

2018 McGill-ASECS Fellowship Report: Sarah Faulkner

I have a long, wonderful love affair with Frances Burney—yet, sadly, she is not a central or even peripheral figure in my dissertation. I wrote a Master’s dissertation on secrets in the novels of Burney and Austen at the University of Edinburgh in 2013, and continued to study her voraciously during my time as a PhD Student at the University of Washington. I wrote a conference paper on editions of her letters for the 2015 Canadian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, where I was very intimidated (but delighted) to be placed on a panel with Burney Centre Director Peter Sabor. Later in my program, my interest in the paratextual materials associated with women’s writing (letters, portraits, prefaces, footnotes, etc.) led me to a doctoral dissertation on the intersections between women’s authorship, print culture, and national novels. While I will endlessly lament that my interest in the Scottish and Irish national novel led me away from Burney for my current work, I couldn’t have arrived at my current project without her, and expect to be working on her again in the near future.

I feel very lucky to have had a proposal for a Burney-adjacent project approved, and am so grateful for my month at the Burney Centre and in McGill University Library’s Special Collections. Beyond the opportunities to work full-time on my dissertation, I greatly appreciated the camaraderie and kindness at the Burney Centre. Dissertating is an isolating process—I was encouraged, comforted, inspired, and welcomed by my colleagues in ways that boosted my morale and productivity, and I will be ever grateful for their friendship and collegiality.

Throughout my month in Montréal, I performed research for my dissertation “Paratext and Women’s Authority in British National Novels 1800-1830.” At the time I had four chapters each nebulously half-drafted, and felt completely awash in archival research, critical arguments, and painstaking organization and re-organization of my ideas. Now with two chapters completed, I can say with confidence that the project examines how women writers—namely Jane Porter (1776-1850)

and Sydney Owenson (1781-1859), following Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849)—use the national novel's association with paratext (footnotes in particular) to argue for expanded notions of national and female authorship in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Rather than being simple window-dressing, I argue that women's footnotes are carefully-crafted interventions in the development of both the genre of the national novel and the public woman writer. More specifically, I argue that Sydney Owenson and Jane Porter deliberately craft paratextual personas that push the boundaries of genre, of eighteenth-century theories of history, of gendered notions of authority, and, most importantly, challenge the idea that women writers could not court fame of public notice without reprehension. While many have seen footnotes merely as women writers' self-serving attempts to promote their texts' authenticity, they instead emphasize the mediated fictionality of the text and thus the role and goal of the author in crafting the text's ideas on nation, history, and gender.

While at McGill I examined rare editions of national novels by British novelists Jane Porter, Sydney Owenson, Maria Edgeworth, Walter Scott, Susan Ferrier, and more. I performed archival (and from the stacks!) research for my fourth chapter, which examines dozens of editions of Porter's *The Scottish Chiefs* from its publication in 1810 to its most recent 2008 edition in comparison with editions of other national novels, namely those by Porter's childhood friend and great rival in the historical-national novel, Walter Scott. In this chapter I explore how new print technologies altered Porter's reception in both the United Kingdom and United States throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I argue that, as Porter's novels were given the visual trappings of Scottishness and medieval chivalry, and her personal prefaces and footnotes removed, her novels were flattened into commercial adventure stories and her artistic innovation forgotten.

I also argue that, as editors removed and replaced women writers' footnotes and prefaces, they erased the national authority women so carefully developed through their paratext. In

subsequent editions of Porter's *The Scottish Chiefs*, illustrations of Scottish castles and historical landmarks are replaced by images of fainting women and valiant knights. Bindings to American editions emphasize its Scottishness; one edition from 1895 is bound in red and green tartan cloth, and stamped with a golden thistle. Additionally, the 1921 Scribner's Illustrated Classics edition strips all Porter's paratext, and adds a new preface that emphasizes how its high-flown sentiments and daring adventures appeal to America's youth. The novel's subsequent shelving as children's literature completed Porter's transformation from an assertive theorist of British history and nation into a forgotten children's author of romantic old Scotland. I seek to highlight the self-reflexive development and subsequent diminishment of women's paratextual authority in the last two hundred years. Studying how these women sought and gained political authority, and yet had their efforts erased, helps us understand why women writers like Owenson and Porter's contributions to national discourse and the public woman writer remain largely overlooked.

The McGill University Library is full of national novel treasures. They hold fourteen Porter texts, many of which I had never seen in archives before. They hold an 1890s American edition of *The Scottish Chiefs* that is re-titled as *Life of Sir William Wallace*, a remarkably bold example of late nineteenth-century publishers doing what they will with Porter's novel, even changing its title. They also hold multiple editions of her first novel *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, as well as non-British editions like the French translation of *The Field of Forty Footsteps*. Porter was proud of being well-received on the continent, and used her wide range of translations to bolster her claims to national and moral authority, particularly in France, where Napoleon had banned *The Scottish Chiefs*. Expanding her repute even farther, McGill holds many American editions, including the first American edition of *Thaddeus of Warsaw* published in 1809. Her fame at the time of her death was greater in the United States than in the United Kingdom (a New York literary group even sent her a rocking chair in her

old age), greatly assisted by the re-printing of paratext in the American editions, including her final 48-page autobiographical preface that contributed to her transatlantic popularity.

Another fascinating holding was a nineteenth-century edition of Jane Porter's *The Pastor's Fireside*, published by Cameron and Ferguson's Publications. This features a highly unusual illustrated color cover, and adds a subtitle to the novel I had never seen before: "The Pastor's Fireside: Or, Ripperda, The Renegade." Beyond its strange illustration and new subtitle, it prints none of the prefaces, dedications, or notes Porter penned during her life time, leading me to wonder if advancements in some areas of paratext that appeal to consumers, such as illustrations and bindings, came at the cost of paratext that developed women's authority and public persona, such as prefaces and footnotes.

Beyond texts authored by Porter, McGill also holds rare books that discuss her work, such as *Pilgrimages to English Shrines* by Mrs. S.C. Hall, who also wrote Porter's most famous obituary in *The Art Journal* in 1850, which solidified Porter's reception as a quiet, pious woman rather than a public, professional author, and *Romance in History: from Sir Walter Scott, Sophia Lee, John Leland, Maria Edgeworth, Susan Ferrier, Jane Porter and Christopher North* by R. Brimley Johnson, which provided crucial information on Porter's early twentieth-century critical and popular reception. In addition, there are over fifty-four editions of Maria Edgeworth's works, fourteen Sydney Owenson texts, seven Susan Ferrier novels, and one Christian Isobel Johnstone novel. It was fascinating to see how the 1904 edition emphasizes the Scottish themes of Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* by stamping gold thistles on the cover, similar to *The Scottish Chiefs*.

Walter Scott's novels also did not fail to disappoint. The 1932 New Crown Edition of *The Bride of Lammermoor* features magnificent paste-downs that feature the Henry Raeburn portrait of Walter Scott surrounded by thistles, illuminating print culture's role in developing both the cult of the author and their national associations. Furthermore, the 1930 Macmillan edition of *The Lay of the*

Last Minstrel features pull-out maps of the Borders, providing paratext that establishes Scott as an author associated with specific a location and nation. Examining how publishers consistently added new paratext to Scott's novels, while stripping paratext from Porter's helps us understand why he has overshadowed her for so long in discussions of the historical-national novel. These editions were absolutely essential to developing the argument of and providing evidence for my final chapter.

When I think back on my fellowship, I think of mornings in Special Collections; excitedly hauling books from the stacks into the Burney Centre; pulling out my hair at my desk while watching McGill freshman enjoy barbecues; having existential crises while watching the Library's "whacky wiggler" dance on top of the library; lunches, teas, drinks, unfortunate renditions of *Les Mis*, commiserations, and festivals with my wonderful new friends; stimulating lectures; and incredibly collegial lunches with all the folks at the Burney Centre. In summary, my time in Montréal was productive, collegial, and all-around exquisite, and I am so thankful for it. For my research, studying McGill's editions was crucial to understanding how Porter's paratext participated in the fluctuating intersection between women's writing, the national novel, and print culture. For me, the camaraderie, faith, and support was indispensable. I am eternally grateful to Peter Sabor, Christopher Lyons, and Catherine Nygren for their generosity and kindness, and also to my colleagues Kelly Hunnings, Megan Taylor, and Willow White, for their friendship and fellowship.