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Tully's the Fashion: Ciceronian Fame in Frances Burney's *Cecilia*

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Tully's the Fashion: Ciceronian Fame in Frances Burney's *Cecilia*

by

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Dedication

To my friends and family for bringing to life all that is best in literature.

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Abstract

Tully's the Fashion: Ciceronian Fame in Frances Burney's *Cecilia*

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Across a festively lit drawing room at a fashionable London masquerade, the eponymous heroine of Frances Burney's *Cecilia* (1782) catches sight of a man dressed in Ciceronian costume. She identifies him as the famous Roman statesman by his toga and "consular dignity." At first glance, this brief scene is utterly forgettable because, as Peter Gay has noted, Cicero today is "at best an interesting politician and a master of a certain Latin style; at worst he is a bore or an unknown." A closer look, however, reveals not only Burney's deep awareness of Cicero's significance as a "culture hero" but also her and her contemporaries' complex relationship with his legacy. By the time of *Cecilia*'s publication, Cicero is no longer simply the purview of pedants and politicians but is famous to a wider London public. The popular desire to be like Tully, as he was frequently and affectionately referred to during this period, newly manifested itself in material culture, as it had become the height of fashion for his name and face to appear not only in books but also on jewelry, clothing, shop signs, and home décor. It was also

during this era that Cicero's character came under scrutiny: readers had begun to notice that Cicero's public persona in his orations and treatises was far more virtuous than how he appears in his private correspondence. As Burney's portrait of the masquerader reveals, her own attitude towards Cicero's fame was equally complex: while she shared her culture's admiration for Tully, she had misgivings about those like the Ciceronian Frenchman for whom that emulation was an affectation and an opportunity for celebrity mongering. I argue that Burney exposes her society's affectation of Ciceronian virtue, an affectation that mirrors Cicero's own hypocritical self-fashioning. By presenting the reader with a heroine who, like Cicero, strives for virtue and is ambitious of the fame virtue enables, the novel can be seen as a meditation on the nature of ambition itself and whether, if even those who seem to understand virtue best are undone by their desire for fame, ambition and virtue can exist simultaneously.

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In one of *Cecilia*'s great comic scenes, Frances Burney entertains her readers with a parade of ridiculous" and "ludicrous" guests at the Harrels' fashionable London masquerade (106). Separated by over two hundred years from Burney and her original audience, modern readers might find it difficult at times to track the flight of her satiric darts. This is especially true when Cecilia catches sight of a gentleman dressed in Ciceronian costume:

Soon after, a gentleman desiring some lemonade whose toga spoke the consular dignity, though his broken English betrayed a native of France, the school-master followed him, and, with reverence the most profound began to address him in Latin; but, turning quick towards him, he gayly said "*Monsieur, j'ai l'honneur de représenter Ciceron, le grand Ciceron, pere de sa patrie! mais quoique j'ai cet honneur là, je ne suis pas pédant!—mon dieu, Monsieur, je ne parle que le François dans la bonne compagnie!*" And, politely bowing, he went on. (122)¹

At first glance, this brief scene is utterly forgettable—forgettable because, for us today, Cicero is "at best an interesting politician and a master of a certain Latin style; at worst he is a bore or an unknown" (Gay 106). But to Burney and her readers, this scene is richly satirical, and a closer look reveals not only Burney's deep awareness of Cicero's significance as a "culture hero" but also her and her contemporaries' complex relationship with his legacy (Gay 189). Burney's portrait suggests that Cicero's name

¹ Translation of the French: "Sir, I have the honour to represent Cicero, the great Cicero, father of his country! But although I have that honour, I am no pedant!—for heaven's sake, Sir, I speak only French in polite society!" (trans. Doody and Sabor).

evokes an ideal of elegance and enlightenment—a fashionable ideal from which the French masquerader comically falls short.

By the time of *Cecilia*'s publication, the “great Cicero” of the eighteenth century is no longer simply the purview of pedants and politicians but is famous to a wider London public and equally at home in parliament and at parties.² At the heart of this fame was an ideal of virtue that deeply appealed to many of Cicero's admirers in the Enlightenment. But Cicero was not without his critics. In fact, it was during this era that Cicero's character came under scrutiny: readers had begun to notice that Cicero's public persona in his orations and treatises was far more virtuous than how he appears in his private correspondence. To this point, it is important to note that on the other side of the coin of Cicero's fame in the eighteenth century was a deep admiration for Cicero's rhetorical achievements. While this paper speaks more explicitly about ethics, to speak about one is to speak about the other. For Cicero and for eighteenth-century rhetoricians, ethics and eloquence are deeply intertwined in the concept of *ethos*, a rhetorical technique that aims to persuade by establishing the authority of the speaker.³ Thus, Cicero's rhetorical self-fashioning in his public writings was sometimes seen as reinforcing his

² As William Altman discusses in his introduction to the Brill *Companion to the Reception of Cicero*, Thaddäus Zielinski's seminal work *Cicero im Wandel der Jahrhunderte* (1897) identifies the Enlightenment, along with the Renaissance and late antiquity, as one of the most crucial moments in Cicero's afterlife. Considering Cicero's importance during the eighteenth century, scholarship on his influence is surprisingly sparse. For some excellent introductions to eighteenth-century Cicero, see Matthew Fox's “Cicero during the Enlightenment,” Gunter Gawlick's “Cicero and the Enlightenment,” Peter's Gay's *The Rise of Modern Paganism*, and the Brill *Companion*.

³ For more of Cicero's rhetorical legacy during the Enlightenment, I recommend Wilbur Samuel Howell's *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (1971).

own fame at the expense of truth. Regardless of the controversies surrounding his biography, the popular desire to be like Tully, as he was frequently and affectionately referred to during this period, newly manifested itself in material culture, as it had become the height of fashion for his name and face to appear not only in books but also on jewelry, clothing, shop signs, prints, and home décor. At the same time, the portrait of the masquerader reveals that Burney's own attitude towards Cicero's fame was complex: while she shared her culture's admiration for Tully, she had misgivings about those like the Ciceronian Frenchman for whom that emulation was an affectation and an opportunity for celebrity mongering.

This essay will explore two things: the nature of Cicero's fame, to which Burney responds at the masquerade, and Burney's own reply to that popularity in her novel *Cecilia*. I will argue that Burney exposes her society's affectation of Ciceronian virtue, an affectation that mirrors, appropriately enough, the hypocritical self fashioning that Cicero himself may have been guilty of. The antidote to the object of her satire, which posits a heroine who does not fall short of but is capable of exceeding her Ciceronian model, informs the ethical compass of the novel, explaining why her novels delighted everyone from tradesman's daughters to the politician Edmund Burke, the "British Cicero" himself. Like Cicero's treatise *De Officiis*, *Cecilia* can be seen as a meditation on fame and virtue. The novel presents a heroine who, like Cicero, strives for virtue and is ambitious of the fame it enables. Coming in the wake of Cicero's biographical controversies, the novel also contemplates the nature of ambition itself and whether, if even those who seem to understand virtue best are undone by their desire for fame,

ambition and virtue can exist simultaneously. Because Burney enjoyed Cicero in translation, and, as I will show, found herself torn between admiration of his practical ethics and anxiety that openly reading his works would make her appear intellectually “affected”, there are few overt mentions of Cicero in her works, making his appearance at the masquerade an exceptional moment that, in keeping with the implied tradition of disguise, hides a larger intellectual purpose.⁴

* * *

A philosopher, politician, and orator, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) witnessed and participated in a turbulent political climate including a number of civil wars, the assassination of Julius Caesar, and the fall of the Roman Republic. After ascending the political ladder to become a consul and one of Rome’s most respected legal advocates, he was forced into periodic retreats from political life because of his defense of old Republican ideals. It was during these times and near the end of his life that Cicero composed his philosophical, political, and rhetorical treatises, including *De Officiis*, *Laelius De Amicitia*, and *De Legibus*. He was also a prodigious correspondent, and his letters to his friends and family have not only given to posterity a remarkable portrait of the man himself but have also allowed us an intimate glimpse of Roman

⁴ The only other time Burney mentions Cicero by name in her novels occurs in the second volume of *The Wanderer*: “To Juliet scarcely a word of their narrations was intelligible; but, to the ears of their mother, accustomed to their dialect, their lipsing and their imperfect speech, these prattling details were as potent in eloquence, as the most polished orations of Cicero or Demosthenes, are to those of the classical scholar” (233).

political life.⁵ Since his assassination at the hands of the Second Triumvirate, Cicero has enjoyed a monumental legacy, and it would be impossible to do justice to his almost inestimable impact on two thousand years of European intellectual and political history. The most any study can do, as William Altman points out, is to single out one side of Cicero, and, in this case, that side is the Cicero that Burney's London saw as a figure to revere (2).

That every Londoner knew Cicero's name was in large part due to increasingly affordable translations of Cicero's works by fashionable booksellers, making his work accessible to those, like Burney herself, without the benefit of a classical education. William Guthrie (1708-1770) and William Melmoth (1710-1799) were two of Cicero's more widely read translators and were both part of Samuel Johnson's literary circle. When Burney was introduced to Melmoth in 1780, however, he did not make a good impression on her. "Mr. Melmouth," she writes, "seems intolerably self-sufficient; appears to look upon himself as the first man in Bath; & has a proud conceit in look & manner mighty forbidding" (*EJL* 4:99-100). Several of Guthrie and Melmoth's English editions would certainly have been available to Burney from the library of her father, Dr. Charles Burney, as well as from the Thrales' home at Streatham Park where she was a

⁵ For an introduction to Cicero's life and times, see *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero*, Elizabeth Rawson's *Cicero: A Portrait* (1983), and the most recently published biography: Anthony Everitt's *Cicero* (2003). *Cicero's Practical Philosophy*, published by Notre Dame Press, offers insight into recent efforts in scholarship over the last two decades to revive serious interest in Cicero's political philosophy.

frequent visitor between 1778 and 1783.⁶ Even if Burney's reading habits failed to surmount her personal dislike of Melmoth, she would have had access to plenty of other Ciceronian texts, because in addition to Melmoth's *Cato and Laelius* (1777) and *Letters to his Friends* (1753), the auction catalogue of her father's library lists Thomas Francklin's translation of *Nature of the Gods* (1775), Edward Jones' *Brutus and Orator* (1776), and Thomas Cockman's frequently reprinted *Tully's Offices* (1732) among his library.

Beyond a relish for translations of Cicero's works was perhaps an even more flourishing market for works about his life. An interest in the personality behind the pen was a relatively late development in the history of Cicero's fame. For example, Howard Jones has pointed out that while Cicero was a popular writer in the Middle Ages, "his career as an orator and statesman, his political ideals, the affairs of his life, these were matters of no interest, even to those who cite him most often" (64). Petrarch's discovery of Cicero's personal letters in 1345 marked the beginning of a more integrated view of Cicero's writings and life that would continue during the Renaissance through the eighteenth century (Jones 81). Between 1684 and 1688, Dryden and a team of scholars translated Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, and Lord George

⁶ The 1816 Streatham auction catalogue lists three English translations of Cicero's works owned by the Thrales: Guthrie's *Cicero's Orations* (1743), Guthrie's *The Morals of Cicero* (1744) and "The Nature of the Gods" (I suspect this is Francklin's translation, the same owned by Dr. Burney). Guthrie also published a collection including Cicero's *Offices*, *Cato Major*, *Laelius*, *Moral Paradoxes*, *The Vision of Scipio*, and the *Letter Concerning the Duties of a Magistrate* (1755). Melmoth published three volumes of *The Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero to Several of his Friends* (1755), *Laelius; Or, an Essay on Friendship* (1777), and *Cato* (1773) at Dodsley's Tully's Head in Pall Mall.

Lyttelton supplemented it with *Observations on the Life of Cicero* fifty years later, in 1733. The most famous and controversial biography of Cicero was Conyers Middleton's bestselling *Life of Cicero*, which was published in 1741 and went through a remarkable eight London editions by 1767 (Smith 169). "I have just finished Middleton's History of Cicero," writes Burney in 1771, "which I read immediately after Hooke's Roman History: it is a Delightful Book: the style is manly & elegant, & though he may be too partial to Cicero, the fine writings he occasionally translates of that great man, Authorise & excuse his partiality" (*EJL* 1:167). Burney was not the only one who felt Middleton's biography had been too complimentary. In fact, her comment hints at the growing sense in the eighteenth century that Cicero's virtue was little more than a self-fashioned façade that masked the cowardly actions of an inefficient and corrupt politician. Colley Cibber, for example, responded the same year with *The Character and Conduct of Cicero Considered*, in which he made it clear that his goal was to give a more balanced account of Cicero's character and legacy than Middleton had (Fox 333). In an era that had come to see the chief role of biography as revealing character in order to assess the subject's moral qualities, the debate over Cicero's character is of central importance to understanding the nature of his fame during the Georgian era, and it is a question I will be returning to later in the paper.

These and other bestselling Ciceronian works were proudly displayed in storefront windows of bookshops, where, at four guineas for the Olivet edition, they were apparently thought so saleable that, in one instance, some volumes were shoplifted and

sold to another bookseller (*Old Bailey* 1783).⁷ The theft of valuable Ciceronian tomes was apparently not uncommon, as the *Old Bailey* records similar thefts and as Burney herself was drawn into a minor family scandal when thirty-five stolen classical volumes were discovered in her brother Charles' rooms at Cambridge (Harman 89-90). There were also a number of bookshops with Cicero's face emblazoned on their store signage. Before the advent of street numbers, businesses marked their storefronts with trade signs that featured familiar cultural symbols and icons (Hamling 88). Literary heads were particularly popular for booksellers (Raven 276). As Cicero's features were iconic enough to be instantly recognizable by the London public, a number of "Tully's Head" and "Cicero's Head" bookshops graced the fashionable district of London: Herman Noorthouck's Cicero's Head in Maiden Lane in Covent Garden, Thomas Becket's Tully's Head in the Strand, Thomas Walker at Cicero's Head in Dame Street, and John Nichols and William Bowyer at Cicero's Head in Red Lion Passage, Fleet Street. The

⁷ In the trial, John Hayes, the book-seller at Holborn, describes how after he noticed his Olivet Cicero and Hooke's Roman History had gone missing on November 28, only to discover that the thieves, James Johnson and David Birmingham, had sold a couple of the volumes to a bookseller in Middle Row, St. Giles. Hayes' companion John Marsom humorously describe how they apprehended Johnson and Birmingham after the two thieves returned to sell the rest of the stolen books: "we waited till the two prisoners came in, I then went into the shop, Mr. Hayes went for an officer; I looked at the books, and asked Johnson what he expected for the books; Johnson said, half a guinea; I observed they were Latin, I said, did he read Latin; he said, no, he could not read Latin; I then said they were not compleat, there were other volumes of the work, and it was extraordinary he should have books he could not read, I asked him where he got them, he said, he bought them of a man in Wapping the night before, he said he did not know who he was, he believed he was a smuggler, he bought them in the street; this was merely for the purpose of amusing them till Mr. Hayes returned with an officer, I then expressed my suspicions, that they were not honestly come by, he said he gave eight shillings for them, then Mr. Hayes, came in, and they were taken before the justice."

most notable of these bookshops was Robert and James Dodsley's Tully's Head, located at a modish Pall Mall address. Strategically choosing a location that was close "to the coffee houses, rumour mills, and smart meeting places of St James and Whitehall," Robert Dodsley opened Tully's Head in Pall Mall in 1735 (Raven 188). He partnered with his younger brother James in 1750, and, upon Robert's retirement in 1759, James took over the business until his death in 1797. According to James Raven, "Tully's Head was to become one of the most distinguished bookshops of the century," publishing the works of the most celebrated literary names in the eighteenth century, including Johnson, Pope, Burke, Sterne, and Akenside (187). Knowing the reputation of Tully's Head throws light on just how ambitious a move it was for Burney as an aspiring authoress to send her manuscript of *Evelina* to James Dodsley in 1776. Unfortunately, Dodsley would not consider an anonymous submission, so she instead took *Evelina* to Thomas Lowndes in Fleet Street (Harman 92). Regardless, the fact remains that for Burney as for other writers like Richard Owen Cambridge (1715-1804) whose title page to his *Scribleriad* (1751) features an image of Tully's bust (Figure 1), the Ciceronian brand on the title pages of their volumes had become a way to promote their own literary fame. The poet Richard Graves (1715-1804) put it best in a poem published in 1756: "Where Tully's Bust and honour'd Name / Point out the venal Page, / Where Dodsley consecrates to Fame / The Classics of his Age" (Solomon 170). If Graves here is using the word "venal" to refer to corrupt or unprincipled business practice rather than in its more benign sense of "saleable," it is possible that the lines critique writers who attempt to artificially immortalize themselves through association with celebrities like Cicero.

THE
SCRIBLERIAD:
AN
HEROIC POEM.
In SIX BOOKS.



LONDON:
Printed for R. DODSLEY in *Pall-Mall*;
and sold by M. COOPER in *Pater-noster-row*.
MDCCLI.

PPA275564

Title-page
(Hammelmann p. 95)

1874 12 12 633

Figure 1: Title page to *The Scribleriad*. 1751. The British Museum, London.

Cicero's celebrity spread well beyond bookshops into the streets, public houses, and private residences of Londoners. Celebrity in the eighteenth century relied not only on an individual's cult of personality but also on commercializing that fame through material objects—a phenomenon that often starts at the highest levels of society (Postle 17, Barchas 9). Amongst the circles of the British aristocracy, Cicero worship started with the practice of collecting ancient Roman treasures—including marbles, gems, vases, and medals—on the Grand Tour of Italy. Lord Burlington brought back a statue of Cicero from Rome to adorn Chiswick house, while Lord Chesterfield acquired an antique bust of Cicero for his library at Chesterfield House (Ayres 138). The printer John Brooks shows the bust displayed in a niche in the background of his portrait of Chesterfield (Figure 2). Vicky Coltman describes how “Rome was as much a marketplace as a museum: a commercial site of buyers, agents, dealers, artists, sculptors, and bureaucrats” (58). Hester Thrale Piozzi travelled Europe for three years and in her published travel journal *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (1789), which Queen Charlotte read aloud to Burney to their “mutual delight” while Burney was at court, Piozzi describes the culture of collecting ancient Roman artifacts: “Every dish and plate, however, being the portrait as one may say of some famous Etruscan vase, or other antique, dug out of the ruins of these newly-discovered cities, with an account of its supposed story engraved neatly round the figure, makes it interesting and elegant, and worthy of one prince to accept, and another to bestow” (Franklin; Piozzi 42). While it seems that Piozzi looked on the practice with something of a critical distance, she undoubtedly participated herself: after returning to

England, she redecorated Streatham Park in “Italianate splendor,” crowned with two Etruscan vases that had supposedly been discovered among the ruins of Cicero’s own villa at Tusculum (Franklin; *Auction catalogue*).



Figure 2: Print by John Brooks. Lord Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield. 1740-1756. The British Museum, London.

According to his letters, Cicero himself was a passionate collector who filled his villas with *objets d'art*, a practice, which, in turn, inspired British taste for collecting (Ayres 136). But beyond this general inspiration to collect, it seems that Cicero kindled a desire for travelers on the Grand Tour to collect what he himself had collected. The fever for relics from Cicero's villas was a passion with which Burney would have been familiar considering that two acquaintances within her immediate circles possessed vases once owned by the great orator. As I have already mentioned, Hester Thrale owned two of Cicero's Etruscan vases. But there was at least one other famous vase that flaunted the fame of its Ciceronian provenance. Lady Anna Miller (1741–1781) became notorious for hosting the elite world of fashion and wit at her house in Batheaston two or three times during the Bath season (Lee). At these “Parnassus-fairs,” which included contemporary celebrities such as David Garrick, Samuel Johnson, Anna Seward, and Horace Walpole, she requested that her guests place a copy of verses as tribute into an antique vase (*Walpole* 407). This vase, which Walpole described sardonically as “a Roman vase dressed with pink ribbons and myrtles,” was supposedly rescued, like Hester Thrale's Etruscan vases, from the ruins of Cicero's villa at Tusculum in 1759 (*Walpole* 407). After dancing and dining, a panel of judges would read and select the best original poetry, and Lady Miller would crown the triumphant poets with wreaths of myrtle. To guarantee her guests' *kleos*, Lady Miller collected and published the vase's poetry in a bestselling work entitled *Poetical Amusements at a Villa Near Bath* (1775-1781), in which she pays tribute to her vase with a short account of its Ciceronian origins and a “tolerable representation in the Frontispiece, with its decorations of Laurel Branches, &c.

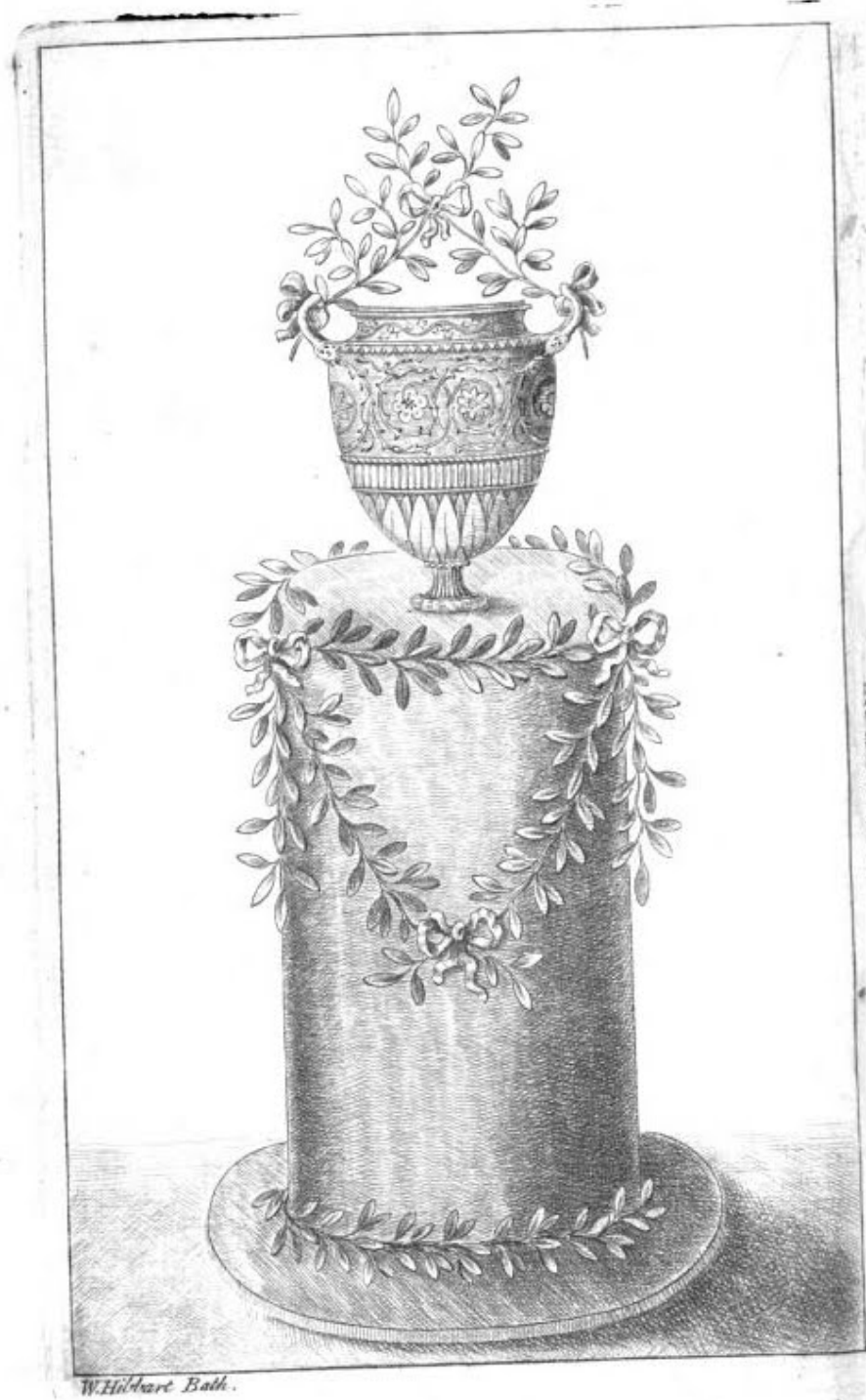


Figure 3: Frontispiece to Lady Miller's *Poetical Amusements at a Villa Near Bath*.

upon its present modern altar” (vii; Figure 3).⁸ By the time Burney was famous enough to be invited to pay a visit to Lady Miller in Bath in 1780, her letter to Susan indicates that “the Vase,” for better or for worse, had become legendary enough to warrant her comment on its absence: “Thursday is still their public Day for Company, though the Business of the Vase is over for this season...I saw the place appropriated for the Vase, but at this Time it was removed” (*EJL* 4:166). Unsurprisingly, Burney shared with others like Johnson and Walpole distaste for Lady Miller’s tawdry, “tonish” desire to be the center of Bath’s fashionable world (*EJL* 4:127). It seems too remarkable that Burney may have encountered not just one but three authentic relics from Cicero’s villa, leading one to suspect that Roman antiquities dealers had swindled her friends. But the possibility of a market in fakes only reinforces Cicero’s fame: Ciceronian wares had become desirable to enough people that by the middle of the eighteenth century they had to be duplicated either as illegal copies or as honest reproductions sold at affordable prices.⁹ While only an elite few can afford a genuine Ciceronian vase, many can own mass-produced reproductions of one.¹⁰

⁸ For more first hand accounts of Lady Miller’s ritual see the preface to Miller’s *Poetical Amusements*, Hester Thrale’s January 3, 1778 entry in *Thraliana*, Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* 2.150-151, and Walpole’s letter to H.S. Conway dated January 15, 1775. After Lady Miller’s death in 1781, the rituals ended, and Edwyn Dowding of Bath purchased the Vase and installed it in a public park (Lee).

⁹ In addition to apocryphal relics, Cicero’s works were subject to theft and forgery. In his own lifetime, misattributed texts and Ciceronian knock offs were commonplace enough to prompt Cicero’s almost gleeful remark, “for my own part, if I am credited with an epigram which I think clever and worthy of a scholar and a gentleman of sense, I make no objection; but I take umbrage when I am reputed to have uttered words which are unworthy of me and belong to others” (quoted from East 109). Interestingly, John Toland’s *Cicero Illustratus* (a 1712 scholarly prospectus outlining a new edition of

It was Josiah Wedgwood who seemed best to embrace the tenet that to succeed commercially in the world of fashion and fame one must “monopolize the aristocratic market, and thus win for his ware a special distinction, a social cachet which would filter through to all classes of society” (McKendrick 110). Or, as Wedgwood himself put it in 1771, one must “begin at the Head first, & then proceed to the inferior members” (McKendrick 110). Realizing that they could guarantee the success of their own wares by harnessing the prestige associated with the aristocratic trend of collecting Roman antiquities, Wedgwood and Richard Bentley first issued a catalogue in 1772 that introduced novel products on the English pottery market: vases, plaques, cameos, intaglios, rings, and busts inspired by Roman and Greek antiquities that the genteel classes could purchase at a reasonable price (Young 13). To design his products, Wedgwood had consulted antiquarians and architects and was granted permission by members of the nobility to access their collections of authentic antique treasures (Young 14). In the preface to the catalogue, Wedgwood reassures his customers that reproducing aristocratic rarities does not lessen their value but enhances it: “Nor can these be any surer way of rendering an exquisite piece, possessed by an individual, famous, without diminishing the value of the original; for the more copies there are of any works, as of the ‘Venus de’ Medici,’ for instance, the more celebrated the original will be, and the more

Cicero’s works that was never published) describes a plan to include eleven apocryphal works from the Ciceronian canon. Katherine A East’s article “Apocryphal Cicero: John Toland’s *Cicero Illustratus* and Notions of Authority in the Early Enlightenment” tackles Toland’s unusual decision, making for a compelling argument about scholarly authority and *spuria* in the eighteenth century.

¹⁰ For more on the importance of commercial duplication to the cultivation of celebrity, see Janine Barchas and Kristina Straub’s article “Curating *Will & Jane*.”

honour derived to the possessor” (Wedgwood 29). Wedgwood and Bentley’s business model, it seems, had revealed a near Biblical truth: far from diminishing, glory miraculously grows when the multitudes are fed.

Based on the catalogue’s range of designs, colors, materials, and sizes, portraits of Cicero in the form of busts, cameos, and medallions appear to have been one of the more sought after designs. Basalt library busts of Cicero like the one seen in Figure 4 and Figure 5, which is a slightly later design from 1780, were one of the first three busts Wedgwood produced between 1770 and 1773 (the other two being Horace and George II) (Meteyard 202).



Figure 4: Wedgwood’s Library Bust of Cicero (1775). The Wedgwood Museum.



Figure 5: Wedgwood’s Bust of Cicero (ca. 1780). The British Museum, London.

The black body of basalt was chosen to mimic the appearance of Etruscan vases, perhaps like the ones Hester Thrale and Lady Miller owned (Meteyard 18-19). But while the stoneware was a more affordable alternative to Etruscan bronze, Wedgwood advertised it as just as, if not more, durable: “for after time has destroyed even marbles and bronzes,” Wedgwood writes, “these copies will remain, and will transmit the productions of genius and the portraits of illustrious men, to the most distant times” (Wedgwood 55). The



Figure 6: Pearlware Bust of Cicero (ca. 1810).
Martyn Edgell Antiques Ltd.

choice of material reinforced the immortality of Cicero and, by association, the fame and prestige of both the manufacturer and owner.

Tellingly, as the Cicero tchotchke in Figure 6 suggests, other manufacturers followed suit, flooding the market with a range of further Tully-inspired porcelain collectables and accessories. Intaglios, such as the sard intaglio mounted in a gold collar in Figure 7, and cameos, much like the one made of sard and set in a modern gold ring in Figure 8, were an especially fashionable

way to show Tully idolatry. In ancient Rome, cameos had “not only advertised the taste and wealth of the men and women who wore them but also, through the images they bore, professed their wearers’ virtue and devotion to the



Figure 7: Eighteenth-century sard intaglio of Cicero. The British Museum, London.



Figure 8: Eighteenth-century sard cameo of Cicero set in a modern gold ring. The British Museum, London

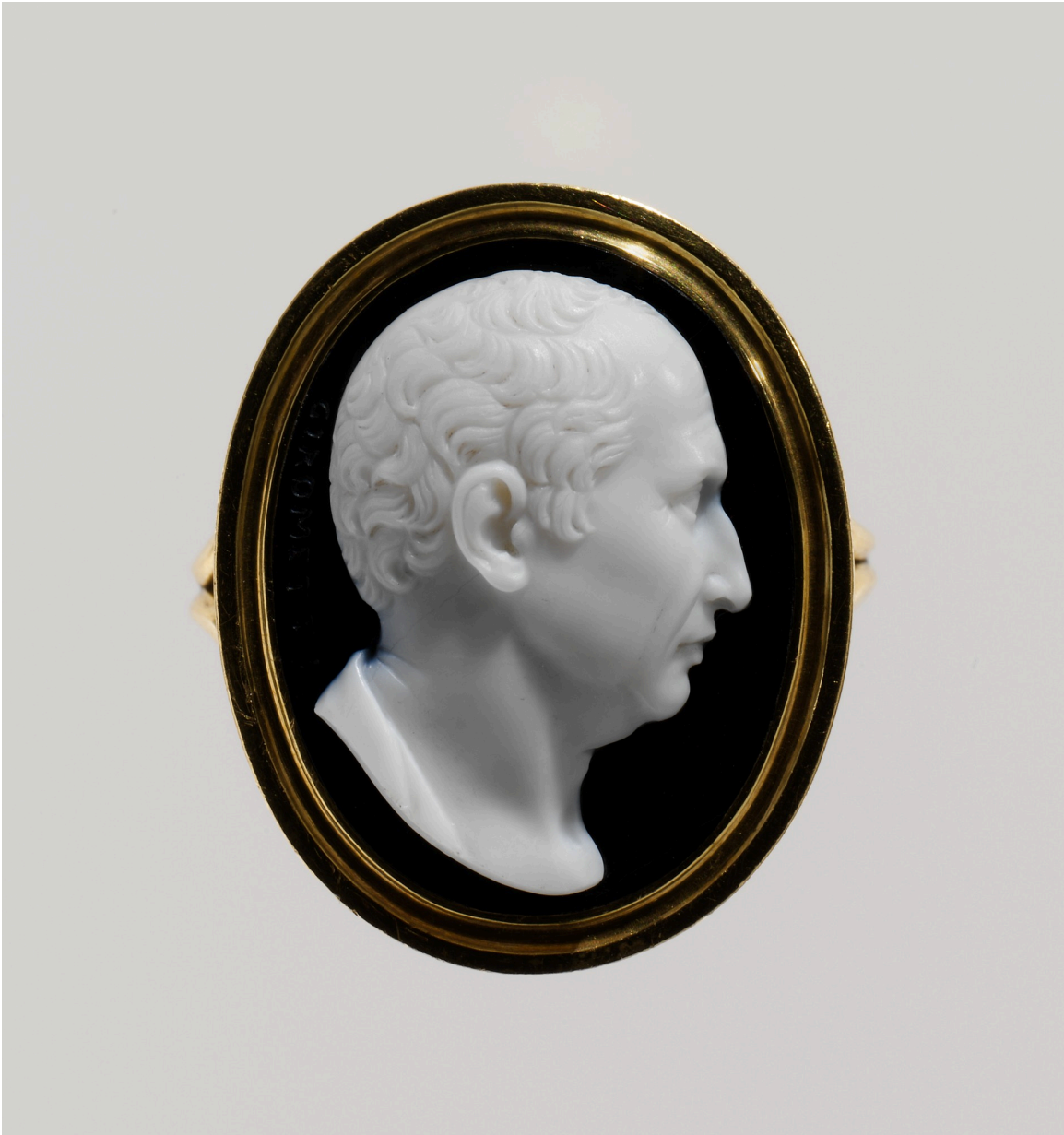


Figure 9. Giuseppe Girometti (1780-1851). Cameo of Cicero. Early nineteenth century.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.

gods or to political forces” (Draper 6). In Georgian England, cameos and intaglios played a similar role, allowing wearers to associate themselves with the reputations of the famous profiles that adorned their jewelry. And these intaglios, if set in rings, could be used to seal letters, adding further gravity to correspondence during a time when it was popular to imitate Cicero’s own epistolary style. Designed in the early nineteenth century by the Italian artist Giuseppe Girometti (1780–1851), the cameo in Figure 9 features Cicero’s profile. The carved onyx mounted in a gold ring imitates the appearance of marble, and the stark contrast of the black and white layers in the gem are meant to “deliver a keener sense of the great orator’s cogitations through his careworn features” (Draper 41). Girometti modeled the profile after the marble head of Cicero in the Roman Musei Capitolini. This bust was also the model for the prominent English intaglio engraver Nathanael Marchant. After becoming the first English engraver to study the “inestimable remains of ancient art on the spot,” Marchant returned to England, set up a shop in Bond Street, and published a catalogue of impressions in 1792 (Seidmann 17). While Girometti’s cameo is an example of a high-end reproduction of an ancient gem, Marchant’s intaglios were part of a booming market of cheaply reproduced impressions made from colored glass pastes that imitated the appearance of real gems. Like Wedgwood’s wares, Marchant’s intaglios capitalized on the technologies that allowed manufacturers to put Cicero’s fame and face within reach of the wider British public.

Beyond seals and jewelry, it was possible to run into painted, printed, sculpted and even embroidered representations of Rome’s greatest orator. For example, the men’s court waistcoat from the 1780s shown in Figure 10 features an elaborate Ciceronian



Figure 10: Men's court waistcoat. ca. 1780-1790. V&A Museum, London.

motif. The circular silk medallions, which evoke Marchant and Wedgwood's cameos, come from wall paintings that had been recently discovered at Cicero's Villa in Herculaneum and that had been published as a part of an eight-volume collection called *The Antiquities of Herculaneum* between 1757 and 1792. (1757-92). Contrary to Cecilia's miserly guardian Mr. Briggs' words that waistcoats are "nothing but tinsel, all shew and no substance," the lavish silks and laces of court fashion could serve as a canvas on which aristocrats could represent political ideals and either alliances or oppositions to the crown or to particular parties (96).¹¹ In the case of the Ciceronian coat, the design could be significant for a number of reasons. One possibility is that this waistcoat projects the original owner's non-partisan value for political liberty and civic virtue. As Ayres has argued, members of Britain's ruling class, Tory and Whig alike, strove to "image themselves as virtuous Romans" shaping Britain "as a land of land of liberty, opportunity and democracy" (xiii, 13). Some, like John Toland, explicitly advised that the British state turn to Cicero's theory of the ideal government and constitution in *De re publica* as the model that could best secure civil liberty and freedom under the law (Gawlick 665-7). In partisan politics, Tories and Whigs at separate times found it rhetorically effective to assert their superiority over the opposing party by claiming it was their own party that truly upheld Ciceronian *amor patriae*. It is also possible that the coat's design speaks to particular political events. Cicero's appearance in satirical cartoons of the 1780s, the decade Burney wrote *Cecilia*, is exceptionally

¹¹ For more on court fashion and politics, see Angela McShane's "Princely Patronage in Europe, 1600-1800" pp. 16-41 and Hannah Grieg's *The Beau Monde* pp. 99-130.

frequent.¹² John Boyne's "Cicero Against Verres," (1787) for example, is an early example of a print that compared Burke's prosecution of Warren Hastings, which was a highly publicized public trial that took place between 1788 and 1795, to Cicero's *Verrine Orations* (Figure 11).¹³ The trial, which the horrified and enthralled Burney attended and vividly recorded in her diary, charged Hastings with misconduct during his time as Governor-General of India and famously and brilliantly drew on the similarities to Caius Verres' "vicious misgovernment" of Sicily (Ayres 42).¹⁴ Burney herself remarks on the effectiveness of Burke's classical references, writing in her diary, "his allusions and quotations, as far as they were English and with my reach, were apt and ingenious" (*DL* 3:449). Because Cicero led the prosecution against Verres in 70 BC, it is clear that Burke, through these allusions and quotations, was attempting to establish his Roman political lineage, fashioning himself as a British Cicero who would safeguard his nation's foreign interests. Yet for every serious imitator of Cicero, there were at least as many shallow acolytes. In the case of the waistcoat, it is reasonable to suspect that, like Burney's

¹² For some examples of satiric cartoons featuring Cicero in the 1780s, see James Sayers "The Patriot Exalted" (1792) and "Cicero in Catilinam" (1785), William Dent's "Black Carlo's White Bust" (1791), and "A Ciceronian attitude" (1790).

¹³ For more on Cicero's *Verrine Orations* as a model for Burke's prosecution of Hastings, see H. V. Canter's essay "The Impeachments of Verres and Hasting: Cicero and Burke".

¹⁴ It was during her time as Keeper of the Robes for Queen Charlotte that Burney attended the first day of the trial on February 13, 1788. Burney was captivated by the trial and continued to attend the proceedings. Part of what made the trial so disturbing to her was its personal significance: acquainted with both Hastings (she had met him at her brother-in-law Clement Francis's house in Aylsham the previous year) and Burke, it was distressing to see, from her perspective, Burke's "perversion of his genius" loosed upon an innocent man (Harman 212). While she supported Hastings, Burney couldn't help but admire Burke's captivating oratorical performance: "Yet, at times I confess, with all that I felt, wished, and thought concerning Mr. Hastings, the whirlwind of his eloquence nearly drew me into its vortex" (*DL* 3:449).



Figure 11: John Boyne (ca. 1750-1810). "Cicero Against Verres" (1787). The Lewis Walpole Library, New Haven.

Frenchman, its original owner donned his Ciceronian garb without any better reason than the time's vogue for Roman political ideals.

In short, by the time *Cecilia* was published, it would hardly be an exaggeration to say, as one Londoner did as early as 1732, “Every one fancies himself to be a Cicero” (*Old Bailey* 1732). The appearance of a Toga-wearing gentleman at a masquerade is not an anomaly but just one of the many ways Tully filled the private and public spaces of Burney's London. His fame was marketed to polite and popular consumers alike: artisans and manufacturers like Wedgwood and Marchant drew on and reinforced the fashionable status of Tully amongst elite consumers by producing affordable products that made his fame desirable and accessible to the London public. As is evident from these wide-ranging items, from glass paste intaglios to authentic Etruscan vases, Cicero was not only on the mantelpieces, but also on the minds of Londoners. It is worth reiterating that these fashionable objects are the trappings of a more deeply rooted preoccupation with Cicero. In a society that increasingly insisted on the virtues of trade and consumerism, it makes sense that commercial goods were a way to disseminate virtue itself.¹⁵ Or, as Horace Walpole put it, “the tongue runs overs *with virtù*” when one's “fingers are loaded with cameos (Walpole 406). As we have seen already, items like the waistcoat, cameos, and the proliferation of biographies point at the thing that is at the heart of Cicero's celebrity: the ideal of private and civic virtue that he came to represent. Cicero was not just the philosopher who wrote about virtue but was also the politician who practiced virtue and “embodied the *vita activa*” (Gay 192). Burney's

¹⁵ See J.G.A Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985)

world is one in which objects point to a larger concern for fame and public and private virtue—an ethical view, in other words, refracted through the glittering prism of fashion and fame.

* * *

Cicero's cultural significance in the eighteenth century is also reflected in Burney's *Cecilia*. After looking more closely at Burney's satire of the Ciceronian gentleman's pretensions and affectation of celebrity, I will explore how the novel's preoccupation with virtue and fame offers a solution to her era's vexed Ciceronian inheritance. Together, Burney's twofold attitude towards Cicero in the novel suggests that the desire for Cicero's fame, and particularly for his practice of virtue, must be mediated by awareness that ostentation and pedantry undermine that virtue and turn it into mere affectation. To further complicate matters, Burney wrote *Cecilia* during a time when the authenticity of Cicero's own virtue was under debate. As the poet Robert Jephson puts it in his *Roman Portraits*, "Though fond of virtue, more he lov'd the fame" (1217). Eighteenth-century readers had begun to suspect that Cicero's portrayals of his own virtue was more an attempt to be remembered and celebrated for his character than it was an accurate portrayal of his actions. In other words, Cicero himself was perhaps guilty of the same affectation Burney reflects upon almost two thousand years later: aspiring to fame for the sake of fame rather than for the sake of virtue.

As we return to Cicero's appearance at the masquerade, it becomes clear that Burney's satire aims at those who merely affect Cicero's fame in the absence of true knowledge. The words at the beginning of the chapter set the scene's governing motif of

pretense: “the conceited efforts at wit, the total thoughtlessness of consistency, and the ridiculous incongruity of the language with the appearance, were incitements to surprise and diversions without end” (106). The Frenchman’s most obvious offense is an incongruity between language and appearance. Mr. Gosport, who is dressed as a schoolmaster, approaches and begins to address the Ciceronian gentleman in Latin only for him to respond in French. In one sense, the scene exposes the shortcomings of contemporary education, thus placing Burney in a tradition of British novelists like Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding who satirize Georgian society’s abuse of classical learning.¹⁶ Mr. Gosport’s disguise as a schoolmaster puns on *cicerone*, a word that refers generally to a tutor or instructor and more specifically to a guide who explained the curiosities of antiquity to travelers on the Grand Tour. Of course, it is fitting that throughout the rest of the novel Mr. Gosport serves as Cecilia’s own personal *cicerone* for the human curiosities of “the ton.” For centuries, Cicero had been the cornerstone on which elite educations were built in childhood and abandoned in adulthood.¹⁷ Like the gentlemen in *Evelina* who struggle to recite Horatian odes long forgotten since their university days or Lady Smatter who misattributes her readings in *The Witlings*, the French Cicero unwittingly exposes what is really a pretense to, and a shallow grasp of,

¹⁶ Though Smollett and Fielding poke fun at their characters’ scholarly pretensions with some frequency, we might think of two representative examples from their novels: the episode of the Horace-quoting innkeeper in Chapter X of *Roderick Random* and Partridge, the schoolmaster who can always be relied on for his Latin *non sequiturs*, in *Tom Jones*. While she focuses exclusively on the work of Fielding, Nancy Mace’s *Fielding and the Classical Tradition* provides insight into the ethical ends to which other authors like Burney and Smollett could have put their satiric uses of the classics.

¹⁷ For an overview of the state of classical education in the early eighteenth century, see the first chapter of Mace’s *Fielding and the Classical Tradition*.

classical reading. Lady Smatter's words best capture his attitude: "if my pursuits were not made public, I should not have any at all, for where can be the pleasure of reading Books, and studying authors, if one is not to have the credit of talking of them?" (16). Lady Smatter and the French Cicero's "desire for celebrity" through their reading is a marked contrast to Burney's own anxiety over public displays of learning, an anxiety she also expressed when Johnson attempted to teach her Latin in 1779 (16).¹⁸ Burney reverses Lady Smatter's sentiment in another remark to Johnson: "Sir, quoth I, courageously, I am always *afraid* of being caught Reading, lest I should pass for being *studious* or *affected*, & therefore, instead of making a *Display* of books, I always try to *hide* them" (*EJL* 3:172). Her personal fear of pedantic display suggests just how pressing it was for her to move beyond ridicule in search of a solution: how can a sincere regard for the classics be put to good use in a society where displays of learning often amount to little more than ornament?

Furthermore, part of the comedy is not just that he cannot speak Latin but that he speaks French rather than English. The French *philosophes* were particularly fervent in their admiration of Cicero's civic virtue and eloquence: Cicero was "*le plus grand philosophe des Romains, aussi bien que le plus eloquent*," as Voltaire once wrote (Sharpe 329).¹⁹ A young Montesquieu expressed his own fancy to be Cicero: "*Cicéron est, de*

¹⁸ According to Doody, "Burney had mixed feelings about devoting 'so much time to acquire something I shall always dread to have known'. The dread was partly inspired by Charles Burney, who mocked the scheme, thinking Latin grammar 'too masculine for misses' and eventually forbade Fanny to continue" (241).

¹⁹ An excellent place to start for Cicero's reception in France would be Peter Gay's *The Rise of Modern Paganism and The Party of Humanity: Studies in the French*

tous les anciens, celui qui a eu le plus de mérite personnel, et à qui j'aimerois mieux ressembler" (Gawlick 659). The sentiment of Burney's Ciceronian Frenchman was so frequently repeated in England's own political literature during the eighteenth century that the Frenchmen's encomium to Cicero as "the father of his country" would have struck readers in the 1780s as the most hackneyed of opinions (Ayres 6-7). At the same time, the moment reads as a satiric evocation of another platitude: Lord Chesterfield's famous advice to his son that the ideal gentleman ought to combine Roman *gravitas* with the easy elegance and *politesse* of the French (Ayres 53). The French Cicero's clumsy attempt to reassert his dignity using a threadbare phrase that the *philosophes* had used one too many times and his weak defense that, like the perfect gentleman, he will only speak French in "polite" company ensures that he appears neither polite nor enlightened in the eyes of Burney's audience.

While Burney satirizes the French gentleman's fashionable Ciceronian affectations, she reaffirms in her heroine a virtuous ideal embodied by Cicero—or at least the virtuous ideal Cicero had perhaps crafted himself. From the beginning, *Cecilia* explores the possibility of virtue in the face of ambition and affectation in an attempt to put her classical reading to good use. The novel opens with Cecilia's prayer for the immortality of her parents' virtue: "Peace to the spirits of my honoured parents, respected be their remains, and immortalized their virtues! may time, while it moulders their frail relicks to dust, commit to tradition the record of their goodness" (5). This remarkable

Enlightenment. The Brill Companion also contributes two especially strong essays: Kathy Eden's "Cicero's Portion of Montaigne's Acclaim" and Matthew Sharpe's "Cicero, Voltaire, and the *Philosophes* in the French Enlightenment."

first sentence recalls a similar panegyric to parental virtue in Cicero's *De Officiis*. Composed as a letter to his son Marcus, *De Officiis* lays out what Cicero calls the "noblest Inheritance that can ever be left by a Father to his Son, and far exceeding that of Houses and Lands, is the Fame of his Virtues and glorious Actions" (L'Estrange 111).²⁰ Central to Cicero's *De Officiis* and Burney's *Cecilia* is the desire to chronicle virtuous legacies and, moreover, to recognize that virtue comes from legacies. In Cicero's time, Romans believed that good character, or *ethos*, was passed on from generation to generation (May 6). This is evident from *De Officiis*, in which the almost autobiographical nature of the work both distills a lifetime of experiential wisdom and passes it on to the next generation of Romans. Similarly, the beginning of *Cecilia* takes seriously this Roman concept of *mos maiorum* (ancestral precedent), showing the heroine honoring and vowing to carry the torch of her mother and father's legacy both in how she spends her fortune and in how she regulates her conduct. From this perspective, Cecilia's status as an heiress gives her both a material and an ethical responsibility.

As previously mentioned, Cicero's fame in the eighteenth century stems in part from his ethical teachings. Cicero's work was deeply influential on moral philosophy of the period, and works such as James Beattie's *Elements of Moral Science* (1790-93) and Thomas Reid's *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (1788) extensively cite and discuss Cicero (Heydt 370-371). Others, such as Edward Bentham's *Introduction to Moral Philosophy* (1746) include Ciceronian epigraphs on their title pages while Sterne's

²⁰ A note on translations of *De Officiis*: for this paper, I have cited from L'Estrange's *Tully's Offices* (1680) and Guthrie's *Offices* (1755) in addition to consulting the standard Loeb translation.

narrator in *Tristram Shandy* playfully names Cicero as among the “best ethick writers” (2). But from Cicero’s own canon, no work was better seen to celebrate his lifetime’s achievement of thought and action than *De Officiis*. To Hume, it was the work in which “the fame of Cicero flourishes” (Schofield 86). Burney too once commented on the usefulness of Cicero’s philosophy to the conduct of daily life. In a letter to her son, she advises that his “Cicero reading...must, in every way, & upon every project, be good for your taste as well as instruction” (*JL* 11:53). Part of what makes Cicero’s philosophy so appealing during the Enlightenment was its practical bent. Not only did his philosophy seem simple and accessible, Garwick argues, but also Cicero himself emphasized again and again the need to fuse thought and action (658). The philosopher, Cicero said, must also be a statesman.

But what is perhaps the more interesting, and certainly more difficult, question that vexed eighteenth-century Ciceronians was whether Tully had practiced the philosophy he preached and whether his own ambition for fame and glory had undermined the virtue he has hoping to attain. Indeed, this issue will recall this paper’s earlier discussion of the controversies surrounding biographies about Cicero in which biographers and readers began to notice the ways in which Cicero’s virtuous self representations had actually fallen short of reality. To address this, we will need to begin with Cicero and Burney’s shared impulses to chronicle legacies of virtue. Part of the reason why the eighteenth century championed him as the hero of the *vita activa* is because that is exactly what Cicero intended. In order to succeed in the world of Roman oratory and politics, it was essential to secure *auctoritas*, *gratia*, *gloria*, *existimatio*, and

dignitas (May 7). For the Romans, it was not enough to wield *ethos* as a mere rhetorical tool of persuasion as it had been for the ancient Greeks, since *ethos* had to be established in all aspects of a Roman politician's life: his bearing, his actions, and his family's reputation (May 9). Cicero arrived in Rome as a young *novus homo*, meaning that he would be the first in his family to serve in the Roman senate as elected consul. Because the young orator "had no ancestral deeds to commend his character or waxen images to decorate his halls," Cicero perhaps more than most aspiring Roman orators understood how difficult but also how crucial it was to deliberately self-fashion *ethos* (May 13). In his book *Making a New Man*, John Dugan argues that throughout his life Cicero took seriously the notion "*talis oratio, quails vita*": the orator's words reflect his character and actions (3). Without family legacy and without military achievements to establish his virtue, Cicero, Dugan argues, turned to publishing his orations and his philosophical works as a way to fashion a virtuous persona and secure *ethos* both among his contemporaries and future readers. When Burney and her contemporaries picked up a copy of *De Officiis*, they were reading what is both Cicero's impressive attempt to provide Roman citizens with a guide to the moral duties that regulate daily life as well as the culmination of a lifetime's worth of rhetorically promoting his own renown as a virtuous leader of the Republic.

When Cicero's readers returned with renewed interest from his *oratio* to his *vita*, they were surprised and dismayed to discover, especially in his letters, a different side to

his personality than that of the virtuous *rhetor* familiar from his orations and treatises.²¹ Lyttelton's biography was the first in the century to call attention to Cicero's hypocrisy: "If we may take his own word, Rome had not a more unspotted Patriot to boast of than himself: But I doubt when we look strictly into his Conduct, we shall often find it very different from theirs who really deserve that Name; and it will appear even from the Testimony of his own Letters, in which he spoke more naturally and with less vanity than he does in his Orations, that his publick character was far from being Perfect" (2). This was especially a shock to those in the eighteenth century who had come to adopt this neo-Ciceronian ideal of "*talis oratio, quails vita*," and the debate over Middleton's biography only threw the question of the orator's ethical disposition and the formation of private and public virtue into sharper relief (Smith 171). An exchange between the characters in Maria Edgeworth's novel *Belinda* (1801) elegantly captures what had evidently been a conversation repeated in other drawing rooms over the course of the century:

²¹ The debates over Cicero's character in the eighteenth century sowed seeds of dissent that would finally bring him toppling from his pedestal in the nineteenth century (see Nicholas P. Cole's essay "Nineteenth-century Ciceros" in the *Cambridge Companion to Cicero*). For most of the twentieth century too, Cicero's reputation suffered not just in terms of his *vita* but also his *oratio*: Cicero was seen as a cowardly, hypocritical politician *and* a second-rate philosopher. Evidence for attempts at a Ciceronian revival can be seen in the recent number of biographies and Notre Dame University Press' 2012 volume *Cicero's Practical Philosophy*. Catherine Tracy's essay "Cicero's *Constantia* in Theory and Practice," for example, makes a compelling defense of Cicero's character in which she argues for Cicero's commitment to *constantia*. Even if he did not always succeed, Cicero believed that acting the role of a virtuous man is not a temporary way to achieve political goals but is impossible to do unless the virtue is genuine (93).

‘Cicero was certainly right,’ continued [Clarence Hervey], addressing himself to Mr Vincent, ‘in his definition of a great orator, to make it one of the first requisites, that he should be a good man.’

Mr Vincent coldly replied, ‘This definition would exclude too many men of superior talents, to be easily admitted.’

‘Perhaps the appearance of virtue,’ said Belinda, ‘might, on many occasions, succeed as well as the reality.’

‘Yes, if the man be as good an actor as Mr Hervey,’ said Lady Delacour, ‘and if he suit ‘the action to the word’— ‘the word to the action.’ (349)

While the comments here are fairly representative of the range of responses readers would have had towards the debate over Cicero’s character, it is Mr Vincent’s more jaded outlook that most closely reflects the backlash of Lyttelton, Cibber, and others against Middleton’s biography. “Superior talents,” Mr. Vincent seems to say, imply the existence of ambition. Indeed, ambition is what was seen to lie at the heart of Cicero’s hypocrisy. Much earlier, Plutarch insisted that Cicero’s thirst for fame verged on “intemperate” and was symptomatic of a “vanity” that “interrupted the prosecution of his wisest designs” (Dryden 465). “Thy mad and memorable Desire for Fame,” Cibber wrote in his witty apostrophe at the beginning of *The Character and Conduct of Cicero Considered* “at last, has made thee Famous for thy Desire!” (Introduction). Cibber, Mr. Vincent, and Plutarch’s assessment all point to the same crux, a crux which Burney will explore in *Cecilia*: is it possible to be both ambitious and virtuous? Or must ambition always

undermine the practice of virtue? And as a related question, is it possible to be ambitious of virtue?

Unlike Cicero's *De Officiis*, which he wrote reflecting back on a life of political prestige, Burney wrote *Cecilia* at the height of her own literary celebrity. It makes sense that Burney's second novel both shares with *De Officiis* a preoccupation with the relationship between virtue and renown as well as a concern for the accusation Burney's contemporaries leveled against Cicero: can virtue and ambition coexist? As Margaret Anne Doody has discussed, the composition and publication of *Cecilia* was a public affair. "Rumours of its advent," Doody writes, "created long waiting lists at the circulating libraries before the publication date of 12 July 1782. The first edition sold out rapidly. The book was discussed everywhere in London" (Introduction xi). More importantly, the success of *Evelina* also introduced her to London's elite literary circles, a development that she incorporates into *Cecilia*: "The novel entertains us with its nervous comic scenes of fashionable high life, introducing us to the cults of the 'Insensibilists', the 'Supercilious', and the 'Volubles'. The mannerisms betray the meaningless cultivation of personality as one of the diversions of the high bourgeoisie" (Introduction xviii). Immersed as she was in a world of pedantic conversations with Melmoth and frivolous parties at Lady Miller's home in Bath, it is no wonder that Burney turns her satiric eye to the affectations of fashionable society in *Cecilia*. Doody's point about personalities as meaningless facades brings to mind the Frenchman's ridiculous attempts to cultivate Ciceronian refinement and virtue. In the same way that Mr. Gosport becomes *Cecilia's cicerone* for the absurdities of the ton, so too does Mr. Albany expose her to the

underbelly of fashionable London behavior. Throughout the novel, he warns her against dissimulation and the “annihilation of virtue” (66). In a world where it is the fashion to don a personality as easily as one would don a costume,” Cecilia’s mask-less presence at the Harrels’ party becomes a visual emblem for the way Burney’s heroine stands apart from the false practitioners of virtue in the novel.

It is necessary now to address the unresolved problem of what was perceived as Cicero’s own hypocrisy. Just because he had fallen short of his own philosophical principles did not devalue the ideal of virtue he espoused. If anything, what made Cicero’s shortcomings all the more egregious was that he was still considered an expert on the theoretical practice of virtue: “What makes him the less excusable is, that none ever understood the Rules of Virtue or saw the Beauty of it more than he!” (Lyttelton 3). But at the same time it also worth reiterating that Lyttelton’s contempt was far from universal. In all likelihood, veneration for Cicero’s character was as mixed as the opinions in *Belinda*, ranging from Mr. Hervey’s faith in Cicero’s word, to Mr. Vincent’s skepticism, to Belinda’s critical yet ultimately forgiving perspective. Even Cicero’s greatest critics ultimately found much to admire in his character: “Notwithstanding this imputed Frailty, O Cicero! Our Admiration does not yet forsake thee; still is thy Store of Excellence too great for little Losses to impoverish! Nor can that self-wounded Fame, which temporary perishable Part so arduously laboured to perpetuate, ever die while Rome shall be remember’d!” (Cibber). However little or much Cicero may have been guilty of affectation, it did not stop people from aspiring after the ideal he had set. After all, biographies were not simply intended to reveal a famous historical subject’s

character, but were also supposed to lead the reader towards self-reflection and moral improvement (Duff 5). In other words, where Cicero fell short, others could excel through his example.

In a world where the false virtue of the French Cicero, and even Cicero himself, runs rampant, Cecilia surprises those around her by proving her virtue genuine. Her character withstands the various attempts in the plot to undermine her virtue and to “defame” her, including Mr. Monckton’s slander against her reputation and Mrs. Delvile’s attempts to persuade her from marrying Mortimer. As astonished as if Cecilia herself had singlehandedly saved Rome from the tyranny of Caesar, friends and acquaintances cannot help but praise her for possessing “true greatness of mind!” (549) and “virtue in its highest majesty” (572). In his letter to her, Mortimer Delvile even rhapsodizes, “her virtues, her attractions, and her excellencies, would reflect lustre upon the highest station to which human grandeur could raise her, and would still be more exalted than her rank, though that were the most eminent upon earth”(563). Cicero’s dictum rings true that “Glorious is the Life of that Man whose Virtue and Practice are glorious” (Guthrie 340).

It is not only important that Cecilia’s virtue wins her glory but that she also desires that fame. In one particularly striking incident, Mr. Albany’s representation of her as virtue incarnate is, if not somewhat eccentric, also surprisingly lucid:

Albany, who listened to these directions with silent, yet eager attention, now clasped both his hands with a look of rapture, and exclaimed ‘Virtue yet lives,—and I have found her?’

Cecilia, proud of such praise, and ambitious to deserve it, cheerfully said,
where, Sir, shall we go now?' (768)

Here, Cecilia has become the allegorized image of virtue, embodying virtue so completely as to become fully identified with it. The details about Mr. Albany's "rapture" and hands clasped in prayerful reverence paint this moment as an almost ecstatic vision, as if Cecilia has been lifted from the earthly realm and assumed into heaven as a celestial being. What is more interesting is Cecilia's response to that possibility of apotheosis, which inspires her with "pride" and "ambition." The scene seems to suggest that, while it is difficult, it is possible to be ambitious of virtue. In *De Officiis*, Cicero himself is interested in the conditions under which ambition can be acceptable. While he may have attempting to justify his own ambition for glory, Cicero makes an important distinction that fame can only follow from what is *honestum*, or morally upright: "for true Glory takes deep rooting, and grows and flourishes more and more; but that which is only in Shew and more Outside, quickly decays and withers like Flowers" (L'Estrange 178). L'Estrange's English translation is an unusual pagan Roman modification of the *vanitas* motif in Ecclesiastes: not all human glory withers—only human glory that has not taken root in the fertile soil of human excellence. Cicero's distinction strikes at the heart of the difference between the French Cicero and Cecilia: desire for glory is acceptable when oriented towards the practice rather than performance of virtue.

At the end of the novel, Cecilia's achievement ends in a paradox that was all too familiar to Cicero. Faced with moderate, human happiness, Cecilia comes to terms with

mortality and the ordinariness of her future life with Mortimer: “Rationally, however, she surveyed the world at large, and finding that of the few who had any happiness, there were none without some misery, she checked the rising sigh of repining mortality, and, grateful with general felicity, bore partial evil with chearfullest resignation” (941).

Similarly, Cicero and the Peripatetic philosophers of ancient Greece acknowledged that even as virtue soars above earthly limits, it also must reside in the middle of life, following a straight and narrow path between extremes. As Cicero wrote, “*mediocritas optima est*”—or, “the best rule is the golden mean” (Cicero I.130). Burney also alludes to this principle at the start of the novel: “to approach that golden mean, which, like the philosopher’s stone, always eludes our grasp, yet always invites our wishes” (131).

When Burney writes in a letter to Samuel Crisp that her heroine achieves the “middle state” of human contentment, the reader should see this as a moment in which happiness in the world of *Cecilia* is possible and the practice of moderation and virtue celebrated (*DL* 2:81). Indeed, the novel leaves us where it begins: a legacy of virtue. For while Cecilia herself cannot step beyond the realm of human possibility or achieve “unhuman” or everlasting happiness, her real glory exists not for her alone but for generations of Burney’s readers. As Cicero would say, “the Glory you pursue does not terminate in your own Person...but you are to share it with me, and it is to descend to our Posterity” (Guthrie 399).

* * *

It was August 1778, and Burney opens her diary entry with an almost palpable excitement, professing it had been “the most consequential Day I have spent since my

Birth” (*EJL* 3:66). In the wake of *Evelina*’s recent publication and its growing popularity amongst London’s literary elite, Burney at 26 found herself on the threshold of fame.

Anticipating that evening’s dinner party with Hester Thrale and Dr. Johnson, she records her visit to Streatham’s library:

I prevailed upon Mrs. Thrale to let me amuse myself, & she went to obey her master’s order & Dress. I then prowled about, to chuse some Book, & I saw, upon the Reading Table, *Evelina*;—I had just fixed upon a new Translation of Cicero’s *Laelius*, when the Library Door was opened, & Mr. Seward Entered. I instantly put away my Book, because I dreaded being thought studious & affected. He offered his service to find any thing for me, & then, in the same Breath, ran on to speak of the Book with which I had, myself, *favoured the World!* (*EJL* 3:71).

In a moment that might be easy to overlook but which, Burney nevertheless thought significant enough to record, it’s appropriate that she places Melmoth’s new translation of Cicero’s *Laelius De Amicitia* away just as the conversation turns to *Evelina*.

Exchanging Cicero for her own novel evocatively captures a turning point in Burney’s career—a turn that places a novel about a young woman’s entrance into the world on the same shelf with the philosophical works of Ancient Rome. By the time she publishes *Cecilia*, Burney was a celebrity in her own right and acclaimed as a writer, who as Burke pointed out, edifies her readers with a “comprehensive and noble moral” (*EJL* 5:88).

Like the heroine herself, Burney’s *Cecilia* achieves that which is at the heart of Cicero’s fame during the Enlightenment: “the union of virtue and abilities with elegance” (460).

The entrance of Cicero at a party, then, is not so unremarkable as might first appear and reveals Burney's keen awareness of a society that collected busts, coats, and jewelry in order to display a deep desire to live a life of virtue and renown. For the Age of Burney, Tully was the fashion: as likely to be seen with arm outstretched in passionate delivery of an oration before the senate as in polite acceptance of a glass of lemonade at a party.

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