

Tuesday, August 2, 2011

'Shame the Devil' Shines Light on Fanny Fern

Book Preview

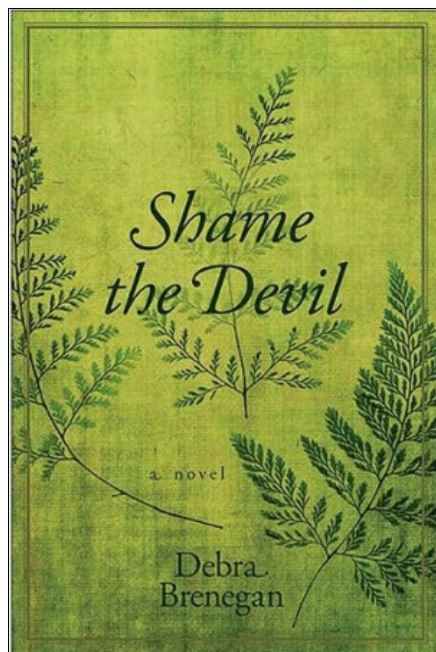
By Jenni Herrick

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Fanny Fern, celebrated newspaper columnist and author in the 1850s-'70s, was born in 1811 as Sara Willis Parton. Her writings captured the attention of middle-class women across the country, and she gained the literary respect of prolific penmen like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Walt Whitman. But despite her renown in that era, not to mention novels that outsold those of Harriet Beecher Stowe and other contemporaries, Fern's accomplishments are often overlooked today. Fortunately, author Debra Brenegan shines a light on this American feminist in a carefully researched and historically accurate new novel, *Shame the Devil*.

Brenegan's work chronicles the exciting and often rebellious adventures of Fern, from her childhood through her rise to fame and wealth as a journalist. As an artist, Fern combined her fearless, unconventional style with plain language in unabashed reports on societal ills. She addressed issues of women's liberation decades before female equality entered the mainstream consciousness. *Shame the Devil* is a passionate and stirring tribute to a refined wordsmith who paved the way for generations of women.

Brenegan, a Milwaukee native who earned her Ph.D. in creative writing from UW-Milwaukee, teaches English and women's studies at Westminster College in Missouri. Her work has appeared in *Tampa Review*, *Southern Women's Review* and *Milwaukee Magazine*, among other publications. Brenegan will discuss *Shame the Devil* at **Boswell Book Co.** on Aug. 8 at 7 p.m.