



Fanny Burney

Fanny Burney is not the most famous novelist in the canon of English literature, although she was successful and popular in her day. She earns her place as Miss Hannam's inspirational woman because she wrote one of the most courageous and extraordinary pieces of work ever encountered.

Burney's is the first example that most people come across of a woman writing about so intimate an event as a diagnosis of breast cancer and a mastectomy. It's something we still regard as a rather brave thing to do, but we also acknowledge that it is tremendously helpful to others in a similar position to know there is no shame attached to the diagnosis. Please, though, bear in mind that in 1811 there was no such thing as an effective anesthetic! Be brave and read in memory of Burney and her most supreme courage and will to live in her account entitled, 'Account from Paris of a terrible Operation- 1812'.

So, despite that ghastly operation, which will, frankly, stay in most readers minds forever, Fanny Burney outlived everyone she had loved, including her child. I love her writings, her gossip, her vivid portrayals of life among the London literati of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most of all I love her for making us all aware that, though the diagnosis is horrific and the suffering isn't pleasant, breast cancer can be survived and a long and extremely productive life lived after it.