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**ASECS McGill Fellowship Report: August-September, 2012**

I had recently completed my doctoral research at the University of Southampton, when starting my ASECS McGill fellowship. My research focused on decentralized voices in Frances Burney's fiction, with a particular interest in the literary and extra-literary elements of the dialogue in her work. Such an interest focused largely on prose fiction which Burney herself had read, but also took in contemporary discourses in other fields, such as moral philosophy, linguistics, and conduct literature. My research fellowship at the Burney Centre offered me a valuable post-doctoral opportunity to extend my interests, allowing me to explore other aspects of, and influences on, Burney's work, as she honed her craft as a writer.

I had touched on Burney's involvement with drama and the theatre in my PhD, but I wanted to gain more knowledge about Burney's own experience of theatrical productions, about her dramatic works, and to find out more about potential generic overlaps. A major part of this project was to compare the dialogue in Burney's fiction with that in her own drama, and then to measure this against works by some of her contemporaries with whom she was familiar. I was aided in this aim by Francesca Saggini's recently published study, which explores the influence of theatrical productions and works on Burney's work. *Backstage in the Novel: Frances Burney and the Theater Arts* contains an excellent appendix, listing Burney's numerous references to dramatic texts and productions throughout the novels and her non-fiction works. I was able to access Saggini's new and useful work through the ebrary facility at McGill. Then through McGill's links with e-text versions of the *Journals and Letters*, as well as hard copies of *The Memoirs of Dr Burney* in the centre, I was able to locate Saggini's references, and examine what Burney had to say about her reading, or the performances listed. During the first part of my visit to McGill, I was able to gain access to the full range of plays written by Burney, in scholarly editions. I was also able to access the plays of other writers, some of whom were in her social network, like Samuel Crisp, and others who were contemporary to Burney, like Oliver Goldsmith and Hannah Cowley.

A second area of interest for me was the way Burney may have honed her literary skills through her interactions with her correspondents, especially her sister Susanna. My particular interest was how each correspondent represented speech in their journals and letters, and to track any developments which may have been common to each. Using the extensive resources at the centre, I was able to trace this correspondence. After consulting Joyce Hemlow's *Catalogue of the Burney Family Correspondence, 1749-1878*, I highlighted letters between Frances Burney and Susanna Burney Phillips. I was able to read Susanna's letters, copies of which are held by the Centre, and establish which ones have not yet been published. I was also able to read the Centre's transcripts of Susanna's diary, from January to June 1780, and peruse copies of the journal for the years 1786 and 1787, which the Centre has acquired from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection at Yale University. Although some extracts of these diaries

have recently been published in Philip Olleson's study (which I was able to read during my visit), much of the material remains an untapped resource.

Towards the end of my visit, I drew on the collections in the Burney Centre and the McLennan Library to allow me to situate my research on Burney in the context of other writers, such as Hester Piozzi Thrale. This provided me with the opportunity for comparison, by extending my reading to other members of the Burney network. The resources available at the Burney Centre opened up new avenues for my research, and by the end of the month my interests§ had taken new directions, which I look forward to developing further.

I would like to express my thanks to ASECS and McGill University for awarding me the fellowship, and for thus providing me with the space, opportunity, and funding for focused research, and access to such a wide range of resources. I would like also to extend my thanks for the warm and supportive welcome by everyone at McGill; to Richard Virr, Head and Curator of Manuscripts at the Rare Books and Special Collections, who provided invaluable advice on how to find my way round the resources on offer in Special Collections; to Stewart Cooke and Elaine Bander, whose specialist knowledge and enthusiasm were inspiring in equal measure; and to Hilary Havens, whose advice on catalogues, collections, and all things technical made much of my research more productive. I am especially indebted to the Director of the Burney Centre, Professor Peter Sabor, from whose expertise in Burney studies I have greatly benefited, and for whose scholarly interest and guidance I am extremely grateful.