

GROWING UP BURNEY AND THE ROLE OF A COMMONPLACE BOOK

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“THE FAMILY of the Burneys are a very surprizing Set of People; their Esteem & Fondness for the Dr seems to inspire them all with a desire not to disgrace him; & so every individual of it must write and read & be literary.” So wrote Hester Thrale in August 1779 (399).¹ A friend to both Charles and Frances Burney, and an astute observer, she is essentially making three observations within the same sentence: she notes the depth of family feeling and loyalty; the weight of expectations and the need to live up to them; and the primacy of literary activity in the Burney household as a way to win approval. Clearly, Thrale notices the importance of writing to a sense of family identity.

Charles Burney’s high valuation of literary ability is perhaps not surprising. A musician with little formal training or education, he was enabled to rise above his humble circumstances, acquire an international reputation, and win acceptance in elevated social circles through a combination of hard work, social charm, and several well-received publications (notably his two musical tours² and *A General History of Music*).³ He was often full of writing plans and likely to have a huge project on the go⁴—which would frequently involve his female relatives serving as his assistants.⁵ In savouring his success, he managed to inculcate a sense of the winning formula in his progeny: diligence, a course of reading as a means to self-improvement, and especially, the practice of writing, as a means to get ahead.⁶ The underlying assumption—that authorship was a key component of social advancement—became part of the family ethos.

These values were imbibed by several of his children. Of Charles Burney’s three sons, two were prolific authors: Captain James Burney, who sailed with James Cook, whiled away his forced retirement by penning multivolume histories of the sea (and also kept private journals); Charles Burney, Jr., a clergyman, schoolmaster, and classical scholar, authored many learned tracts and publications.⁷ On the female side, two of his five daughters (Frances and Sarah Harriet Burney)⁸ and one step-daughter, Elizabeth Meeke,⁹ were successful and unusually prolific novelists, joining the small

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percentage of novelists who published multiple novels;¹⁰ at least three kept journals and letters,¹¹ one wrote reviews. Furthermore, the urge to “read and write and be literary” passed down to subsequent generations; over a period of 100 years, a number of published authors can be traced in this family, who dabbled in a variety of genres—travel writing, fiction, religious tracts, children’s literature, diaries—not to mention creative works left in manuscript, such as musical compositions, art works, and other creations (Clark, “Hidden Talents” 148).¹²

That writing is a key to the Burneys’ sense of identity is a phenomenon noted by others. Sophie Coulombeau emphasises the trait in her introduction to a special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Life*, which is comprised of essays on the family circle. In it, she draws in part on the work of Catherine Gallagher, who herself draws on Pierre Bourdieu to describe the Burneys as “the holders and producers of ‘cultural capital,’” arguing that their “accretion of cultural capital and the development of relationships that would make it grow was bound up with their most intimate sentiments and deepest sense of identity.” For this reason, Gallagher argues, the Burneys conceived of their writings “as contributing to a collective property, a corporate fame. . . . The writings of other families might have been imagined as second-order realities, as accomplishments indicating a (past or present) economic independence, but the writings of the Burneys were the business of their lives” (216–17). This characterization of the Burneys is, as Coulombeau argues, an important “touchstone” deserving of further study. Through archival work and the discovery of non-canonical texts, especially those of juvenile writers, we can broaden our understanding of this and other literary families whose texts are, in Coulombeau’s terms, “stimulated by and produced from within a network of intellectual, professional, and social relationships” (5). Of these family-produced texts, the work I shall be exploring in this article is a prime example, which shows the importance of literary activity to the sense of family identity and in shaping the values of the Burney children.

The abundance of texts produced by family members suggests that the experience of growing up Burney was an intensely stimulating one. The family provided a context in which creative play of all kinds, particularly literary activity, was encouraged in the young, which might explain why several examples of juvenilia created by young Burneys have been discovered in various archives.¹³ Supported by the adults in their lives (who must have provided paper, time, space, and—probably—an audience), their youthful efforts were evidently valued highly enough to ensure their preservation.

The youthful works preserved (outside this manuscript collection) all originate in the same family: that of Frances’s elder sister, Esther Burney, who married her first cousin, Charles Rousseau Burney, on 20 September 1770. Both talented musicians, they created a quintessentially Burneyan household which Joyce Hemlow has described as full of “sportiveness and gaiety” as well as “music, musical instruments, books, and drawings” (*History* 403, 415). Located in London, Esther’s children grew up close to the home of their grandfather, Charles Burney, and enjoyed the undivided attention of numerous aunts and uncles, as the only children to be born in the family for at least a decade. The five eldest, born in quick succession within five years, were thus in a position to enjoy the stimulation of a large extended family actively engaged

in art, music, or literature on a professional level, and to have their own early efforts indulged and appreciated.

The importance of literary expression in the extended family network is made especially clear in a commonplace book owned by Charlotte Anne Hester Burney, a sister of Frances Burney, preserved in the Houghton Library at Harvard,¹⁴ in which the poetic effusions of various family members over several decades are preserved. Juvenile productions are not all that the little book contains, but they do make up a fair proportion of the whole. This unique collection may contribute to our understanding of this and other literary families—as well as to our understanding of the purpose served by commonplace books more generally. While the juvenilia of other family groups are well known (the Brontë or Alcott children, for example), the literary productions of the Burney children are relatively unknown, belong to a much earlier period, and have not been looked at in detail by other scholars.

In 2018, the Children’s Museum of Edinburgh (in collaboration with the Scotland’s Early Literature for Children Initiative [SELICIE]) mounted a special exhibition, *Growing Up with Books*, that included examples of commonplace books, scrapbooks, and family-created magazines. The commentary printed on the cards beside these exhibits (written by Danielle Howarth) emphasised the materiality of these handmade books that were created either by early readers or by family members for them; their spatiality was an important dimension, in that “they offered a place in which to keep items of value to the owner,”¹⁵ an insight that applies to other examples of the genre, including Charlotte Burney’s. In her small manuscript volume, bound in vellum, the items of value consist of works of poetry, as it is the only genre represented; in all, more than one hundred poems have been preserved within its pages.

The youngest child of Charles Burney’s first marriage, born in 1761, Charlotte Anne Burney grew up in a mixed family household with a stepmother (Charles Burney having married for the second time in 1767). Besides her five siblings, she had three step-siblings (from Elizabeth [*née* Allen] Burney’s first marriage) and two half-siblings (born of the second marriage). On 11 February 1786, she married the surgeon Clement Francis and bore three children, the youngest, a son, just weeks old when Francis died suddenly on 19 October 1792. Six years later, on 28 February 1798, she married Ralph Broome, a political pamphleteer and satirical poet. The couple had one child; their union lasted seven years before Broome, too, passed away. After his death in 1805, Charlotte remained a widow until her own death in 1838, at the age of 77.

Charlotte Burney (as I’ll call her throughout to avoid confusion) filled this volume’s 168 manuscript pages with poems composed for the most part by both adult and juvenile members of the Burney family and their most intimate friends. But it also includes some excerpts of published works (particularly towards the end, when she seems to have run out of original material). Since no mention of this compilation has yet been found in any of the Burney family correspondence, all that we can know with certainty of the history of its creation, purpose, function, or readership must be inferred from textual evidence; though this evidence may also be helpfully illuminated by scholarly studies of other examples of the miscellany and commonplace book (two closely related genres).

Some of the functions Charlotte Burney's book was intended to serve are immediately evident: keeping a record of important family events (births, deaths, marriages) by marking them with a poem; and celebrating the creative achievements of several family members by preserving representative samples of their work. Because this compilation does include excerpts from published poetry, it can be considered a type of commonplace book, a genre still popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which significant passages from published works were copied, sometimes with added commentary on their significance or implications. And as David Allan argues, commonplace books are valuable objects of study since they give "the most revealing insights into the nature and consequences of reading" (19). Some critics have underscored the agency and self-fashioning of the compiler; Thomas Koenig, for instance, defines the genre in terms of "reflections of the self, defined in relation to [literary] materials (459). William St Clair similarly emphasises the commonplace book's expression of "readerly autonomy" in the Romantic period, pointing out that these compilations are the result of readers choosing to record those texts that suited their own "needs, desires or whims" (5)¹⁶

One need evident in Charlotte Burney's commonplace book is the memorialization of people who are no longer part of her life; Amanda Watson notes a similar element in nineteenth-century American commonplace books containing "contributions from loved ones," which can function as "monuments to the past, commemorating never-to-be-seen-again friends and dead relatives" (103). A closely related element also evident in Charlotte Burney's book is the desire to celebrate the talents of those she considered family—a different kind of commemoration.

To celebrate a young writer's talent is also to encourage it; this, I would argue, was yet another important function of Charlotte Burney's collection. Even the act of gathering these original compositions together confers importance on those examples chosen, since they are copied into a book which in its form mimics publication. The miscellany reinforces the practice of manuscript-sharing in literary circles and emphasises the importance of the act of writing itself. Whereas a compilation of published excerpts involves the power of choice as evidence of a principle of selection (which must be inferred), the example presented here displays its creativity more directly. As Stephen Colclough notes, the practice of collecting and transcribing original poetic compositions "written by the friends, families and owners of these books" was fairly common in the eighteenth century, and generally reflects a "group activity," which shows that "reading and writing are very closely associated in the reading communities in which these books were kept." The resulting collection, or miscellany, was "designed to be read by the compilers, or by others in their social circle, who may have made their own contributions to the compilations" (13–14). In her study of miscellanies compiled by women, Victoria Burke also sees them as the product of social activity; more specifically, she argues that "the most common context for the production of women's miscellanies" was the extended family (317). Such research may prompt us to consider the possibility that Charlotte's book was shared or copied from other sources. Given the preponderance of contributions from the children of Esther Burney here, and given that so many of Esther Burney's children's writings have been preserved elsewhere as well, the strong likelihood is that

Esther Burney kept a similar collection of her own, even though no examples of miscellanies kept by her or any other of Charlotte's Burney sibling survive today.

In any case, this compilation is likely to have served to foster a belief in the importance of active participation in literary activities in the lives of Charlotte Burney's own children and the children of her extended family. The juvenile writers who contribute are seen experimenting playfully with different literary conventions, or (in a more serious vein) depicting and thus coming to terms with moments of loss, rupture, or trauma in their lives by clothing them in literary form. The miscellany reflects the kind of environment and influences that surrounded those children who were growing up Burney.

WHAT CHARLOTTE Burney created, then, is a space in which the unpublished poetry written by herself, her father, sisters, brothers, children, nephews, nieces, and friends was collected, preserved, enjoyed, and shared. Pinpointing the date of the creation of this compilation is a challenge. Since the book is signed "Charlotte Anne Hester Francis" on the inside cover, it seems fair to date the ownership of the book (at least) to the period of her marriage to Clement Francis (1786–92) and six-year widowhood (1792–98). A surgeon who had, before his marriage, served in the East India Company and acted as private secretary to Warren Hastings (the Governor-General of Bengal from 1772 to 1785), Francis took his wife to live near his family in Aylsham, Norfolk. It seems tempting to infer that the copying of poems was started soon afterwards, to compensate, perhaps, for Charlotte's evident feelings of homesickness in her new marital abode (for she frequently complained of the misery of being banished to the provinces).¹⁷ Other, similar compilations, such as those Watson examined in her study of "the function of commonplacing in antebellum America," could serve the purpose "of maintaining family ties by extending the communal reading that typically took place at home—one person reading aloud as other family members listened while working at domestic tasks—across the dimensions of space and time." The compilers typically "read together, copied again and again, and handed on to later generations" (103). Based on these findings, it would be easy to assume that Charlotte Burney was motivated to begin her collection by a wish to reach back into the past, to a period of childhood that she had lost, or outwards to those relatives who once formed part of her inner circle but from whom she was separated by distance after her marriage and move to the provinces.

But it is wise to be wary of assumptions, for the date that Charlotte signed the inside front cover of the book does not necessarily correspond to the date the poems were composed, or even copied.¹⁸ The natural assumption that her compilation began soon after the date of acquisition of the little leather-bound book, and that she began to fill its pages almost immediately, during the six years of her first marriage, is directly challenged by the evidence of the varied dates of the first eight poems—keeping in mind that the date of the copying of a poem is not identical with the date of its composition, and those written years beforehand may be included at any point. (Yet it is at least certain that a poem cannot be copied before it is written.) It does seem significant that the first eight poems copied were ones from her family of origin (written by or about her father, sisters, or cousins). This may tempt us to infer that

she chose these entries at a time when she was looking back with nostalgia upon first leaving home, but the first poem in the collection does not fit this theory (in terms of dating, at least): written by her father, Charles Burney, “On his daughter Esther’s recovery after a dangerous illness,” it was probably composed on 28 September 1789, which was three years after Charlotte’s wedding.¹⁹

The opening poem is followed by some written years earlier: a rhyming letter composed by Charlotte’s sister, Frances Burney, which jauntily describes a visit she paid while staying as a guest at Hester Thrale’s house at Streatham; it dates from the period of Frances Burney’s intimacy there, and was probably written in October 1781.²⁰ The fourth poem, Charles Burney’s “Epitaph” to a close friend, Samuel Crisp, must post-date Crisp’s death of 24 April 1783 (Hopkins 137); the date of his verses on the marriage of his daughter Susanna Burney (fifth poem) can be pinpointed by the date of her wedding, 10 January 1782. Another two poems (seventh and eighth) memorialise talented cousins who died young: the artist, Thomas Frederick Burney, who died aged 19, in August 1784; and the musician, Richard Gustavus Burney, who is eulogised after his death on 13 November 1791.²¹ But confounding the hypothesis that the first poems in the book (which form a natural group of eight) precede 1798 (the year that Charlotte remarried and changed her last name), is one placed in the midst of this group that commemorates Susanna Burney’s tragic death, which took place on 6 January 1800. This poem stands sixth in the sequence of eight, and thus makes it impossible to conclude that the book was begun some time during Charlotte’s first marriage, or even during her first widowhood—for by 1800 she had married again, and her surname had become Broome.

If the dating seems a little puzzling, the purpose or function of the book seems clear, at least at the outset: that of memorializing important family events, which prompted the writing of poems. Charlotte Burney, it should be recalled, was close to her father and had been for several years before her marriage (from at least 1783 to 1786) “employed” (as Charles Burney described it) as his librarian, copyist, and amanuensis, while he toiled on his *General History of Music*. The value of her services is indicated by the poem he wrote for her on the occasion of her marriage, in which he apostrophises the bride as “Chaos’s dingy Empire Queen,” commends her “diligence & order,” and expresses reluctance at losing her to marriage: “This loss of limb by which I feel / In crippled state, from head to heel” (98). Apparently intended to amuse, the fond father’s poem laid so much emphasis on his own loss that it caused some offense, and he had to write to her afterwards to apologise.²² Having served an “*apprenticeship*,” as her father put it, and having been in the habit of organising his books and papers, Charlotte might well have seen herself as carrying on her role as record-keeper in her commonplace activities, occupying herself in what Watson describes as “memorializing the past” (103). It is possible, therefore, that the early pages of Charlotte Burney’s commonplace book, which contain the record of major life events (births, marriages, deaths), were meant to be a sourcebook of important family events, preserving them for herself, her children, and for future generations and clothing them (as seems appropriate for a Burney) in literary form, that is, lines of verse. In the absence of any explicit statement of purpose recorded by Charlotte Burney, such analysis must remain somewhat speculative; nevertheless, the very act

of keeping the book shows its importance to Charlotte Burney and her pride in the writing abilities of Burneys of all ages.

However, the particular purpose of the collection, like the dates of composition, seems to vary in different sections, as the practice of copying worthy examples apparently extended over a period of some years. The earliest poem included, one that pays tribute to Charles Burney's first wife, is dated 1763 (when Charlotte herself was two), and the latest date given is on a poem dated 26 September 1806. Towards the end of the book, the dates of composition are given more regularly (they range between 1804 and 1806), and rather than family members, the contributors tend to be friends or acquaintances, writing on varied subjects. The final entry, a fragment about the Battle of Trafalgar, is marked with the date of the battle, 21 October 1805. This was also the year that Charlotte's second husband, Ralph Broome, died, which raises the possibility that the task of copying the later poems, at least, might belong to the period of grief and retrospection that ensued. Although the compilation probably reflects different periods of active copying, then, the closing, at least, can be said with fair certainty to reflect a time soon after her husband's death, a loss that might naturally lead to a period of reminiscence, a wish to memorialise and capture the past.

This theory gains credence when the sheer quantity of poems by Ralph Broome is considered. Of the more than one hundred poems collected, roughly one quarter (twenty-seven) are composed by him, their numbers dominating the second half. Their quality and warmth are noteworthy. One of the earliest, "Lines on the marriage of CB" (Charlotte Burney), contains an avowal of his love (though perhaps with rather dry humour, as the compliment is somewhat left-handed):

If permitted the fairest to chuse
Of all God intended for man
Wit, beauty & wealth I'd refuse
And adhere to my own Charlotte Anne. (68)

The message is repeated in other poems, such as the equally ardent "Three weeks after marriage" 90–91:

But Charlotte's charms, deep rooted in affection
Shall daily flourish like the spreading vine
Whilst all her virtues shall afford Protection
And everlasting happiness be mine. (90)

Broome's warm expressions of affection appear again in a celebratory poem written on their first anniversary, which conclude:

One year intire has gently slip't away
Since March the first, last year our wedding day
And true it is th'experimental space
Has given affection durable increase,

What was at first but untried admiration
Derives from knowledge steadfast approbation. (92)

This evidence of Broome's abilities and character is revealing, given that he was not greatly admired by his Burney in-laws who wondered at Charlotte's desire to marry "so disgusting a being."²³

Besides his feelings for Charlotte, the depth and sincerity of Broome's paternal affection is evident in the many poems addressed to his step-children. Their presence in this collection also suggests that Charlotte Burney may have expected her children to be aware of her commonplacing activity, that she was not only recording the poems for herself but using the act of recording as a way of encouraging the children in their own literary activities, fostering the kind of active participation that Colclough and Burke describe. Broome's "Lines addressed to Charlotte Francis on her 13th birthday" (66–67), for instance, are full of a parent's "fond solicitude," as is a complimentary acrostic in which the first letter of each line spells her name (although I quote only the first four lines here). The poem opens with a complimentary nod to the family's literary heritage in the first line, which references Frances Burney's heroine:

Camilla like in gentle disposition,²⁴
Happy in Talents framed for erudition,
Active in spirit far beyond her age,
Retentive memory like the written page.

Broome's verses, lovingly preserved by his wife, provide a salutary corrective to the negative portrayal we find in the journals of Frances Burney (which often dominate and distort the family annals), and allow him to express his own identity. While these poems are not written by children, they were often written for children, and their attempts to encourage and express affection through literary play demonstrates the kind of learning environment in which the young Burneys thrived: an environment to which this compilation may well have contributed.

Given the number of poems addressed to Charlotte and Clement Francis's three children, and given the aptitude of the Francis children, as evidenced by the flowering of their talents later in life, it seems surprising that so few of their own poems are recorded, unless we consider the larger family dynamic. An "epic poem" by the eldest, Charlotte Francis, aged 7 (*c.* 1793) and a hymn written by the devout Marianne Francis, aged 10 (*c.* 1800) comprise the lot (120, 135) whereas literally dozens of those of their cousins are preserved, dating from the early 1790s. Yet the record of the achievements of the Francises in adulthood seems a clear indication of their love of reading and writing. Charlotte and Clement Francis's only son, Clement Francis, Jr., was studiously inclined: he stood high in his class at Cambridge, was awarded a Fellowship, and took holy orders. His promising career was cut short by his early death.²⁵ His older sister, Marianne Francis, would have well merited a college fellowship herself; she was considered a prodigy and viewed with some alarm for her command of several languages (including Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew), her mastery of geometry and algebra, and her ambitious course of reading.²⁶ She later

taught at charity schools and composed several hymns.²⁷ The accomplishments of the eldest, Charlotte Francis (later Barrett), are better known. Chosen as executor by her aunt Frances, she inherited her “immense Mass of Manuscripts” with permission to publish;²⁸ she culled a creditable selection from a large mass of material, and published it as *The Diary and Letters of Madame d’Arblay*, in seven volumes (London, 1842–46), which established the image of Frances Burney (as one of England’s great diarists) that lasted for more than a century. Charlotte may also have dabbled in other literary ventures, such as translations,²⁹ and she wrote the first memoir of her aunt in the introduction to her edition.

With literary and academic tendencies of this kind, Charlotte Burney’s children seem likely to have produced more examples of juvenilia than are included. Yet the pages of their mother’s commonplace book do not preserve their effusions but rather those of the offspring of her elder sister Esther; this preference strongly suggests that those children held a special place in the extended family group, and were widely viewed as talented prodigies.³⁰

By far the greatest number of the poems recorded are those of the young Frances Burney, niece to the novelist (and to Charlotte herself), who ranks second only to Ralph Broome within this collection, with her twenty-two titles, roughly one-fifth of the total. The range and variety of genres she employs (in this and other family collections) reflect her ambitions as a writer as well as the benefits of what little formal schooling she is known to have received (demonstrating that those who keep or contribute to such commonplace books were likely to be well educated). She was later involved in teaching the young herself, serving as a governess, and she died fairly young, at fifty-two. While it might seem as though her early promise was never entirely fulfilled, her next of kin were startled, when sorting her effects, by evidence of the breadth of her reading, the number of languages that she knew, and the extent of her forays into different arts, as she left behind original compositions in music, poetry, and drama (“Memoranda” 86–87).

Several of her contributions to the commonplace book were written between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. (Those which appear in other collections will not be discussed here.) The first of her works continues the Eastern tale of “Alcanzor & Zayda” by Thomas Percy (14–18), with a clever pastiche that successfully imitates the style and rhythm of the quatrains (19–25); she introduces violent action, ending in a bloodbath, with all the principals weltering in either blood or grief, which is typical of the taste of the young Burneys, who revelled in tragic drama.³¹ She also contributes an elegiac poem and a cycle of five sonnets—“To Solitude,” “To Melancholy,” “To Despondency,” “Written at Midnight,” and “Written during a Storm”—each of which experiments with a different form but all of which clearly, from their titles alone, show the Romantic influence at work (27–31).

Frances’s aunt Charlotte also preserved a set of pastorals (45–49) written by Frances based on the four seasons (in imitation of Thomson’s influential poem); her final contribution, a fragment entitled “The Maniac”(142–45), is definitely Byronic, evoking a landscape of “rugged crags,” the ocean’s “roar,” and the “tumultuous rage” of a storm, or the solitude of “darkling woods” and “trackless wilds,” to match the “souls’ despondency.” The speaker ultimately claims to go mad. So competent do the

verses seem that it is not until the very end when the occasion of the poem is revealed that the youthfulness of the poet becomes evident: written by “Frances Burney / . . . after her friend *Rose* de Kiernier went to live in France—.” The contrast between the powerful impact of the verses and the comparative slightness of the occasion which prompted them is quite striking, but her skill in crafting the verses, and the versatility and sophistication of her entire oeuvre, is undeniable.

Interestingly, there are few contributions by Frances’s younger sister Sophia, although the two were often collaborators: here, they are said to be co-authors of a medieval-style ballad, “Egbert and Ellen,” which in another juvenile collection was attributed to Sophia alone.³² Sophia’s writing often evokes black humour, displayed here in a poem that appears to be playfully teasing one of her cousins—a *jeu d’esprit* that she probably shared with him. At first reading, the poem appears to be rather aggressive:

Dear Charles, I’ve thought you ever from a Child
Illnated, frightful, vulgar & illbred,
A Genius rare, blest with a temper mild
You’d fain appear by vain ambition led . . .

But the lines are cleverly constructed, as the author explains in the closing lines:

If you read the above quite thro’ I believe
Your humble opinion of yourself you’ll perceive
The second time skip ev’ry other rude line
See who makes a smitten Incognita pine! (83–84)

When every second line only is read, the poem reveals a second meaning, a complimentary tribute.

A pastoral poem penned by another sibling, “Colin & Sylvia” (written *c.* 1789), is also striking, though for extra-literary reasons (49–53). In an Arcadian setting, the faithful shepherd Colin persistently woos the beautiful Sylvia who is caring for her aged mother; finally “She named a day which was to make for Life / A happy husband and a happy wife.” His suit won at last, the faithful swain goes to town to buy the wedding gown. Upon his return, as he approaches Sylvia’s hut, he has an eerie moment of premonition that sounds Wordsworthian but in fact anticipates the Lucy poems by roughly ten years:

The night was dark, & dreary was the Road!
As he approached to her still abode
The Moon behind a cloud withdrew her light
as of this sad Event t’avoid the Sight
.....
These dreadful omens noting something bad
Froze his warm blood & him in terrors clad
For from the shocking tokens he had heard

Some accident to Sylvia he feared[.]³³

Colin's premonitions prove to be apt: during his three days' absence, Sylvia had died suddenly ("He fear'd not vainly; for a sad disease / Did in his absence lovely Sylvia seize") and "Poor luckless Colin ... worn by grief" sinks lifeless on her grave. The moral is then drawn:

Then let us, from their sad untimely fate
This lesson learn before it is too late,
On earthly happiness not to depend
For no one knows the hour of his end[.]

The name of the author below these lines renders them doubly effective: Charles Crisp, aged 15. This high-spirited lad, Esther's younger son, was himself destined for an early death. Repeatedly parcelled off to relatives, he ran away more than once, and finally disappeared without a trace in February 1791.

It was not until years later that his family learned his fate: penniless and desperate, afraid to go home, he had joined the East India Company, sailed to India, caught dysentery, and died in Calcutta on Christmas Eve 1791, at seventeen.³⁴ The terrible irony and poignancy of these lines, then, are inescapable, and may well explain the inclusion of this poem in Charlotte's collection. The apotheosis in the closing lines may even have afforded some consolation to his grieving kin:

But Joys immortal to our Souls secure
That shall through all eternity endure
A place in our Redeemer's sight to gain
And leave forever, misery & pain
To Joys like these, let us with hope aspire
And leave the world to join the heavenly choir. (53)

Significantly, this is the only one of his poems known to have been preserved.

The last examples of juvenilia are contributed by Charles's younger sister, Cecilia: a suite of poems, one composed in every year from the ages of eight through twelve—which suggests some kind of manuscript sharing: perhaps Charlotte Burney was drawing from another family compilation that has not survived from which she chose a handful of representative poems. Esther Burney's sixth child, Cecilia, was, like Charles Crisp, farmed out to wealthy relatives and adopted by a childless aunt and uncle in 1794, the year she turned six.³⁵ Although apparently successful, the transition must have been traumatic for a young child, suddenly banished from her home, her parents, and siblings. Signs of an early experience of rupture and loss, and a subsequent period of mourning, can be traced in some of her verses.

In a heartfelt poem, a versified tale of "The Travels of Orlando" (78–81), knowledge of the back story gives added resonance to such lines as these:

Torn from those friends that were the most Sincere

I wandered far, in every wood & wild
Torn from the arms of those I loved most dear
I wandered far, hard fate's unhappy child. (78)

The speaker is wrenched from his happy life because his cupidinous father (“But gold was what my father valued most”) had barred him from marrying his true love for lack of fortune. The beautiful Amelia whom he loses (and who marries someone else) is suggestively named after Cecilia’s youngest sister. “I fled my native home, Sad was the day / Alas, I own, I fled.” Thence begins a life of desolate wandering.

In a kind of nightmare sequence, the speaker enters a “dark, gloomy wood,” finds a cottage and Amelia beside it on the ground, apparently deserted, but feels he cannot stay to help her. Instead he “Journeyed on, full many a day,” until at last, “Worn out with hunger, weariness & care,” he decides to try to find his way back. “Who’d think I should return the way I came?” Retracing his steps to the cottage, led by the hand of an innocent child, he finds Amelia again, abandoned by the “faithful spouse” she had married. He “hastily” proposes, is met with blushing silence, and blissfully regains Amelia forever. The happiness of the ending seems rather fragile, curiously shaded by the unresolved fate of the absent spouse. The stanzas which powerfully describe the speaker’s dazed wanderings, haunted by grief, overshadow the brief scene of reunion, as the poem wraps up quickly. In these and other juvenile contributions, the events that form part of the family saga can be seen refracted through the eyes of a child.

There are other entries of interest which should be mentioned, not only in order to provide a fuller description of the collection but also because of the information they provide about the overall purpose of the collection: some satirical poems by the painfully shy artist Edward F. Burney, which show that (like many Burneys) he was skilled in more than one genre; one by Charles Burney, Jr., entitled “Sonnet written in a blank leaf of *Evelina*”;³⁶ others by a handful of friends, including the Wesleys, Warren Hastings, and Hester Thrale. Preserving in this way the poems not only of the extended Burney family but also of their circle, Charlotte Burney’s compilation recalls Colclough’s description of the typical miscellany, the product of a “group activity” within a “reading community” in which “reading and writing are very closely associated” (13–14). Strengthening the bonds between family members and the bonds between family members and their friends, the compilation richly represents the many dimensions of the collective sense of Burney family identity that was defined by and focused around writing.

I’d like to close with some lines from a poem by Ralph Broome addressed to his step-daughter Marianne Francis (82–83):

Marianne aloft shall rise
Till her fame shall reach the Skies.
Taking her poetic Journey
All shall know her for a Burney
Should her own maternal Aunt,
Chance to meet her in her jaunt,

She will greet her with a kiss,
 Crying Oh I'm glad of this
 My own fame shall never die,
 Whilst my nieces vivify
 And my Name resuscitate
 I resist the Poet's fate. (109)

These lines encapsulate perfectly the writerly urge observed by Hester Thrale in the Burney clan, which she believed was based on their desire to live up to the expectations of Charles Burney, and, implicitly, to match the literary reputation of Frances Burney. This compilation of poems of the Burney circle written over a forty-year period, by both children and adults, belongs to the writing collective; as Burke writes, “Commonplacing” was “a shared activity in which family members participated as a collective expression of family sociability and authorship” (55–56).

While the compiler, Charlotte Burney, may have been motivated to preserve and celebrate her family's poetic achievements, particularly those of the young Burneys who showed early signs of potential, she may also have used the book to shape her own children's experiences as they were “growing up Burney” by memorializing people who were important within their family circle and by promoting the values that they shared (like the importance of writing, and of productive enterprise). Her leather-bound book, lovingly preserved, contains the work of several generations and ages; it captures and at the same time—through its very existence—promotes the literary talent at which her family excelled, *fostering* their sense of a collective identity.

NOTES

¹ In the same passage, Thrale also expressed her surprise that Dr. Burney, a man of modest means, should be as much beloved by his family as if he were rich: “I sh^d expect a rich Linen-drapeer to be better beloved in his own house—and nobody is so much beloved” (1: 399).

² Charles Burney's two musical tours are *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*, 1771; and *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Provinces*, 1773, 2 vols.

³ Frances Burney (Mme d'Arblay), who effectively wrote the first biography of her father in her *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, focused her work on the trajectory of his rise: “tracing the progress of a nearly abandoned Child, from a small village of Shropshire, to a Man allowed throughout Europe to have risen to the head of his profession” (1: ix). Roger Lonsdale, his modern biographer, follows the same pattern, stressing that at the end of his life, Charles Burney's “happiness lay in looking to the past, in measuring the distance he had travelled from the Shropshire village in which he had spent his childhood” (463).

⁴ Lonsdale remarks that “the restless energy that drove Burney to success also deprived him of the capacity to enjoy it. ... Unremitting industry became so much a habit that ... he was uneasy without some large undertaking on his hands, and yet was depressed by the task as long as it remained unfinished” (483).

⁵ A long line of female relatives was provided with a kind of professional training by assisting with Charles Burney's publications: these include four daughters, “four grand-

- daughters, [and] a niece,” who “passed through Charles Burney’s study” (Clark, “Hidden Talents” 149).
6. The biographers of Frances Burney recognise the importance of the literary element in Charles’s ambitions. For instance, Margaret Anne Doody writes, “he wanted to be a ‘man of letters’ because men of letters were given a place in society denied to the music teacher or musician.” Doody had strong views on Charles Burney and his social climbing, to which she anticipated some opposition in her preface: “It may be objected that I have made Charles Burney the villain of the piece.” But she also noted that he would have “his own biographers and defenders” (12, 5). When the six-volume edition of *The Letters of Dr. Charles Burney*, now underway, is completed, his achievements may come to be viewed more sympathetically.
 7. Besides his published works, the journals James Burney kept while on two exploratory voyages with Cook have recently attracted interest: the National Library of Australia’s beautifully produced edition of the first in Suzanne Rickard’s *Sailing with Cook: Inside the Private Journal of James Burney RN* (National Library of Australia, 2015), will soon be followed by an edition of the second. Charles Burney, Jr., was, in his lifetime, respected as one of the foremost classical scholars in the United Kingdom; many of his learned works are preserved in the British Library.
 8. Sarah Harriet Burney published five works of fiction between 1796 and 1839, one of which has been published in a modern edition in the Chawton Library Series. The trajectory of the writing careers of both [the] sisters have been compared in Clark, “Frances and Sarah Harriet Burney.”
 9. See Simon Macdonald for the identification of the prolific Minerva Press author, Mrs. Meeke, as Charles Burney’s step-daughter, Elizabeth Allen (who married Samuel Meeke); see Anthony Mandel on the implications of this discovery for the history of the Minerva Press
 10. A large majority of women writers between 1700 and 1829 produced no more than one or two novels, so those publishing multiple works were highly unusual (see, e.g., Turner 37; Garside 63).
 11. A scholarly edition of Frances Burney’s voluminous journals (twenty-five volumes in all) has recently been completed, the last eight volumes under the general editorship of Peter Sabor, Director of the Burney Centre at McGill University. Another daughter, Susanna Elizabeth Burney, also kept journals (later sent as letters), the highlights of which have been published in *The Journals and Letters of Susan Burney*, edited by Philip Olleson, Ashgate, 2012. Fragments of the journal kept by Charlotte Anne Hester Burney have been included in Frances Burney’s *Early Diary* [vol. 2] (2: 277–320).
 12. Burney family manuscripts can be found in archives around the world, though primarily concentrated in the British Library, New York Public Library, and the Beinecke Library at Yale University. Joyce Hemlow catalogued their whereabouts after a worldwide search made in the 1960s (*Catalogue*), though more have come to light since.
 13. Some have already been published, for instance, my edition of Sophia Elizabeth Burney’s “Works” and “Novels, Plays, and Poems” by the Juvenilia Press (2016).
 14. I am grateful to the Houghton Library for permission to see and to quote from the manuscript.
 15. This insightful remark appeared on a card in a display case in the part of the exhibition curated by Danielle Howarth, “The Lives of Children’s Books Part One: Owners and Readers.” See also the exhibition catalogue, *Growing Up with Books: A Little History of Children’s Literature as Seen through the Collection at Edinburgh’s Museum of Childhood*, edited by Sarah Dunnigan and Howarth (University of Edinburgh / SELCIE, 2018).

- ¹⁶ Also useful to this discussion is Deborah Lynn Pfuntner's PhD dissertation, *Romantic Women Writers and Their Commonplace Books* (Texas A&M, 2016).
- ¹⁷ Charlotte's unhappiness in Norfolk is mentioned in a letter of Frances Burney to Charles Burney (*Court Journals* 2: 264; [15 October 1787]).
- ¹⁸ This kind of misleading dating in the headings of journals, structured as a record of events kept daily, happens elsewhere in the Burney Papers. My research on Frances Burney's *Court Journals* proved that she was frequently writing up her apparently up-to-the-minute accounts a full twelve to eighteen months after the events described. See Clark, "Dating the Undated." Similarly, Claire Harman has commented on Burney's retroactive writing and reading habits, using the phrase "super-retroactive," for the liberties she took with both the narrative and the dating. All Burney editors rely on Hemlow's pioneering work on the family manuscripts, described in the introduction to vol. 1 of her edition of *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*.
- ¹⁹ The poem has been dated by Barbara Hopkins (256).
- ²⁰ The date is given by Betty Rizzo in her edition of *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (2: 543–44).
- ²¹ The dates are given in the "Memoranda of the Burney Family. 1603–1845," a compilation of important family events drawn up in the mid-nineteenth century, of which several typescripts exist, including one in the Bodleian library (86–87).
- ²² Charles Burney's apology is contained in a letter to Charlotte Burney (now Francis), dated 25 February 1786, in which he writes, "We will henceforth, my dear Charlotte, make no serious complaints of missing you in the Spidery & elsewhere—I meant not to be serious ab^t it in my *Varses*—w^{ch} were made in Hudibrastic Dogrel measure, & *punical*, on purpose to avoid the consequen{ce} of those that I gave to Susan. And if an air of regret & sorrow at losing you now & then appears, it *came so* without my intending it. As I told you before, 'you have fairly served your *apprenticeship*, & are entitled to your freedom, & the liberty of setting up for yourself{'}'."
- ²³ The phrase appears in a letter from Charlotte's step-sister, Maria Rishton, to Frances (Burney) d'Arblay, 12 January 1803.
- ²⁴ A reference to the eponymous heroine of Frances Burney's third novel, *Camilla; or A Picture of Youth* (1796).
- ²⁵ A brief biography can be found in J. A. Venn (562). Robert Southey composed his epitaph.
- ²⁶ See Alexander d'Arblay in a letter written jointly with his mother, to his father, Alexandre d'Arblay, [27 September 1812]. Frances Burney, *Journals and Letters* 7: 32.
- ²⁷ See Mascha Hansen.
- ²⁸ The phrase occurs in Frances (Burney) d'Arblay's will, published in *Journals and Letters* (12: 980).
- ²⁹ Sarah Harriet Burney to Charlotte (Francis) Barrett (*Letters of Sarah Harriet Burney*, 107, 110–11; [29 December 1809], [6 January 1810]).
- ³⁰ I have considered the possibility that Charlotte's own family writings were kept in another commonplace book, but the inclusion of so many poems written by her husband seems to militate against that idea.
- ³¹ See Clark, Introduction (xxix–xxx).
- ³² The juvenile works of Sophia Burney, and of the young Frances Burney, are discussed in Clark, "'Teaching the Young Idea.'"
- ³³ Compare the situation to the last five stanzas of Wordsworth's poem, "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known":

JJS December (2020)

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot,
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's greatest boon!
And all the time my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped;
When down behind the cottage roof
At once the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried
"If Lucy should be dead!" (86)

³⁴ The story, whose source is the "Memoranda of the Burney Family," is told in full in Clark (Introduction xxvii-xxix).

³⁵ The story emerges in the "Memoranda of the Burney Family" (67-68), and two letters of Frances Burney to her sister Esther Burney which refer to it: one written on 9 January 1794 (*Journals and Letters* 3: 35); the other on 2 May 1794 (*Journals and Letters* 3: 60).

³⁶ Another version of the same poem with a slightly different ending, signed "Charles Burney. DD. October, 1778" (the year he turned twenty-one), is extant in the Osborn Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University. The commonplace version has been published in Appendix 2 of the *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (3: 460).

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