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Frances Burney (1752–1840)

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A prolific and versatile writer, Frances Burney published four novels, her father’s memoirs, and a political pamphlet. She left in manuscript eight plays (one of which was briefly staged). Her 25 volumes of journals and letters paint a vivid picture of the Georgian era, including descriptions of the bluestocking assemblies of the 1780s, the “madness” of George III, and Brussels during the battle of Waterloo.

Long seen as a minor precursor to Jane Austen, Burney is now appreciated as an innovative and influential writer in her own right, with academic conferences, a research center at McGill University, and a literary society dedicated to the study of her work.

**Biography**

Born in Norfolk, Frances Burney was the second daughter of musicologist Charles Burney and his first wife, Esther Sleepe, who died when Frances was ten. She grew up in London after 1760 in a large and talented family, which included half- and step-siblings after her father’s 1767 remarriage to the widow Elizabeth Allen. Burney recorded their lively household, musical evenings, and active social life in a diary she began in 1768.

Her first novel, *Evelina*, published anonymously in 1778, created a London sensation. After her authorship became known, she was invited to Bluestocking assemblies and befriended by Hester Thrale and Samuel Johnson. Encouraged by Richard Brinsley Sheridan to write a comedy, Burney penned in 1779 *The Witlings*; this satire on a female literary club was suppressed to avoid offending the Bluestockings. In 1782, she published the very successful *Cecilia*.

Through her friendship with Mary Delany, Burney met the Queen and was appointed Keeper of the Robes. Employed in the Queen’s household from 1786–91, Burney suffered from the monotony, constraint, and separation from family and friends. Confined to her rooms in 1788 during George III’s “madness,” she began a series of four tragic plays. Her mental and physical condition deteriorating, Burney was permitted to retire in July 1791 with a £100 pension.

While visiting her favorite sister, Susanna, in January 1793 at Mickleham, Surrey, Burney met French refugees, including Germaine de Staël and General Alexandre d’Arblay. She married d’Arblay in July 1793, settling in Surrey; their only child, Alexander, was born in December 1794. Proceeds from her 1796 novel *Camilla* enabled them to build a house. Between 1798 and
1802, she wrote three comedies (that remained unstaged), despite grieving Susanna’s 1800 death. In 1802, Burney and son joined d’Arblay, who was trying to reclaim his property, in France. War prevented her return to England until 1812. She published in 1814 *The Wanderer*, whose sales proved somewhat disappointing.

In 1815, when Napoleon escaped from Elba, the d’Arblays were in Paris. D’Arblay took up arms, and Burney fled to Brussels. Following the battle of Waterloo, she traveled across war-torn France to find her wounded husband and returned with him to Bath where D’Arblay died in 1818. The widowed Burney continued to write letters and edit her late father’s correspondence and memoirs, publishing in 1832 a curtailed and censored *Memoirs* which critics panned. She never recovered from her son Alexander’s untimely death in 1837. She died on 6 January 1840, the 40th anniversary of Susanna’s death.

**Biographical Resources**

Burney’s journals and letters, written over 70 years (1768–1839) remain the most valuable source for biographical information. Burney had already begun to edit (select, categorize, censor, and destroy) these materials, leaving them to her niece, Charlotte Barrett, who in 1842–6 published a seven-volume selection with an introductory memoir. Austin Dobson’s 1903 biography relied on Barrett. In 1926, R. Brimley Johnson included chapters on various family members, providing material not available elsewhere.

Drawing on archival materials, Joyce Hemlow’s pioneering 1958 biography placed Burney and her family at the center of London’s cultural life. Hemlow’s worldwide search for Burney family papers led to her 1971 *Catalogue of the Burney Family Correspondence* with Jeanne M. Burgess and Althea Douglass.

In 1988, Margaret Anne Doody began to change Burney’s image from “Fanny,” a “cheerful little Augustan chatterbox,” to “Frances,” a serious and complex novelist (3, 387). The first to consider Burney’s dramas, Doody stressed the tragedies’ “therapeutic” value and the comedies’ anticipation of the theatre of the absurd; she also deemed *The Woman-Hater*’s Joyce a feminist heroine. Doody’s biography remained for a generation the definitive work on Burney (5, 2, 48, 179).

Between 1998 and 2002, five biographies were published: Kate Chisholm’s perceptive study in 1998, Claire Harman’s provocative discussion in 2000, and Nigel Nicolson’s Short Book in 2002. In 2000 Hester Davenport described Burney’s 1786–91 court years, while Janice Thaddeus focused on her literary career.

Biographical notices of Burney appear in *DWW* (Katharine Rogers), *EBW* (Joseph Grau, updated Lorna Clark), Eckroth, *FC*, *ODNB* (Pat Rogers), and Shattock.

**Works**

Burney published four novels – the 1778 *Evelina*, 1782 *Cecilia*, 1796 *Camilla*, and 1814 *The Wanderer* – and two works of nonfiction: her 1793 political pamphlet *Brief Reflections on the French Clergy* and 1832 *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*. See Thaddeus in 2000 for Burney’s publication history. Her four tragedies (*Edwy and Elgiva*, *Hubert de Vere*, *The Siege of Pevensey*, and *Elberta*) were all composed between 1788 and 1791. Burney wrote *The Witlings* in 1779 and her remaining three comedies (*Love and Fashion*, *The Woman-Hater*, and *A Busy Day*) between 1798 and 1802. Of Burney’s eight plays, only *Edwy and Elgiva* was performed in her lifetime, at Drury Lane Theater on 21 March 1795.
Modern Editions

Novels

Journals and Letters
Barrett in 1842–46 edited selected letters and journals starting from 1778, and in 1889, Annie Raine Ellis edited Burney’s 1768–78 early years. Dobson in 1904–5 used Barrett’s text but added footnotes. In 1972–84, Hemlow re-edited Burney’s later years, the material most truncated by Barrett and Dobson. Between 1988 and 2012, Lars E. Troide edited Burney’s early years (through *Evelina*’s publication and Burney’s subsequent celebrity). Sabor et al. in 2011–19 edited Burney’s court journals and letters, and in 2018 included material written between 1791 and 1839 omitted in earlier volumes. Stewart Cooke in 2015 edited Burney’s 1784–86 private writings.

Plays

Other Works
Claudia L. Johnson in 1990 edited a facsimile reprint of Burney’s *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy*.

Archival Holdings
The main manuscript-holding collections are the British Library, the New York Public Library’s Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, and Yale University’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. See Hemlow’s *Catalogue* for a list of locations.


Reception

Eighteenth Century: Contemporary

*Evelina* received five favorable notices in 1778. The *Monthly Review* pronounced it “sprightly, entertaining, and agreeable”; the *Westminster Magazine* recommended its “practical lessons, both
on morals and manners” to younger “female” readers (316, 325). The Critical Review compared Evelina favorably with the novels of Samuel Richardson (202).

In 1782, Cecilia generated about ten reviews. Samuel Badcock praised it for having “the dignity and pathos of Richardson; and […] the acuteness and ingenuity of Fielding,” a position others frequently echoed (414). Even so, Badcock found her characters so exaggerated “as to be more like a caricature than a real picture” (453, 457). The Critical praised the novel’s “purest lessons of morality” (420).

Burney’s 1796 Camilla garnered over ten reviews. Mary Wollstonecraft, writing anonymously for the Analytical, judged Camilla “inferior” overall, though “superior” in parts to Burney’s earlier novels (142). The Critical defended the novel genre in general and Burney in particular (26). The Scots Magazine believed that “Camilla will disappoint the generality of readers” (691). Both the British Critic and Monthly Magazine criticized its length and errors, while praising its morals and other merits.

Contemporary commentary on Burney’s works appears in eight RJWR volumes.

**Nineteenth Century: Contemporary**


Burney’s 1832 Memoirs of Doctor Burney was immediately judged a failure. J. H. Leigh Hunt complained that Burney’s friendship with Samuel Johnson spoiled her style. Burney’s nemesis, Croker, criticized her style, noted many inaccuracies, and, worse yet, accused her of trying to hide her true age.

**Nineteenth Century: Posthumous**

Barrett’s edition of d’Arblay’s letters and journals generated ten reviews. The early volumes were praised for their vivid depiction of society and manners, especially the scenes with Thrale, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Sheridan, and Joshua Reynolds, and what the 1842 Athenaeum called “the Burney gallery” (125). Reviewers quoted Burney’s observations of the royal family’s domestic life. Croker in the Quarterly accused her of “personal affectation and vanity” for recording only conversations “flattering” to her, of “treachery” in recording private moments, and of “horse-leech egotism” (244, 246, 259, 251). Thomas Babington Macaulay in the 1843 Edinburgh offered a balanced appraisal of Burney’s life and writings, praising her gift for comedy, but deprecating her exaggerated characters and lack of subtlety. Burney’s true value, for Macaulay, lay in paving the way for Edgeworth and Austen.

**Early Twentieth Century**

Dobson’s 1903 biography cemented Burney’s modest achievement. He placed her work between Fielding’s “breezy and bustling highway” and Richardson’s “analytic hothouse,” while her domestic scenes anticipated Austen’s “exquisite parlour pieces” (204). For the next half-century, Burney was valued as a precursor to more important writers. Hemlow initiated Burney’s rehabilitation
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with her 1950 discussion of Burney’s plays, her 1958 biography, her 1971 catalog of family manuscripts, and her 1972–84 edition of letters. Troide and then Sabor carried on this editorial work.

Whereas early twentieth-century critics saw Burney as a conservative writer, 1970s feminist critics viewed her as a radical, challenging the conventions. Patricia Meyer Spacks in 1975 argued that, for Burney, growing up female involved “being curbed and tamed” until marriage brought the heroine back to the dependent state of childhood (130). Susan Staves in 1975–6 saw Burney as a reformer, noting the violence in Evelina. While some critics saw only sublimated protest in Burney’s novels, Rose Marie Cutting in 1977 saw “growing rebellion,” with strong, independent female characters leading to The Wanderer’s Elinor, who asserted the equality of the sexes with revolutionary fervor (529).

Ongoing 1980s recuperation led to strong positive re-assessments. Doody in 1980 noted Burney’s innovative use of free indirect discourse (prior to Austen). In 1986, Dale Spender paired Burney with Edgeworth as reaching the “height of achievement” of women writers, while Martha Brown found Burney’s feminist-protest elements simply literary conventions (284; 31). Kristina Straub in 1987 echoed the idea of a “double” Burney, seeing the text’s “dividedness” as “ideological rifts implicit in female identity,” and the heroines’ difficulties as the psychic cost of “contradictory impulses” (5, 1, 6.8). Julia Epstein’s influential 1989 reading of the journals (especially the mastectomy account) highlighted Burney’s “retrospective memorialization herself at moments of trauma” (5, 41).

The 1990s brought a diversity of approaches. In 1990, Katharine M. Rogers, as had others before her, stressed Burney’s “conventional side” (4). In 1991, Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace asserted that Burney’s failure to meet “feminist expectation for consistent resistance to patriarchy” required “new critical methods,” while Deborah Ross argued for the term “radical conservatism” instead of “double vision” (viii, 111). Joanne Cutting-Gray in 1992 applied the theories of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray to Burney. John Wiltshire in 1993 identified Burney as the first practitioner of a new genre he called “pathography,” a narrative of an illness experience. In 1995, Claudia Johnson found the notion of “Burney’s confidence as a social critic” overstated, arguing that she upheld “traditional notions of gender even as her own novels protest[ed] them” (144, 188). For Linda Lang-Peralta in 1997, Burney’s “different voices” in her private writing “reflect[ed] a growing sense of self” (40). Barbara Zonitch in 1997 found the violence in Burney’s works reflected the modern world’s “ideological conflict” (13). Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook in 1999 compared George III’s and Burney’s attitudes towards the New Forest as a construction of political identity.

The 1995 publication of Burney’s plays drew attention to Burney’s theatrical ambitions. The Witlings attracted the most interest, with Sandra Sherman in 1996 observing its class-based attitudes towards time, whereas in 1997, Peggy Thompson thought that Burney was satirizing herself. Also in 1997 Barbara Darby focused on the tragedies’ depiction of female suffering. In 1998, Emily Allen looked at theatrical elements in Burney’s fiction, while in 1999 Noel Chevalier explored A Busy Day’s “cultural construction of India” (134).

Novels

**EVELINA**

Evelina has long been Burney’s most-discussed novel. Ruth Bernard Yeazell in 1991 found the insistence of modesty while exposed to the male gaze created “unconscious aggression” in Evelina (130, 134). Epstein’s 1991 special issue on Evelina included David Oakleaf’s and Gina Campbell’s essays on the heroine’s quest for paternal recognition and Amy Pawl’s on naming in family relations. In 1993, Susan Fraiman saw Evelina as a tale of “blockage and frustration” in which marriage-induced dependency undercut the heroine’s development (35–6). Helen
Thompson in 1998 used *Evelina* “to reassess” Jürgen Habermas’s idea of “the bourgeois public sphere” (48). In 1996, Caroline Gonda identified an erotic element in Villars’s relationship with Evelina, a point Julie Shafer reiterated in 1999.

**CECILIA AND CAMILLA**

Terry Castle in 1986 interpreted the masquerade scene as a “carnivalesque” world turned upside-down. For D. Grant Campbell in 1990, “conspicuous consumption” in *Cecilia* reflected a “explosion in consumer spending” (133). Catherine Craft-Fairchild in 1993 found Cecilia imprisoned in her role. For Elizabeth Gruner in 1994, *Camilla*’s caged bullfinch represented the confinement and violence suffered by women. Andrea Henderson in 1997 connected Camilla and Mrs. Mittin’s ill-fated browsing to a “rapidly expanding industrialist consumer economy” that made shopping and gambling fashionable (80).

**THE WANDERER**


**Economic Issues**

In 1987, Jan Fergus and Janice Thaddeus compared Burney’s earnings to those of other women writers, research Cheryl Turner expanded in 1992. Catherine Gallagher in 1994 presented Burney as “raised to the trade” and her family as part of the emerging literary-professional class (216). Edward Copeland in 1995 found that Burney, like other “vulnerable” women writers, focused “obsessive[ly]” in their fiction on “yearly income” and presented images of “loss, dispossession, forced removal, isolation” (24, 7). In 1996, James Thompson noted that after *Evelina*, all Burney heroines fall into debt and become “vulnerable to male sexual and financial manipulation” (159). In 1997, Sharon Long Damoff looked at charity in *Evelina* and *The Wanderer*. Deidre Shauna Lynch in 1998 noted that the *OED* traced the first use of the noun “shopping” to Burney (168).

**Twenty-First Century**

The twenty-first century saw a remarkable quantity and range of Burney criticism, including in 2007 both Sabor’s *Cambridge Companion* and Clark’s essay collection.

**Novels**

Critiques of Burney’s plays have engendered an appreciation of her novels’ theatricality. In 2005, Emily Hodgson Anderson highlighted three “scenes of staged suffering,” showing how the “conflicts and struggles surrounding female performance” reflected the “personal struggles and conflicts she experienced in writing texts” that were never performed (629, 638). In 2010, Teresa Michals claimed that “the rise of the novel depend[ed] on the fall of the theatre,” with Madame Duval’s overly stagey figure representing rejection of theatricality (198).
2012, Francesca Saggini examined dramatic qualities in Burney’s novels, and Laura Engel found Burney’s “nuanced assessment of female performances” reflected “celebrity culture” (7).

**EVELINA**

Martha J. Koehler in 2002 applied Lacan to “Evelina’s error and misconception” (30). Jeannine Casler in 2003 explored representations of elderly women. In 2007, Barbara Seeber examined Burney’s engagement with early animal-rights advocacy to depict female entrapment; and Patricia Hamilton connected Lord Orville’s rejection of the monkey to the “polite ideal” of a gentleman (440). In 2009, Laura Brown linked the monkey to the “struggle to identify human being itself,” while Greenfield held that Orville’s act denied “the resemblance between monkeys and men” (383; 427). Elles Smallegoor in 2010–11 considered Burney’s innovative use of sound to define social classes. Mascha Hansen in 2012 looked at *Victorine*, a German play based on *Evelina*. Peter Degabriele in 2014 argued that *Evelina* used the “epistolary form to intervene in […] debates concerning the ‘legal fiction’ of paternity” (22). In 2016, Adam Kozaczka tied Macartney to Anglo-Scottish integration. Bannet in 2016 examined Scottish and American imitations of *Evelina*. Eugenia Zuroski in 2020 considered how the monkey scene and Lovel’s radical “queer authority” disrupted the marriage plot (167, 183).

**CECILIA**

Studies of Burney’s draft revisions include Helen Thompson in 2008, and Havens in 2015, the latter uncovering a suppressed Satanic ritual scene. In 2012, Catherine Parisian traced *Cecilia*’s publication history. In 2005, Noelle Chao suggested that Burney arrived at a “troubling compromise” in “the split between music and language,” and Leya Landau connected the opera’s “sentiment and structure” with Burney’s views on writing fiction and her not-so-happy ending (24, 30; 652). Anthony Lee in 2006 tied *Cecilia*’s “penetrating critique of mentoring authority” to Samuel Johnson’s influence (253). In 2011, Alicia Kerfoot equated Cecilia’s role to that of the shoe-buckle, a “declining ornament” (68).

For Erik Bond in 2013 the admonitory male is replaced with an “inward monitor” and female agency. For Melissa Ganz in 2013, *Cecilia*’s foregrounding of secret marriage suggested Burney’s advocacy of female agency, while Ann Campbell found it critiqued the “deeply flawed institution of marriage itself” (85). Elaine Bander in 2013 revisited *Cecilia*’s connection with *Pride and Prejudice*. Linda Zionkowski in 2016 found Cecilia’s “dream of charitable paternalism” “unrealized,” since female autonomy and the ideology of domesticity remained incompatible (117). For Kelly Fleming in 2017, Burney used masquerade to “illuminate” how “elite fashionable culture” objectified “the working class” (25).

**CAMILLA**

George Justice in 2002 and Havens and Sabor in 2012 explored *Camilla*’s publishing arrangements, reviews, and Burney’s revisions. Emma Pink in 2006 viewed Burney’s decision to print by subscription through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu’s theories. In 2011, Stephanie Russo connected the surveillance motif with 1790s political upheaval, whereas Julian Fung found that Burney’s comedic writing led to *Camilla*’s “lighter” “more optimistic” tone (948). Jennifer Locke in 2013 contextualized *Camilla* with fortune-telling manuals and practices. In 2014, Jason Farr correlated Eugenia’s deformity with her education; Andrea Haslanger related it to the use of automata associated with femininity. In 2016, Kowaleski-Walace analyzed *Camilla*’s staging of *Othello* and its implications for Burney’s sense of self. In 2018, Kristen Pond found *Camilla* revolutionary in showing that misreading and misinterpreting others (as Edgar does Camilla) “destabilizes acts of interpretation” (316).
Spacks in 2000 contrasted *The Wanderer’s* concerns for privacy and propriety with *Sense and Sensibility*, while Cathrine Frank in 2001 found the same pairing of women (one domestic, one political) in Scott’s *Waverley*. As *The Wanderer* was begun in the 1790s but not published until 1814, critics debate where best it fits. In 2003, Mascha Gemmeke compared Burney’s *Wanderer* with de Stael’s *Corinne*. In 2004, Suzie Park identified it as “Romantic,” interrogating the “romantic belief in freedom of expression” (307). Christopher Nagle in 2005 examined Elinor’s and Harleigh’s embedded letters in relation to the cult of sensibility and Austen’s *Persuasion*. Andrew Dicus in 2011 saw it as Gothic, exploring how Burney disrupted the novel’s “imagined community” (25).

Devjani Roy in 2013 considered *The Wanderer* in the context of the volatile 1790s, “behavioral economics,” and game theory (26). Tara Czechowski in 2013 found its “interrogation” of “the idea of black as criminal” repudiated racist assumptions, while Shelby Johnson in 2016 argued that Juliet’s refusal to tell her story showed how “the black experience is lost and effaced” and suggested that her change of appearance “challenges binary opposition of class and race” (314, 680; 66, 76). In 2018, Chloe Wigston Smith considered “shopping and sexuality,” and the roles of women as “producers and sellers” which “provokes ruptures in the marriage plot” (272, 273, 274). In 2019, Shelby Johnson showed that Burney obliquely referenced the Haitian revolution. In 2020, Nowell Marshall found *The Wanderer* “both a female Gothic and a queer gothic text” (8).

**Journals and Letters**

Burney’s accounts were frequently written long after the events they describe, deliberately crafting a convincing sense of immediacy. Cooke in 2000 examined Burney’s failed romance with George Cambridge. Clark, who has published extensively on Burney’s private writing, posited in 2001 that the journals – self-conscious literary constructs, preserved, selected, and prepared for posterity – constituted Burney’s “finest creative achievement” (296). Rizzo in 2003 compared Burney’s writing process to sewing. In 2007, Sara Davis showed how Burney interpolated reader responses into her texts; Leslie Robertson considered the *Early Journals* as juvenilia; and Sarah Moss found Burney’s accounts of refusing food illuminated scenes in the novels where “appetite and hunger” are “signs of degradation” (421, 416). In 2008, Sangeeta Mediratta examined Burney’s mastectomy account and her engagement with the “dominant discourses of her time about disability, the female body and conceptions of ideal femininity” (188). In 2011, Annie Pécastaings placed the account within the historical context of the French Revolution.

In 2012, Katie Gemmill studied Burney’s French notebooks, and Sabor her Paris life-writing. Magdalena Ożarska in 2013 considered Burney’s journals alongside Dorothy Wordsworth’s and Mary Shelley’s. Gillian Skinner in 2014 examined Burney’s troubling interactions with Charles de Guiffardiere. Nancy Johnson in 2016 explored Burney’s “crisis of subjectivity” at court (13). Emma Walsh in 2017 discussed the materiality of Burney’s correspondence with Georgiana Waddington; and Jocelyn Harris connected Burney and Austen through Cassandra Cooke (cousin to Austen’s mother). In 2018, Geoffrey Sill examined Burney’s views on revolutionary politics.

Burney’s response to the Warren Hastings trial garnered discussion from Daniel O’Quinn and Betsy Bolton in 2005; Clark in 2011; and Wallace in 2018. Karin Kukkonen in 2019 noted that Burney used free indirect discourse in her life-writing to offer a “double perspective” and provide “the interface between factual and fictional writing” (171, 163). Also, in 2019, Henna Marian Messina argued that in writing of pain, Burney “transformed her bodily traumas” into “a vehicle of connection” with others (451, 452).
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Plays

In 2002, Justice discussed *Edwy and Elgiva*’s “suppression and censorship.” In 2005, Gefen Bar-On Santor showed how Shakespearian tragedy enriched Burney’s novels, and Alex Pitošky found *A Busy Day* a “sustained satirical attack on racism” (63). In 2006, Elizabeth Deirdre Gilbert compared Burney and Joanna Baillie’s historical representations. In 2007, Wallace refuted the view that the tragedies focus on female victimization, and Audrey Bilger considered Burney as an “innovative comic writer” who used both sentimental and laughing comedy (127). For J. Karen Ray in 2008, Burney based *The Witlings* on Pope’s “Essay on Criticism.” In 2015, Marcie Frank tied free indirect discourse to theatrical elements in Burney’s novels. In 2021, Fiona Ritchie and Sabor found Burney’s engagement with Shakespeare informed her plots and characterizations, while Willow White looked at dramatist Arthur Murphy’s influence on her satire.

Other Works


Gender, Family, and Domesticity

Sarah Spence in 2004 compared Burney and Wollstonecraft’s female difficulties. In 2007 Helen Cooper considered Burney’s male mentors and Margaret Kathryn Sloan, female ones, while Kevin Jordan addressed her male characters’ weaknesses. Megan Woodworth in 2009 connected family dynamics in Burney’s fiction to public debates about the Revolutionary War. In 2012, Francus, noting the importance of eighteenth-century domestic ideology, pointed out the lack of good mothers in Burney’s fiction. Brian McCrea in 2013 positioned Burney as “prior to ideology” (x).

Economic Issues and Publishing Contexts

In 2000, Sara K. Austin presented family ties as “permeated with market notions” (292). In 2001, Catherine Keohane considered debt in *Cecilia*. In 2002, Henderson applied Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism to position *The Wanderer*’s heroine as a commodity. Cynthia Klekar in 2005 considered gift-giving. For Betty A. Schellenberg in 2005, Burney “align[ed] herself” with Streatham’s “largely masculine circle,” earning “a prestigious [literary] rank for herself” while “writing her numerous female colleagues out of the canon” (161). In 2007, Heather Lusty saw Burney using female gaming (associated with sexual promiscuity) as a motif, and Justice argued that Burney’s “great ambitions shape[d] the composition, publication, and even reception of all of her works” (149). Kate Hamilton in 2011 linked the “importance of London” to the female bildungsroman, while Christina Ionescu studied illustrations for Burney’s novels (38). Cassandra Ulph in 2015 linked Burney’s self-fashioning as a professional writer to music.

Illness Pathography and Medicine

In 2007, Victoria Kortes-Papp analyzed illness in Burney’s texts, while in 2014, Eleanor Crouch applied “nerve theory” to Burney’s fiction. Heather Meeke in 2017 used contemporary medical texts to explore “discourses of breast cancer” (26). In 2019, Wiltshire looked at Burney’s breakdown at court and her son’s inoculation for smallpox in terms of pathography.
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Language and Society

Randy Bax in 2005 analyzed Samuel Johnson’s influence on Burney’s style from a “quantitative” perspective within the framework of social network analysis (160). In 2010, Melissa Pino examined Burney’s engagement with eighteenth-century aesthetics, and Gabrielle Starr in 2011 considered her engagement with Ovid. In 2010, Christina Davidson argued that the “dialects” of Burney’s various characters “create[d] moral hierarchies which go beyond class and gender” (299). In 2017, Lisa Zunshine applied Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories to show how social class was constructed in Evelina.

Familial Context

Studies on Burney’s family – her husband and their son Alexander; her mother and stepmother; her eldest brother; her step-sister and fellow author, Elizabeth Meeke; and her half-sister and fellow author, Sarah Harriet Burney – provide context for her works. See Simon MacDonald in 2013 on Meeke; Amy Erickson in 2018 on Sleepe; and Sophie Coulombeau’s 2018 special issue.

Avenues for Future Research

The reception of Burney’s work abroad and in translation deserves greater attention. More work remains to be done on the Burney family, their interests, and publications: father Charles’s musical tours and General History of Music; brother Charles’s scholarly articles; and brother James’s maritime histories; sister Susanna’s life and letters; half-sister Sarah Harriet Burney’s fiction; and step-sister Elizabeth Meeke’s prolific career as a Minerva Press author.

Signatures

His Daughter, Madame d’Arblay; The Author of; Anonymous

List of Selected Texts

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*Cecilia; or, Memoirs of an Heiress.* 5 vols. T. Payne and Son and T. Cadell, 1782. [12mo. 12s. 6d. sewed or 15s. bound.]

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