

Burney Letter

Vol. 4 No. 2

The Burney Society

Fall 1998

Troide, Lane to speak in Québec

Sept. 26 is the postmark deadline for those members of the Burney Society who plan to register for the fourth annual general meeting in North America, scheduled to be held the evening of Friday, Oct. 9, at the Loews Le Concorde Hotel in the heart of historic Quebec City, Quebec, Canada.

The Burney dinner, featuring talks by Dr. Lars Troide and Maggie Lane, will begin at approximately 7:30 p.m., following a cocktail reception held as part of the 20th annual meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America. JASNA is meeting at the Loews Le Concorde, and, thanks to the assistance of JASNA conference coordinator Peter Sabor and co-coordinator Victoria Kortés-Papp, the Burney Society has also been welcomed at the hotel.

The dinner will be held in the Pilot Room, a private room located on the third floor of the hotel. The hotel staff can direct members to the room. If for some reason there is a change in the time the meeting starts, a notice will be posted on the JASNA message board. The price of the four-course dinner, tea or coffee,

tax, tip and meeting costs is \$43 U.S. each for those who want the chicken or vegetarian entrees, or \$50 U.S. for the those who prefer the salmon entree. Beer and wine may be purchased separately. Members can register for the meeting by filling out the form on page 8 and sending it, along with a check made out to the Burney Society in U.S. dollars to Lucy Magruder, Secretary/Treasurer, The Burney Society, P.O. Box 2971, Tubac, AZ, 85646.

Registration forms must be postmarked no later than Sept. 26 in order to give Lucy time to make arrangements with the hotel. Lucy much prefers that all registrations be paid in advance. However, Canadian and British members who may have problems with currency exchange can send in the filled-out form with a note saying they will pay at the meeting. Anyone with questions can call Lucy at 520-398-8587.

Following a short business meeting, the dinner will feature an address by Dr. Lars E. Troide, director of the Burney Project at McGill University, followed by

a shorter talk on Fanny Burney and Bath given by Maggie Lane, Burney Society patron and vice president for Great Britain. Ms. Lane gave the full version of her talk at the British branch meeting of the Burney Society in June. The full text of that talk, along with the text of Dr. Troide's talk, will be published in the 1999 edition of *The Burney Journal*.

Dr. Troide, who holds a doctorate in English from Yale University, has won a number of prizes and research grants, including one from the American National Endowment for the Humanities. He is the editor of the new series of *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, being published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford and McGill-Queen's University Press. Three of the projected 12-volume series have been published. He also edited *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Henry Seymour Conway, Lady Ailesbury, Lord and Lady Herford* (et al.), published by the Yale University Press and Oxford University Press. He has published

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'The Witlings' to get its West End debut

By Ian Kelly

It gave me more pleasure than I was quite able to communicate to travel to the meeting of the British branch of the Burney Society in June to deliver the exciting and happy news that the go-ahead has been recently given for a full-scale West End production of Fanny Burney's 1800 comedy, *A Busy Day*.

Those who have followed Miss Burney's more recent "career" as a

dramatist may be aware that there was a production of this wonderful satirical farce in Bristol several years ago that subsequently transferred to the London fringe, and that there have been semi-staged readings of *The Witlings* mounted in London and North America. I had the great good fortune to be cast in that first production in Bristol, and I have been trying ever since to find ways to facilitate the larger scale production — and audience — that *A Busy Day* deserves. I also had had the fascinating experience

of playing in *The Witlings*.

As some may know, Alan Coveney's adaption and productions of *A Busy Day* were great critical successes in Bristol and again at The King's Head in London — the capital's oldest pub theatre. But both spaces presented certain challenges to this elegant comedy of manners, which bounces between louche gaming houses, the aristocratic salons of Georgian Piccadilly and Kensington Gardens all in

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the course of one roaringly busy day.

What concerned both critics and audience alike at the time of both these productions were the twin concerns of whether Fanny Burney should be re-evaluated now as a dramatist, as well as a novelist and diarist, and — of more concern to the theatre going public — whether *A Busy Day* would ring across the centuries and still, now, add to the sum of human happiness as Dr. Johnson might advise. The answer, from both critics and audience to both these questions, was a resounding “yes.” Indeed, several papers hailed *A Busy Day* as a lost comic masterpiece, a bridging point between Sheridan and Pinero — but of more value to our box office — as the “best night out in London” at the time. One hopes that Fanny might have been pleased, but we played in a heat wave a few summers ago and struggled to get West End producers along.

One who did has struggled with me

over the years in between to find the right “package” to relaunch the play, in another production, but still using Alan’s adept adaptation. Bath Theatre Royal, appropriately, recently came on board the project with the West End producers Green & Lenagan (whose current West End projects include Steven Berkoff at the Haymarket and the Prunella Scales/Timothy West *Birthday Party* tour), along with Salisbury Playhouse, where the sets will be built. The new production will be directed by Jonathan Church, artistic director of the Salisbury Playhouse and will open in May 1999 followed by a five or six week tour of various provincial cities in the U.K. and then our arrival in the West End.

Although it is very early days in West End terms, I am allowed to say that the wonderful actress Miriam Margolyes (*The Age of Innocence*, *Pacific Heights*, *The Killing of Sister George* in the West End) has expressed her keenness to play the City parvenu Mrs. Watts. And I have to consider myself presently the luckiest actor in England, or more precisely France where I am currently filming, in being given the chance to recreate the

role of Frank Cleveland, the young rake whom one critic described as “like seeing Algernon for the first time at the first night of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.”

It has struck me as amazing, and amazingly sad, that it has taken this long for Fanny Burney to get the theatre audience she deserves. Many of you will of course know the sad series of accidents and oppressions that led to her plays remaining unperformed in her lifetime — and for these two centuries since. Only the slow progress of theatre producing has led to this further delay of a few years, and I hope many of you may want to share the excitement — which I, like you, have also come to know from the novels — of her wit and warmth speaking down through the generations. To hear a modern audience fall about together in the joyous laughter of recognition is a true signifier of her genius and provides some of my happiest memories of being in a theatre.

Those who might like more information about financial support of this production can contact Ian Kelly, 0181 348 5563, or the West End producers Green & Lenagan, 0171 713 6696, or fax 0171 713 6384. In any event, put Bath Theatre Royal, May, in your diaries — as Fanny might have done.

Newsletter editor sought

The Burney Society is looking for a volunteer or volunteers to edit the *Burney Letter*, the newsletter of the society that appears in the spring and fall of each year.

Catalina Hannan, who was the newsletter editor, no longer had time to do it after she assumed the duties of co-coordinator of the Metropolitan New York region for the Jane Austen Society of North America. We thank her very much for all her work. Burney Society President Paula Stepankowsky has been

editing the newsletter in the interim.

Burney Society members in Great Britain, Canada or the United States who would be interested in becoming the editor or assisting with newsletter production should contact Paula Stepankowsky, 1407-24th Ave., Longview, WA USA; p_stepankowsky@tdn.com; 360-636-3763. The society is particularly interested in a volunteer with desktop publishing skills, as well as writing and editing experience.

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numerous articles about Fanny Burney and is reader of manuscripts for Oxford University Press and the University of Georgia Press. Dr. Troide is a Burney Society patron.

Ms. Lane of Bristol, England, is the author of numerous books and articles about women writers of the late 18th and early 19th-centuries. They include *Jane Austen's England*, *Literary Daughters*, *Bath in the Life and Time of Jane Austen*, *Jane Austen's Family Through Five Generations*, and *Jane Austen's World: The Life and Times of England's Most Popular Author*.

Burney Letter

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

President..... Paula L. Stepankowsky

Address correspondence regarding newsletter articles to Paula Stepankowsky, 1407 24th Ave., Longview, WA 98632 USA

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 2971, Tubac, AZ, 85646. In Great Britain, write Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, England, GU34 3JB.

Lane, plaque highlight U.K. meeting

By Jean Bowden

We were pleased to welcome our speaker, Maggie Lane, the vice president of the British Branch of the Burney Society, and Burney family members Charles and Brigit Burney, John and Cynthia Comyn, and William Fraser, who was our host at the Petty France Hotel set in the lovely Cotswold countryside.

Thirty members and friends, and patrons of the *Burney Society* (Susan McCartan, Charles Burney and John Comyn) were also welcomed warmly welcomed. Jean Bowden, the British secretary/treasurer and patron, then read out a message of welcome from Paula Stepankowsky, our president. Many members expressed a wish to see Paula at one of our meetings, and Jean said she would pass on that message.

Maggie Lane then gave us a fascinating talk about "Fanny Burney and Bath," and Charles Burney gave the vote of thanks. The text of the talk will be published in the 1999 *Burney Journal*. After a short break for tea, we began the business meeting with apologies for absence. The accounts were then presented. Our assets on 7 June 1998 were £495.92, but Jean hastened to add that we still had to pay for the British share of the production costs of the recent *Burney Letter* and *Burney Journal* as the invoice had not yet been presented, and also the cost of room hire and refreshments for the present meeting. Last year we had 46 paid-up members. Jean expressed the opinion that several members may simply have forgotten to send their dues, although there had been several reminders in the Burney Letters.

We then discussed the first number of the *Burney Journal*. Members felt that the editor, Victoria Kortés-Papp, and the editorial board, deserved congratulations on producing such an interesting and very professional-looking journal. It was very gratifying that in such a short time, the *Burney Society* had achieved two of its aims, permission for a plaque in Westminster Abbey and the production of a journal.

Regarding the positioning of the plaque, we all agreed that the

very best place for it would be next to that of Fanny's father, Charles Burney. Members were told that the president, Paula Stepankowsky, was planning to come to England in March 1999, to meet the Surveyor of the Fabric at the Abbey. The question of fund-raising was discussed. Susan McCartan said she had acceded to the president's request to be responsible for fund-raising in Britain.

The idea of a one-day conference in London, suggested by John Wiltshire of La Trobe University in Australia at the meeting in San Francisco, to be held at the same time as the formal dedication of the plaque to Fanny Burney, was greeted with great enthusiasm, and ideas were put forward as to its possible venue. A dinner to celebrate Fanny's 250th birthday, on the same day, with any luck, 13 June 2002, was also approved.

We all congratulated Kate Chisholm on the publication of her book, *Fanny Burney, her Life* (Chatto & Windus, London, 1998, ISBN 0-70116378-X). Kate had been asked to bring some copies of it for sale at the meeting, and members were pleased to have the opportunity to purchase autographed copies from her. Kate told us about the writing of her book.

News items from members were then heard. Charles Burney, who has so far been unable to attend any of our meetings, said he hoped in future to come more often, and he stressed that he felt it was important to have the name Fanny Burney on the plaque. Ian Kelly, an actor who played in Alan Coveney's production of *A Busy Day*, gave us good news about a further production of the play (details elsewhere in this *Burney Letter*). A letter from Francesca Saggini was read out, detailing her lecture at the University of Parma "Madness and Representation:

Frances Burney, Mary Wollestonecraft and the Court of George III." She has been asked to give a series of lectures at the University of Viterbo, focussing on Evelina and *The Wanderer* and their relation with the turn-of-the-century theatre. Maggie Lane is to speak at the meeting of the Burney Society in Quebec this October, and Jean Bowden will also be taking part in that meeting.

The next meeting of the British branch of the Burney Society will be held on Sunday, 11th June 1999, at Juniper Hall in Surrey. Kate Chisholm has very kindly agreed to speak at that meeting on the theme of "Fanny Burney and *The Wanderer*."

Plaque wording proposed

On the agenda for discussion at the British branch Annual General Meeting was the question of the wording to be used on the stone plaque to be dedicated to Fanny Burney in Westminster Abbey. After some quite heated discussion, it was decided that, so far as the British members of the Burney Society were concerned, we would like to see the following wording:

FANNY BURNEY
(MADAME D'ARBLAY)

Novelist

Diarist

Playwright

Daughter of Charles Burney Mus. D.
1752 - 1840

The controversy was over the listing order of Fanny's accomplishments. Many of us were of the opinion that "Diarist" should precede "Novelist." The problem, of course, is due to everyone's own particular interest. The historians and biographers amongst us naturally thought Fanny's diaries to be of supreme importance, whilst those involved in English literature thought she was far better known for her novels. We voted, and the majority vote was for "Novelist" to be listed first. It will be very interesting to see how the vote goes amongst the American and Canadian members at the AGM in Quebec.

The one thing upon which we were all in complete agreement was that her forename should be "Fanny" and not "Frances." In England, the country of her birth, life and death, the general public would not know who Frances Burney was, but would instantly recognize Fanny Burney.

Dr. Johnson's house reflects period

By Natasha Salton

"Mr. Johnson, who came home last night, sends his respects to dear Dr. Burney, and all the dear Burneys, little and great."

Dr. Johnson's House is located to the north of Fleet Street in a small square that is best reached on foot. This arm of the City is connected by alleys and courtyards that are a reminder of historic London. As Johnson once remarked, "If you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this city, you . . . must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts."

The house itself is a remarkable survival of an 18th-century townhouse. Built in 1700, it stands quietly on the east side of Gough Square. The house was built by a merchant called Gough, who gave his name to the square, of which No. 17 is the only 18th-century house left standing.

Samuel Johnson moved to this house in 1748. It was very much a place of work, as well as a home for himself and his wife, Elizabeth, as he had recently been commissioned to write a *Dictionary of the English Language*. In addition to being conveniently close to his printer, the house boasts a large garret floor, ideal as a workroom. The interior remains essentially the same as when Johnson lived here, with its solid pine staircase, paneling and window shutters. Several cupboards are built into the thickness of the wall, including a powder closet used for storing wigs, and a cellarette. The most unusual feature is two large moving panels on the first floor landing — now long since frozen — that were designed to make the entire first floor either open plan or divided into separate rooms.

Fanny Burney never visited this house, as she first met Johnson in 1777, nearly 20 years after he had left Gough Square. However, her father, Dr. Charles Burney, came to the house on at least one occasion. James Boswell writes: "After dinner, Mr. Johnson proposed to Mr. Burney to go up with him into his garret, which being accepted, he there found about five or six Greek folios, a deal writing-desk, and a chair and a half. Johnson, giving to his guest the entire seat tottered himself on one with only three legs and one arm."

Elizabeth died in 1752 in her room on the second floor, and it was after her death that Johnson began to surround himself with a household of people for whom he was responsible financially. His black servant, Frank Barber, lived with him until Johnson's death in 1784. Anna Williams, a friend of Elizabeth's, was an important part of the household and managed much of the domestic arrangements despite her blindness. Other dependents included Elizabeth Desmoulins, the daughter of Johnson's godfather, and Richard Levet, a medical practitioner known as "The Poor Man's Doctor." With no formal training, Dr. Levet often would treat the poor at very little cost.

This household was by no means always harmonious. Johnson summed up the domestic warfare that was commonplace at his house: "Williams hates everybody, Levet Hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams. Poll loves none of them."

Johnson would often jest about his quarrelsome dependents. On one occasion, he expressed a wish to Mrs. Thrale that Fanny Burney would portray his household in one of her books: "I wish Miss Burney would come among us; if she would only give us a week, we should furnish her with ample material for a new scene in her next work." Perhaps Johnson found relief in making a joke out of what must have been a difficult situation at times.

After Johnson moved from Gough Square, the house underwent a number of changes. It became a storehouse, a printing press, and a small hotel. By the beginning of the 20th century, the house was in a state of disrepair. It was bought by the Liberal member of Parliament, Cecil Harmsworth in 1911 and he set about restoring it to the house Dr. Johnson would have recognized.

Dr. Johnson's house is deliberately kept uncluttered so that the contents do not draw attention away from the house itself. There is period furniture placed in the rooms, of a simple and sturdy design such as Johnson would have used. Prints, paintings and portraits of Johnson's circle of friends are displayed. As Cecil Harmsworth observed: "The staircase, intact in every particular, that has so many times creaked to his footstep as he made his way up to the Dictionary Attic; the paneled walls that have resounded to his laughter and to his prayers — what more, or better, can his most enthusiastic follower desire!"

The City of London, particularly the area near St. Paul's Cathedral, suffered badly from bomb damage

in World War II. Dr. Johnson's House was saved by a combination of luck and hard work, as the house was adopted by the Auxiliary Fire Service who fought hard to save it. The Fire Service used the house as a base, and held musical evenings and lectures here, as well as used the house as a place to rest between shifts and as a canteen. The roof and Dictionary garret were burned out in December of 1940, and the house caught fire again the following month, and again in July of 1944.

The damage, though severe, was not irreparable, and a grant from the Pilgrim Trust replaced the roof after the war. Dr. Johnson's House has remained opened to the public since this time, and is popular with tourists and Londoners alike. A new attraction comes in the form of a memorial to Dr. Johnson's famous cat, Hodge. At the east side of the square, Hodge sits on the folio edition of the Dictionary, with oyster shells at his feet, and is the most recent statue to be erected in the City of London.

Dr. Johnson's House is open every day except Sundays and Bank Holidays, from 11 a.m. until 5:15 p.m. in summer and 4:45 p.m. during the winter months.

Natasha Salton is the curator of Dr. Johnson's House.

Performances scheduled

Three performances of "An Evening with Fanny Burney," presented by Burney Society member Karin Fernald, will be held at Dr. Johnson's House, 17 Gough Square, London, Sept. 30, Oct. 1 and Oct. 2.

The performances repeat a series Ms. Fernald gave at the house in May that proved so popular that many people were turned away, said Natasha Salton, curator of Dr. Johnson's House. Ms. Salton said numbers are limited to 40 per performance as they are held in the garret of the house. Ms. Fernald is well-known for her one-woman plays about Fanny Burney.

Tickets are £9 each and include a glass of wine, light refreshments and a private view of the house. For further information about the performances, contact Ms. Salton at Dr. Johnson's House, 17 Gough Square, London EC4A 3DE; 0171-353 3745.

Book Review

A Burney takes stock of a new Burney biography

Fanny Burney: Her Life, by Kate Chisholm. London: Chatto & Windus, 1998. 347 pages Hardback. £20.

Reviewed by Charles Burney

This reviewer has neither expertise nor time to attempt an academic, annotated review or this, the latest book to appear on Fanny Burney. This may be just as well, for this book is the first and foremost a "good read" and as such would surely have been appreciated — though argued in places — by its subject.

It is gratifying to witness the strong interest in Fanny Burney that has developed over the past 40 years since the appearance of Joyce Hemlow's *The History of Fanny Burney* (1958). To this work Kate Chisholm openly acknowledges her debt, by implication distancing herself from subsequent interpretations of Fanny's role in her own time and her impact on posterity. There is indeed a freshness about this book largely attributable to its broad approach. A mere glance at the back of this publication, however, will reveal the disciplined effort behind it, as demonstrated by the numerous footnotes — no mere references. Perhaps this book might have benefited by inclusion of many of these notes in the main text? But that would have strained the limits commonly thought advisable nowadays on the length of a work aimed at a wide readership. What a difference from Fanny's day! Yet she herself acknowledged the excessive length of all her novels save only *Evelina*, her first.

Different readers may seek answers to different questions in such a biography: Not all will be satisfied. What sort of person was Fanny? What were the influences of her family? To what degree does she reflect the social, economic and political conditions of her time? What is her role as a pioneer of modern feminism?

What were the psychological factors behind her life and works? This book is highly illuminating on the first three questions, but is all the better for these omissions. The discerning reader is given ample evidence in this book on which to form a judgment, without the author's expatiating on emotional or intellectual reactions at any great length.

Does Fanny Burney deserve such minute appraisal? The movement across the Atlantic of the bulk of the Burney papers since World War I — Burneys over the generations on the whole being poor at making money and no doubt in need of the proceeds — has undoubtedly stimulated the thesis industry characteristic of modern universities. Now interpretations are sought for their own sake, in the name of originality. Fanny has encouraged these through her innumerable deletions, the work of her lonely old age mulling over her diaries and letters.

There is an artificiality in attempts to consider Fanny in isolation from her family and friends: without company she was lost. Various authors have taken up positions for or against her father, Dr. Charles Burney Senior, and thus by implication, for or against her. Charles Sr. is viewed as domineering and demanding, certainly using Fanny and her sisters as editorial assistants; Fanny is viewed as self-interested and ruthless. It is easy to make a case for the prosecution against both father and daughter. The futility of going far along these lines lies in the fact that Fanny was a close reflection of her father in many ways. Her love of good conversation and stimulating company, shared with Hetty and Susan her sisters, dated back to her youth in Lynn Regis. From the first an ardent socialite, Fanny soon became a metropolitan snob, despising the provincials of King's Lynn — a sentiment she was to express years later a propos her husband's home town of Joigny. Surrey was somehow different, probably for its associations with Juniper Hall and the French emigres as well as the birth of her only child, Alexander (1794). With Camilla Cottage, Surrey was a mark of "retirement," not in the modern sense so much as in the meaning of the rural life, away from the assembly rooms, ballrooms and salons of London and later of Paris.

Fanny was a reflection of her father also in matters of money, never far from her thoughts throughout her long life, nor indeed from his. The McBurneys had once been moderately prosperous, but unwise theatrical ventures and marriages gradually reduced them in society. The major setback came with the elopement of James McBurney IV (1678-1749), his disinheritance and his dependence on earnings as an itinerant actor, musician and portrait-painter. This family background, albeit ill-documented, is a highly relevant inclusion of Kate Chisholm's book, for it explains much.

Dr. Burney, always dependent on his Down initiatives with aid of patronage, was from the first determined to see his family restored to something of the status in society it formerly enjoyed. Consequently he was normally prudent in money matters, though over-generous in lending £2,000 pounds to his profligate son-in-law, Molesworth Phillips, a loan predictably becoming a bad debt. Kate Chisholm puts matters succinctly: "Like her father, she would never take on a debt, no matter how small."

The unhappy years during and immediately after her service for Queen Charlotte at Court reveal Fanny's inability to commit herself to the marital security she clearly sought. One factor it seems was her distrust of wealthy suitors, their habits of extravagant living and their potential for domination over her life. Perhaps the gross eating habits of Henry Thrale influenced this attitude? But in her earlier years, and until she met General d'Arblay in Surrey, Fanny evidently found mental stimulus or intellectual satisfaction in the company of much older men, first her own father, then Samuel Crisp and later Samuel Johnson. This last, however, seldom applied his critical powers to Fanny's works or conversation.

The explanation for Fanny's varying literary attainments lies in her earliest years. It was then she imbibed the sheer exuberance and sparkling, if barbed, humour and wit of conversations frequently maintained for hours, inspiring in her a lightness of touch emerged most famously in *Evelina* but later, too, in her

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BIOGRAPHY

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comedies, notably *The Witlings* and *A Busy Day*. The imminent staging of the latter is to be applauded and should make Fanny Burney more widely known, beyond the devoted circle of the Burney Society. Much as educationists today might deplore such a hot-house upbringing, it is surely arguable that her lack of formal schooling is what drove Fanny in upon herself. The bonfire she lit of all her writings at the age of 15 in no way deterred her from scribbling incessantly — with interruptions only from pressing external factors — for most of her life. The result was the mountain of papers she strove to edit in her *final* years.

Books on self-improvement were part of her childhood training, and in middle age, she speaks of *Camilla* as being written “to speed the progress of morality.” She could, literally, not afford to offend potential readers nor the Queen, who had bestowed on her an annual pension of £100 when she left royal service in 1791. Financial stringencies undoubtedly reinforced her lifelong respect for her father, whatever exasperation he caused her at times. “She never lost that childlike desire to be his ‘favourite girl,’” Chisholm writes.

Certainly there is evidence that Fanny advocated equal partnership between spouses, largely true of her own married life — perhaps his lack of wealth was one of the attractions of M. d’Arblay in her eyes! It is idle to speculate how far Fanny might have gone if she had been wealthy in her own right. While her views might have been more radical, she would not have had the financial spur for writing her novels, or at least those after *Evelina*. The urge to make money itself, it seems, tended to encourage verbosity on paper ever a weakness with Fanny. Moreover, she laboured under a compulsion to do the acceptable thing: from early days she had been teased as being a prude. With her father the motives for conformity were frankly pecuniary: hence his compelling her to do suppress *The Witlings*. Mrs. Thrale-Piozzi, on hearing that Fanny had left court and years after their breach, was not from the mark when she wrote in 1791 that Fanny Burney acted “. . . for her own and her family’s benefit.”

Though her repudiation of her old

friend Hester Thrale is a blot on Fanny’s reputation, it was a sign of the times and of a family, the Burneys, ever anxious for self-improvement, tolerant of the excesses of outsiders only when it was in their own interest to be so, yet in the end accepting numerous failings within the family. The hardest fate seeds to have befallen young Richard Burney, Fanny’s half-brother, exiled in his youth to Bengal, whence he was never to return.

Fanny Burney emerges, for this reviewer, as more admirable than likeable, quick to perceive a slight and slow to forgive. In her earlier years inclined to hypochondria, family responsibilities eventually seem to have brought out an innate toughness. Her sheer single-mindedness, an industriousness beyond belief and a refusal to be defeated in the face of adversities in the family or negative critical reactions to her latest work in print or on stage must command the highest respect. Patience of a high order was demanded of her at Windsor and Kew; physical courage in her horrendous but successful mastectomy in 1811 and 10 years of exile in Napoleonic France.

Fanny Burney’s writings reflect the events and socioeconomic developments of her own lifetime only spasmodically, providing occasional background to the personalities. Public events impinged most dramatically at the time of George III’s madness and later with the Battle of Waterloo. Yet her canvases were in a sense far broader than those of her more celebrated younger contemporary, Jane Austen. In spite of hating the rituals and restrictions of the Court, Fanny was an ardent royalist. In 1791 she found herself at odds politically with her favourite sister Susan. James, like Susan, was also a liberal (or Whig) at heart, costing him the advancement he sought in his naval career. Fanny, however, learned — according to our author, from her contacts with the servants at Windsor — to sympathize with poorer, less educated folk. Such sympathy almost cost her her liberty, when she befriended Spanish prisoners of war building the fortifications of the port of Dunkirk, before her voyage across the Channel from her long exile in France. The Gordon Riots and later bread riots in Dorking brushed her by. Fanny had lived through a stirring of pressure for women’s rights in the 1790’s into a more repressive age, born of reaction against the French Revolution. To her credit, she did not bow to in her past.

Many a writer would have left a higher

reputation if he or she had died younger. After the experience of Brussels during Waterloo, little of colour occurred in Fanny Burney’s life. Had she died then, *The Wanderer* (1814) would have left some questions in the air, to say no more. But she would not have had time to mail her father’s papers, a deed not easily forgiven.

Kate Chisholm has peppered her book with brief, perceptive and provocative comments, of which a few deserve mention. Fanny was “anything but a closet Feminist” (p.78); “not always a comfortable person to know” (p.80); “had the snootiness of a true metropolitan” (p.94). The severest remarks relate to her relations with men: “Mr. Crutchley . . . was suave, well-read and, one suspects, more intelligent than Fanny, with a keen understanding of the way the world worked.” When Fanny became attached to Rev. George Owen, “her diary begins to read like a bad novellette.” (p. 124) Fanny was “ever the dramatist” (p. 154); “not a stylish writer . . . her marriage to a Frenchman further corrupted her use of language.”

The labours of many scholars, latterly for the most part based in the USA and Canada, have corrected previous obfuscations and brought to light hitherto unpublished documents. To these researchers and their supporters is owed the establishment of the Burney Society, now extending its scope beyond Fanny herself to the family by whom she was at various times emotionally stimulated, supported and drained. The Burney clan was marked by a colourful variety of attainments, in part reflecting those of Dr. Burney’s father, though later tending to seek that refuge in those days of the undecided, the clerical calling, which yield a harvest of archdeacons.

Penetrating, articulate, well illustrated and scholarly, Kate Chisholm’s *Fanny Burney — Her Life* is a worthy and highly readable addition to “Burneiana.” Will we be hearing more from this author? I hope so.

Charles Burney is the head of the Burney family and a patron of the Burney Society.

Bio sparks comments about Burney's legacy

A number of major British newspapers have run favorable reviews of Kate Chisholm's new biography of Fanny Burney. In addition to commenting on the book itself, some of the reviewers have given their own assessment of Burney's place in literature. Here is a sampling of their comments:

"Burney is worth remembering, worth reviving, as a complex and idiosyncratic figure of her times, a rich source of

information and indeed a writer of genius." Claire Tomalin, *The Sunday Telegraph*, June 21, 1998.

"Virginia Woolf famously hailed her as 'the mother of English fiction,' and since the 1970s — particularly through the work of such scholars as Margaret Anne Doody and Julia L. Epstein — Burney's novels have been read as complex accounts of the society construction of femininity in late eighteenth-century

culture." Lucasta Miller in the *Times Literary Supplement*, July 3, 1998.

"Whether it is Garrick thrilling the audience at Drury Lane with his King Lear, or mad King George pursuing her with his 'What? What?' interjections, we are there; we feel it. Burney's gift, says Chisholm, is 'to speak directly to her readers', and that is as true and valuable now as ever." David Nokes, *The Sunday Times*, June 14, 1998.

"In all her novels, Burney underscores her essentially conservative satire with a potentially subversive insistence that women learn 'self-dependence.' She anticipated and perhaps inspired Jane Austen's interest in class, money and the marriage market." Stella Tillyard, *London Times*, no date.

"It is thanks to Fanny's sharp eyes and ears that we know the private side of Johnson which Boswell missed." Peter Lewis, *Daily Mail*, June 27, 1998.

'Cecilia' is Internet group topic

Those Burney Society members with access to the Internet will be interested to know that a discussion of Burney's second novel, *Cecilia*, has been taking place in an e-mail chat group devoted to Jane Austen.

The Austen e-mail group was founded and is administered by Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, co-founder of the Burney Society and Montreal regional coordinator for the Jane Austen Society of North America.

In the course of discussing Jane Austen, members of the e-mail group became curious about references to Burney in Austen's works. The e-mail group moderator, Ellen Moody, then suggested the group might be interested in reading one of Burney's works, with certain parts slated to be covered each week. The group started with *Evelina* and members decided to move on to *Cecilia*, published in 1782, after

finishing *Evelina*.

There are frequent references to Jane Austen's predecessors in the e-mail group, something that should interest members of the Burney Society, many of whom also admire Jane Austen and are members of Jane Austen societies in North America, Great Britain or Australia.

To subscribe to the list, type: subscribe austen-l. Then type your first and last names. Send this message to: listserv@vml.mcgill.ca. Do not include the periods after "austen-l" or "ca" in the addresses. They are there to end the sentences only.

To look at the Jane Austen Home Page, run by Henry Churchyard on the World Wide Web, type: <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~churchh/janeinf.html>. Again, do not include the period after "html" in the address.

'Evelina' edition adds context

Burney, Frances. *Evelina, or, The History of a young Lady's Entrance into the World*. Edited by Stewart J. Cooke, McGill University. Published by W.W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 1998. Paperback. £6.95 in the UK; \$13 U.S.

Time is of the essence for all of us, and much as we would like to find out more about the background to a classic novel which we have just read and enjoyed, it is not always possible. The new Norton edition of Fanny Burney's *Evelina* caters to people like us.

A third of this attractive paperback edition is given over to contexts, contemporary reactions, and critiques.

The section headed Contexts includes fascinating excerpts from various conduct books (instructions on how women should behave, mostly written by men!) and then some relevant extracts from Dr. Burney's memoirs and from Fanny's journals and letters on the publication of *Evelina*. Then follow five contemporary reviews published in literary magazines.

The last section consists of extracts from 12 critiques of *Evelina*, published over the two centuries since Fanny Burney's first novel appeared in print in 1778. A brief chronology of the main events of her life and a selected bibliography are also included.

— Jean Bo wden

Dues reminder

Renewal forms for the Burney Society's 1998-1999 dues year, June 13, 1998, to June 13, 1999, have been sent out.

Thanks to the support of existing and new members, the society is growing and is able to produce two annual meetings a year, two newsletters a year and and, this year for the first time, a literary journal.

Long-term goals include promoting the study and appreciation of Frances Burney d'Arbly, her works, life and times, as well as raising a plaque to her in Westminster Abbey. The society also seeks to reuniting her monument with her remains in the churchyard at St. Swithin's Church, Walcot, in Bath.

Anyone who would like to join the society, or who has not yet received a renewal notice, should contact Lucy Magruder, P.O. Box 2971, Tubac, AZ, 85646, in the United states, or Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, England, GU34 3JB.

Québec Conference Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt. or House No.: _____

State/Province/County: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Friday, Oct. 9, dinner meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m., Loews Le Concorde Hotel.

Price for the meeting and dinner is \$43 for members who would like the chicken or vegetarian entree, and \$50 U.S. members who would like the salmon entree. The price includes the cost of a four-course meal, tea or coffee, tax, tip and expenses associated with the meeting.

Please check your desired dinner selection:

Chicken \$43 *Vegetarian \$43* *Salmon \$50*

Total amount enclosed: _____

*Please register for this event by filling out this form and mailing it, along with a check made out to
The Burney Society in U.S. dollars, to Lucy Magruder, Secretary/Treasurer,
The Burney Society, P.O. Box 2971, Tubac, Ariz. 85646.*

*Registration forms must be postmarked no later than Sept. 26 in order to give Lucy time to make
arrangements with the hotel.*

Return address

IN NORTH AMERICA:
THE BURNEY SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 2971, TUBAC, AZ,
85646 USA

IN GREAT BRITAIN:
THE BURNEY SOCIETY
PRIMROSE COTTAGE
GRACIOUS STREET
SELBORNE, ALTON
HAMPSHIRE, ENGLAND
GU34 3JB.

Register for Burney Dinner by Sept. 26