



Francis Burney, *El ridículo ingenio y Un día de mucho apuro*, ed. María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia y Carmen María Fernández Rodríguez, trad. Carmen María Fernández Rodríguez, Sevilla, Arcibel Editores, 2017.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24197/her.21.2019.561-564>

Frances Burney (1752-1840) is an important reference in eighteenth-century and gender studies for many reasons. She cultivated the novel of manners, she sponsored feminism and she had an interesting life as an Englishwoman who lived in Britain at the time of the French Revolution and gave fictional form to the difficulties of women at that time. But apart from being a novelist, Burney yearned to be a playwright and her career was frustrated in favour of promoting her image as a “proper writer”. This translation of two of Burney’s plays into Spanish represents an attempt to uncover that hidden part in Burney and make us speculate the talent that was lost had Dr. Charles Burney and Daddy Crisp not interfered in her work. Both *The Witlings* and *A Busy Day* were produced by Burney in 1779 and 1800-1802 without paternal sanction. These plays came to light thanks to Peter Sabor’s and George Sill’s edition (2011) and show what Frances Burney really wanted to do, not what she was expected to write.

The book offers an introduction divided into three main sections: Burney’s life, her non-dramatic corpus and bibliography. Attention is paid to the critical reception before and after the twentieth-century, when Burney Studies began to flourish, and a brief analysis of each play follows with the aim to relate the plays to Burney’s novels. The translation has many footnotes about places, people and cultural references, with some references to the original. Perhaps more footnotes about Burney’s work might have been added, but this would make the edition too scholarly for many readers.

In a revealing “Note to the text” (52) it is stated that proper names and titles have been preserved and that the translator has also tried to preserve the rhyme in the ballad and Dabbler’s verses in *The Witlings* and that some characters’ speech in *A Busy Day* has been slightly deviated from the standard language. In the first case, Fernández relies on synonyms and changes in word order. A more debatable point is the translation of idiolect, since in *A Busy Day* some characters have a very peculiar way of speaking which is difficult to render into Spanish.

Fernández eschews this preferring a specific geographic variety and the consistent use of vulgarisms in a choice to render Watts' speech into Spanish. The translator has carefully used correspondences throughout the text, so Miss Watts is characterized by her "Venga, papá" and the language of the upper-classes is totally distinguished from that of the servants. In *El ridículo ingenio* Fernández selectively uses poetic language for the lovers, who commonly use "tú" during the piece and this treatment changes to "usted" when they have a quarrel. These changes bring the text closer to the reader, who always has the impression of reading an English play since the original culture is preserved in the target language.

The "Note to the text" also explains that Peter Sabor's and George Sill's edition of the plays has been taken as a source. However, the recovery of Burney's texts began with the work of Joyce Hemlow who wrote a definitive life of Burney based on voluminous manuscript journals and letters of Burney and other members of her family, and founded the McGill Burney Papers Project. Not only has Sabor edited Burney's plays and other works, but more recently her court journals and letters (2011, 2018), and he has extensively edited other authors, like Richardson and Austen. As is pointed out in the introduction, Burney's plays were the main focus of Barbara Darby's book and Kristen Michelle Johnson in her dissertation thesis, and they have been repeatedly taken to the stage in the USA and Great Britain.

Sabor and Sill's edition is based on the manuscripts held at the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. In the introduction to his edition, Sabor explains that he has resorted to the copy-texts and recovered deleted material and Burney's notes, and he has even added conjectural readings. Sabor insists that "in no case did her manuscripts reach a final form" (Sabor and Sill 1995: xl) since she brought no play to a state of completion. This fact is very important since Burney liked to revise her texts, eliminate excerpts and even destroy her texts if they did not satisfy her. Spelling, punctuation and capitalization are preserved in Sabor's and Sill's edition; as well as Burney's act and scene divisions. Though Sabor's and Sill's work has been chosen as the basis for this edition, there was a previous edition of *A Busy Day* by Tara Ghoshal Wallace, whose debt is acknowledged by Sabor and Sill. In the Spanish edition Sabor's changes are assumed.

Burney's plays have never come to light in Spanish. *Evelina* was translated into Spanish in 1934 and the publishing house d'Época issued

another translation in 2103. Meanwhile, Spanish readers are still waiting for a translation of *Cecilia*, *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*. In France, *Evelina* was issued in 1991 and there is an Italian translation dating back to 2001.

REFERENCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS

- Burney, Frances (1984), *A Busy Day*, Ed. Tara Ghoshal Wallace, New Brunswick, Rutgers UP.
- Burney, Frances (1991), *Evelina*, Trans. Florence Bruzel Vercaemer, Paris, José Corti.
- Burney, Frances (2001), *Evelina*, Trans. Chiara Vatteroni, Roma, Fazi Editore.
- Burney, Frances (2013), *Evelina*, Trans. Eva González, Colección Tesoros de época, Morcín, Asturias, Editorial d'Época.
- Darby, Barbara (1997), *Frances Burney Dramatist: Gender, Performance and the Late Eighteenth-Century Stage*, Louisville, KY, UP of Kentucky.
- Johnson, Kristen Michelle (2012), *Gender, Genre and Gossip in Burney's The Witlings and Sheridan's The School for Scandal*, Doctoral Thesis, California State University at Fresno, abstract in Fresno State Digital Repository: URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10211.3/105339>.
- Sabor, Peter (ed.) (2011), *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney: Volume I: 178*, Oxford: OUP.
- Sabor, Peter (ed.) (2018). *The Additional Journals and Letters of Frances Burney: Volume II: 1791-1840*, Oxford: OUP.
- Sabor, Peter and Geoffrey Sill (eds.) (1995), *The Complete Plays of Frances Burney*, London, Pickering and Chatto, 1995.

MANUEL MÍGUEZ BEN
Universidad de Santiago de Compostela
manuel.miguel.ben@usc.es