

# Burney Letter

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## *“Mud and Magnificence”: a Burney in India*



Julia's eldest daughter Etta, born in India, with her bearer. The family still has some of the toys you can see here. (By kind permission of Piers Wauchope, descendent of Julia Maitland.)

### By Alyson Price

Julia Maitland, the great-niece of Fanny Burney, set sail for Madras on the southwest coast of India in August 1836. That summer, much against the inclination of her extended family, she had married James Thomas, a widower with three young daughters. “I do not think him worthy of her...The match is by no means a good one in point of circumstances,” wrote her mother Charlotte Barrett. Julia was not only well educated but also “a most lovely companion, without and within...simple, unaffected, affectionate, useful,” according to her great-aunt Fanny. Sarah Harriet Burney thought “such a fine creature as that, ought to marry the Duke of Devonshire.” The marriage also raised fears that because of her husband’s profession, Thomas was a civil servant in the employ of the East India Company, the family might never see the “universally beloved” Julia again; her grandmother Charlotte Broome thought going to Madras was “going from this world to the next.”

**See A Burney in India on p. 2**

## *Tucson Conference in October*

### By Paula Stepankowsky

#### **“Frances Burney and 1814”**

**Loews Ventana Canyon Resort  
Tucson, Ariz.**

**Oct. 26 and 27, 2006**

The momentous year of 1814, which saw the publication of Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer*, Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, Maria Edgeworth’s *Patronage* and Walter Scott’s *Waverley*, will be the theme of the 13th annual general meeting of The Burney Society in North America on Thursday, Oct. 26, and Friday, Oct. 27, 2006.

Margaret Anne Doody and John Wiltshire will be the plenary speakers at the conference, which will also include a roundtable on teaching Burney, along

with presentations by nine additional speakers on such topics as the limits of paternal authority and Burney’s approach to endings. Dr. Doody will speak on “Borders, Invasions, Contested Spaces and Margins in 1814: *Waverley*, *Patronage*, *Mansfield Park* and *The Wanderer*.” Dr. Wiltshire will speak on “Frances Burney as Pathographer.”

The conference will be held at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort just outside Tucson, Ariz., at the base of a mountain range and within visiting distance of such sights as Sabino Canyon, San Xavier Mission and the Tucson Museum of Art.

The conference will begin with registration at 9 a.m. Thursday morning at the resort and end at noon on Friday. In addition to sessions all day Thursday and

Friday morning, the conference will include a dinner Thursday evening at Soleil, a nearby Tucson restaurant, that will feature a reading from some of Burney’s works organized by Juliet McMaster. Those of you who saw Juliet’s productions in Boston in 2000 and in Los Angeles in 2004 won’t want to miss this!

The winner of the Hemlow Prize will also be announced during the dinner. The prize, for the best graduate student essay in Burney studies, is given in honor of the memory of Dr. Joyce Hemlow, the founding editor of the Burney Project, which is housed in the Burney Centre at McGill University in Montreal.

**See Tucson Conference 2007 on p. 3**

**INSIDE:** UK AGM, p. 4  
Windsor 2007, p. 5  
Call for Papers, p. 6

New Burney Journal, p. 6  
Visit to Kew, pp.7-8  
Burney Centre Website, p. 8

“The Famous Miss Burney,” p. 8  
Frances Anne Crewe, pp. 9-10  
Book Reviews, pp. 11-15

## A Burney in India

### Continued from p. 1

Research is rarely a straight and orderly occupation. When I first came across Julia Maitland, it was not through the Burney connection but through her volume of letters from India published by John Murray in 1843 as *Letters from Madras* by a Lady. On my own return to London from an extended stay in India, I began reading first-hand accounts by European women of their experiences in India, accounts published before 1857. Among these, *Letters from Madras* stood out for its lively and interesting observations and the obvious intelligence of its author. The world “A Lady” observed was a microcosm of British colonialism, illustrating the work of the East India Company, of missionaries and of educators convinced of the superiority of British administration, the Christian religion and a scientific education. Serious anxieties about empire had yet to emerge and the author, while critical of the attitudes and approach of some of her peers, was one among many women who became part of that colonial enterprise.

The first copy I read of *Letters* had no indication of who “A Lady” might be. The second contained the pencil note of a librarian that “A Lady” was one Julia Maitland but this was not much help to me at the time as she did not appear in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. In her introduction to the *Letters* the author makes it clear that all Europeans in her work have been given fictitious names. I spent a summer researching background to the letters in the Oriental and India Office Collection in the British Library; the Collection contains approximately fifteen miles of material and includes the papers of the East India Company. “A Lady” was married to a Judge at Rajahmundry, up country from Madras, and it was not difficult to discover, however disguised the names, that Mrs. Maitland had once been Mrs. Thomas. Through the material in the collection, the Gazettes and Almanacs and the Proceedings of the Company, I was able to build up a picture of the Madras Presidency in the 1820s and 1830s to give the “India background” to the *Letters*.

But who was the author? I knew a

few things about her: she was an astute observer and a very readable writer; she had a marvellous sense of humour; she was an accomplished musician, played the guitar and an organ that was ordered from London; she might have been in Italy as her letters contained smatterings of Italian; she was educated and loved literature, her letters littered with quotations and literary references. Returning one day to a closer reading of the “Maitland” entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, I found her, inside the entry on her second husband, Charles Maitland: “In November 1842 he married Julia Charlotte, widow of James Thomas, an Indian judge in the Madras presidency. Her maiden name was Barrett, and her mother was a niece of Fanny Burney....” The real fruit of this entry was this: it led me to Joyce Hemlow’s edition of the *Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* and there to the discovery that the letters Julia had used to construct her publication were extant and located in the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library.

The survival of these fragile pieces of paper meant a change in my research; not only was there India background to give to the letters, Julia now became a rounded personality. Here she was with a family and a history: she had grown up as an accomplished musician; she was educated in all the necessary “ologies” of the time as her great-aunt Fanny put it; she was well-read; she had lived in Italy with her mother and sister in the vain hope that the mild climate might improve her sister’s health. It would also be possible to identify figures in the published letters (“journal letters” I was to discover she called them) and to see what it was that Julia had edited out. So it was that in New York, a city structured as a grid, I had the curious experience of reading grid-like letters. The letters were all cross-written; that is, the folded sheet of paper was first written on horizontally on all four sides, then vertically. This made postage cheaper and saved paper; mail could take up to six months by ship and this was reduced to two months only when the overland and steamer route opened up in the late 1830s. Fortunately Julia Maitland had a good hand and the letters were not difficult to read.

Julia had chosen to edit out much information that adds to our understanding of and interest in both her and her times. Her mother was very keen that any

information about the family be cut out or disguised, and this Julia dutifully did. She gives us very little information, for example, about the birth of both her children and none about the death of her husband, all of which add to our understanding of her. Julia also cut out details surrounding her husband’s career and the appointments system in the Company, and these provide us with an insight into the workings of the Company from an individual’s point of view. These excisions also deprived us of much fine writing.

For publication, I decided to reproduce Julia’s *Letters* as she had published them, and at the end of each letter provide notes that combined the work I had done in the British Library with the information culled from Julia’s original letters and extracts from them. The Berg collection also holds ten of Julia’s watercolours and a selection of these were added to the publication. Julia Maitland was curious about the world around her, and courageous in the living of her life – after all, for a start, here she was out in India thousands of miles from the family and friends she had been surrounded by all her life and living with a man she barely knew. She occupied her time with developing a local school for

**See A Burney in India on p. 3**

### Burney Letter

The semi-annual newsletter of the Burney Society, which includes members in Canada, Great Britain, the United States and elsewhere.

President: Paula L. Stepankowsky

Editor: Lorna J. Clark

Address correspondence regarding newsletter articles to Dr. Lorna Clark, Burney Centre, McGill University, 853 Sherbrooke Str. W., Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 2T6 or to lclarklj@aol.com

Membership in The Burney Society is available for \$30 (Students \$15) US annually in the United States and Canada, and £12 annually in Great Britain. To request membership information, or to notify the society of a change of address, write in the United States and Canada to: Alex Pitofsky, 3621 9th St. Drive N.E., Hickory NC 28601, USA or to pitofskyah@appstate.edu. In Great Britain, write David and Janet Tregear, 36 Henty Gardens, Chichester, West Sussex, England PO19 3DL or tregear david@hotmail.com

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## **A Burney in India**

### **Continued from p. 2**

caste boys only), following her husband's career (using her connections to advance it), sketching, caring for her children (surviving two pregnancies), managing her household and the extraordinary number of servants available to her, learning Tamil (the local Indian language), following the fortunes of the missionaries she knew (she was quite certain about the kind of missionary that should be operating in India) and visiting and talking with Europeans and Indians (she insisted she and her husband accept the invitation of the Rajah

Puntooloo to visit his home) and, of course, keeping up a voluminous correspondence.

I came to find Julia an extraordinarily sympathetic character, and of course found out far more about her than was relevant to the publication. Julia gives powerful and sometimes humorous concrete descriptions of the India she lived in, a place she saw as a "compound of mud and magnificence, filth and finery." But there was much, like the British Raj later found, that she could not grasp, just as she describes this temple visit, "an interminable perspective of rows of massive, grotesque pillars, vanishing in darkness...here and there a strange, white-turbaned figure, just glancing out for

a moment, and disappearing again in the darkness."

*Alyson Price is an historian and has worked as a teacher, university administrator and archivist. She has a particular interest in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Italy and in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century India. Since 2001, she has been responsible for identifying, processing and cataloguing the holdings in the Archive of the British Institute of Florence. The new edition of Letters from Madras was published by Woodstock Books in 2003.*

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## **Tucson Conference 2007**

### **Continued from p. 1**

As described below, participants may attend both the day of talks and the dinner together for one price, or just the dinner.

Our list of speakers include:

- Elaine Bander – "Male Ambitions and Female Difficulties: *The Wanderer*, *Patronage*, and *Mansfield Park*"
- Laurel Czaikowski – "Unsignified Women: [Lack of] A Place in Social Construction in *The Wanderer*"
- Emily C. Friedman – "Wanderer's End: Understanding Burney's Approach to Endings"
- Brian Goldberg – "Anonymous Wanderers in 1814: Burney's *The Wanderer* and Southey's *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*"
- Hilary Havens – "The Involuntarily Reacting Body and the Mind in *The Wanderer*"
- Emma Pink – "Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*: Nationness, Womanhood, and Authorship"
- Alex Pitofsky – "*Mansfield Park*, Burney, and the Limits of Paternal Authority"
- Maggie Sloan – "The Difficulty of *The Wanderer*: Mentorship and Female Subject Formation"
- Jessika L. Thomas – "Gender and Class in Burney's *The Wanderer* and *Camilla*"

### **Pricing/Registration Information**

Participants can register for the full conference, including the day's talks at the resort, two continental breakfasts, the dinner and the reading for a fee of \$125 U.S. Lunch will be on your own on Thursday, but attendees can purchase a box lunch in advance for \$7 each. Those who cannot attend the sessions during the day may register for the dinner meeting and the reading alone for a price of \$65 U.S. each.

All Burney Society members will receive a registration packet under separate cover. Registration is due by Oct. 12.

The Burney Society meeting is designed to coordinate with the national annual meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA), which is scheduled from Friday, Oct. 27, through Sunday, Oct. 29, also at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort.

Because the resort is on the outskirts of Tucson, there are no

other hotels within walking distance of the resort, which is a 35-minute drive from the Tucson Airport. Burney Society members who want to stay at the Resort can make a reservation using the following information: Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, 800-234-5117.

Any Burney Society members interested in joining JASNA, or attending the JASNA conference, can find all the information needed at the society's web page: [www.jasna.org](http://www.jasna.org). The JASNA conference rate is \$285.

Anyone with questions can contact Alex Pitofsky, [pitofskyah@appstate.edu](mailto:pitofskyah@appstate.edu), Secretary/Treasurer, or Paula Stepankowsky at [pstepankowsky@adelphia.net](mailto:pstepankowsky@adelphia.net), or 360-636-3763.

### **Other Accommodation options**

In late-breaking news, we have just learned that all rooms for Wednesday and Thursday night at the resort have already been booked, although there are still rooms available for Friday and Saturday nights. As a result, we are suggesting several other accommodation options available nearby.

One is The Lodge at Ventana Canyon, 6200 North Clubhouse Lane, JASNA has reserved a block of rooms at this facility, which is near the resort and is accessible to the resort by a free shuttle bus. The rooms have either one king bed or two double beds, a kitchenette, dining area and living area. The special JASNA rate is \$169 per night, plus tax and a \$20 service fee. To make reservations, call The Lodge by Sept. 15 at 1-800-828-5701.

There is also a condo development within walking distance of the resort that makes condos with two or three bedrooms, living rooms, full kitchens and dining rooms available. The price range varies up to \$185 a night (inclusive of tax and fees) for a three bedroom unit that sleeps four people. So those planning to stay for both the Burney and JASNA meetings may find this option useful. Information about booking a condo is available on the following web page: [www.vacationhomestucson.com](http://www.vacationhomestucson.com).

For those with access to a car, JASNA has also reserved a block of rooms at the Sheraton Tucson Hotel and Suites. The Sheraton is a 15-minute drive from the resort. For room information, call 1-800-325-3535 by Sept. 15 to get the JASNA rate of \$119 per room or \$139 per suite, plus tax.

# Annual General Meeting of the British Burney Society

**By Hester Davenport**

*Though an unfriendly guest caricatured our meeting in The New Statesman as an assemblage of comic old codgers in a decaying country house, the reality was somewhat different. So, to set the record straight...*

On Sunday 11 June we met in Juniper Hall (run by the Field Studies Council for the National Trust) in Mickleham in the beautiful Surrey countryside to enjoy the annual reunion, to listen to two stimulating lectures by young scholars, and to hold a short business meeting in the Templeton Room. It was in this elegant room that in 1793 Madame de Staël dazzled with her conversational skills, and a penniless soldier fleeing the French Revolution fell in love with an English novelist.

Fanny was at the time still recovering from her five years at Court, years darkened by the overbearing nature of her self-appointed superior, Mrs Juliana Schwellenberg. She would have been fascinated to hear from Mascha Gemmeke, our first speaker, what she has discovered so far about the background of this difficult woman. Mascha has not yet been able to pin down her birth or family precisely, but believes she originated from Waldeck in North Hesse, not far from a place called Schwalenberg. Today there are only 18 Schwollenbergs in the whole German telephone directory! Like Mrs Hagedorn, Fanny's predecessor as Keeper of the Robes whose father was a physician, she probably came from a middle-class professional family, entering service at the court of Mecklenburg-Strelitz sometime before the future Queen Charlotte was eight years old. Later she was one of only three attendants permitted to accompany

the 18-year-old bride to England. Early in the marriage it seems that the King wanted to send her back again and the Queen had to fight to retain her. How Fanny would have wished that the King had prevailed! Mascha described some of her bruising experiences with the old retainer, but also told us of Mrs Schwellenberg's friendship with Mrs Hastings, discussed her relationship with the Queen, and read us an affectionate letter of 1794 from the Prince of Wales. She has not discovered any actual portraits, but showed a wickedly funny Gillray cartoon published after her death which depicts Schwelly as a plump winged figure "gliding to paradise on a sunbeam," though her trajectory is decidedly downwards.

A buffet lunch followed, with time to wander or sit and chat in the pleasant gardens. Later, in the second of our talks, Fiona Ritchie discussed Burney and Shakespeare, making her starting point the conversation Fanny recorded with George III when he suggested that Shakespeare contains "sad stuff" but one mustn't say so, because it's Shakespeare "and nobody dare abuse him." Fiona illustrated how reverence for Shakespeare grew in the eighteenth-century with the publication of several editions of the works, and events such as Garrick's 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee. We were fascinated to hear about a group called the Women's Shakespeare Society who, though their individual identities are unknown, in the late 1730s successfully lobbied the playhouses for more Shakespeare productions, especially history plays. Fiona suggested that Burney's verse dramas might be considered more in the tradition of the history plays than the tragedies. She reminded us of Evelina's visit to Drury

Lane to see *King Lear*, and also of the very funny chapter in *Camilla* which describes a chaotic performance of *Othello* by a group of strolling players. This, Fiona argued, showed that for all her admiration, Burney was not a Shakespeare idolator.

Before this second talk the Society had held its business meeting. David Tregear explained that the British branch is seeking charitable status as this will make a significant difference to our financial situation. When it is confirmed, the British and North Americans will become separate societies in law, though we shall of course continue to be one in spirit.

There was an enthusiastic response to the plans for an international conference in Windsor in July 2007 to mark the editing of the Court Journals. Kate Chisholm revealed the list of speakers so far and David Tregear gave an idea of the cost. Hester Davenport reported on the venue, and also described how an initial idea of a Burney/Delany commemorative plaque on a wall adjoining the Castle proceeded by slow stages up the royal ladder from the Superintendent of the Castle to the Director of the Royal Collections to the Keeper of the Privy Purse, until she heard the gratifying news that the Queen had "raised no objection." She showed the proposed wording to members for discussion, and got agreement to the use of Fanny rather than Frances since that is the name by which she is generally, and affectionately, known in this country. A second-hand book sale plus some generous donations raised £261 towards the cost. Next year's conference thus got off to a splendid start and the day was brought to a satisfying end.

## British AGM Makes Mainstream Press

"No publicity is bad publicity" is the accepted wisdom – though open to question. The AGM of the UK Branch of the Burney Society, held on 11 June 2006 in Juniper Hall, was written up in a British weekly. The meeting was attended by Rachel Aspden, who (without identifying herself to the group as a reporter) nevertheless wrote up its "esoteric pleasures" for the *New Statesman*.

Unfortunately, the account aims for sensational effect rather than accuracy, as illustrated by the following sentence: "most of Burney's papers have been snapped up by Montreal's McGill University for, gallingly, the 'Frances Burney Archive'." The amount of misinformation conveyed in these few words is quite astounding: the centre is *not* called the "Frances Burney Archive"; it has "snapped up" nothing and, in fact, does not possess nor seek to acquire any manuscripts.

Among other outrageous claims made in the article is the assertion that a murmur of interest in an unusual painting of Queen Charlotte was somehow salacious in nature; the writer also lingers pruriently on the supposedly lewd connotations of the nickname "Fanny." That both of these allegations should be beneath the dignity of a serious journal, was pointed out in an able rejoinder written by Fiona Ritchie.

The article appeared on 19 June 2006, the protesting letter (abridged) two weeks later; both can be searched at the journal's website.

## Burneys in Windsor, 6-7 July 2007

Plans for next year's Burney Conference to celebrate the start of editing of Frances Burney's *Court Journals* are well in hand. It will be held in the fifteenth-century Vicars' Hall, in the precincts of Windsor Castle, and will offer an attractive range of talks and activities, taking place over 24 hours from the Friday to the Saturday afternoons. (Delegates arriving earlier might like to take the opportunity to visit the State Apartments prior to the Conference.\*)

Residential accommodation will be in St George's House hotel, near the Vicars' Hall and within the Castle precincts, or in equivalent value hotel accommodation nearby. Anyone wishing to stay for a second night can do so at Bed and Breakfast cost but it would be helpful if such a wish is made known at the outset. Anyone wanting to find cheaper accommodation might like to know that the Windsor Travel Lodge will be opening next year and will be within easy walking distance.

A Windsor Conference Pre-Registration Form is found below and early registration is urged. Twenty bookings have already been made and are being carefully date-registered so that rooms in St George's House can be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. A full pre-registration packet will be mailed in late fall to all who have sent in their forms and deposits. Priority will be given to Burney Society members, and we hope that others wishing to attend the conference will take out membership.

It is planned that we shall first assemble in St Albans Street just outside the Castle for the unveiling of the Delany/Burney

plaque, then move to the Vicars' Hall for tea and the general welcome and introduction. After tea we shall attend evensong in St George's Chapel, renowned for its choral singing, and there will be more musical entertainment from the Windsor Box and Fir Company before and during our buffet supper, with music from the period of Fanny's service at Court. The key-note talk after dinner will be by Peter Sabor, General Editor of the *Court Journals*, and the evening will conclude with a private tour of St George's Chapel, where we shall be shown the changes made by George III.

We are delighted that Lars Troide, distinguished General Editor of the *Early Journals*, has agreed to chair the first event of the second day, a round-table discussion with all the *Court Journal* editors: Lorna Clark, Stewart Cooke, Nancy Johnson, Peter Sabor and Geoffrey Sill. That will be followed, after coffee, by a Young Scholars Panel organised by Fiona Ritchie, who is shortly to join McGill University.

In our final session after lunch there will be two talks, one yet to be confirmed, but the other will give us the opportunity to hear Patricia Crown, the expert on Fanny's cousin the artist Edward Francesco Burney, talk about his life and work. It promises to be a very stimulating and lively two days.

*\* As with necessary safety announcements on boats and aircraft we feel obliged to say that in the unlikely event of a royal funeral at the time the conference would be cancelled and all money returned.*

### Windsor Conference Pre-Registration Form

**July 6-July 7, 2007**

**St. George's House, Windsor Castle**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to attend the Windsor conference and enclose £25 or equivalent in U.S. dollars as a reservation. The estimated total conference price for those staying at St. George's House, including a room for one night, meals and VAT, is £245 per person (single) and £215 (shared). The non-residential fee is estimated at £157, including VAT and all meals but breakfast. Those pre-registering will be sent a complete registration packet in mid-November. St. George's House has only 28 rooms, and meeting space is limited to 80, so please register early to avoid disappointment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Contribution to help with the cost of plaque installation and a special musical performance. (tax deductible to U.S. donors)

\_\_\_\_\_ Contribution to underwrite the Windsor conference (tax deductible to U.S. donors)

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed (Thank you!)

Please make cheques payable to The Burney Society and mail them in the UK to David and Janet Tregear, 36 Henty Gardens, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 3DL UK, or, in the U.S. to Alex Pitofsky, 3621 - 9<sup>th</sup> St. Drive, N.E., Hickory, NC 28601, USA, by Oct. 15.

## Call for Papers at ASECS

The annual ASECS conference will be held in Atlanta on March 22-25 March 2007. The Burney Society was accorded affiliate status with ASECS in March 2005, and is given the opportunity each year to sponsor a panel. The first-ever Burney Society-sponsored panel was presented in Montreal in April 2006: "Burney and her French Connections," chaired by Dr. Lorna Clark.

The topic for this year's panel will be "Burney and Her Literary Heirs." We welcome papers that reconsider Burney's location in literary history, as well as papers that use Burney's career as a means to rethink the labels often used to characterize late eighteenth-century literature (such as "the Age of Johnson," "the Age of Sensibility" and so on). Proposals should be sent to Marilyn Francus, Dept. of English, West Virginia U. 230 Stansbury Hall, P.O. Box 6296, Morgantown, WV, 26506; Tel: 304/293-3107; Fax: 304/293-5380; E-mail: Marilyn.Francus@mail.wvu.edu by September 15, 2006.

Other panels at the ASECS conference also feature Burney. A session chaired by George Haggerty looks at "Men in Burney and her Contemporaries." Frances Burney's novels abound in all the versions of masculinity that were available in the later eighteenth century. Her heroines must navigate among fops, libertines, merchants, honorable and dishonorable nobles, wealthy heirs, poor poets, men of feeling, men of the cloth, country gentlemen, gamblers, castrati, &c. This seminar invites papers on any aspect of masculinity represented in the novels of Frances Burney or any of her female novel-writing contemporaries. Proposals should be sent to: George Haggerty, Dept. of English, UC-Riverside; Tel: 951/827-1940; E-mail: GEHaggerty@aol.com

Another panel suggested by Anna Lott is on "Living Proof": The Private Writings of Public Women." In Frances Burney's 1768 *Journal*, she reflects with pleasure on the personal satisfaction she expects to receive in later years from her journal: "I am very much deceived in my foresight, if I shall not have very great delight in reading this living proof of my manner of passing my time, my sentiments, my thoughts of people I know, and a thousand other things, in future." Burney, like many other diarists, intended her journals to be kept private, for her own "very great delight," but her life-writings now offer us an understanding not only of her personal struggles, but also of her public work. In this session, Anna Lott would like panelists to consider diarists such as Burney, Inchbald, Larpent, and others, exploring issues such as how each woman constructed a public identity or a public voice (writing and often acting on the stage) and how that public voice differed (if it did) from her private one. Other questions might include how a writer's private writings influence our understanding of her public writings and actions, how the methods and techniques of private writing differ from those of public writing, what might be theorized about journal writing as a genre. (Anna Lott, English Dept., Box 5050, U. of North Alabama, Florence, AL 35632-0001; Tel: 256/765-4486; Fax: 256/765-4239; E-mail: aelott@una.edu).

Finally, Burney might come into a panel entitled, "Smart Talk by Smart Women: The Pains and Pleasures of Conversation," co-organized by Laura Runge and Kathryn King. A malleable English word, "smart" captures the paradoxical experience of sociable women in the eighteenth century. Neat and trim; stylish;

fashionable; elegant; clever, capable, adept; pointed; witty; sharp, severe; cutting; inflicting pain. Denied access to the professions and institutions of higher learning, women adopted the salon, the tea-table and the sitting room as their realm; conversation became a way for smart women to develop and showcase their wit, learning, refinement, politeness, verve, mindfulness, as well as their thoughts on philosophy, religion, women, and life in general. Some women talk smartly to earn a livelihood – those who make a trade of their wit – and some talk smartly to shape the larger conversation about women.

Taking as its subject women of wit and smart conversation, and writing about or representations of smart conversation under the shaping tongue of women, this panel seeks to focus discussion around illustrative women of the eighteenth century (and the men who like them) who took command of the conversation on women and did so with flair. . . . Abstracts are invited for papers of 15-20 minutes reading time. Co-organizers: Laura L. Runge, U. of South Florida, Dept. of English CPR107, Tampa, FL 33620; Tel: 813/974-9496; Fax: 813/974-2270; E-mail: runge@cas.usf.edu and Kathryn King, U. of Montevallo, Dept. of English, Comer Hall, Station 6420, Montevallo, AL 35115; Tel: 205/665-6420; Fax: 205/665-6422; E-mail: KingK@montevallo.edu

More information about the panels or the conference can be found at the ASECS website.

## *The Burney Journal has New Look*

### By Marilyn Francus

In fall 2005, *The Burney Journal* began a reorganization process to become a peer-reviewed journal. That process has been moving forward ever since, and the *Journal* now has a new editorial team, consisting of Marilyn Francus as General Editor, Stewart Cooke as Managing Editor, and Alex Pitofsky in charge of marketing. Marilyn, Stewart, and Alex have been active in the Burney Society and Burney scholarship – working on the Burney edition at McGill, presenting and publishing research on the Burneys, and organizing the bi-annual North American Burney Society conference.

In conjunction with the Advisory Board (Peter Sabor, the head of the Burney Centre at McGill, and Paula Stepankowsky, the President of the Burney Society), the journal editors have assembled a stellar editorial board of Burney scholars. The editorial board includes Burney biographers Margaret Doody, Kate Chisholm and Hester Davenport; specialists in Burney and contemporary British women writers, such as Juliet McMaster, John Wiltshire, and Audrey Bilger; and Burney family experts, such as Sarah Harriet Burney scholar Lorna Clark.

With an editorial board now in place, *The Burney Journal* anticipates its first issue as a peer-reviewed journal to be published in early 2007. This combined issue for 2006-2007 will feature recent scholarship on the Burneys, the essays of the Hemlow Prize winners for 2005 and 2006, and a bibliography of the year in Burney studies. If you wish to submit a manuscript for publication, please send it via e-mail to Marilyn Francus at mfrancus@mix.wvu.edu.

# A Visit to Kew Palace

**By Hester Davenport**

On 6 May this year Kew Palace opened its doors to the public after ten years of closure. I was eager to see it again, though all I could recall from the past were a series of small dark rooms, and one item of furniture: the black horse-hair chair on which Queen Charlotte died. The dark panelling of the original 1631 merchant's house – Kew is a “palace” only by its royal associations – is still there in the ground floor but the building has undergone a sensitive and imaginative restoration, giving visitors an insight into the life of George III and his family and showing something of the country house retreat they created for themselves from 1804.



*Kew Palace as it is today*

During Fanny's time at court the Palace, or Dutch house, was used by the Prince of Wales, and she was housed with the King and Queen in the White House opposite. That was demolished following its sad associations with the King's 1788-89 illness, but its outline has now been marked on the lawns so one can get a sense of the relationship of the two buildings and see the view which Fanny would have had of the Prince's territory – where Stephen Digby also lodged – during that dreadful winter. None of that chill, meteorological and mental, could be felt on the hot July day of my visit, when the Palace glowed under its new coat of orange-red limewash, justified by a patch of the colour discovered under a drain-pipe.

I should have liked to have had Fanny's company and comments on entering the building, when in the ante-chamber the visitor suddenly comes face-to-face with George III himself. The convincing image has been made from moulds taken in 1810 from life by Madame Tussaud. It has been set up at the King's natural height, supplied with a wig and dressed in his Windsor uniform, blue turned up with red, and complete with Garter Star. If it were not just a bust, and under glass, one would expect a great outburst of questioning and “What whats!” In the next room there is a display of items connected with the King's special interests, including a telescope, flute, plant specimens brought from the southern hemisphere by Joseph Banks, a pocket watch with his own hand-written instructions for taking it to pieces, and some tiny scraps of paper described as “concert programmes” on which

in Lilliputian writing the King noted pieces to be played (perhaps at the evening concerts so frequently overheard in her rooms by Fanny). One can just make out phrases like “Chorus N.5 Messiah” [sic].

On the other side of the corridor is the dining-room where the originality of the restoration is revealed in the table set with eight gold-edged porcelain plates; these are not of the period but designed to speak for the King's friends and admirers. At the head of the table is one inscribed “Fanny Burney,” with a quotation from her 1774 journal about the court appearance of Omai in his “suit of Manchester velvet, lined with white sateen, lace ruffles, and a very handsome sword.” Other plates record the words of Banks, William Chambers, Dr Johnson, Lord Brougham, Baron Glenbervie and George III himself. They refer to the King – Dr Johnson declares on his plate of 1767 that “He is the finest Gentleman I have ever seen” – Herschel, Zoffany, Prime Minister Addington, and Doctor Heberden. The Queen is represented in this room by a portrait by Angelica Kauffman.

In the small panelled room which once housed the King's library at Kew there is another portrait of her, by Johann Georg Ziesenis, sent to the King at the time of their engagement: a little artistic licence may have been used in the presentation of a very pretty girl. Nearby, in the Pages' Waiting Room, one can listen to the “Queen” herself talking of her life and 15 children, while contemporary portraits are projected onto a white panelled wall.

Many endearing souvenirs of the royal family are displayed in the King's Breakfast Room, one of them appropriately a silver-gilt egg-boiler given to their father on his 66th birthday by the Princesses. One wonders if Fanny ever saw the huge baby-house on show, built in the 1780s for the Princesses and furnished and decorated by them. She must surely have been shown by its proud owner the embroidered pocket-book with enamel fastenings worked for Mrs Delany by Queen Charlotte herself. Another fascinating exhibit is a sheet with fabric samples of the silk dresses worn by the Queen and Princesses at the King's birthday ball of 1791. This took place just before Fanny left royal service and, freed from anxiety about her future, she wrote an extremely funny account of the pre-ball dinner presided over by Mrs Schwellenberg and attended by a very drunk Prince William. He was to partner Princess Mary on her coming-out ball (if he could stand up). The silk snippets show that her dress was of white and silver stripes while the Princess Royal wore stripes of black and silver, Princess Augusta pink and silver and Princess Elizabeth yellow and silver. The Queen's dress was silver with stripes of figured silver.

While the ground floor is largely given over to exhibits, the first floor has been lavishly restored as living and sleeping areas, principally of the Queen. George III's court is often described as the dullest in Europe, but the decorative schemes are flamboyant. Painstaking research revealed a tiny fragment of a Greek key border in black flock on a green “verditer” paper, so the colour was recreated and wall-paper made and hung in her boudoir in the authentic Georgian manner. Archives provided evidence for

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**See Kew Palace on p. 8**

## Kew Palace

### Continued from p. 7

fabrics and carpet and the vivid turquoise has been complemented with black and yellow chintz curtains. Princess Elizabeth's bedroom was similarly hung with verditer paper; this most artistic of daughters had a fashionable Grecian couch-bed which in keeping with her love of bright colours has red and yellow chintz hangings. Queen Charlotte's four-poster is hung more discreetly with simple white dimity. The chair in which she died is here – she could not breathe lying down – but one of the knowledgeable guides explained that it got its black covering in Victorian times: Queen Charlotte would never have sanctioned black!

After the Queen's death on 17 November 1818 the only survivors of the old life, Princesses Augusta and Sophia, left Kew for ever. (Amelia had died in 1810, Mary and Elizabeth had made belated marriages and the King was locked in permanent confusion of mind at Windsor Castle; a silk waistcoat on show is poignant in its sleeves, not set in to the shoulders but attached by a band of pleated material to ease the old man's dressing.) On the

day of their departure Augusta wrote to a brother: "This is a very melancholy day with us, we have walked all round this dear place to take leave of everything we love here." Her bedroom was on the second floor where, in contrast to the luxury below, the rooms have been left bare and empty as for the past two hundred years. But ghostly figures are cleverly projected: the shadow of a maid passes and repasses across a blind, carrying items of dress. In Augusta's room images appear and disappear; a maid lights a candle and lays out writing materials on a little table; a woman (identity is left to the visitor's imagination) sits in the chair with a book. She reads a letter and laughs; she reads another and wipes away a tear; the maid blows out the candle.

Leaving these haunting rooms and emerging into the blazing July sunshine and garden visitors seemed like a kind of time travel. But I felt enriched and stimulated by all I had seen. Kew Palace is small, but it holds a miniature of the lives of George III, his Queen and daughters, within its walls.

## Burney Centre to Launch New Website

The Burney Centre at McGill University, directed by Prof. Peter Sabor, is developing a new enhanced website. The existing Burney Centre website at <http://arts.mcgill.ca/burneycentre/> is being updated with a new graphic design and extended content.

The new material includes: information on current Burney Centre publications and projects, a searchable database of selected library holdings housed in the Burney Centre, brief

biographies and bibliographies of seven prominent members of the Burney family, and an index of links to texts by members of the Burney family available online.

Burney Society members may be particularly interested in the table of contents for back issues of both the *Burney Letter* and *The Burney Journal*. The website will also provide information on previous and forthcoming Burney Society conferences.

The website is being developed by

webmaster Joanne Holland, who is a new MA student at McGill. Prior to coming to McGill, Joanne created a website for Career Services at the University of Winnipeg. Joanne is excited to have the opportunity to work on a website related to her research interests.

A launch for the new website will take place on 21 September 2006. The new website will be located at <http://burneycentre.mcgill.ca>.

## Burney House Sold

### By Lorna Clark

Burney House, the five-bedroomed house said to be built on the remains of Camilla Cottage in Westhumble, Surrey, has been sold. Jacqueline Banerjee, who explored the history of this house for the Spring 2006 issue of the *Burney Letter*, writes that the deal was concluded in early August. The real estate agent John D. Wood confirms that the house obtained close to its asking price of £1.65 million.

Located in a picturesque corner of Surrey, the original cottage housed the d'Arblays during the idyllic early years of

their marriage. Their happiness is reflected in Burney's novel, *Camilla*, which is said to have been written under a beech tree on the grounds. The present structure is much grander than the original cottage, built by Alexandre d'Arblay, which was destroyed by fire in 1919, along with manuscripts and other memorabilia of the novelist. While local legend suggests that some papers may have escaped the flames, no ghosts have been reported. It is hoped that the present owners will appreciate and enjoy the rich associations of this beautiful property.

## THE FAMOUS MISS BURNEY

Karin Fernald has been invited to present again her one-woman show, based on the diaries of Frances Burney, which has delighted audiences around the world. There will be three shows, on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> October (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings), starting at 7:30 p.m. at Dr. Johnson's House, 17 Gough Square, London EC4A 3DE. Ticket prices, of £14.00, or £12.00 (concession), include a glass of wine. More information is available from the [curator@dr.johnsonshouse.org](mailto:curator@dr.johnsonshouse.org) or tel.0207 353 3745.



# Frances Anne Crewe

**By Michael Allen**

My principal interest is Charles Dickens, my approach biographical. Over the years I've been attracted by original source material and by listing and sifting, by questioning and sleuthing. My first book, *Charles Dickens' Childhood*, published in 1988, brought to light documents not seen for 160 years and drew conclusions new to Dickens biography. It also raised questions I couldn't answer at that time but which pointed the direction for future enquiry, questions concerning the first 20 years of the life of Dickens' father and of the lives of Dickens' grandparents. Dickens' grandparents, we know, were employed as servants in the households of John Crewe and his wife Frances Anne, attaining the responsible positions of butler and housekeeper. It became clear that an understanding of the family background of Dickens could only be enhanced by an understanding of the background of the Crewe family. Such was the attraction of the Crewes, though, that I became drawn back through the ages, through the eighteenth, seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, inevitably back towards the Normans, where so often British family history looks for its roots. My work on the earliest centuries was fascinating stuff, particularly that surrounding Sir Ranulph Crewe, who in the seventeenth century established family fortunes for the following 300 years as a successful lawyer, rising to the powerful position of Lord Chief Justice under James I and Charles II but suffering when he challenged the rights of the king in the prelude to civil war. He was also responsible for building Crewe Hall, which still stands today. The writing of those early years is now for the most part completed, but it was inevitably the end of the eighteenth-century that would dominate the book thanks to the appearance on the scene of the charismatic Frances Anne Crewe.

In the context of the *Burney Letter*, I must draw attention first to her parents. Her father, Fulke Greville, grandson of the fifth Lord Brooke, was a man with hopes of inheriting that title, together with Warwick Castle and a vast fortune. An excellent description of him is given in Frances Burney's memoirs of her father. He was noble, dignified, handsome, and fashionable: a striking, athletic superior being, but with flaws. He took too much interest in the gaming tables and racehorses, lost too much money, failed in his ambitions, became prickly and irascible and died lonely. However, as one of the first employers of Dr. Charles Burney, he established an affectionate tie between the two families that was to last a lifetime. When Greville married Frances Macartney in 1748, it was done in secret: Charles Burney was persuaded to act as father to the bride, to give her away, since she was still under age. On their return the elopers sought the forgiveness and blessing of the bride's father, but he was unimpressed: "Mr Greville," he said, "has chosen to take a wife out of the window, whom he might just as well have taken out of the door." At the baptism in 1748 of this couple's first child, Frances Ann Greville, Charles Burney stood proxy for the Duke of Beaufort as godfather and when later Burney himself married it was Mrs. Greville he turned to as godmother and namesake to his own daughter, Frances, born 1752.

Fulke Greville's wife and Frances Anne's mother was born Frances Macartney. Vivacious and aggressively bold, her sharp manner stung with its sarcasm and satirical wit. She intimidated many, including such confident characters as Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Montagu and Lady Spencer. Betty Rizzo claims that Mrs. Selwyn in Fanny Burney's *Evelina* is based on her. She was intelligent and could write well – her poem *Ode for Indifference* still appears in modern compilations. The mix of her sharpness and her husband's irascibility didn't stand the test of time and the couple separated in 1785, just before her visit with her daughter to Paris, as recorded in my book *An English Lady in Paris*.

Under her mother's wing, Frances Anne Greville's early life would have followed society's seasons – at the family home in Wiltshire, in London, and at the fashionable spa towns. Thanks to her parents she was widely travelled: to Italy as a baby, to Lorraine in France at the age of five, to Spa in Belgium at 15 and to Munich in Germany at 16. At the age of 12 she was painted on the first of three occasions by Sir Joshua Reynolds. As she grew into a beautiful young woman her mother took her into society, following her duty to find a suitable husband. Stephen Fox, eldest brother of Charles James Fox, was a suitor; so too was the Duke of Beaufort. In the end it was John Crewe, a wealthy landowner from Cheshire who, in 1768, won her hand. He was a quiet, unimpressive man, solid, sensible, reliable, well-liked but with little sparkle. He sat for 40 years in The House of Commons but rarely spoke. What he lacked, she made up for. As early as 1768 Fanny Burney described Mrs. Crewe and her mother as the two greatest beauties in England; then 24 years later pressed the point again: "She is certainly, in my Eyes, infinitely the most completely a BEAUTY of any woman I ever saw." She was fun too: there are many accounts of extravagant masked balls held in London – no polite dances these, but rather loud, crowded raves, excessive in fashion, glamour, food, drink and explicit behaviour, often ending as the sun began to rise. She came as a Spanish nun, a ballad singer, a young fellow, one of Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor and so on. Fanny Burney attended too: "The magnificence of the rooms, splendour of the illuminations and embellishments, and the brilliant appearance of the company exceeded anything I ever saw before. The apartments were so crowded we scarce had room to move, which was quite disagreeable." Frances Anne Crewe was warm, affectionate and flirtatious. She maintained a respectable reputation, achieved more by discretion than by abstaining from the sexual freedom of the age. Not so discreet that her affair with the dramatist Sheridan wasn't talked about behind her back. On one occasion Sheridan's wife wrote: "S[heridan] is in Town – and so is Mrs Crewe. I am in the Country and so is Mr Crewe – a very convenient arrangement is it not?" Three years later Betsy Sheridan reported that though Mrs. Crewe, among other lovers, had had her brother in her train, passion was no longer the tie. That passion was not only of a

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**See Frances Anne Crewe on p. 10**

## Frances Anne Crewe

### Continued from p. 9

sexual nature – Frances Anne Crewe was also passionate about theatre and about politics, at both of which Sheridan excelled. She took great pleasure at watching Sheridan's plays mimic her and her circle, particularly *The School for Scandal* which Sheridan dedicated to her. She also had great affection for Shakespeare's works, knowing them inside out, as demonstrated in her Paris diary. Love of plays stretched from the theatres of London (and Paris) to the Crewe mansion in Cheshire, where performances were staged for the amusement of family and visitors – servants also participated and I detect here the seeds of fascination with theatre planted in the young John Dickens and later nourished in Charles. Indeed, there's a further Dickensian link here – it's likely that when Sheridan became Treasurer to the Navy in 1806 and needed more staff, he chose, or was asked by the Crewes, to employ the son of the housekeeper at Crewe Hall. John Dickens later claimed he was a favourite of Sheridan's and liked to tell anecdotes of his famous connection. The letters which make up the Paris diary of Mrs. Crewe were, I believe, written to Sheridan.

In part Frances Anne Crewe's position in society was underpinned by the quality of her "salons," which attracted eminent politicians, writers, artists and musicians, rivaled only by those given by her very good friend Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. Politically the Crewes were particularly close to Charles James Fox and Edmund Burke. Fox wrote some charming lines about Mrs. Crewe in 1775:

*"If then for this once in my Life I am free,  
And escape from a Snare might catch wiser than me,  
'Tis that Beauty alone but imperfectly charms;  
For though Brightness may dazzle, 'tis kindness that warms.  
As on Suns in the Winter with Pleasure we gaze,  
But feel not their Force, though their Splendour we praise,  
So Beauty our just Admiration may claim;  
But Love, and Love only, our Hearts can inflame."*

John Crewe's long and staunch support for Fox was re-inforced by his wife, famously at the critical Westminster election of 1784. The Whigs were trying to wrest power from Pitt's Tories: the King supported Pitt, the Prince of Wales supported Fox. A contemporary relates: "On the 22nd April I find Sir Joshua Reynolds attending at Covent Garden, no doubt to record his vote for Fox in that famous election which was now filling the neighbourhood of the hustings with fighting mobs, through whose greasy ranks the brilliant Whig ladies, headed by the Duchess of Devonshire and Mrs Crewe, moved like beings of another sphere, courting, cajoling, and canvassing." Fox won and a celebratory banquet was held at the Crewe home in Mayfair, many decked out in the party colours of buff and blue. The toast of the evening was given by the Prince of Wales: "Buff and Blue, and Mrs Crewe," which evoked tremendous applause; she rose and responded with great panache "Buff and Blue, and all of you!" John Crewe's support for Fox was rewarded in 1806 when Fox was in a position to raise his friend to the peerage as the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Crewe of Crewe.

Another great friend of the Crewes was the influential Edmund Burke, a visitor to Crewe Hall and frequent

correspondent of Mrs. Crewe. Despite their friendship he was often frustrated at the ease with which she changed her mind: in the early stages of the French Revolution opinion in England was divided; Burke was vehemently against the Revolution, Fox was for it. Burke spent time persuading Mrs. Crewe to his view; to his annoyance, though, she would go away and be persuaded to take the exact opposite view; when they next met he had to go over the whole argument again. Nevertheless, they remained great friends throughout.

An entertaining account of a Crewe "gathering" is given by Fanny Burney in her diary for June 1792, when she and her father are escorted to Mrs. Crewe's villa at Hampstead by her 11-year old daughter Emma ("...a very sweet Girl... extremely well bred, sensible, attentive, & intelligent"). Emma, at the age of 6, had accompanied her mother to Paris and features in the diary: I've included a wonderful painting of her by Gainsborough, never before published. This villa at Hampstead has intrigued me – I've identified the building on maps but not yet found a painting, sketch or photograph, even though it survived until damaged by bombs in 1941. Fanny and her father stayed from Thursday to Saturday at the villa and she shows some sharp insights into character, of which I particularly like that of Mrs. Crewe's son John. There is a beautiful painting of him as a boy, dressed as Henry VIII, also in *An English Lady in Paris*. But he grew to be a disappointment to his parents, squandering money and contracting a sham marriage, till eventually his father banished him abroad and cut him from his will. With great prescience Fanny marked out his character on this occasion, when he was only 21: "He is just of age, & looks like her elder Brother! He is a thick, clunch, large, big, heavy, old-looking young man. But he was civil & silent, & therefore inoffensive. He is going to China with Lord Macartney, & under such a Guide & Companion, he may return new moulded."

As Mrs. Crewe and Dr. Burney grew older so was their friendship constantly reinforced. Fanny wrote in her father's memoirs: "...the person at this epoch the most conciliatory and the most welcome to Dr. Burney, was the still beautiful, though no longer the still young; the humorous, though contemplative; the sportively loquacious, though deeply-thinking, Mrs. Crewe. This lady was now his most confidential friend, and most intimate correspondent." In 1806 she became Lady Crewe and using her connections helped persuade the government and the King to bestow a pension on Dr Burney. His death eight years later was followed by her demise in 1818.

*Michael Allen is the author of Charles Dickens' Childhood and An English Lady in Paris: the Diary of Frances Anne Crewe 1786. He has also contributed to The Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens and the forthcoming A Blackwell Companion to Dickens. With a career of 38 years in libraries behind him, he is now able to concentrate more on research and writing, with Dickens and the Crewe family at the centre of his work.*

**An English Lady in Paris is available from Oxford-Stockely Publications at 17 Heather Close, St. Leonards, UK BH24 2QJ or at [oxfordstockely@binternet.com](mailto:oxfordstockely@binternet.com).**

## BOOK REVIEW

By Lorna Clark

*An English Lady in Paris: The Diary of Frances Anne Crewe 1786.* Ed. Michael Allen. St. Leonard's. Hants: Oxford-Stockley Publications, 2006. 245 pp. £29.95. ISBN 0 9552490 0 7.

The eighteenth-century (as any reader of Frances Burney's diaries is aware) was a glittering age, studded with stars. And (as the opening to this volume remarks): "Anyone reading [such] accounts . . . would be struck with the role women played: as confident leaders of society, as participants in the social sides of politics and the arts, . . . [as those] with the highest profiles and the most influence." (1)

In this handsome volume, Michael Allen presents one of these dazzling lights, the stunningly beautiful Frances Anne, wife of rich landowner and M.P. John Crewe. A fashionable London hostess, she attracted to her home the wealthy, the aristocratic, the powerful and the talented, even exerting an influence on public affairs. As "a leading light of the *ton*," she may have inspired Sheridan's play, *A School for Scandal*; she was suspected of having an affair with the playwright himself.

The letters contained in this volume may actually have been written to Sheridan (later written up as a travel-diary and apparently prepared for private circulation). The text consists of a series of letters, written to an unnamed friend during a three-month-stay in Paris, from Christmas Eve 1786 until mid-March 1787.

It was a busy winter; even when pleading indisposition, it is astounding how much Mrs. Crewe saw (in the way of plays, operas, and balls) and how many people she met, the cream of French *ci-devant* society. Her acquaintances included Mme du Deffand, the Marquis de Lafayette, even the King and Queen themselves, Louis XVI,

and Marie Antoinette. The notes alone make for fascinating reading; well-informed and entertaining, they are presented in an interesting way, in italics on the left-hand page facing the right-hand page of text. This format allows the reader to seek information immediately, as soon as a footnote number is encountered, something not often possible when end notes are gathered at the end of the volume.

Scholars and enthusiasts of the period will be grateful for Michael Allen's notes. Some, for instance of less well-known people, contain a gold-mine of information, which could otherwise be gleaned only with great difficulty through archival research. On better-known subjects, it is remarkable how deftly he can pick out the highlights and present them with an assured and easy touch, the result, apparently, of long familiarity with the subject and the period. Eighteenth-century personalities, scandal, and gossip come alive on these pages as do scientific crazes (mesmerism), political intrigues, and public spectacles.

A particular interest of Mrs. Crewe's (or her correspondent's?) was the theatre, and dramatic spectacles are described at length, as are literary debates in the salons, and, of course, the fashions. Thoughtful comparisons are made between French and English social customs, with the preference given to the less formal manners adopted by the English (a certain amount of John Bullishness is but natural). In these restless years just before the revolution, even a visitor to Paris could observe the discontent and unease that penetrated even the most privileged circles. By the end, Mrs. Crewe seems anxious to go home; her journal comes to an end soon after landing in England; she closes "And here end my *Canterbury Tales*" (202).

Several appendices follow the text of the letters, which include: the fulsome verses in which Sheridan dedicated his play to Mrs. Crewe; a poetic tribute from Charles Fox; some less-than-flattering passages about her taken from the letters of

Mme Du Deffand; a chronology of the Paris visit; and a family tree of the Crewes.

The extended introduction is also useful, tracing the history of the family from 1150 to the present-day. Part of it outlines the connection to the Burney family; Mrs. Crewe's mother, Frances *née* Macartney, had married Charles Burney's early patron and friend, Fulke Greville, and stood godmother to Frances Burney. Charles Burney attended the baptism of the infant Frances Anne, who would remain a steadfast friend to the Burneys throughout her life. After her death, her widowed husband, Lord Crewe would invite another daughter, Sarah Harriet Burney, to be governess and companion to his two grandchildren. Her letters describe the profusion and hospitality of the family seat, Crewe Hall, of which a recent photo has been provided. The illustrations to the volume are worth remark: plentiful and unusual (including some images never before published), they have been beautifully reproduced.

It was at Crewe Hall that this odyssey began, arising from Allen's research on another literary subject; in his acclaimed book, *Charles Dickens' Childhood*, he discovered that the grandparents of the famous novelist had served as the butler and housekeeper at Crewe Hall, a background which throws suggestive light on the novelist's vivid renditions of life below stairs. Evidently, Michael Allen has been in touch with present-day descendants of the Crewe family, and is familiar with the family seat and surrounding village; the thoroughness with which he has conducted his research adds considerably to the value of this volume.

*An English Lady in Paris* is the kind of book that can be read with pleasure, and then kept within reach on the shelf, for frequent consultation. It provides a convincing snapshot of an age, a society, and a personality who shone with brilliance in its midst.

## BOOK REVIEW

**By Lindsay Holmgren**

Mascha Gemmeke. *Frances Burney and the Female Bildungsroman*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004. 359 pp. ISBN 3-631-52303-3.

Mascha Gemmeke's *Frances Burney and the Female Bildungsroman* (2005) offers a useful addition to Burney scholarship, accessible both to Burney scholars and to those who are encountering in Gemmeke's book their first scholarly analysis of Burney's work. This 359-page book is divided into ten chapters that address Burney's literary writings: criticism contemporary with the text; recent Burney scholarship; extensive biographical research, including Burney's letters and journals; and philosophical influences. Though best read in its entirety, Gemmeke's study can be readily appreciated from any starting point due to her careful attention to clarity and repetition where necessary, rendering each chapter a self-sufficient, internally coherent analysis. This is an advantage of which not all Burney studies can boast.

Gemmeke's principal objective is to demonstrate that *The Wanderer: or, Female Difficulties* (1814), Burney's last and often thought her "worst" novel, can be better appreciated if read as a *Bildungsroman*. According to Gemmeke, both modern critics and Burney's contemporaries have been disappointed in the novel less because it is itself poor than because it is not the novel they wish Burney had written. In Gemmeke's view, this explains largely why so many of Burney's contemporaries were troubled by *The Wanderer's* inattention to the problems posed by the French Revolution. Moreover, Gemmeke suggests, critics mistakenly understand the novel (and its author) as conservative, due to a misreading of Burney's female characters: critics suggest that the novel encourages these characters (and the female reading public) to remain

willing participants in the socio-cultural system imprisoning them. On the contrary, Gemmeke claims, "the novel is about the difficulties of a woman *not* willing to be locked into an identity prefabricated by society" (14). Disguised as "Ellis," Juliet, the protagonist of the novel, "has more opportunities to get to know herself and the world than the average young gentlewoman, and Burney makes the most of Juliet's freedom." And she does so, according to Gemmeke, "without a specific reformatory goal in mind" (197).

Using Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795) as her touchstone, Gemmeke analyzes the protean category of the *Bildungsroman* with remarkable subtlety in order to illuminate the parallels between Goethe's and Burney's novels. The pivotal first chapter, which includes a thoughtful analysis of humanism as it relates to the *Bildungsroman*, is that upon which the rest of her argument turns. Gemmeke explains how Burney's female protagonist resembles the usually male protagonist of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, gradually incorporating textual support from Burney's novels to validate her argument. While each chapter addresses its major concerns (gender, performance, duty, aesthetics and philosophy, to name only a few) as they relate directly to the fiction, Gemmeke is careful, if only briefly, to bring the argument back to the overarching concerns of the *Bildungsroman*. Thus, her definition of the *Bildungsroman* continues to evolve throughout her study. For instance, she challenges conventional definitions that distinguish the learning associated with the world of work from the kind of development specific to the *Bildungsroman* – arguments that are not relevant in the context of *The Wanderer*: "For the female *Bildungsroman* . . . work assumes a different relevance in the process of formation-socialisation, given that a gentlewoman would not normally be defined by any 'profession' but that of wife and mother . . . work is as essential to Juliet's formation as the theatre is to Wilhelm's" (172).

The richness of her study stems partly

from the appropriate and useful ways in which Gemmeke brings Burney's life, letters, and journals to bear on her analysis of *The Wanderer*, as well as the other novels she addresses. In so doing, Gemmeke is convincing and generally careful to avoid slanting her argument so as to suggest that the content of Burney's fiction can be exclusively ascribed to her life experience. Moreover, in treating Burney's experience as an eighteenth-century female required to work (which led to Burney's rather unhappy time at Court), Gemmeke employs feminist thought from the 70s to recent gender criticism, pressing some of the later texts, such as Susan Fraiman's *Unbecoming Women* (1993) and Robert Jones's *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2000), to advance her own argument, thus revitalizing Burney studies with a contemporary, informed approach to gender. Gemmeke's view of the ways in which Burney's own female difficulties shaped her fiction is even-handed: she does not suggest that Burney was infallibly able to separate her life and her fiction, but does argue, as did Burney herself, that her novels are not merely disguised autobiographies. While Gemmeke readily acknowledges the ambiguities in many of Burney's claims, she clearly maintains that her fiction and non-fiction writings are the result of much thought, a tremendous amount of reading in philosophy, history, and literature despite a limited formal education, and an ability to view her environment objectively as a result of life experience as an "outsider."

Gemmeke's command of eighteenth-century philosophical thought is impressive, and she aptly applies that knowledge in order to demonstrate where Burney's novels cleave with conservative thought. Particularly insightful are her analyses of Burney's work in relation to Locke, Hume, and Burke. While some chapters include a fair amount of plot summary, they provide an enjoyable counterpoint to the philosophically, theoretically, or critically weighted sections and centre the book as a whole on

Burney's fiction. In the chapter on critical reception of *The Wanderer*, including and during the years since its publication, Gemmeke condenses a wealth of research into a useful summary. I was somewhat troubled in this chapter by Gemmeke's initial approach to critical accusations of Burney's didacticism that later gave way to equally strong claims of her own: "Burney adhered to the old-fashioned belief that fiction should instruct the young . . . her last novel is not a tale for the young . . . Her didacticism is inexcusable" (81). Moreover, Gemmeke's claim seems to conflict with her underlying faith in Burney's desire to hold an objective, "realistic" mirror up to nature that refuses to offer clear answers to the problems of female difficulties. Additionally, the book would be

strengthened by a reduction in the number of quotations and qualifying phrases and a stronger reliance upon the many beautifully articulated passages in Gemmeke's own words through which her original ideas surface.

These, however, are minor issues in light of what amounts to a praiseworthy work of scholarship characterized by strong evidence of abundant research not only into Burney's life and work, but also into the period in which she wrote, the philosophical ideas to which she was responding, and the underestimated independence of mind with which she did so. While I am not entirely convinced that *The Wanderer* should be added to the ever-growing (or ever-decreasing, depending on the lens) number of

*Bildungsromane*, this in no way detracts from the richness and usefulness of Gemmeke's book. Regardless of whether or not this novel is best described as a *Bildungsroman*, this perspective will inspire a generous, stimulating, and enriching reading of *The Wanderer* and Burney's fiction in general.

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## By Lorna Clark

Julia Maitland. *Letters from Madras during the years 1836-1839*. Ed. by Alyson Price. Otley: Woodstock Books, 2003. xxvii+207 pp. ISBN 1 85477 267 8.

The project of reclaiming lost and forgotten works by women writers is an exciting one, especially when they are private writings (journals, letters, diaries). (Another article in this newsletter announces a conference panel on just that topic, the task of reclaiming and re-examining "The Private Writings of Public Women.") The reasons for which the voices of women have been "lost" are many and complicated; British historian Bridget Hill has noted that the history of women's lives in past ages remains unwritten because largely undocumented. The journals and letters in which women recorded their daily lives thus provide fascinating and valuable material.

It is in this context that Alyson Price's new edition of *Letters from Madras during the years 1836-1839* can be placed. They are written by Julia (*née* Barrett) Maitland to her mother, Charlotte Barrett (niece to Frances (Burney) d'Arblay who was also her literary heir and first editor). Evidently, the recording habit ran in the family, and Julia sought to document and later publish her impressions of the four years she spent in India with her husband.

I have always found Julia an intriguing member of the Burney family. In her youth, she spent several years in Italy with her mother, in hopes of improving the consumptive condition of her sister, "Hetty." A lovely and talented young woman, she had several admirers (including Alex d'Arblay), but chose (to the mystification of her family) a widower several years her senior who came with the responsibility of three young children. Even worse, marrying him meant leaving her family behind to accompany him to his post in far-away India. Her grandmother feared that for a delicate young woman, the trip itself was tantamount to a death warrant, which indeed proved the case for many.

As Pryce points out, the letters written by Julia back to her

family in England offer an invaluable first-hand account of her travel experiences in India. Julia was a perceptive observer; she writes with that zest and energy characteristic of her famous great-aunt; her lively letters paint a vivid picture of the life around her. Their freshness is perhaps most striking on the voyage out and on her arrival in Madras, when she hastens to record her first impressions when the "bloom of . . . Orientalism is fresh" (41). For instance, early on she urges her husband to accept an invitation to visit a local Rajah and then describes the dinner and entertainment at length: the festoons of lamps, garlands of scented flowers, and a conjurer who magically produces scorpions and snakes. In her eagerness to see the real India, she brings to mind Forster's Miss Quested; elsewhere, though, she writes less appealingly, reflecting the prejudices of her time.

She continues to document her life as she gives birth to a daughter (and later a son) and moves with her husband to distant outposts. She combats the loneliness of her situation in typical Burneyan fashion, with constant occupation and industry: she takes lessons in Tamil and helps to establish a school; she collects insects, minerals and other curiosities; she makes skilful sketches and paintings of the scenery and, of course, she writes.

On her return to England after her husband's early death, Julia Maitland prepared a selection of her letters for the press; a first edition was published by John Murray in 1843 and a second, slightly revised version in 1846. Her present-day editor points out that the letters selected for publication had intimate family details edited out and chooses to base her own edition on the published text. However, she draws on passages from the original letters to amplify or elucidate whenever necessary, as well as on historical works and other contemporary accounts for purposes of illumination or comparison. Text and notes together (along with appendixes and the List of Sources and References) give an authentic and fascinating picture of the life of an Englishwoman in India in the mid-nineteenth century.

*Letters from Madras* is a slim and attractively produced volume; it more than lives up to its editor's promise to provide "an enjoyable read" for a summer's day.

# BOOK REVIEW

**By Francesca Saggini**

Paula Byrne. *Perdita. The Literary, Theatrical, Scandalous Life of Mary Robinson*. New York: Random House, 2005. ISBN: 1400061482. Reprinted as *Perdita. The Life of Mrs. Robinson*. London: Harper Perennial, 2005. xvi+477 pp. £7.99. ISBN 0-00-716459-9

Hester Davenport. *The Prince's Mistress: A Life of Mary Robinson*. Stroud (Gloucestershire): Sutton, 2004. xiv+274 pp. £20. ISBN 0-7509-3227-9

Sarah Gristwood. *Perdita. Royal Mistress, Writer, Romantic*. London-Toronto: Transworld Publishers-Bantam Press, 2005. 454 pp. £20. ISBN 0-593-05208-0

Approaching Mary Robinson via her portraits is as good a way as any of getting to know a woman who was often famous – and certainly notorious – for the several masks which she donned, positioned at the hub of what was rapidly becoming the Georgian factory of celebrity culture. All the three biographies of Robinson recently published do justice to the fascinating gallery of her portraits, which includes works by George Romney, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, and John Hoppner, to name just a few of the celebrated artists she sat for. In the first canvas of our ideal gallery Mary is caught by Gainsborough's brush as a beautifully pensive young woman, with an air of melancholy, holding a miniature in her left hand. Her dog stands next to her, a hazy cluster of trees in the background. Had it not been for the fact that she is portrayed cross-legged (at the time an improper pose for a female sitter) we would be misled into taking her for a noblewoman. The second picture is a portrait of Mary late in life made by John Chubb and reproduced in Byrne's book. This time she is sitting at a table on which we can see her writing implements; pensive and slightly detached, her celebrated beauty is still visible. Once again caught cross-legged, she looks steadfastly at the miniature she clasps in her right hand.

Although twenty years have gone by between the first and second portrait, nothing much seems to have changed for Mary – neither her posture, nor her unique way of hiding whilst revealing herself, leading her audience to believe what she wants them to believe. In both portraits, for instance, there is no hint of her acting profession – quite an ironic counterpass for the woman who was to go down in history as the *Perdita*, from the name of the innocent pastoral heroine (in the adaptation of *The Winter's Tale*) whom she was portraying when, according to the legend, the seventeen-year old Prince George of Wales saw her on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1779 and instantly fell in love with her. Allegedly, it is the Prince's face that was set in the miniature, presented to her as the gracious token of an eternal love which was to outlast just one year of life. Quite predictably, the story behind the

miniature is significantly different from what it may seem at first glance, too. That is the never-ending problem with first impressions – never trust “first sight” when speaking of both royal amours and character-reading. At the time of the first portrait (1780) Mary was in fact negotiating for the sale of the prince's letters, a canny entrepreneurial feat which in one blunt stroke transformed what was born as a romantic love affair into an unfeeling commercial transaction. At the time of the second portrait, she had just been spending the best part of twenty years steadily clutching at the royal purse, in a constant – and hardly sentimental – reminder that she had once given up a profitable acting career for the sake of a boy six years her junior.

And this is also the problem faced by any biographer of Mary Robinson. Figure of scandal, public name, celebrity mistress, adventuress, *louche* queen of the fashionable world, Mary is much more than the independent spirit contemporary readers crave to read about. She was a political commentator, an accomplished novelist, translated into French and German, and her poems share the same shelf not only with the modest Della Cruscan, but also with William Wordsworth, and even Samuel T. Coleridge, with whom she corresponded, and who found both her *persona* and personality upsetting and even slightly frightening. Time and again, as in a biographic compulsion to repeat, Mary has been a victim of that moniker, “*Perdita*,” the lost one, which seems to have been both her curse and blessing. After being an actress, and thus a social outcast, a dazzlingly beautiful queen of the tribe of lost women tainted by the stigma of the stage, she was also lost to the Prince, who eagerly (and rather gratefully!) pensioned her off to many other embraces, both noble and plebeian, thus passing her on to future fame as *Perdita la Pecheresse*. Actress and mistress, lost on the professional and personal level, she finally went lost in the process of canon formation, erased for a long time from the glare of the literary histories. For an ironical twist of scholarly fate, Robinson thus ended up sharing the literary misfortunes of many other contemporary women writers, either more or less talented than herself, including those as prim and irreproachable as Hannah More, who taught her in Bristol and later repudiated her along with her own dangerous *penchant* for the stage. Her reappraisal is then all the more welcome, since, as rightly remarked by Gristwood, “Mary Robinson is at least now credited with having helped usher the Romantic era into being; itself an enormously exciting discovery” (6).

There are two standard works all three biographies turn to in search of some elusive evidence about Mary's life. First of all we have Mary's *Memoirs*, which she began in her last years and which often remains the only source of information about the first period of her life up to the time she embarked on her relationship with the Prince of Wales. The first person narrative tantalisingly breaks off there, just at the time when Mary must have yielded to HRH. The rest of the story is told by an unknown “Friend,” commonly believed to be her daughter Maria Elizabeth. A biographic pinch of salt ought to be used, though – let's not

forget that we are dealing with a woman enormously talented at turning the history of her life into a saleable story. This friend might in fact be only one of the many *personae* concocted by Mary, who may have used this typical eighteenth-century fictional device in order to confer more credibility on her narrative or simply to avoid telling the more suggestive parts of it *viva voce*. The second temptation the biographer finds along his or her path is the anonymous *Memoirs of Perdita*, a titillating and at times downright lewd fictional account of Mary's life that operates as "a counterbalance to the strongly angled picture she herself paints for her early years" (Gristwood, 9). We might add to these two texts a plethora of items of various scandal-mongering, newspaper reports, many iconographic testimonies (including lewd cartoons and prints), pamphlets and several private correspondences. Quite a lot to chew on even for an experienced biographer, and some of it a tasty morsel indeed. After all, Mary was for many years the prime mover of printed and visual gossip.

These are the crossroads where Mary Robinson's biographies part company. How should we handle a woman who was both child bride and "*grande horizontale*" (Gristwood, 228), fashion icon and radical writer, creature of sensibility and creator of texts and people (she surely had a hand in revamping one of her most glamorous lovers, the American war hero Colonel Balastre Tarleton, into a successful politician, later MP for Liverpool)? Hester Davenport, well known to the Burney community as the author of *Faithful Handmaid: Fanny Burney at the Court of George III* (Sutton, 2000), has preferred a rigorously historical approach. Her biography is pleasant, well researched and informative. As Hester successfully shows, biographers are faced by the hard facts of "real, solemn History" (as Catherine Morland would say), and manage to turn them into fascinating reading. The section dealing with Mary's royal intrigues is the one in which Hester sparkles most. At times the reader can really tell that she is dying to give us something more about the (un)royal dealings of that (in)famous household while she must, instead, content herself with a quick nod and move on to what was going on (and off) with Robinson. Davenport's bibliography is rich and her notes precise. Her book is, however, half the size of the other two biographies of Robinson (both well over 400 hundred pages); it does not surprise that the space for the intriguing asides is somewhat scanty and some episodes of the saga slightly crushed.

Gristwood instead approaches Mary as a figure of glamour and style. She reconstructs her as a contemporary priestess of taste and her biography makes for very lively reading, with an eye turned to today's celebrity columns. It is obvious that the author knows how to varnish and pleasantly package Mary's vibrant life story. There are many clever touches, such as the use of the titles of eighteenth-century plays for chapter-headings. Gristwood candidly admits that Robinson and Tarleton "were, one yearn to say, the Posh and Becks of their day" (389), and she confesses that, "if I were making a television documentary about Mary Robinson, there are three experts I would want to interview most urgently. A literary historian, a Jungian analyst [and] Max Clifford, king of image manipulation." Her biography is at its best when she describes the fashionable side of Mary's life, London's attractions and her wonderful on- and off-stage attires, her carriages and the *beau monde* she freely mixed with.

Unfortunately the research behind her work is sometimes second-hand, with recurrent quotes from Judith Pascoe and Richard Holmes. Gristwood openly explains that in her reconstruction a few of the archive details of Mary's life have in fact been drawn straight from the newspaper reviews and contemporary commentary published in Richard Bass's *The Green Dragoon*, the 1957 biography of Mary's lover, Banastre Tarleton. As she frankly acknowledges in the endnotes in more than one occasion, "for this and subsequent reviews see Bass, *Green Dragoon*."

Byrne successfully unites Davenport's historical accuracy with Gristwood's glitzy reading of Robinson's life. Her pages are resonant with long visits to several archives across the States and the UK, for meticulous research of contemporary records and multiple, rewarding, double checks. She suavely questions the value of *The Green Dragoon*: "it is no exaggeration to say that [Bass's] inaccuracies outnumber his accuracies: if Bass says that one article appeared one November in the *Morning Post*, one may rest assured that it is to be found in December in the *Morning Herald*" (3). Byrne never relies on outside evidence, and her citations are usually generous. Although many quotes are shared with Davenport (the earlier biographer), Byrne's are often longer, which means that she has never taken anything for granted, always checking against the original article or record rather than its second-hand quotation. At the same time, Byrne's knowledge of the Romantic period is solid and makes her book an excellent read for those looking for precise contextual references. Her biography successfully manages to live up to the promise of its title, *The Literary, Theatrical, Scandalous Life of Mary Robinson*. Byrne's all-inclusive (re)vision of Mary is ultimately sympathetic to the woman, generous with the author and intrigued by the actress.

After all it is a fortunate coincidence that we have had three recent biographies of Perdita, which we can read individually or against each other. Tireless entrepreneur of herself, she lent her face to many masks and many portraits, none of which and all of which tell the truth about her. She would probably be quite amused to see herself turned into the talk of the scholarly world, after having been the talk of the town for so many years. Maybe we should let Mary Robinson rest in peace, happy to have finally returned her to the *persona* she wished to be remembered as, "author of poems and other literary works," as her epitaph reads. Against all odds, however, I believe that this slightly sanitised short-hand *memento* does not do her full justice – unless we want to read the truth with a slant, which she would herself sometimes do. "Author of poems and other literary works," I may well grant, but most of all self-creator, self-promoter and self-presenter, author and demiurge of her many present-time and posthumous selves.

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