Burney Letter

Vol. 2 No. 1 | The Burney Society | Spring 1996

'Camilla' to be honored on 200th birthday

By Paula L. Stepankowsky

A celebration of the 200th anniversary of *Camilla*, as well as a reading from one of Frances Burney's comic plays, will highlight the second annual general meeting of The Burney Society, scheduled for early October in Richmond, Va.

Prof. Juliet McMaster of the University of Edmonton in Alberta will deliver the address on *Camilla*, which was published in 1796 and is the third of Frances Burney's novels.

Also displayed will be a first edition of *Camilla*, which contains a subscription list that is a who's who of late 18th-century English society. A Miss J. Austen of Steventon is among the subscribers.

Prof. McMaster's address will be given at a tea to be held between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. at the Mr. Patrick Henry Inn in Richmond's Historic District on the afternoon of Thursday, Oct. 10. Readings from a comedy, likely to be The Witlings, will take place at a dinner meeting scheduled early in the evening of Friday, Oct. 11, at the Omni Richmond Hotel.

> *Also displayed will be a first edition of 'Camilla,' which contains a subscription list that is a who's who of late 18th-century English society.*

The Burney Society meeting will coincide with the annual general meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America, which is being held in at the Omni Richmond Oct. 11 through Oct. 13.

Both the Burney Society tea and the Friday dinner have been scheduled during times when there are no official JASNA activities so Burney and JASNA members can attend both meetings without a time conflict.

The tea will be held before the JASNA conference officially opens and the dinner will be held between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m., after daytime JASNA activities are concluded and before a talk for JASNA by George Hobert Tucker.

Prof. McMaster is well known as a scholar and critic of Jane Austen's novels. She has written *Jane Austen on Love* as well as books on Thackeray, Trollope and Dickens. Her most recent book is *Jane Austen The Novelist*, published this year by St. Martin's Press.

The Mr. Patrick Henry Inn is

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FB's diaries will be topic for British members

Fanny Burney's diaries will be the topic of discussion at the second annual meeting of the British branch of the Burney Society, scheduled for 2 p.m. Saturday, June 9, at Juniper Hall, Mickleham, near Dorking, Surrey.

Featured speaker for the event will be Prof. Judy Simons of Sheffield Hallam University, whose talk is entitled "Miss Somebody: The Diary of Fanny Burney."

Prof. Simons is the author of *Fanny Burney* in the Macmillan Women Writers series. She has also written Macmillan Masterguides to *Sense and Sensibility* and *Persuasion*.

A discussion among members will follow the presentation. There also will be a short business meeting. Tea will follow.

Tickets will be about £5 each, including tea, and can be obtained by writing to Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3JB, England. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Juniper Hall, now a field study center, is the house that witnessed the first meeting between the novelist and her future husband, Gen. Alexandre d'Arblay, in 1793.

The Burney Society, inaugurated in 1994 in New Orleans, La., includes members, officers and patrons from three countries - the United States, Great Britain and Canada.

Membership cards depict watercolor

The Burney Society will have a special membership postcard for our third year, July 1996 - June 1997.

The society's secretary-treasurer, Lucy Magruder, found it while at Juniper Hall in Surrey, the beautifully situated country home in which Frances Burney met her husband, Gen. Alexandre d'Arblay in 1793.

The Juniper Hall Field Centre, occupiers of Juniper Hall since 1943, has two watercolors in its folder of Burney-related items. One has been reproduced as a postcard. It depicts Juniper Hall in the late 18th-century. The outside view shows groups playing and another group seated around a table under a tree enjoying refreshments.

One of the ladies at the table is wearing a costume like the one Frances Burney in her brother's portrait of her at the National Portrait Gallery in London. A modern biographer has suggested that this lady at the table is Frances Burney. She suggests the watercolor could be by M. d'Arblay, known to be an accomplished watercolorist, or it could be something done in this century to commemorate Burney's association with Juniper Hall.

Lucy said she prefers to think the watercolor is of the former attribution and has thus decided to use the postcards as membership cards.

Postcards with the picture of Frances Burney held by the National Portrait Gallery are out of print, and there are currently no plans to reissue them.

Efforts continue for non-profit status

The Burney Society has completed the first of two steps necessary to be designated a non-profit organization in the United States.

The society's application for non-profit status has been accepted in the state of Washington, the home state of President Paula Stepankowsky. Non-profit status must first be granted by a state before it can be granted by the federal government. In order to maintain non-profit status in a state, an officer of the society must be a resident of the state in which the application is filed.

The society's secretary-treasurer, Lucy Magruder, is now doing the paperwork necessary to apply for federal non-profit status, something we hope to achieve this year.

Non-profit status will allow the Burney Society to offer donors a tax deductions on contributions to the society, which will be used for such projects as establishing a literary journal and funding a plaque to Frances Burney in Westminster Abbey.

Non-profit status will also exempt the society from taxes on savings and investments, as well as keep bank administrative fees to a minimum.

Plays available in North America

Those who would like to have a copy of the complete plays of Frances Burney no longer have to write to England to acquire one.

The plays, edited by Peter Sabor, professor of English at Université Laval in Quebec, have been published in North America by McGill-Queens University Press. The set, first published in England by Pickering & Chatto, is available from McGill-Queens for $150 U.S.

The two-volume set includes text set from the original manuscripts, a general introduction, headnotes to each play, explanatory notes and variant readings. The set includes such plays as *The Witlings* and *A Busy Day.*

The set is available from McGill-Queens University Press, c/o University of Toronto Press, Order Department, 5201 Dufferin Street, Downsview, ON, Canada, M3H 5T8, or call 1-800-565-9523 anywhere in North America.

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located in Richmond's Church Hill neighborhood, one block west of historic St. John's Church (circa 1741), site of Patrick Henry's famous "Liberty or Death" speech.

The inn's owners, James and Lynn News, began renovating the 1855 building in 1986. The pre-Civil War features that make up the inn include a garden patio in a formal garden setting, an original carriage house and a bridle pony path.

Other historic locations within a few blocks of the inn include the National Civil War Battlefield Headquarters, the Edgar Allen Poe Museum, the State Capital, and the Museum of The Confederacy.

Further information about the Burney Society meeting, including registration forms, more details about Prof. McMaster's talk, and tea and dinner prices, will be contained in the next issue of the *Burney Letter.*

For further information about the society or the meeting, contact Paula L. Stepankowsky, 360-636-3763.

Burney Letter

The semiannual newsletter of the Burney Society, which includes members in Canada, Great Britain and the United States.

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Membership in The Burney Society is available for $10 (U.S.) annually in the United States and Canada, and £6 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: Lucy Magruder, P.O. Box 5424, Fullerton, Calif., 92635. In Great Britain, write Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, England, GU34 3JB.

Burney's dramatic side explored in Madison

A talk on "Frances Burney: Diarist, Dramatist and Novelist" by Prof. Margaret Anne Doody of Vanderbilt University highlighted the second annual general meeting of the the Burney Society held in Madison, Wisc. on Oct. 5.

More then 20 members of the society from the United States, Canada and Great Britain gathered in the book-lined atrium of The Canterbury Inn for a short business meeting, followed by Prof. Doody's talk, which she graciously allowed to be reprinted in this newsletter.

During the business meeting, President Paula L. Stepankowsky outlined the society's accomplishments since its founding in November of 1994 in New Orleans.

They include electing officers and organizing a distinguished list of patrons for the society, publishing two editions of the *Burney Letter*, designing and printing official stationery, drafting a constitution and bylaws, beginning the process of applying for non-profit status and organizing the Madison meeting.

Jean Bowden, the society's secretary-treasurer for Great Britain reported on the first meeting of the society in Great Britain at Juniper Hall in Surrey, with Prof. Judy Simon as speaker. She also reported that the society has secured permission to use the portrait of the novelist wearing a large hat in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in its membership brochures, which will be printed once non-profit status is achieved. If for some reason the National Portrait Gallery portrait cannot be used, society patron John Comyn offered the use of a family portrait in his possession as an illustration.

Miss Bowden also reported that the society's membership in Great Britain totaled more than 40. As of the Madison meeting, the society in North America had 54 paid members, which, combined with those in Great Britain, as well as those who have joined subsequently, results in a total paid membership of more than 100.

Membership forms passed out at the Jane Austen Society of North America meeting following the Burney Society meeting indicated that more members will be on the way.

Ms. Stepankowsky reported that Charles Burney, head of the Burney family and society patron, wrote to a former schoolmate of his who is a Sub-Dean at Westminster Abbey regarding the matter of a memorial plaque. His friend replied that the society should write to the dean himself regarding the procedure to be followed to nominate Frances Burney d'Arblay for the honor of a plaque in Westminster Abbey.

An update on the society's plans to do something about the d'Arblay graves at St. Swithin's Church Walcot in Bath appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

A committee to explore the costs of establishing a literary journal was appointed. Ms. Stepankowsky and Susan Schwartz, a member from Portland, Ore., agreed to serve.

Those at the meeting voted that the theme for the 1996 meeting in Richmond be *Camilla*, in recognition of the novel's 200th anniversary of publication .

Members attending also agreed that it is convenient to schedule meetings of the Burney Society in North America immediately before the annual general meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America, to which many Burney Society members belong.

In her talk, Prof. Doody said that Burney's standing in the literary world is changing as her dramatic works are being published as a whole for the first time. While Burney was first known as a novelist, and then a diarist, her dramatic abilities were virtually unknown.

"Publication of the plays is an event of the first proportions for Burney's reputation," Prof. Doody said.

Only one of Burney's plays, *Edwy and Elgiva*, was ever produced during her lifetime and "not even Mrs. Siddons was able to rescue it," she said.

Love and Fashion was accepted for production in 1800, but Charles Burney never took to the idea of his daughter becoming a comic dramatist and the production never went on, Prof. Doody said.

With Burney's reputation as a novelist established in the 18th century and her dramatic tendencies stifled, she next became known as a diarist in the 1840s with the publication of her diaries and letters by her niece.

"It established a new Burney, a wonderfully intimate source about the 18th century," Prof. Doody said."She is still being used as a source. She is a wellspring of Georgian manners and gossip."

Now with the publication of her plays, the world can see a new Burney emerging, Prof. Doody said.

Burney is caught between two selves - the modest diarist or a robust comic writer and satirist, Prof. Doody said. "There is a new self emerging, one that may shove the others off the stage."

Prof. Doody said Burney is achieving more popularity in the 1990s because she is increasingly being seen as an exciting and disturbing writer, someone whom critics spent a century covering up.

Burney asks subversive questions throughout her novels, and didn't shy away from exploring such issues as guilt.

"Jane Austen said 'let other pens dwell on guilt and misery'; one of those pens was Burney's."

Prof. Doody, who is also a Burney Society patron, is the author of a number of important works of criticism, including *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works; A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, and *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered*, which won the Rose Mary Crawshay Prize awarded by the British Academy. She is editing new edition of Jane Austen's works and has written two novels of her own. She is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities and Director of Comparative Literature at Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

Mystery of d'Arblay graves at Walcot probed

By Lucy Magruder

When Frances Burney d'Arblay died in 1840, she was buried in the same grave as her son, Alexandre, in the grounds of the Mortuary Chapel across the street and down a hill from St. Swithin's Church in the Walcot section of Bath, also referred to as Walcot Church. The gravesite was near that of her husband, Gen. Alexandre d'Arblay, who died in 1818.

Through a series of incidents described by Dr. Joyce Hemlow, a pioneering Burney scholar and a Burney Society patron, in an appendix to Vol. 12 of *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (Madame d'Arblay), the location of the novelist's grave has been lost. In 1955, the church's parish council removed the monument erected in the early 20th-century over the grave to a triangular enclosure beside the church without the knowledge of the Burney family.

One of the long-term goals of the Burney Society is to clarify the location of the novelist's grave and attempt to persuade the appropriate authorities to either return the monument to its original site or remove the remains, if they can be found, to the site where the monument is now. The rectangular, chest-style monument, which memorializes both the novelist and her son, itself needs cleaning and restoration.

The Burney Society's position in the matter is that one of the novel's great pioneers should not lie in an unmarked grave.

During our December 1995 trip to Bath, my interesting assignment from Burney Society President Paula Stepankowsky was to look for any evidence that might show the grave site.

In Dr. Hemlow's appendix, a photo of Burney's tomb in its original place is provided. Using the photo, one is led about a half block south of Walcot Church, across streets and past businesses to the site in the cemetery surrounding the former Mortuary Chapel.

As one faces the chapel, there is a walk that runs along the right side of the chapel. About half way down the walk, there is a mound of thick moss, mixed with grass and slightly raised above the surrounding land. Using the photo taken by Dr. Hemlow, this must be where the monument marking the novelist's grave was originally.

The headstones are in neat rows except for the blank where the mossy mound is. The mound is the approximate size of the monument and it is in the right place, according to the photo.

The chapel is currently used as a community center and appeared neatly kept. At the time of our visit, there was an exhibit of local artists' work. Having carried a tape measure all the way to Bath from Arizona just for the purpose, of course it was left in the car miles away. When I asked for a tape measure, ruler or even some string, the two friendly young people involved in the exhibit dug in to their bags and came out with a spool of orange thread. We measured off lengths of thread to compare with the various measurements Dr. Hemlow gave in her appendix. The numbers are certainly close.

> *In view of the uncertainty about who will be responsible for the church in the immediate future, the Burney Society will wait to make its first formal approaches in the matter until after control is clarified.*

Dr. Hemlow wrote in the appendix that when Gen. D'Arblay died, his widow marked his grave as he requested. That marker and the site are lost to us now. No evidence is currently available to locate it. Dr. Hemlow also wrote about efforts by the Burney family to exhume the novelist's remains, presumably to place them with the monument at its new location.

The documentation in the matter is somewhat contradictory, but it appears that permission was given to remove one body, but two were found and apparently both were left. The existence of the remains of two people can be accounted for in the fact that Frances Burney D'Arblay was buried in the same grave as her son, as she requested before she died. So, we can only assume that the novelist lies in the chapel graveyard with no marker.

The two helpful artists who loaned the orange thread told us that someone had been there some weeks before looking over the condition of the former chapel and the graveyard. This visitor told the artists he had been involved in saving that part part of historical Bath from a wrecking crew and apartment buildings some 20 years ago. The two could not tell us who this person was. We hope this conservator remains vigilant.

Burney Society Patron Susan McCartan reports that in recent months, Rev. Graham Dodds, who had been rector at St. Swithin's Church Walcot, has been reassigned and that there is to be a period of about three months during which the status of the church will be evaluated.

After that, Mrs. McCartan writes, the church may be declared redundant and be passed into the hands of English Heritage, a major preservation organization. The church is a Grade 2 listed building and is the only surviving Georgian church in Bath.

In view of the uncertainty about who will be responsible for the church in the immediate future, the Burney Society will wait to make its first formal approaches in the matter until after control is clarified.

Those Burney Society members who also admire Jane Austen know that there is one other grave stone in the enclosure along with the D'Arblay monument. It belongs to the Rev. George Austen, Jane Austen's father.

Frances Burney: Novelist-Diarist-Dramatist

Editor's note: This is the text of the speech given by Prof. Margaret Anne Doody at the first Annual General Meeting of the Burney Society on Oct. 10, 1995, in Madison, Wisc. Prof. Doody is from Vanderbilt University.

I'm extremely proud and feel most honored to be the first plenary speaker at the first conference devoted to Frances Burney and sponsored by the Burney Society. The developments within the past year have marked a new phase in the reputation of this author, thanks to hard work by a number of people. Looking at you all, I feel, however relatively modest our beginnings may be, that Burney is "here to stay."

I have called my talk "Frances Burney - Novelist - Diarist - Dramatist" in order to bring out the three aspects of her literary career. I am listing them in that order because Burney was first known to a reading public as a novelist, then in the 19th Century as a diarist. Her work as a dramatist has been coming to light only relatively recently. A few years ago it would have made no sense at all to refer to Burney as a "Dramatist". It is rather exciting to realize that "new" works by this author have been appearing in the light of print. *The Witlings* was included by Katherine Rogers in an anthology of 1994, and the *Complete Plays of Frances Burney*, edited by Peter Sabor with Geoffrey Sill and Stewart Cooke, came out in two volumes in March of this year. They are published by Pickering and Chatto, London. This is an event of the first importance for Burney's reputation, not only within the scholarly community, but among general readers. Peter Sabor, who has also worked on editions of the Burney novels for World's Classics, has made a major contributions that will affect the way in which Burney is seen as a writer. This really marks a big change not only in the status of this writer, but in her very identity.

Credit must be given to Tara Wallace who edited Burney's late comedy *A Busy Day* in 1984. This play was first produced (had its world premiere) in Bristol in 1993, where it was put on by the "Show of Strength Company", and it was taken to London in the summer of 1994, where it appeared at the King's Head Theatre, Islington (a location rather pleasantly reminiscent of *Evelina*). So Burney has at last appeared as a dramatist and as a comic dramatist in the 1990s. Before, only the tragedy *Edwy and Elgiva* had been produced in a failed production in London that ran for precisely one evening on March 21, 1795. Not even Mrs. Siddons as Elgiva was able to rescue the play from condemnation. None of Burney's comedies were ever put on in her lifetime, even though *Love and Fashion* was accepted by a theatrical manager, Harris of Covent Garden Theatre, for the (then) not inconsiderable sum of £400. It was supposed to be produced in the spring of 1800. Burney's father ordered her to have *Love and Fashion* withdrawn, citing as a reason the recent death of her sister Susanna, which made the identity of a comic playwright unsuitable; but, as I have argued elsewhere, Charles Burney never took at all to the idea of his daughter Frances coming before the public in the guise of a comic dramatist.

Comedy is a very bold form — it is inclined to be vulgar, it deals with sexuality (even if indirectly) and it always is verging on the satiric. Dr. Burney seems to have felt that novels were more ladylike. After the success of *Evelina* in 1778, Burney wrote a play, her first adult comedy, with the encouragement of two prominent theater men, Arthur Murphy and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. In 1779, Charles Burney certainly suppressed *The Witlings*, which some of Burney's admirers find the best of her comedies, though I insist on finding *The Woman-Hater* the most interesting and complex of the comic plays. Charles Burney didn't want *The Witlings* put on, I think, not because it was a bad play or because he feared failure for his daughter as he alleged, but because it was a danger to the whole Burney family in that it might offend powerful potential patrons — or matrons, especially Elizabeth Montagu and her circle. That at least is a rational reason, if not a very noble one.

But it seems to me also true that Dr. Burney was startled by *The Witlings* as he had not been by *Evelina* — startled to discover in it the pungent cruelty of observation, and a criticism of the very operations of society, and not just of some vulgarians within it.

The play's plot involves public, social and financial, as well as private life. It starts (unusually) in a shop, where personal and economic forces meet, even in the feminine side of social life. A bank failure affects the life of the former heiress, the heroine Cecilia Stanley, and the other characters' reception of the news of the heiress's new poverty moves us beyond the moral line and discourages reading for easy precept. Eighteenth century moralists believed moral books should endorse well-known social rules by exhibiting for criticism only the failure of an individual to live up to the group standard. Burney is openly questioning the group standard. *Evelina* did the same thing but hid behind the demure presence and naive voice of its narrating heroine. Drama, it might be argued, veils the author even more behind a multitude of characters. But the dramatist is obviously very powerful, knowledgeable in the ways of the world, capable of immodestly investigating the ways of both men and women. A play is also unveiled, public and uncontrolled. Drama is an uneasy, edgy mercurial form of literature. Thus, I think it was one ultimately suited to Burney, who is an uneasy, edgy, mercurial kind of writer. A perfect Gemini, in short. She was, after all, a Gemini, which may be one reason why she is interested in alter egos and substitute selves.

In the 19th-century, Burney, who had lost any chance of a reputation as a dramatist in her lifetime, gained a reputation in a manner that caused her reputation as novelist to lose altitude. We should remember that this 18th century writer was also an 'inhabitant' of the 19th century — almost a Victorian. Frances Burney was born on June 13, 1752 — in the era of George II. She died on Jan. 6, 1840. She had lived to see the young Victoria become Queen (she felt sorry for the girl). It was thus while Burney's memory was fresh in the minds of her

family, if not in the public minds, that her niece Charlotte Barrett published her *Diary and Letters* (1842-46), in the decade immediately after the author's death. The *Diary and Letters* established a new Burney, a wonderfully interesting source of information about the 18th century, about Johnson and his circle, about Reynolds and Burke and Herschel, about music and court life, about the madness of King George III. She is the handmaid to historians, a wellspring of Georgian manners and gossip. Barrett carefully excised material that might be offensive or painful, including anything that might be humiliating to Burney herself or would seem too emotional; thus, Frances's love-anguish over Mr. George Cambridge is edited out, along with a good deal else. What remains is excellent, and Burney gained in popularity as a diarist. She was admired by Thackeray's daughter, Anne Thackeray Ritchie, because of these journals, and the account of Brussels during Waterloo may have been of influence on Thackeray himself.

In the next generation, Annie Raine Ellis added considerably to our knowledge of Frances Burney (the young Frances Burney) by editing the *Early Journal*, produced in 1889. *The Early Journal* has much to recommend it, including very informative and thoughtful notes. But its presence ultimately served to destabilize Burney's reputation as a novelist, or remove it altogether. Frances Burney or (Madame d'Arblay), this "new" writer discovered in the diaries, becomes an artless Evelina, given to trivial chatter, her French married name adding to the impression that she is a lightweight. She is a little female onlooker at the events of the day, who offers literary pleasure in her diaries (unlike her antiquated, old-fashioned novels) because she is unthreatening and cheerful. Joyce Hemlow, who did so much, starting in the 1950s, to inform the world about the existence of the monumental mass of Burney papers (including the then as yet -unedited plays) could largely share this view. To Hemlow, Burney is not an important novelist; her virtues are those of the "camera obscura" (a metaphor for the author first used by Mrs. Thrale) and a tape recorder.

In some ways, then, we can see Burney caught between two "selves" or what we might call "writerly selves." She is the ladylike journal-keeper, the modest diarist (duly furbished and set out in the later 19th century), or she is too robust and an abrasive, satiric, comic dramatist whose work Charles Burney had to keep off the stage. There is, perhaps, some danger now that her new emergence in the guise of dramatist could lead shortly to her new identity, shoving the others off the stage. "Oh, who can read those old novels, and those old diaries, so dreadfully long-winded about people one knows *nothing* whatever about — but have you seen her new comedy?" I can almost hear someone saying this in, say, 1997.

Well, much else could be said in talking of the status of Burney's reputation at the present moment, in 1995. Credit for making us look at her afresh should be given to a host of people, including Kristina Straub, and the remarkable Julia Epstein, both in her book *The Iron Pen* and in two important essays. It would be invidious to continue, perhaps. Something might be said in compliment to Oxford University Press, for that press's decision to publish the long running Hemlow edition of the later *Journals and Letters* has kept Burney (the diarist) before the public eye. Oxford's decision to put the novels into World's Classics form (first *Evelina* and *Camilla* then *Cecilia* and finally even *The Wanderer*) has made a major difference to our view of Burney the Novelist. Burney the Diarist has also changed, with the skilled editorial work of Lars Troide, whose edition of the *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* has replaced Ellis's *Early Diary* and will eventually replace Barrett's *Diary and Letters*. What is coming to light is the material modestly excised by Victorian and post-Victorian editors, so Troide's picture of Burney the Diarist in her younger years is already markedly different from what we used to know.

So, there is where we are. A new Burney is emerging — a Burney who is freshly a Dramatist (thanks largely to Peter Sabor); a Novelist whose works are all available for reading (thanks to OUP, Peter Sabor, Robert Mack and, I must add, myself, as well as other assistants and friends); and a Diarist newcast (thanks to Lars Troide). An effort has been made by myself, Julia Epstein and others in different ways to relate the person and her times to what she wrote. "Only connect," says Goethe (echoed by E.M. Forester). How do we connect Burney with Burney?

I feel a certain self-consciousness speaking of this, for I have had a good shot at working on Burney, and I am aware that there are younger voices to be heard from. I think of a line from Burney's journal in 1782, when she received complimentary remarks on *Cecilia* from Mrs. Delany: "The Old Wits have begun the charge!" (D&L, II, 177). I am one of the "Old Wits" now, I thought, chancing upon that line again, and yet, how cleverly she words it, and how gracefully and yet impishly she takes up the male noun Wit for a person, and makes it applicable to the female. I appreciate as I so often do with Burney, the style of mind at work here.

Can we get an integrated view of Burney — the Novelist, Dramatist and Diarist? Can we get an integrated but not oversimplified Burney — a Burney for the 1990s? We might begin our project of connecting, I suppose, with looking for instances in which one of the works carries on, as it were, from another, bridges and causeways that indicate the works are not contained within rigid boundaries: This is a novel. That is a journal-letter. This is a play. Processes of thinking and styles of exploration move from one to another so they are parts of the same continent and not in the sea ensiled. For instance, in the vanquished play *The Witlings*, the would-be wit, Lady Smatter, recites Pope's line from his Essay on the Characters of Women (Moral Essays II) "Most women have no Character at

all." Lady Smatter sets this up as a topic for discussion at her salon, the gathering of dullards she calls her "'Spirit [Esprit] Party"? and leads off saying she doesn't see "if this was true in the time of Pope, why People should complain so Much of the depravity of the present Age?" She mistakes "character" in Pope's use of the word, taking it to mean virtue and in a woman's case simply female chastity, rather than distinct identity. When old Codger indicates she has mistaken the word, Lady Smatter gets huffy. Evidently the idea of distinct female identity is difficult to grasp.

We find Pope's dictum coming up again, in a somewhat different context, in *Camilla*, Burney's novel of 1796. The witty woman of the world, Mrs. Arlbery complains of the social monotony:

> *'Tis a miserable thing, my dear General, to see the dearth of characters there is in the world. Pope has bewailed it in women; believe me, he might have extended his lamentation. You may see indeed, one man grave, and another gay; but with no more 'mark or likelihood,' no more distinction of coloring, than what simply belongs to a dismal face or a merry one... We are almost all, my good General, of nature so pitifully plastic, that we act from circumstances, and are fashioned by situation.* (p.398)

In both of those instances, women past the first youth and with a reputation for wit register a conscious need for success by means of distinction. The suburban Lady Smatter thinks she gains distinction as a wit, but she is too unwitty to see Pope's full meaning or to be insulted by it, although she has stupidly made another anti-female insult out of it. In the flush of respectability, she doesn't see that she is being denied any originality. Mrs. Arlbery, who has Lady Smatter's same desire to shine amidst an entourage of admiring and entertaining people, is fully aware of the nuances of Pope's meanings. Taking her cue from Henry Fielding, she uses Pope's line against society in general and against male individuals who fail to achieve identity: "with just as little light and shade, just as abrupt a skip from one to the other, as separates inevitably the old man from the young one." Men are crude variations on a theme. The revised objects of Pope's negative line became not just males, but all humankind. She raises the disturbing thought that we have no identity, no "individuality" at all.

> *The word "Observation" comes readily to mind. Burney has often been credited as a good observer. But observation is a very limited term and has traditionally often been used to express limitation. Women writers were (grudgingly) allowed to be good at observation.*

Burney observes in characters whom she criticizes what she observes in herself — a certain craving for "originality," which in her early lifetime is gaining ground rapidly as both an aesthetic and a social value. The idea of originality is at once both attractive and repugnant. In her own preface to *Evelina*, Burney praises Johnson, Rousseau, Richardson, Fielding and Smollett, but then says in a surprising turn: "yet I presume not to attempt pursuing the same ground which they have tracked; whence, though they have left it barren." (8-9). What is this but a gigantic claim to originality, a dismissal of precursors, and the barren plain they have left? Yet in the next paragraph Burney entreats us not to misunderstand: "that what I have here ventured to say in regard to imitation, may be understood, as it is meant, in a general sense, and not be imputed to an opinion of my own originality, which I have not the vanity, the folly, or the blindness, to entertain." (9) How are we to understand her?

It is easy enough, and probably not entirely inapt, to attribute these remarks to modesty. They are prefaced by an author only in her mid-twenties to her anonymously published novel. It is natural for her to feel, or at any rate to manifest, a shrinking from the hubris of laying claim to originality on the part of a mere female, even though in this instance her name, age, or gender are to be identified. But looking at this preface in the light of other material in Burney, such as Mrs. Arlbery's speech quoted above, we may find in it an expression, not of modesty (I am not good enough to be original) but of philosophic doubt (originality is a chimerical quality to which no one can really lay claim). It is not true that there is no Romantic side to Burney (arguably there is more in her than in Jane Austen) but the "romantic" insights or claims are in her too always scrutinized. In her "love stories," there is a sharp tempering of the conventional romance, and the heroes strike us as well-meaning but weak. There are no Mr. Darcys, though we see Edward Ferrars, and even Edmund Bertram, who may be partly drawn from Edgar Mandlebert of *Camilla*. In The *Witlings*, it is suggested that "originality" is at least customarily a self-satisfied impression which is the happy reward of too little consciousness of culture. Dabler the bad poet is a would-be wit, the cossetted hero of the "Spirit Party" and a false pretender to literary gifts. Dabler reads his little rhyming 'epigram' which might be taken as Burney's ironic comic hymn to "originality":

> *Ye gentle Gods, O hear me plead*
> *And kindly grant this little loan;*
> *Make me forget whate'er I read*
> *That what I write may be my own.*

What academic can claim never to have felt thus?

Forgetting is a wonderful tranquilizer of the anxiety of influence, as Burney sharply records.

We can pursue certain themes or motifs, even quotations, from diary to novel to play and back. But can we say what are the central qualities or graces of Burney's writing, and can they be found everywhere in her oeuvre? What are her qualities?

The word "Observation" comes readily to mind. Burney has often been credited as a good observer. But observation is a very limited term and has traditionally often been used to express limitation. Women writers were (grudgingly) allowed to be good at observation. Hazlitt, discussing Burney, speaks disparagingly of all women:

The surface of their minds, like that of their bodies, seems of a finer texture than ours; more soft and susceptible of immediate impression. They have less...passion or imagination. But they are more easily impressed with whatever appeals to their senses or habitual prejudices." (*Edinburgh Review*. February, 1815).

As writers, they are capable of noting manners because they are slavishly devoted to social custom and note every deviation from it. They can convey scattered impressions: "There is little other power in Miss Burney's novels, than that of immediate observation."Thus, the author is "a very woman," says Hazlitt. Note that Hazlitt is not condemning Burney alone, but all women writers, past, present and future. Hazlitt's review would not have been fit for Jane Austen to read either. Observation of dull ordinary life is what women are fit for.

We certainly do find "immediate observation" in Burney's works; she notes closely (as Richardson did) the minute gestures, the little give-way, the theatrics, intentional and unintentional of social life, as in the description of an embarrassed lady:

Lady Alithea felt herself blush. The confusion was painful and unusual to her. She drew her glove off and on; she dabbed a highly scented pocket handkerchief repeatedly to her nose; she wondered what it was o'clock; took her watch in her hand, without recollecting to examine it; and then wondered if it would rain though not a cloud was to be discerned in the sky. (*Camilla* 413)

The lady is all there for us, with her upper-crust accoutrements, and her exaggeration (a highly scented handkerchief). Burney is undeniably very good at capturing the details of a person or a place, and most especially the manners of a place or group. It is the energy adapted to the capture of detail that makes her diaries such a pleasure to read:

By far the best among our men acquaintance here...is a Mr. Tidy. You will probably suspect...that this is a nickname only, whereas he hath not, heaven knows, a better in the world! He appears a grave, reserved, quiet man: but he is a sarcastic, observing, and ridiculing man. No trusting to appearances, no, not even to wigs! for a meaner, more sneaking and pitiful wig — a wig that less bespeaks a man worth twopence in his pocket, or two ideas in his head, did I never see than that of Mr. Tidy (*D&L*, I, 240 [1779])

Burney is always entertained by male wigs, which seem to call forth her sense of the ridiculous — as a phallic object, perhaps, the wig that speaks a man's social and masculine worth, a piece of transparent disguise. Mr. Tidy's wig is a disguise if a pointless one, for it looks like the wig of a stupid fellow: Mr. Tidy's own sarcastic observation not being up to observing the effect of his own wig. We might compare Virginia Woolf's gaze at "the bald spot at the back of the head." The observing woman looks at a man when perhaps she is not supposed to have this kind of gaze. Hazlitt would comment that this is just the kind of trivial mind that women do display, their interest all in physical appearance and social convention. What Hazlitt didn't add was that it is unnerving to have women looking so freely about them.

But if this is "observation," let us think of other kinds of observation of a more amplified kind, which can also be found in Burney. One of the passages brought to light by Lars Troide in editing the *Early Journal and Letters* and restoring what Barrett and Ellis left out, has become a particular favorite with me, if rather a gruesome one. Writing to Samuel Crisp in March 1775 (three years before *Evelina* was published), Burney describes the jokes about the unfortunate Italian Soprano, Lucrezia Agujari, known as "La Bastardella":

You have doubtless heard the story of the Pig's Eating half her side, & or of its being repaired by a silver kind of machine. You may be sure that she has not Escaped the witticisms of our Wags upon this score; it is too fair a subject for Ridicule to have been suffered to pass untouched. Mr. Bromfield has given her the Nick name of Argentine...& my Lord Sandwich has made a Catch, in Italian, & in dialogue between her and the Pig ...beginning with Ciao Mio Porco — the Pig answers by a Grunt; — & it ends by his exclaiming a che bet mangiare! Lord S. has shewn it to my Father, but he says he will not have it set, till she is gone to Italy. (*EJL*, II, 98)

In this description, Frances Burney seems to be in complicity with the masculine jokes about the singer and her silver side. But, by carrying the description and the account of the jokes far enough, she moves into the territory of the visibly dubious and disgusting, and the egregious Lord Sandwich comes out not as an elegant wit, but as a boor of the first water. Dr.. Burney displays better feeling, but the shape of the sentence disappoints us, for Dr. Burney's sensibility restrain him only *until* the soprano has retreated to Italy. She won't have to hear the sung lampoon, but there is apparently no other reason why it shouldn't be executed.

It is interesting both that this passage exists, and that Ellis cut it out, the excision being a pointer to the kind

of disturbance both described and elicited. Burney is more than merely recording here. By being able to observe and describe so bitingly and succinctly, she experiments with creating the kind of reaction she is going to be able to arouse with her account of the old women's race in the third volume of *Evelina*. Her own life and circles in London gave her a very good idea of the amount of sheer cruelty that exists in the social world, and the amount of brutal ridicule directed against women, foreigners, the poor and mere entertainers in general. There is a kind of animal cruelty, as it were, within the upper classes (Lord Sandwich himself assimilating to his porco.) The Italian language both mocks the hapless foreigner and veils (or rather tries to veil) the crudity. The weight of irony to be allotted to Burney's phrase "too fair a subject for Ridicule to have been suffered to pass untouched" is difficult to assess. Burney observes here the way that others observe. I suggest her sentence has a restrained satiric *style indirect libre* underneath it. Here we go beyond observation to judgment, but without a clear or easy judgment being available.

If we have Observation, we also find Estrangement. What colors Burney's observation and makes it less and much more than the pretty chatter from 18th-century drawing rooms is her ability to render the familiar, the easy, the socially "natural" as strange. What makes Burney an exciting and, I think, a disturbing writer is amount of distance put between us and not only characters but any available easy point of view. She observes the norms — yes. But as she observes them, they reform intosomething strange, bizarre, complex, like Lord Sandwich on La Bastardella's wound. Even a wig *estranges* a man from himself. Lurking behind all Burney's comedy (and her comedy is truly various, skilled and laugh-provoking) is the sense that there may be no normal world to return to.

Far from observing, as Hazlitt would have it, only the minor deviations from a social, comfortable set of conventional right behaviors, Burney makes us question whether there are truly any "right" behaviors at all. We begin to wonder where the conventions come from and to question whether all manners are not a kind of formalized but not at all well-organized madness. I think this is so big and, in some ways, so terrifying an aspect of Burney that we spent a century or more, say from 1840 to the 1950s, at least, in covering this up and turning her into a little chirpy "Fanny" who is cute and sweet and no threat. This is one of the reasons why I would put her among major comic writers, and why she can at her best easily surpass Maria Edgeworth (good as Edgeworth is), for Edgeworth always has to have certainty. Edgeworth needs to believe in the normal much more than Burney does.

Mrs. Arlbery's statement, quoted before, reflects some of Burney's great comic doubt, which estranges the reader from the characters just as the character is estranged from herself. Mrs. Arlbery (whose name, as Burney's sister thought, could be read as a partial anagram for 'D'Arblay") expresses with unusual completeness the lurking doubt that nobody has "character" or "originality." It is no longer just a case of a would-be poet and a dull, suburban matron not coming up to a level of high cultural consciousness. What we are offered is the opportunity to notice (if we can bear to) that we are all (intelligent or stupid alike) "pitifully plastic," that we are all made or largely made by circumstances or situation.

Mrs. Arlbery laughs at herself after saying as much, and admits that if Sir Sedley had behaved with proper attention to her, she would be as amused as he is instead of holding forth about the impertinence and folly of the young aristocrats. When the General compliments her on this observation on herself, "This is candid, however," she replies with a kind of meta-candour: "O, we all acknowledge our faults, now; tis the mode of the day; but the acknowledgment passes for current payment; and therefore we never amend them." (398)

Such an analysis, here pointed out to us through an unusually articulate character, is often to be set in operation by the reader of the diaries, novels (and one might add, the audience, if only there had been an audience of Burney's comic plays). What accompanies such analysis is a sense of the difficulty of allotting meaning to things. Meaning is seen in Burney as a kind of expensive import that human beings attach to life with a good deal of cost to themselves. I do not mean to imply that Burney was an atheist — I think she visibly is not — but her skepticism is directed against the human social and philosophical meanings that are attached to circumstances and actions.

On one level, *Evelina* the novel is completely conventional in recording as its "Family Romance" the search of a young girl for her father, or rather for recognition by him. But there is another way of reading *Evelina* so that the value of the concept of "legitimacy" is questioned as it is within the novel through the existence of the illegitimate half-brother, and the illegitimate girl who has been adopted by Evelina's father by mistake. Legitimacy is the gift only of the Father. But is the father always desirable? The strong presence of Captain Mirvan is an ugly reminder of how disagreeable a father might be. Evelina says with naive frankness that he is "surly, vulgar and disagreeable." She resents on his daughter Maria's account the jokes against her that begin as soon as he reenters her life:

Almost the same moment that Maria was presented to him, he began some rude jests upon the bad shape her nose, and called her a tall, ill-formed thing. (Evelina, 42)

Evelina thinks Mrs. Mirvan "deserved a better lot": "I am amazed she would marry him." Husbands and fathers may be the results of social fictions. After all, Evelina, with the love and support of Mr. Villars, who is not her father, has grown up happy. Legitimacy seems to be a matter of fashion or

dangerously close to it. Do we accept it because we are pitifully plastic? The subversive questions that go on within Burney's stories are certainly somewhat hidden, but they are there. I think one of the readers who understood Burney's jokes very well was the young Jane Austen, whose early writings have so many jokes about legal and illegal unions, legitimacy and illegitimacy, the licit and illicit.

Society has the power to make individual members feel embarrassed. Burney understands very well the power of the social engine of embarrassment, but another matter dealt with in her comedies is the issue of guilt. I would go so far as to say the idea of guilt fascinates Burney, and is a great comic subject. This brings her closer to *Mansfield Park* of course, for *Mansfield Park* is a novel riddled with acknowledged and unacknowledged guilt.) In exhibiting the extent to which the production of guilt is used as a social tool, consciously and even unconsciously, Austen in this novel is entering Burney territory. The expressive and even violent treatment of the violent effects of guilt production is, however, rather more Burney's interest than Austen's.

> *Guilt plays a large role in all of Burney's writings. In the comedy both of her comic plays and her novels, it plays an ironic role, for guilt does little good.*

Guilt plays a large role in all of Burney's writings. In the comedy both of her comic plays and her novels, it plays an ironic role, for guilt does little good. Humble acceptance of faultiness and promise of amendment is, of course, the approved social response, particularly by a woman, but also by young men — to awareness of their implication in wrongdoing, or what is judged as wrongdoing.

Ideally, public atonement is made and the guilt internalized. But the ideal is not the real and the ideal itself becomes dubious. Burney explores the difficulty for almost any one of her characters in accepting or dealing with guilt. The useful social mechanism seems to backfire, and the morality emerging from guilt production becomes slowly more and more bizarre. She is acute in noting the ways in which people shrug off or will not accept some implication of faultiness, starting with herself. Nor, as Burney knows, is this capacity to deflect imputed guilt and humility altogether a bad thing — a woman, in particular, who cannot resist some of the social precepts will be crushed. She shouldn't believe even what she is told in books. In reading Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, Burney comments:

I cannot help taking notice of one thing in the 3d Book — which has provoked me for the honour of the sex...Venu...threatens to deprive (Helen) of her own beauty ... Hellen (sic) immediately yields her Hand. Thus has Homer proved his opinion of our poor sex — that the Love of Beauty is our most prevailing passion. It really grieves me to think that there certainly must be reason for the insignificant opinion the greatest men have of Women — At least I fear there must. — But I don't in fact believe it Thank God! (EJL, I, 37)

The willingness to suspend one's own belief in social judgment marks the person who is capable of survival. A degree of cultural agnosticism is necessary for the female who wants to survive and finds herself constantly in the presence of imputed guilt, whether she is in the ballroom or reading classics of our literature. The world wants to make you feel bad — you have to resist. Burney's heroines, Cecilia and Camilla, in particular, are shown both succumbing to the temptations of self-doubt, self-blame and guilt — and resisting these temptations ... But some characters (both men and women) who are intentionally or inadvertently by their faults afflicters of the heroine *should* feel guilt. So the reader must feel. But we see that these characters cannot feel guilt, cannot even bear the prospect of it. Rather than leading to good, guilt leads to a combination of self-wounding with disguise, and sets the scene for alienation from self and others.

Guilt over the mistreatment of his dead wife, Evelina's mother, made Sir John Belmont a fair target for an impostor; he accepts little Polly Green as his own daughter when she is foisted on him because guilt has fostered inertia. In *Cecilia*, guilt drives Mr. Harrell to commit suicide after the weird champagne party at Vauxhall. We do not associate champagne with self-destruction, so, like Cecilia herself, we do not pick up the clues. We have set Harrell down as a manipulator and a poseur. So he is, but not without a confused and angry sense of guilt that leads him to his last dramatic pose in blowing his brains out. Harrell has signed his bills with the grandiose statement "To be all paid tonight with a BULLET!" (430). O f course, that is the wrong currency.

To make someone feel guilty is not necessarily to make him/her behave as you wish, as Burney shows in her "'good" folks and "bad". Mortimer Delvile's mother is an amiable and accomplished and even kind woman, but she manipulates Cecilia's guilt — or tries to — with great ruthlessness in trying to separate the girl from Mrs. Delvile's son. There are echoes of this kind of manipulation in Lady Catherine de Bourgh, but Mrs. Delvile, intelligent and charming, has been a real friend to Cecilia in earlier times, and the loss of the friendship under the guilt-infliction adds to Cecilia's woe, and also to her confusion.

Guilt, once arisen, never seems to point in a clear direction or dictate any coherent plan of action. When Jane Austen says, "Let other pens dwell on guilt and

misery," (*MP*, 420), she knew that other pens had dealt with these, and one of those pens was Burney's. Burney does deal with "guilt and misery" but in her own imaginative and ironic way. When we look at the chaos wrought by guilt in Burney's novels, we can see why she is in some ways felt to be a modern novelist, or rather, why her works have come into renewed prominence at the end of the 20th century, She shares what has been our discomfiture with social engineering through arousing guilt in the individual, especially when claiming that God or divine authority somehow constituted put it there. What has usually put guilt there is some form of constructed regulation.

Burney is, therefore, oddly interested in the characters who can shrug off guilt. At an extreme, they are pathological and cruel like Captain Mirvan. But they can also be refreshingly funny. One of her best characters of the guilt-avoiders is to be found in the play *Love and Fashion*. Mordaunt Exbury is a free-spending elder son whose extravagance now forces his father, Lord Exbury, and the rest of his family to retire into the country in order to recoup the money they have lost paying Mordaunt's expenses. That he is even in more financial trouble than his family realizes furnishes the matter for the plot and also for mistakes over the nature and conduct of the play's lover-hero, Valentine, and his beloved Hilaria. Mordaunt, the cause of all the trouble, is cool, laconic, apparently affectless. At the denouement, when his part in their troubles had been revealed, Mordaunt has the funniest line in the play:

I have been the ruin of you all, — & I feel cursed queer. I'll go and lie down again. (V. iv)

Mordaunt in his Chekovian or Oblomovian exhaustion is not, at least, actively working to make others as miserable as he. In this he is untypical of many of Burney's characters, including her nicest ones; for instance, Sir Hugh, the plump, fuzzy-minded benevolent uncle of Camilla who plays with his own original guilt for causing little Eugenia to be scarred and crippled for life by manipulating the entire family, and trying to govern the young people through games of inheritance and marriage.

It is not the least of the paradoxes of guilt, as Burney explores it, that it offers the guilty party a thorough excuse for the exertion of unusual psychic force upon others. The extreme case is that of the mad moralist Albany in *Cecilia*, forever doing penance for the girl whose death he caused. Indeed, that someone exerts such force ought to serve as a clue that he/she feels secretly guilty about something. The most common outlet for unacknowledged or imperfectly accommodated guilt is the creation of some elaborate and baroque guilt in others. Dr. Marchmont's resentful misogyny has been partly the product of his own guilt at the ruin of his marriages, and he nourishes both a sense of personal inadequacy and a sense of guilt in Edgar Mandlebert, a man whose self-doubt makes him likely to fly into resentment.

We think, reading *Camilla*, that the truly guilty parties do not feel guilt. The heroine's mischievous brother Lionel is especially troublesome, an apparently insouciant practical joker who imposes upon his sisters. But his cocky facade conceals tremendous insecurity, as, this sisters come to discover. When Lionel is caught out in an adulterous affair, for which he needs 'hush money," he turns to blackmailing an elderly relative to frighten him into coughing up, a matter for which he would be subject to severe legal penalties if his family didn't indeed hush it up. Lionel continues to jest, and Camilla, sickened, wonders if he feels anything: "What have you done with your heart? she cries. (739) But for Lionel, any kind of conscious repentance gets confused with self-abasement, disintegration, and even (as with Harrell) desire for self-annihilation:

However, shall I tell you the truth? I hate myself and so completely hate myself at this moment, that I dare not be grave! dare not suffer reflection to take hold of me, lest it should make life too odious for me to bear it. (739)

Burney, indeed, hardly knows how to rescue Lionel from the plight into which she has brought him, for no 18th-century novelist, male or female, could let off too lightly a character who does what Lionel does. And the author has let us understand why this only son of a clergyman has gone in for illicit sex for some amusement. The more Mr. Tyrold expatiates upon Lionel's guilt as an adulterer, the more readily we begin to understand how he has entered into an affair with a married woman, whose husband, he claims, deserves it: "Such a tiresome quiz!...You never knew such a blockhead. The poor thing can't bear him, but she's fond of me to distraction." (731) Lionel needs to feel that someone is extremely fond of him — fond "to distraction."

At the end of *Camilla*, Lionel can see no better way out than avoiding his family (now partially reconciled) as much as possible by procuring "an appointment that carried him abroad." There "time aided adversity in forming him a new character." (909) What Lionel has to obtain is nothing less than "a new character" — there is no step-by-step retrieval of an old one.

If Lionel is to be officially reprobated in *Camilla* (but not as harshly as his parents would do in trying their campaign of tough love or severity), then we can supply a decided contrast in another character in Burney's works, one whose lightness of heart is evidently approved of by the author. In the play *The Woman-Hater*, the girl Joyce is in the position of little Polly Green, a character we don't hear from directly in *Evelina*. Like Polly Green, Joyce has been foisted on her "father" who is estranged from his wife and ignorant of the existence of his real daughter. Mr. Wilmot, gloomy and severe, is trying to bring up a proper lady. He gives Joyce, his supposed daughter, moralizing books to read. But, like Burney with Pope's *Iliad*, Joyce "doesn't believer it." When her father is sway, she jumps up and flings away the improving books:

Margaret Anne Doody

So march off, Mr. Thompson! decamp, Mrs. Chapone...& off! off! with a hop, skip and a jump, ye Ramblers, Spectators and Adventurers!..."(II,iii).

During the course of the play, Joyce learns from the Nurse that she is really the Nurse's child by a shoemaker. Nurse urges Joyce to behave and keep up her position as a usurper. Joyce is briefly upset to realize her change in social status but very soon sees the advantages. She is not much daunted at being told if her identity comes out, she will have to be a kitchen maid or a ballad singer; indeed, she begins to act the role of the street singer and finds it could be fun. She is immensely relieved to find that her "Father" isn't her father. She is not detected, but casts herself off with a recognition of her new freedom: "...why I a'n't afraid to speak to him now he i'n't Papa!" (V.xvi).

Joyce, wrongly named Wilmot, has the power to *rejoice*. She shrugs off the load of imputed and cultural guilt, which the very plot line seems to make her wear, and shows another face of things. One of the reasons Burney's comedy is so attractive, despite its edginess and violence, I think, is the amount of lively, rejoicing being done at the bottom of it. And I think one of the secrets at that comedy's heart is that rejoicing is better than guilt. Burney had to be pretty careful how she said it but I think she did say that. There is a taste for gaiety, for lightness of motion, for skimming the ground like her fleet Camilla. Burney always wanted to write a comic play or novel with a heroine named "Ariella". The lightness, the airy Ariel-la side of her comedy balances the seriousness, the mordant satire, and the questioning of meaning, the pursuit of the results of guilt. Not for nothing, I repeat, lightly, was she a Gemini, an Air sign. We can heartily enjoy her Ariel-rejoicing, her lightness of touch with serious matters, but it is a touch that gives these serious matters a good shove, too, and leaves them not where they were.

Because of all these qualities and more to be found in her works — her observation, her sense of estrangement, her questioning, and her important levity — we are meeting this afternoon to honor Frances Burney in the first Annual Meeting of the Burney Society.

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