

## Burney Society (UK), Bishop Grosseteste University, 30 July – 1 August 2019



Conference Delegates at Wine Reception



Dr Cassie Ulph Conference Organiser

The theme of this conference, *Locating the Burneys: from the Margins to the Mainstream*, encouraged thoughtful reassessment of Burney studies from an impressive array of British and international speakers. The Conference Organiser was Dr Cassie Ulph, Lecturer in the School of Humanities, Bishop Grosseteste University.

**The first Keynote Speaker, Lorna Clark**, Research Professor in English Language and Literature at Carleton University, Ottawa, provided a valuable and wide-reaching overview of the development of critical approaches to Frances Burney in her paper 'Progress of a Heroine: From the Margins to the Mainstream with Frances Burney'. Lorna adopted a chronological approach, analysing the development of literary criticism of Burney's writing, from the 1903 comments of Dobson who praised Burney's domestic life and admired her diary more than her fiction, through to the considerable proliferation of articles in the twenty-first century. In this paper Lorna synthesized the stages in criticism, describing and analysing prevailing trends in literary criticism and their underlying philosophies.

In the early twentieth century, Burney was seen either as a transmitter (of the Richardson-Fielding novel tradition) or precursor (of Austen), who had limited value of her own. The shift began with the pioneering scholarship of Joyce Hemlow, who wrote the authoritative biography and laid the groundwork of the modern scholarly edition of *Journals and Letters*. The recovery work on early English women writers that began in the 1970s included Burney. Many voices joined the conversation, notably, Epstein, Straub, and especially Doody, whose work reinterpreted Burney's for a new generation. As a newly feminised history of the novel emerged, Burney found a place within it.



Professor Lorna Clark, Carleton University

Her oeuvre was expanded with the discovery of her plays, and several new biographies appeared. Within the last thirty years, so much has been written, that a linear narrative is difficult: Clark pointed to nodes of critical interest, such as gender issues, performance studies, material culture, and medicine, with some more wide-ranging approaches. She briefly surveyed the recent work on each of the novels, and pointed to the completion of the 25-volume edition of *Journals and Letters*, suggesting how it might affect our view of Burney as a writer.

Finally, looking to the future, she highlighted promising areas, such as the Burney family, the topic of a recent issue of *Eighteenth-Century Life*. Burney has provided a model for revisioning the work of early English women writers, and has gone beyond the academy into the mainstream, although there is still so much more to be done.

**The second Keynote Speaker was Dr Gillian Dow**, Associate Professor in English at the University of Southampton. Gillian based her paper, ‘«Des riens, sans consequence, et sans interet»: Some things of Interest in Frances Burney’s French Journals’, on her recent research into the Burney Papers held by the Berg Collection, New York: research funded as part of a Leverhulme Trust Fellowship. The first of Burney’s French Journals, dated 1801, provides a ‘sweet picture of married life’ and starts with the phrase ‘Eh Bien, Mon Ami’. This journal includes short stories about her life, intimate notes to D’Arblay and an account in French of her relationship with Hester Thrale Piozzi. Gillian commented on Burney’s ‘subjunctivitis’: that Burney was so fond of this tense that she used it frequently and sometimes inappropriately when writing in French. In her French journals Burney reveals herself as a very overprotective and dedicated mother, recording in detail Alexandre D’Arblay’s progress. Burney also records her frustration at not being able to communicate adequately in French, to be ‘only able to say nothings’, and Gillian reflected on how difficult this must have been for an author praised for her brilliant dialogue.

Gillian argued that one aspect of Burney’s prolonged residence in France which tends to be underrated is her reading of French literature and the impact this had on both her writing style, and her choice of theme for her final Novel, *The Wanderer*. Gillian went on to discuss the importance of Madame de Genlis (1746–1830) and her Historical novels in relation to the development of the English novel and more particularly the work of Frances Burney during her time in France.

**Dr Gillian Dow**  
University of Southampton



+ - + - + - + - + - + - + - + - +

The theme of the first panel was ‘**Marriage and Property**’. In her paper ‘Marriage as the new mainstream: *Evelina* and the Bluestockings’ **Cleo O’ Callaghan Yeoman** (University of Edinburgh) presented the argument that Burney’s portrayal of marriage signifies a platform upon which female autonomy may be recognised, and from which women may enter society’s mainstream. The second paper in this panel, ‘Novel Developments: Frances Burney and the rise of the Heiress Novel’, by **Dr Beth Cortese** outlined her research as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. She described her involvement in the collaborative project ‘Unearned Wealth: A Literary History of Inheritance 1600 – 2015 at Aarhus University’, which employs digital methods, economic theory, and legal history to the study of inheritance practice in Literature.



**L to R: Beth Cortese and Cleo O’Callaghan Yeoman**

The second panel, on **'Identities'**, was composed of three thought-provoking papers. **Montana Davies-Schuck** (Northumbria University), spoke on 'Marginalised Identities: Madame Duval and the physical representation of hostility to foppish bodies'.



Panel 2 L to R: Lorna Clark (Chair), Montana- Davies Schuck, Marie Egan and Gina Maddison

Montana focused on the ways in which Burney makes the corporeal the main expression of acceptance and rejection of Madame Duval, stressing the importance of dress to convey the gentility and status of the wearer. Frances Burney explores foppish identity in the characters Duval and Lovell and discredits these identities by removing items of clothing, for example in the violent attack by the Captain's monkey on Lovell.

**Marie Egan** (DCU Dublin) argued in her paper, 'In Frances Burney's Bad Books' that Frances Burney's sensitivity and her sense of propriety determined her attitudes and approaches to many individuals in her life. Marie exemplified her argument with reference to Miss W (Miss White); Jane (Jenny) Barsanti, an operatic singer, actress and protégé of Charles Burney; and Hester Thrale Piozzi.



'Miss Mirvan and I jumped on chairs'  
*Evelina*

In her paper, 'What's in a name? Identity through First Names in Frances Burney's Novels', **Gina Maddison** (Coleg Llandrillo University Centre, Grwp Llandrillo Menai), considered the significance of names, identity, anonymity and fame. Gina described *Evelina* as a novel of identity, noting that Evelina is a form of her mother's maiden name Evelyn, and that Anville, Evelina's adopted surname, is a form of Evelina. Gina argued that uncertainty over Evelina's true identity is central to the novel.

The third panel was on **'Burneys and Beyond: New Directions and Connections'**, with papers by Lucy-Anne Katgely (Université de Strasbourg) and Professor Francesca Saggini (Università degli Studi della Tuscia).

In her paper, 'Aspiring Burneys: Anonymous Novelists on the Margins of Literary Fame', **Lucy-Anne Katgely** re-examined Straub's question from *Divided Fictions* (1987) "was the successful woman novelist notorious or simply famous? A prodigy or a freak?" *Lumley House* (1787), considered by reviewers as the epitome of a 'Burney school' novel, was then discussed by Lucy-Anne to illustrate how a budding writer became both a product and a producer of mainstream culture.



Lucy-Anne Katgely (Université de Strasbourg)

**Professor Francesca Saggini** drew upon her recent research for her paper ‘Frances Burney and the Muses: a new contribution to Burney Studies’, based on her forthcoming edited collection *Frances Burney and the Muses*. In discussing ‘the Muses’ Francesca referred to a range of eighteenth-century arts and the feminine creative process. She highlighted the range of artistic endeavours undertaken by members of the Burney circle and argued that her family connections provided Burney with a profound understanding of the arts, which she employed in her writing. The Burney family members provided Frances with a nurturing environment where her manifold talents could flourish from an early age, albeit within a set of codified genres and modes vetted by her father and by the many advisers surrounding her.

In light of this unique familial and social context, *Frances Burney and the Muses* takes its cue from the proud assertion of her own versatility that Burney placed in the dedication to her father at the start of *The Wanderer*. In this crucial metacritical self-assessment, Burney, now in her sixties and a renowned novelist as well as wife and mother, recalls the famous “bonfire of the vanities” with which as a 15-year-old she had purged her nascent authorial ambitions. Among the manuscript juvenilia consigned to the flames, Burney lists “Elegies, Odes, Plays, Songs, Stories, Farces – nay, Tragedies and Epic Poems”. This is, of course, an a posteriori reconstruction, and as such all the more significant from a metadiscursive standpoint, if not from a purely biographical one: it shows Burney’s literary production to have been diverse from the start, evidencing (or perhaps imaginatively re-creating, by way of taking stock of her long career) the broad range of Burney’s earliest literary experiments as well as her interest in various art forms and genres.

*Frances Burney and the Muses* investigates the semes of Burney’s complex relationship with female learning, creative expression and the interart and intermedia dialogue present throughout her oeuvre. Chapters are devoted to individual arts: dance, music, song, poetry, history – the famed classical Clio. The contributors approach these forms of artistic expression in an inclusive and anti-hierarchical fashion, also covering such minor applied arts as needlework.



In conclusion Francesca outlined her future plans, which include further research on Frances Burney’s Tragedy plays and the setting up of a Frances Burney website to further Burney studies in a multi-media context. For her research endeavours Francesca was recently awarded an MSCA Co-Fund Senior Fellowship at the University of Freiburg’s Institute of Advanced Studies.

**Professor Francesca Saggini**

‘**Edward Francisco Burney, Man of Mystery**’ was the subject of the fourth panel.



The paper by Burney Society (UK) Chair, Miriam Al Jamil, ‘Frances, Edward Francisco and the Portrait Conspiracy’ concentrated on the portrait of Frances Burney which hangs in the Long gallery of Parham Park, Sussex.

Miriam discussed Frances Burney’s unwillingness to model for this painting, according to her description of the event. She wrote in her diary on 12 August 1782, ‘The instant dinner was over, to my utter surprise and consternation, I was called into the room appropriated for Edward and his pictures, and informed that I was sit to him for Mr Crisp!’

**Fanny Burney, Edward Francisco Burney (1760 -1848), oil on canvas, 1782, 30 x 25 ins., Parham Park Limited. Photograph: Miriam Al Jamil**

What went on in the Painting room? In addition to painting Frances, Edward entertained his cousin with caricatures of her stepmother. Edward was subverting the family dynamics of the situation, the power of senior Burney family members to direct the activities of the younger generation.

Miriam examined the painting and compared it to a Reynolds portrait of Mary Robinson which Edward had seen at the Academy exhibition and may have used as a model.

**Miriam Al Jamil, Chair Burney Society UK**



**Cassie Ulph** (Bishop Grosseteste University) in her paper 'Locating Edward Burney's *Death of Major Peirson*' explained the historical background to the Battle of Jersey and compared Burney's depiction (*Battle of Jersey, the Death of Major Peirson*, Edward Francis Burney (1760–1848), oil paint on canvas, 1781, H 61 x W 75 cm, Jersey Museum and Art Gallery) to the larger and more famous painting of the same scene by Copley (*The Death of Major Peirson, 6 January 1781*, John Singleton Copley (1738–1815), oil paint on canvas, 1783, c. 2515 x 2658 mm, Tate N00733).



*Battle of Jersey, the Death of Major Peirson, Edward Francis Burney*



*The Death of Major Peirson, 6 January 1781, John Singleton Copley*

The fifth panel was on 'Public and Private Spaces'.



In her paper, 'Locating Frances Burney at the Trial of Warren Hastings: the Evidence of Tickets', **Professor Gillian Russell**, Chair in Eighteenth Century Literature at the University of York, introduced the social importance of female attendance. Gillian illustrated her use of signed event tickets, together with the seating plan, to identify the location of the box Frances Burney occupied and which dignitaries had enabled Frances Burney's access to Warren Hastings' trial.

**Professor Gillian Russell**

The final paper of the conference was *'Evelina, the Dressing-Room, and a Heroine's Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream'* by **Dr Karen Lipsedge**, Associate Professor of English Literature at Kingston University. Karen considered the nature of privacy for the eighteenth-century elite and the tensions between individual and social values, with the privacy of a dressing room perceived as a threat to social order. Karen suggested that in *Evelina* the dressing room was a place of cosmetic transformation, from maiden to mistress.



**Dr Karen Lipsedge, Kingston University**

The Conference closed with a **Roundtable: 'Living Memory? The challenge of heritage without a house'**. This was chaired by Devoney Looser, Foundation Professor of English at Arizona State University. Roundtable participants were: Gillian Dow (Associate Professor in English, University of Southampton, and former Director of Chawton House Library); Katherine Fennelly (architectural historian and post-medieval archaeologist, University of Lincoln); Claudia Capancioni (Senior Lecturer, Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln) and Miriam Al Jamil (Chair, Burney Society UK). The discussion was lively, and points raised by panel and delegates included: What do you need a house for? Are fictionalized landscapes more important than the author's life? Houses need artefacts but how many genuine artefacts are there, and what do they achieve? How can we use opportunities such as this conference to kick-start wider interest in the Burney family? Suggestions made included: walking tour maps of Burney locations, possibly based in Surrey and in London, virtual tours, or an exhibition at a suitable location.

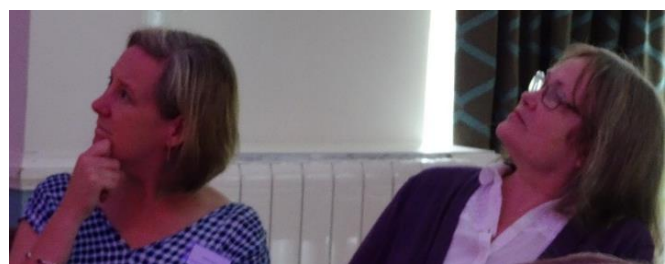


**Round-table L to R: Miriam Al Jamil, Claudia Capancioni, Katherine Fennelly, Gillian Dow and Devoney Looser**

**Social activities** associated with the conference included a wine reception for delegates and a Welcome address by Professor Scott Fleming, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs) at Bishop Grosseteste University. This was followed by a Burney Family Quiz, devised by members of the Burney Society UK Committee and presented by Trudie Messent. A Conference dinner which followed and the Quiz winners, Keynote Speakers, Lorna Clark and Gillian Dow, were each awarded a bottle of wine. Miriam Al Jamil then thanked Cassie Ulph for her work as Conference Organiser, Claudia Capancioni, Senior Lecturer in English, Bishop Grosseteste University, for her support of the conference, Cassie's post-graduate students for their assistance during the conference and the Bishop Grosseteste University dining and accommodation staff.



**Professor Scott Fleming**



**Keynote Speakers Lorna Clark and Gillian Dow pair up for the Burney Quiz**

The following day there was an optional outing to tour Lincoln Castle, with its fascinating history and Victorian Prison. A highlight of the Castle was the chance to view not only their copy of the Magna Carta but also their display of a first edition of Lewis Carroll's 'Through the Looking Glass' (1871), gifted by the author to Alfred Lord Tennyson. Other sites visited included the extremely impressive Lincoln Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace.

L to R: Miriam Al Jamil and Lorna Clark  
in the Victorian Prison, Lincoln Castle



**Conference report and photographs:** Trudie Messent, with contributions on their papers from Lorna Clark, Gillian Dow, Francesca Saggini and Miriam Al Jamil respectively. This report has been adapted from previously published reports in the *Burney Letter Fall 2019* and the *Burney Society UK Newsletter Autumn 2019*.