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ASECS McGill Fellowship Report

I have been developing a book project to excavate the effects of motherhood on the careers of professional women writers in the long eighteenth century. Frances Burney's well-documented life and career provides an exemplary case that illuminates the material and cultural conditions of authorship and parenting. Yet Burney is also significant for my study because she is distinctive: unlike most women writers of the period, she was an established author long before she became a mother. My fellowship at the Burney Centre allowed me to pursue my research on Frances Burney, and to develop my ideas about motherhood and authorship.

Joyce Hemlow's edition of Burney's journals and letters remains the primary text for Burney's perspective of her life as a parent. But the voice of Burney's son, Alexander D'Arblay, is necessary to develop a clearer picture of Burney's motherhood—and his complete correspondence has not been published. As the pre-eminent archive on the Burney family, the Burney Centre has a master list of some 230 letters to and from Alexander, and copies of 200 of those letters. I began my work at the Centre by copying the master list and the letters, to develop an archive for my study. By reading Alexander's letters and recapturing his voice, I am now in the position to reconstruct Frances Burney's relationship with her son fully—and to assess her parenting, her sense of her life as a mother, and the ways that parenting shaped her literary career.

To further my analysis, I used Hemlow's *Catalogue of the Burney Family Correspondence 1749-1878*, which I cannot access at my home university, to develop a master list of the correspondence between Frances Burney and her husband, Alexandre D'Arblay. While most of this correspondence is integrated within Hemlow's edition of Burney's journals and letters, I now have a way to locate this correspondence easily, and a means to track D'Arblay's unpublished letters as well. With the letters by Alexander and Alexandre, I will be able to contextualize the circumstances of Burney's authorship of her plays, *The Wanderer*, and *The Memoirs of Charles Burney*, and build upon my research on Burney's authorship of *Camilla*.

The Burney Centre also provided me with resources to pursue my research on the career of Frances Sheridan. There is no edition of Sheridan's letters, so establishing Sheridan's perspective involves assembling her correspondence from a variety of sources. Among Sheridan's correspondents was Samuel Richardson, and the Burney Centre is home to the forthcoming edition of Samuel Richardson's correspondence. (This new edition is complete, unlike the current standard edition by Anna Letitia Barbauld, a heavily-edited edition that lacks the majority of Richardson's letters.) Based on the complete Sheridan-Richardson correspondence, I developed a timeline of Frances Sheridan's literary

productivity in light of her familial circumstances, the first step towards my reconstruction of the narrative of Sheridan's motherhood and authorship.

I drew upon the collections in the Burney Centre and McLennan Library to elaborate this Sheridan timeline, working with *The History of the Dublin Theatre* and *The London Stage*; Sheldon's biography of Thomas Sheridan, *Sheridan of Smock Alley*, and multiple biographies of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (by Moore, Rae, Sichel, and O'Toole); and the references to the Sheridans in the *17th/18th Century Burney Newspapers* database. The Burney Centre also supported my motherhood/authorship research with access to primary sources through the *Electronic Enlightenment* database and the *Eighteenth-Century Journals* database, and a wide range of academic journals.

By the end of my month at the Burney Centre, my research on motherhood and authorship had advanced significantly, and I had acquired an extensive archive of material for my next book. I would like to thank ASECS and McGill University for sponsoring my fellowship at the Burney Centre and supporting my work. The researchers at the Burney Centre provided inspiration, information, techno-savvy, and camaraderie. I am indebted to Elaine Bander, Stewart Cooke, Louise Curran, Hilary Havens, Sarah Skoronski, and Laurence Williams, who made my stay in Montreal productive and fun. Most of all, I am grateful to Peter Sabor, the Director of the Burney Centre, for his guidance, his scholarly generosity, and his support.