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## Frances Burney: A Houstory

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### ABSTRACT

This article maps Frances Burney's life and works from the vantage point of material studies, considering the houses the author lived, sojourned, and worked in. The tension between the contending discourses of “public” house and “private” house—the house as a space for entertainment and a cultural hub used to promote visibility and augment cultural capital, as opposed to the “private” house as the locus of intimacy and family life—is exemplified by the juxtaposition between the houses Frances Burney lived in as her father's daughter (in particular the famous house at 35 St. Martin's Street, London) and the idyllic Surrey dwellings Burney moved into with her husband, Alexandre d'Arblay, after 1793. This article will consider the symbolic, often mythopoetic value associated with Burney's houses as artificial, cultural mythoi and her poetics of indirect, oblique association to accrue cultural and social capital.

“I am tranquil in nothing during this wandering, houseless, Emigrant life. This is no siecle [*sic*] for those who love their home, or who have a home to love.”

Frances Burney d'Arblay to a friend (prob. Georgiana Waddington). 10 July 1815, Brussels. (*Journals and Letters* 8: 284)

### Building air

In a recent study on Jane Austen, the Italian scholar Diego Saglia chose to build his two central chapters around as many geo-cultural references: chapters 3 and 4 are respectively titled “Steventon's novels” and “Chawton's novels.” This arrangement, which departs from the standard Austen studies' one-chapter-per-book format, is clearly programmatic for the critic, who believes it is possible to group at least a portion of Austen's production around two symbolic houses which draw together and represent, thematically and formally, a significant part of Austen's work. Saglia is only the latest in a long line of critics who link the study of a famous author to the places where they lived, as if crossing

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a house's threshold, rather than furtively peeping through a keyhole, might be able to mediate, for the benefit of the modern public, the literary past as well as the writers who inhabited that past. Among the early proponents of this biographical hermeneutic approach was James Boswell, one of the great modern biographers, who thought it necessary to include in a note a complete list of the houses in which Samuel Johnson had lived. Not unlike an *A to Z* street atlas of Johnson's life, this meticulous inventory was apparently justified by Johnson's own remarks on the respect shown to a literary talent through the enumeration of their many domestic stations:

In his "Life of Milton," [Johnson] observes, "I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence." I [Boswell] had, before I read this observation, been desirous of showing that respect to Johnson, by various inquiries. Finding him this evening in a very good humour, I prevailed on him to give me an exact list of his places of residence, since he entered the metropolis as an author, which I subjoin in a note. (Boswell 2: 862)

The search for the links between a writer and the places of his/her writing does not always yield such happy results, amenable to cataloguing in Foucauldian fashion, as in Boswell's list. The houses of literature are various and of various types, ranging from those which the authors happened to inhabit or continued to dwell in by chance (the house of their birth, in the first place), to those for which they instead felt an irrepressible and lasting elective affinity, houses that have acted as a silent chorus to the authors' world, be it public or private, and that have been able to represent it, because the author built them in their own image as well as in the image of their own writing. The contemporary Italian novelist Curzio Malaparte confesses to just such feelings in an emotional sketch of his living (at) Villa Malaparte, a home sculpted by the writer's visionary imagination out of the Mediterranean harshness of Punta Masullo in Capri: "The day I started building a house, I didn't think I was going to draw a portrait of myself. The best of those I have drawn so far in literature" (my translation).

Writers dare to bare and show themselves as they are when they build a house, if we want to follow Malaparte's reasoning. Additionally, be the bricks real (factual) or imaginary (fictional), the reflection of the author's face and inner being always remains as an *imago* imprinted on those walls. There is Petworth House, J. M. W. Turner's "house of art" in West Sussex (Leslie 448); there is Virginia Woolf's "house of writing," Monk's House, just across in East Sussex; and there is also Samuel Johnson's "house of words" in Gough Square, London, to which I will return shortly. Finally, there are the "houses of air," in Hermione Lee's splendid phrase, those houses of writers and poets that have become invisible, air-thin, and of which nothing remains because they have been destroyed, reconverted, violated, dismantled, long-forsaken, or simply demoted to the oblivion of nothingness.

Among these "houses of air" we find the houses of the English writer Frances Burney. Houses are located along a nomadic social and artistic trail, divided as they are between the Georgian geometries of London and Bath and the gothic walls of the royal palaces of Windsor and Kew, and then again, across the Channel, from England to France, in Bonaparte's seething capital, and on to a Brussels scarred by the very recent wounds of Waterloo, along a peripatetic path drawn by the complicated human and financial vicissitudes of Burney's husband, the French émigré Alexandre d'Arblay, rather than by the artistic or life choices of the author herself.

It is difficult for authors who lived in/of “houses of air” to obtain a posthumous memorialization, in the hope that the walls that protected their domestic intimacy and the hours of their artistic creativity might aspire to become a national monument, a memorial worthy of at least a blue plaque, if not preservation for the education of present and future generations. Likewise, the evanescence of air does not offer a solid “cultural capital,” in Pierre Bourdieu’s definition, on which to conceive a writer’s house museum, a museum dedicated to the writer’s writing, with all the possible connections and constructions that coalesce in and around the authors, to preserve their memory and, finally, to contribute to their canonization (241–58). At the very same time that the Victorians were warmly supporting the epoch-making institution, and institutionalization, of writers’ house museums, Frances Burney saw attacked and dismantled (page after page, brick of words by brick of words) the work she had probably envisaged as her own writer’s house museum, that seven-room house, meticulously furnished decades ahead of its publication, which is *Diary and Letters*, posthumously published by her niece Charlotte Barrett in 1846. Thus whereas, at Gad’s Hill Place, Samuel Luke Fildes could reconstruct Charles Dickens’s workroom for the benefit of the devoted reader, complete with a chair just pushed back from the writing desk, as if the eternal Boz had risen just for a moment and was about to descend again among the living, in the fictitious temporal suspension of the illustrator’s famous *The Empty Chair, Gad’s Hill—Ninth of June 1870*,<sup>1</sup> by contrast, and paradoxically, Burney’s *opus magnum*, a true masterpiece of the reality effect sought by Fildes (Barthes), was ruthlessly crushed by John Wilson Croker as the umpteenth instance of an unsightly “display of egotism,” no more than the shameless “glorification of Miss Fanny Burney—her talents—her tastes—her sagacity” (Anonymous 245).

The “houses of air” inhabited by Burney are many, given her peripatetic life, and some among them must have been more than houses, homes. From the lodgings in Chapel Street, King’s Lynn, where Frances was born in 1752, to 29 Lower Grosvenor Street, near New Bond Street, London where she died in 1840, many of these houses, whether vanished or transformed by time, are worthy of individual analysis and reflection, both from the point of view of the Romantic setting in which a good portion of Burney’s (domestic) life lies, and the artistic and biographical progress of the author, full of remarkable connections, particularly from a Bourdieusian perspective of building social and cultural capital. I will focus on two typologies of house that were central to the construction of the author’s poetic *mythos*: the urban house at 35 St. Martin’s Street, London, where she lived for twelve years, between 1774 and 1786 (the years of the publication of her greatest successes *Evelina* [1778] and *Cecilia* [1782]),<sup>2</sup> and the houses in Surrey, among them “Camilla Cottage,” where they lived until 1802. These rarefied, invisible “houses of air”—the dynamic one in the capital and the idyllic ones in the countryside, whose contrast describes a centripetal public-private *pas de deux*—have nevertheless left well-defined word traces (*signs*, I call them) in Burney’s artistic cartography. It is on their importance in Burney’s process of authorial self-construction rather than the anecdotes associated with them that I intend to dwell here.

But first, two methodological premises. On the one hand, much information about Burney’s post-1778 life comes from Burney herself, through the mediation of the *Diary and Letters*, which can be considered the monovocal resonance chamber

(including at the meta-level, especially where the volumes co-edited by Burney before her death are concerned) of the much-appreciated polyvocality of her narrative style. On the other hand, as the architectural maieutics advocated by Malaparte also evoked, is our awareness, or at least well-founded suspicion, that building a house is an undertaking not dissimilar from writing fiction, perhaps even “autobiografiction” (see Reynolds).<sup>3</sup> It means transforming formal imagination into material imagination.

### The fortunate place: 35 St. Martin’s Street

Queen Square, –

I have now changed my abode, & quitted dear Poland Street forever. How well satisfied shall I be if after having Lived as long in Queen’s Square I can look back to equally happy Days!

Frances Burney, 16 November 1770. (*Early Journals and Letters* 1: 141)

Charles Burney’s real estate itinerary, in accordance with the usual pattern of mid-Georgian proto-capitalist mobility, follows a precise and predetermined upward trajectory. Burney’s moves on the urban chessboard (first on the micro-scale of King’s Lynn [where Charles lived from 1751 until the first months of 1760], and then on the macro-scale of the capital [where he remained until his death at the Royal Chelsea Hospital, in 1814]) confirm the notion, in line with our own postcode hierarchies, that a house is a professional and social facilitator (as well as a cultural facilitator, a concept never unwelcome to Charles Burney). Such a type of facilitating house signifies that its inhabitant(s) have attained a “fortunate place.”<sup>4</sup>

While the industrious and ambitious musicologist was engaged in that grueling tour of Italy, France and Switzerland that would cement both his fortunes in literature and his professional reputation (*The Present State of Music in France and Italy* [1771]), Elizabeth Allen, the second Mrs. Burney from 1767, had herself embarked on the equally delicate task of providing a suitable frame for her husband’s coming triumphs. As it happens, 50 Poland Street (leased by the Burneys from 1760 to 1770), at the time surrounded by open fields and still sparsely built plots, had gradually turned out to be an inconvenient address for the tireless frequenter of the elegant London boroughs where most of the wealthy families to whom he gave his well-paid music lessons lived. What is more, that off-center domicile had become uncomfortably close to cumbersome neighbors, such as the wig maker mentioned in a much-cited entry in *Memoirs of Dr Burney* (1832): “There lived next door to me, at that time, in Poland street, and in a private house, a capital hair merchant, who furnished perukes to the judges, and gentlemen of the law” (2: 170). The obvious financial well-being of the *perruquier* (a character invested with a comic aura not unlike that of the mocked cits in Georgian comedy) proves insufficient to wash away the *embarras* of trade from that semi-peripheral neighborhood. It is therefore no surprise that in *Memoirs of Dr Burney* the two-headed narrator (the author Charles and his posthumous editor Frances) hastens to clarify, in reference to Poland Street:

Mr. Burney had successively for his neighbours, the Duke of Chandos, Lady Augusta Bridges, the Hon. John Smith and the Miss Barrys, Sir Willoughby and the Miss Astons; and, well noted by Mr. Burney’s little family, on the visit of his black majesty to England, sojourned, almost immediately opposite to it, the Cherokee King. (1: 134)

This highly respectable (I would say “romantic”) home mapping is, however, belied by the impartial *Survey of London*, which specifies, with reference to the previous passage: “There is no sign of these titled residents in the Poland Street rate books for the years when Dr. Burney lived in the street, but it is possible that they occupied furnished houses and did not pay rates” (Sheppard).<sup>5</sup>

When we come to 35 St. Martin’s Street, we find a further, and certainly more accomplished, example of this type of “house-facilitator” as far as Charles is concerned. At the same time, it also represents a multi-level house-metaphor for Frances. If we follow Burney’s backward auto-biographical gaze (as much in *Memoirs of Dr Burney* as in *Diary and Letters*) we find 35 St. Martin’s Street’s domestic associations and implications recast into a *sub-rosa* meta-language through which to convey, by figuration and analogy, a “romance” vision of one’s own art.

Although chiefly purchased with an eye to its favorable situation, 35 St. Martin’s Street had a further quality in the eyes of the Doctor. Built in the last decade of the seventeenth century, it had the unbeatable advantage of having been from 1710 to 1727 the home of Sir Isaac Newton, a national figure of pride to whom even the most exacting foreign guests would need to pay obeisance. Indeed, Newton had conducted most of his research within those walls for almost thirty years. There he also completed the third revision of his masterpiece, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* [Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy] (1st ed. 1687; 3rd ed. 1726).

The first news of the purchase appears in one of Frances’s letters from the spring of 1774: “My father has bought A House in St. Martin’s Street Leicester Fields—an odious street.—but *well situated, & nearly in the Centre of the Town*; & the House is a large & good one. It was built by Sir Isaac Newton!” (*Early Journals and Letters* 2: 32, my emphasis).<sup>6</sup> The house extended over three floors, as Georgian vertical architectural decorum prescribed: the kitchen and the servants’ quarters were in the basement and the bedrooms on the second floor, while the rooms reserved for the children were on the top floor. As mentioned, the house was “well situated” for the paternal business and conducive to strengthening his social connections: “the change of position . . . required all it could bestow of convenience to business, of facilitating fashionable and literary intercourse, of approximation to traveling foreigners of distinction, and of vicinity to the Opera House” (*Memoirs* 1: 289). Topographical convenience was bolstered by cultural convenience, this latter guaranteed by the house’s enviable, indeed hardly surpassable, heritage, as emphasized by the exclamation point Frances placed after Newton’s name above. And her enthusiasm was destined to explode on the day of the move (18 October 1774):

Newton House St. Martin’s Street,  
Leicester Fields. Oct. 18th

We Came immediately to this house, which we propose calling *Newton House*, or *The Observatory*, or something that sounds *grand*. By the way, Sir Isaac’s identical observatory is still subsisting, and we show it, to all our visitors, as our principal Lyon. I am very much pleased with the House & still more with this part of the Town. (*Early Journals and Letters* 2: 52)

In Burney’s breathless description, the house is no longer *a* house, but *the* house *par excellence*, none other than the house of *Newton*, “the most stupendous of human

geniuses” (*Memoirs* 1: 291). It was the house-gift to be offered to the Burneys’ guests as a cultural viaticum of indisputable stature (“grand”), the worthy setting for the ambitious musical salon of the cultivated doctor, himself a polymath and a scholar of letters, a tireless and diligent scientist of music who, as a lifelong enthusiastic observer of the stars himself, could not but bask in the vicarious light of those sacred rooms.<sup>7</sup>

Where Charles viewed St. Martin’s Street (located as it was at the intersection between past and present, memory and ambition) primarily as a social and cultural facilitator, Frances, instead, turned it into an oblique meta-language. Placed at the top of the building was the wooden observatory built by Newton to scrutinize the celestial vault undisturbed by city lights. Great domestic prestige was transferred to the Burneys’ house from this room-museum, religiously preserved “in the same simple state in which it had been left by Sir Isaac” (*Memoirs* 1: 290). Interestingly for our purposes, it was a room where the private sphere (an amateur locus of study) and the professional sphere (the scientific laboratory) intersected, in an era in which science had scarcely developed institutional settings and it was still possible to speak, as it will for another good few decades, of domestic(ated) empiricism. Charles Burney did not hesitate to repair the observatory-relic twice, despite the considerable costs required by such an undertaking: “He would have thought himself a ruthless Goth, had he permitted the sancta sanctorum of the developer of the skies in their embodied movements, to have been scattered to nonentity through his neglect or parsimony” (1: 291). It seems a bitter and, indeed, ironic *contra-passo* that subsequent owners’ neglect downgraded the august aerie to the dilapidated workshop of a lowly cobbler; one need only remember with what embarrassed anguish Frances Burney realized that with its publication, *Evelina*, “A work which was so lately Lodged, in all privacy, in my Bureau, may now be seen by every Butcher and Baker, Cobler and Tinker, throughout the 3 kingdoms, for the small tribute of 3 pence” (*Early Journals and Letters* 3: 5, my emphasis).

The observatory was a small room, very simply furnished, and from the top of the house “[it] overlooked all London and its environs” (*Memoirs* 1: 290). With its numerous windows, the observatory opened onto the celestial world of the stars, as well as the sub-lunar world of the capital spreading out at its feet, that city “world” object of scrutiny in Frances’s first novel, *Evelina; or the History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World*, published in early 1778 and written in the house in St. Martin’s Street: “The observatory [was] encompassed completely by windows of small old-fashioned panes of glass, so crowded as to leave no exclusion to the glazier” (*Memoirs* 1: 290). From its very first mention (probably revised in retrospect), Frances identifies this space with her nest of creative interiority, the room in which to take refuge to write her private fancies and “vagaries” (*Early Journals and Letters* 3: 58), as she remarks with characteristic, coy underestimation of her poetic labors. “As soon as the company had gone,” Virginia Woolf muses in a famous essay, “[Burney] stole to the Observatory and wrote down every word, every scene, in letters twelve pages long, for her beloved Daddy Crisp at Chessington” (108–25).

The observatory, with its elevated position immediately above the children’s playroom, signifies by metonymy the writing of *Evelina* itself, as the product of a novice writer who was long mistaken for (and all too awkwardly identified with) her adolescent character, “a young female ... at the age of seventeen” (*Evelina* 7), although in fact eleven years older. In spatial proximity to the children’s playroom in the attic, Burney re-



mediates novel writing in the playful pastime of a non-child disguised as a young prodigy. On the peak of her domestic Parnassus, she dominates and eyes the house of History, Science and Culture (all spelled with a capital letter) unfolding across the floors below. Dwelling in her small room-nest, the actual spatial incubator for *Evelina* (a story of London society and its characters [lowercase letters this time]), she purports “To draw characters from nature ... and to mark the manners of the times” (7). Thus, the covert, finely wrought Newtonian association participates in conferring valued epistemological capital to “all the little incidents” (7) of the novel and its poetics of realist minutiae.

If the proximity of the playroom to the observatory/writing studio supports the early *mythos* of the “accidental” author (*Memoirs* 3: 235), the room located on the attic floor was also notoriously associated, at least in the Georgian imagination, with the disparaged creativity (and therefore the amateurism) of the garreteer, the *typos* of the impecunious and discredited writer, so often the target of satirical barbs. *Evelina*’s melancholy poet, Macartney, for instance, lives in misery at the Branghtons, “up three pairs of stairs” (197), on what is the least posh floor of the house, and therefore also the least expensive to rent.

My argument here is that Frances Burney is an author who creates cultural capital as a delicate filigree, by deflection and discreet mediation rather than open ostentation. Far from being a modest and poorly heated room, the idea(l) of the garret emerging from behind the Newtonian observatory of Burney’s writing has in fact a much more noble tradition. It for one recalls the garret praised with playful irony by Samuel Johnson, a good friend and mentor of the Burneys, in a letter composed in the guise of his *persona*, Mr. Rambler, which celebrated the creative advantages of this modest room (Johnson, *Rambler* 259–64). Johnson, who had fittingly completed his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) in the garret of 17 Gough Square, enumerates with the usual half-seriousness of his authorial *eidolon* the many advantages, both domestic and creative, of this locale, capable of providing shelter from noisy and intrusive visitors (in Burney’s case, the guests attending the house of music and conversation on the first floor), while simultaneously inducing reflection and “serene learning” (for Burney, her night-time writing carried out by stealth on the upper floor). Johnson compares the philosopher or the poet who resides in the modest garret to no less than the mythological figures located in similar “elevated situations”: “Why was Jove nursed upon a mountain?” half-jokingly asks Mr. Rambler of his reader.

As the locus of sidereal exploration, a *sanctum* of terrestrial writing, and finally the playroom of concealed authorship, Newton’s observatory is represented synecdochically by the instrument *par excellence* of the night explorer of the skies: the telescope. This scientific apparatus is placed in optical antithesis, but also in hermeneutic and epistemological contiguity, with the microscope adopted by the realist novelist. Both the telescope and the microscope are mediating devices of knowledge able to read the visual texturing of the world as well as to perceive details not ordinarily apprehended by the observer’s naked eye—in Burney’s case, those very acute, indefatigable and “rather prominent gnat-like eyes” with which the writer tirelessly swept society,<sup>8</sup> notwithstanding her pronounced short-sightedness, only at times improved with spectacles (Woolf 111).

The semantic affinity between the two types of eyeglasses used by scientist and novelist (astride the *tele-* and *micro-* reflections cast by analytical watching) is recalled in a well-known letter by Samuel Crisp dated 8 December 1778:



In these little entertaining elegant Histories, the writer has his full Scope; as large a Range as he pleases to hunt in—to pick, cull, select, whatever he likes:—he takes his own time; he may be as minute as he pleases, & the more minute the better; provided, that Taste, a deep & penetrating knowledge of human Nature, & the World, accompany that minuteness.—When this is the Case, the very soul, & all it's (sic) most secret recesses & workings, are develop'd and laid as open to the View, as the blood Globules circulating in a frog's foot, when seen thro' a Microscope. (*Early Journals and Letters* 3: 189)

On closer inspection, the optical phenomena of reflection and refraction intersect not only in telescopic vision, but also in novel writing. As reading and remediation tools, both the telescope and the novel move between fact (reliable representation) and fiction (its narrativization), observation and imagination, Nature and romance, as Burney claims in her “Preface” to *Evelina* (9).

Sidereal long shots and earthly close-ups, the sky and the world, the nature of the universe and human nature: in her privileged observatory at the top of 35 St. Martin's Street, the novelist, self-named heir to “Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett” (*Evelina* 7), finds form and themes for her stories—the small records of a lesser exploration and discovery capable of engraving a secular cosmos on a paper pinhead. For Frances Burney, in honoring Newton's observatory, is paying indirect (slant) homage to her own otherwise contestable art and censurable authorship by recurring to universally eminent models.<sup>9</sup> By affirming without asserting, by means of a memorable room placed on top of a very famous house, Frances Burney inscribes the popular in the institutional, yokes observational science and literary imagination and, finally, “sublimif[ies] lath and plaster” into everlasting cultural capital (qtd. in Clifford 66).

### The “felicitous space”: Burney's Surrey paper homes<sup>10</sup>

Phoenice Farm, Fair Field House, Camilla Cottage. A cluster of three now forgotten “houses of air” scattered in the green countryside of Surrey, hovering on the boundary between literal and allegorical reading. Located in the vicinity of a village with an almost metaphorical name, Great Bookham (nicely evoking a “great village of the book”), these three houses have received little attention from critics. They are domestic meteors, eclipsed by the more pleasing narrative of the autumnal romance surrounding Burney's marriage to Alexandre d'Arbly, celebrated in St. Michael and All Angels Church, Mickleham (Surrey) on 28 July 1793. This period in Burney's life was marked by three events: the relinquishment of her Court appointment (1791); then the relocation to Surrey (1793); and finally the publication of *Camilla, or a Picture of Youth* (1796), a sequence that may be summed up in the euphoric progression COURT → COURTSHIP → CURTILAGE. None of these events offers exciting *frissons* or scenes of brilliant worldliness to the scholar, nor adventures in foreign lands. However, it is precisely their silent and solitary obscurity, their being a nothing “of paper” and “of air,” as Burney narrated them in various guises to various people, that I find suggestive and ripe for poetic meta-analysis. Once again, we see denotation flowing into connotation, while intertextual allusion and figurative reading—my “slant-wise” reading—graft the fictional onto the factual and accrue epistemological capital not only to the writing (Burney's letters), but also to the biography (her life). As Adam Gopnik shrewdly remarks in a different context, “an intelligent suspension of disbelief necessary for reading fiction meets the intelligent

suspension of belief necessary for reading biographies, with the truth suspended somewhere between.”

In this second phase of Burney’s life, following her counter-current move from CITY to COUNTRY, or more precisely, from INSIDE THE HOUSE of St. Martin’s Street to OUTSIDE THE HOUSE of Surrey, with an inverted inside-out focus, we are confronted with three houses whose onomastics seem to offer a delicate, tantalizing hermeneutic invitation. The first of these dwellings is Phoenix Farm, near Leatherhead, an out-of-the-way farmhouse (as we can still see in a modern photograph, [Figure 1](#)) to which the d’Arblays moved immediately after their wedding while waiting to find more spacious accommodation in the same green basin of the River Mole where Frances’s beloved sister Susanna Burney Phillips then resided, as did their mutual friends, the Locks of Norbury Park. In these remote rented rooms Burney spent the first weeks after her marriage to her much-loved husband Alexandre, a period of rebirth and regeneration after the dark years spent at Court, as captured in the symbolism of the mythological phoenix, of which “Phoenixe” is an ancient spelling.

The second panel in this rural domestic triptych is Fair Field Cottage, the “beautiful” place in the village of Great Bookham where the d’Arblays lived for four years, roughly between September 1793 and November 1797.<sup>11</sup> The couple rebaptized the house, owned by a Mrs. Catherine Bailey, “The Hermitage,” a significant toponym that was to remain in common use in after years.

The last in this triptych of symbolic Lares is also the best known of Burney’s Surrey domiciles: “Camilla Cottage,” where the author lived almost continuously until 1802, the year in which the family, now expanded by the arrival of baby Alexander in 1794,



**Figure 1.** Item 7828/2/94/6. Phoenixe [*sic*] Farm. Postcard, 1926. By kind permission of Surrey History Centre.

moved to France. This house, built with the publication proceeds of *Camilla* in 1796, represents the zenith of Burney's post-epithalamic real estate progress, an extraordinary transubstantiation of her writing, which became for the first time a true profession, in the full semantic sense of the term: on the one hand an activity with the explicit aim of earning money; on the other the public declaration of her art. If "Camilla Cottage" corresponds to "the dream house," in Bachelard's theorization, in my view it is also and above all the house a book built.

These three houses, scattered in the "greensward woodland walks and groves antique" (Woodhouse 7, line 71) of Surrey's verdant countryside, locus of the picturesque *par excellence*, should be understood as "felicitous" spaces, once again in the Bachelardian sense of the word: precious places of intimacy, discreet refuges of the soul, sheltered rural hermitages, but also very dense semiotic clusters in which the classical tradition of the blissful country life is revisited and definitively transformed, where a simple georgic *otium* now merges with an unavoidable entrepreneurial *negotium*, and the *felix* of Miltonian descent, understood as happy and fortunate, becomes also—or, above all—fruitful. Burney herself describes this period of her life with the rather rare adjective "felicitous." She does so in a memorandum affixed to a letter from her father, dated 7 May 1825, five years after her husband's death (1818): "NEVER—NEVER," the writer stresses with Richardsonian emphasis, "was Union more exquisitely blest & felicitous" (qtd. in *Journals and Letters* 2: 170). *Felicitous* is a complex and semantically dense adjective, derived from the noun *felicity*. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* explains, to the primary meaning, "happiness" (1.a), with a perceptible widening and an interesting semantic shift, *felicity* adds the secondary meaning of "prosperity, good fortune, success" (3.a) and, in an obsolete plural form, "prosperous circumstances; successful enterprises; successes" (3.b).

Through Burney's verbal filigree we glimpse a happy garden in a secluded enclave, rich in flowers and plants to be cultivated assiduously. Associated with this image is the motif of the simple contented life of a couple fulfilled in each other. "Monsr d'A. & his Rib" (*Journal and Letters* 3: 106), Burney jokes, but not quite; and her choice of the obvious word-stimulus, "rib," at once witty and allusive, would recur in an important business letter to her brother James in 1797 (3: 308). It is on this peaceful parcel of green land that I wish to conclude my topoanalysis, in a post-Miltonian Eden apparently antithetical both culturally and spatially to the city vortex of St. Martin's Street, but on closer inspection not wholly unlike it. For according to one of my interpretative assumptions, any enclosing shell, even a solid one built of bricks, can be no more than daydream, ambivalence—simultaneously *limen* (boundary) and *limes* (threshold). As a protective envelope, fragile and porous, and a permeable membrane between INSIDE/SAFETY and OUTSIDE/DANGER, a shell is in fact only a brittle barrier between us and the Other, two terms enmeshed in an inescapable, endless symbiosis. And any shell is, howsoever and always, placed in space, so that the dialectic (or inevitable contamination, if you like) between inside and outside, privacy and exposure, can be displaced, romanticized, dreamed about, but never erased.

Just two days after the couple's second wedding ceremony, officiated in the Roman Catholic chapel of the Sardinian Ambassador in London (30 July 1793), Burney summarizes her new status as a wife and her expectations for the future in a letter to Georgiana Waddington:

*Happiness* is the great end of all our worldly views and proceedings; and no one can judge from another in what will produce it. *To me*, wealth and ambition would always be unavailing; I have lived in their most central possessions—and I have always seen that the *happiness* of the Richest and the Greatest has been the moment of retiring from Riches and from Powers. Domestic comfort and social affection have invariably been the sole as well as the ultimate objects of my choice: and I have always been a stranger to any other species of *felicity*. M. d'Arblay has a taste for literature, and a passion for reading and writing as marked as my own; this is a *sympathy* to rob retirement of all superfluous leisure, and ensure to us both occupation constantly edifying or entertaining. He has seen so much of life, and has *suffered* so severely from its disappointments, that retreat, with a chosen *Companion*, has become his final *desire*. (*Journal and Letters* 2: 179, my emphases)

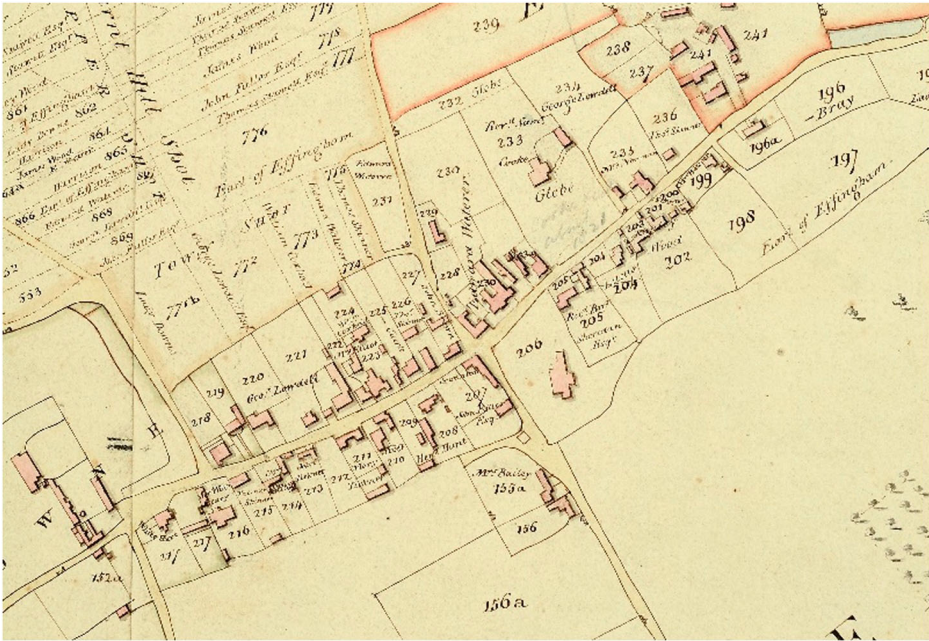
In this auspicious confession, where Burney symbolically closes the circle, as in a wedding ring, between her own (“To me”) and her husband’s “final desire,” we find echoes of the Declaration of Independence and the discourses of sensibility, the classical tradition of the blissful life away from the city (celebrated by Martial, Virgil, and Horace) and subtle, yet clearly recognizable, Miltonian references (as in the semes *companionship*, *frugality*, *conversation*, *felicity*, for Burney, evidently the true “central possessions”). Thus, where Margaret Anne Doody suggested reading the name Evelina Anville, the eponymous protagonist of *Evelina*, as an anagram of “Eve in a veil” (40), we might now reverse the anagram: ensconced in the countryside of Surrey alongside her husband, Frances seems to imagine for herself (and whisper to herself) a future as an “unveiled Eve.”

The passionate confession to Georgiana Waddington already begins to outline the semantic map, gradually expanded, of the early years in Surrey: a marital solitude that is neither loneliness nor isolation, the life side by side of two subjects (different, yet equal) whereby we can speak of solitary companionship; a familial industriousness that brings happiness and fresh harvests, in both the literal and figurative sense of these terms. My “slant-wise” reading once again seems justified in these pages, on the one hand by the dialectical relationship between desire and factual reality (connotation) and on the other by the pervasive underlying Miltonian allusions (denotation).

The couple’s pre-lapsarian life in the Surrey countryside thus acquires multiple inter-cultural echoes at Fair Field Cottage, nicely encapsulated by the Anglo-French twist of its new name: “Hermitage” has the same spelling in the two languages, thus indirectly conveying a symbolic symmetry of identity and the correspondence of intentions and views of the two residents in that happy home.<sup>12</sup> A map of the parish of Bookham *ca.* 1804 (Figure 2), combined with a listing of the landowners and their property (Figure 3), confirms that Fair Field Cottage was indeed surrounded by a garden and an orchard of considerable proportions (to my very rough estimate, about six acres) and in any case such as to justify the General’s frenetic horticulturalist labors, to which Burney returns time and again. What appears less certain to a more granular analysis, however, is the actual extent of the solitude that enveloped the couple.

The first factual description of the cottage, “a very small House in the *suburbs* of a very small village, called Bookham” (letter of 19 September 1793), is immediately followed by a reference to isolation: “our situation is totally free from neighbours and intrusion” (*Journal and Letters* 3: 14). The minuscule house is described as a “little obscure dwelling” (3: 14), so as to be more correctly identified with the appellation of a place of “retirement” (3: 40) and with derivatives of this term. The name “Hermitage” was therefore apparently





**Figure 2.** K177/1. Plan of the parish of Great Bookham. Coloured. N.d. [c.1804]. By kind permission of Surrey History Centre.

| No. on the Plan.                     | Names of Proprietors, &c.                               | Cultures | A | R | P  |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------|---|---|----|
| <i>Mrs Bailey</i><br><i>In Hand.</i> |   |          |   |   |    |
| 155a                                 | <i>House, Garden and Orchard, adjoining Fair Field.</i> | P        | " | 2 | 17 |
| 233a                                 | <i>House, and Garden.</i>                               | "        | " | " | 18 |
|                                      |   |          |   | 2 | 35 |

**Figure 3.** K177/2. Book of reference to plan of parish of Great Bookham (K177/1) listing the land-owners and their property. Mrs. Bailey's plots are numbered 155a ("House, Garden and Orchard, adjoining Fair Field") and 233a ("House and Garden"). By kind permission of Surrey History Centre.

apt, and by semantic and semiotic contiguity, the d'Arblays named themselves “the hermits.”

Cartographic investigation seems to bring out an alternative interpretative possibility, however. Immediately adjacent to the Hermitage property was the village’s “fair field” from which the house took its name. Further domestic privacy was ensured by the plantation immediately overlooking the house, just across the road. But beyond the plantation was St. Nicholas Church, the historic church at the heart of medieval Great Bookham, with a cemetery behind it. The house next to the Hermitage, still known today as Hop Field Cottage, had been there for many years, while on the left, just a few meters further down the road, Bookham High Street was already densely built up. Mrs. Bailey, the d'Arblays’ landlady, lived in a house known as “Gothic House,” just across the church’s front yard, about 200 meters away as the crow flies.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the trees in front of the church, which are still there today, the distance between Mrs. Bailey’s and the d'Arblays’ dwellings must have been quite small and in any case such as to allow Mrs. Bailey to keep the General’s topiary inexperience under discreet control, as is evident from a post-scriptum of 27 January 1794: “Think of our horticultural shock last week, when Mrs. Bailey, our Landlady, ‘entreated Mr. D’Arblay not to spoil her Fruit Trees!’” (3: 39).

Perhaps, then, the isolation of Fair Field Cottage should be perceived more as psychological, a state of mind, than as fact. We might decode it as an act of volition, construction, an imaginary projection—yet another episode in the plot of the real estate “romance” woven by Frances Burney and begun in St. Martin’s Street, to resume my previous line of reasoning. And here I would like to recall what Bachelard says in one of his most illuminating thoughts: “the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace” (6).

The horticulturalist incompetence of d'Arblay, already observed with suspicion by Mrs. Bailey, often makes its appearance in Burney’s biographies as a bathetic digression, in which we are told how the General waged an unequal campaign against the luxuriant hedges, which he pruned with his saber for lack of adequate gardening tools or perhaps out of mere inexperience (letter of 10 August 1794). Besides the heroicomic-domestic code of this botanical batrachomyomachy, the garden of Fair Field Cottage takes on, as the letters succeed each other, increasingly marked Edenic associations (epic-domestic code), now with the appearance of a Golden Pippin, planted by the General to honor “*M. le cher docteur*” (29 November 1796) (*Journal and Letters* 3: 245), now with the construction of an “arbour” covered in “lilacs, Honeysuckles & Jessamine, root, mould & branch” (2 March 1794) (3: 43). Amid such flowery abundance and in industrious solitude, the newly married couple inhabits this pre-lapsarian garden of pleasure, so distant (and so dissimilar) from the post-lapsarian pleasure gardens of the city: “Can Life, [M. d'Arblay] often says, be more innocent than ours?” (22 March 1794) (3: 45). And it is with a final thought on the refined system of horticultural allusion traceable in the letters of this period, specifically on the signification of a truly modest vegetable, the cabbage, that I conclude the HOME → CREATIVE IMAGINATION interpretative circuit that I began with 35 St. Martin’s Street.

The decision to exploit, with audacious self-branding, her own authorial cultural capital to broker the best possible deal for the novel that would become *Camilla* dates to the years Burney spent in Surrey. Alongside this successful entrepreneurial effort

Burney was engaged in writing and revising several ill-fated plays on which she placed additional hopes of financial stability. I am thinking here of *Edwy and Elgiva*, staged in 1795 in place of the contemporaneous *Hubert de Vere*, for which Burney envisaged publication in the form of a perhaps more easily saleable “dramatic tale” (letter of 26 January 1797) (3: 258). *Love and Fashion* was accepted for production by Thomas Harris, the manager of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, with the certainly not negligible offer of £400. The Surrey drama series concludes with *A Busy Day*, a comedy that had to wait until 1993 to reach the stage (Sabor, “Rediscovery”).

In the Surrey countryside, Burney enjoyed a period of intense and fruitful writing like few others in her life. Bookham’s *quies* might be considered manifestly distant from the hustle and bustle of London, yet in those same years a metaphorical “press in the garden,” to paraphrase Leo Marx, was set up by the not-so-solitary, and indeed industrious, d’Arblays. While Alexandre was declaring implacable and frankly ridiculous war on the weeds, Frances confessed to having “taken *tightly* to the *grand ouvrage*” (*Journal and Letters* 3: 73); that is, her third novel, *Camilla*, here introduced with heroic prosopopoeia (“grand” was the same adjective the author used for Newton’s observatory). I cannot help but think of the famous passage in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost* (in which the *arbour* mentioned above appears) where Eve explains to Adam the usefulness and joy of collaborative work. “Let us divide our labours” (line 214), she proposes to him, because shared work is more fruitful and gives greater pleasure.

If the meta-language of the city *domus* at 35 St. Martin’s Street came to signify fictional writing, the earthly micro-cosmos vis-à-vis the sidereal macro-cosmos, at Fair Field Cottage the more modest meta-language of horticulture comes to signify the fruits and goals of that same writing. In a letter to Dr. Burney dated 22 March 1794, Frances reports yet another episode in the family horticultural saga, once again rich in oblique associations: “But I must not omit that we have had for one week Cabbages from our own cultivation—every Day!—O, you have no idea how sweet they tasted! We agreed they had a freshness & a goût we had never met with before” (*Journal and Letters* 3: 49). Further rhapsodies about cabbage cultivation crop up throughout the following years: “[M. d’A.] dreams now of Cabbage Walks—potatoe Beds—Bean perfumes & peas’ blossoms,” Frances gleefully tells her father at the end of 1796 (*Journal and Letters* 3: 207). This is a central period in Burney’s life, in which it had become obvious to her that she needed to resume writing to add to the annual pension of £100 she received as a reward for her service at Court, a modest sum that constituted almost the entire household budget of the d’Arblays. It is worth noting that most of these letters are addressed to her father, whose life-long struggle to control her authorial ambitions was only (partly) resolved by his deification/murder in the *Memoirs of Dr Burney*.<sup>14</sup> Although Burney’s “green” enthusiasm is fully understandable within the worldview of a new bride who enjoys every particle of her new life (indeed, a cursory lexical analysis shows that the words *happiness* and *happy* recur more frequently in these pages than in her entire earlier correspondence), it should however, in my view, be interpreted within what I have outlined as her poetics of slant enunciation.

In the conventional wisdom of the time the cabbage was a plant with numerous virtues. Substantial and wholesome, frugal but dependable, its standing within the contemporary pharmacopoeia cannot have been unknown to Burney. James Cook, under whom Frances’s brother James had served on two Australian crossings, had used it to combat scurvy



during the second Voyage of Discovery in 1772 (402–06). Even the influential agriculturalist Arthur Young, who had married Martha Allen, sister of the second Mrs. Burney, had repeatedly discussed it in the chronicles of his travels (*A Tour in Ireland* [1780]) and in his scientific writings (*The Farmer's Letters to the People of England* [1767]; *The Farmer's Calendar* [1771]), listing the various types and, above all, the numerous properties of the vegetable. Likewise, Burney must have been aware of the possible association between the humble kitchen garden plant and the royal family of Hanover, especially if one remembers King “Farmer” George’s well-known keenness for husbandry. And, of course, the Hanovers were traditionally linked by caricaturists with the immoderate consumption of cabbage imputed to the Germans, as in the biting satirical print by James Gillray, *Germans Eating Sour-Krout* (1803). Adam and Eve, George and Charlotte: these are sublime models, respectively biblical/otherworldly and secular/earthly. As such, they are “high” exemplars capable of conferring unsurpassed cultural capital by oblique association: by stressing the d’Arblays’ contiguity to them the author can give definition to and create a “romance” around the couple and their art/labor.

Burney’s writing (her “press in the garden” [Marx]) finds expression, once again through mediated association, in the loving and assiduous cultivation/narration of a brassica: a plant as nutritious as it was wholesome, polyvalent and healthful, capable of providing true sustenance, in the kitchen as well as in the family, a source of tasty food and, by metaphor, also of economic support. General d’Arblay’s factual cabbage graces their table and contributes to feed, concretely, the spouses, ensuring their sustenance and economic independence (“M. [d’A] assures me [our Garden] is to be the staff of our Table & existence” [*Journal and Letters* 3: 48]). Likewise, Burney’s fictional “cabbage,” that is, her writing (to which she symptomatically refers with an adjective relating to the semantic fields of taste and food), is the resource on which the household of Fair Field Cottage must rely (albeit reluctantly, due to the unpleasantness of subscription publication) for its future subsistence:

Should [the new novel] succeed like *Evelina* & *Cecilia*, it may be a little portion to our Bambino—we wish, therefore, to print it for ourselves, in this hope . . . This is in many—MANY ways unpleasant & *unpalatable* to us both—but the real chance of real use & benefit to our little darling overcomes all scruples, & therefore—to work we go! (*Journal and Letters* 3: 124–25, my emphasis)

In an attempt at reconciliation after a nuptial choice that he considered risky and ill-advised, the first gift Charles Burney sent to the newlyweds was a trio of books that he felt they could not do without. For d’Arblay, the Doctor chose a copy of Philip Miller’s *A Gardener’s Dictionary* (1731–39), to which Charles added, for the benefit of both, a copy of *Paradise Lost* and one of Samuel Johnson’s *Rasselas* (letter of 16 September 1793) (3: 5n1). In intertextual and associationist terms, Charles Burney’s extraordinary gift serves both as a prologue and an epilogue to the history of Frances Burney’s Surrey homes, simultaneously poetic program and narrative prolepsis. And indeed, it was in the “happy valley” (Johnson, *Samuel Johnson* 261) of the River Mole, between “agricultural Enlightenment” (Jones) and Miltonian domestic afterlives, in happy conjugal alone-in-togetherness, that Burney imagined and “romanced” one of her blissful “paper houses”: Fair Field Cottage, the first, and perhaps the only, felicitous house she had because the only one never tarnished by a lapse into cruel reality.

## Et in Arcadia ego: a writer's un-housed museum

They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way. (Milton, *Paradise Lost* 12, lines 468–69)

I can never so estimate myself as not to feel for-ever his Debtor, knowing as I know the delicacy of [d'Arblay's] feelings & his taste, even if he proposed that we should walk out together into the wide World, to gain our subsistence by our labour. I do not say this would not be extravagant; yet, at all events, & in all circumstances, still I must eternally be obliged to him That he has wished me to be his Life's Companion.

Frances Burney to Mrs. Phillips [nee Susanna Burney] (*Journal and Letters* 2: 52)

On the night of 17 April 1919, a sudden, fierce fire tore through Camilla Lacey, the house that the d'Arblays had once proudly christened “Camilla Cottage.” The owners, the family of the antiquarian and scholar Frederick Leverton Harris, last in a long line of owners to whom William Lock Jr. had passed the property after the death of his father William (1810), were not at home at the time of the disaster. In a perverse ritual of pyrrhic destruction, a true “domicide” (Tringham 89–108) starkly contrasting with the prosperous post-epithalamic phoenix, the destruction of this “house of fire” also erased the precious Burneyana that Leverton Harris had painstakingly assembled in a small domestic collection in the so-called “Burney Room”: “This contained the manuscripts of several of Fanny Burney’s novels, original letters and other correspondence, and family portraits which Mr. Harris had been at much [*sic*] pains and expense to collect. The whole of these have been destroyed” (“Camilla Lacey Burned”). “Only the outer walls remain standing,” reads the report/epitaph in the *Times*: the empty shell of a “house of air” turned into a “house of fire,” replacing what had been the germ of a writer’s house museum.

The *Times*’ real estate obituary and the ashes of “Camilla Cottage” seem to epitomize the metaphorical journey towards homelessness (or rather, un-housedness) that Frances Burney underwent in the decades following her departure from the dwelling in 1802. Often painful, when not deeply traumatic, these wanderings and dislocations, from Joigny to her final resting place in Bath, tossed her in a bewildering sea of existential and domestic changes as her nomadic life took her back and forth across the Channel, forcing her to repeatedly adapt to different languages and cultures. In a note of the spring of 1814 Burney bewails the painful disorientation following the sale of “Camilla Cottage”—the book that became a home that became life and individuality, in my interpretation. Robbed of such a symbolic domestic anchorage-turned-identity, Burney was plunged into deep existential mourning, to all intents and purposes a subject-turned-object without a fixed abode and even without a homeland, “wholly ignorant even of where I shall fix my residence! Whether in Paris, or London,—at Montpellier, or at Bath—or upon the banks of the Loire,—or at the foot of a welsh [*sic*] mountain” (*Journal and Letters* 7: 359). What a difference and what a paradigmatic reversal—over the brief span of only a half century, albeit one of the most troubled in modern history—between Burney’s anguished regret and Voltaire’s earlier profession of cosmopolitanism, “La patrie est là où on vit heureux.” Even Burney’s last earthly home suffered a troubled fate that has something of the incredible: the chronicle of the displacement and replacement of her tomb is yet another micro-journey of perplexing and perilous dislocation that saw the writer’s mortal remains exhumed, then relocated, to various burial grounds in a small corner of Bath.

None of the houses in which Burney lived, for a few months or for many years, by choice or need, remains what they once were. Dismantled piece by piece, 35 St. Martin's Street was transported across the Atlantic, and then simply disappeared into thin air. The other London houses among which Burney divided her time in the last phase of her life (11 Bolton Street, 1 Half Moon Street, 112 Mount Street, up to 29 Lower Grosvenor Street, where she died) have undergone such constant, chameleon-like transformations that the "air" of contemporaneity has overwritten and washed off the hidden signs and phantasmal stories that once animated them. In celebration of Burney's "houses of life" there remains, as a memento for the curious, an almost invisible plaque on the High Street of King's Lynn, a small, modest blue oval among the many glaring red SALE signs offered to the (in)different eyes and perhaps shorter memories of shoppers. A second blue plaque, placed on an archway erected in the driveway leading to the present-day "Camilla Lacey," looks like a remote, almost alien footprint, of a stranger who no longer belongs there and may in fact never have. Even an old Great Bookham's official tourist leaflet, "Bookham Heritage Trails," now no longer accessible online, indicated the years Burney spent at Fair Field House with incorrect dates.<sup>15</sup>

Nothing. Void. Absence. Indifference. Rubble. Erasure. Only air. These are now the sole inhabitants of the many houses in which Burney lived and which she narrated with her slant imbrication of fact and fiction, reality and trope. Burney constructed them as skillful filigrees, multi-layered "houses of signs," named with an onomastic bulimia that sought to fill and exorcise, through repeated evocation, what would otherwise be deficiency and uncertainty. The houses that I have here conjured out of the shadows may help to restore some three-dimensionality, however immaterial, to the inner world and poetics of the author. Tucked away and forgotten in little-visited corners of her diaries and letters, these dwellings are in danger of remaining a dead letter, piles of invisible bricks, lath, and plaster that only Google Street View can help us place on a map and partly imagine. The artificial eye of technology, with its eternal present, has so far managed to construct for Frances Burney more, and probably much better, homes than the bricks of human memory perhaps ever will.

## Notes

1. Fildes's illustration is available at <[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3/Samuel\\_Luke\\_Fildes\\_-\\_The\\_Empty\\_Chair\\_%28The\\_Graphic%2C\\_1870%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3/Samuel_Luke_Fildes_-_The_Empty_Chair_%28The_Graphic%2C_1870%29.jpg)>.
2. The Burneys lived in St. Martin's Street until 1789.
3. With the expression "autobiografiction" applied to Burney's *Diary and Letters*, I insert myself into the complex discourse on the autobiographical form by arguing that in that textual place, as in many others, Burney selects, builds, and sometimes re-mediate (fictionalizes) her own factual experience by resorting to the veridiction associated with the writing of the Self. According to Stephen Reynolds, who coined the term "autobiografiction" in 1906, autobiografiction includes "those lapses from fact that occur in most autobiographies" (28, 30), a meta-linguistic practice in my opinion central to *Diary and Letters*.
4. Many of the following topo-analytic reflections are indebted to Gaston Bachelard's *La poétique de l'espace* (1958).
5. My linguistic choice needs double clarification, both terminological and methodological. The adjective *romantic*, which I use throughout this article, reworks in a broader sense the Freudian complex known as the "family romance," which in my reading comes to indicate the imaginative foundations of the (Burney) Self/Selves. As examples of artistic and social mythopoesis, both

*Memoirs of Dr Burney* and *Diary and Letters* can in my opinion also be read from the wider angle of Freud's family romance, transforming them into "autobiografictions," which is the stylistic-formal angle from which I analyze them here. See Freud's "Family Romances" (237–41).

6. Interestingly, in the Ellis edition the letter continues: "and, when [Newton] constructed it, it stood in Leicester Fields, not Square, that he might have his observatory unannoyed by neighbouring houses, and his observatory is my favourite sitting place, where I can retire to read or write any of my private fancies or vagaries" (*Early Diary* 1: 304). This passage is not present in the *Early Journal and Letters* volume edited by Troide.
7. The passion for astronomy accompanied Burney throughout his life and was the subject of a philosophical treatise in verse, later lost, entitled *Astronomy: An Historical and Didactic Poem* (probably in twelve books), dedicated in part to Newton (Book 9); see Bander.
8. The verb to *sweep* refers to the Newtonian sweeper, a little refractor used "to sweep" the sky for nebulae (Olson and Pasachoff). The high number of ommatidia in the eye of a fly or a midge make it among the most sophisticated organs of vision in nature. Woolf's similitude is therefore extremely perceptive, in my opinion, because the ocular units that make up the eye of an arthropod operate as lenses that, in an ocular collage, assemble many segments of individual images. The final optical effect recalls that of a panorama or, in Burney's writing, specifically a panorama of London.
9. Janice Farrar Thaddeus reminds us: "As readers we must always read slantwise," an invitation to recalibrate the unstable ratio of fact to fiction in Burney's writings, especially self-writings (110).
10. Gaston Bachelard's "felicitous space" is the "eulogized space" that protects us and that in turn we protect (xxxv).
11. I am aware of my interpretative bias here since the "fair" in the name of the house is not a qualitative adjective but a topographical reference: the house rented by the d'Arblays faced the field of the "fair," or periodical mart, of Great Bookham. This information, like all those related to the history of the house and the *messuages* of the area, was kindly provided by the staff of the Surrey History Centre, Woking, whom I thank for the precious remote collaboration in the years of COVID.
12. The Surrey History Centre archive does not have documentation about the cottage's name, which in the catalogue is simply listed as "house." We can therefore surmise that, as in the case of the later "Camilla Cottage," the name was chosen by the d'Arblays, jointly or not, as descriptive and functional. I thank Julian Pooley of the Surrey History Centre for essential information about Great Bookham in the late eighteenth century.
13. My rough calculation is based on the plan of the parish of Great Bookham (Figure 2), which shows the two properties owned by Mrs. Catherine Bailey (Figure 3), scale four chains to one inch. This calculation was later compared with the distance in Google Maps. It should therefore be understood as indicative rather than prescriptive.
14. See Sabor's "Charles Burney." The notion of the deification of the murdered father is developed in Freud's *Totem und Tabu* (1913).
15. Indeed, it reported the period 1794–1802. See: <<https://www.molevalley.gov.uk.../bookhamheritagetrail.pdf>>. Retrieved on 27 March 2021 and, currently, no longer accessible.

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