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BROWN, MARTHA GLEATON

FANNY BURNEY'S THREE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROMANCES:  
"EVELINA," "CECELIA," AND "CAMILLA"

*The University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

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FANNY BURNEY'S THREE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROMANCES:

EVELINA, CECELIA, AND CAMILLA

by

Martha G. Brown

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APPROVAL PAGE

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Although the novels of Fanny Burney were highly regarded in their own time, modern critical assessments frequently conclude them to be flawed by contrived plots, flat, static characters, artificial language, and didacticism. These criticisms clearly trace to a modern insistence on realism as the defining quality of good fiction. This study contends that Burney's novels, like most eighteenth-century fiction, are deeply indebted to the romance tradition and so are not answerable to critical evaluations that use realism as the only yardstick. In fact, Burney's fiction cannot be fully understood or appreciated until it is placed in its appropriate context and viewed as a synthesis of older romance concerns and techniques and newer realistic ones.

Chapter one of this study focuses on the realistic prejudices of modern critical views of the novel in general, and on the unfortunate effect of these on typical evaluations of Burney's novels in particular, explaining the "flaws" that critics discover in her work as borrowings from the romance tradition.

Chapter two includes a survey of Greek, medieval, and Renaissance romances, a summary of the characteristics of the tradition and a discussion of the ways in which the attitudes and methods of romance informed the eighteenth-century novel, especially those of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Burney.

Chapter three, an analysis of Burney's first novel, Evelina, surveys criticism that focuses on failures in realistic technique, and corrects these mistaken readings by explaining the influence of the romance on plot, characterization, and theme. Exhibiting the tripartite structure of the quest romance, the plot relies heavily on coincidence, which is a reflection of the providential world view of romance. Other romance devices, such as the birth-mystery, babies switched in the cradle, and the obligatory incest threat, are evident in the plotting of Evelina, which ends with the revelation of the heroine's true identity, her marriage and elevation of rank and fortune. Characters, who represent general and stable moral qualities, are black and white and change little. The major themes--identity, prudence, and appearance/reality--are characteristic concerns of the romance. The chapter also examines newer, realistic attitudes and techniques that appear in Evelina and ways in which they supplement and complement those of romance.

The next two chapters follow the basic format of chapter three. Chapter four analyzes Cecelia, surveying criticism and defending the novel against critics who inappropriately apply realistic standards to the novel, by explaining the influence of romance. Chapter five takes the same approach to Camilla, but includes an analysis of the problems in the novel, attributing them to the combination of humor, rather than satire, with romance.

Chapter six includes two short sections. The first is a brief note on The Wanderer which suggests its general affinities with romance and asserts that it is flawed, because Burney, in this novel as in Camilla, unwisely yoked romance with concerns that are inimical to it. The second section is a conclusion, summing up Burney's achievement.



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CHAPTER I  
THE REALISTIC RECEPTION OF BURNEY'S NOVELS

Fanny Burney's reputation has been unfairly tarnished by a faulty theory of the literary past. Her novels have been underrated because of a progressive theory of realism, which has led many modern critics to misread romances like Burney's. Henry Knight Miller has coined a phrase, "the Whig interpretation of literary history" (modifying Herbert Butterfield's phrase), to describe the tendency to interpret past literature by contemporary standards and as a stage in the progressive development toward present, and presumably better, literature. In the nineteenth century, this approach resulted in a pervasive tendency to judge eighteenth-century poetry by Romantic standards and prose by Victorian ones and to find them sadly wanting. The neo-classical poetry of Dryden and Pope was held up against the lyric and was pronounced to be not poetry at all, but prose. The novel too suffered from this sort of self-congratulatory measurement in which the yardstick was realism. As Miller suggests,

the hegemony of the "realistic" novel (that brilliant creation of the high Victorian age) implicitly reshaped the critical history of all narrative fiction--as, for the most part it continues to do today, despite a few gentle

reminders that a narrative tradition of two millennia had quite other goals, and is therefore not responsive to the rubrics of "realism."<sup>1</sup>

So deeply ingrained is the idea that the novel was, is, and must be "realistic" that it has led most literary critics and historians of the twentieth century unthinkingly to repeat the mistake they inherited from the nineteenth. In fact, until quite recently most respectable studies of the eighteenth-century novel have insisted on realism as the essential characteristic that distinguishes the new form from the prose fiction that precedes it. Arnold Kettle is typical in his suggestion that the novel "arose as a realistic reaction to the medieval romance and its courtly descendents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."<sup>2</sup> More recently, Ian Watt asserts that the defining quality of the new fiction is "formal realism," which is

the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the

<sup>1</sup> Henry Knight Miller, "The 'Whig' Interpretation of Literary History," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 6 (Fall 1972), 80.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel (London: Hutchison Univ. Library, 1951), I, 30.

times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms.<sup>3</sup>

In the same vein, Ronald Paulson argues that

If the novel as it emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth century had any generic aim at all, it is a commitment to the presentation of reality--not moral truth but the truth of actual experience--and the avoidance of convention and artifice.<sup>4</sup>

This viewpoint has been repeated so often and with such assurance that it has taken on the authority of truth.

To be fair to both nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics, novelists and critics of the eighteenth century appear to have done much to mislead their descendants in this direction. In some ways, the modern mistake is part of an older mistake in which the novel was often contrasted with romance. For instance, Clara Reeve in The Progress of Romance (1785) makes this distinction:

The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things.--The novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written. The Romance, in

<sup>3</sup> Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (London, 1957; rpt. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Paulson, Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968, p. 11.

lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen.--The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves; and the perfection of it, is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (or at least while we are reading) that all is real until we are affected by the joys or distresses, of the persons in the story, as if they were our own.<sup>5</sup>

Writers as well as critics often insisted on this distinction.

Congreve, in the preface to Incognita, writes:

Romances are generally composed of the constant loves and invincible courages of heroes, heroines, kings and queens, mortals of the first rank, and so forth; where lofty language, miraculous contingencies, and impossible performances elevate and surprise the reader into a giddy delight, which leaves him flat upon the ground whenever he gives off, and vexes him to think how he had suffered himself to be pleased and transported, concerned and afflicted at the several passages which he has read, viz these knights' success to their damosels' misfortune, and such like, when he is forced to be well convinced that 'tis all a lye.<sup>6</sup>

And Fanny Burney herself warns the reader in the preface

<sup>5</sup> Clara Reeve, The Progress of Romance (reproduced from the Colchester Edition of 1785; New York: The Facsimile Text Society, 1930), p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> William Congreve, "The Preface to the Reader," Incognita, in Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel, ed. George L. Barnett (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p. 18.

to Evelina:

Let me . . . prepare for disappointment those who, in the perusal of these sheets, entertain the gentle expectation of being transported to the fantastic regions of Romance, where Fiction is coloured by all the gay tints of luxurious Imagination, where Reason is an outcast, and where the sublimity of the Marvellous rejects all aid from sober Probability.<sup>7</sup>

The urgent desire of these writers to establish the probability of the events and the characters in the novel is one explanation for the apparent rejection of the romance, which allowed the improbable and fantastic. The novel was new, but it was already suspect. Richardson, for example, in a letter to a friend says of his intention in writing Pamela:

. . . the story, if written in an easy and natural manner, suitably to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing, that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and dismissing the improbable and marvellous, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue.<sup>8</sup>

Fanny Burney writes that although it would probably be more

<sup>7</sup> Fanny Burney, preface to Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Richardson, letter, quoted in Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel, p. 72.

to the advantage of young ladies "to effect the total extirpation of novels," since "the distemper they have spread seems incurable," she will attempt in Evelina "to contribute to the number of those which may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury."<sup>9</sup> These early novelists were engaged in an honest attempt not only to define the new genre, but also to justify its existence, which they did by insisting loudly and earnestly on its moral purpose. And in the dedication to The Wanderer she writes that although she is "past the period of chusing to write or desiring to read a merely romantic love-tale or a story of improbable wonders," she feels justified in writing a novel because "What is the species of writing that offers fairer opportunities for conveying useful precepts?" The novel can do this, she writes, because "it is a picture of supposed and probable human existence."<sup>10</sup> The novel was defined in opposition to romance then partly because the novelists were anxious to establish the moral purpose of the novel and the more probable the events and characters, the more likely it was to provide a model for readers.

<sup>9</sup> Burney, preface to Evelina, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Fanny Burney, The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1814), I, xxiii, xvi.

A related but more serious objection to romance--the lack of moral purpose--had to do not with romance in general, but with more recent corruptions of classical romances, such as the French heroic romances and their English imitations. It is not difficult to see how these objections arose. In Aphra Behn's stories, for example, the old romance devices are sensationalized. In The Dumb Virgin, incest and patricide are not mere threats; they actually occur. In Agnes de Castro, there is a patricide, and in The Unfortunate Lady, forced prostitution. These romances, hardly edifying reading matter for unformed young ladies, were understandably held in contempt by those who believed that the purpose of the novel was to provide moral instruction.

Yet another objection to popular romances, such as the French heroic romance and the novels of Mrs. Haywood and Mrs. Manley, the staples of the lending libraries, was that they would raise dangerous expectations in the hearts of naive young female readers. A speaker in Clara Reeve's The Progress of Romance, expressing the opinion that "A circulating library is indeed a great evil," suggests that when impressionable young girls read these books,

The seeds of vice and folly are sown in the heart,--the passions are awakened,--false expectations are raised.--A young woman is



taught to expect adventures and intrigues,-- she expects to be addressed in the style of these books, with the language of flattery and adulation.--If a plain man addresses her in rational terms and pays her the greatest of compliments,--that of desiring to spend his life with her,--that is not sufficient, her vanity is disappointed, she expects to meet a Hero in a Romance.<sup>11</sup>

Fielding, Henry Knight Miller says, objected to the salon romance for still different reasons--because he saw them as "a trivializing and effeminizing of the entire tradition."<sup>12</sup> These romances and these alone were the targets of Fielding's attacks on the romance, according to Miller, who points to the remark in Tom Jones that it was the contempt incited by these romances for fiction "that hath made us so cautiously avoid the Term Romance; a Name with which we might otherwise have been well enough contented."<sup>13</sup>

But whatever the cause of this early and persistent opposition of romance and realism, it is a mistake with far-reaching implications. George Saintsbury argues that

<sup>11</sup> Reeve, pp. 77-78.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Knight Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones and the Romance Tradition, English Literary Studies Monograph Series, No. 6 (Victoria: Univ. of Victoria, 1976), p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, ed. Sheridan Baker, Norton Critical Editions (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1973), pp. 371-72.

The separation of romance and novel--of the story of incident and the story of character and motive--is a mistake logically and psychologically. It is a very old mistake, and it has deceived some of the elect: but a mistake it is. It made even Dr. Johnson think Fielding shallower than Richardson; and it has made people from Dr. Johnson think that Count Tolstoi is a greater analyst and master of a more developed humanity than Fielding.<sup>14</sup>

What this error has done to the novels of Fanny Burney is to damage the reputation they enjoyed in their own time. Most critics reserve what faint praise they are willing to accord her for her realistic presentation of the contemporary social scene. This emphasis is not peculiarly modern but began quite early. In 1818, we find Hazlitt dismissing Burney in this way: "There is little other power in Madame D'Arblay's novels than that of immediate observation," a power which according to Hazlitt a woman has to a greater extent than a man because her mind "is less disturbed by any abstrusive reasoning on causes or consequences."<sup>15</sup> A twentieth-century version of the same attitude comes from Lord David Cecil, who smugly remarks of Burney's limited scope, "By nature,

<sup>14</sup> George Saintsbury, The English Novel (1913; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1919), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> William Hazlitt, quoted in R. Brimley Johnson, The Women Novelists (London: W. Collins Sons and Co., Ltd., 1918), pp. 32-33. Fanny Burney became Madame D'Arblay in 1793 when she married Alexandre D'Arblay, an exiled adjutant-general of the Marquis de Lafayette.

women are observers of those minutiae of manners in which the subtler social distinctions reveal themselves."<sup>16</sup> In almost all modern assessments Burney is valued, if she is valued at all, for her realistic presentation of real life. Saintsbury, in a fit of enthusiasm, exclaims, "All glory, therefore, be to Frances Burney," because

she had hit upon--stumbled upon one may almost say--the real principle and essence of the novel as distinguished from the romance--its connection with actual ordinary life--life studied freshly and directly "from the life," and disguised and adulterated as little as possible by exceptional interests and incidents.<sup>17</sup>

Strangely enough, Saintsbury appears here to have fallen into the same old mistake he attacks earlier--the separation of romance and the novel. Ian Watt, less surprisingly, also stresses her ability to present ordinary "real" life when he writes that she is important in combining Richardson's "minute presentation of daily life" with Fielding's "comic and objective point of view."<sup>18</sup>

Burney is often admired for her ability to observe keenly and record accurately. Muriel Masfield praises

<sup>16</sup> Lord David Cecil, "Fanny Burney," in Poets and Story-Tellers (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 80.

<sup>17</sup> Saintsbury, pp. 154-55.

<sup>18</sup> Watt, p. 296.

her as a "photographic character-monger."<sup>19</sup> Ernest Baker suggests that her "importance in the history of the novel is . . . that she came so near to what may be called a direct transcript of life."<sup>20</sup> Cross seems to agree since he discusses Miss Burney under a category labeled "The light transcript of contemporary manners."<sup>21</sup> She has, according to Eugene White, "no great message," but "merely records her amusing but trivial observations of the society around her."<sup>22</sup> Speaking of Burney's victims in Evelina, Walter Allen says "she observes them with a camera eye and picks up their speech with a microphone ear," a remark that is preceded by his opinion that Burney's "achievement has been overvalued."<sup>23</sup> It has not, in my view. On the contrary, it has consistently been undervalued and undervalued at least partly because of comments such as Allen's.

<sup>19</sup> Muriel Masfield, Women Novelists from Fanny Burney to George Eliot (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1934), p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Baker, The History of the English Novel, V (London: H. F. G. Witherby, 1934), 156.

<sup>21</sup> Wilbur F. Cross, Development of the English Novel (n.p.: The Macmillan Co., 1899), p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> Eugene White, Fanny Burney, Novelist (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1960), p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> Walter Allen, The English Novel: A Short Critical History (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1955), pp. 97, 95.

It is disturbing to note that the words used to describe her talents as a realist--words such as "photographic," "transcript," "camera," "microphone"--are oddly mechanical. Margaret Schlauch, in a discussion of realism in fiction, says,

Two ladies sit drinking tea . . . and exchanging gossip which may be lively and diverting. A sound film may record their voices and images. The resulting cinema will undoubtedly be an accurate transcript of what happened, but we should not therefore call it a document of realistic art. What is lacking is the artist's elimination of impertinent materials, his choice of others as pertinent, and his organization of these from a specific point of view and for a specific purpose.<sup>24</sup>

To emphasize the mechanical aspects of Madame D'Arbly's realism, as so many have done, is to suggest that she lacks the power to select and to organize that distinguishes "transcripts" from art.

But even if this unfortunate emphasis is corrected, a problem remains. An approach which focuses only on the realistic aspects of Burney's fiction is ultimately reductive and slights both the richness and the complexity of her accomplishment. If the novels are not seen for what they are--a blend of realism and romance--then much will be missed, much misunderstood, much undervalued.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Schlauch, Antecedents of the English Novel, 1400-1600 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), p. 6.

As Henry Knight Miller suggests, "Every fiction has its 'Let us suppose . . . .'"<sup>25</sup> Most approaches to Burney have been distorted by a simple failure to understand--or perhaps a reluctance to accept--her "Let us suppose . . . ." The two most frequent charges leveled against all four of her novels are that the plots are "farfetched" and "marred" by coincidences and that the characters are disappointingly flat and static. Both these alleged "weaknesses" can be easily explained by her debt to the romance tradition, which is marked by such plotting and characterization.

This limited view of Burney has also caused her to be valued mainly as a predecessor of Jane Austen. This view makes it possible for F. R. Leavis to say that Fanny Burney matters because Jane Austen read her and for Michael Adelstein to remark of the relationship between Burney and Austen:

Great writers frequently are preceded by lesser ones who indicate the route to take but cannot travel it themselves. So Fanny Burney showed Jane Austen the plan for the novel of manners, leaving it for her to explore and map out the new terrain. Jane Austen possessed the irony, the psychological penetration, the subtlety, and the technical artistry that Fanny lacked.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (London, 1948; rpt. New York: New York Univ. Press, 1972), p. 13; Michael

This sort of comparison is unfair because it assumes that Burney's aims and Austen's were identical, that Fanny Burney did in a mediocre way what Jane Austen did much better--write realistic novels of manners. In fact, though Burney's novels are deeply concerned with manners, they, unlike Austen's, owe much to the romance tradition in which irony, psychological depth of characterization and subtlety are not so highly prized as they are in realistic novels.

Recent scholarship has done much to modify and correct the widely-held view that eighteenth-century fiction in general is essentially realistic and to suggest the profound influence of the romance tradition on particular authors. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, for example, assert that "The novel is not the opposite of romance, as is usually maintained, but a product of the reunion of the empirical and fictional elements in narrative literature."<sup>27</sup> Henry Knight Miller argues against an "evolutionary theory of prose fiction" in which we tend to view the realistic nineteenth-century

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E. Adelstein, Fanny Burney, Twayne English Author Series, No. 67 (New York: Twayne, 1968), pp. 150-51.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (1966; rpt. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 15.

novel as "representing a final stage in an obvious progression from the 'primitive' romance to a 'sophisticated' and ultimate form, the realistic novel" and asserts that the romance influence was still strong in the fiction of the Augustan age.<sup>28</sup> Miller also argues, not only that "Fielding's Tom Jones is in all major essentials a 'romance,'" but also that "despite his hostility to the French roman heroique, Fielding did indeed think of his great work as a romance."<sup>29</sup> Sheridan Baker has demonstrated the influence of the romance tradition in Humphry Clinker, as well as in Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, and Amelia; Margaret Dalziel has done the same with Richardson.<sup>30</sup> Although Fanny Burney's novels lend themselves well to this synthetic approach, no one has yet considered them in this light.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Knight Miller, "Augustan Prose Fiction and the Romantic Tradition," in Studies in the Eighteenth Century III: Papers Presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Carbera, 1973, ed. R. F. Brissenden and J. C. Eade (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 241.

<sup>29</sup> Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Sheridan Baker, "Humphry Clinker as Comic Romance," Essays on the Eighteenth-Century Novel, ed. Robert Donald Spector (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1965); "Fielding's Amelia and the Materials of Romance," Philological Quarterly, 41 (April 1962), 437-49; "Henry Fielding's Comic Romances," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, 45 (1960), 411-19; Margaret Dalziel, "Richardson and Romance," Australian University Modern Language Association, 33 (1970), 5-24.



This is a puzzling oversight, since each of the novels, to a more or less successful degree, blends the techniques and concerns of romance with those of realism. In each novel, the larger plot structure is that of romance; each action follows the quest-initiation pattern, in which the heroine journeys from an idyllic home to a hostile environment where she must undergo a symbolic death and rebirth followed by the reward of marriage and a sudden elevation of fortune or rank. Burney's plots also rely heavily on coincidence and employ devices typical of the romance, such as exposed infants, infants switched in the cradle, mistaken identities, disguises, and threats of incest. The romance also provides the novels with characters who are good or evil, change little and speak a stylized language. The themes, including self-discovery, prudence, appearance/reality are all the old themes of romance, although they are not, of course, exclusive to this tradition.

Traditional romance plots, themes, and characterizations are also supplemented and complemented by newer realistic concerns and methods. All the novels demonstrate some aspects of formal realism. In Evelina, the narrative is fixed in time by dating letters and in space by naming and describing places, while the epistolary technique establishes verisimilitude. The same aspects of

formal realism are evident in Cecelia, Camilla and The Wanderer, in each of which money and setting become progressively more important. The idiomatic speech of many characters, especially those who are satirical targets, contrasts with the stylized speech of others and reveals Burney's ear for language so often remarked by critics. And finally the satire on manners, which mediates between the two poles of romance and realism, participates in the concerns of both.

An examination of Fanny Burney's fiction from this perspective may deepen our understanding of her aims, her methods and her accomplishments, while countering some criticism which grows out of mistaken notions of what she was attempting. Perhaps if it is approached in this way--as a blend of romance and realism--Burney's work, so badly tarnished by the realistic prejudices of later ages, may regain at least some of the luster it had in its own day when Fanny Burney could proudly number among her most ardent admirers Sheridan, Burke, Reynolds, Gibbon, and Johnson.

CHAPTER II  
ROMANCE AND REALISM

As C. S. Lewis reminds us, "Humanity does not pass through phases as a train passes through stations: being alive, it has the privilege of always moving yet never leaving anything behind. Whatever we have been, in some sort we are still."<sup>1</sup> This is surely true of the romance tradition which is not, as sometimes implied, a stage we passed through on our ultimate destination--realism and the novel. It is instead a tradition which informed English prose fiction from its very beginnings and which continued to inform it through the time when it developed, in the hands of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, into the form that we call the novel. In fact the romance provided these early novelists with plot, structure, themes, motifs, and characters. Although a thoroughgoing history of the romance tradition is outside the scope of this study, a brief and selective survey is necessary to outline its salient features and to demonstrate the powerful influence of the romance on the eighteenth-century novel and especially on Burney.

<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (London, 1936; rpt. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 1.

Two separate romance traditions are pertinent to the development of English prose fiction--the Greek romance of adventure and the medieval romances of chivalry and courtly love. The Greek romances were, according to Ernest Baker,

the first prose stories of any length to be read simply for enjoyment, and not for information, moral improvement, or any other extraneous purpose; the first, also, having intricate plots, revelations, catastrophes, a love affair properly rounded off, and all the devices henceforth to be regarded as the<sup>2</sup> consecrated insignia of popular fiction.

Of these Greek romances, three are of special interest: Heliodorus's Aethiopica, or Theagenes and Chariclea, Longus's Daphnis and Chloe and Tatius's Clitophon and Leucippe, each of which was translated into English before the end of the sixteenth century and exerted a considerable influence on the course of Renaissance prose fiction and the seventeenth-century French heroic romance.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Baker, The History of the English Novel, I (1924; rpt. London: H. F. G. Witherby, 1934), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel L. Wolff, The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction (New York: Burt Franklin, 1912). See Wolff's table, pp. 8-9, for dates of composition and translation. My discussion of Greek romances is heavily indebted to Wolff.

A typical plot, stripped to its bare bones, would read something like this: An infant is abandoned by its parents--Chariclea of Theagenes and Chariclea and both lovers in Daphnis and Chloe begin life in this unfortunate way. The motives for the exposure vary, but one thing is consistent; the infant is left with certain tokens, usually jewelry or a birthmark. Chariclea has a ring and other jewels, a fillet explaining why she was abandoned, and a black mark on her arm; Chloe possesses gilt sandals, golden anklets and a gold headdress, while Daphnis is left with a rich mantle and an ivory-hilted sword. The infant is found and reared by either a kindly shepherd or a soft-hearted nobleman who is ignorant of the infant's identity but who suspects, because of the tokens, a noble heritage. After the child reaches maturity, he or she falls in love at first sight. This sudden passion, which is based on the notion that love enters through the eye, is accompanied by conventional symptoms, including rolling eyes, sighs, blushes, and fits of fainting and near-madness. This love is blocked either by a previous betrothal, as in Theagenes and Chariclea and Clitophon and Leucippe, or by lack of fortune, as in Daphnis and Chloe. The lovers, who may, like Theagenes and Chariclea, be secretly married, run away together and endure a series of adventures in which they are shipwrecked, kidnapped,

set upon by pirates and savages, nearly sacrificed, forced to disguise themselves, wooed by unwanted suitors (who may as in *Tatius* be a father). Many of these events are bizarre. For example, *Leucippe* at one point is apparently disemboweled, roasted and eaten by savages before *Clitophon's* eyes, but fortunately, the scene turns out to be a mock-sacrifice, arranged with the aid of a pig's bladder. A little later, when a woman, apparently *Leucippe*, is beheaded by pirates, we discover that a harlot has been substituted for the heroine. After undergoing these outlandish adventures, the lovers are finally reunited, their true identities are revealed via the tokens, and they are married.

This composite plot outline reveals several characteristics of plotting in the romances. First, the plot does not grow out of the character's personality or motivation, but is controlled by outside forces, usually Providence or Fortune. In *Heliodorus*, events are directed by both these agents; in *Tatius*, characters are the puppets of Fortune; and in *Longus*, Eros pulls the strings.<sup>4</sup> A second characteristic of these romances is that love is an important element of the plot and is instrumental in setting the action in motion and in

<sup>4</sup> Wolff, pp. 111-12.

keeping it going. The treatment of love is frankly sensual and is elevated and dignified only to the extent that it is constant and that the chastity of the heroine is preserved to the end. There are, however, some features in the Greek treatment of love which hint of later developments. For example, there are certain conventions, such as love at first sight, the worship of the kiss, and the standard symptoms of love which are already close to being formalized into a code.<sup>5</sup> But even more important to plotting than love is adventure, the more the merrier, the stranger the better.

This focus on adventure results in a structure that includes much irrelevant material, is suspenseful, complicated, and episodic. Heliodorus's romance is structured according to epic conventions, beginning in medias res, with exposition coming from the speeches of characters. Since the third person narrator is not omniscient, we know about the characters only what they tell us. Longus's story is loosely structured and lacks unity, but is told in chronological order. Narration in Tatius is inconsistent; Clitophon begins to tell the story in the first person, but becomes omniscient.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Wolff, pp. 126-37.

<sup>6</sup> Wolff, pp. 192-99.

With the heavy emphasis on plotting and on complicated patterns of narration, character receives far less attention. Wolff says that in these romances, "character counts for as little as may be; and each person is a pawn in a game played by non-human powers,--a bit of matter, with a consciousness incidentally attached, to be acted upon by outward forces."<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the actions of these characters, who are psychologically shallow and unconvincing, rarely reveal moral purpose or growth.

The other important elements of these Greek romances--setting and style--may be summed up briefly. The setting, both historical (in time) and geographical (in space), is inconsistent, vague, and bears no thematic relationship to the story. In style these romances, which were after all written by rhetoricians, are characterized by elaborate and artificial devices, such as oxymoron, antithesis, balance, and homeophony.<sup>8</sup>

Since these Greek romances exerted no influence on the English narrative tradition until the Renaissance, we may set them aside for the time being and turn to the second major development in the tradition, the medieval romance. Although most of these romances are metrical,

<sup>7</sup> Wolff, p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> Wolff, pp. 163, 217-35.



their contributions to the English narrative tradition are many and varied, providing prose writers with subject matter, themes, plots, and characters. A detailed re-telling of the complicated story of how these romances came into being is not the business of this study, but a brief review of their birth and development may be helpful. The medieval romances grew out of legend and history set down in chronicles such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae, which were turned into metrical courtly romances by Cretien de Troye and others, and finally redacted into prose versions such as Malory's. The romances fell into three major groups or matters: the matter of Rome, which is the oldest and includes versions of the Trojan story such as Lydgate's Troy Book and stories of Alexander the Great; the matter of France, consisting of Charlemagne stories recounted in French romances such as Chanson de Roland and English translation; the matter of Britain, which is the largest category containing the Arthurian material treated by Cretien, the Gawain poet, and Malory. Most scholars now add a fourth category--the matter of England, which encompasses romances such as King Horn, Havelock, Athelston, and Gamelyn, all concerned with native English matter. The most important in terms of the history of English fiction are the matters of Britain and England.

The diversity and variety in these romances are staggering, making easy generalizations impossible and even careful ones difficult. As Donald Sands says, in underlining the problem of defining the genre, "no one romance is like the next one even in its own particular group."<sup>9</sup> This statement is true; nonetheless, out of this variety enough common features emerge to allow us, with careful qualification, to discuss the conventions and motifs which characterize these stories in both verse and prose.

First of all, the subject matter of the medieval romances is, as it was in the Greek romances and indeed in all romances, love and adventure. A profound change, however, has taken place in the conception of love. The new ideal of courtly love enters the romances with Cretien de Troye, who took his psychology of love from the Provençal courtly school. The significance of this shift is enormous. As C. S. Lewis says, the French poets who developed this code of romantic love "effected a change which has left no corner of our ethics, our imagination, or our daily life untouched."<sup>10</sup> Not only the introduction

<sup>9</sup> Donald B. Sands, introduction to Middle English Verse Romances, ed. Donald B. Sands (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, p. 4.

of courtly love, but his handling of it in all his romances--Erec, Cliges, Lancelot and Yvain--assure Cretien a prominent place in the romance tradition. As Ernest Baker suggests,

he mediated and analyzed and interpreted, much in the style of a modern novelist. He was a predecessor not only of Mademoiselle de Scudery but also of Madame de la Fayette. Hence, through his work, and the cycles of romances that were directly or at further removes founded upon it, modern fiction is ultimately affiliated.<sup>11</sup>

After Cretien the psychological, moral, and spiritual basis for the code of courtly love is watered down or lost completely, while the conventions are retained. Although these are preserved whole in most romances, there is one significant modification in later romance--the change from the adulterous passion of the earlier romances to an interest in married love. Malory, for example, took the courtly ideal of love and transformed it to fit his own belief in fidelity and marriage. And in Havelock, courtly ideals give way to more bourgeois ones; Havelock and Goldborough, united in an arranged marriage, come to love one another and live happily ever after, producing many children and growing old together. But the one thing that is consistent in the treatment of love in these romances--

<sup>11</sup> Baker, I, 111.

whether it is based on the courtly code or on a more bourgeois one--is that love is idealized in a way that it was not in the earlier Greek romances.

The second central subject of medieval romance is adventure, which has changed forms since the earlier romances. Shipwrecks and attacks by pirates have been replaced in the world of chivalrous romance by jousting, tournaments, trips to the perilous chapel and quests for the Holy Grail, and in more homely romances by less aristocratic adventures such as Havelock's stone-putting. But whatever the nature of the adventure, the emphasis on episode produces plots which are for the most part loose and lacking in unity (Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, with its carefully structured and balanced plot, is a notable exception). Most depend on a biographical thread for what structure they do have. As Mehl Dieter points out, Havelock and Sir Gouther "are even described as Vita in the manuscripts."<sup>12</sup>

In some romances the emphasis is less on adventure than on sentimental relationships. Margaret Schlauch divides the medieval romances into two general categories. The first she calls "the action romance," which would

<sup>12</sup> Mehl Dieter, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1969), p. 26.

include stories such as Gui de Warewic (later reworked in English as Guy of Warwick) where "the stress is laid for the most part on external deeds rather than on the quieter forms of social intercourse."<sup>13</sup> A second class she designates "society romances," borrowing a term from the title of Sarah Barrow's book, The Medieval Society Romance. This type, which includes Cretien's Yvain, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, she defines as "those verse tales in which normal upper-class human relations are the centre of interest rather than military or supernatural adventures."<sup>14</sup> Romantic love is only one of these relationships, which may extend to other sentimental and social bonds such as friendship or the love between a parent and a child. John Stevens is making much the same point when he speaks of the idealization of "gentillesse" and suggests that the medieval romance "was not confined, then, to the interpretation of an isolated private experience but was concerned with the formation of a 'gentil' man in a 'gentil' society."<sup>15</sup> This is an important point to keep in mind when we are considering

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Schlauch, Antecedents of the English Novel, 1400-1600 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Schlauch, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> John Stevens, Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1973), p. 57.

the relationship of the romance tradition to the novel, which at least through the nineteenth century is concerned foremost with man in his relationships with other men in society.

The tendency to idealize "gentillesse," chivalry and courtly love also produces characters who are flat, static, and idealized. Sands says, "Romance characters tend to be non-pareils: they are paragons of beauty, goodness, evil, saintliness; usually no humanizing and magnanimous inner weakness arises to give their perfection credibility and strength."<sup>16</sup> Even the better poets tend to draw their characters as models of virtue and vice. For example, Cretien de Troye, whose ideas are more complex than those of lesser writers, creates characters who, as Vinaver says, "appear as instruments in a subtle harmony of general ideas and conventional feeling: they lack individual complexity and variety."<sup>17</sup> Again the Gawain poet is an exception; Sir Gawain is more complicated and human than most, being at once admirable and slightly ridiculous. Chaucer, too, goes far beyond the cardboard cut-outs of the typical romance in his complex and psychologically convincing portrait of Criseyde. But it

<sup>16</sup> Sands, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Eugene Vinaver, Malory (1929; rpt. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 31.

is still fair to say that, for the most part, characters in medieval romance are either black or white, good or bad, and that they exist to represent ideas.

Setting, too, represents ideas and is vague and unrealized in both time and space. Once more the Gawain poet, with his detailed description of changing seasons, of Bertilak's castle and of the landscape around the Green Chapel, is an exception. And Malory, whose mind, according to Vinaver, "is essentially realistic," gives more than usual attention to concrete details of setting.<sup>18</sup>

Although medieval romances share with their Greek counterparts many common features, such as subject matter, plot structure, characterization and setting, there are subtle differences. On the one hand, the main direction of the medieval romances is toward idealization--of love, of chivalry, of "gentillesse"--while on the other hand these attitudes are being partially undercut by the mixed attitudes of writers like Chaucer and the Gawain poet. It is also worth noting that some realistic features, be they ever so slight and embryonic, are beginning to appear, as for example, in Chaucer and the Gawain poet's more fully rounded characters, or in the more fully realized settings of Malory and the Gawain poet. This

<sup>18</sup> Vinaver, p. 49.

development suggests that, although romance and realism do represent opposing tendencies, throughout the history of English narrative, from its very beginning, they are modified and interpenetrated by one another, a process which continues in the eighteenth-century novel.

During the sixteenth century several more or less separate veins of romance were translated, written, imitated and read. The first of these are the prose romances which continue in the "society romance" tradition and are based on the basic situation of their ancestor, Troilus and Criseyde--a love affair between a young girl and an aristocratic lover. The most notable example of this type is Piccolomini's sixteenth-century translation of the fifteenth-century Latin prose romance Du duobus amantibus, which became in the English version Eurialus and Lucrece. This romance demonstrates a decided tendency to add onto the old medieval romance tradition comic scenes and vivid pictures of low life. This synthesis is by no means unique. We have seen this tendency in medieval romance, and we will see more throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A second line of development in the romance of the late sixteenth century was stimulated by the popularity of the fifteenth-century Spanish romances, the most popular of which was Amadis de Gaula, a Portuguese romance which



was preserved in prose by Ordonez de Montalvo in the latter part of the fifteenth century. This romance and others like it, such as Palmerin of England and Sir Belianus, make up one chapter in the story of how romance got its bad name, since they were the favorite reading matter of Don Quixote and were responsible for inflaming the poor knight's brain. Although most of the sixteenth-century imitations of Amadis and Palmerin are little more than warmed-over versions of their superior predecessors and are characterized by sprawling, confused plots, stilted language, and the mechanical repetition of other conventions, the reading public's demand for them spawned English imitations, such as Chinon of England, Richard Johnson's Pleasant History of Tom à Lincoln, and Emmanuel Forde's several renderings of the Amadis and Palmerin stories. While perhaps doing little to improve the taste of the new reading class, these stories did serve to keep their appetite whetted for romance.

Just as it began to look as though romance was a worn-out form, doomed to degenerate into cliché, the translations of the Greek romances in the late sixteenth century breathed new life into the tradition, inspiring several interesting Neo-Hellenistic romances. The most important lessons the Elizabethan writers learned from the Greeks were, according to Schlauch, "first of all, a trick

of diversifying adventurous action with interludes of pastoral tranquility, and secondly, a methodology for producing heightened intricacies in the plot."<sup>19</sup>

The first notable appearance of the Greek influence in English prose fiction is Lyly's Euphues, which is indirectly indebted to Greek tradition, taking its plot from Boccaccio's Tito and Gissippo, which in turn is probably indebted to a Greek original, now lost.<sup>20</sup>

An even more important expression of Greek influence is Sidney's Arcadia, which is significant here for two major reasons. First of all, it is a happy hybrid of Greek and medieval romance traditions. From the chivalric romance, Sidney took the idealization of the lovers; from Longus, the idea of combining romance with pastoral; and from Heliodorus, the complex plot structure, which became in the New Arcadia what Baker calls "the most complicated plot in English fiction."<sup>21</sup> To these were added more modern concerns. George Saintsbury says of romances such as the Arcadia (which he designates "heroic") that "it could not but exercise an important influence on the future of fiction, insomuch as it combined, or attempted

<sup>19</sup> Schlauch, p. 175.

<sup>20</sup> Wolff, pp. 248-53.

<sup>21</sup> Baker, II, 72.

to combine, with classical unity and medieval variety the more modern interest of manners and (sometimes) personality."<sup>22</sup> Sidney is significant too because the Arcadia, probably the most influential single piece of prose fiction in the Renaissance, kept the tradition alive and thriving in England.

The popularity of both euphuistic and arcadian fiction provided the impetus to romance and an inspiration to writers. Greene, who was heavily influenced by both Lyly and Sidney, produced fifteen romances between 1583 and 1592.<sup>23</sup> One of the best known of these is Pandosto (1588), which was to be reentitled Dorastus and Fawnia in later editions and which furnished Shakespeare with the basic plot for A Winter's Tale. This story contains all the stock features familiar from the Greek romances. Fawnia is exposed as an infant, reared by a shepherd, loved by a young man who appears to be above her, courted by her own father who does not know her, finally identified through her tokens, and married to her young suitor. Greene, along with other sixteenth-century arcadian and euphuistic writers such as Thomas Lodge,

<sup>22</sup> Saintsbury, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Arlin Glenn Meyers, Romance and Realism in the Novels of Aphra Behn and Previous Prose Fiction (Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, Inc., 1967), p. 13.

whose Rosalynde is remembered mainly for its contribution to Shakespeare's As You Like It, are in the main derivative and contributed little of significance to the romance tradition or the course of English prose fiction.

Although there are no innovative developments in the English romances of the seventeenth century, the sheer bulk and variety of those being imitated and reprinted throughout the century attest to their popularity. They are so numerous that Charles Mish, in his introduction to a collection of seventeenth-century fiction, finds it convenient to categorize them in this way: the chivalric romances, which were the most popular and which include reprints and imitations of the Amadis and Palmerin series; romances of sentimental adventure, dependent on the Greek romances for structure and plot devices and including translations of French heroic romances, as well as English imitations; religious romances, mainly translations from the French, but also including English examples such as Pilgrim's Progress; romantic tales, encompassing reprints of sixteenth-century tales and less successful seventeenth-century versions.<sup>24</sup>

Because of their tremendous popularity in England, their influence on late seventeenth-century writers, such

<sup>24</sup> Charles Mish, introduction to Short Fiction of the Sixteenth Century, ed. Charles Mish (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1963).

as Aphra Behn and early eighteenth-century writers such as Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Heywood and because of the violence of eighteenth-century reactions against them, the seventeenth-century French heroic romances deserve some attention. These romances include Gomberville's Polexandre and Cytherée; de Scudéry's Ibrahim, Le Grand Cyrus, and Clélia; and La Calprenède's Cassandre, Cléopâtre, and Faramond. Most of these romances were translated into English during the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> Imitations soon followed the translations. The quality of these imitations is indicated by George Saintsbury's remark of Rosa Boyle's Parthenissa that a person who might attempt to read it "would not, unless he were a very impulsive person, 'hang himself.' He would simply, after a number of pages varying with the individual, cease to read it."<sup>26</sup>

The French originals of these English imitations are distinguished by their discouraging lengths and by their labyrinthian plot structures. Despite their complexity and length the plots of these romances follow the same general outline. In fact, Herbert Hill has constructed a composite romance from Cassandre and Cléopâtre that is a

<sup>25</sup> See Ernest Baker, vol. 3, pp. 28-29, for a list of the translation dates.

<sup>26</sup> George Saintsbury, The English Novel (1913; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1919), p. 46.

fair outline of all of these. Arlin Meyers sums up Hill's typical plot this way:

The hero, disguised or reduced from his rightful rank and heritage through misfortune, falls violently in love with the daughter of the obdurate ruler. The hero performs wonders by fighting in tournaments, duels, or battles, by saving the life of the ruler or by preserving the Kingdom from ruin. He scorns all rewards save the hand of the heroine. Because of his low station, a family feud, or the promise of the heroine to another, the heroine's hand is denied to him. He is then usually banished or imprisoned. But he is brought back or freed through his own hands, by the heroine, or by his captors who need his services. The hero then finds other ways to illustrate his prowess and generally demonstrates his chivalry by courtesy to his enemies. The heroine is then carried off by the hero, by unscrupulous rivals, or by pirates, and is in turn rescued by the hero or she escapes by her own efforts. The wicked woman either attempts to kill the heroine or stirs up her jealousy by slandering the hero or by making love to him. The hero's rival then attempts to kill him or slanders him or the heroine. The difficulties are solved wholly or in part by: (1) the hero, who conquers his enemies or reveals his identity; (2) the ruler, who gives in or is killed; (3) the generous rival, who sacrifices himself for the hero; or (4) the wicked woman, who assists the hero.<sup>27</sup>

As this outline makes clear, such a plot is basically that of the Greek romances, and since English prose romances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were modeled on the same sources, there are obvious similarities here too. Like both their Greek and English predecessors,

<sup>27</sup> Meyers, pp. 60-61.

these prose fictions focus on constant love and strange adventure; they are characterized by plots which are episodic, intricate, complicated by sub-plots and are peopled by characters who are models of virtue or monsters of vice. There are, however, significant differences. In the first place, these "novels," taking a cue from their French model, D'Urfé's Astrée, put a new emphasis on sentiment. Although D'Urfé's sentimental philosophy is modified in *La Calprenède* and Scudéry by the interest in adventure, the sentimental emphasis remains, especially in Scudéry. Although the refined and self-conscious sentiment in Scudéry's romances finds plenty of mockers such as Sorel and Molière, it is a trend which had an undeniable effect on the course of English fiction.

A second and even more important development in these seventeenth-century French romances is a new desire for verisimilitude which Mlle de Scudéry sets out in her preface to Ibrahim, where she recommends that writers use real, if remote, historical setting and actual historical personages and that they keep the marvelous to a credible minimum. This advice did not, of course, produce realistic novels; in fact, pseudo-realistic features adopted by the romance writers could and did provide guises for the most extravagantly unreal features of their fiction. As Meyers suggests: "Because the characters,

places, and events all had their origins in the historical past, the reader could easily be duped into believing the most incredible actions, provided they remained mixed with the proper amount of historical fact."<sup>28</sup> But the historical setting and characters which Scudéry insists on show a new desire to create at least some semblance of reality.

There are also tentative moves in the direction of realism in characterization, mainly in the works of Scudéry. Her characters, like those of other seventeenth-century French romances, are typical romance figures--the brave, chivalrous, constant young man and the chaste, virtuous, constant young woman, surrounded by a host of other familiar types. Some innovations, however, are evident in Scudéry. First, her characters, although they are placed in remote settings and given historical names, are actually drawn from contemporary figures. A second important innovation in Scudéry is a new interest in motivation.

This new interest in the psychology of character is, like the historical setting and naming, an outgrowth of the desire of the seventeenth-century romancers to give their stories and their characters some semblance of reality. Of course, these writers did not achieve anything

<sup>28</sup> Meyers, p. 64.



approaching the verisimilitude of eighteenth-century writers like Defoe; nor did they wish to. These works are first of all romances, even when they pretend to be something else, but it is significant that these writers for the first time exhibit a need to convince readers, through a variety of techniques, mainly unsuccessful, of the "reality" of the fiction.

This tendency to modify romance in a realistic direction becomes the strongest urge in English prose fiction of the late seventeenth century. It is clearly evident in the works of Aphra Behn who, according to Meyers, "can be seen as a transitional figure between the previous popular form of romance and the realistic novel as it was to be developed twenty years later by Daniel Defoe."<sup>29</sup>

With this capsule summary in mind, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the romance tradition in general and about the way it developed in English prose fiction. First, romance is remarkably durable. Saintsbury is right when he insists "You cannot kill Romance; it would be a profound misfortune, perhaps the profoundest that could befall the human race, if you could."<sup>30</sup> As this survey reveals, down through the seventeenth century--and,

<sup>29</sup> Meyers, p. 89.

<sup>30</sup> Saintsbury, p. 155.

as we shall soon see, beyond it--we have never been seriously threatened with this misfortune. Romance has sometimes sickened and sometimes died in one genre only to be reincarnated in another. This conclusion leads to a second observation--that romance is not inherent in any genre nor is it limited to any literary form. Basically it is a way of looking at things, a set of assumptions about the world and a set of attitudes about certain basic human experiences. Northrop Frye says:

Myth . . . is one extreme of literary design; naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of romance, using that term to mean . . . the tendency . . . to displace myth in human direction and yet, in contrast to "realism," to conventionalize content in an idealized direction.<sup>31</sup>

And since romance is in its most essential aspect this attitude, this tendency to idealize, it is not surprising that although it is modified from time to time, from culture to culture, from genre to genre, certain defining characteristics remain constant. John Stevens argues of medieval romance that not only are its concerns "fundamental and permanent but also that these concerns create and re-create the conventions--of plot, image and

<sup>31</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 46.

character--essential to their expression."<sup>32</sup> This permanence which Stevens speaks of makes it possible to generalize about this tradition which, despite its surface variety, remains at bottom consistent in plot, in characterization, in setting and in meaning.

The plot of romance typically focuses on the initiation of a young man (or young woman) as he or she is coming of age, a focus which determines the two great subject matters of romance--love and adventure. No matter who the writer, what the genre, when the date, the narrative focus remains the same. The conceptions of love vary from the rather simple idea of constancy and chastity in the Greek romances, to the highly developed courtly love philosophy of Crétien to the tedious attempts of Madame Scudéry to "anatomize the amorous heart" in seventeenth-century salon romances--but love remains in all a chief motive. The other main narrative interest is adventure, which also varies from the tests of endurance, both of life and chastity, in the Greek romances to the allegorical and spiritual adventures of medieval romance, but the adventure most often takes the form of a quest. This quest, whether Christian or secular, usually falls into three main stages providing

<sup>32</sup> Stevens, p. 17.

structure for the romance. Northrop Frye calls these stages: "the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero."<sup>33</sup> The quest provides the controlling pattern for the Greek, medieval, and renaissance romances, and, as we shall see, the eighteenth-century novel as well.

Characterization in the romance is determined in part by the central quest pattern. As Frye points out, there are only two basic moral stances a character may assume. He may approve the quest and help the quester, in which case he is good through and through; or he may oppose the quest and hinder the quester, in which case he is altogether bad.<sup>34</sup> There is no room in romance for gray characters, and there is no need either; black and white characters are sufficient in terms of action and meaning. Characters also change very little or not at all; if good, they only get better; if bad, they only become worse. This static quality results, as Henry Knight Miller suggests, from the romance writer's interest in the permanent aspects of being in contrast to our

<sup>33</sup> Frye, p. 187.

<sup>34</sup> Frye, p. 195.

modern interest in the flux of becoming.<sup>35</sup> The interest is not in how an individual becomes who he is; the interest is not in the individual at all, but in the representative, the universal, the permanent in human nature. This focus produces characters who are types, including moral types, personality types, and often social types.

The unrealized, undifferentiated nature of setting, both in time and space also results from this interest in the universal and permanent. Setting is symbolic or emblematic rather than purely physical. Even in Sir Gawain, where the changing seasons and the landscape are described with some fullness, the setting is not important for its own sake but only to mirror aspects of the quest. In The Faerie Queene or in Pilgrim's Progress, settings represent moral realities, revealing romance's affinities with allegory. The romancer lacks the realist's need to place the narrative in a precise geographic, social, economic, and temporal setting because for him these things do not represent the "real" which resides in a moral, not a physical universe.

These conventions of plot, character, and setting are informed to a large extent by the world view of the romance

<sup>35</sup> Henry Knight Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones and the Romance Tradition, English Literary Studies Monograph Series, No. 6 (Victoria: Univ. of Victoria, 1976), p. 56.

which is essentially the same from the Greek versions through the Renaissance and even into the eighteenth century. Despite the differences in these societies, some fundamental characteristics hold true for all. The romance, as Miller says, is a product of a "hierarchical and providential cosmos that included but transcended the earthly flux." And this world view produces meaning which is not "derived from induction of particulars, nor is it 'emergent' from the action; it is deductive and a priori, based on cultural norms."<sup>36</sup>

A profound change in this world view occurs in the seventeenth century. This change, as Ian Watt explains, arose from the emergence of empirical philosophy as the medieval emphasis on universals was rejected in favor of a new interest in the individual; this shift in focus contributed to a new emphasis on formal realism which produced the novel. Watt is essentially right; the change he describes runs deep and wide. But he oversimplifies in two ways, exaggerating both the suddenness and the completeness of this shift in view and the effect of it on prose fiction. It is true that realism did not develop into a philosophy until the seventeenth century and did not become an expressed aim of literature until that time. But

<sup>36</sup> Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, pp. 13, 73.

it is also true that realism did not spring up full-blown in the eighteenth-century novel, but had always existed as a tendency alongside the more dominant attitudes of romance.

And if the formal realism described by Watt is not so new as he suggests, neither is the shift in world view he describes so complete. Changes of this magnitude happen very slowly and for a long time new attitudes and old overlap. Melvyn New provides a helpful corrective to Watt when he suggests that the proper way to view eighteenth-century fiction is as the product of a transitional time between the Christian world view, which shared its assumptions with romance, and a secular world view. He argues that

the major novelists of the age imaged forth in their writing neither the Christian world view, which was slowly giving way, nor the secular world view, which we now recognize as having replaced it; rather . . . their fictions reflect, with surprising consistency and complexity--if not full consciousness--that historical moment when the intellectual and imaginative resources of their culture were transferred from one system of ordering experience to another. The proper frame of reference, then, for the great English fictions of the eighteenth century is one that defines this transition.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Melvyn New, "'The Grease of God': The Form of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction," PMLA, 91 (March 1976), 236.

Eighteenth-century novelists had behind them a tradition of prose fiction which equipped them well to write this transitional fiction. For two centuries before them, realism and romance had co-existed as the two dominant forms of fiction. C. S. Lewis in his study of sixteenth-century literature divides the fiction into three classes. One of these, in which Lewis places works such as Euphues and John Grange's Golden Aphroditis, has more rhetorical than narrative interest, and therefore exerts little influence on later prose fiction. The other two are romance and realism, both of which Lewis says "foreshadow later fiction."<sup>38</sup> And Ernest Baker designates Euphues, the Arcadia and Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller "the three most notable works of Elizabethan prose fiction before Deloney."<sup>39</sup> Since Deloney's works are realistic, Baker's hall of fame includes two romances and two realistic works, underlining again the point that romance and realism were the two attitudes that shaped the course of English prose fiction. All major eighteenth-century fiction, in fact, is marked by a blend of the two--a characteristic that modern

<sup>38</sup> C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1944), p. 421.

<sup>39</sup> Baker, II, 160.



critics, in their desire to define the novel in terms of realism, have sometimes overlooked.

Richardson, whose skill in "formal realism" has been widely recognized and appreciated, provides a vivid example of this critical bias. The epistolary technique, which adds verisimilitude, immediacy, and psychological realism, has been a major focus of critical attention. Watt is typical when he asserts that Richardson's ability to let the readers inside the characters' mind through his realistic mode of narration is primarily what "gives Richardson his place in the tradition of the novel."<sup>40</sup> Critics have also noted the realistic dating of the letters and the attention given to details of clothing, setting, and character description. Relatively little has been said, however, of the romance influence, which is clearly evident in the plotting and characterization of both Pamela and Clarissa. Richardson himself is largely responsible for this. Because of his bourgeois mentality and concerns, the very term romance was full of dangerous connotations for Richardson. Anxious to establish his fiction as "a vehicle to . . . Instruction" rather than a "light Novel, or transitory Romance," he frequently and

<sup>40</sup> Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (London, 1957; rpt. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 175.

fervently denied any connection with the romance tradition.<sup>41</sup> Rejecting the "pomp and parade of romance-writing," he makes Pamela a mouthpiece for his view.<sup>42</sup> When asked if she has read any romances, she answers:

. . . there were very few novels and romances that my lady would permit me to read; and those I did, gave me no great pleasure; for either they dealt so much in the marvelous and improbable, or were so unnaturally inflaming to the passions, and so full of love and intrigue, that hardly any of them but seemed calculated to fire the imagination, rather than inform the judgment.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these protestations, the subject matter, plot, and characterization in Pamela are basically those of the romance. Filled with the very "love and intrigue" that Pamela objects to, her story, true to romance tradition, focuses on the initiation of a young girl who, isolated from her family, alone and unprotected, is subjected to tests of her virtue and prudence which build to a crucial struggle and is resolved by the exaltation of the heroine, who is rewarded by marriage and a great elevation in rank

<sup>41</sup> Samuel Richardson, preface to Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962), p. xxi.

<sup>42</sup> Richardson, letter, quoted in Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel, ed. George L. Barnett (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p. 72.

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Richardson, Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, II (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1914), 454.

and riches. The plot departs from this quest structure only in that the novel does not end with the marriage, but continues for some time afterwards.

Richardson's characterization, especially of Pamela herself, is also heavily indebted to romance. Richardson's heroine, who significantly bears the same name as the heroine of the Arcadia, is a paragon. She is beautiful, accomplished and, most important by far, she is chaste and determined to remain so. In fact, her main struggle, in the style of the old Greek romances, is to preserve her chastity against the assaults of the villainous Mr. B., who in typical romance fashion, abducts her and tries to seduce her with a sham marriage, repenting and reforming only when all his wicked plots fail.

Clarissa, too, is perfect enough, both physically and spiritually, for any romance. Margaret Dalziel is right to suggest that Clarissa, as well as Richardson's other heroines, "conform[s] to the romantic stereotype of the essentially passive lady who is constantly being tyrannized over by parents and guardians, plagued by would-be seducers, carried away, and having to be rescued by another lover, usually but not always the true one."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Margaret Dalziel, "Richardson and Romance," Australian University Modern Language Association, 33 (1970), 18.

Anxious to defend himself against charges of romantic improbabilities, Richardson writes in the postscript to Clarissa, "Some there are, and Ladies too! who have supposed that the excellencies of the Heroine are carried to an improbable, and even to an impracticable height, in this History," arguing that his portrayal of Clarissa is realistic because of her early education and because he is acquainted with real English women who "have reached the perfections of a Clarissa."<sup>45</sup> Richardson's protestations to the contrary, Clarissa's perfect goodness and virtue place her as squarely in the romance tradition as Lovelace's black-hearted motives and wicked actions place him there.

In the plot of Clarissa, Richardson made a conscious effort to depart from the romance. Responding to a reader's wish that Clarissa have a happy ending, he writes, "And how was this happy ending to be brought about? Why, by this very easy and trite expedient; to wit, by reforming Lovelace and marrying him to Clarissa . . . ."<sup>46</sup> While the ending of Pamela is precisely the "trite" one he describes, the ending of

<sup>45</sup> Richardson, postscript to Clarissa, quoted in Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel, pp. 88-89.

<sup>46</sup> Richardson, quoted in Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel, p. 75.

Clarissa is indeed a significant modification of the romance plot. But other features of plotting, including intricacy, a reliance on coincidence and devices such as the abduction, are borrowed straight from romance. Richardson's novels, like those of most other eighteenth-century writers, have much closer affinities with romance than he wished or admitted, underscoring the pervasive nature of the tradition.

In Fielding, whose classical background made him less anxious to justify his fiction on pragmatic grounds, the influence of the romance is even more readily apparent. Although Fielding, as well as Richardson, expressed hostility to the romance, his animus was almost certainly directed, as Miller suggests, at French heroic romances rather than at the tradition in general.<sup>47</sup> In fact, Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, and Amelia are all romances of one sort or another and are clearly marked by features of that tradition.

In Joseph Andrews characters are, in good romance form, either good or bad, and remain so throughout. Joseph, Fanny, and Parson Adams, representing virtue and innocence, are surrounded by a host of type-villains, ranging from the lustful ladies, Slip-Slip and Lady Booby,

<sup>47</sup> Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, p. 10.

through a variety of corrupt clergymen, quack doctors, and shyster lawyers. Despite his apparent lack of background and breeding, Joseph is a chivalrous knight described in terms reminiscent of romance. As Sheridan Baker points out, Joseph has all the "unconscious traces of knighthood," including "the chestnut locks, the fair skin, the nobility, the sweetness, and even the effeminacy of the conventional knight of romance."<sup>48</sup>

The plot of Fielding's first novel also reveals the powerful influence of romance, with Joseph's knightly adventures taking the form of a journey or a quest. Filled with the old romance devices--babies switched in the cradle, and threats of incest--the plot is characterized by a heavy reliance on coincidence and depends for its resolution on the unravelling of mysteries in which Joseph and Fanny's true identities are revealed (Joseph's by a token birthmark), their ranks and fortunes raised and their virtue rewarded by marriage.

The plot and characterization of Tom Jones is as plainly modeled after the romance. As Miller suggests, "Tom Jones is a quest-epic," involving the "search for a father and for a public identity," which takes the form

<sup>48</sup> Sheridan Baker, "Henry Fielding's Comic Romances," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, 45 (1960), 450, 453.

of the "birth-mystery plot of the hero-sired and abandoned child" and "the story of a misjudged 'son' of a parent who listens to evil counselors."<sup>49</sup> The structure of Tom's quest exhibits the three-part structure--exile, initiation, and return--characteristic of the romance. Beginning with Tom's exile from his pastoral homeland, it focuses on his initiation into the world of experience with all the attendant trials and tests of his virtue and ends, after the conventional incest-threat, with the revelation of Tom's true identity and his marriage and elevation of fortune.

The stamp of romance is easily visible in characterization as well as in plotting of Tom Jones. In fact, Miller argues that "The major characters, and many of the minor characters, in Tom Jones have their romance 'equivalents' and, in large part, they perform their analogous romance functions . . . ." Tom, for example, is "The Young Man," the representative hero, the "Knight and Quester."<sup>50</sup> Miller also suggests other archetypal romance figures, such as

Squire Western, the senex iratus and father of the princess; Partridge, the amiable, cowardly, confident Squire; the Evil Counselors Twackum

<sup>49</sup> Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, pp. 25-26.

<sup>50</sup> Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, pp. 66, 59, 66.

and Square , who so frequently in the romances force the hero's exile; Mrs. Honour, the confidante . . . Mrs. Arabella Hunt, whose proffer of marriage echoes the critical and ultimate test of the hero's fidelity in many a romance; and the ubiquitous Dowling, the carrier of the secret.<sup>51</sup>

Fielding's characters are also marked by the tendency to be thoroughly good or bad and to remain so, with little change or development, and to be either rewarded or punished in the end precisely as they deserve.

Although critics have generally seen Amelia as a realistic novel, many elements in Fielding's third work, too, are suggestive of romance. As Sheridan Baker argues, the novel is replete, especially at the beginning and the end, with the devices of romance, such as disguise, veiled incest (in Amelia's relationship with her foster brother), an episode in which Booth enters his beloved's room in a basket, and a scene involving a forgotten casket which, according to Baker, is drawn straight from Ariosto.<sup>52</sup>

The plot is, with some modifications, that of romance. Although Booth and Amelia are married early and there is no mystery surrounding the birth of either, they are

<sup>51</sup> Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, p. 70.

<sup>52</sup> Sheridan Baker, "Fielding's Amelia and the Materials of Romance," Philological Quarterly, 41 (April 1962), 437-43.



exiled and forced on a quest which ends with Amelia's elevation of fortune and the beginning of a new and better marriage for them. As Baker suggests, Booth's courtship and marriage to Amelia "repeat the courtly pattern . . . the poor but worthy man-at-arms serves a lady far above him."<sup>53</sup>

Smollett also drew on the romance for plot outlines and situations, and, to some extent, for characterization. In Humphry Clinker, especially, the borrowings are abundant. Humphry, an orphan who is marked by "alabaster" skin, natural courage and courtesy, endures a series of adventures on the road, after which his true identity is revealed through a set of tokens. The illegitimate son of Matthew Bramble, Humphry is finally acknowledged, becomes an heir and is married, though not to a lady but to a servant. The romance elements in the novel are frequently undercut, of course, by comedy, but many of the values of romance are retained. Humphry, a comic figure in many ways and a slightly ridiculous knight, is nonetheless handsome, courteous, virtuous, and brave. Although romance may be the occasional target of the satire, it is also one of the weapons. According to Baker, Humphry Clinker is at once "a modernized burlesque of

<sup>53</sup> Baker, "Fielding's Amelia," p. 445.

chivalric romance and a mild chivalric romancing of the follies of ordinary life," in which the satire is aimed at "man's poor social aspirations."<sup>54</sup> Throughout, the novel blends romance and realistic satire--a blend which is characteristic of much of the best eighteenth-century fiction.

With all this in mind, it is possible to say with some assurance that the eighteenth-century novel was not born in reaction against romance but was the offspring of the marriage of romance and realism, which had co-habited happily for at least two centuries. These two do not make so strange a pair of bedfellows as it may seem. Situated as they were at the point of change, the eighteenth-century novelists had at their fingertips the techniques of both romance and realism and they had in their heads both the older Christian world view and the newer secular one. They did with these ideas what must have been almost inevitable, producing fiction which blended the old and the new both in technique and in attitude. This synthesis is found to some extent in all eighteenth-century fiction and is, in fact, the defining characteristic of the novel of the age. The balance of

<sup>54</sup> Sheridan Baker, "Humphry Clinker as Comic Romance," Essays on the Eighteenth-Century Novel, ed. Robert Donald Spector (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 155, 163.

the two varies from writer to writer, depending on the background and the aims of the novelist. In Richardson, with his tradesman's concerns, realism outweighs romance, while in Fielding, with his Christian and classical view, romance conventions and ideals predominate. And the realistic concerns combined with romance vary.

Richardson's interest is in economy and psychology, Fielding's in benevolence, Smollett's in satire, Burney's in manners. The concern with manners is perfectly compatible with the concerns of romance and when Fanny Burney writes best, which is in Evelina, she illustrates perhaps better than any other eighteenth-century novelist the synthesis of realism and romance.

## CHAPTER III

EVELINA

Written in secrecy and published anonymously, Evelina, to the delight and astonishment of Fanny Burney, drew praise from the greatest names in literary circles of the day. Sheridan declared it "superior to Fielding."<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke, fascinated, sat up through the night to finish it; and most importantly, Johnson admired it enthusiastically. Fanny, ecstatic to hear that he had said there were "things and characters in her book more than worthy of Fielding!"<sup>2</sup> indulged herself in a dance around a mulberry tree. It became immediately and enormously popular with the reading public as well, going through four editions before the end of 1779,<sup>3</sup> one German edition in 1779 and three Dutch editions by the end of 1785.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richard Sheridan, unpublished diary ms., quoted in Joyce Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> Fanny Burney, Memoirs, ii, quoted in Hemlow, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> Hemlow, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> Edward A. Bloom, introduction to Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. xxi.

Although instant fame is heady stuff for a young untried writer, Fanny Burney was perceptive enough to worry about the fate of her book, asking "Will the World value the notions of Those of other Times?"<sup>5</sup> Miss Burney's doubts have been largely justified. Although Evelina went through two dozen editions in the nineteenth century, W. L. Courtney could ask in 1904, "how many of the modern generation have ever looked within its covers? Gentle reader, have you? Do you know anyone who has?"<sup>6</sup> Evelina is still neither widely read nor much written about. Yet, of Burney's four novels, Evelina finds the largest audience and receives by far the greatest share of critical attention. Of approximately forty journal articles published on Burney's fiction, more than half treat Evelina exclusively, while only two are devoted to Cecelia, two to The Wanderer and the rest to all four novels. The same emphasis obtains in literary histories.

Most of the favorable criticism of Evelina tends to center on one aspect of her talent--her ability to paint a realistic picture of eighteenth-century English life and manners. In one of two full-length studies of Burney, Michael Adelstein remarks of Evelina that

<sup>5</sup> Hemlow, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> W. L. Courtney, The Feminine Note in Fiction (London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1904), p. 241.

Although the work is marred by didactic passages, a wooden hero, a melodramatic subplot, and some sentimentality, the refreshingly natural heroine and the gently satirical representation of various middle-class characters provide an amusing picture of the manners of that time and in all times.<sup>7</sup>

Eugene White, author of the other book-length study, asserts that "The impression received from reading a novel like Evelina, then, is a conviction of reality. This surely is the fashionable London of the late eighteenth century. This is the way people looked and acted and thought."<sup>8</sup> And W. H. Graham sums up the value of Evelina in this way: "In well-selected and varied scenes we are shown the daily routine in the lives of what may be loosely described as middle and upper class families of the latter half of the eighteenth century. In this lies its value to succeeding generations."<sup>9</sup>

To praise Evelina for its realism alone is bound to result in misunderstanding and underestimation because the novel cannot be fully appreciated until the essential

<sup>7</sup> Michael Adelstein, Fanny Burney, Twayne English Author Series, No. 67 (New York: Twayne, 1968), pp. 147-48.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene White, "Fanny Burney," in Minor British Novelists, ed. Charles A. Hoyt (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1967), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> W. H. Graham, "Evelina," Contemporary Review, 171 (June 1947), 351.

romance conventions which inform it are recognized. Judged by strictly realistic standards--that is to say, by nineteenth-and twentieth-century standards--Evelina must fall short. And this verdict is precisely what has occurred in criticism of the novel, with the "weaknesses" such as the extravagant plot, the ideal, static characters, coincidence, being viewed as failures of realism, rather than what they really are--successful uses of romance conventions.

Only one critic has explicitly recognized Evelina for what it is, a blend of romance and realism. Laura Hinkley comments of the novel that it "shows in its plot and development an odd association of extravagantly romantic and acutely realistic attitudes . . . . The romantic inheres chiefly in the enveloping plot, the circumstances of the heroine's birth and their consequences."<sup>10</sup> Although Hinkley is perceptive in recognizing the association of realism and romance, I would certainly quarrel with the word "odd" to describe it. In fact, as we have seen, it is not peculiar at all, but typical, marking the novels of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, as well as of Burney. And while Miss Hinkley is right to say that plot and plot devices are drawn from the

<sup>10</sup> Laura L. Hinkley, Ladies of Literature (New York: Hastings House, 1946), pp. 26-27.

romance, these are not the only debts to romance. The main characters and all the major themes, as well as the plot, are drawn directly from romance and can be fully appreciated only in that light.

The romance influence is especially evident in the plotting of Evelina. Saintsbury summarily dismisses the plot, saying Evelina "has no plot worth speaking of."<sup>11</sup> I disagree. It is certainly worth speaking of, if only because it is one of the main targets for criticism, which grows out of a misunderstanding. Adelstein, for example, complains that Evelina's plot is "farfetched" and depends "heavily on chance and coincidence."<sup>12</sup> Hale calls the plot of Evelina and Burney's other novels "extravagant and impossible," and Kemp Malone, speaking of the happy ending of Evelina, remarks: "The rigors of realism are yet to seek."<sup>13</sup> Exactly so. The main plot of Evelina, if judged only by realistic standards, is farfetched and extravagant. But it is, in its larger outline, a perfectly well-constructed romance plot. Henry Knight Miller

<sup>11</sup> George Saintsbury, The English Novel (1913; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1919), p. 152.

<sup>12</sup> Adelstein, pp. 28, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Will Taliaferro Hale, "Madame d'Arbly's Place in the Development of the English Novel," Indiana University Studies, 3 (January 1916), 31; Kemp Malone, "Evelina Revisited," Papers on English Literature and Language, 1 (1965), 13.



summarizes the typical historical-biographical romance pattern

that began with the birth of the hero and his youth and education, then traced his departure (or exile) from 'home,' his initiation and testing in the progress of the Quest (the search for reputation, or love, for a home or for a father, but ultimately the search for maturity, for the defined essence of the soul), and, after the final and most severe test, concluded with a peripeteia in the hero's fortune and the discovery of his authentic character--which in the romances normally meant not only his spiritual essence but also his location in a human community.<sup>14</sup>

One could hardly find a more satisfactory plot outline of Evelina with the exception that Burney, like Heliodorus, begins in medias res.

When the novel opens, the heroine is seventeen years old and is about to make her entrance into the world. Exposition about her background is provided by the correspondence between the Rev. Villars and Lady Howard in two letters in volume one--letter II, which explains the background of Evelina's family for three generations, and letter XXVIII, which explains Villars' motives in bringing Evelina up as he has. Briefly, the background of the opening situation is this: Evelina's grandfather,

<sup>14</sup> Henry Knight Miller, Fielding's Tom Jones and the Romance Tradition, English Literary Studies Monograph Series, No. 6 (Victoria: Univ. of Victoria, 1976), p. 25.

Mr. Evelyn, to whom Mr. Villars was tutor, married a low-bred, ignorant French barmaid whose beauty was her only recommendation. Upon his deathbed he committed the child of this union to the protection of Villars, who loved and cared for her until her mother, Madame Duval, ordered her to come to Paris and accept a forced marriage. To escape this, Miss Evelyn secretly married Sir John Belmont, a libertine who burned the marriage certificate and denied the marriage.<sup>15</sup> Dying at the moment she gave birth to a daughter, Miss Evelyn committed to Mr. Villars a second charge, Evelina, who has been brought up under Villars' guidance in pastoral seclusion for sixteen years. This is the situation of Evelina when the story opens. The unacknowledged but legitimate daughter of a nobleman, she has been "exposed" by her father, reared by a kindly old priest and is now ready to be initiated into the world.

The circumstances of Evelina's birth and her situation are those of a typical romance heroine. The stigma surrounding her birth--her father's denial of the marriage--makes her in effect a bastard, a fact which is important in several ways. On the level of surface action, her supposed bastardy functions, as Susan Staves

<sup>15</sup> The story of Caroline Evelyn was told in a very early novel which the young Fanny Burney, under pressure from her stepmother, burned in a bonfire. Nothing remains of this early attempt.

suggests, to justify her entry into a wider circle of society than would otherwise be proper and puts her in a position where she is unprotected and vulnerable to any number of threats.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Villars is keenly aware of Evelina's peculiar vulnerability and reminds her that "The supposed obscurity of your birth and situation makes you liable to a thousand disagreeable adventures."<sup>17</sup> But Evelina's birth has deeper thematic significance. Henry Knight Miller, in discussing Tom Jones' birth, points out three ways in which bastardy can signify. First, "bastardy in myth and legend was a way of proclaiming the marvelous child, set apart for some representative deed"; secondly, "it also marked the Outsider, whose ambiguous relationship to his society urgently required him to define himself, and whose free agency (as it were) also gave him a peculiar license to test and define the codes of his society"; and finally, "a bastard with no acknowledged heritage could, in one sense, most fully embody the young man who is entirely potentia."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Susan Staves, "Evelina; or Female Difficulties," Modern Philology, 73 (May 1976), 376.

<sup>17</sup> Fanny Burney, Evelina; or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 116. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text.

<sup>18</sup> Miller, p. 66.

Evelina's bastardy functions in just these ways. She is in all important ways representative--the young girl rather than a young girl, whose initiation is representative and not peculiar, although she is situated in such a way as to particularize the experience. Evelina's bastardy also serves to underline one of the most important themes arising out of her questionable parentage--the search for identity. Aware of her unenviable position, Evelina signs her first letter to Mr. Villars (VIII) "Evelina \_\_\_\_\_," adding this postscript, "I cannot to you sign Anville, and yet, what other name may I claim?" (p. 24). At her first ball she is disconcerted to imagine Lord Orville "has been inquiring who I was" (p. 34). She calls herself an "orphan," "motherless," and "worse than fatherless" (p. 218). Lovel's remark to Lord Orville that she is "nobody" (p. 35) and that he "cannot learn who she is" stings so deeply that five and a half months later she is still smarting from it and writes to Villars, "Since I, as Mr. Lovel says, am Nobody, I seated myself quietly on a window, and not very near to anybody" (p. 289).

Not only must she seek to discover who she is, but also where and to whom she belongs. Her position makes her all potentia. Since she is nobody and belongs to nobody, she may be anybody and belong to anybody. There

are several possibilities. Evelina may belong to Villars, who has hoped "to educate and to cherish her as his own," to make her heiress to his modest fortune and "to bestow her upon some worthy man, with whom she might spend her days in tranquillity, cheerfulness, and good-humour, untainted by vice, folly, or ambition" (p. 127). A second possibility is that she may be accepted by Sir John Belmont, but this acknowledgement seems unlikely, as Villars recognizes when he asks,

only child of a wealthy baronet, whose person she has never seen, whose character she has reason to abhor, and whose name she is forbidden to claim; entitled as she is to lawfully inherit his fortune and estate, is there any probability that he will properly own her? (p. 19).

Or she may be forced to take her place in the vulgar world of Madame Duval and the tacky Branghton relatives, a world in which Evelina feels instinctively she does not belong. Evelina is in a typical romance situation.

Northrop Frye explains that in the romance "there is a search for the child, who has to be hidden away in a secret place. The hero, being of mysterious origin, his true paternity is often concealed."<sup>19</sup> This situation is precisely Evelina's. She has been hidden away for

<sup>19</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p. 199.

seventeen years by Villars, who has given her the name of Anville to protect her from both Sir John Belmont and Madame Duval. Frye suggests that in the romance "a false father appears who seeks the child's death" while the "true father is sometimes represented by a wise old man or teacher."<sup>20</sup> Sir John Belmont, although he is the natural father of Evelina, functions throughout most of the novel as a false father. While he does not literally seek her death--in fact he does not seek her at all (for reasons that are made clear later)--Villars fears that if Sir John finds Evelina, she will, under the care of this "false" father, be exposed "to the snares and dangers inevitably encircling a house of which the master is dissipated and unprincipled" (p. 126). The other threat to Evelina is Madame Duval, a character who is the "false mother" or "cruel stepmother of romance." By hiding her away in rural retirement and giving her a false name, Villars, as the "true father" or "wise old man," has hoped to protect Evelina from both false mother and father. But when Madame Duval's inquiries and demands make this aim impossible, Evelina is forced to go out into the world to seek her place. Throughout she is placed in these different worlds and tested by each, a testing that

<sup>20</sup> Frye, p. 199.

is part of her search for identity. She is as acutely aware of belonging to nobody as she is of being nobody, and when Orville asks to whom he must apply for her hand she replies, "I hardly know myself to whom I most belong" (p. 353).

It is well that Burney begins in medias res, at the point where Evelina, at seventeen, is at the threshold of her initiation into experience and her quest for identity. In the romance tradition adolescence is the time of initiation, testing, and self-discovery. Up until this time, Evelina has spent a happy childhood in idyllic surroundings. Nothing occurred then to interest the romancer or to provide the stuff of a novel. It is only when she becomes adolescent that questions of identity begin to loom large. As Henry Knight Miller puts it,

the romance, unlike the "Romantic" child-centered mode, was primarily interested in characters who could be considered responsible for their actions, and the youthful periods of genuine interest were those of the rites de passage, such as the time of puberty . . . and the approach to manhood and the ceremony of initiation.<sup>21</sup>

So we find Evelina as the novel opens at just such a stage, poised at the brink of initiation.

<sup>21</sup> Miller, p. 66.

In the preface to Evelina, Burney sets out the general plot of the novel in these words:

a young female, educated in the most secluded retirement, makes, at the age of seventeen, her first appearance upon the great and busy stage of life; with a virtuous mind, a cultivated understanding, and a feeling heart, her ignorance of the forms, and inexperience in the manners, of the world, occasion all the little incidents which these volumes record, and which form the natural progression of the life of a young woman of obscure birth but conspicuous beauty, for the first six months after her Entrance into the World

Her entrance into the world necessitates that she journey from the comfortable safety of Berry Hill to London and to Bristol Hotwell, a journey which is, as Lillian and Edward Bloom suggest, "a moral encounter," moving Evelina "from trial to trial" as she "undergoes tests of discovery."<sup>22</sup> This journey takes the form, as it does in most romances, of a quest which provides the story not only with its themes but also with its structure.

Evelina is, in other words, a quest-romance, and like others of the kind, has a three-part structure. Although modern one-volume editions of the novel somewhat obscure this division, the three volumes of Evelina correspond roughly to the three parts of the quest described by

<sup>22</sup> Lillian P. Bloom and Edward A. Bloom, "Fanny Burney's Novels: The Retreat from Wonder," Novel: A Forum on Fiction, Spring 1979, p. 224.



Northrop Frye and others. Volume one, encompassing Evelina's visits to Howard Grove and to London and her return to Howard Grove, corresponds to Frye's first stage of the romance quest, "the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures."<sup>23</sup> Evelina's journey is perilous indeed, fraught with the "snares," "dangers," and "dreadful pits" Mr. Villars had hoped to shield her from. Although under Villars' guidance, she has become well-mannered, accomplished and educated, she has lived a private existence, ignorant of the ways of the "real" world. As her guardian suggests, "She is quite a little rustic, and knows nothing of the world" (p. 19), an ignorance which Lady Howard admiringly calls "a certain air of inexperience and innocency" (p. 21). The crucial test is concerned with these two qualities--inexperience and innocence, since Evelina must be initiated into experience yet retain her innocence.

Her testing takes place in a social setting and centers on manners. In the beginning, Evelina, fearing most of all a breach of etiquette, describes herself as "one whose ignorance of the world makes her perpetually fear doing something wrong" (p. 30). As she endures her first trial--a private ball--the tone is one of

<sup>23</sup> Frye, p. 187.

overwhelming embarrassment. In a single five-page letter, she uses the words "shame" or "ashamed" five times, "confused" twice, "uneasy" twice, and "embarrassment," "flurried," and "mortified" once each. She "colours," is "frightened," and overcome by "panic," "terror," and "fear" (pp. 29-34). These same words recur throughout volume one with revealing frequency. It is tempting to dismiss her fear of committing a social blunder as silly. But it is important on two levels since this scene, like many others, participates in the concerns of both the romance plot and the realistic satire on manners. In terms of realism, the scene ridicules the manners of the intolerable fop, Lovel, and others. In terms of the romance concerns, the scene is a real test of Evelina's mettle, as the situation she faces and the choices she makes are invested with symbolic and ritualistic significance. In speaking of the perilous journeys of romance, Kathleen Williams says "the hero's fate depends upon whether he takes a certain seat, asks or answers a certain question."<sup>24</sup> Evelina's fate too depends on choices such as these, and it is almost decided prematurely when Orville concludes from her ignorance of form that she

<sup>24</sup> Kathleen Williams, "Romance Tradition in The Faerie Queene," Research Studies, 32 (1964); rpt. in Edmund Spenser's Poetry, ed. Hugh McClean (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1968), p. 561.

is but "A poor weak girl!" (p. 35). Forms, which may seem trivial, are filled with meaning and become outward and visible signs of inward wisdom and virtue.

Moreover, not all Evelina's trials are limited to embarrassment and confusion. Her ignorance of custom and manners subjects her on several occasions to real danger. After her mortifying visit to the opera in the company of the Branghtons and Madame Duval, her ignorance and inexperience allow her to accept Sir Clement Willoughby's offer of a ride home in his carriage. This turns out to be more than a faux pas, since Willoughby, a profligate rake, attempts to abduct her. Sir Clement is dissuaded partly out of fear of scandal, since Evelina, on this first "perilous journey" is safely under the protection of Mrs. Mirvan.

In the second stage of her journey, which makes up volume two and includes her second visit to Howard Grove and London, she is not so fortunate. This stage of Evelina's quest is what Frye calls "the crucial struggle."<sup>25</sup> The tests and trials are no longer the "preliminary adventures" of the first volume, but more serious struggles. Now, travelling with Madame Duval, whose morals are questionable and whose manners are

<sup>25</sup> Frye, p. 187.

execrable, and forced into the company of the vulgar Branghton relatives, Evelina sees London in a new, more frightening light. The trials come thick and fast as Evelina, virtually unprotected, is subjected not only to embarrassments, but to physical danger and threats to her chastity.

Two parallel incidents are potentially disastrous. In the first, Evelina and the Branghton sisters become separated from the rest of the party on a visit to Vauxhall and are lost in the dark walks or alleys where they are seized by a riotous group of strange men. Breaking away from them, Evelina runs alone down the alleys, losing even the slight protection of the sisters and is accosted by a party of men who handle her with humiliating familiarity. She is "saved" by the appearance of Sir Clement, but no sooner has he driven away the ruffians than he leads her yet deeper into the maze of dark walks with an intention obviously not honorable. She manages to escape this trial unscathed only to be subjected to a second and parallel incident at Marybone Gardens. Again she becomes separated from her party, and again she is subjected to "impertinent witticisms, or free gallantry" from every man she meets, culminating in a young officer's seizing her "with great violence" (p. 233). And again, Evelina's ignorance of the world

subjects her to danger as she seeks protection in the company of women whom she fails to recognize as whores. The inadequacy of Madame Duval as protector and guide is apparent when we discover that she pronounces the prostitutes to be "two real fine ladies" (p. 236).

These adventures at Vauxhall and Marybone are symbolic, with the dark alleys of these gardens corresponding to the labyrinthine underworld of romance. Northrop Frye points out that in myths associated with romance "the hero travels perilously through a dark labyrinthine underworld full of monsters between sunset and sunrise."<sup>26</sup> The dark alleys are this underworld, and the leering men and loose women become the monsters, threatening Evelina's safety and chastity. Through these trials, she triumphs, gaining experience and retaining her innocence, but volume two ends with Evelina receiving a wound from an unexpected quarter. When she gets a too familiar and insinuating letter signed by Lord Orville, she is crushed, loses faith in human goodness, and plunges into despair. Leaving London for the sanctuary of Berry Hill, she sickens and becomes ill, and there suffers the ritual, symbolic death which so often marks romance.

<sup>26</sup> Frye, p. 190.

Volume three, containing Evelina's symbolic rebirth, her recognition, reversal of fortune, and marriage, corresponds to Frye's final stage of the quest, "the exaltation of the hero."<sup>27</sup> This volume, which focuses less on adventures and struggles than the first two, takes place at Bristol Hotwell, where Evelina has gone to recover her health, and at Clifton, where both Evelina and Lord Orville happen to be houseguests. As close contact with him returns her to her original conviction of his goodness, her faith is restored, and a mutual avowal of love ends in Orville's proposal of marriage. Closely following the proposal comes Evelina's discovery that the mysterious Mr. Macartney is her brother. Immediately afterward comes the meeting with Sir John Belmont, where he recognizes her instantly by her romance token, which is not a birthmark but a remarkable resemblance to her dead mother. Not the false father Villars has feared him to be, Sir John, repentant, has reared as his daughter a young woman foisted off on him by the nurse as Evelina-- a version of the old romance device of infants switched in the cradle. In the last volume, the stigma of Evelina's birth is removed, she acquires a brother, father and husband, and she becomes the heiress of several

<sup>27</sup> Frye, p. 187.

fortunes--an ending typical in every respect of the recognition and exaltation of the hero in romance.

The sub-plot which concerns Mr. Macartney is even more obviously modeled on romance. The borrowings are so apparent that Erickson has asserted that "aside from the Cinderella theme and the theme of the abandoned child, Macartney's story is about all we have of the old romance in Evelina."<sup>28</sup> This observation is not true, of course, but it is true that the romance elements in Macartney's story are exaggerated in a way they are not in Evelina's story, in which realistic concerns are more thoroughly combined with those of romance. Mr. Macartney's story, on the other hand, is pure romance. This unhappy young man has fallen in love with Miss Belmont (alias Polly Green, the nurse's daughter) and comes close to killing her father (really his father) in a duel, bringing him perilously near to both incest and patricide. When Polly's true identity is revealed, the incest threat is removed, and Macartney and Polly are united in a double ceremony with Evelina and Orville.

Another feature of the romance marking the plot of Evelina is the heavy reliance on coincidence--a reliance

<sup>28</sup> James P. Erickson, "Evelina and Betsy Thoughtless," Texas studies in Literature and Language, 6 (Spring 1964), 101.

that has drawn fire from critics. Eugene White says, "Besides a lack of originality in plot construction, a weakness that strikes most readers is the dependence upon accident and coincidence in the complication and resolution of plot."<sup>29</sup> Michael Adelstein suggests that "Because Fanny's story is incidental to her picture of manners, the reader forgives her for depending on coincidence just as he does Fielding in Tom Jones."<sup>30</sup> Neither Burney nor Fielding is in need of this sort of magnanimity. In each, the use of chance and coincidence represents not a failure in plotting, but a romance world view which is Christian and providential. Aubrey Williams has demonstrated that chance and coincidence in Fielding's novels are reflections of his "conception of a Providence that intervened directly, though usually by natural means and agents, in human affairs."<sup>31</sup> And Melvyn New points out that "the strong sense that the characters are manipulated toward their final reward (or punishment) by forces beyond themselves" is one of the essential

<sup>29</sup> Eugene White, Fanny Burney, Novelist: A Study in Technique (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, 1960), p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Adelstein, p. 32.

<sup>31</sup> Aubrey Williams, "Interpositions of Providence and the Design of Fielding's Novels," The South Atlantic Quarterly, 70 (1971), 266-67.



characteristics of romance and of a Christian world view.<sup>32</sup>

All the coincidences in Evelina function in just this way. Although they may appear random at first glance, they are all actually part of an overarching design which works consistently throughout the novel to bring about the eventual union of Evelina and Orville. Orville is always conveniently at hand when Evelina needs rescuing either from the snubs and slights of Lovel or Lady Louisa or from the false rescues of Sir Clement. Some of Orville's coincidental appearances seem superficially to work against Evelina. The scene at Marybone Gardens, for example, where Orville just happens to be on the spot just in time to observe Evelina in the company of some ladies of the evening, temporarily sets her in a mortifying light, but ultimately provides the occasion for a solicitous visit from Orville at the end of which Evelina writes, "Can I ever, in future, regret the adventure I met with at Marybone, since it has been productive of a visit so flattering?" (p. 241). In a like manner, Orville's sudden appearance in the garden where he observes Evelina's meeting with Macartney temporarily compromises Evelina and

<sup>32</sup> Melvyn New, "'The Grease of God': The Form of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction," PMLA, 91 (March 1976), 238.

sinks her in Orville's opinion, but in the larger design, it provides an opportunity for Evelina to ask for his counsel, setting the stage for more intimate conversations.

The whole Macartney story is a web of coincidence designed to manipulate the deserving young man toward a final reward. It is a coincidence indeed that he chooses to lodge at the Branghtons where he meets Evelina, whom he does not know to be his real sister. And fortunately for the young Scotsman, Evelina is on the spot to stop him from committing suicide. Macartney makes the providential nature of this coincidence clear when he writes to Evelina,

But no time can ever efface from my memory that moment, when in the very action of preparing for my own destruction, or the lawless seizure of the property of others, you rushed into the room, and arrested my arm!--It was, indeed, an awful moment!--the hand of Providence seemed to intervene between me and eternity (p. 230).

And finally the resolution of both stories depends on a string of coincidences which bring Evelina, Orville, Macartney and Sir John Belmont together at Bristol, a situation which is necessary for the resolution and exaltation of Evelina.

This happy ending, as well as the coincidences leading up to it, has occasioned criticism. Waldo S. Glock sees the "contrived" ending as a reason to question Burney's

seriousness as a novelist, since "Miss Burney resolves all problems by the simple but arbitrary device of Lord Orville's avowal of love," which "does little to support the intellectual themes of the novel."<sup>33</sup> Feminist critics take an especially dim view of the ending. Patricia Spacks, for instance, asserts that in Evelina and other Burney novels the heroine's "'growth' leads her back toward childhood, the 'happy endings' of Burney novels reassert the charm and irresponsibility of the child as the greatest achievement to be hoped for by adolescents."<sup>34</sup> Another feminist critic, Judith Newton, calls Evelina's entrance into the world an "entrance into the marriage market" and argues that by marrying she abdicates adult responsibility and power.<sup>35</sup> These are odd criticisms to make of Evelina; indeed they would be odd criticisms to make of any eighteenth-century novel, since, with the exception of Clarissa, all major novels of the period end in just this way--happily and with marriage, or better

<sup>33</sup> Walter S. Glock, "Appearance and Reality: The Education of Evelina," Essays in Literature--Western Illinois University, 2 (1975), 41.

<sup>34</sup> Patricia Spacks, The Female Imagination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 129.

<sup>35</sup> Judith Newton, "Evelina: Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the Marriage Market," Modern Language Studies, 6 (Spring 1976), 53.

yet, a set of marriages. This feature lies at the very heart of the romance tradition, in which things must end happily because, as New suggests,

The world of the romance is a God-ordained, God-contrived world in which virtue is rewarded, vice punished, where trial and experiment (the outwandering of the mythic hero) are concluded in a significant, comprehensive, satisfying manner.<sup>36</sup>

Fanny Burney, as well as other writers of the time, most appropriately envisions this satisfying conclusion in terms of marriage. Particular and individual ways of maturing held no interest for Burney, who cared instead to show universal patterns of moral and social maturation ending in communal relationships, of which marriage is the most potentially creative. As Henry Knight Miller says,

romance and comedy traditionally conclude with the celebration of a marriage, not because that marks the end but precisely because it celebrates a new beginning, the sacramental emblem of a new world of maturity and hope, the assertion of life and continuity as against the "reality" of isolation and death.<sup>37</sup>

So it seems that Burney, from one significant point of view, has done better, much better, than she is ever credited with in the plotting of her first novel.

<sup>36</sup> New, p. 238.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, p. 40.

Proceeding from a Christian world view still predominant and drawing from a romance tradition still viable, she has constructed a plot which is well suited in its mythic structure to her most important themes and to her major characters.

All Burney's main characters, the ones surrounding Evelina and Evelina herself, would be comfortably at home in most any romance. The three major male characters--Orville, Villars, and Willoughby--are either soot black or lily white. Orville is a gentle, perfect knight; Villars is all wisdom and kindness. Both are good to the backbone without the slightest flaw to mar their perfection. Sir Clement, on the other hand, is perfectly evil, with a heart as dark as his deeds; he is never pricked by conscience and remains unrepentant and villainous to the end. The female characters are similarly drawn. Lady Howard and Mrs. Mirvan represent the best in feminine virtue, while their opposite, Madame Duval, is all selfishness and pride. One approach to Burney's ideal characters is to deny their existence, as Edith Morley, who is determined to judge Burney as a realist, has done. She says, "it is reality that she depicts--not an idealized world or idealized or imaginary personages."<sup>38</sup> Since

<sup>38</sup> Edith J. Morley, Fanny Burney, The English Association Pamphlet No. 80, April 1925, p. 13.

this conclusion is blatantly untrue, such an approach will not take us far.

A second and much more common approach is to assume that the ideal characters are evidence of Burney's failed attempts at realism. Eugene White argues that "The weaknesses of her characterizations lie in their general shallowness, their dependence upon dominant and peculiar traits, and their static quality."<sup>39</sup> James P. Erickson says regretfully, "Evelina might have been a better book had Lord Orville and the Reverend Villars had some . . . human failings."<sup>40</sup> Expressing the same dissatisfaction, Michael Adelstein says, "One wishes that Fanny had been able to humanize Mr. Villars and Lord Orville."<sup>41</sup> Although poor Mr. Villars receives such abuse, most of it is heaped on Orville. Laura Hinkley says, "I am afraid Lord Orville is pure ideal"; both Michael Adelstein and Walter Allen label him "wooden"; and S. L. Courtney terms him a "blameless prig."<sup>42</sup> Adelstein also suggests that this "paragon" is described in terms more befitting

<sup>39</sup> White, Fanny Burney, Novelist, p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> Erickson, p. 103.

<sup>41</sup> Adelstein, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Hinkley, p. 33; Adelstein, p. 147; Walter Allen, The English Novel: A Short Critical History (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1955), p. 96; Courtney, p. 242.

"chivalrous knights than eighteenth century heroes."<sup>43</sup> His objection persuasively makes the point. Orville is drawn straight from romance and has his equivalent in the chivalrous knights of medieval romance. As such, he is not supposed to be flawed. Only the modern realistic prejudices of certain critics make them bemoan the fact that he is too perfect to be human and "real." Burney almost certainly did not draw Orville as ideal because she did not know how to draw him otherwise, but because she wanted him just as he is, representative of virtue, valor, and courtesy.

Orville's most engaging quality is his courtesy. Although Evelina notes that he is "extremely handsome" with a "person all elegance" (pp. 29, 30), it is his manners rather than his appearance which impress her most. His manners are "gentle, attentive, and infinitely engaging" (p. 30); they are "so elegant, so gentle, so unassuming" (p. 72). His politeness is remarked with telling regularity by Evelina (pp. 47, 72, 102, 281), and even the sharp-tongued Mrs. Selwyn cannot withhold a compliment for this courteous knight who, she supposes, "was undoubtedly, designed for the last age; for, if you observed, he is really polite" (p. 283).

<sup>43</sup> Adelstein, p. 36.

These courteous manners go deeper than superficial form to both good nature and virtue. Evelina notes Orville's amiability more than once (pp. 37, 261), declaring him to be "the most agreeable" and seemingly "the most amiable man in the world" (p. 37). He is also humane. During a dispute between Mr. Lovel and Lord Merton over how to settle a bet, the suggestions of the others, ranging from the best bow to the longest straw, are made to seem even emptier and sillier when Orville quietly suggests that the money belongs to whoever "should bring the worthiest object with whom to share it" (p. 292). The popular vices of the age are conspicuously absent in Orville, who is "no friend to gaming" (p. 296) and drives so cautiously that Mrs. Selwyn remarks ironically that he must be ashamed that "in an age so daring, [he] alone should be such a coward as to forbear to frighten women" (pp. 296, 283).

In three different letters, one in each volume, Evelina underlines Orville's virtue by comparing him to Mr. Villars, who is, as Evelina exclaims, "all goodness!" (p. 260). In volume one, letter XVIII, she writes to Villars that she imagines "when his Orville's youth is flown, his vivacity abated, and his life is devoted to retirement, he will, perhaps, resemble him whom I most love and honor" (p. 72). In the second volume, after she



is disillusioned by the forged letter, she writes that she had once believed Orville in his old age "would have shone forth among his fellow-creatures, with the same brightness of worth which dignifies my honoured Mr. Villars" (p. 261). And in the last volume, she writes, "O Sir!--was there ever such another man as Lord Orville?--Yes, one other now resides at Berry Hill!" (p. 320). There is enough similarity in their names to call attention to the similarity in their moral qualities. Evelina Anville, Villars, Orville--they are all much alike. Perhaps as Michael Adelstein suggests, "Fanny may have derived the ville from the French vieil to suggest those upholding old or traditional manners as opposed to the vulgar ways of the nouveau riche."<sup>44</sup>

And finally to Orville's benevolence, virtue, and prudence, is added a final necessary quality--valor. Always ready to rescue a damsel in distress, he saves Evelina from both the snares of Sir Clement and the mortifying taunts of Lovel. After Lovel insults Evelina during a performance of Love for Love by comparing her to Miss Prue with her "rural ignorance" (pp. 81-82), Orville exacts a promise from Lovel to treat her in future with respect, an act which puts him in some danger of being challenged to a duel. Evelina writes:

<sup>44</sup> Adelstein, p. 156.

But how cool, how quiet is true courage! Who, from seeing Lord Orville at the play, would have imagined his resentment would have hazarded his life? yet his displeasure was evident, though his real bravery and his politeness equally guarded him from entering into any discussion in our presence. (p. 102)

A perfect knight in every respect, as Mrs. Selwyn sums up, he is "almost as romantic as if he had been born and bred at Berry Hill" (p. 369).

The function of Orville in the romance plot is to guide Evelina through her quest, helping her by example and gentle advice to secure knowledge of the world, while retaining her innocence. Perfectly virtuous and wise though he may be, Villars is unable and unwilling to fulfil this function; his virtue and wisdom are spiritual and cloistered, not worldly. What Evelina must seek to find--who she is, where she belongs, and how she must behave--are truths to be discovered in the world and require a secular guide such as Orville. It is one thing to be good in the innocent world of Berry Hill; it is quite another, more difficult task to remain good and become better throughout the complex social and moral trials Evelina must endure in her initiation and quest. Villars' wish is to protect Evelina because he believes "the artlessness of your nature, and the simplicity of your education, alike unfit you for the thorny paths of the great and busy world" (p. 116). Orville, taking up

where Villars leaves off, guides her on her perilous journey through "the thorny paths" of experience, helping her to sidestep the snares and to emerge from her trials not only with her virtue intact but with far more wisdom and maturity.

Sir Clement, on the other hand, performs the opposite function. Frye's statement that the moral stances of characters in a romance depend simply on whether they aid or hinder the quest applies well to this figure. Sir Clement, Lord Orville's moral opposite, is busily at work throughout the book, setting the snares that Orville must help the quester avoid; he behaves badly as consistently as Orville behaves well. From the first time he sees Evelina, he thinks of her as fair game and assumes the role of predator. When Orville remarks that she is but "A poor weak girl!" Sir Clement exclaims, "I am glad to hear it!" (p. 35), and proceeds at every turn to prey on her innocence and inexperience. His behavior is painted over with a thin coat of chivalry. For instance, he carries Evelina in his arms over a mud puddle after her coach overturns, gallantly offers his carriage after the opera, and saves her from the unwelcome advances of other men both at Vauxhall and at Bristol. In each case, however, he uses the occasion to make himself more troublesome by his too familiar attentions and insincere

protestations of affection. He is all pretended gallantry and sneaking deceit. His apparent courtly manners are entirely empty of meaning and perverted to serve his own evil designs. His language too reveals duplicity. He speaks the language of courtly love, calling Evelina "angel" at least seven times (pp. 35, 44, 98, 145, 197, 343, twice), declaring that he "adores" her at least eight (pp. 45, 97, 145, 146, 198, 329, 343, 344), and that he "worships" her (p. 343) and will willingly suffer "martyrdom" for her (p. 342). Evelina, recognizing his verbal excesses for what they are, accuses him of "fine speeches" and language that is "flighty" and "too flowery" (pp. 97, 344, 178). She is not so astute, however, in recognizing the evil designs this language masks and even compares him favorably with Mr. Smith, who despite his gaucheness, is not evil. At this point in her quest, she is still quick to judge by outward appearance and says,

It is true, no man can possibly pay me greater compliments, or make more fine speeches, than Sir Clement Willoughby, yet his language, though too flowery, is always that of a gentleman, and his address and manners are so very superior to those of the inhabitants of this house, that to make any comparison between him and Mr. Smith would be extremely unjust. (p. 178)

Adelstein mistakenly views Evelina's admiration of Sir Clement's courteous exterior as evidence that Burney is

"More concerned with manners than morals."<sup>45</sup> This statement misses the point. Evelina's misjudgement of Sir Clement is one of the snares she is almost caught in. To judge correctly, to see through experience, is a lesson she must learn. Mr. Villars, who sees better than Evelina, views Willoughby clearly from the start. Recognizing that he is an "artful, designing man," he warns Evelina that his duplicity endangers her. He writes to her:

The nobleman you met at the Pantheon, bold and forward as you describe him to be, gives me no apprehension; a man who appears so openly licentious, and who makes his attack with so little regard to decorum, is one who, to a mind such as my Evelina's, can never be seen but with the disgust which his manners ought to excite. But Sir Clement, though he seeks occasion to give real offence, contrives to avoid all appearance of intentional evil. He is far more dangerous, because more artful. (p. 115)

The female characters are also drawn as simply as the males. Lady Howard and her daughter, Mrs. Mirvan, are models of feminine virtue and decorum. Lady Howard is responsible for Evelina's beginning her journey, while Mrs. Mirvan functions throughout as a wise mother figure who protects and guides Evelina in her quest. Madame Duval, who in the comic portions is an object of satire,

<sup>45</sup> Adelstein, p. 40.

is on the romance level the counterpart of the false mother of romance. Where Mrs. Mirvan protects, she exposes; where Mrs. Mirvan is well-mannered, she is crude; where Mrs. Mirvan is considerate, she is unfeeling; where Mrs. Mirvan appreciates Evelina's superior beauty and virtue, Madame Duval sees her only as an asset to dispose of to the highest bidder. Mrs. Mirvan is willing to aid Evelina in her search for identity and place; Madame Duval, on the other hand, as Evelina writes, "had it in her head to make something of me" (p. 121).

All characters, male and female, are set up in these contrasting pairs. Fanny Burney was well aware of the artistic effect achieved by contrast. In writing about a Reynolds portrait she had seen in Powderham castle, she complains that

the picture has too much glare of beauty, and beauty of one style and character, to make it of great effect. Contrast seems so essential, that an ugly Boy or Girl or two, would render the piece delightful! 'Tis pity one cannot maim one part of a family to shew the rest to advantage.<sup>46</sup>

Burney approaches characterization this way in Evelina. By standing an "ugly Boy or Girl" by a handsome boy or lovely girl, she causes both the defects of the former and

<sup>46</sup> Fanny Burney, Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arbly, ed. Charlotte Barrett, I (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1893), 29.

the perfections of the latter to appear in sharp relief. The defects and perfections are, of course, not physical, but moral. This method of contrasting moral types is drawn from the romance tradition, where, as Frye says, "every typical character . . . tends to have his moral opposite confronting him, like black and white pieces in a chess game."<sup>47</sup>

The moral opposition of characters is especially evident in the way Burney contrasts Lord Orville and Sir Clement. From the start, Willoughby's actions and attitudes are the opposite of Lord Orville's. Very early in volume one, the first time they are brought together, the contrast is clear as Evelina is "tormented" and "persecuted" by Willoughby and relieved by Orville. But the contrast is clearest in the two parallel adventures, where first Sir Clement at Vauxhall and later Lord Orville at Marybone see Evelina in an altered situation, no longer in the company of the Mirvans but her poor relations. The attitudes of the two young men toward Evelina's lowered status reveal much. Sir Clement uses the opportunity for increased familiarity and ill-bred curiosity. Evelina is troubled by this behavior and writes:

<sup>47</sup> Frye, p. 195.

there is something in all these questions, and all this unrestrained curiosity, that I did not expect from a man, who when he pleases can be so well-bred, as Sir Clement Willoughby. He seems disposed to think that the alteration in my companions authorizes an alteration in his manners. (p. 201)

Later in the same volume when Orville observes her in the company of the ladies of the evening, although he has the greater reason to alter his behavior, he does not. He is as polite and solicitous as ever, and his later questions are as delicate as Sir Clement's were crude. Evelina herself makes the contrast explicit, writing to Villars:

let me observe the difference of his Lord Orville's behaviour, when nearly in the same situation to that of Sir Clement Willoughby. He had at least equal cause to depreciate me in his opinion, and to mortify and sink me in my own: but far different was his conduct;-- perplexed, indeed, he looked, and much surprised, --but it was benevolently, not with insolence. (p. 238)

Again, the contrast is made explicit in volume three when Sir Clement, Orville and Evelina are all in the same party and Willoughby again behaves with insulting familiarity.

Evelina writes:

I could not but remark the striking difference of his attention, and that of Lord Orville: the latter has such gentleness of manners, such delicacy of conduct, and an air so respectful, that, when he flatters most, he never distresses, and when he most confers honour, appears to receive it! The former obtrudes his attention,



and forces mine; it is so pointed, that it always confuses me, and so public, that it attracts general notice. (p. 330)

Although the main contrast is between Orville and Willoughby, Lord Merton is also Orville's opposite. Again, Evelina draws the contrast for us, observing to Mr. Villars:

In all ranks and in all stations of life, how strangely do characters and manners differ! Lord Orville, with a politeness which knows no intermission, and makes no distinction, is as unassuming and modest, as if he had never mixed with the great, and was totally ignorant of every qualification he possesses; this other Lord, though lavish of compliments and fine speeches, seems to me an entire stranger to real good-breeding; whoever strikes his fancy, engrosses his whole attention. He is forward and bold, has an air of haughtiness towards men, and a look of libertinism towards women, and his conscious quality seems to have given him a freedom in his ways of speaking to either sex, that is very little short of rudeness. (p. 114)

These black and white characters do not change, but end as they began, with Orville virtuous and courteous, Merton and Willoughby rakish. Viewing their consistency as a flaw, White argues that "It is in . . . the study of the development of character, that Miss Burney's powers lie most open to question."<sup>48</sup> This common criticism is an unjust one. Since the characters in Burney's novels

<sup>48</sup> White, p. 8.

represent moral qualities, they do not develop; they are not supposed to. They are not in the process of becoming; they simply are. In fact, they must remain consistent if they are to remain sharply focused. Development and change would only blur the contrast so important to the meaning of the characters.

This integrity is true of all except Evelina, whose goodness and innocence are slightly flawed. She has truths to learn and virtues yet to acquire. Hinkley says that when the story opens, "Evelina at seventeen has become everything you could want in a heroine, at least everything you could want in 1778. She is extremely beautiful, intelligent, modest, obedient, affectionate, and prudent . . . ." <sup>49</sup> She is beautiful, intelligent, and good, but she is not prudent. To say that she is is to misread the novel and to misunderstand the nature of Evelina's quest. "No faultless monster," she remains imperfect until she acquires prudence during the testing in which her innocent goodness is assaulted by experience.

As she makes abundantly clear in her letters, Evelina is aware of this lack. Very early in the novel, her lack of prudence tempts her to use Orville's name to ward off the troublesome advances of Willoughby. This

<sup>49</sup> Hinkley, p. 28.

mistake costs her dearly and causes her to write, "I am too inexperienced and ignorant to conduct myself with propriety in this town, where every thing is new to me, and many things are unaccountable and perplexing" (p. 48). The same problem leads her into the coach with Willoughby, after which she promises Mrs. Mirvan "that for the future I would be more prudent" (p. 100). It leads her into the dark alleys of Vauxhall and Marybone. She has more insight than foresight and after she makes use of Orville's name a second time, writes to her guardian with hard purchased self-awareness, "I am perpetually involved in some distress of dilemma from my own heedlessness" (p. 243). She confesses to Orville "my intentions are never willfully blameable, yet I err perpetually!" (p. 306).

Villars fears the price for these errors will be high and cautions that "imprudence is much sooner regretted than repaired" (p. 309). Evelina comes to realize the danger of imprudence all too well and exclaims:

Alas, my dearest Sir, that my reflections should always be too late to serve me: dearly, indeed, do I purchase experience! and much I fear I shall suffer yet more severely, from the heedless indiscretion of my temper, ere I attain that prudence and consideration which, by foreseeing distant consequences, may rule and direct in present exigencies. (p. 341)

Basically virtuous, she has only to add good judgment to a good heart. In an early letter to her friend, Mr. Crisp, Fanny Burney writes, "The flights and failings of women are oftener from some defect in the head than the heart."<sup>50</sup> Evelina echoes these words as she writes to Villars, "Your Evelina's errors are those of the judgment,--and you, I well know, pardon all but those of the heart!" (p. 323).

Prudence, the ability to judge, is the essential quality one must have to avoid the snares of the world. Adelstein has mistakenly argued that

. . . Evelina is a static character who is little wiser at the end than in the beginning. She has learned, of course, how to refuse dance invitations tactfully. She has become more vividly aware of the danger of accepting rides from libertines like Sir Clement. She now knows better than to stroll along "the dark alleys" in Vauxhall. And she will not initiate a correspondence with a gentleman again. But besides these social conventions, she has learned little about values, morals, or people, suggesting that a social education is all.<sup>51</sup>

This is nonsense. Wrong-headed and reductive readings such as Adelstein's almost certainly grow out of a failure to understand the classical meaning of the word "prudence."

<sup>50</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 283.

<sup>51</sup> Adelstein, p. 39.

If prudence meant simply cautious adherence to trivial rules of etiquette, then Adelstein and others would be right to suggest that Evelina's education lacks moral purpose. But prudence, at the time Burney was writing, retained its older meaning of prudencia or wisdom, involving the ability to make moral choices leading to virtuous action. Edward Bloom rightly reminds us that "for Johnson, and for Fanny Burney as well, prudence was more than merely pragmatic. An intellectual faculty also, it was (as in Aristotle's Ethics) 'practical wisdom' and so a guard to virtue."<sup>52</sup> Martin Battestin has argued persuasively that prudence as in Cicero's Offices "is the central ethical concept of Tom Jones."<sup>53</sup> The same may be said of Evelina, in which the heroine's search is for practical wisdom, the ability to make choices, moral as well as social, which will enable her not only to sustain her innocence but to perfect her virtue. She has not had to learn this at Berry Hill, where there were no difficult choices to face, no villainous rakes, no unprincipled Madame Duvals. When Evelina enters the world, she enters

<sup>52</sup> Edward Bloom, introduction to Evelina, p. xxi.

<sup>53</sup> Martin Battestin, "Fielding's Definition of Wisdom: Some Functions of Ambiguity and Emblem in Tom Jones," ELH, 35 (1968); rpt. in Tom Jones, ed. Sheridan Baker, Norton Critical Editions (New York: W. W. Norton, Inc., 1973), p. 819.

it without the one quality that will allow her to order that world.

The characterization of Evelina, then, is in keeping with the romance tradition of the questing hero, who is nearly, but not completely finished and perfected in his virtue. This point is well made by John Stevens who, speaking of the black and white quality of romance characters, adds that "not everyone in romance is a perfect knight or a perfect lady. To begin with, the hero himself must not embody achieved perfection." Instead,

At least, the hero must be unproven, even though we suspect him of perfectibility; he must be a Beaumains or a Perceval, with much to learn and much to undergo. However--and this is the essential point--the unproven hero is already set fair; the seeds of perfection are within him and need only to grow to fruition. There are critical decisions to be made, but no changes of course, no compromises.<sup>54</sup>

Nothing could describe Evelina's position more aptly than this. She is close to perfection from the start, with a nature formed for virtuous actions by the teachings of Villars. Her only blemish is her need for prudence, a virtue which she can only acquire through a series of testings in which her failure to judge well and act wisely

<sup>54</sup> John Stevens, Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches (New York: W. W. Norton, Inc., 1973), p. 170.

brings her perilously near disaster again and again. But through these trials we never fear too much for Evelina because we believe in her goodness and in her perfectibility.

Evelina changes, but not in radical ways. She does not have to create a self, but only to discover who she is; she does not have to claw her way up a social ladder, but only to find her proper rung; and she does not have to undergo a fundamental change in her moral nature, but only to perfect what is already there by acquiring the crowning virtue of prudence. This characterization is typical of the romance and, not surprisingly, of most eighteenth-century novels. Although she does not allude to the romance tradition, Patricia Spacks recognizes that for eighteenth-century writers "virtue . . . depends upon an uncomplicated integrity of identity" and argues that

The eighteenth-century concern with stability of identity (and the consequent reluctance to emphasize fundamental change) implies specific kinds of possibility both for character and for story . . . and specific possibilities for moral insight. The assumption that moral perception must imply profound change may derive from literature--specifically nineteenth-century literature--more than from life. George Eliot's ostentatious claims of moral seriousness can mislead us into believing only her kind of

insight matters. In fact the morality and the subtlety of stability can be as demanding as that of change.<sup>55</sup>

This perceptive and significant observation is true of Fanny Burney, whose concerns are clearly and consistently moral. The moral stability of the characters and the ordered providential nature of the plot are both drawn from romance and are closely tied to the most important themes in Evelina.

The first of these is, as I have suggested earlier, the quest for the self, a theme which both the plotting and the characterization of romance help to underline. A few critics have taken account of this. Recognizing the thematic significance of the journey, Emily Patterson has pointed out that Evelina continues the family and pilgrimage themes that Ronald Paulson has found to be the thematic structure of the eighteenth-century novel through Smollett, and that the "concern of the work is self-identity."<sup>56</sup> Paulson himself suggests that "In Evelina the satiric aspects, the attitudes toward the world, are subordinated to the protagonist's personal search, which

<sup>55</sup> Patricia Spacks, Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 8, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Emily H. Patterson, "Family and Pilgrimage Themes in Burney's Evelina," New Rambler, 18 (1977), 41.



is thus the theme of the novel."<sup>57</sup> The Blooms are right to say that Evelina "searches for an all-attentive father who can establish the identity so necessary for self-knowledge." But they err when they suggest that Fanny Burney "coped with her problems by reworking a fairy tale narrative,"<sup>58</sup> or in other words that Burney used Evelina's search to exorcise her own psychological ghosts resulting from her plainness, jealousy of her stepmother and fears of paternal rejection. This is pure speculation of the sort I would not want to indulge in. And there is no necessity to do so since the quest for identity they recognize is the pervasive theme of romance.

It could hardly matter less in terms of understanding Evelina whether Fanny Burney was troubled by "psychic fragmentation" or not. The quest pattern is archetypal and provides the basic structure for romance. The search for identity ending in self-recognition so central to the romance is really, as Frye suggests, "attaining one's original identity."<sup>59</sup> Evelina, like other romance

<sup>57</sup> Ronald Paulson, Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), p. 286.

<sup>58</sup> Lillian and Edward Bloom, pp. 225, 222.

<sup>59</sup> Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1974-1975 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 152.

heroines, has been denied her true identity and her rightful place by her father's ostensible rejection of her and by Villars' well-intentioned attempt to bury her in seclusion. So the quest is for the recovery of her rightful name, her rightful father, her rightful place, all components of her rightful identity; or to put it another way, her search is for truth. She is not concerned with becoming someone or in creating a self, but in discovering who, in truth, she is and where she rightfully belongs. As Henry Knight Miller suggests, in societies reflected in the romance,

there was no clawing struggle to achieve an "identity" in the modern sense of social or economic status--that question was normally settled at one's birth; hence the necessary "status" myth was merely one of mistaken identity . . . . But the search for the central identity of the Soul was central to the romance as to the major myths--it was the search for the soul's true essence.<sup>60</sup>

The quest also involves an initiation of trials and testings which lead Evelina to self-knowledge. What she learns about her self is that she must acquire prudence.

The central place of prudence in the novel gives rise to a closely related theme of major importance--appearance and reality. Cicero defines prudence as "a sagacious

<sup>60</sup> Miller, p. 57.

inquiry and observation for the finding out of truth."<sup>61</sup>  
 An article "On Prudence" in The British Magazine for  
 March 1749 defines the quality this way: "Prudence is the  
 just estimation and trial of all things; it is the eye  
 that sees all."<sup>62</sup> Martin Battestin says, "Prudence is,  
 in other words, that perspicacity of moral vision which  
 alone permits us to perceive the truth behind appearances  
 and to proceed from the known to the obscure."<sup>63</sup> That  
 Evelina lacks prudence or moral vision causes, in the  
 beginning, her failure to distinguish between false  
 appearance and truth. Among critics White recognizes  
 that the "preoccupation with appearances and with the  
 truth behind it is the very heart of Miss Burney's  
 work."<sup>64</sup> Glock asserts that one of the most important  
 themes in Evelina is "the contrast between appearance and  
 reality."<sup>65</sup> And Vopat notes that "The verbs 'appear,'

<sup>61</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, Cicero's Offices (London, 1909; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1966), p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> The British Magazine, 4 (March 1749), 77, quoted in Battestin, p. 822.

<sup>63</sup> Battestin, p. 820.

<sup>64</sup> Eugene White, "Fanny Burney," p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Glock, p. 33.

'seem' and 'look' begin to occur continuously in the letters she sends home to Villars."<sup>66</sup>

The letters of Lady Howard, Mr. Villars, and Evelina make the importance of appearance clear. Lady Howard's argument for Evelina's entrance into the world takes this form:

it is time that she should see something of the world. When young people are too rigidly sequestered from it, their lively and romantic imaginations paint it to them as a paradise of which they have been beguiled; but when they are shown it properly, and in due time, they see it such as it really is, equally shared by pain and pleasure, hope and disappointment.  
(p. 17, my italics)

To learn to see things as they really are is, as Lady Howard realizes, something that is required for moral maturity. Since "the world," in contrast to Berry Hill, is full of false appearances, it is the right place for this learning. Villars, anxious and overprotective, fears London because "it is the general harbour of fraud and of folly, of duplicity and of impertinence" (p. 116). Fraud and duplicity are both instances of false appearances, and they are masks that Evelina must learn to see through.

<sup>66</sup> James Vopat, "Evelina: Life as Art--Notes Toward Becoming a Performer on the Stage of Life," Essays in Literature, 2 (Spring 1975), 43.

Villars, believing innocence is blind and confusing virtue with the inability to see through duplicity, is constantly afraid Evelina will be the dupe of appearance. He explains her disappointment in Orville after the forged letter in this way:

Your indignation . . . is the result of virtue; you fancied Lord Orville was without fault--he had the appearance of infinite worthiness, and you supposed his character accorded with his appearance; guileless yourself, how could you prepare against the duplicity of another? (p. 267)

In other words, Evelina's virtue makes her morally blind. In a later letter, he says "innocence" because it is blind is "perpetually deceived!" (pp. 307-08). Villars is mistaken to suggest that innocence and virtue cause faulty vision.

In fact, the characters of the novel are judged largely on whether they can see through false appearances to the truth or not. Madame Duval, for instance, takes people as they appear, mistaking the prostitutes for "two real fine ladies." Evelina, commenting on this mistake, says, "It is wonderful to see how easily and how frequently she is deceived" (p. 236). Sir Clement too relies on appearances and so alters his behavior to suit Evelina's altered appearance when she appears in public with the common Branghtons. Lord Orville, on the other

hand, is prudent, can see through the surface of things to the underlying reality. When he sees Evelina with the "ladies," he does not accept appearances but visits her to discover the truth behind the appearance. Evelina worries that her meetings with Macartney have "the appearance of mystery" (p. 302) and that her altered behavior to Orville after Villars advises her to shun him have an "unmeaning appearance" (p. 330). She is right in each case, but luckily for her Orville does not react blindly to the way things look, but seeks to discover how they are. He says to Sir Clement of Evelina, "I am convinced, that whatever might appear strange in her behaviour, was simply the effect of inexperience, timidity, and a retired education, for I find her informed, sensible, and intelligent" (p. 347).

The ability that Orville has to see through appearances is something that Evelina must learn. She is far too quick to accept things as they look at first glance, a mistake that causes her to overvalue Sir Clement in the beginning. And when she thinks she has most successfully penetrated beyond appearances to truth, she is mistaken and mistaken ironically because of her continued reliance on the very appearances she claims to distrust. When she receives the insulting letter which appears to be from Orville, she accepts the appearance

as reality and plunges into a state of bitter disillusionment that approaches despair, exclaiming, "Never, never again will I trust to appearances,--never confide in my own weak judgment,--never believe that person to be good, who seems to be amiable! What cruel maxims are we taught by a knowledge of the world!" (p. 256). Evelina has been taught nothing at all; she has merely exchanged a reliance on good appearance for a reliance on bad appearance in judging character. She still has much to learn, much judgment and prudence to acquire. The novel's concern with prudence, moral wisdom, and distinguishing appearance from reality typifies the romance where, as Miller suggests, "the 'real' is conceived to lie in a dimension beyond the 'actual'--the masquerade world of mere appearances."<sup>67</sup>

The "real" world of the romance is also a providential one, characterized most of all by order, which becomes another central theme in Evelina. Berry Hill has been an ordered world for Evelina; Howard Grove, a kind of half-way house for her, represents order, at least until Captain Mirvan shows up and "The harmony that reigned here, is destroyed" (p. 117). London, on the other hand, represents disorder--a place where the rhythms of sleeping and waking are disturbed in a "reverse of the order of

<sup>67</sup> Miller, p. 73.

nature" (p. 39), and where "things are unaccountable and perplexing" (p. 48). Evelina must learn to create order out of the chaos of experience. At first she cannot begin to do this, existing as she does in a constant state of confusion. The dark alleys at Vauxhall and the maze of walks at Marybone represent the chaos that she is perpetually on the verge of falling into.

Evelina's attempts at ordering her experience are upset by the Branghtons, by Madame Duval, by Captain Mirvan and most seriously by Sir Clement Willoughby, who is a very principle of disorder. On the comic level, he participates in the Captain's tricks, which result in physical upsets into mud puddles and ditches and disordered hairdos and dresses. This physical disorder is suggestive of the inner moral disorder in Sir Clement. His adherence to empty forms thinly veils his corrupt interior. His attempts on Evelina's chastity are perversions of the order of courtship rituals and he constantly discomposes, upsets, and disorders her, causing her to complain that he "always confuses me" (p. 330). His gentlemanly façade barely conceals a nature in which passion reigns out of control. He reveals his powerlessness over his passions most notably in the scene in which Evelina discovers her love for Orville. He speaks in a "passionate manner," "gnashing his teeth," flying



into a "fury," "trembling with passion." Grabbing Evelina's gown, Sir Clement is all "wildness" as he stalks up and down the room in an "agitated manner," "too much disordered to know or care what he did" (pp. 357-58). His manner causes confusion, shock, and consternation in the whole household and convinces Lady Louisa and Evelina that he is mad. Evelina, reacting later to the letter she receives from him, writes, "To what alternate meanness and rashness do the passions lead, when reason and self-denial do not oppose them!" (p. 388).

As usual, Orville represents the opposite quality. His good manners and courtesy are outward ways of ordering experience which reflect his inner order, and which always result in Evelina's feeling more composed. When Captain Mirvan creates chaos and danger with his vicious monkey prank, Orville is the one who restores order. Unlike Willoughby, his passion for Evelina, though real, is reined and ordered. His proposal to Evelina contrasts sharply with Willoughby's frantic outburst of passion. Not the prig he is sometimes made out to be, his emotions are so strong that he drops to his knees and becomes "hardly articulate." But he restrains his own passions and is careful not to disorder Evelina, whose own are barely under control.

Villars, always fearful that Evelina will not be able to handle her initiatory trials, describes to her what he believes to be a perilous situation, a dangerous disordering of her passions and imagination:

Young, antimated, entirely off your guard, and thoughtless of consequences, imagination took the reins, and reason, slow-paced, though sure-footed, was unequal to a race with so eccentric and flighty a companion. How rapid was then my Evelina's progress through those regions of fancy and passion whither her new guide conducted her! (p. 308)

For reason to become subject to passion and imagination is a disruption of order with serious consequences.

Villars, himself heir to two such consequences, knows well the fruits of unlicensed passion. Mr. Evelyn's passion for the seductive bar maid has produced a daughter, whose hasty and passionate marriage to a rake has produced Evelina. Since reason does not run in this family, Villars has cause to tremble for Evelina.

Ordering the passions is a concern that appears frequently in eighteenth-century novels, which are often focused on what Spacks calls "the dangerous age" and reflect the belief that "youth must learn . . . to control without destroying emotional vitality."<sup>68</sup> Evelina must

<sup>68</sup> Patricia Spacks, "The Dangerous Age," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 11 (Summer 1978), 433.

learn this balance and with Orville's help, she does. As Vopat says, "The change in Evelina's character is that she no longer merely reacts to experience, she evaluates it . . . she essentially orders experience, and through such order, she controls it."<sup>69</sup> Indeed, the novel's ending celebrates order. Sir John Belmont's recognition of Evelina restores order, while the marriages of Evelina and Orville, Macartney and Polly Green create it anew.

The thematic concerns, then, as well as the structure and the characterization of Evelina, are those of romance, a tradition which Burney drew on heavily in this and in all of her novels. This is not to suggest, however, that Evelina is not realistic in certain ways. In fact, it is successful most of all in the way it combines romance and realistic techniques, and blends the two to serve concerns that mediate between the world of romance and the world of realism. This successful blending is no accident. Hinkley suggests that the realism seems to happen almost in spite of Burney, who "started to write a romantic novel in the artificial accepted mode. The thing turned in her hands and added to itself a keen, spontaneous study of the manners of the time."<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Vopat, p. 48.

<sup>70</sup> Hinkley, p. 34.

It is unlikely that Fanny Burney stumbled into realism in this way. In her juvenile journal of 1768, Fanny writes that she is displeased with Mrs. Rowe's Letters from the Dead to the Living because "every word belies improbability." She adds, "For my own part I cannot be much pleased without an appearance of truth; at least of possibility--I wish the story to be natural tho' the sentiments are refined; and the characters to be probable tho' their behaviour is excelling."<sup>71</sup> In the Preface to Evelina, Burney makes her intentions explicit when she writes that her plan is "To draw characters from nature, though not from life, and to mark the manners of the time" (p. 7). And in the dedication to The Wanderer, she writes that the novel

is, or it ought to be, a picture of supposed, but natural and probable human existence. It holds, therefore, in its hands our best affections; it exercises our imaginations; it points out the path of honour; and gives to juvenile credulity knowledge of the world, without ruin, or repentance; and the lessons of experience, without its tears.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Fanny Burney, The Early Diary of Frances Burney, 1768-1778, ed. Anne Raine Ellis (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1913), I, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Fanny Burney, dedication to The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1814), p. 10.

The novel, then, should tell a believable story about believable people in a believable way in order that readers may be instructed and improved. To this end, Burney employed devices designed to lend verisimilitude, or in Watt's words, the devices of formal realism.

The most obvious of these is the narrative technique. The entire story is told through a series of letters, most of which are penned by Evelina herself. Of the thirty-one letters contained in the first volume, the correspondence between Lady Howard and the Reverend Mr. Villars occupies nine letters; seventeen are written from Evelina to Mr. Villars, four are from Villars to Evelina; and the last is written by Lady Howard to Sir John Belmont. The second volume contains thirty letters, including one from Sir John to Lady Howard, one from Villars to Lady Howard, four from Villars to Evelina, and twenty-four from Evelina (eighteen to Villars and six to Miss Mirvan). There are also three letters--one from Mr. Macartney to Evelina, one from Evelina to Orville and the forged letter to Evelina--embedded in other letters. Of the twenty-three letters in volume three, one is from Lady Howard to Sir John, three from Villars to Evelina, and nineteen from Evelina to her guardian. Evelina's letters include four embedded ones--from Evelina

to Macartney, from Mrs. Selwyn to Sir John, from Sir Clement to Evelina, and her reply.

Since the letters of others are short and those of Evelina long, even this count does not give a fair idea of how much of the novel is written by Evelina. In fact, one estimate has it that "ninety percent of the novel is actually a journal kept assiduously by Evelina and sent periodically to Villars."<sup>73</sup> This method of narration means, of course, that we see the world and the people in it almost exclusively as Evelina sees them, and this effect was an expressed aim of Burney, who writes, "I have not pretended to show the world what it actually is, but what it appears to a young girl of seventeen."<sup>74</sup> But although nearly the whole story is told by Evelina in her letters, she is a faithful reporter of conversations and the preponderance of dialogue in the letters gives the book a dramatic quality.

A second realistic effect of the letters is that they have, in style, a "real" feeling. Simple and natural, they seem letters which might well have been dashed off

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Deitz and Sidonie Smith, "From Precept to Proper Social Action: Empirical Maturation in Fanny Burney's Fiction," Eighteenth-Century Life, 3 (March 1977), 86.

<sup>74</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 2.

by a girl of seventeen. Fanny Burney appears to have made good use of the advice of her old friend, Samuel Crisp, who admonished her about her own letter-writing that "there is no fault in an epistolary correspondence like stiffness and study" and,

If your letters were to be fine-labour'd compositions that smelt of the lamp, I had as lieve they traveled elsewhere . . . Dash away, whatever comes uppermost; and believe me you'll succeed better, than by leaning on your elbow, and studying what to say.<sup>75</sup>

Evelina's letters to Villars have just that dashed-away quality which results in immediacy and a sense of realism. In addition, the style of the letters often reveals Evelina's mood or emotional state. For instance, in an early letter in which she describes the flurry of activity at Howard Grove, the sense of hurry is felt in the breathless, staccato pace of her letter: "Lady Howard does not sit a moment in a place; Miss Mirvan is making caps; every body so busy!--such flying from room to room! --so many orders given, and retracted, and given again!-- nothing but hurry and perturbation" (p. 23). But when Evelina's spirits are at their lowest ebb after the forged letter, she writes to Miss Mirvan, "All my thoughts were directed to considering how I might dispel the doubts

<sup>75</sup> Burney, The Early Diary, I, 268; II, 41.

which I apprehended Mr. Villars had formed, without acknowledging a circumstance which I had suffered so much pain merely to conceal" (p. 26). The sentence lags as Evelina's spirits do. And finally, since Evelina is always writing to a confidante, either Villars or Maria, she writes in an unguarded way, giving the impression that we are allowed an intimate peek into her head and her heart.

In addition to adding verisimilitude through a sense of immediacy and psychological realism, the letters are dated, placing the narrative in a specifically delineated framework of time. In volume one, excepting three letters between Villars and Lady Howard, all letters are dated; in volume two, only one lacks a date; the letters in volume three are all dated except the last two. The dating usually indicates at the least the month and day of the month; some are even more specific. Letter twenty-one in volume two, for example, is dated "July 1, 5 o'clock in ~~the~~ the morn" (p. 231). Occasionally a letter from Evelina "written in continuation" is undated, but the letter itself usually makes it clear what the day is. A single letter may be written in short segments, each dated by the day of the week. Letter twelve of volume one, for instance, is dated April 5 and includes bits labeled Wednesday, Thursday, Thursday night, Friday, and Saturday



night. The action of the novel occurs within a specified unit of time--five and a half months. The third letter (the first to be dated) bears the date March 28, and the twenty-first letter in the third volume (the last to be dated) is written on October 13.

The novel is carefully placed in space as well as in time, and there is never any doubt about where Evelina is since every stage along her journey is named. She travels from Berry Hill to Howard Grove, to London (twice), and finally to Bristol Hotwells and Clifton. During the two London stays, the setting is even more particularized by street addresses. When Evelina is in London with the Mirvans, she stays on Queen Anne Street, an address which much to her mortification she is forced to exchange during the second visit for the far humbler address of Holborn. Here she boards in a hosier's shop, not far from her cousins' unfashionable residence at Snow Hill. The list of places visited, sights seen, reads like an eighteenth-century guidebook for tourists--Drury Lane Theatre, Portland Chapel, St. James's Park, Ranelagh, Cox's Museum, the Pantheon, Vauxhall, Marybone Gardens, Kensington Gardens, Hampstead. The Branghton herd, feeling the superiority of natives, play the "Have you been to . . .?" game with their country cousin, adding other contemporary place names, such as George's at Hampstead, Don Saltero's

at Chelsea, the Tower of London, Sadler's Wells, St. Paul's Church and Foote's. Later when the Branghtons bicker about how to spend the evening, they mention as choices White-Conduit House, Bagnigge Wells and Mother Red Cap's.

But Burney doesn't stop here. She puts real people in these real places, referring to contemporary playwrights, plays, and events. At Drury Lane, Evelina sees David Garrick as Ranger in The Suspicious Husband (a role he actually performed in 1776) and sees Love for Love acted. At the little theatre in the Haymarket, they watch a performance of The Commissary and The Mirror. Mrs. Selwyn refers to The Drummer, a comedy by Addison which had recently been revived and acted several times. The M. Torre who exhibits fireworks at Marybone Gardens existed and exhibited such a display in the 1770's. And the Justice Fielding whom Madame Duval threatens to report Captain Mirvan to was John Fielding, half-brother to Henry and still serving as a magistrate at the time Evelina was published. Sprinkling references to real and contemporary places, events, and people throughout lends an air of reality to the narrative.

But formal realism stops here, for the setting becomes important in establishing another kind of realism. Although places are named, they are hardly described, and what descriptions are given are far from visual. Edward

Bloom is right to suggest that "If we do not always see a place, we are always aware of it as a social force."<sup>76</sup> There are no fully realized interiors or exteriors in Burney, but there is always in each description one telling detail which allows us to fill in the rest and to know what the place means to Evelina. For instance, Mr. Branghton's Snow Hill residence is sketchily described as "small and inconvenient, though his shop, which takes up all the ground floor, is large and commodious." The detail is scant, yet tells much about the values of Mr. Branghton. This description is followed by a remark that in order to have tea they had to go "up two pair of stairs, for the dining room, Mr. Branghton told us, was let" (p. 168). We now know all we need to about this residence. Evelina's and Madame Duval's rooms in Holborn, in contrast to the small and inconvenient Branghton lodgings are "large, and not inconvenient." But Evelina adds, "our landlord is an hosier. I am sure I have a thousand reasons to rejoice that I am so little known" (p. 171). The dimensions or colors or furnishings of the rooms are not provided because they do not matter. The places are fully realized in the sense that they represent the lowered status of Evelina and that they reveal much about the people who inhabit them. All we are given to know about Mr. Smith's room is

<sup>76</sup> Edward Bloom, introduction to Evelina, p. xxv.

that he refuses to let the slatternly Branghton girls use it because they have once left it "a little greased," a telling comment on all three.

Although these rooms are up several flights of stairs, they represent a descent for Evelina and cause a change in her perspective of London. She writes:

Indeed to me, London now seems a desert; that gay and busy appearance it so lately wore, is now succeeded by a look of gloom, fatigue, and lassitude; the air seems stagnant, the heat is intense, the dust intolerable, and the inhabitants illiterate and under-bred. At least, such is the face of things in the part of the town where I at present reside. (p. 172)

The Snow Hill and Holborn addresses are psychological, as well as physical, places. The same is true of the novel's exteriors. Vauxhall is merely described as "very pretty, but too formal." Evelina, however, realizes that her perception of the place is distorted and writes, "had I been with a party less disagreeable to me, I should have thought it a place formed for animation and pleasure" (p. 193). Marybone Gardens "is neither striking for magnificence nor for beauty," but as Evelina realizes, "we were all so dull and languid" (p. 232). On a larger, thematic scale, the places represent stages in Evelina's quest--Berry Hill is innocence, London experience. Vinaver says of Malory's setting, "A realistic setting may

well serve romance."<sup>77</sup> Fanny Burney's settings are realistic, fixing Evelina's story as they do in a concrete, local, "real" world with actual places, people, and events. They also work well to serve the romance concerns, representing moral qualities and states of being.

Dialogue, faithfully recorded in Evelina's letters, also works both ways. The language of the characters, both high and low, who are the objects of satire, is strikingly realistic, giving the impression of the real language spoken by real characters in the real world. Burney's ear was sharper than her eye. She had a keen awareness of dialect and of idiosyncrasies of language, a talent which we also see in her diaries in the reproductions of conversations often recalled and recorded days after they occurred. And it is this talent which gives the dialogue of the satirized characters such a vivid impression of being actual speech. For example, Madame Duval's language, liberally peppered with Ma fois and Par dieus, is just what we might expect of an illiterate French barmaid with pretensions to breeding. Rebuking the Captain for his coarse language, she says,

I would have you learn to be more politer, Sir,  
and not to talk to ladies in such a rude,

<sup>77</sup> Eugene Vinaver, Malory (1929; rpt. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 51.

old-fashion way as this. You, Sir, as have been in Paris (again addressing herself to Lord Orville) can tell this English gentleman how he'd be despised, if he was to talk in such an ungenteel manner as this, before any foreigners. Why there is n't a hair-dresser, nor a shoe-maker, nor nobody, that would n't blush to be in your company. (p. 61)

And Madame Duval's antagonist, Captain Mirvan, who speaks the rough jargon of a seaman, rails at Mrs. Mirvan in a typical outburst:

I am now upon a hazardous expedition, having undertaken to convey a crazy vessel to the shore of Mortification . . . if of you, that are my chosen crew, capitulate, or enter into any treaty with the enemy,--I shall look upon you as mutinying, and turn you adrift. (p. 139)

The verbal bouts of the Captain and Madame Duval are splendidly satirical.

The dialogue of other characters is equally recognizable and ridiculous. Mr. Branghton's speech strikes the ear as just the way an unlettered, money-grubbing shop-keeper would have talked. At the opera, he complains, "What a jabbering they make! . . . there's no knowing a word they say. Pray what's the reason they can't as well sing in English? But I suppose the fine folks would not like it, if they could understand it?" (p. 92). Young Mr. Branghton says of their place at the opera, "Why it's as like the tweldepenny gallery at Drury-lane . . . as two peas are one to another. I never

knew father so bit before" (p. 91). And the speech of Lovel seems to catch just the right foppish air when he explains to Mirvan at the play, "I confess I seldom listen to the players; one has so much to do, in looking about, and finding out one's acquaintance, that, really, one has no time to mind the stage" (p. 80). Lady Louisa is the voice of feminine vanity and affectation when she says, "Really, Ma'am, the roads are so monstrous dusty,--you can't imagine how troublesome the dust is to one's eyes!--and the sun, too, is monstrous disagreeable!--I dare say I shall be so tanned I sha'n't be fit to be seen this age" (p. 279). In addition to recording the cadences of real speech, the language, like their manners, reflects inner deficiencies.

Manners are of major concern in Evelina--a concern that has caused some critics to misunderstand and to underestimate both the novel and Burney. Adelstein complains that Evelina's education is merely "social."<sup>78</sup> Waldo Glock says that Evelina's education is "in the roles of social propriety" and that "Miss Burney's conception of virtue is impaired by its reliance on forms."<sup>79</sup> Fanny Burney was no slave to rules and forms. In fact, in an

<sup>78</sup> Adelstein, p. 39.

<sup>79</sup> Glock, p. 38.

entry in her early diary, she has great fun ridiculing such mindless adherence to senseless rules. Pretending to have written a book of etiquette, she explains to the present company, "In the first place, you are never again to cough," "You may smile . . . but to laugh is quite abominable; though not quite so bad as sneezing or blowing the nose"; and sums up by advising "that whatever is natural, plain, or easy, is entirely banished from polite circles."<sup>80</sup>

Burney is concerned, however, with social propriety and with manners for several reasons. In the first place, manners form the necessary base for an ordered society. If everyone were to live, as a certain Miss Bowdler of Burney's acquaintance did, "exactly as she pleases," the result would be chaos. In the early diary, referring to this young woman who flies in the face of custom and scandalizes all by visiting and supping with unattached young men, Burney declares herself in agreement with Mr. Rishton, who believes that a woman "who despises the customs and manners of the country she lives in must, consequently, conduct herself with impropriety." Burney adds, "I can by no means approve so great a contempt of

<sup>80</sup> Burney, Early Diary, I, 325-26.



public opinion."<sup>81</sup> To defy custom is prideful and disrupts ordered social relationships. And reputation, to be gained or lost according to how one conducts oneself, is an index to character. On meeting Miss L., a young lady with a racy reputation, Fanny writes, "It is . . . impossible, and improper to keep up acquaintance with a female who has lost her character, however she may be an object of pity."<sup>82</sup>

Rules of conduct or manners have moral force in a world in which how one acts is a measure of what one is. Capricious forms concerning sneezing and coughing and picking one's teeth are meaningless and subject to ridicule. But wherever the rules of conduct touch on fundamental human relationships, on important ways members of a society behave to one another, there the idea of manners begins to gain moral significance. White, in a misguided attempt to defend Burney, says "she does not confuse morality with social propriety. The relationship between social conduct and morality can be recognized without implying that the two are synonymous."<sup>83</sup> But the point is that in all the ways that really matter, they are

<sup>81</sup> Burney, Early Diary, I, 221.

<sup>82</sup> Burney, Early Diary, II, 73-74.

<sup>83</sup> White, Fanny Burney, Novelist, p. 72.

the same. Manners, as Lionel Trilling defines them, are "that part of culture which is made up of half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value," and as such they "indicate the largest intention of men's souls as well as the smallest."<sup>84</sup> Because manners had this significance for Burney, her anatomy of manners, though realistic, is certainly not antithetical to romance. The satire on manners, in fact, parallels and underlines in every instance one of the thematic concerns of the romance plot. The objects of satire are those who have bad manners, and they fail in this respect not because they do not know which fork to use, but because they are stupid or bad.

Evelina's quest takes place in the social world, and the identity she seeks is partly social. Poised between two worlds--the all too "real" world of Madame Duval and the Branghtons with their materialistic and trivial physical concerns and the ideal world of Lord Orville--she must decide who she is in order to know to which world she belongs. She feels perilously balanced between the two and confused about which is real and which illusion. When she is forced to reside for a time in the Holborn

<sup>84</sup> Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (New York: The Viking Press, 1950), pp. 200, 205.

Street and Snow Hill world, the reality of that makes the world of the Mirvans and Lord Orville seem illusory. She writes to Maria, "And yet, I think I rather recollect a dream, of some visionary fancy, than a reality,--That I should ever have been known to Lord Orville,--That I should have spoken to--have danced with him,--seems now a romantic illusion" (p. 172). The world of the Branghtons does have a baser kind of reality--a reality that resides in tangibles such as food and clothing and money and the weather. They can understand and appreciate only what can be touched, eaten, worn, or spent. These characters are satirized not because they lack money or title or blood, but because they lack manners and the underlying moral sense implied by them, including prudence and judgment.

Evelina eventually learns prudence, which as Edward Bloom suggests, "entails two collateral powers; inner understanding or self-knowledge, and apprehension of external reality," of forms and manners.<sup>85</sup> The satirized characters lack both insight and the moral vision to see through appearances to the reality that lies beneath. Madame Duval, as we have seen, cannot tell a lady from a whore and is constantly the dupe of appearance. She takes clothes as the measure of the man, and when the Captain

<sup>85</sup> Edward Bloom, introduction to Evelina, p. xxii.

takes her for a washwoman, she retorts, "Ha, ha, ha!--why you han't no eyes; did you ever see a washwoman in such a gown as this?" (p. 51). Polly and Biddy Branghton have inherited their aunt's poor vision and are equally dependent on surface appearances. When they first meet Evelina, they are most interested in her clothes, her age, and her size and insist on measuring and comparing heights with great attention to "head and heels" (p. 69). One of the sisters declares of Sir Clement that she thought "he was a man of quality by his look" (p. 212). They are easily taken in by a little cheap glitter and see Mr. Smith as a true gentleman. Polly says, "I assure you he's quite like one of the quality, and dresses as fine, and goes to balls and dances, and every thing quite in taste" (p. 174). This slavery to externals is not confined to the working class. Mrs. Beaumont "is an absolute Court Calendar bigot" who "thinks proper to be of opinion, that birth and virtue are one and the same thing" (p. 284).

The characters who depend most heavily on appearance are also the ones most concerned to fool others by their own, a concern which leads them into affectation. As Fielding explains in the preface to Joseph Andrews, affectation, the "only source of the true Ridiculous," arises from either "vanity or hypocrisy; for as vanity puts us on affecting false characters, in order to purchase

applause; so hypocrisy sets us on an endeavour to avoid censure, by concealing our vices under an appearance of their opposite virtues."<sup>86</sup> Most of the ridiculous characters in Evelina are more guilty of vanity than hypocrisy. Mr. Smith, who makes himself truly absurd by his bad imitation of a gentleman, occasioned this remark from Samuel Johnson: "Henry Fielding never drew so good a character!--such a wonderful varnish of low politeness--such a struggle to appear a gentleman!"<sup>87</sup> Mr. Smith thinks that appearing a gentleman is the same thing as being one. The "high" characters come in for their share of this satire on affection. Lady Louisa speaks "in a most affected voice" and affects to have a constitution "infinitely delicate." She is perpetually "fatigued to death" and "half dead" and "nerve all over!" (pp. 279-86). But Mr. Lovel's affectation is most ridiculous of all, since he affects to be affected! At the play Love for Love, he pretends not to know what is playing, explaining that men of fashion never watch the play. When Evelina discovers he has really watched, she writes, "How strange it is, Sir, that this man, not contented with the large share of foppery and nonsense

<sup>86</sup> Henry Fielding, preface to Joseph Andrews (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 34.

which he has from nature, should think proper to affect yet more!" (p. 82). Madame Duval is guilty of both vanity and hypocrisy. Obsessed with her appearance, "the labour of the toilette seems the chief business of her life" (p. 155), and "her showy dress and an unusual quantity of rouge" (p. 222) make her an object of derision.

But her affectation arises also from the more dangerous source--hypocrisy. She pretends, though not very consistently or very convincingly, an affection for Evelina that she does not feel. She introduces Evelina to the Branghtons by saying,

Here, my dears . . . here's a relation you little thought of; but you must know my poor daughter Caroline had this child after she run away from me,--though I never knew nothing of it, not I, for a long time after; for they took care to keep it a secret from me; though the poor child has never a friend in the world besides. (p. 68)

Her sugary sentiment masks her real motive, which is to augment the family coffers by suing Sir John Belmont; failing in this scheme, she tries to force Evelina into a match with young Branghton to keep the money in the family. She and Sir Clement pose the greatest threats to Evelina because of their hypocrisy. Sir Clement, like Madame Duval, masks his evil motives under a veil of affection and concern. Pretending throughout to be enamored of Evelina, he admires her extravagantly and insincerely

and goes through the motions of courtship; his intentions, we know, are otherwise.

Another concern of the romance plot--order--is also mirrored in the satire on manners. Manners are a way of ordering experience, and the lack of them creates chaos. Captain Mirvan, Madame Duval, and all the Branghtons are creators of disorder. Captain Mirvan does not order his own passions and is always flying into a rage. Even his language represents disorder and confusion since, as Evelina suggests, his "use of a thousand sea-terms" renders his speech "quite unintelligible" (p. 139). His tricks twice end in upsetting "the old French hag." The first time he trips Monsieur De Bois, who is carrying her over the mud; they fall into a puddle where the harder they struggle, the deeper they become mired in "the nastiness." The rumor he spreads about M. De Bois' being imprisoned upsets Madame Duval emotionally, and the faked robbery upsets her physically into a ditch where her dress is torn, her face and body covered with "filth" and her false "curls" put in a "nasty condition." Although we may feel some pity for her, we can scarcely fail to realize that Madame Duval belongs in this besmirched condition which seems to parallel her moral state. Captain Mirvan's final prank, putting a monkey "fully dressed, and extravagantly a-la-mode!" into a room full of people,

causes general confusion and ends badly with Mr. Lovel defending his honor by striking the monkey, who retaliates by viciously biting his ear. A monkey dressed as a man, a man stooping to "duel" with a monkey--both are ridiculous perversions of social relationships. Captain Mirvan's trickery does not make us laugh; it makes us squirm, because we sense that the mud and the filth and the violence that result represent a dangerous underworld of darkness and chaos.

The Branghtons also represent dirt and disorder. The Branghton girls "greased" Smith's room, their clothes are often disheveled, their rooms a mess. The whole Branghton household is constantly in an "uproar." When the young members of the family hear of the Captain's tricks on their aunt, they put the room into an "uproar" with "such noise, passion and confusion that had any one stopped an instant on the stairs, he must have concluded himself in Bedlam" (p. 169). Young Branghton, like the Captain, takes fiendish delight in upsetting others. His favorite trick is to catch his sisters with dirty clothes and undone hair, first sending up one of their suitors to cause confusion that he compounds by setting two squalling, fighting cats into the room. Then he says, "there's such a noise, and such an uproar!--Lord, you can't think, Miss, what fun it is!" (p. 175). Whatever this family touches



turns at once into chaos. When they make use of Lord Orville's carriage, their presence creates disorder and destruction, with the coach colliding with a cart and young Branghton sticking his thick head through the glass. Like that of the Captain, their love of disorder and confusion grows out of an underlying lack of moral order.

For Fanny Burney bad manners mirror a bad nature. All the ill-mannered objects of Burney's satire lack benevolence, and their bad manners are symptoms of cruelty, insensitivity and egotism. Lovel, who delights in tormenting Evelina, hides a mean nature under foppish manners. Misunderstanding the true meaning of manners, he uses them like a cudgel, declaring Evelina "guilty of ill manners" because in ignorance she breaks a rule of assemblies. He, of course, is more ill-mannered to make such a fuss about nothing and to cause her humiliation. His failure to understand what manners mean is evident when he associates them with the town and the ton. In a "sneering speech" to Evelina, he says, "Our customs, our manners, and les etiquettes de nous autres, can have little resemblance to those you have been used to. I imagine, Ma'am, your retirement is at no very small distance from the capital?" (p. 79). The crudeness of the Branghtons' manners contrasts to the polished, artificial ones of Lovel and Merton. But the cause of

the bad manners--bad nature--and the result--confusion and hurt--are the same. One of the rhinoceros-hided Miss Branghtons insensitively exclaims, "Lord Polly, only think! Miss never saw her papa!" (p. 69), a remark which sends Evelina running from the room, shocked and wounded. Mrs. Beaumont, whose "civility is too formal to be comfortable," according to Mrs. Selwyn, distresses Evelina with embarrassing questions about her pedigree. But even though the razor-tongued Mrs. Selwyn is quick to spot and attack ill manners in others, her own are flawed. She is honest to a fault and her satirical attacks grow out of egotism and pride. Some critics have seen her frankness as admirable. Susan Staves, for instance, says that Mrs. Selwyn is sometimes "a satiric spokeswoman."<sup>88</sup> Fanny Burney almost certainly did not see her this way. In the early diary she writes of a Miss Allen, "she is too sincere: she pays too little regard to the world; and indulges herself with too much freedom of raillery and pride of disdain toward those whose vices and follies offend her."<sup>89</sup>

Evelina, although she is uneducated in the ways of the world, has natural good manners which reflect her good

<sup>88</sup> Staves, p. 378.

<sup>89</sup> Burney, Early Diary, I, 134.

nature, and she is instinctively offended by those who do not. Her embarrassment at the ill-bred behavior of her low relatives has caused some critics to object to her snobbery. To some extent, they are right. Evelina's rejection of all that is vulgar and indecorous is based on an aristocratic ideal that characterizes romance. As Frye says,

One very obvious feature of romance is its pervasive social snobbery. Naive romance confines itself largely to royal families; sentimental romance gives us patterns of aristocratic courage and courtesy, and much of it adopts a "blood will tell" convention, the association of moral virtue and social rank implied in the word "noble."<sup>90</sup>

Significantly, Evelina several times describes Orville, in whom rank and virtue meet, as "noble." Burney's concept of manners is taken from the aristocratic tradition of the romance in which manners and morals are intimately connected. Hers is not a democratic world in which one man is as good as the next. When Madame Duval says, "I'm as good as Lady Howard" (p. 51), she is wrong. In the romance world, in Burney's world, some are better than others; Lady Howard is better, in every meaningful sense, than Madame Duval.

<sup>90</sup> Frye, Secular Scripture, p. 161.

Through manners we can best see the blend of romance and realism which characterizes Evelina. In order for Evelina's quest for identity and wisdom and order to have meaning, it must be placed in the "real world." And the world of Evelina is real, with its attention to time, its named and localized places, its life-like dialogue. But it is not this sort of reality, this attention to the details of day-to-day living, that interests Fanny Burney most, but an ultimate reality which is inherent in the romance tradition. Trilling reminds us that "Reality, as conceived by us, is whatever is external and hard, gross, unpleasant" and that this "reality we admire tells us that the observation of manners is trivial and even malicious, that there are things much more important for the novel to consider."<sup>91</sup> For Fanny Burney there was nothing more important. The reality of Evelina is of the kind that concerns itself with values which repose in manners. What Evelina must learn is to rise above the sordid, shifting reality of money and dress and weather that defines the Branghton-Duval world. She must discover in the flux and disorder of living a transcendent reality in which virtue and prudence, which are the heart of manners, are ways of being good and living well in the world.

<sup>91</sup> Trilling, pp. 209-10.

## CHAPTER IV

CECELIA

Because of Evelina's popularity, Burney was able to command 250 pounds from the bookseller for Cecelia--a lordly sum compared to the 20 guineas she had received for her first effort. But fame also brought new pressures and anxieties. Writing Cecelia was, to Burney's regret, a much more public affair than her secret composition of Evelina. Although she wished to "have kept it snug until the last," this was impossible; and she wrote fretfully to her sister Susan in 1782 that her "book affair has got wind, and seems almost everywhere known."<sup>1</sup> She had to write not only more publicly but also more quickly. Dr. Burney, anxious to have Fanny seize the advantage of Evelina's popularity, urged her to scribble with haste, allowing her little time for revision. Perhaps it would have been a shorter and a better novel without Dr. Burney's well-intentioned advice. Fanny herself felt the need to prune and responded to her friend Mr. Crisp's suggestion for more revision that she would like another year but

<sup>1</sup> Fanny Burney, Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, ed. Charlotte Barrett (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1893), I, 408, 420.

that her father "would run crazy if I made such a proposal."<sup>2</sup> In addition to the pressures of time and publicity, Burney felt keenly the pressure of her newly established reputation, an anxiety which was fed by advice such as that of Mr. Crisp, who cautioned her, "You have so much to lose, you cannot take too much care."<sup>3</sup> Her friends' expectations for her second novel, she writes, "fills me with the horrors."<sup>4</sup>

She worried too much. When Cecelia was published in 1782, it was welcomed even more enthusiastically than Evelina. Burke devoured all five volumes in three days, Gibbon in only one. Dr. Burney thought that compared to Evelina, Cecelia had "a superior design and execution." Daddy Crisp declared that "nothing like it had appeared since Fielding and Smollett." Mrs. Thrale exclaimed, "Oh! it beats every other book, even your own other volumes, for 'Evelina' was a baby to it." Johnson praised it for "the general Power of the whole." The novel was so widely read and universally applauded that Charlotte Burney could say in 1783 when Cecelia was going

<sup>2</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 418.

<sup>3</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 416.

<sup>4</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 431.

into a third edition that "Cecelia is as much liked and read I believe as any book ever was."<sup>5</sup>

Today it is seldom read and rarely liked. Last printed in 1882, Cecelia is, as Will Hale suggests, "hardly a book that in the coming years any but the student will read."<sup>6</sup> Only a few modern critics have bothered to treat the novel at all. Even fewer judge it equal or superior to Evelina. R. Brimley Johnson, while conceding that Cecelia's greater variety of character and incident "reveal more mature power," finds it "less spontaneous and, in a certain sense, less original."<sup>7</sup> Harrison Steeves calls Cecelia "a maturer work in almost every respect; also in all-round merit the best novel of her writing," but contradicts this a few pages later, concluding his assessment of Burney's general flaws with the statement, "Yet there is Evelina--not pure gold, but certainly not to be forgotten."<sup>8</sup> Even such timid and

<sup>5</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 408, 425, 429; Joyce Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 151; Fanny Burney, The Early Diary of Frances Burney, 1768-1778; ed. Anne Raine Ellis (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1913), II, 307.

<sup>6</sup> Will Taliaferro Hale, "Madame D'Arblay's Place in the Development of the English Novel," Indiana University Studies, 4 (January 1916), 64.

<sup>7</sup> R. Brimley Johnson, The Women Novelists (London: W. Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1918), p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Harrison R. Steeves, Before Jane Austen (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), pp. 219, 225.

vacillating praise is rare. More typical is Joyce Horner's judgment that "Evelina is a better book than . . . Cecelia," or Adelstein's statement that Cecelia is "a disappointing although interesting work" and "not a first-rate novel."<sup>9</sup> Critics such as these are probably right to suggest that it is somewhat disappointing, but not for the reasons they sometimes suggest. The major problem with Cecelia is simply that it is far longer than it needs to be. Fanny herself knew this and regretted it, writing to Susan, "My work is too long in all conscience for the hurry of my people to have it produced."<sup>10</sup> Joyce Hemlow finds after studying the manuscript of Cecelia that "the revisions are usually curtailments of the texts or attempts to avoid circumlocution" and concludes, "If she had been allowed time for a little more excision, or if she had been advised to delete duplicated trends in the plot, Cecelia would now be more popular."<sup>11</sup> She is right. The major flaw and the only serious one in Cecelia is its length. Although Hemlow is not the only critic to

<sup>9</sup> Joyce Horner, The English Women Novelists and Their Connection with the Feminist Movement (1668-1797) (Northampton, Mass.: Folcroft Library Editions, 1973), p. 136; Michael Adelstein, Fanny Burney, Twayne English Authors Series, No. 67 (New York: Twayne, 1968), pp. 64, 69.

<sup>10</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 408.

<sup>11</sup> Hemlow, p. 149.



recognize this, more often the critical focus is on other "flaws" such as the complex plot with its reliance on coincidence, its static, ideal characters and the stilted and affected language of the major characters. As with Evelina the persistent tendency is to hold Burney accountable to realistic standards, resulting in misunderstanding and an evaluation that is lower than the novel deserves. Cecelia, like Evelina, owes much to the romance, and these "flaws" in plot, characterization and language all stem from that tradition.

The plot of Cecelia, like that of Evelina, draws on the romance for its situation, structure, complexity and reliance on coincidence. Critics have mistakenly seen these characteristics of plotting as what Adelstein terms "cracks in the craftsmanship." He says, for example, that "In Cecelia the complex plot overshadows the characters."<sup>12</sup> Complicated patterns of narrative and a tendency to emphasize plot over character is, as we have seen over and over, a dominant characteristic of the romance tradition. Adelstein also complains that "The overuse of chance and coincidence is another fault in Cecelia."<sup>13</sup> Eugene White suggests that "the dependence

<sup>12</sup> Adelstein, p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> Adelstein, p. 70.

upon accident and coincidence in the complication and resolution of plot" is a "weakness" Burney had in common with many other eighteenth-century novelists who "had not progressed beyond the improbable."<sup>14</sup> This sort of condescending approach is an example of the stubborn modern insistence that prose fiction has evolved or progressed. Joyce Horner provides an instance of the same modern realistic prejudice when she laments that Cecelia's "adventures verge continually on the unreal."<sup>15</sup> Of course they do. Although Cecelia, perhaps even more than Evelina, is marked by the influence of formal realism, the plot structure is still basically that of the romance, following closely the historical-biographical romance pattern described by Miller as tracing the hero's progress from birth through exile, initiation and testing in the Quest and the final reversal of fortune, ending in the discovery of the hero's identity and place in society.<sup>16</sup> This pattern provides the plot for Cecelia.

The novel opens in medias res with Cecelia, aged twenty, ready to embark on her quest. The narrator gives

<sup>14</sup> Eugene White, Fanny Burney, Novelist (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, 1968), p. 9 (my emphasis).

<sup>15</sup> Horner, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Knight Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones and the Romance Tradition, English Literary Studies, Monograph Series No. 6 (Victoria: Univ. of Victoria, 1976), p. 25.

us the heroine's history in a brief summary passage of exposition. The daughter of a country gentleman, she had lost her father "in her early youth, and her mother had not long survived him."<sup>17</sup> Since then she had lived with her uncle, the Dean of \_\_\_\_\_, whose recent death has left her with no family and no home. She is heiress to 10,000 pounds from her parents and an estate of 3,000 per year from her uncle on the condition that the man she marries take her maiden name of Beverly. The Dean has provided her with three guardians: Mr. Harrel, a profligate gambler, Mr. Briggs, a penny-pinching miser, and Mr. Delvile, an arrogant aristocrat. In naming these three, Cecelia's uncle believed "he had equally consulted her pleasure, her security, and her pecuniary advantage" (I, 30). He could hardly have been more mistaken. They are as unlikely a trio as one could possibly find to guide a young woman through her initiation. In fact, these three guardians function as the "false father" of romance and are joined by yet another of these figures, Mr. Monckton, whose wicked machinations are responsible for many of Cecelia's troubles. Although none of her four false fathers actually seeks her death, they all

<sup>17</sup> Fanny Burney, Cecelia, or Memoirs of an Heiress (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), I, 1. All quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text.

manipulate and exploit her for their own selfish interests; all misguide and block her in her quest for maturity and identity.

Her situation is the typical romance one. Just at the brink of maturity, yet not quite mature, inexperienced, orphaned, she is about to begin her initiation and testing in experience. Unlike *Evelina's*, *Cecelia's* pedigree is public and respectable--her actual identity in terms of parentage is not in question, but the theme of identity is underlined by a different stigma--the name clause which requires her to retain her family name forever and her husband to relinquish his. And since *Cecelia* must discover where she belongs, her three guardians are also part of her search for identity, representing choices which, though temporary, are part of the process of self-definition and discovery. *Cecelia's* departure from her rural home and her journey to London take the form, as in *Evelina* and most romances, of a quest.

As a quest romance, *Cecelia* exhibits the three-part structure typical of this kind. Published in the eighteenth century in five volumes made up of ten books and in the nineteenth in two volumes, the three-part structure is not immediately apparent. Nonetheless, it is there. The novel divides roughly into three uneven parts parallel to the three stages of the quest described

by Frye, with books one through five corresponding to the first stage, "the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures," books six through nine and part of ten to the "crucial struggle" and the last chapters of the final book to "the exaltation of the hero."<sup>18</sup>

The first stage begins with Cecelia's departure on her "perilous journey." Having lived for twenty years in rural retirement, protected by family and friends and Mrs. Carlton, her "aged and maternal counsellor, whom she loved as her mother" (I, 2), her departure is an exile. Content to remain and reluctant to leave, "she quitted her early companions, the friend she most revered, and the spot which contained the relics of all she had yet lived to lament, and accompanied by one of her guardians, she began her journey from Bury to London" (I, 2). The quest necessitates Cecelia's leaving the pastoral paradise of her youth, representing innocence, and entering the urban world, representing experience, with its temptations, its trials and testings. Mr. Monckton worries that Cecelia, with her lack of experience, may fall prey to "sharppers, fortune-hunters, sycophants, wretches of all sorts and denominations," warning that

<sup>18</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 187.

Temptation . . . is very easy of resistance in theory: but if you reflect upon the great change of situation Miss Beverly will experience, upon the new scenes she will see, the new acquaintances she must make, and the new connections she may form, you will not wonder at the anxiety of a friend for her welfare. (I, 13)

Though Mr. Monckton is no friend to Cecelia, he has a point. Untried virtue is not worth much; theory must be tested in practice. As Adam and Eve had to leave Paradise and Evelina had to leave Berry Hill, so Cecelia must leave Bury. Her journey to London is necessary for the testing and perfection of her virtue.

She begins her journey into experience, unfortunately, with the most worldly of her guardians, Mr. Harrel. Once in his house, Cecelia's trials and testings begin immediately. Totally without morals or intelligence or substance of any kind, the Harrels lead a dissipated, extravagant life which keeps them perpetually at the brink of ruin. Cecelia is subjected to an exhausting round of parties made up of foolish, affected, and shallow people whose only concerns are fashion, gossip and entertainment. She is plunged into this world abruptly when the insensitive Mrs. Harrel greets her with a large party of gayly dressed people who examine her--the ladies to take "an exact inventory of her dress," the men to dispute "whether or not she was painted" (I, 19). Her

future trials in the social arena are more of the same-- situations in which she must deal with frippery and foppery. These are Cecelia's "preliminary minor adventures" characteristic of the first stage; she handles them well. Maturer than Evelina and more socially poised, she has little difficulty dealing with the affected types she meets and is able to view characters such as Miss Leeson, who never speaks, and Miss Larolles, who never stops, with amused detachment. Even at the masquerade when she is persecuted by the fiend, dirtied by the chimney sweep, and irritated by the haughty Turk, she retains her composure and enjoys the novelty of the mask. So although she is tested in social situations, her virtue and native dignity get her through these preliminary skirmishes with ease. Never tempted by the frivolity of the Harrels, Cecelia stocks her life with more meaningful activities. She helps a destitute family and fills her solitary hours with reading. "And thus," the narrator tells us, "in the exercise of charity, the search of knowledge, and the enjoyment of quiet, serenity in innocent philosophy passed the hours of Cecelia" (I, 99).

Other problems, however, pose more serious threats even in this first stage of her quest. One of these is in matters of the heart. First, Mr. Harrel secretly takes

money from a hopeful suitor, Sir Robert Floyer, promising him Cecelia's hand in return. Soon rumor has them firmly betrothed. To complicate matters, gossips also make much of her apparent interest in another young man, Mr. Belfield. When their quarrel over the honor of escorting her ends in a duel, the rumors increase. Although Cecelia's reputation may be slightly sullied and her relationship to young Delvile complicated by all this, her virtue is not involved since she is unaware that Harrel has sold her hand, and her concern for Belfield is truly disinterested. Her situation becomes perilous only when she falls in love with Mortimer Delvile. It seems to Cecelia safe and appropriate enough at the time. When she realizes with a sudden flash of insight that she loves him, the narrator explains her feelings in this way:

Yet this loss of mental freedom gave her not much uneasiness, since the choice of her heart, though involuntary, was approved by her principles, and confirmed by her judgment. Young Delvile's situation in life was just what she wished, more elevated than her own yet not so exalted as to humble her with a sense of inferiority; his connections were honourable, his mother appeared to her the first of women, his character and disposition seemed formed to make her happy, and her fortune was so large that to the state of his she was indifferent. (I, 245)

Not until the second stage of her quest does it become obvious that Cecelia has much cause for uneasiness from



her love for Delvile, which, though appropriate, is premature.

The most terrible assaults on her in the first stage are on her purse, rather than on her heart. When she becomes aware of Mr. Harrel's abuse of his workmen, she gives charitably to the distressed Hill family, but the crucial test of Cecelia's prudence comes when Mr. Harrel, deeply in debt, manipulates Cecelia into borrowing heavily from a Jew. Cecelia's generosity only feeds his gambling and extravagance until finally, with creditors swarming through the house, Mr. Harrel threatens suicide unless Cecelia lends him a sum sufficient to empty his house of collectors. Cecelia borrows this sum, a shocking 7,500 pounds, from the same moneylender, which only postpones Mr. Harrel's inevitable ruin. Book five ends with the climactic scene at Vauxhall gardens with Mr. Harrel, completely ruined, making good his earlier suicide threat. His death ends the first stage of Cecelia's quest, in which the preliminary adventures sow the seeds for later and more dangerous testings.

Stage two, encompassing books six through nine, involve Cecelia's real trials of the heart. This stage, describing the "crucial struggle," centers on the Delviles' refusal to allow their son's marriage to Cecelia. Although Mrs. Delvile recognizes Cecelia as the

perfect wife for her son, she shares her husband's obsessive pride in family and his feeling that the name clause renders the marriage impossible. Delvile, unable to conquer his passion for Cecelia, proposes an immediate and secret marriage. The clandestine nature of the proposal troubles Cecelia, but she is persuaded and the ceremony actually begins only to be interrupted at the point where the priest pronounces the familiar words about speaking now or forever holding one's peace. To everyone's astonishment and Cecelia's horror, a woman calls out "I do!" ending the ceremony and convincing Cecelia of the wrongness of their plan. After this, Mrs. Delvile exacts a promise from Cecelia that she will never marry her son. When Mortimer rebels, his mother conveniently and dramatically becomes ill. Appropriately, her illness is a ruptured blood vessel; she has literally burst with pride in her blood. The scene is crucial in underlining the theme of pride. In response to Mr. Crisp's criticism of this scene, Burney writes:

The conflict scene for Cecelia, between the mother and son, to which you so warmly object, is the very scene for which I wrote the whole book, and so entirely does my plan hang upon it, that I must abide by its reception in the world, or put the whole behind the fire.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 418.

After this dramatic scene, Cecelia, reaching the age of her majority, retreats to the neighborhood of Bury, where she settles in her own house. Her quiet existence is interrupted by the happy news that Mrs. Delville has given a separate consent to their marriage, which takes place secretly but with her approval. A condition of the marriage is, of course, that Cecelia must give up her fortune rather than Mortimer his name. Rose Marie Cutting points out that Cecelia, and Burney's other heroines, are "cut off from their rightful inheritance-- a situation that serves as a good metaphor for the historic poverty and economic dependency of women."<sup>20</sup> This feminist reading ignores the fact that the denial of the hero's rightful inheritance is a feature of the romance tradition and is almost certainly traceable to that source rather than to some repressed feminist tendencies in Burney.

But marriage, which resolves all difficulties in most romances, does not do so here. Cecelia's "crucial struggles" are not yet over. She still has to face eviction from her rural estate by a greedy relative who has learned of her marriage, and, worse yet, Delville's

<sup>20</sup> Rose Marie Cutting, "Defiant Women: The Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney's Novels," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 17 (1977), 521.

suspicious when he finds her in the Belfield apartment. His lack of faith in her, exacerbated by his father's refusal to admit her to his home, causes her to go mad. Desperate and delirious for days, she undergoes the symbolic and ritual death characteristic of the romance.

It is only in the last few chapters of the final book that Cecelia's quest enters its third stage, the "exaltation of the hero." All misunderstandings are cleared up, Delville repents his lack of faith, and even the immovable Mr. Delville relents at the sight of her and undergoes a significant, if temporary, change of heart. The narrator says, "His pride, his pomp, his ancient name, were now sunk in his estimation; and while he considered himself the destroyer of this unhappy young creature, he would have sacrificed them all to have called himself her protector" (II, 444). After Cecelia's symbolic rebirth, the marriage is made public and she is accepted into the Delville house and family. To compensate for the loss of her fortune, Cecelia becomes the sole heiress of Mortimer's aunt, while he inherits his uncle's town house and a portion of his estate.

This ending is worthy of any romance, although Burney's intentions appear to have been otherwise. At the end, Cecelia is described as having "all the happiness human life seems capable of receiving:--yet human it was

and as such imperfect" because she is "portionless, though an HEIRESS." This "partial evil" she bore with "cheerfullest resignation" (II, 473). This strikes a false note in the face of Cecelia's real happiness and seems to have been written to satisfy Burney's desire for a realistic ending. She writes to Mr. Crisp of the ending:

I think the book, in its present conclusion, somewhat original, for the hero and heroine are neither plunged in the depths of misery, nor exalted to Unhuman happiness. Is not such a middle state more natural, more according to real life, and less resembling every other book of fiction? . . . You will find, my dear daddy, I am prepared to fight a good battle here; but I have thought the matter much over, and if I am made to give up this point, my whole plan is rendered abortive, and the last page of any novel in Mr. Nobel's circulating library may serve for the last page of mine, since a marriage, a reconciliation, and some sudden expedient for great riches, concludes them all alike.<sup>21</sup>

It is difficult to imagine how Burney could have fooled herself into thinking the ending of Cecelia was actually a realistic new departure, since it ends with "a marriage, a reconciliation, and some sudden expedient for" riches which, though they may not be "great" are certainly not inconsiderable. The romance pattern was much more deeply ingrained in Burney's imagination than she realized. And this pattern does not require that endings be perfect, that the united lovers live in paradise, a point well made

<sup>21</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 426.

by Miller when he discusses the fact that the lovers in Tom Jones settle in Western's neighborhood rather than in Paradise Hall. He asserts, ". . . Fielding was wise in this slight shift of location, for it gives force to his understanding that the earthly paradise cannot be a static condition, an 'ending' any more than (say) the concluding victory of Aeneas is an ending."<sup>22</sup>

If the ending of Cecelia is less realistic than Burney realized, it is also less feminist than some critics have wished it. Feminist critics find it revealing that Burney once again ends with a wedding, thereby missing a good chance to thumb her nose at men and marriage, but at the same time revealing Burney's suppressed anger at women's lot. Patricia Spacks argues that Cecelia's marriage is a "diminishment" and that "Like Evelina . . . she achieves and values social advancement through marriage."<sup>23</sup> Cutting suggests that "Cecelia's story, although seemingly highly idiosyncratic, actually typifies the fate of most women: when she marries, she loses not only her name but her fortune."<sup>24</sup> In the first place, it

<sup>22</sup> Miller, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> Patricia M. Spacks, Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 181; The Female Imagination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> Cutting, p. 521.

is unlikely that Burney intended the name clause as a metaphor for women's oppression. She writes that her end "was chiefly to point out the absurdity and short-sightedness of those name-compelling wills, which make it always presumed a woman marries an inferior, since he, not she, is to leave his own family in order to be incorporated into hers."<sup>25</sup> So the situation she was reacting against is not, as Cutting seems to think, that women were submerged in their husbands' identity, but quite the reverse.

A more important reason for the marriage at the end is, of course, that it is an indispensable part of the romance pattern, which is circular. As Miller suggests,

The romance structure, like that of comedy, wherein the larger world and smaller world are harmonized at last, is almost inevitably that of the completed figure, the satisfactory Gestalt, the regained equilibrium, the resolved chord. . . . The characteristic pleasure of romance and of comedy comes . . . from their natural completion of the figure, and their inevitable suggestion that a new figure is thereby generated.<sup>26</sup>

This sense of fulfillment and of promise is represented in the romance, in most eighteenth-century novels, and certainly in Burney's fiction, by marriage.

<sup>25</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 426.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, pp. 40-41.

In addition to the quest-structure ending in marriage, another device of plotting taken from the romance is the reliance on coincidence which, as we have seen, is really a fictional manifestation of the Christian world view of the romance. As Aubrey Williams argues, the eighteenth-century novelists hold a world view which "insisted upon the world as a place where Providence interposed frequently in the individual human experience, and also insisted that the surest signs of such interposition were events marked by a strange or startling or coincidental character."<sup>27</sup> Melvyn New suggests that Defoe, Richardson, Fielding and Smollett

All believed in a world ordered and continually governed by a just God; all imitated that world by using the long-standing conventions of the romance. Yet modern critics, often uncomfortable with the notion of a natural order, often reluctant to believe that intelligent men could believe in the reality of continual governance by divine Providence, have frequently downgraded and ridiculed those very conventions by which such a world is mirrored in narrative.<sup>28</sup>

Burney's reliance on coincidence, drawn from the romance and used to suggest a Providential ordering of human

<sup>27</sup> Aubrey Williams, "Interpositions of Providence and the Design of Fielding's Novels," The South Atlantic Quarterly, 70 (1971), 267.

<sup>28</sup> Melvyn New, "'The Grease of God': The Form of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction," PMLA, 91 (March 1976), 239.



affairs, is one of these conventions her critics, who call it a "weakness," a "flaw," a "crack in the craftsmanship," feel most uncomfortable with. Seen in the proper light, the chance and coincidence in Cecelia actually reveal the hand of Providence manipulating the lives of the characters to punish the bad, reward the good, and most importantly, to bring about the union of Cecelia and Delvile.

On the surface, it seems that the coincidences that bring Delvile and Cecelia together block their union. Delvile is always at the wrong place at the wrong time to observe Cecelia in acts that appear to be suspect. First, Delvile happens to be on the scene when the quarrel breaks out between Belfield and Sir Robert Floyer and shares the crowd's conviction that Cecelia's concern proves that she is "dying with love for Sir Robert Floyer" (I, 134). Shortly afterwards, when Cecelia stops in front of Belfield's physician's house quite by accident, she meets Mortimer, who shifts his suspicions from Sir Robert to Belfield. By a strange coincidence, when she agrees to help a needy family, Albany takes her to the Belfield's house where she befriends his sister, Henrietta, providing the basis for more chance meetings and more suspicions. As if on cue, just as she is entering the Belfield's apartment to visit Henrietta, she meets Delvile coming

out. And if this were not enough to confirm his doubts, a little later he is present when Cecelia's servant hands Belfield's physician a letter from her. These apparently unfortunate coincidences occur with such regularity and frequency that Cecelia "began now almost to fancy there was some fatality attending her acquaintance with him, since she was always sure of meeting, when she had any reason to wish avoiding him" (I, 222).

Other coincidences are more favorable. In Cecelia, as in Evelina, Providence seems to always place the knight at the right time and place to rescue the damsel in distress. The first time Cecelia meets Delvile at the masquerade, he, disguised as a white domino, rescues her from the torments of the fiend (Mr. Monckton) after Don Quixote (Belfield) has failed in his chivalrous but ineffectual rescue attempt. In the duel scene, Mortimer is at hand to separate the men and to comfort Cecelia, saying, "Be not alarmed, madam . . . all is over, and everybody is safe" (I, 134). In a gesture less heroic, but actually more dangerous, Delvile, seeing that an overturned teapot is about to spill its contents on Cecelia, throws his own body in the path of the hot liquid and in this way "secured her preservation by receiving himself the mischief with which she was threatened." Wet and in pain, he retires, saying only half jokingly, "There is something, I must

own, rather unknighly in quitting the field for a wet jacket . . ." (I, 280, 281). When Mr. Harrel, in the grim Vauxhall scene, commits suicide, Delvile is there to escort and protect Cecelia, a coincidence she is right to call "fortunate indeed!" (I, 411). Later at Delvile Castle, Delvile, happening upon Cecelia caught in a violent storm, gallantly shields her with his hat and umbrella. This provides the occasion for Delvile to reveal his feelings to Cecelia; it also provides the occasion for Mortimer to catch a miserable cold.

It seems that young Delvile must be alternately scalded and chilled in return for his gallantry, but he is ultimately rewarded for his pains by yet another fortunate coincidence. Having followed Cecelia to Mrs. Carlton's house, he approaches her in the garden at the exact moment to overhear her professing her love for him to his dog, Fidel. This is the happiest of all coincidences, since convinced that Cecelia returns his love, Mortimer finally decides to act. The final chain of coincidences aiding their eventual union comes when Cecelia visits a sick woman who turns out to be none other than the pew opener at the church during Cecelia and Delvile's aborted secret marriage. Later by yet another coincidence, this same pew-opener happens to settle in Bury where she then happens to run into Miss Bennet at church, enabling her to solve

the mystery of the interruption and revealing to Cecelia the depth of Monckton's treachery.

Adelstein is wrong to suggest that these coincidences "do little more than slow down or speed up the action."<sup>29</sup> They are manifestations of Providential intervention, moving the plot toward its appropriate and satisfying conclusion. It is clearly right that Cecelia and Delvile should marry. They are perfectly suited to each other in appearance, education, intelligence, and temperament, a fact which not only the lovers, but also other characters and the narrator recognize. As Delvile handed her a letter for Mr. Belfield, "he seemed struck, as she was herself, by the extraordinary coincidence of their ideas and proceedings" (I, 275). Henrietta says their marriage has seemed to her "the thing most likely," and Mrs. Carlton tells Cecelia that Delvile "deserves you alike from his principles and his affection" (II, 349, 109). The narrator tells us that Delvile's "character and disposition seemed formed to make her happy" (I, 245). And the hand that formed them for each other also manipulates the plot so that they may eventually and fittingly be united in a marriage that is, as Cecelia has rightly thought, "a union of inclination with propriety" (I, 245).

<sup>29</sup> Adelstein, p. 71.

The romance influence is as clearly evident in the characterization as in the plotting. With the exception of Mrs. Delvile, all the main characters are typically black and white. Mr. Monckton, Mr. Harrel, Mr. Briggs and Mr. Delvile are very bad and always bad; Cecelia and young Delvile are good. As Frye explains, "The characterization of romance follows its general dialectic structure which means that subtlety and complexity are not much favored."<sup>30</sup> However, here again, as in Evelina, critics have seen Burney's characterization as a failure in craftsmanship and a weakness in the novel. Jerry Beasley compares Cecelia unfavorably with Austen's Elizabeth Bennet, saying, "Elizabeth is flawed and complex in a way that Cecelia is not."<sup>31</sup> Spacks also contrasts Burney's characterization with Austen's asserting that while Elizabeth's "inner life changes," Cecelia, like Pamela and Evelina, "expands in personality but does not alter."<sup>32</sup> And Adelstein complains that "Cecelia remains a paragon throughout with neither the depth nor complexity to be lifelike."<sup>33</sup> Mortimer is no more satisfactory to critics.

<sup>30</sup> Frye, p. 195.

<sup>31</sup> Jerry Beasley, "Fanny Burney and Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice," English Miscellany, 24 (1973-74), 113.

<sup>32</sup> Spacks, Female Imagination, p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> Adelstein, p. 66.

Hale says that he, like Burney's other heroes, is "not very human."<sup>34</sup> Beasley says that, unlike Austen's Darcy, who changes, "Delvile remains throughout a static, rather lifeless character" and invokes the ultimate insult; he is "wooden."<sup>35</sup> Adelstein agrees, saying that despite the conflicts between love and duty that Delvile suffers "he is as wooden in his speech and actions as Lord Orville and other Grandison-like heroes," adding that "to readers he is humorless and spineless, in addition to being stiff, bland, and boring."<sup>36</sup> Other characters fare no better. Monckton is, according to Hemlow, "rather unreal," and he is "hardly credible" to Adelstein, who also finds Lord Delvile one-dimensional and the Harrels "flat characters."<sup>37</sup> Hale says of the characters in Cecelia in general that "everyone harps on the same string on all occasions."<sup>38</sup>

Again, modern realistic prejudices blind critics to Burney's value and cause them to see her as a failed realist rather than a successful romancer. The characters

<sup>34</sup> Hale, p. 25.

<sup>35</sup> Beasley, pp. 162-63.

<sup>36</sup> Adelstein, p. 167.

<sup>37</sup> Hemlow, p. 166; Adelstein, p. 66.

<sup>38</sup> Hale, p. 16.

are consistent; they are flat. But they are so because they are the main characters in the main plot which is, in its broadest outline, drawn straight from romance. Fanny Burney could draw characters which come close to satisfying modern standards of realism; she does it in Evelina and she does it in Cecelia. These realistic characters, however, do not participate directly in the central plot, which is Cecelia's representative quest. The ones who do are themselves representative, reflecting the typical romance interest in character which is, as Miller reminds us,

focused upon the essence that lay behind purely existential "accidentals" of individual nature, focused upon the qualities that had permanent significance and representative force and were therefore "real," not those of the muddled local flux that constituted the "actual."<sup>39</sup>

So it is hardly surprising that Monckton is so evil he is, to Adelstein, "hardly credible with his ceaseless malevolent scheming."<sup>40</sup> So evil because he is evil, he represents the worst, the basest, the most corrupt possibilities in human nature. It is no more surprising that the Harrels are "obsessed with luxury and

<sup>39</sup> Miller, p. 56.

<sup>40</sup> Adelstein, p. 66.

extravagance"<sup>41</sup> since they represent the evils of selfish indulgence. Macaulay says of the characters of Cecelia that "Mr. Delvile never opens his lips without some allusion to his own birth and station; or Mr. Briggs, without betraying the self-indulgence and self-importance of a purse-proud upstart."<sup>42</sup> Mr. Delvile represents pride; Mr. Briggs, avarice. The function of these four villains is to retard the heroine's progress in her quest, to misadvise, misguide and use her for their own ends. Mr. Delvile is interested in blocking her marriage to his son; Mr. Harrel, only in spending her money; Mr. Briggs, only in hoarding it. Mr. Monckton, most villainous of all, wants both Cecelia and her money for himself.

The good characters, on the other hand, aid Cecelia in her quest. Mrs. Carlton, a benevolent mother figure, helps to arrange for Delvile to see Cecelia because she was "more anxious for her future and solid happiness than for her present apprehension and delicacy" (II, 93). Henrietta, though bitterly disappointed to find that Delvile loves Cecelia, is faithful to the end, aiding their union and exclaiming when Cecelia is ill, "I will lie down by your side,--I will never quit you while you

<sup>41</sup> Adelstein, p. 66.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay, quoted in Hale, p. 16.



live,--and I wish, I wish I could die to save your precious life" (II, 446). Mr. Arnot is equally faithful to Cecelia. He is virtuous, gentle, charitable, and he adores Cecelia. She cannot, however, return his love. She is aware of his passion for her and regrets

her own inability to participate in or reward it: for with him an alliance would meet with no opposition; his character was amiable, his situation in life unexceptionable: he loved her with the tendrest affection, and no pride, she well knew, would interfere to overpower it; yet, in return, to grant him her love, she felt as utterly impossible as to refuse him her esteem: and the superior attractions of Delvile . . . shut up her heart . . . . (II, 80)

Although Arnot is good, he is too dull to win Cecelia's heart.

Delvile has the "superior attractions" that Mr. Arnot lacks. Brave, courteous, and virtuous, he, like every good knight, is attractive. The first time Cecelia sees him out of costume she notes that he is "strikingly elegant in his address and appearance" (I, 135), and the narrator tells us "Mortimer Delvile was tall and finely formed" (VI, 147). But an even more important knightly qualification is his courtesy. At their first meeting, when Cecelia knows him only as the white domino, she is "greatly pleased with his conversation and his manners" (I, 123). In the duel scene, he is quick to remind the duelers of their manner, exclaiming, "For shame, for

shame, gentlemen! is this a place for such violence" (I, 133). The narrator tells us that his "noble openness of manners and address spoke the elegance of his education, and the liberality of his mind" and that he is "recommended by high birth, a striking figure, and polished manners" (I, 147, 244). Unfailingly courteous and well-mannered, he treats Cecelia, even after he has determined to conquer his passion for her, with "civility" and "good breeding" (II, 4). These good manners, more than elegant polish, are outward emblems of an inner nature that is amiable and virtuous. The narrator says of Cecelia's growing fondness for him:

If at first she had been pleased with his deportment and elegance, upon intimacy she was charmed with his disposition and his behaviour: she found him manly, generous, open-hearted and amiable, fond of literature, delighting in knowledge, kind in his temper, and spirited in his actions. (I, 245)

His "spirited" actions often take the form of knightly rescues. At the masquerade he alone can repulse the persistent torments of Cecelia's "black persecutor." Don Quixote enjoys a temporary victory when "the wand of the knight of the horrible physiognomy, was broken against the shield of the knight of the doleful countenance" (I, 106), but the devil is soon back to resume his growling advances. Delvile, clever as well as brave, delegates part of the

responsibility to lesser knights, giving himself time to make a pretty speech to the rescued damsel, to whom he has lost his heart, a "danger," he says, "to which my incautious knight errantry has exposed me" (I, 108). This is the first of many such chivalrous adventures in which he saves Cecelia from the threat of a duel, the "impending evil" of an overturned teapot, and the perils of a storm. But although he is for the most part courteous, virtuous, and valorous, he is less than perfect and, as he mockingly says of himself, sometimes "rather unknightly" (I, 281).

Less finished than Orville, he is in the beginning often the dupe of appearances and the puppet of both pride and passion. He is, as John Stevens says, characteristic of the romance hero, "unproven, even though we suspect him of perfectibility" and still "with much to learn and much to undergo."<sup>43</sup>

If Delvile is farther from perfection than Orville, Cecelia is closer to it than Evelina. Older, more mature and self-confident than Evelina, she is

no stranger to company; she has passed her time in retirement, but not in obscurity, since for some years past she had presided at the table of the Dean, who was visited by the first people of the county in which he lived; and notwithstanding

<sup>43</sup> John Stevens, Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1973), p. 170.

his parties, which were frequent, though small, and elegant, though private, had not prepared her for the splendour or the diversity of a London assembly, they yet, by initiating her in the practical rules of good-breeding, had taught her to subdue the timid fears of total inexperience, and to repress the bashful feelings of shame-faced awkwardness. (I, 19)

Much less fearful of faux pas and less vulnerable to the insults of fops and fools, she maintains her poise and sense of humor throughout her initiation in the fashionable world of London high society.

She is all innocence and vulnerability, however, when it comes to matters of love and money, both of which call for prudence, the one quality Cecelia lacks. She is too generous in these areas and too quick to loosen both her heartstrings and her purse strings. As Spacks suggests, "Cecelia . . . is more knowledgable about the ways of the world, but not sophisticated enough to protect herself from the wiles of a purposeful man. The conjunction of innocence with experience generates the novel's drama and its titillation."<sup>44</sup> This is certainly one part of Cecelia's problem. She is too innocent and too trusting to avoid the pits and snares set, not by one "purposeful man," but many. Caught in a complex web of deceit, passion, and greed, she lacks the prudence, the wisdom necessary to handle the

<sup>44</sup> Patricia Spacks, "Ev'ry Woman is at Heart a Rake," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 8 (1974), 29.

sophisticated machinations of practiced villains. She allows herself to be victimized by Mr. Harrel, who squanders her paternal fortune and "sells" her to a suitor, and to be humiliated by Mr. Delville's arrogant attempt to prevent her marriage to Mortimer. Even more threatening is the crafty treachery of Mr. Monckton, who preys on her innocent faith in him. Lacking experience, she is ill-equipped at the beginning of her quest to defend herself against the worldly evils represented by these men.

Cecelia's most terrible test comes from within, when she imprudently allows herself to fall in love with Mortimer. The narrator says:

She was not of that inflammable nature which is always ready to take fire, as her passions were under the control of her reason, and she suffered not her affections to triumph over her principles. She started at danger the moment she perceived it, and instantly determined to give no weak encouragement to a prepossession which neither time nor intimacy had justified.  
(I, 244)

But Cecelia is far less in control of her passion than it appears from this. When she becomes a houseguest of the Delvilles for a fortnight, just when she should be most guarded, "she grew less guarded, because less clear-sighted to the danger of negligence, for the frequency of their conversations allowed her little time to consider their

effects." Unaware of her danger, "Her heart made no resistance, for the attack was too gentle and too gradual to alarm her vigilance," and it was not until she returned to the Harrels that "she was conscious her happiness was no longer in her own power" (I, 244). Since she had no "certainty that the regard of young Delvile was reciprocal" (I, 245), she is in a perilous situation indeed, a situation which could have been avoided with prudence.

This situation ends in book three; Cecelia must spend the next nine books struggling to conquer her passion for Delvile. Not until after the aborted secret marriage and after her promise to Mrs. Delvile does she regain control, ordering her life in her own home, filling her hours with "benevolent excursions" and "the society of the wise, good, and intelligent." Through these measures, she is "restored to serenity" (II, 338). In this crucial struggle Cecelia is rewarded only after she has learned to live without Mortimer, by the opportunity to live with him. By the end of her quest she has added experience to innocence and prudence to virtue and is finally deserving of the reward of marriage. She does not change, but adds crowning virtues to a nature already good.

At the end none of the characters has changed in any essential way. Mr. Harrel dies extravagantly and

appropriately in a sensational suicide, leaving others to clean up the mess. Mr. Monckton is deceitful to the end, declaring in his final letter to Cecelia that "I meant but your welfare at all times" (II, 461). And Mr. Delvile's repentance is short-lived; he soon regains his air of haughty pride and his reception of Cecelia into his home is "formal and cold" (II, 463). Burney's characters remain consistent because, as Miller says, in the romance the delineation of character reflects the concern "for the qualities of 'Being,' 'Essence,' the permanent and abiding."<sup>45</sup> The essence of Mr. Harrel is selfish extravagance; the essence of Mr. Monckton, hypocrisy; the essence of Mr. Delvile, pride. Even Cecelia and Delvile do not really change but add prudence to natures that are already near perfection. Beasley is right when he says that Cecelia's story concerns the "testing of an already established" character. He is wrong when he suggests that this is less satisfactory than Austen's "study in the development of personality."<sup>46</sup> Burney, unlike Austen, had no interest in the individual development of unique personalities. She was interested instead in the universal, stable types representing permanent moral values.

<sup>45</sup> Miller, p. 56.

<sup>46</sup> Beasley, p. 163.

These unchanging romance characters speak the language of romance. Critics often attack the "Johnsonese" style of Cecelia. Macaulay says:

In an evil hour the author of Evelina took the Rambler for her model . . . . She had her own style. It was a tolerably good one; and might without any violent change, have been improved into a very good one. She determined to throw it away, and adopt a style in which she could attain excellence only by achieving an almost miraculous victory over nature and over habit. She could cease to be Fanny Burney; it was not so easy to become Samuel Johnson. In Cecelia the change of manner began to appear.<sup>47</sup>

Modern critics have continued to condemn what they see as Johnson's influence on her style. Brimley Johnson says, "Under the watchful eye of Dr. Johnson, indeed, she made some attempt at the rounded period, the elegant antithesis in Cecelia," an "obvious effort" which he regrets.<sup>48</sup> At the time the novel was written, many even suspected that Fanny had not simply imitated Johnson, but that he had had a hand in the composition, a rumor that he flatly denied, saying,

Ay . . . some people want to make out some credit to me from the little rogue's book. I was told by a gentleman this morning, that it was a very fine book, if it was all her own. "It is all her own," said I, "for me, I am

<sup>47</sup> Macaulay, quoted in Hale, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, p. 30.



sure, for I never saw one word of it before it was printed."<sup>49</sup>

But if Johnson had no hand in the style of Cecelia, it is still true that the language of the major characters is in the "high" style, and is not, in contrast to the speech of minor characters, realistic. Cecelia's opening words, for example, are:

Peace to the spirits of my honoured parents, respected be their remains, and immortalized their virtues! may time, while it moulders their frail relics to dust, commit to tradition the record of their goodness! and, oh, may their orphan descendant be influenced through life by the remembrance of their purity, and in death be solaced, that by her it was unsullied. (I, 1)

This style is an elevated one for the "secret prayer" of a twenty-year-old girl.

The speech of other major characters is similarly stylized and formal. Mr. Monckton introduces Cecelia to a small group of people gathered informally around his breakfast table with these words: "I bring you . . . a subject of sorrow in a young lady, who never gave disturbance to her friends but in quitting them" (I, 8). Mr. Delvile, on first meeting Cecelia, says, "I have received information, from authority which I cannot doubt, that the indiscretion of certain of your admirers last

<sup>49</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 454.

Saturday at the Opera-House occasioned a disturbance which to a young lady of delicacy I should imagine must be very alarming" (I, 146). Mrs. Delvile, though a much warmer character, speaks as formally, saying to Cecelia:

I come to you, then . . . in the name of Mr. Delvile, and in the name of our whole family: a family as ancient as it is honourable, as honourable as it is ancient. Consider me as its representative, and hear in me its common voice, common opinion, and common address. (II, 177)

And Delvile, in the heat of passion, speaks to Cecelia in this manner:

Resent not my presumption . . . my beloved Miss Beverly, but let the severity of my recent sufferings palliate my present temerity; for where affection has been deep and serious, causeless and unnecessary misery will find little encouragement; and mine has been serious indeed! Sweetly, then, permit me, in proportion to its bitterness, to rejoice in the soft reverse which now flatters me with its approach. (II, 96)

Critics have been quick to condemn speeches such as these typical ones. Hemlow notes that Cecelia speaks in a "stilted idiom," and White points out that the language of the genteel characters is "high-flown."<sup>50</sup> "Unhappily," says Adelstein, "in Cecelia the aristocrats do most of the talking; their affected, inflated speeches are lifeless

<sup>50</sup> Hemlow, p. 167; White, p. 54.

declamations that are deadly to read."<sup>51</sup> In the most telling comment of all, Will Hale asserts that the upper class characters in Burney speak in a "stilted, affected idiom that lessens very much the illusion of reality."<sup>52</sup> Quite true. But as Miller suggests, "The language both in narration and dialogue, of most 'literary' . . . romance tends to be consciously stylised, 'rhetorical' and anti-mimetic . . . ."<sup>53</sup> Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg assert that "Insofar as narrative literature is concerned, we can observe that the monologues tend to be rhetorical in what we call romance and psychological in what we call realistic narrative."<sup>54</sup> In other words, in romance, speech is designed to influence readers, while in realistic fiction, speech reveals character and intention.

Since Burney's fiction is a blend of romance and realism, we find both types of speech. The language of

<sup>51</sup> Adelstein, p. 70.

<sup>52</sup> Hale, p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> Henry Knight Miller, "Augustan Prose Fiction and the Romance Tradition," in Studies in the Eighteenth Century III: Papers Presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra, 1973, ed. R. F. Brissenden and J. C. Eade (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 254.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (1966; rpt. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 188.

minor characters is realistic and idiosyncratic; although it does not reveal much about the inner life of the characters, it does tell much about the psychology of the type. The speech of the romance characters, such as Cecelia, Delvile, and his parents, on the other hand, is not individualized, it is not realistic, and it is not designed to reveal personality or motive. It is consciously literary and conventionalized. And style in the romance is virtually inseparable from meaning. The balanced, antithetical phrases reflect the concern with order. Miller says of Fielding's style that the formal stylistic devices "reflect a cosmos of certainty and order that remain serene whatever the furor and mutations under its eye."<sup>55</sup> The same may be said of Burney's style.

That Fanny Burney was familiar with the language of the romance is clearly evidenced by her burlesque of it in the masquerade scene. Mr. Belfield, dressed as "the knight of the doleful countenance," assumes the kneeling posture of the knight and addresses Cecelia:

Sublime Lady! I BESEECH but of your exquisite mercy to refrain mouldering the clay composition of my unworthy body to impalpable dust, by the refulgence of those bright stars vulgarly called

<sup>55</sup> Miller, Fielding's Tom Jones, p. 91.

eyes, till I have lawfully wreaked my vengeance upon this unobliging caitiff, for his most disloyal obstruction of your highness's adorable pleasure. (I, 105)

Delvile's address to Cecilia is conventionally courtly.

He says,

From seeing the danger to which my incautious knight errantry has exposed me: I begin indeed, to take you for a very mischievous sort of person; and I fear the poor devil from whom I rescued you, will be amply revenged for his disgrace, by finding that the first use you make of your freedom, is to doom your deliverer to bondage. (I, 108)

This speech is delivered in a light tone in keeping with the tone of the masquerade itself, and Delvile, in making it, may be smiling at himself in the role of knight. The speech, however, is close to his usual way of speaking and is no more stylized than his much more impassioned profession of love for Cecelia many pages later. Although Burney may occasionally ridicule the excesses of romance language, her own major characters consistently speak in just this way.

And if Cecelia is basically a romance story about romance characters speaking the idiom of romance, it is told appropriately enough in a way characteristic of this tradition--by a third person omniscient narrator. Approaching the novel from a strong realistic critical bias, critics have preferred the epistolary method of

Evelina and viewed the narrative mode of Cecelia as a mistake. Adelstein says that in Cecelia and later novels, "The sprightly first-person narrator was replaced by an obtuse, stilted, verbose, omniscient author who intruded with increasing frequency to comment on the action and on the characters, or to proffer social instruction."<sup>56</sup>

Although it is difficult to see why he calls the narrator "obtuse," "stilted" and "verbose" seem apt enough descriptions of the narrator's style. The following passage is typical:

The candour of this speech, in which his aversion to the Delviles was openly acknowledged, and rationally justified, somewhat quieted the suspicions of Cecelia, which far more anxiously sought to be confuted than confirmed: she began, therefore, to conclude that some accident, inexplicable as unfortunate, had occasioned the partial discovery to Mr. Delvile, by which her own goodness proved the source of her defamation. (II, 304)

The sentences are carefully formed, with balance and antithesis, and like the language of the characters, reflect the assumption that there is order in the cosmos, or at least the possibility of imposing order on the flux of worldly experience. Burney's main characters and her narrator do not simply react; they think, they sift experience through the intellect and in so doing, arrange

<sup>56</sup> Adelstein, p. 148.

and order it. The order and balance in the speech of the narrator and the characters suggest an ordering intelligence which in turn suggests a providential order in the universe.

Adelstein's second objection to the way Cecelia is told is that the narrator is omniscient and intrudes "to comment on the action and on the characters, or to proffer social instruction."<sup>57</sup> Adelstein shares the pervasive modern critical tendency to frown on omniscient narration, which has fallen out of favor because, as Wayne Booth argues, our modern scholarly view of modes of narration has centered on an "opposition between artful showing and inartistic, merely rhetorical, telling."<sup>58</sup> Critics consistently respond more favorably to the showing in Evelina than to the telling in Cecelia and Burney's later novels. Again Adelstein is typical when he complains that "Because the angle of narration of Cecelia places no restraints upon her, she describes and discusses her characters instead of presenting them dramatically."<sup>59</sup>

This unreasonable preference for the dramatic mode of presentation came about, Booth tells us, when critics

<sup>57</sup> Adelstein, p. 148.

<sup>58</sup> Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 27.

<sup>59</sup> Adelstein, p. 69.

such as Percy Lubbock hardened Henry James's theories about point of view into dogma which "is reduced to the one thing needful: a novel should be made dramatic."<sup>60</sup> Romance writers did not share this view; neither did Fielding or Burney. One reason for this is, as Scholes and Kellogg suggest, that the word "omniscience" is "a definition based on the presumed analogy between the novelist as creator and the Creator of the cosmos, an omniscient God."<sup>61</sup> As we have seen, the romance reflects a Christian world view, in which the hand of God is highly visible; in the novel the narrator's hand may be equally apparent and equally manipulative. The narrator's voice is also audible.

The narrator of Cecelia is a distinctly moral voice and does not hesitate to moralize, as in this comment on Mr. Monckton's greed: "So short-sighted is selfish cunning, that in aiming no further than at the gratification of the present moment, it obscures the evils of the future, while it impedes the perception of integrity and honour" (I, 3-4). Passages such as these are objectionable to Adelstein, who says, "As the omniscient author, Fanny also could moralize whenever she felt like

<sup>60</sup> Booth, p. 24.

<sup>61</sup> Scholes and Kellogg, p. 272.



it and she felt like it frequently . . . . Fanny's constant moralizing is obtrusive and tedious."<sup>62</sup> And Hazel Mews complains that the tone of Cecelia is "more obviously didactic than that of Evelina."<sup>63</sup>

Although much of the didacticism may be traced, as Hemlow suggests, to the courtesy book vogue,<sup>64</sup> a more important and much older source is the romance tradition, which reflects a moral world in which characters who are either good or evil make choices that are either moral or immoral. No apologies were made for this didacticism; none were expected. It was, in fact, the express aim of romance as well as of eighteenth-century fiction to impart moral truths. As Miller says, "the romances are for the most part either explicitly or implicitly and allegorically didactic, and their authors (and critics) would have found works that failed in didacticism as an ultimate end to be mere trivial entertainments."<sup>65</sup>

These universal moral truths are embodied in Cecelia in themes which underline the necessity for moral choice

<sup>62</sup> Adelstein, p. 70.

<sup>63</sup> Hazel Mews, Frail Vessels: Woman's Role in Women's Novels from Fanny Burney to George Eliot (Univ. of London: The Athlone Press, 1969), p. 33.

<sup>64</sup> For Burney's indebtedness to the courtesy books see Joyce Hemlow, "Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books," PMLA, 65 (September 1950), 732-761.

<sup>65</sup> Miller, Fielding's Tom Jones, p. 72.

and moral action. Cecelia's quest is a series of trials and testings in which she must learn to judge and to act with prudence, a major theme and one which is closely tied to the pervasive theme of appearance and reality. Since prudence involves moral vision or judgment as well as moral action, Cecelia must be able to see clearly before she can act wisely. And the world in which Cecelia undertakes her quest is one in which appearance and reality are frequently at odds. Mr. Monckton, ironically, cautions Cecelia at the beginning of her journey,

Be upon your guard . . . with all new acquaintances; judge nobody from appearances; form no friendship rashly; take time to look about you, and remember you can make no alteration in your way of life without greater probability of faring worse than chance of faring better. Keep therefore as you are, and the more you see of others, the more you will rejoice that you neither resemble nor are connected with them. (I, 14, italics mine)

Monckton's admonishing Cecelia to remain as she is, is self-interested since she is at this point blind to his evil and trusts totally to his apparently benevolent, disinterested concern for her. But his advice--"judge nobody from appearances"--is sound and appropriate since Cecelia is about to be plunged into the London world of false and misleading appearances.

The Harrels' house is a microcosm of this world. Living lavishly, in a house which has the "appearance of

splendid gaiety" (I, 263), they appear rich and happy when in reality they are deeply in debt, forced to cheat workmen and beg from friends to support this false front. Since they have no affection for each other, rarely meeting and rarely talking except about spending or getting money, their marriage is also a facade and, symbolically, is barren. The emptiness of their life, however, does not concern them; they have so thoroughly confused appearance with reality that they believe appearing to be gay is the same as being happy and that appearing to be rich is the same as having money. Even their lavish entertainments are a sham. Mr. Briggs complains of one he attended that the Harrels only

pretended to give a supper; all a mere bam; went without my dinner, and got nothing to eat; all glass and show; victuals painted all manner o'colours; lighted up like a pastry-cook on twelfth-day; wanted something solid, and got a great lump of sweet-meat . . . believe it was nothing but a snow-ball, just set up for show, and covered over with a little sugar. (I, 441-42)

Everything in their life is "set up for show," a fact which doesn't disturb their friends, who are just like them. Although "sometimes those with whom she mixed appeared to be amiable," Cecelia realizes "how ill the coldness of their hearts accorded with the warmth of their professions" (I, 50).

When Cecelia wisely advises Mrs. Harrel to give up this extravagant and empty life, her friend replies "that it was quite impossible for her to appear in the world in any other manner" (I, 186). After Cecelia's ill-placed charity saves them from total ruin, they feel no guilt but only concern for keeping up appearances. Cecelia, shocked at their plans to go to the Pantheon only hours after the bill-collectors have left, is assured by Mrs. Harrel that their "future appearance in the world" depends upon her accompanying them and Mr. Harrel joins her, saying that "your appearance at this time is important to our credit" because "The only way to silence report is by putting a good face upon the matter at once, and showing ourselves to the world as if nothing had happened" (I, 265-66, my emphasis). And when Mr. Harrel disappears for a day and a night, Mrs. Harrel dresses as usual for an assembly because she is, as Cecelia says, obsessed with "saving appearances" (I, 350). At the end of his life, despairing and suicidal, Harrel stages his death in a public and characteristically extravagant way.

Appearance and reality are equally at odds in the house of Mr. Briggs, who, in an inversion of the Harrels' situation, lives like a pauper though wealthy. His house, his servants and his person appear shabby and poor. Briggs half starves his servants, won't allow pencils

sharpened above once a year, uses a slate to save ink, and washes with sand to save soap. As his foot-boy tells Cecelia, "he's so near, it's partly a wonder how he lives at all: and yet he's worth a power of money, too" (I, 171). He prides himself on the ability to see through appearances and cautions Cecelia "Never give your heart to a gold-topped cane, nothing but brass gilt over" and "Be sure don't mind gold waistcoats; nothing but tinsel, all show and no substance" (I, 92), and "Never set your heart on a fine outside, nothing within" (I, 114). But he is as dependent as the Harrels on appearance, though of a different kind, and like them confuses appearance with reality, money with virtue. He asks Cecelia of Albany, "Is he a good man that's the point, is he a good man?" When she replies, "Indeed, he appears to me uncommonly benevolent and charitable," he says, "But that i'n't the thing; is he warm? that's the point, is he warm?" Cecelia answers "If you mean passionate . . . I believe the energy of his manner is merely to enforce what he says." To this Briggs impatiently responds, "Don't take me, don't take me . . . can come down with the ready, that's the matter! can chink the little gold boys, eh?" (II, 290). In his mind, a "good man" is one who has ready cash.

Both the Harrels and Mr. Briggs live lies. Cecelia recognizes that "the unjust extravagance" of the Harrels

is no more deceitful than the "unnecessary parsimony of Mr. Briggs" and that her third guardian "must inevitably be preferable to both" (I, 92).

She soon discovers differently. Mr. Delvile is no less the slave of appearances than her other guardians, saying on first meeting his ward, "I should feel in some measure disgraced, myself, should it appear to the world, while you are under my guardianship, that there was any want of propriety in the direction of your conduct" (I, 146, italics mine). Content with the outward show of respect, he has no notion of what true respect is and is happiest in his castle where "all he saw were either vassals of his power, or guests bending to his pleasure: he abated therefore, considerably, the stern gloom of his haughtiness, and soothed his proud mind by the courtesy of condescension" (II, 2). Quick to trust to appearances, when he surprises Cecelia in Belfield's room, he accepts the appearance as the truth, saying, "the situation in which I see you abundantly satisfies my curiosity" (II, 324). And Mr. Delvile's objection to the name clause is based on a slavish adherence to his family's appearance in the world, since for Mortimer to take the name of Beverly would not in reality make him any less a Delvile.

As Dr. Lyster points out, this pride and prejudice work to Cecelia's advantage at the end since Mr. Delvile is

persuaded to accept her into his home only because he fears the appearance of having a daughter-in-law lodging at the Three Blue Balls. Still his acceptance of her is only apparent. Although "as she now appeared publicly in the character as his son's wife, the best apartment in his house had been prepared for her use, his domestics were instructed to wait upon her with the utmost respect" (II, 463), he never alters his feelings about her and maintains only the outward show of accepting her.

None of Cecelia's guardians, however, can approach Mr. Monckton's skill in masking the truth. He is perceptive about others with "faculties the most skilfull of investigating the character of every other" to which was added "a dissimulation the most profound in concealing his own" (I, 3). Maintaining the appearance of virtue, he fools everyone into accepting him as virtuous. Even his marriage is a sham. Having married for money an older woman whose disposition is "far more repulsive than her wrinkles" (I, 3), he treats her with "the appearance of decency" (I, 4), while waiting eagerly for her to die. Ironically, he is quick to accuse others of the hypocrisy he practices daily. He cautions Cecelia that she does not "see the son properly" and that everyone except Cecelia "must immediately see" (II, 121) that the Delviles have designs on her fortune. Fearful that her charity may

diminish her fortune, he tries to persuade her that Mr. Albany is not an idealist but a "lunatic." Actually it is this "consummate master in every species of hypocrisy" (II, 289), not the Delvilles or Albany, who is misrepresenting himself and scheming to possess both Cecelia and her fortune.

Neither Cecelia nor Mortimer has, at the beginning, enough moral vision to see through false appearances to the truth. Delvile is misled mainly by his acceptance of the way Cecelia appears, as too fond either of Belfield or Sir Robert Floyer. He learns better as he sees the falsity of these appearances, but he learns slowly. After their marriage, when he surprises Cecelia with Belfield in a seemingly compromising situation, he is once again too quick to respond to appearance. He tells Cecelia, "I never have had, I never will have a doubt! I will know. I will have conviction for everything!"; and in a more reassuring tone he adds, "I have ever believed you spotless as an angel! and, by heaven, I believe you so still, in spite of appearances--in defiance of everything!" (II, 421). His faith is weak, however, and when he does not find Cecelia at his father's house, he assumes the worst, saying "it appeared that she wished to avoid me, and once more, in the frenzy of my disappointment, I supposed Belfield a party in her concealment" (II, 457).



Only during Cecelia's madness and near-death does he learn the consequences of relying on appearance. Finally seeing clearly her true nature, he asks if she can forgive "the wretch who for an instant could doubt the purity of a mind so seraphic?" (II, 458).

At the beginning of her quest, Cecelia is also lacking the penetrating moral vision which would protect her from the snares set for her. Not as naive as Evelina, she can spot obvious frauds and hypocrites, but when deceit is complex and subtle, her vision fails her. She is never in danger of misjudging Miss Larolles, Miss Lesson or Mr. Meadows and sees clearly the discrepancy between appearance and reality in the Harrels. She sees through the mask of gaiety of her old childhood friend, Mrs. Harrel, to the emptiness inside. Mr. Monckton praises her for her discernment:

You see her now with impartiality, for you see her almost as a stranger, and all those deficiencies which retirement and inexperience had formerly concealed, her vanity, and her superficial acquaintance with the world have now rendered glaring. But folly weakens all bands; remember, therefore, if you would form a solid friendship, to consult not only the heart but the head, not only the temper, but the understanding. (I, 190)

But Cecelia's lessons in judgment still have far to go. Her vision is still weak, for she replies to Mr. Monckton, "Well, then, . . . at least it must be confessed I have

judiciously chosen you!" (I, 190). Her blindness to Mr. Monckton's evil nature persists until near the end when "shocked and dismayed, she now saw with horror, the removal of all her doubts, and the explanation of all her difficulties, in the full and irrefragable discovery of the perfidies of her oldest friend and confidant" (II, 371).

Although Cecelia sees Mr. Harrel more clearly than she does Mr. Monckton, her vision of him is only partial. She sees the obvious--that he is a dissipated wastrel who is consuming her fortune--but she cannot see to the depth of his treachery and duplicity. Only after his suicide does she learn that he has sold her hand to two hopeful suitors and used her name freely to stave off creditors. At this news "Cecelia saw now but too clearly the reason her stay in his house was so important to him" (I, 425).

But it is not enough to see clearly; one must also learn to act wisely to be truly prudent. Cecelia, like Evelina, must learn to impose order on experience. Internally, she must learn to control and order her passions and externally, to create order out of the flux around her. Coming from an ordered existence in Bury, she is immediately immersed in the chaotic world of London and the Harrel household. Again, as in Evelina, the natural rhythms of sleeping and waking are disturbed.

Cecelia, on her first morning in the city, "arose with the light" (I, 24), and hurrying to the breakfast room was surprised to find no fire, no food, and no family.

Mr. Harrel considers "his own house merely as an hotel, when at any hour of the night he might disturb the family to claim admittance" (I, 49). Their entire life is a clutter of things they don't need and can't pay for and people they don't know or care about. Mr. Monckton rightly terms the Harrel household as "the region of disorder and licentiousness" (I, 359).

The masquerade is illustrative of their life. The preparation of it destroys Cecelia's "tranquility" and sets the whole house "in commotion," while the actual masquerade ends in utter chaos after the Harlequin pulls down the awning and lights, throwing the room into darkness. The narrator describes the resulting disorder in this way:

The clamour of Harlequin, who was covered with glass, paper machee, lamps, and all, the screams of the ladies, the universal buzz of tongues, and the struggle between the frightened crowd which was enclosed, to get out, and the curious crowd from the other apartments, to get in, occasioned a disturbance and tumult equally noisy and confused. (I, 121)

The Harrels' life, like the masquerade scene, is totally out of control, with darkness and chaos always threatening. When Cecelia walks into the Portman Square house to find

it filled with creditors, there is "confusion in the whole house" with debtors swarming, servants scurrying and Mr. Harrel "wild and perturbed" (I, 256), threatening suicide. When he finally makes good this threat at Vauxhall, the suicide is foreshadowed by a "scene of such disorder" (I, 399), as Mr. Harrel, drunk and "extremely unruly," makes a "queer party" of incompatible types, such as Mr. Morrice, Capt. Aresby, Mr. Marriot, Mr. Meadows, Sir Robert, Mr. Hobson and Mr. Simkins, resulting in confusion and quarreling. The suicide itself, an outward manifestation of the deepest moral disorder, despair, appropriately throws the entire gardens into "a general confusion" (I, 404).

The Harrels are not the only principles of disorder. The entire set of fashionable fools who surround them are constantly upsetting things, underlining the danger and the extent of disorder. Morrice, who causes the chaos at the mask, creates confusion wherever he goes. Meadows, in a negative way, often causes disorder. In the teapot scene, he is indirectly responsible for the spill, since his refusal to make room for others causes the crowding and his feet, which he refuses to move, trip the clumsy Morrice. As usual he responds with one of his "absent fits" and "wholly unconcerned by the distress and confusion around him, sat quietly picking his teeth" (I, 281). When

Miss Larolles, Mr. Gosport, and Mrs. Meers get into a chaise together, it is no surprise that it almost instantly overturns, resulting in a general uproar and breaking Miss Larolles' dog's leg, which causes more confusion, as "neither words were saved nor lungs were spared; the very air was rent with cries, and all present were upbraided as if accomplices in the disaster" (II, 135). Morrice characteristically doubles the disorder by inept attempts to right things, and Meadows, "the only unconcerned spectator in the midst of the apparent general bustle" (II, 135), is, as usual, too self-absorbed to see or care.

Tiring quickly of the chaotic society of the Harrels, Cecelia wisely imposes order on her own life by formulating "A scene of happiness at once rational and refined" which involved choosing only a few friends with either piety, knowledge, or accomplishments and manners, a "regulation" freeing her from the meaningless society of empty people and leaving her time for music, reading, and charitable acts. But Cecelia has less luck ordering her finances and her passions than her time.

Money, an insistent theme in Cecelia, is one aspect of the larger theme of order. Adelstein is right to suggest that "Excluding Moll Flanders, no previous novel paid such attention to a character's wealth" and that "Prudence

about money is a dominant thematic idea in Cecelia."<sup>66</sup> Since the way one orders one's finances is an index to prudence and inner order, the characters are judged by the way they save or spend, give or take. Mr. Harrel's obsessive spending is an obvious symptom of a profound moral disorder; so is Mr. Briggs's hoarding.

With Mr. Briggs, charity does not begin at home. He gives his servants nothing to eat "but just some old stinking salt meat, that's stayed in the butcher's shop so long it would make a horse sick to look at it" (I, 171) and threatens to horse whip his footboy for sharpening a pencil before its annual sharpening date. He is no more generous with himself, refusing himself all comfort, wearing cheap clothes, breakfasting on water-gruel and scrubbing his body with sand. His obsessive efforts to pinch pennies often cause him to be physically disordered. Trying to save the cost of a hackney coach, he walks home from the masquerade in the dark, falling into the mud of the kennel, getting "muck" all over his clothes and wig, and suffering cuts and bruises and finally a cold and fever, which he is too stingy to call a physician to relieve. And walking to a party at the Harrels he wears a hole in his shoe, nearly ruins his coat and almost loses a bundle containing his best clothes.

<sup>66</sup> Adelstein, p. 72.

His thrift is an obsession reflecting an inner disorder. He does not order his money; it orders him. Because of this, his life is in a constant state of dirty disorder. As Cecelia says, his "parsimony, vulgarity, and meanness, render riches contemptible, prosperity unavailing, and economy odious" (I, 365). Even less generous to others, he is, as Albany observes, the "Inhuman spirit of selfish parsimony" (II, 287) who says of the poor,

hate 'em; hate 'em all! full of tricks; break their own legs, put out their arms, cut off their fingers, snap their own ankles,--all for what? to get at the chink! to chouse us of cash! ought to be well flogged; have 'em all sent to the Thames; worse than the convicts. (II, 289)

His passion for hoarding and saving is so obsessive that it has unbalanced and disordered him, stifling all fellow feeling.

Cecelia's generosity, though much less blameable than Mr. Harrel's extravagance or Mr. Briggs's parsimony, is also a flaw. Though the narrator describes her generosity as "neither thoughtless nor indiscriminate" (I, 184), under pressure from the Harrels she loses control and is seduced into acting without prudence. Immediately regretting her too charitable giving to the Harrels, she thinks:

How much better . . . would this have been bestowed upon the amiable Miss Belfield! or upon her noble-minded, though proud-spirited brother! and how much less a sum would have made the virtuous and industrious Hills easy and happy for life! but here, to become the tool of the extravagance I abhor! to be made responsible for the luxury I condemn! to be liberal in opposition to my principles, and laugh in defiance of my judgment!--Oh, that my much-deceived uncle had better known to what dangerous hands he committed me! (I, 265)

Mr. Harrel's house is a perilous place for a too generous young lady to live, but this is part of her initiation and testing. Although the lesson is expensive at 8050 pounds, Cecelia learns slowly, and even this costly trial has not taught her true prudence in charity. She, like her friend Mrs. Carlton, has a "generous foible." Mrs. Carlton, compassionate to a fault, "in her zeal to alleviate distress . . . forgot if the object were deserving her solicitude" (II, 73). Cecelia, taught by her experience with the Harrels, considers the worthiness of the recipient, but is too generous to too many deserving people, leaving herself in distress and powerless to help herself or her dependents when Mr. Eggleston claims her estate. She realizes then "the capital error she had committed in living constantly to the utmost extent of her income, without ever preparing, though so able to have done it, against any unfortunate contingency" (II, 407). As the novel ends, Cecelia has learned monetary prudence. The



narrator says, "The strong spirit of active benevolence which had ever marked her character was now again displayed, though no longer, as hitherto, unbounded. She had learnt the error of profusion, even in charity and beneficence" (II, 471).

Cecelia's problem in ordering her passion is more dangerous than her difficulty in ordering her finances. Here again she is too generous and gives too much, too quickly. Although the narrator remarks of Cecelia that "she was not of that inflammable nature which is always ready to take fire, as her passions were under the control of her reason" (I, 244), she allows herself to fall in love before she has "any certainty that the regard of young Delvile was reciprocal" (I, 245) and without having the judgment to foresee his family's objections. This lack of prudence costs Cecelia a world of suffering until, reconciled to the impossibility of the union, she orders her passion and her life. She arranges her life around friends and charitable acts and overcomes her apparently hopeless passion for Delvile "by a regular and even timour of courage mingled with prudence" (II, 328). Spacks suggests that Cecelia has "no real freedom and no power" and that "She must use her energies for self-suppression."<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Spacks, Imagining a Self, p. 181.

This particularly modern view is at odds with the romance perspective, in which it is necessary to impose order on a chaotic world or to impose inner order on passions. Self-control is not self-suppression. On the contrary, the ability to order passion gives "freedom" and "power," while yielding to passion takes them away. One remains good and becomes better by the internal ordering of passion and the external ordering of experience.

Delvile must learn this, too. More than once his "prudence and forbearance have suddenly yielded to surprise and to passion" (II, 56). He has been willing to deceive his parents in a secret marriage or to defy them openly with a public one. Only when he conquers his passion and resigns himself to his parents' will does it become possible for Cecelia and Delvile to be united. Each has had to learn to live ordered and prudent lives apart before they can live an ordered and prudent life together.

Their union is blocked by the passion of the Delviles, whose life is controlled by pride as much as the Harrels' is by extravagance, or Briggs's by avarice. Their passionate pride in their ancestry is a sign of an inner moral disorder and reflects a confusion of values. Mr. Delvile, "a man whose pride out-ran his understanding" (I, 445), is "proud without merit, and imperious without capacity" (II, 5). Even Briggs, for all his moral

blindness, can see the absurdity in Delvile's arrogance and chastises "Don Puffendorf" for his pride in his ancestors, saying, "Why all them old grandfathers and aunts you brag of; a set of poor souls you won't let rest in their coffins; mere clay and dirt! fine things to be proud of: a parcel of old mouldy rubbish quite departed this life!" (I, 443). Mrs. Delvile, though better than her husband, shares his pride in family and his superior attitude, which isolates her. The narrator says:

And if Mr. Delvile was shunned through hatred, his lady no less was avoided through fear; high spirited and fastidious, she was easily wearied and disgusted, she bore neither with frailty nor folly--those two principal ingredients in human nature: she required, to obtain her favour, the union of virtue and abilities with elegance, which meeting but rarely, she was rarely disposed to be pleased; and disdain- ing to conceal either contempt or aversion, she inspired in return nothing but dread or resentment: making thus, by a want of that lenity which is the milk of human kindness, and the bond of society, enemies the most numerous and illiberal by those very talents which, more meekly borne, would have rendered her not merely admired, but adored! (II, 5)

Fanny Burney realized that this was one of the evil consequences of overweening pride and reports in her diary a conversation with a Mr. Crutchley in which he complains how difficult it is "to meet with any society that is good," to which she replies, "But that difficulty . . . is

a part of the pride; were you less fastidious, you would find society as other people find it."<sup>68</sup>

The Delvilles' obsession with ancestry not only isolates them but makes them the helpless puppets of their pride, which is so all-consuming that they are willing to sacrifice their only son's happiness to it. In Mrs. Delvile, Fanny writes to Mr. Crisp, she meant "to show how the greatest virtues and excellences may be totally obscured by the indulgence of violent passions and the ascendancy of favourite prejudices."<sup>69</sup> Mrs. Delvile's violent, passionate pride so disorders her that she hemorrhages and becomes seriously ill, which she admits is the result of "blindness of vanity and passion!" (II, 358). Realizing her folly, she gives her consent to the marriage, writing to Cecelia, "then let wealth, ambition, interest, grandeur and pride, since they cannot constitute his happiness, be removed from destroying it" (II, 357). Mr. Delvile's pride is never diminished, but as Dr. Lyster suggests, "if to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their termination" (II, 462).

Delvile's and Cecelia's eventual union, which takes place with Mrs. Delvile's knowledge and consent, is a

<sup>68</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 380.

<sup>69</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 418.

celebration of order, in contrast to their earlier secret marriage which, appropriately, had been interrupted and not completed. The secret marriage is wrong because it is both deceitful and disobedient, a perversion of marriage, which is a ceremonial and public celebration of order. Cecelia feels the full moral weight of this secrecy. At the thought of the secret marriage she is "confused," "her faculties seemed all out of order . . . , all was darkness and doubt, inquietude and disorder" (II, 117). Their eventual union, though private, is not secret, and though performed without Mr. Delvile's permission, is ratified by Mrs. Delvile's blessing. But not until the end of the novel, when the marriage is openly and publicly acknowledged and recognized by Mortimer's father, is their union truly complete. Spacks suggests that Cecelia is rewarded by marriage only after she has gone through the process of "diminishment."<sup>70</sup> But it is only Cecelia's fortune that is diminished, not Cecelia herself. The marriage represents a fulfillment, a completion rather than a diminishment. No matter how Spacks manipulates the evidence in Cecelia, the love story cannot be read as a woman's failed attempt at liberation. The thematic impact of the love story is moral; moral people make moral choices even when these choices conflict with their desires.

<sup>70</sup> Spacks, Imagining a Self, p. 181.

Setting in Cecelia, like plot, characterization, and themes, is, on one level, characteristic of the romance. Although some details of setting are made to serve the demands of formal realism, others function to serve the concerns of romance. The fullest descriptions in the novel--of the houses--are drawn not for verisimilitude, but for symbolic purposes. The houses are moral places, representing the moral stances of the characters who inhabit them. The Harrels' house is a monument to their extravagance. A backdrop for their lavish entertainments, it is constantly being adorned. Immediately after Cecelia discovers the Harrels have refused to pay the workmen for building they have already done, she walks in to find them around a table "covered with plans and elevations of small buildings," plans for a theatre. Later she finds Mr. Harrel and some workmen examining "an elegant awning, prepared for one of the inner apartments, to be fixed over a long desert-table, which was to be ornamented with various devices of cut glass." Not satisfied with this display of opulence, Mr. Harrel thinks "of running up a flight of steps, and a little light gallery here, and so making a little orchestra" (I, 96). And immediately after their house and belongings are nearly seized by creditors, they prepare the house for a "splendid and elegant" entertainment (I, 312).

Mr. Briggs's home, in contrast, embodies the spirit of parsimony. When Cecelia, disgusted by the Harrels' profligate ways and frightened by Mr. Harrel's demands on her fortune, sought refuge in Mr. Briggs's house, he welcomed her,

led her up stairs, and took her to a room entirely dark, and so close for want of air, that she could hardly breathe in it. She retreated to the landing-place till he had opened the shutters, and then saw an apartment the most forlorn she had ever beheld, containing no other furniture than a ragged stuff bed, two worn-out rush-bottomed chairs, an old wooden box, and a bit of broken glass which was fastened to the wall by two bent nails. (I, 363)

When Cecelia looks shocked at the shabbiness and meanness of the room, her guardian promises to "make it smart as a carrot" with a used table and a second-hand blanket, and explains that until then she can "make a little shift at first; double the blanket till we get another; lie with the maid a night or two" (I, 365). His own room is "yet more scantily furnished, having nothing in it but a miserable bed without any curtains, and a large chest, which, while it contained his clothes, sufficed both for table and chair" (I, 364). It is appropriate that Mr. Briggs describes his room as "snug as a church" (I, 363), since he has made a religion of parsimony and his room, comfortless as a monk's cell, is an altar where he worships cash.

Mr. Delvile's castle is another sort of altar--one before which he practices ancestor-worship. It is described in this way:

DELVILE CASTLE was situated in a large and woody park, and surrounded by a moat. A draw-bridge which fronted the entrance was every night, by order of Mr. Delvile, with the same care as if still necessary for the preservation of the family, regularly drawn up. . . . The mansion-house was ancient, large, and magnificent, but constructed with as little attention to convenience and comfort, as to airiness and elegance; it was dark, heavy, and monastic, equally in want of repair and improvement. The grandeur of its former inhabitants was every where visible, but the decay into which it was falling rendered such remains mere objects for meditation and melancholy . . . . Festivity, joy, and pleasure seemed foreign to the purposes of its construction; silence, solemnity, and contemplation were adapted to it only. (II, 1)

Words such as "monastic," "meditation," and "contemplation" underline the idea of the castle as a shrine to Mr. Delvile's ancestors and to his own pride, while the moat and draw-bridge emphasize the isolation that results from this pride. Lady Honoria introduces another image to describe the castle when she advises it be turned into a jail, suggesting to Mortimer, "it is only to take out these old windows, and fix some thick iron grate in their place, and so turn the castle into a gaol for the county" (I, 49). Mortimer laughs but Mr. Delvile, who is not amused, says sternly, "If I thought my son capable of putting such an insult upon his ancestors, whatever may be the value I



feel for him, I would banish him my presence for ever." Although Lady Honoria's only purpose is to irritate her stuffy uncle, her remark has much truth in it. The castle is jail-like, suggesting that Mr. Delvile is a prisoner of his pride and of the imaginary demands of his ancestors.

Cecelia, who has learned much from the houses she inhabits with her guardians, is a sensible architect when she builds her own house. Mrs. Harrel is disappointed that she lived "with no more magnificence or show than if heiress to only five hundred pounds a year" (II, 329). She lives comfortably but modestly because

She had seen . . . by Mr. Harrel, how wretchedly external brilliancy could cover inward woe, and she had learned at Delvile Castle to grow sick of parade and grandeur. Her equipage, therefore, was without glare, though not without elegance; her table was plain, though hospitably plentiful; her servants were for use, though too numerous to be for labour. The system of her economy, like that of her liberality, was formed by rules of reason, and her own ideas of right, and not by compliance with example, nor by emulation with the gentry in her neighbourhood. (II, 330)

Places in Cecelia are invested with moral significance--Cecelia's house is a good place; Mrs. Harrel's, Mr. Briggs's and Mr. Delvile's are bad places--and represent the moral natures of the characters who live in them: Mr. Harrel's is a shrine to extravagance; Mr. Briggs's, to parsimony; Delvile's, to pride; and Cecelia's, to prudence.

Although the setting, plot, characterization, and themes of Cecelia are all clearly and heavily indebted to romance, Burney intended her novel to be realistic, and to a great extent it is. As we have seen, she made her realistic intentions about the ending explicit, saying Cecelia's "middle state" at the finish is "more natural, more according to real life."<sup>71</sup> As we have also seen, the ending conforms to the typical pattern of romance, ending with "a marriage, a reconciliation, and some sudden expedient for great riches." But the conventional ending is somewhat modified in a realistic direction, with the necessity to keep the marriage unannounced, with Cecelia's loss of fortune only partially repaired by her unexpected inheritance, and with Mr. Delvile's failure to genuinely accept her.

Burney also makes explicit her realistic intentions toward at least one main character, Mrs. Delvile, writing to Mr. Crisp, "I meant in Mrs. Delvile to draw a great, but not a perfect character; I meant, on the contrary, to blend upon paper, as I have frequently seen blended in life, noble and rare qualities with striking and incurable defects."<sup>72</sup> Burney did well what she meant to do with

<sup>71</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 426.

<sup>72</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 418.

Mrs. Delvile. Although her defects are "incurable" and she changes little, if any, she is not a simple black or white romance character, since her imperious pride is made bearable by her intelligence, charm and virtue. Even in the drawing of Mr. Delvile, who is clearly a "black" character, Burney's intentions were that his character and his actions be realistic. She writes in her journal, "I never meant to vindicate old Delvile, whom I detested and made detestable; but I always asserted that, his character and situation considered, he did nothing that such a man would hesitate in doing."<sup>73</sup> And although the Delviles' willingness to sacrifice a large fortune to an old name seemed hardly credible to Dr. Burney and may seem even less so to modern readers, it did not strike Cecelia's contemporary aristocratic readers this way. A certain Lord De Ferrars told Fanny that "if he had been a Delvile, he should have done the same with a Beverley," and Fanny reports that "Mrs. Thrale herself says that her own mother would have acted as Mrs. Delvile acted."<sup>74</sup> Burney, responding to her father's criticism of Mrs. Delvile's actions as unnatural, writes, "Yet when I see about me in world, such strange inconsistencies as I see, such

<sup>73</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 461.

<sup>74</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 461-62.

astonishing contrariety of opinions, and so bigoted an adherence of all marked characters to their own way of thinking, I really know not how to give up this point."<sup>75</sup>

But although both the plot and the main characters are modified slightly in a realistic direction, the realism, for the most part, inheres in the minor comic characters and their language, in one aspect of setting, and in the satire on manners.

Setting in Cecelia, as in the description of the houses, often functions symbolically, representing moral choices available to the quester. Other details of setting, however, are included for quite different purposes. Since Cecelia's quest takes place in the world of the actual, Burney takes some pains to establish verisimilitude or "formal realism" by placing the narrative in a designated geographical space, using place names generously to fix the setting. Leaving Suffolk county to begin her quest in London, Cecelia walks real streets, attends real operas and concerts featuring actual performers, visits real places and resides at real addresses. The first opera Cecelia hears is Artaserse, sung by Pacchierotti, who was chief singer at the Italian Opera House in London from 1778-1785 and a friend of Dr. Burney. In a diary entry of 1779, Fanny describes her

<sup>75</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 419.

pleasure at Pacchierotti's Sunday morning visit to the Burney household where he sang a rondeau from Artaserse.<sup>76</sup> When Cecelia undergoes a condescending interrogation about what she has seen and where she has been, the foppish Captain Aresby shows off his knowledge of fashionable entertainments by asking if she has tried the Pantheon or the Festino, while Mrs. Harrel recommends the ancient Music (the concerts of Ancient Music or the King's Concerts) or Abel's Concerts. Mr. Harrel gambles at Brook's Club and commits suicide at Vauxhall Gardens. Cecelia's journey to Mr. Briggs's house is interrupted by a mob gathering to watch prisoners on their way to be hanged at Tyburn Street, the actual place for hangings until, a year and one half after Cecelia's publication, they were moved to Newgate. The Belfields, who formerly lived in the village of Paddington, move first to Swallow Street in London and later to Portland Street on Oxford Road. The Harrels live in Portman Square; the Delviles' town house is in St. James' Square, the Moncktons' at Soho Square. Frequent references to actual places fix the story in space and lend it an air of authenticity.

In contrast to the major characters, the host of minor characters who walk these streets, attend these

<sup>76</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 97.

events, and visit these places of entertainment are surprisingly realistic. Modern critics often fail to appreciate the realism of the minor characters. Hale says that "Madame D'Arblay cannot rank with the greatest creators of characters. She has portrayed a remarkable number of types, and has skillfully differentiated them, but they do not impress us as human beings," adding that "Madame D'Arblay has made too many freaks."<sup>77</sup> Adelstein says that most of her minor characters are failures because "with only a few exceptions, their dominant traits are carried to such extremes that they become caricatures."<sup>78</sup>

There is truth in the "accusation" that the minor characters are types, but they are types drawn directly from life and so are more deeply and truly "real" than less typological characters. And although they may fail to satisfy modern critical demands for realism, eighteenth-century readers were so persuaded of their credibility that they searched for their models among contemporary people; many readers, for example, thought Mr. Briggs copied from a contemporary sculptor named Nollekens. All the minor characters struck readers of

<sup>77</sup> Hale, p. 26.

<sup>78</sup> Adelstein, p. 67.

the time as familiar figures. Mrs. Thrale says, "Hobson and Simkins are Borough men, and I am confident they were both canvassed last year; they are not representatives of life, they are the life itself."<sup>79</sup> The Monthly Review agreed, writing that in Mr. Hobson "the self-importance of a rich tradesman is represented to the life."<sup>80</sup> The English Review says of the characters in Cecelia, "All of them seem fairly purchased at the great work-shop of life, and not the second-hand, vamped-up shreds and patches of the Monmouth-street of modern romance."<sup>81</sup> Mrs. Walsingham says, "I meet her characters every Day: Miss Larolles in particular," while Mrs. Montagu exclaims, "O, the Meadows are a tribe as numerous as it is hateful."<sup>82</sup>

Another, older criticism of the minor characters is that they are simply too many of them. Edmund Burke, in a letter to Burney commending Cecelia, writes, "Justly as your characters are drawn, perhaps they are too numerous."<sup>83</sup> Adelstein agrees, suggesting that Burke

<sup>79</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 428.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney, p. 162.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney, p. 164.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney, p. 165.

<sup>83</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 435.

"rightfully objects to the multitude of minor figures cluttering the novel."<sup>84</sup> Minor characters are certainly far more numerous in Cecelia than in Evelina. From the upper ranks of society, Burney draws Miss Larolles, Miss Leason, Mrs. Meers, Captain Aresby, Sir Robert Floyer, Mr. Meadows, Mr. Morrice, Mr. Gosport, while from the middle class, she draws Briggs, Mr. Hobson, Mr. Simken, and the Belfields. The plethora of minor characters works well, though, in terms of the romance, which, as Miller says, shows that "the 'actual' world is full of mutability and fluctuation and chaotic particulars."<sup>85</sup> The proliferation of minor figures can be viewed as an expression of these "chaotic particulars."

In these minor characters the realistic satire of manners and the romance concerns meet. Cecelia must conduct her quest in the world of the actual, and these minor characters represent on one level the chaos that she must learn to order and the false appearances she must learn to see through. Since these concerns are acted out on a social stage where manners are the measure of morality, the minor characters are, on the level of realistic social satire, the targets for ridicule and

<sup>84</sup> Adelstein, p. 69.

<sup>85</sup> Miller, "Augustan Prose," p. 254.



correction. Romance and satire, both didactic, moral modes, are compatible and complementary. Hale is right to suggest that most of Burney's characters "are not only mean and cruel and utterly indifferent to everyone else's feelings, but they take a fiendish delight in making other people miserable." He is wrong, however, to suggest that "the moral code of these people is largely a matter of decorum and propriety" and that "Etiquette serves in lieu of a conscience."<sup>86</sup> The opposite is true. Good characters are well-mannered; bad ones are ill-mannered. Hale makes a common mistake in confusing fashionable gestures with good manners. Burney, who never makes such a mistake, writes to Susan, "My coldness in return to all these sickening, heartless, ton-led people, I try not to repress."<sup>87</sup> Mr. Gosport, who has good manners and good sense, tells Cecelia, "A man of the Ton, who would now be conspicuous in the gay world, must invariably be insipid, negligent and selfish" (I, 271). Burney understood clearly the difference between tonnish manners, which are fashionable forms empty of meaning, and true good manners, which are reflections of good nature and virtue.

<sup>86</sup> Hale, pp. 26-27.

<sup>87</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, II, 267.

Tonkish manners, in fact, are synonymous with affectation, which in the minor characters becomes a variation of the appearance-reality theme. Cecelia must learn to deal with such manners early when Mrs. Harrel, showing remarkably bad manners, thrusts her guest immediately into a formal party, which includes the gamut of affected types, who exhibit their bad manners at once by staring and talking about Cecelia among themselves. Miss Larolles is first to "attack" her with her empty and affected conversation, which is invariably about clothes, hairstyles, and social events. She says, "for my part, I never think about dress" but tells a revealing story about her preparations for a masquerade. Lucky enough to get a ticket because a friend "by the greatest good luck in the world happened to be taken suddenly ill" (I, 21), she then "got one of the sweetest dresses you ever saw." But

When everything else was ready, I could not get my hair-dresser! I sent all over the town--he was nowhere to be found. I thought I should have died with vexation. I assure you I cried so, that if I had not gone in a mask, I should have been ashamed to be seen. And so, after all this monstrous fatigue, I was forced to have my hair dressed by my own maid, quite in a common way; was it not cruelly mortifying? (I, 21)

Although she affects never to "think about dress," she is obsessed with outward appearance--both her own and others--and judges people solely by their clothes. Looking

about for Mrs. Mears at a party, she says,

O, I see her now; I'm sure there's no mistaking her; I could know her by that old red gown half a mile off. Did you ever see such a frightful thing in your life? And it's never off her back. I believe she sleeps in it. I am sure I have seen her in nothing else all winter. It quite tires one's eye. She's a monstrous shocking dresser. (I, 41)

While Miss Larolles is a constant source of what Mr. Gosport calls "the insignificant click-clack of modish conversation," all of which is about appearance, Miss Leeson, her exact opposite, rarely speaks, providing an example of "the pensive dulness of affected silence" (I, 23). Her affectation is more troublesome to Cecelia, who is disconcerted by Miss Leeson's laconic responses to her friendly attempts at conversation until Mr. Gosport explains this fashionable affectation. He says,

I come, now, to the silence of affectation, which is presently discernible by the roving of the eye round the room to see if it is heeded, by the sedulous care to avoid an accidental smile, and by the variety of disconsolate attitudes exhibited to the beholders. This species of silence has almost without exception its origin in that babyish vanity which is always gratified by exciting attention, without ever perceiving that it provokes contempt. (I, 39)

Cecelia meets a different affectation in the person of Sir Robert Floyer, who studies to appear a "man of the town." He is insolent and arrogant, and

His manners, haughty and supercilious, marked the high opinion he cherished of his own importance; and his air and address, at once bold and negligent, announced his happy perfection in the character at which he aimed, that of an accomplished man of the town. (I, 31)

His conversation, which consists entirely of gossip on horse-racing, gambling, town beauties, bankruptcies and divorces, is calculated to add to the effect. His concern with his own appearance is matched by his interest in the superficial appearance of others, and he examines Cecelia "with the scrutinizing observation of a man on the point of making a bargain, who views with fault-seeking eyes the property he means to cheapen" (I, 31).

Of all the affected fools Cecelia must deal with, Mr. Meadows is the most absurd. His affectation is to appear utterly jaded--with people, with places, with music, with traveling--in short, with life. He tells Cecelia, "I am tired to death! tired of everything! I would give the universe for a disposition less difficult to please. Yet, after all, what is there to give pleasure? When one has seen one thing, one has seen every thing." He concludes as usual with a "violent fit of yawning" (I, 268). Mr. Gosport, who is expert at labeling and defining the varieties of popular affectations, explains to Cecelia that Meadows is an "INSENSIBLIST." Miss Larolles admiringly says of him,

Why he's at the very head of the ton. There's nothing in the world as fashionable as taking no notice of things, and never seeing people, and saying nothing at all, and never hearing a word, and not knowing one's own acquaintance, and always finding fault. (II, 146)

Affectation, though less dangerous than the evil hypocrisy of Mr. Monckton, is still a serious moral flaw because it arises from vanity and pride, is based on illusion and delusion, and is manifested in the social world as bad manners.

Another concern of the romance plot--order--is also mirrored in the satire on manners. True good manners reflect inner order and create outer order in the social world. Bad manners reflect inner disorder and create chaos. Cecelia is momentarily disordered and embarrassed by Mrs. Harrel's welcoming party, where she is further confused by the rattling of Miss Larolles, the silences of Miss Leeson and the arrogant advances of Sir Robert Floyer. Mr. Morrice, as we have seen, creates chaos wherever he goes, upsetting a table and a teapot and participating in the confusion of the over-turned carriage. Mr. Meadows takes a perverse delight in creating confusion by his rude listlessness. Mr. Gosport says of him that

If he sees a lady in distress for her carriage, he is to enquire of her what is the matter, and then, with a shrug, wish her well through her fatigues, wink at some by-stander, and walk

away. If he is in a room where there is a crowd of company, and a scarcity of seats, he must early ensure one of the best in the place, be blind to all looks of fatigue, and deaf to all hints of assistance, and seemingly totally to forget himself, lounge at his ease, and appear an unconscious spectator of what is going forward. (I, 271)

These "absent fits" result in discomfort and confusion.

Mr. Briggs is another agent of social, as well as moral, disorder. At the masquerade, he causes general confusion and disgust as, filthy with ashes, he grabs at Cecelia's cap, pats her cheek with his sooty hand, and repulses the whole company with his offensive odor and appearance. Later, at the Harrels' house, he again disrupts the party by standing on a chair to get a good view, pushing rudely through the crowd and taking off his wig to wipe his head. These actions excited "utter consternation of the company" and "universal horror," much to the delight of the old miser who looked about grinning "to see whom he had discomposed" (I, 315).

And finally Lady Honoria, though charming and witty, likes nothing better than to upset everyone with her merciless teasing and gossip. She enjoys the gossip circulating about Cecelia's suitors "because it helps to torment them, and keeps something going forward" (I, 345). When Lord Derford is due to arrive at Delville castle, she hopes fervently that he brings some scandalous tale "that

will put Mrs. Delvile in a passion, which will help to give us a little spirit" (II, 9). All her schemes about transforming Delvile Castle into a jail are designed to upset her proud uncle, and she admits to Cecelia, "I only say so to provoke him" and that "I take much delight in seeing any body in a passion. It makes them look so excessively ugly!" (II, 51). Some of her gossip is more malicious. On the slimmest thread of fact, she weaves an ugly story about Mortimer's keeping a mistress, a rumor designed to upset both Mrs. Delvile and Cecelia. Her first hint of this affair causes Cecelia "consternation." And when Lady Honoria repeats and embellishes it later, Cecelia blushes and becomes ill, spoiling her embroidery in her confusion. Cecelia's disturbance delights Lady Honoria, who torments her cruelly about her ruined needlework and her blushes.

The bad manners, affectations and disorderly conduct of the minor characters are more than breaches of etiquette. These are moral, as well as social, failures. Good manners, which spring from a good heart, create social relationships that are harmonious and deeply satisfying. Bad manners, which grow from a bad heart, create chaos, frustration and pain.

The language of these flawed minor characters functions both to underline the moral themes of the novel

and to enhance formal realism. This aspect of the novel both eighteenth-century and modern readers have found most successful. Mrs. Hale wrote in 1782 that when she read Cecelia, she could "hear some people chattering their nonsense at random," and Dr. Johnson said he could hear in the novel "the free full flow of London talk."<sup>88</sup> Among modern critics, Adelstein praises Burney's skill in having the middle-class characters "speak almost as naturally as Mr. Smith and the Branghtons."<sup>89</sup> White remarks that in the conversations of comic figures Burney "suits the language to the character and scene as she does in Evelina," while Hale says that the speeches of "second-class characters are always more natural" in Cecelia.<sup>90</sup> Muriel Masfield suggests that "It is like a plunge into reality to pass from such exalted passages as Delvile's declaration of love for Cecelia to Mr. Briggs scolding Cecelia for failing to pay him a visit he was expecting."<sup>91</sup>

The speech of the minor characters, both upper and lower class, is realistic. Miss Larolles, Miss Leeson,

<sup>88</sup> Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney, pp. 164, 167.

<sup>89</sup> Adelstein, p. 70.

<sup>90</sup> White, p. 54; Hale, p. 14.

<sup>91</sup> Muriel Masfield, Women Novelists from Fanny Burney to George Eliot (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1934), p. 30.



Mr. Meadows, and Captain Aresby speak the fashionable jargon of affectation that was immediately recognizable to contemporary readers, while the speech of Mr. Hobson and Mr. Simkins seemed to catch just the right tone of the middle class merchant of the day. The language of these characters adds verisimilitude in yet another way by its sheer bulk. Although the method of narration is omniscient, the preponderance of dialogue gives a dramatic quality, and so a sense of immediacy, to whole scenes consisting of realistic conversations. And as White suggests, by allowing the characters "to speak for themselves, Miss Burney preserves the appearance of objectivity and apparently the process of judgment entirely to her readers."<sup>92</sup>

An even more important function of language is to reveal character and so to underline themes. Burke praised the language in Cecelia, saying that the characters are known "by their own words."<sup>93</sup> The language of the characters defines them and defines their faults as well. To both Miss Leeson and Miss Larolles, speech is a fashionable gesture rather than a means of communication. Words are to them like dress or hairstyles.

<sup>92</sup> White, p. 21.

<sup>93</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 473.

Each affects a different, but equally modish and equally empty, style of speaking. Mr. Gosport, again the expert in these matters, tells Cecelia,

The TON misses, as they are now called, who now infest the town, are in two divisions, the SUPERCILIOUS, and the VOLUBLE. The SUPERCILIOUS, like Miss Leeson, are silent, scornful, languid, and affected, and disdain all converse but with those of their own set; the VOLUBLE, like Miss Larolles, are flirting, communicative, restless, and familiar, and attach, without the slightest ceremony, every one they think worthy their notice. (I, 37)

These styles of speaking, though the height of fashion, have certain unpleasant effects on their slavish adherents. Miss Leeson suffers most

for as she must speak only in her own coterie, she is compelled to be frequently silent, and therefore, having nothing to think of, she is commonly gnawn with self-denial, and soured with want of amusement: Miss Larolles, indeed, is better off, for in talking faster than she thinks, she has but followed the natural bent of her disposition. (I, 273)

But unpleasant as these non-conversations may be to the speaker, they are more so to their unfortunate listeners such as Cecelia, who is alternately frozen to death by silence or attacked by an empty barrage of words.

A third type of language affectation is represented by the sect of Jargonists headed by Captain Aresby, whose speech is studded with French phrases and pat expressions.

This type, explains Mr. Gosport,

has not an ambition beyond paying a passing compliment, nor a word to make use of that he has not picked up at public places. Yet this dearth of language, however you may despise it, is not merely owing to a narrow capacity: foppery and conceit have their share in the limitation, for though his phrases are almost always ridiculous or misapplied, they are selected with much study, and introduced with infinite pain. (I, 272)

Mr. Meadows, the chief Insensiblist, is even more ridiculous in his affected abuse of words. As Mr. Gosport explains, "he must, upon no account, sustain a conversation with any spirit, lest he should appear, to his utter disgrace, interested in what is said" (I, 271). Miss Larolles, a great admirer of Mr. Meadows, commends his refusal to speak or to listen, saying there is simply nothing quite so fashionable as "saying nothing at all, and never hearing a word" (II, 146). Perhaps this is not so strange as it seems since he has nothing significant to say and, in the fashionable circles he runs in, there is rarely anything worth hearing.

Mr. Briggs's language, though not an affectation, reveals his chief moral flaw--his miserliness. He hoards words as carefully as he does money and speaks a curious shorthand. When Cecelia tells him she has not yet met Mr. Delvile, he replies:

Though so. No matter: as well not. Only tell you he's a German Duke, or a Spanish Don Ferninand. Well you've me! poorly off else. A couple of ignoramusses! don't know when to buy or sell. No doing business with either of them. We met once or twice: all to no purpose: only heard Don Vampus count his old Grandees; how will that get interest for money? Then comes master Harrel,--twenty bows to a word,--looks at a watch,--about as big as a sixpence,--poor raw ninny! a couple of rare guardians! Well, you've got me, I say; mind that! (I, 91)

Cecelia, not surprisingly, is unable to reply to this "harangue." His written language, which involves the expenditure of pen and ink as well as words, is even stingier. He writes to his ward: "Miss, Received your's of the same date; can't come to-morrow. Will, Wednesday the 10th. Am, &c. Jn Briggs" (II, 260).

The problem with all these uses and abuses of language is that none of them communicates meaning, first of all because they are empty forms devoid of matter and secondly because they are so eccentric and private that they are almost incomprehensible. At the opera Cecelia listens to the babble of her party:

yet was at first in no little perplexity to understand what was going forward, since so universal was the eagerness for talking, and so insurmountable the antipathy to listening, that every one seemed to have her wishes bounded by a continual utterance of words, without waiting for any answer, or scarce even desiring to be heard. But when, somewhat more used to their dialect and manner, she began better to comprehend their discourse, wretchedly indeed

did it supply to her the loss of the opera. She heard nothing but descriptions of trimmings, and complaints of hair-dressers, hints of conquest that teemed with vanity, and histories of engagements which were inflated with exultation. (I, 130)

Cecelia is not the only one who has difficulty deciphering the language of others. Mr. Delvile says to Mr. Briggs, "This is language, sir . . . so utterly incomprehensible, that I presume you do not even intend it should be understood" (I, 443). Mr. Hopkins, understandably puzzled by Captain Aresby's affected language and French phrases, cannot believe he is an Englishman. He exclaims, "An Englishman, ma'am! why I could not understand one word in ten that came out of his mouth," and adds, "Let everyman speak to be understood . . . that's my notion of things: for as to all those fine words that nobody can make out, I hold them to be of no use" (I, 399). His complaint is justified. Aresby's language communicates nothing; it is all empty show. But Hobson and his friend Simpkins are themselves at fault when they fail to understand Mr. Albany. Mr. Hobson says, "But as to talking in such a whiskey-friskey manner that nobody can understand him, why it's tantamount to not talking at all, being he might as well hold his tongue" (II, 321-22). But we soon suspect that it is not only the words but the ideas behind them that Hopkins finds incomprehensible. He

continues,

And then as to that other article, of abusing a person for not giving away all his lawful gains to every cripple in the streets, just because he happens to have but one leg, or one eye, or some such matter, why it's knowing nothing of business! it's what I call talking at random. (II, 322)

Albany's language, the narrator says, is "too lofty for their comprehension" (II, 286).

It is not only the lofty language, but the lofty sentiments underlying it that they find incomprehensible. Mr. Albany may be slightly mad in a wonderful way. He is obsessed with alleviating distress and poverty wherever he finds it. His charity rather than his words make merchants like Hopkins and Simkins uncomfortable. Cecelia, who understands charitable impulses, also understands Albany's words. And Dr. Johnson had no trouble at all with Albany's language, declaring "he is one of my first favourites. Very fine are the things he says." Burney comments that Johnson "fully, also, enters into all my meaning in the high-flown language of Albany . . . ." <sup>94</sup> His deeds are as "high-flown" as his words, and he tells Cecelia, "Yet words alone will not content me; I must have deeds" (II, 248).

<sup>94</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, I, 463.

The connection that Albany makes between words and deeds underlines the whole idea of form and content central to the satire on manners and to the romance. The novel is realistic on one level in its inclusion of the details of daily life. In Cecelia, characters count their money, purchase gowns and caps, dress their hair, visit real places and often speak realistically. As a narrative technique, these details function as devices to add verisimilitude. But they are even more important thematically. Cecelia's testing and initiation take place in the world of human experience, which includes money and dress and parties. Characters who are morally inadequate confuse these trivial things and activities with an ultimate moral reality; they settle for empty forms. For Mr. Briggs and Mr. Harrel money is the ultimate reality; for Miss Larolles and Mr. Meadows affected forms pass for real manners. But by the end of her quest Cecelia has learned, not to ignore forms, but to use them correctly by filling them with significant moral content. Viewing manners as the outward manifestation of inner goodness and money as a means of living well and doing good, she has learned to rise above the welter of mere things to a higher reality grounded in order and prudence and virtue.

## CHAPTER V

CAMILIA

Between the years 1782 when Cecelia was published and 1796 when Camilla came out, Fanny Burney's life changed in important ways. From 1786 to 1791 she was second keeper of the robes to Queen Charlotte, a position that drained her energy, dampened her spirits, and left her little time for rest and less for writing. In 1793, at the age of 41, she married an exiled Frenchman, Alexandre d'Arblay, and the next year had her only child, Alexander. All these changes had an effect on her writing. Her duties to the Royal Family were so demanding that although she began her third novel during the five years she served them, she never got beyond preliminary plot outline and character sketches. After the publication of Camilla, she told the king in an interview at Windsor that "The skeleton was formed here, but nothing was completed."<sup>1</sup> Her new role as wife and mother made different but equally difficult demands, mainly financial. Since the exiled Frenchman was penniless, their total income was 120 pounds

<sup>1</sup> Fanny Burney, The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney, ed. Joyce Hemlow and Patricia Boutilier, III (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973), 176.



a year--100 from a pension for Fanny's service to the queen and 20 from the sale of Cecelia.

Finishing the novel became an urgent need. Susan writes to her in 1793, "For my own part I can only say, & solicit, & urge to my Fanny to print, print, print - Here is a resource - a certainty of removing present difficulties . . . ." <sup>2</sup> Fanny took this advice and threw herself into writing Camilla, turning out as many as 14 pages at a sitting. When the king asked her how much time she had given her writing, she replied, "All my time, sir! - from the period I planned publishing it, I devoted myself to it wholly; - I had no Episode - but a little baby!" <sup>3</sup> Pressure to increase her income from this novel came from family members. Her brother Charles advised her "What Evelina . . . does now for the son of Lowndes, & what Cecelia does for the Son of Payne, let your third work do for the Son of its Authour." <sup>4</sup> It was good advice, bringing the D'Arblays 1000 pounds from the booksellers, enough to reduce their financial burdens and to finance a small house which they aptly named "Camilla Cottage."

<sup>2</sup> Fanny Burney, The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney, ed. Joyce Hemlow and Althea Douglas, II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 148.

<sup>3</sup> Burney, Journals and Letters, III, 176.

<sup>4</sup> Burney, Journals and Letters, III, 140.

Their appetite whetted by the fourteen-year famine between Cecelia and Camilla, the public eagerly devoured the new novel. In the first four months, nearly 4,000 copies were sold--four times as many as Evelina and nearly twice as many as Cecelia. Critical reception, however, was mixed. On the list of subscribers to Camilla was listed a "Miss J. Austen of Steventon." Austen liked the book and wrote to her sister of a woman whom she had recently met, "there are two traits in her character which are pleasing, namely she admires Camilla, and she drinks no cream in her tea."<sup>5</sup> The Monthly Review, less enthusiastic than Austen, criticized Camilla for grammar and style. Even more wounding was Horace Walpole's terming the novel "the deplorable Camilla."<sup>6</sup>

Stung by remarks such as these, Madame D'Arbly insisted that she cared more about sales than critics and composed a poem for her father which read, "Now heed no more what critics thought 'em/ Since this you know - All People bought 'em."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jane Austen, quoted in Muriel Masfield, Women Novelists from Fanny Burney to George Eliot (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1934), p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> The Monthly Review, quoted in Masfield, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Fanny Burney, quoted in introduction to Camilla, or a Picture of Youth, ed. with an introduction by Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. xx.

Her actions in the months following the reviews belie these words. Already aware of the problem of length, she had said to the king before Camilla came out, "My subject grew upon me & encreased my materials to a bulk - that, I am afraid, will be still more laborious to wade through for the Readers than the Writer!"<sup>8</sup> After publication, she started immediately and frantically to revise. A hurried second edition was published too soon to incorporate many revisions, and it was not until 1802 that a revised second edition appeared. Unsatisfied, Burney continued to revise, trimming length and removing awkward constructions and Gallicisms, a process that continued intermittently until she died in 1840. It was all to no avail; the edition which came out in that year was a reprint of the 1796 edition.

Perhaps if more of her revisions had been printed, modern critics and readers might read Camilla more frequently and judge it more kindly. As it is, it is consistently considered less successful than either of the first two novels. Austen Dobson says, "We doubt . . . that any but the fanatics of the out-of-date, or the student of manners, could conscientiously struggle through

<sup>8</sup>Burney, Journals and Letters, III, 176.

Camilla."<sup>9</sup> Adelstein, after praising selected characters and scenes in Camilla, says, "Yet these few fine scenes and well-delineated characters cannot save a novel burdened with melodrama and didacticism, overloaded with plot, and top-heavy with sentimental situations. Under the weight of these shortcomings, Camilla has sunk from public view."<sup>10</sup> The Blooms name Camilla as the first of Burney's novels "to exhibit a perceptible falling off."<sup>11</sup> E. T. S. Dugdale says Camilla is "almost unreadable," while Hale asserts that it was "never readable."<sup>12</sup>

Camilla is clearly inferior to Burney's first two novels, but for reasons other than the ones usually cited. In this novel, as in the earlier ones, Burney has drawn characters, themes, and plot from the romance; the flaws critics point to can be understood as debts to this tradition. The real problem with Camilla, aside from the problem of over-writing that it shares with Cecelia, is

<sup>9</sup> Austen Dobson, Fanny Burney (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1903), p. 202.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Adelstein, Fanny Burney, Twayne English Authors Series, No. 67 (New York: Twayne, 1968), p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> Lillian D. Bloom and Edward A. Bloom, "Fanny Burney's Novels: The Retreat from Wonder," Novel: A Forum on Fiction, 12 (Spring 1979), 230.

<sup>12</sup> E. T. S. Dugdale, "Madame d'Arblay," Quarterly Review, 274 (1940), 71; Will Taliaferro Hale, "Madame d'Arblay's Place in the Development of the English Novel," Indiana University Studies, 3 (January 1916), 5.

that in this novel, unlike the first two, the delicate balance between romance and realistic social satire is not maintained.

The plot of Camilla, like that of Evelina and Cecelia, is, in its broadest outline, that of the romance. The only one of Burney's heroines not to be orphaned and isolated, Camilla is surrounded by a large, happy family. No mystery surrounds her birth; no question exists about her parentage. With this exception, the plot is closely modelled on the romance. Camilla, like Evelina and Cecelia and other romance heroines, is, at the beginning of the novel, an adolescent, innocent and untried, ready to undergo the familiar rite de passage involving a journey from the safety of her innocent rural home into the wicked world of experience. Her story, subtitled A Picture of Youth, is in every way typical of the initiation experience with all its dangers and its temptations. As Dr. Marchmont says, "there is nothing more certain, than that seventeen weeks is not less able to go alone in a nursery, than seventeen years in the world."<sup>13</sup> Camilla is alone and unprotected by friends or

<sup>13</sup> Fanny Burney, Camilla, or a Picture of Youth, ed. with an introduction by Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 646. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text.

family through most of her journey, where her youth and her naiveté constantly place her in perilous situations which threaten her innocence and virtue.

As in most romances, the journey into the world represents a pilgrimage or quest. And again, although the five-volume division somewhat obscures the fact, the tripartite pattern of the quest supplies the basic structure for the plot. Stage one, "the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures," takes up most of the first four volumes, ending with book VII of the fourth volume; stage two, "the crucial struggle," encompasses the last book of the fourth volume and most of the fifth, ending with book X, chapter XI of the last volume. The last three chapters describe the "exaltation of the hero."

Although the novel does not begin, as Evelina and Cecelia do, in medias res, Camilla's childhood is told sketchily in the first six chapters; the main story begins when she is seventeen years old and about to "come out" into society. Briefly, the background is this. Camilla has been reared with two sisters and a brother in rural retirement in the parsonage house of Etherington by her father, a rector, and her mother. Her uneventful life is interrupted when Mr. Tyrold's older brother, a wealthy baronet, loses his health and moves to a nearby estate, bringing with him his orphaned niece and nephew. Instantly

and completely charmed by Camilla, her uncle persuades her reluctant parents to let her live with him at Cleves, where he grows fonder of her each day and determines to make her heiress to his estate, which amounts to 5000 pounds a year. Soon, however, a series of accidents caused by Sir Hugh's carelessness, leaves Camilla's younger sister, Eugenia, terribly scarred and crippled. Filled with guilt and remorse, her uncle tries to make amends by promising to leave her, rather than Camilla, the bulk of his fortune and by betrothing her to his nephew, Clermont.

"From this period," we are told, "the families of Etherington and Cleves lived in the enjoyment of uninterrupted harmony and repose" till Camilla was seventeen years old (p. 49). The main story begins with Mrs. Margland, governess to Sir Hugh's niece, Indiana, remonstrating with the old baronet about "the necessity of bringing the young ladies out" (p. 54). Although Miss Margland's motives are not the best--she is bored with quiet country living and longs for the excitement of city society--she is right to suggest that the time has come for the young women to enter the world, or as Johnson puts it, to confront "the wicked world outside the garden" (p. 39). Tutored by parents with "goodness of heart" in "principles of piety," Camilla is good, but her virtue

must be tried and perfected by experience. The narrator makes this clear in the first chapter, saying,

The experience which teaches the lesson of truth, and the blessings of tranquillity, comes not in the shape of warning nor of wisdom; from such they turn aside, defying or disbelieving. 'Tis in the bitterness of personal proof alone, in suffering and in feeling, in erring and repenting, that experience comes home with conviction, or impresses to any use. (p. 8)

The first stage of Camilla's quest is a brief sally into society at a ball in nearby Northwick, where she meets "the officers of \* \* \* regiment" and "all the beaux and belles of the county." Here she suffers the impertinent remarks and rude examinations of a fop, Sir Sedley Clarendel, Mr. Dubster, a gauche tradesman, and Major Cerwood, who treats her, she reports, "like a country simpleton" (p. 63). Less poised than Cecelia, but more so than Evelina, Camilla is amused rather than threatened by the odd assortment of social types she meets.

At her second public entertainment, a more serious threat poses itself. The trials of Camilla, like those of Cecelia, fall into two areas--the heart and the purse. At a public breakfast the temptation to extravagance begins when a locket is raffled. Brought up in thrift and cautious with her small allowance, she hangs back, but finally succumbs and throws in her guinea with the rest



because, as the narrator explains, "she knew not, . . . till now, how hard to resist was the contagion of example" (p. 93). This is Camilla's first mistake about money; she makes many more.

Her second mistake is to fall recklessly and prematurely in love with Edgar Mandlebert, the wealthy young ward of Mr. Tyrold. Knowing that her uncle has long hoped for a match between Edgar and Indiana, she attempts to conquer her passion for him by sending herself into voluntary exile at the home of a fashionable lady of their acquaintance, Mrs. Arlbery. Aware of the danger of her position, she "hoped she had discovered the tendency of her affection, in time to avoid the dangers and the errors to which it might lead" (p. 191). Her hope is vain. Unable to be indifferent, but determined to seem so, Camilla encourages the attentions of Sir Sedley and Major Cerwood, a tactic which proves foolish. Edgar exclaims to himself "how plain, how easy, how direct your road to my heart, if but straightly pursued" (p. 299).

Camilla, however, takes a more circuitous route--one which involves her in false appearances and compromising situations. Later when she accompanies Mrs. Arlbery to Tunbridge, she increases her efforts to convince Edgar that her heart is her own, encouraged by the bad advice of her hostess, who tells her, "There is

but one single method to make a man of his ruminating class know his own mind: give him cause to fear he will lose you. Animate, inspire, inspire him with doubt" (p. 455). This is, in fact, the surest method to drive Edgar away, since he is getting equally bad advice from his tutor, Dr. Marchmont, a misogynist. When Edgar asks Dr. Marchmont for congratulations on "my confirmed, my irrevocable choice!" (p. 157), the scholar, soured by bad experiences with women, urges Edgar to act, not with simple caution, but with skepticism and distrust, saying, "to avoid all danger of repentance, you must become positively distrustful" (p. 160).

If left alone, Camilla and Edgar, both naturally honest and straightforward, might have been married within 100 pages; with all this bad advice, it takes them closer to 1,000. Their strategies are at cross-purposes. Camilla, urged on by Mrs. Arlbery, acts the coquette, while Edgar, with Dr. Marchmont continually whispering "caution," becomes more suspicious and distrustful. But Edgar's love is stronger than his doubts finally, and he impulsively professes his love and proposes.

In the meantime, however, Camilla has been undergoing tests of her prudence about money and has failed these miserably. Hounded by her extravagant brother, Lionel, for money to pay off his debts, she unwisely gives him

almost all her small traveling allowance, forcing her to borrow from both Sir Sedley and Mrs. Arlbery for frivolous amusements and finery. Her debts mount, Lionel's greedy demands increase, and she allows herself to become a party to his borrowing 200 pounds from Sir Sedley. The first stage of her quest ends with Camilla betrothed to Edgar but burdened by an unresolved and very compromising debt to Clarendel.

In the second stage of the quest, she begins to pay dearly for her imprudence. Encouraged by her earlier flirting and by her willingness to borrow from him, Sir Sedley makes advances to her. When Edgar observes him on his knees, kissing Camilla's hand, his suspicions return and he breaks the engagement. In this second stage of her quest, Camilla's trials, both in love and in money, become far more dangerous, beginning with a journey to Southampton where she is mistaken for a shoplifter or a whore, assaulted by a licentious lord, and persuaded to run up an alarming list of debts. Finally her foolish expenditures, added to those of Lionel and Clermont, result in her father's imprisonment and her uncle's homelessness. In matters of the heart, she acts no more wisely, continuing her flirtations, which deepen Edgar's doubts about her. By the end of this stage she believes she has lost the love of both Edgar and her family and,

describing herself as an "outcast," falls into despair. Alone in an inn with no money and no hope, wishing for death, she becomes ill and delirious.

In the final stage, she undergoes a spiritual rebirth in which she repents her death wish and prepares to die as a Christian. When Edgar, her mother, and her father appear at her bedside with forgiveness, the rebirth is complete; she is transported from "so much misery to heart-felt peace and joy" (p. 883). After explanations clear up all old misunderstandings and doubts, Edgar and Camilla are reconciled and married in a double ceremony with Lavinia and Harry Westwyn, which is quickly followed by a marriage between Eugenia and Melmond. This is the conventional happy ending of romance which, as Northrop Frye explains,

may seem to us faked, manipulated, or thrown in as a contemptuous concession to a weak-minded reader. In our day ironic modes are the preferred ones for serious fiction, and of course if the real conception of a work of fiction is ironic, a conventionally happy ending would be forced, or, in extreme cases, dishonest. But if the conception is genuinely romantic and comic, the traditional happy ending is usually the one that fits.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 134.

Burney realized this at some intuitive level and, after struggling unsuccessfully to come up with a realistic ending for Cecelia, returns in Camilla to the formula she had tried to avoid of "a marriage, a reconciliation, and some sudden expedient for great riches."<sup>15</sup>

Another prominent romance feature--coincidence--marks the plotting of Camilla. Again, critics object to this. White suggests that "credulity is stretched too far" by the coincidences in Camilla.<sup>16</sup> Adelstein calls the reliance on coincidence a "weakness," which is "obviously contrived to reward virtue and punish vice."<sup>17</sup> This is true. As Melvyn New has asserted in a remark quoted earlier, "the dispensation of rewards and punishments" and "the strong sense that the characters are manipulated toward their final reward (or punishment) by forces beyond themselves" are among "the essential characteristics of the romance, and they are as well the essential characteristics of a world governed by a providential God."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Fanny Burney, Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, ed. Charlotte Barrett (London: George Bell and Sons, 1891), II, 426.

<sup>16</sup> Eugene White, Fanny Burney, Novelist (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1960), pp. 9-12.

<sup>17</sup> Adelstein, p. 101.

<sup>18</sup> Melvyn New, "'The Grease of God': The Form of Eighteenth-Century Fiction," PMLA, 91 (March 1976), 238.

Like Delvile and Cecelia before them, Camilla and Edgar are obviously intended for each other. Mr. Tyrold believes that his daughter was "irresistibly formed to captivate" Edgar (p. 344). The hand of Providence manipulates events to this end.

Although some coincidences seem hardly fortuitous-- Edgar is always appearing at the wrong place at the wrong time to see Camilla acting in ways that appear suspect, for example--Providence also places Edgar on the scene to rescue Camilla or members of her family and most importantly intervenes to bring them together at the end. Preparing to die, Camilla writes Edgar a letter professing her love, thinking he would not receive it until after her death. But Providence has placed him at the same inn, a coincidence which Mr. Tyrold calls a "fortunate hazard" (p. 898). This is followed by yet another coincidence in which Edgar is situated outside the door of the room at exactly the moment Camilla tells her mother of her love for him, causing the object of this confession to rush in begging "consent for a union, from which every doubt was wholly, and even miraculously removed" (p. 898). Providence also manipulates events so that the guilty are punished. In describing the violent death of the villainous Bellamy, who has abducted and abused Eugenia,

the narrator says of the events leading to his accidental suicide, "The rest was dreadful accident, or Providence" (p. 887).

Characterization in Camilla, like plotting, shows the influence of romance. The line between good and bad characters is, for the most part, drawn thick and black, a fact which bothers critics such as Adelstein, who objects to "The black and white treatment of Eugenia and Indiana" and the lack of "shadings."<sup>19</sup> But this is no failure of technique or talent. Burney has drawn her characters just as she intended. She insists to the king of her characters in Camilla, "as far as general nature goes, or a character belongs to classes, I have certainly tried to take them. But no individuals!"<sup>20</sup> And on the first page of Camilla, the narrator says the picture of human nature is drawn by "the pen which would trace nature, yet blot out personality" (p. 8). Burney is interested in drawing most of the main characters as simple moral types, rather than as complex individuals. In typical romance fashion the characters are neatly divided into the helpers and the hinderers. If a character aids Camilla in her quest for prudence and virtue, he is good; if he misleads her and puts obstacles in her path, he is bad.

<sup>19</sup> Adelstein, p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> Burney, Diary and Letters, III, 575.

Camilla's exemplary mother and father are models of parental wisdom and virtue, unmarried by a single imperfection. Concerned for her reputation and happiness, her father writes her an eight-page letter of advice on good conduct. Both parents try to help her avoid the dangers of her journey into experience, but when she fails, they forgive and comfort. Her sisters are entirely good and do what they can to help Camilla along her way, offering sage advice, sisterly sympathy, and a loan when necessary.

Edgar is even more important in guiding Camilla on her quest than her own family. Joyce Hemlow says of the hero of Camilla that he "must rank next to Coelebs in Hannah More's Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1809) as the greatest prig in English literature."<sup>21</sup> There is no doubt about this. Edgar is a goody-goody, just as Lord Orville was, just as Delvile was. All three are virtuous, brave knights whose role it is to aid the damsel in distress and provide protection and guidance to the questers. Always "tenderly watchful to guide, guard and assist his fair companion in her way," Edgar is well equipped for such knightly service (p. 437).

<sup>21</sup> Joyce Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 255.



Edgar is attractive and well-mannered, "a young man who, if possessed neither of fortune nor its expectations, must from his person and his manners have been as attractive to the young, as from his morals and his conduct to those of riper years" (p. 57). He is also courageous. Even at thirteen he was "an uncommonly spirited and manly boy" (p. 17). He rushes in to snatch Eugenia away from the boy infected with small pox, while in the see-saw incident he "with admirable adroitness, preserved the elder girls from suffering by the accident," carrying Eugenia to the house and galloping away for a doctor (p. 27). He is the only one to keep a cool head when Sir Hugh and his nieces are supposedly threatened by a mad bull. He twice rescues Eugenia from Bellamy's attempts to abduct her, saves Sir Hugh's old spaniel from the vicious attack of a bulldog, protects Camilla from the impertinent advances of Lord Valhurst, and stops a duel.

He is as protective of her reputation and her morals as her physical safety, taking it upon himself to investigate the character of Mrs. Arlbery and the background of Major Cerwood. Later when he believes Sir Sedley is her choice, he decides that even if her heart is to belong to another, he will continue in "her service" (p. 422). He tries to warn her against an association

with Mrs. Berlington whom he fears is a rock "against which . . . she might be dashed, whilst least suspicious of any peril" (p. 486). Sir Hugh judges him accurately when he says after the bull episode, "you have done very right, then, my dear Mr. Edgar, as you always do, as far as I can make out, when I come to the bottom" (p. 136).

Other characters work as hard to block Camilla's quest as Edgar does to assist it. Lionel, for example, is largely responsible for Camilla's financial predicament and for her embarrassing and dangerous entanglement with Sir Sedley. Totally selfish and devoted only to the pursuit of pleasure, he becomes involved in an adulterous affair which puts him in more need of money to pay off a blackmailer as well as to meet his other debts from his extravagant life style. His increasingly insistent demands for money from Camilla result in the loan that compromises Camilla and ends in her broken engagement.

Two other characters--Mrs. Arlbery and Dr. Marchmont--function as the Evil Counselers of romance. Mrs. Arlbery, who dislikes Edgar, concocts a plan which she confides to Sir Sedley is "either to see him at her feet, or drive him from her heart" (p. 458) asking for Clarendel's assistance in making Edgar jealous. Dr. Marchmont's advice to Edgar is equally destructive. He says of women, "They are artful, though feeble; they are shallow, yet

subtle" (p. 642). When Edgar fears his behavior to Camilla will cause her to turn to the generous, warm Henry Westwyn, Dr. Marchmont says, "The juncture is, indeed, perilous, and the trial of extremest hazard; but as it is such as draws all uncertainty to a crisis, it is not much to be lamented" (p. 653). A confirmed woman-hater, he gives cold, calculating advice, which goes as far towards preventing the union of the lovers as the warmer but equally wrong plan of Mrs. Arlbery.

The most complete villain is Bellamy, who on the third attempt finally abducts Eugenia, forces her into marriage, carries on an illicit affair with Mrs. Berlington, persecutes his wife for money, and threatens to kill her. He sees women--like Mrs. Berlington--as his "fair destined prey" (p. 893). There is at least one scheming villain of this sort in each novel: Sir Clement Willoughby in Evelina, Mr. Monckton in Cecelia and Bellamy in Camilla. Burney seems to have taken to heart what Mr. Crisp wrote to her earlier of men: "be assured, my Fanny, they are just what they were design'd to be - Animals of Prey - all men are cats, all young girls mice - morsels - dainty bits."<sup>22</sup> In the world of Burney's novels not all men are

<sup>22</sup> Fanny Burney, The Early Diary of Frances Burney, 1768-1778, ed. Annie Raine Ellis (London: George Bell and Sons, 1913), I, 280.

this way, but most are either of the villainous cast or the chivalrous mold. Few lie between Edgar and Bellamy.

Most of the characters are moral types because Burney's aim in Camilla is to instruct with "sketches of characters & morals put in action."<sup>23</sup> To achieve this aim, Burney not only draws moral types but preaches when she feels like it. This moralizing does not set well with modern critics. Eugene White says, "In Camilla . . . she seems to look upon herself as a moralist and to let the didactic element interrupt her story."<sup>24</sup> Adelstein complains that the didacticism and overt moralizing in Camilla "violate the illusion of reality by making readers aware that the author is controlling her characters according to her superimposed moral arguments instead of allowing the individuals to interact according to their nature and the situation."<sup>25</sup> Fanny had no notion at all of the kind of realism Adelstein is talking about, no desire to probe psyches or pry into individual motives. Her moral arguments are not superimposed on the characters; on the contrary, the characters exist only as they represent the moral argument.

<sup>23</sup> Burney, Journals and Letters, III, 117.

<sup>24</sup> White, p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> Adelstein, p. 101.

To underline this, each character has, as Frye suggests is typical of the romance, "his moral opposite."<sup>26</sup> The Tyrold sisters and their cousin, Indiana, are paired and grouped in several ways. Indiana acts as a foil for both Eugenia and Camilla. Although her beauty is flawless, she is described sadly by her fond uncle as "rather dull" (p. 15) and by Mrs. Arlbery as that "beautiful automaton" (p. 151). Eugenia, in contrast, though scarred and stunted physically, has "moral beauty" (p. 51). And Camilla's beauty, though not perfect, has something in it that her cousin's lacks. Indiana's beauty is regular and symmetrical, "But here ended the liberality of nature, which, in not sullyng this fair workmanship by enclosing it in what was bad, contentedly left it vacant of whatever was noble and desirable" (p. 84). Camilla's beauty is of a different sort. It,

though neither perfect nor regular, had an influence so peculiar on the beholder, it was hard to catch its fault; and the cynic connoisseur, who might persevere in seeking it, would voluntarily surrender the strict rules of his art to the predominance of its loveliness. (p. 84)

Indiana's beauty, though perfect, is an empty shell;

<sup>26</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 195.

Camilla's, though flawed, is more captivating because it is animated by personality and imagination.

Since early childhood, not only their beauty but the behavior of the two cousins has provided a clear contrast, which Edgar sees plainly. In an attempt to convince Dr. Marchmont of Camilla's worth, "He then gave a little recital of the nobleness of her sentiments and conduct when she was only nine years old; contrasting the relation with the sullen and ungenerous behavior of Indiana at the same age" (p. 158). The contrast does not blur but sharpens as they mature. To underline the theme of charity, Camilla and Indiana, now adolescents, are again set against one another. On the way to the public breakfast, the party of young people meets a poor woman. Indiana, "enchanted to again display herself where sure of again being admired, neither heard nor saw the petitioner." Camilla's reaction provides a neat contrast, as "hastily giving her a shilling she took one of her petitions, and promising to do all in her power to serve her, left the poor creature almost choaked with sobbing joy" (p. 83).

Camilla also has a generosity of spirit that Indiana completely lacks, a point which is made again by contrasting their reactions to the same poor woman's humble cottage, in a chapter whose title--"Two Ways of

looking at the same thing"--underlines the contrast.

Indiana, totally insensitive to the feelings of the woman, exclaims,

Dear! Crockery ware! how ugly! - Lord, what little mean chairs! - Is that your best gown, good woman? - Dear, what an ugly pattern! - Well, I would not wear such a thing to save my life! - Have you got nothing better than this for a floor-cloth? - Only look at those curtains! - Did you ever see such frights? - Lord! do you eat off these platters? I am sure I could sooner die! I should not mind starving half as much!

Camilla's reaction is dramatically different. Viewing the cottage from a more generous perspective, she says, "How neat is this! How tidy that! . . . How bright you have rubbed your saucepans! How clean every thing is all round! How soon you will all get well in this healthy and comfortable little dwelling!" (pp. 151-52). And Edgar cannot resist contrasting the two young ladies when he disavows any intentions for Indiana's hand, saying of her heart, "I see not in it that magnetic attraction which charms away all caution, beguiles all security, enwraps the imagination, and masters the reason!" Edgar's "chain of thinking . . . from painting what he thought insensible in Indiana, led him to describe what he felt to be resistless in Camilla" (pp. 233-34).

Indiana and Eugenia are also foils for each other, the former all loveliness outside and ugliness inside, the

latter beautiful in everything except body. Melmond compares their exteriors when still besotted by Indiana's beauty, thinking of marrying Eugenia rather than her fair cousin as a change "from all of beauty to all of deformity" (p. 673). Later, when he is wiser, he sees the contrast in a different light. Now he thinks of Eugenia that "The purity of her love, the cultivation of her mind, and the nobleness of her sentiments, now beam forth a contrast to the general mental and intellectual littleness of Indiana" (p. 813).

Two other women, Mrs. Berlington and Lady Isabella Irby, are explicitly contrasted. Edgar advises Camilla:

Think but of those two ladies, and mark the difference. Lady Isabella, addressed only where known, followed only because loved, sees no adulators encircling her, for adulation would alarm her; no admirers paying her homage, for such homage would offend her. She knows she has not only her own innocence to guard, but the honour of her husband. (p. 476)

Mrs. Berlington, in contrast, encourages adulators, seeks admirers, and dishonors her husband with an adulterous affair.

The males, too, are set up in contrasting pairs representing opposite moral types. These pairs are given similar backgrounds and experiences to make the contrast in character more vivid. Edgar and Lionel, both brought



up under the guidance of Mr. Tyrold, are as different as two young men could be. Edgar's bravery and thoughtfulness contrast with Lionel's cowardice and selfishness, even when they are both children. When Eugenia is injured, Edgar rushes forward with no thought for himself, while "Lionel took care of himself by leaping instantly from the plank" (p. 27). Edgar's behavior at the end contrasts with both Lionel's and Clermont's as sharply as it did at the beginning. While the profligate lifestyle of the two selfish young rakes has driven Sir Hugh from his home, Edgar, ever generous, offers "to advance the sum requisite to return him tranquilly to his mansion" (p. 906).

Two other young men also brought up in similar ways are set against each other. Clermont's bad nature stands out in sharp relief when placed directly beside the good nature of Hal Westwyn with whom he is explicitly compared twice. Hal's father, after explaining how proud his son's bravery makes him, says, "He's another sort of lad to Master Clermont; I hope, my dear young lady, you don't like your cousin? He's but a sad spark. I give you my word. Not a bit like Hal" (p. 659). Mr. Westwyn is not the only one to see the contrast. Lavinia, after she is married to Hal,

found in her husband as marked a contrast with Clermont Lynmere, to annul all Hypothesis of Education. . . . Brought up, under the same

tutor, the same masters, and at the same university, with equal care, equal expense, equal opportunities of every kind, Clermont turned out conceited, voluptuous, and shallow; Henry modest, full of feeling, and stored with intelligence. (p. 909)

The two scholars in the novel also act as foils throughout and are compared in a chapter with the unsubtle title of "Two Doctors." Dr. Merchmont, aside from his bitterness about women, is a good man, a sociable man, who cares more for people than for books, more for amiable conversation than the printed page. Dr. Orkborne, a little self-absorbed man whose petty scholarship consumes his whole time and care, was amazed by the other scholar's interest in life and "ruminated with wonder upon what appeared to him a phenomenon, a man of learning who could deign to please and seem pleased where books were not the subject of discourse, and where scholastic attainments were not required to elucidate a single sentence" (p. 147).

Two other men, Lord O'Lerney and Macdersey, share a common national heritage--both are Irish--but have sharply contrasting characters. The narrator explains that just as the contrast between Clermont and Hal "annul all Hypothesis of Education" so "Lord O'Lerney, cool, rational and penetrating, opposed to Macdersey, wild, eccentric, and vehement, offered against all that is National" (p. 909). It is not family background, nor education, nor

nationality which determines a man's actions in the world of romance and in Burney's novels, but his essential character, which is consistent. Miller explains

that the "psychology" we have been conditioned to look for in modern literary characters is never, in the romance tradition, simply the end-product of various behavioral or social determinisms: it is, rather a "psychology"<sup>27</sup>—the logos of the psyche in its root sense.

Because the characters are moral types, or as Burney puts it, "morals put in action," our view of them is external. Modern critics, with their modern prejudice for the interior and the dramatic, are not happy with this view. White notes that "Camilla marks a change in Miss Burney's method," with the author now "telling us about people and incidents rather than showing them to us."<sup>28</sup> This results, he says, in a loss "in dramatic power through the intrusion of the author's own comments and observations and through her interpretation of events for us."<sup>29</sup> Camilla is, as White suggests, less dramatic than the first two novels. The characters less often speak for themselves; there are fewer long passages of uninterrupted

<sup>27</sup> Henry Knight Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones and the Romance Tradition, English Literary Studies, Monograph Series, No. 6 (Victoria: Univ. of Victoria, 1976), p. 57.

<sup>28</sup> White, p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> White, p. 38.

dialogue. The narrator intrudes freely and frequently. And, as Adelstein suggests, the intrusions are didactic. But these are not necessarily problems with technique. They do, as Adelstein points out, "violate the illusion of reality."<sup>30</sup> But this illusion was not sacred to eighteenth-century writers, who had no qualms about violating it whenever it suited other, more important purposes. For Burney, realism was not an end in itself, but only a means to an end, which was expressly moral.

As Wayne Booth reminds us, "some interesting narrators perform a kind of function in their works that nothing else could perform. . . . They are reliable guides not only to the world of the novels in which they appear but also to the moral truths of the world outside the book."<sup>31</sup> This is quite clearly what Burney intended. But Booth also reminds us, "An author who intrudes must somehow be interesting, he must live as a character."<sup>32</sup> The problem with the narration in Camilla is not that the narrator's intrusions lessen the illusion of reality, but that the intrusions are lacking in grace, wit and style; not that the narrator has too much to say to us, but that

<sup>30</sup> Adelstein, p. 102.

<sup>31</sup> Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 221.

<sup>32</sup> Booth, p. 219.

he has too little to say that interests us; not that he is didactic, but that he is dull. For instance, in the opening pages, the narrator describes in great and tedious length the relationship between Mr. Tyrold and his wife. Since the relationship sets the standard for a good marriage, a central theme in the novel, it deserves a full treatment, but a treatment that is interesting as well as detailed. What we get instead are passages such as the one in which the narrator, speaking of Mrs. Tyrold's propensity to measure everyone by her saintly husband, says,

Such, at its very best, is the unskilfulness of our fallible nature, that even the noble principle which impels our love of right misleads us but into new deviations, when its ambition presumes to point at perfection. In this instance, however, distinctness of disposition stifled not reciprocity of affection - that magnetic concentration of all marriage felicity; - Mr. Tyrold revered while he softened the rigid virtues of his wife, who adored while she fortified the melting humanity of her husband. (p. 9)

The narrator is not always this hopelessly stuffy, but all too often he is.

The speech of the major characters, as well as of the narrator, suffers from dulness and pomposity. Devices such as balance and parallelism are taken to even greater extremes here than in the first two novels. Edgar, though a young man of high spirits and passionate feelings, speaks

in a stilted idiom when declaring his love for Camilla to Dr. Marchmont. He says,

I come to you decided, and upon grounds which cannot offend you, though the decision anticipates your counsel. I come to you, in fine, my dear Doctor, my good and kind friend, to confess that yesterday you saw right, with regard to the situation of my mind, and that, today, I have only your felicitations to beg, upon my confirmed, my irrevocable choice! (p. 157)

The formality of the speech is underlined by the fact that it is delivered by a young man who has galloped over in a hot passion and who precedes his words with "the most animated gesture."

Camilla, like Cecelia before her, thinks as well as speaks in a high style. Musing to herself about a subject which engages her most passionate feelings, she thinks of Edgar's behavior:

From the moment he suffered me to quit, without reclamation, the roof under which I had proposed our parting, I ought to have seen it was but his own desire, perhaps design, I was executing. And all the reluctance he seemed to feel, which so weakly I attributed to regard, was but the expiring sensibility of the last moment of intercourse. Not with murmurs he says, he will quit me - nor with murmurs will I now resign him! (p. 721)

This is an exalted style indeed for the private thoughts of an impulsive and highly emotional seventeen-year-old girl.

Camilla's sisters, Lavinia and Eugenia, both less impulsive than she, speak in a way that is even more stylized, while Mr. Tyrold is the most formal of all. When he writes Camilla, the daughter closest to his affections, he might well be addressing a congregation from his pulpit. He writes to her:

You may imagine, in the innocency of your heart, that what you would rather perish than utter can never, since untold, be suspected: and, at present, I am equally sanguine in believing no surmise to have been conceived where most it would shock you: yet credit me when I assure you, that you can make no greater mistake, than to suppose that you have any security beyond what sedulously you must earn by the most indefatigable vigilance. (p. 360)

This is the style of all the paragons of the main romance plot. Other characters--either those who are morally flawed or those who are part of the satire and humor rather than the romance story--speak quite a different language, more individualized, more natural. In Camilla, as in Cecelia, language appears to be connected in an intimate way with morals; the higher the character rates on a moral scale, the more formal, rhetorical, and ordered his language becomes. This layered style is typical of the romance which is concerned with a higher and a lower reality, with order and disorder, with the permanent and with the temporal. The style of a romance must reflect both worlds or, as Miller says, "must be true

to both dimensions . . . . must somehow at once convey all the disorderly, incoherent, fragmented caprice and impulse that mark the foreground scene, and yet assure us of something harmonious and timeless and unequivocal behind that desperate flux."<sup>33</sup> The language of the good characters--Mr. Tyrold, Edgar, Lavinia, Eugenia, and Camilla--is designed to reflect order and stability, while the language of lesser characters--Lionel, Sir Sedley, Mr. Dubster, Sir Hugh--reflects disorder and instability. Burney's use of language in this way is perfectly in keeping with the tradition of romance. The problem in Camilla is in the execution; she faltered. The style of the major characters in this novel has gone beyond the order, balance and harmony in the earlier novels and hardened into stiff, dull prose.

The language, the mode of narration, the plot and the characterization are all appropriated from the romance tradition, and all function to underline typical romance themes, the most important of which is prudence. Hemlow is right to suggest that in Camilla the "moral is that innocence is not enough: one must be prudent."<sup>34</sup> The first step in acquiring prudence is to gain moral vision,

<sup>33</sup> Miller, p. 90.

<sup>34</sup> Hemlow, p. 267.



which becomes in the novel a concern with appearance and reality.

One of the ways this concern manifests itself in Camilla is in the focus on beauty. Eugenia's disfigurement, which occupies a central position in the novel's action and themes, emphasizes the superficiality of physical appearance. Not only Eugenia's face but her person bear the mark of Sir Hugh's negligence. With her face scarred and pitted from small pox and her "whole figure diminutive and deformed" from her fall, she provides the topic for several discourses on beauty and the occasion to examine several attitudes toward beauty. Sir Hugh, who is simple and good, says of her appearance, "For as to beauty, Lord help us! What is it? except just to the eye" (p. 33). This remark is true enough, but Sir Hugh, though unworldly, is not so naive as to think that the world shares this simple view. Knowing that appearance counts heavily with the world, he tries to compensate for his niece's loss of beauty with a fortune, saying, "I hope it is no such great injury, as she'll have a splendid fortune, which is certainly a better thing, in point of lasting" (p. 33).

Although he is well-intentioned as always, his action sets Eugenia up as a prey for fortune hunters who agree, though for less disinterested reasons, that a fat purse is

preferable to a pretty face in a wife. The coarse, crude Mr. Dubster, too stupid to attempt subtlety, rudely confesses to Camilla his preference for money above beauty. After demonstrating an interest in Eugenia, he hears by rumor that Camilla is the heiress and switches his attentions to her, saying of his earlier interest in Eugenia,

'Twould be a fine joke if such a mistake as that should get the little lame duck as I call her, a husband. He'd be in a fine hobble when he found he'd got nothing but her ugly face for his bargain. Though, provided she had the rhino, it would not much have mattered: for, as to being pretty, or not, it's not great matter in a wife. A man soon tires of seeing nothing but the same face, if it's one of the best. (p. 91)

The villainous Bellamy, far more dangerous, because more artful, shares the tinker's material view. He sugarcoats his avarice with flattery and compliments which Eugenia swallows whole.

Her gullibility is, like her physical limitations, the result of her uncle's good-hearted but wrong-headed actions. In an attempt to protect Eugenia he has decreed that no one in the family mention her physical imperfections, leaving her totally blind to her unfortunate appearance. She learns the truth in an acutely painful way when two passing country women taunt her about her deformities, asking if she is there "to frighten the

crows?" and, in a reference to her humped and dwarfish figure, cruelly inquire "why, Miss, do you walk upon your knees?" (p. 286). Shocked and hurt, she decides "I will no more expose to the light a form and face so hideous: - I will retire from all mankind, and end my destined course in a solitude that no one shall discover" (p. 294).

Eugenia's attitude, although understandable, is nonetheless as wrong as that of other characters who place too much emphasis on appearance. She tells her father that the abuse of the passing women "all at once opened my eyes, and showed me to myself!" (p. 303). Eugenia confuses appearance with reality--the way she looks with who she is.

The fortune hunters like Dubster and Bellamy make the same reductive error; a wife to them is either a face or a fortune. Melmond errs in the other direction, investing physical beauty with moral significance. When Lionel asks "how should you know anything of her [Indiana] besides her beauty?" Melmond replies, "How? by looking at her! Can you view that countenance and ask me how? Are not those eyes all soul? Does not that mouth promise everything that is intelligent? Can those lips ever move but to diffuse sweetness and smiles?" (pp. 103-04). In reality, Indiana's beauty is nothing more than an attractive shell. Her eyes, he later discovers, mirror only the "vacancy of the soul's intelligence" (p. 813),

her mouth utters stupid thoughts, and her lips more often pout than smile. Far too proud of her beauty, she is unable to penetrate beneath the surface appearance of others. Indiana sees Eugenia as a "poor thing," a "little, short, dumpy, hump backed, crooked, limping figure of a fright" (p. 568). When her equally handsome brother Lynmere meets his intended bride, Indiana is amused at the contrast, and "when she saw her brother as handsome as her cousin was deformed, thought this contrast so droll she could look at neither without tittering" (p. 565). Her brother, as blinded by his own beauty as she is by hers, admires his face and form in a mirror and remarks sarcastically that in betrothing him to Eugenia his uncle has "matched me most exactly!" (p. 568). He is right about the mismatch just as Indiana is right about the absurd contrast between the two but not for the reasons they imagine. Lynmere and his sister are inverted images of Eugenia. Their strong and beautiful exteriors are matched by the beauty of her heart and the strength of her character. Her physical deformities are mirrored in their character defects; her dwarfish figure, by their stunted moral growth.

Other morally defective characters are also the slaves of outward appearance. Lionel, for example, explains his adulterous affair to the shocked Camilla by exclaiming,

"Why, she's so pretty! so monstrous pretty! besides, she doats upon me. You don't half conceive what a pretty fellow I am, Camilla" (p. 730). And Mrs. Berlington's motives for her affair with Bellamy are the same as Lionel's since she was "Attracted by his fine person, and caught by the first flattery which had talked to her of her own" (p. 809).

Adelstein, noting the focus on beauty in Camilla, says that Burney meant by it to illustrate "how men are led astray by beauty."<sup>35</sup> There is some support for this view in Eugenia's memoirs in which she, with uncharacteristic bitterness, writes,

Ye, too, O lords of the creation, mighty men! impute not to native vanity the repining spirit with which I lament the loss of beauty . . . for the value you yourselves set upon external attractions, your own neglect has taught to know; and the indifference with which you consider all else, your own duplicity has instructed me to feel. (p. 905)

Written immediately after she has been cruelly deceived and tortured in her nightmarish marriage to Bellamy, these words are distorted by fresh pain and hardly reflect Eugenia's true feelings, much less Burney's.

Some male characters do set too high a premium on beauty, but others, such as Mr. Tyrold and Edgar and

<sup>35</sup> Adelstein, p. 100.

Mr. Westwyn, have more penetrating moral vision. Mr. Tyrold sees beauty as no more than a "secondary gift," which has a brief influence on the observer but which only frivolous minds take too seriously. Other, better men than Dubster or Bellamy have no trouble penetrating the thin veneer of Eugenia's physical ugliness to the "moral beauty" beneath. Even Melmond, temporarily blinded by Indiana's dazzling good looks, becomes clear-sighted and finally sees Eugenia herself rather than only her outward form, blaming his earlier infatuation with Indiana on "fastidious eyes, that could dwell upon her face and form" (p. 813). And Mr. Westwyn, a simple good man, also has the wisdom to see through Eugenia's appearance, saying, "That little one, there, with the hump, which I don't mind, nor the limp, neither, I like vastly." Of Lavinia he says, she "is as handsome a girl as I'd wish to see. And she seems as good, too. However, I'm not for judging all by the eye" (p. 776).

Beauty is, of course, only one example of false appearance. The world is full of other, equally treacherous ones that trick the eye and fool the judgment. Sorting out the true from the false is no easy task, as Mr. Tyrold realizes when he writes to Camilla of her deluding herself about Edgar's love, "delusion, while in force, has all the semblance of reality and takes the same

hold upon the faculties as truth" (p. 356). Even the highly educated, sensitive Eugenia is incapable of this sort of discrimination, and "Like her uncle, she concluded every body and every thing to be precisely what they appeared" (p. 271).

It is no wonder then that Edgar and Camilla, though good at heart, lack the vision to discern false appearances from reality. At the beginning of the quest both rely too heavily on how things appear on the surface. Camilla is at once too careless of her own appearance and too quick to depend on the appearance of others. For example, when she encounters Mrs. Berlington in a compromising situation, Camilla "warmly vindicated her innocence, from the whole of her appearance" (p. 390). At the same time, she puts herself again and again into positions where she appears guilty. Always innocent and well-intentioned, she never, as Spacks suggests, "makes any fundamental moral or emotional errors, she only falls into the appearance of error."<sup>36</sup>

These appearances of error are always observed by Edgar, who sees her in a man's hotel room past eleven o'clock at night, flirting with the "mawkish Major" and "the coxcomb Clarendel," parading through the streets with

<sup>36</sup> Patricia M. Spacks, The Female Imagination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 133.

the suspicious-looking Mrs. Mitten. Camilla, realizing that her actions appear suspect, exclaims to Edgar, "How frivolous I must appear to you!" (p. 434). Later she tells him that "appearances have often cruelly misrepresented me" and that she has seemed to err through "false appearances" (p. 641). Camilla bears the responsibility for much of this since "she thought not of the mischief of appearance" (p. 681). Mrs. Arlbery, who is "guilty of no vices, but utterly careless of appearance" (p. 194), has sullied her reputation by her lack of prudence in this area. Camilla is in danger of losing Edgar through the same carelessness.

But if Mrs. Arlbery's carelessness is a bad lesson to Camilla, Dr. Marchmont provides Edgar with an equally dangerous model. Just as it is possible to be too careless, it is possible to be too cautious. Dr. Marchmont warns Edgar that though Camilla "appears to be all excellence," he should study her "with new eyes" and "whatever is her appearance of worth, try and prove its foundation" (pp. 159, 161). Acting on this advice, Edgar becomes a merciless watcher, following her every move with his eyes, observing, judging with distrust and suspicion. The narrator tells us "the common herd, where appearances admit two interpretations, decide for the worst" (p. 659). Edgar, under the tutelage of the cynical Dr. Marchmont,



becomes like the common herd, giving Camilla's appearance the worst possible interpretation. Camilla, with Mrs. Arlbery as her guide, neglects appearances, while Edgar, with the suspicious doctor as his, depends too heavily on how things appear. When Camilla's mother asks her what caused the breach between her and Edgar, she replies, "deluding appearances, . . . and false internal reasoning on my part, - and on his, continual misconstruction!" (p. 896).

Prudence, like the moral vision it depends on, can be taken to perilous extremes. The narrator ends the story with these words:

Thus ended the long conflicts, doubts, suspenses, and sufferings of Edgar and Camilla; who, without one inevitable calamity, one avoidable distress, so nearly fell the sacrifice to the two extremes of Imprudence and Suspicion, to the natural heedlessness of youth unguided, or to the acquired distrust of experience that had been wounded. (p. 913)

Camilla, at the beginning of her journey, represents the extreme of Imprudence. Virtuous, generous, and innocent, she is flawed only by her lack of prudence. Camilla's story is representative of youthful initiation into experience, and her lack of prudence is typical of innocence. Burney once noted, "Precaution is not natural to youth, whose greatest danger because greatest weakness is confidence in its first impulse, which is commonly

pleasant because kind. To be just requires more reflexion; to have foresight, demands more experience."<sup>37</sup> These words are echoed throughout in describing Camilla's imprudence which, like that of youth in general, is caused by impulsiveness and by lack of reflection and foresight. Mr. Tyrold says that although his daughter's "feelings are all virtues," her "impulses have no restraints" (p. 120). Edgar fears for her because although "her mind was of the purest innocence, it was unguarded by caution, and unprotected by reflexion" (p. 485). And the narrator tells us that "Foresight, the offspring of Judgment, or the disciple of Experience, made no part of the character of Camilla, whose impetuous disposition was open to every danger of indiscretion, though her genuine love of virtue glowed warm with juvenile ardour" (p. 216).

Camilla, after suffering the broken engagement, becomes aware of her flaw and says of Edgar, "if such should be my happy fate; if after hearing all my imprudence, my precipitance, and want of judgment, he should voluntarily, when wholly set free, return to me . . . I will confess to him every feeling . . ., and every failing of my heart!" (p. 583). Prudence is not acquired in a day, however, and Camilla even with her insight

<sup>37</sup> Fanny Burney, quoted in introduction to Camilla, p. x.

continues to act impulsively, until the last stage of her quest, when after going through the symbolic death and rebirth she asks Edgar's forgiveness for "my imprudencies - my rashness - my so often - erring judgment . . . and so apparently, almost even culpable conduct" (p. 900).

Edgar, too, has reason to ask pardon for his error in judgment. Guided by Dr. Marchmont, who confuses caution with distrust and cynicism with judgment, Edgar becomes so cautious that he is paralyzed and unable to act. Soured by two marriages to women who did not love him, the doctor does not exercise good judgment, but proceeds from the hypothesis that women are artful, deceitful, coquettish and manages to find evidence for this in Camilla's imprudent behavior. And the motives for his prudence are suspect since he is concerned not with wisdom or morality but with self-protection. Prudence here, as in Tom Jones, can be used in two senses. It can mean to see clearly, judge wisely and act morally--the sort of prudence that Sophia has in Tom Jones--or it can mean a selfish need to protect oneself by conforming to superficial rules of behavior--like Blifil or Dr. Marchmont. Other characters are prudent in the worst sense of the word. Bellamy, for example, changes his name from Nicolas Grogg to Alphonso Bellamy and his residence from London to Wales because "he thought it . . . prudent" (p. 893).

While Camilla lacks the self-discipline that is one essential component of prudentia, Edgar lacks the wisdom to judge which is the other. Lacking prudence, Camilla is the victim of her own impulsiveness. Lacking prudence, Edgar cannot discern the truth behind the appearance of Camilla's apparent indiscretions.

True prudence involves not only good vision and good judgment but also moral action, which often requires imposing order on one's own passions and on an external world in which disorder, in the form of passions, cruelty and violence, poses constant threats to reason, morality and peace. Camilla is reared in a household that is symbolic of order. The marriage of the Tyrols is a model of balance. Their dispositions, though different, are complementary, and the "distinctness of disposition stifled not reciprocity of affection - that magnetic concentration of all marriage felicity; - Mr. Tyrold revered while he softened the rigid virtues of his wife, who adored while she fortified the melting humanity of her husband" (p. 9). Through careful management, Mr. Tyrold budgets his modest living, enabling him to have everything he and his wife and children need. Their life is moderate and rational and ordered. When Camilla leaves the parsonage house at Etherington, however, she must learn to deal with her own

unruly passions and with the chaos that threatens to engulf her.

Impetuous and emotional, Camilla is unable to curb her feelings for Edgar. Her father, who sees her weaknesses as well as her strengths, writes to express his fears for her, saying, "your wish is your guide, your impulse is your action." Fearing that she has surrendered her heart to Edgar prematurely, he advises her "struggle then against yourself as you would struggle against an enemy" until she has achieved "self-conquest" and gained "a strict and unremitting control over your passions" (pp. 358-59). This good advice comes too late to help Camilla avoid danger since she has already impulsively fallen in love with Edgar. When she first becomes aware of her loss of control, her disordered emotions cause physical disorder, as blushing, stammering and trembling, "her whole frame disordered," she overturns her plate and a sauce-boat and tangles her embroidery (pp. 169-71). A little later, the mere mention of Indiana's possible engagement to Edgar causes her to pale, sicken, and become "strangely disordered." Finally realizing the peril of her position, she "hoped she had discovered the tendency of her affliction, in time to avoid the dangers, and the errors to which it might lead. She determined to struggle without

cessation for the conquest of a partiality she deemed it treachery to indulge" (p. 191).

Unfortunately the conquest is slow and difficult. Unlike Cecelia, Camilla never masters her passion, but only manages to order it and channel it into marriage. Like the marriage of the Tyrols, the union of Edgar and Camilla promises a balance and a harmony. With Edgar's doubts quelled and Camilla's impulsiveness bridled if not tamed, "In conference thus softly balsamic to every past wound, and thus deliciously opening to that summit of earthly felicity . . . confidence unlimited entwined around affection unbounded . . ." (p. 903).

Camilla's love for Edgar, though it needs to be ordered and restrained, is less blameable than other emotions which disorder the lives of less virtuous characters. Mrs. Margland, bitter over her own sterile life, is consumed with anger and is forever in a "rage," or indulging herself in a "harangue," pouring forth "volubly," overcome with "wrath," or making "assertion of ill humour" to "vent black bile" (pp. 141, 183, 214, 270). She "hates" educated women and despises Dr. Orkborne (p. 679). Ensign Macdersey, lacking moderation in every aspect of his life, loves the wildness of extremes. He says:

there is nothing upon the face of the earth so insipid as a medium. Give me love or hate! a friend who will go to jail for me, or an enemy that will run me through the body! Riches to chuck guineas about like halfpence, or poverty to beg in a ditch! Liberty wild as the four winds, or an oar to work in a galley! Misery to tear my heart into an hundred thousand millions of atoms, or joy to make my soul dance into my brain! Every thing has some gratification except a medium. 'Tis a poor little soul that is satisfied between happiness and despair. (pp. 251-52)

Mrs. Norfield, an acquaintance of Mrs. Berlington's, is consumed by a "passion for gaming" which is "inordinate" (p. 685). This is a bad influence on the impressionable younger woman, who doesn't need much encouragement since

Moderation was the last praise to which Mrs. Berlington had any claim: what she entered upon through persecution, in an interval of mental supineness, she was soon awake to as a pleasure, and next pursued as a passion. Her beloved correspondence was neglected; her favourite authors were set aside; her country rambles were given up; balls and the rooms were forgotten; and Faro alone engrossed her faculties by day, and her dreams during the short epoch she reserved for sleep at night. (p. 686)

Moderation is essential in creating an ordered, balanced life in the midst of chaos. Any emotion, attitude, or desire, even one not intrinsically bad, becomes dangerous when it becomes a consuming passion. Mrs. Mittin, who is "bit with the rage of obliging" (p. 619), is so obsessed with being like that

To please was her incessant desire, and her rage for popularity included every rank and class of society . . . . She would work, read, go of errands, or cook a dinner; be a parasite, a spy, an attendant, a drudge; keep a secret, or spread a report; incite a quarrel, or coax contending parties into peace; invent any expedient, and execute any scheme . . . . (p. 688)

Gaiety, not wrong in itself, when excessive as Lionel's is, becomes a symptom of moral disorder. To Lionel, "laughter seemed not merely the bent of his humour, but the necessity of his existence." In order to indulge his need for laughter he "sacrificed his best friends and first duties, if they stood in its way" (p. 79). At best, his pranks cause embarrassment and confusion; at worst, they result in real evil. At Camilla's first dance, Lionel puts her in an awkward position by encouraging Mr. Dubster to ask her to dance and by spreading the rumor that she is the heiress. When he torments a bull into a rage and then creates a general panic by yelling that a mad bull is loose, his intentions are still relatively harmless, but the chaos he creates upsets the entire party. In a later escapade, when the Ensign's misguided heroism leads him to attack imaginary robbers and ends with the would-be hero foolishly attacking brooms and mops, Lionel dissolves into laughter. The only thing hurt, however, is the Ensign's pride. His next joke--stealing a ladder and leaving his sisters marooned in Dubster's summer house--



has more painful consequences since it exposes Eugenia to the vicious taunts of the passing women.

As his obsession with mirth grows his tricks become more self-serving and more painful to the victims. Earlier in the bull prank he still had some sensitivity and when he saw Sir Hugh's fear he "felt his heart smite him . . . and fled to acquaint him that he had made a mistake, for the bull was only angry, not mad" (p. 133). A little later he feels only slight remorse about his malicious extortion attempt on another uncle. When his anonymous letters threatening his Uncle Revil with murder and arson cause the sickly old man to suffer mental "disturbance" and a serious illness, he says airily, "I would give half my little finger I had not done it. But it's over, you know; so what signifies making the worst of it?" (p. 226). Greed is also at the root of his attempts to use Camilla to get money from Sir Clarendel. When he succeeds, he breaks into such a fit of mad mirth that "he whisked every thing out of its place, from frantic merriment, til he put the apartment into so much disorder, that it was scarce practicable to stir a step in it" (p. 505). His behavior confuses and upsets Mrs. Arlbery, Miss Dannel and, most of all, Camilla, for whom the loan is to have far-reaching consequences. In a sequel to the same affair he dismays Camilla by calling her Lady Clarendel,

dancing around in "mad ecstasy," caught up in a "wild transport" and making "a clamour that shook the little edifice to its foundation" (p. 526). Again his behavior disorders not only the room but Camilla's emotions as she "suffered" and "blushed" and "hung her head in speechless shame" (p. 526).

Even education and scholarship, when it becomes an all-consuming passion, reflects a disorder and a lack of balance. Educated at the same university, the two scholars provide a sharp contrast. Dr. Marchmont, "with all his scholastic endowments, was a man of the world, and a grace to society," while Dr. Orkborne "was wholly lost to the general community, and alive only with his pen and his books." Lacking Dr. Orkborne's "extravagance in the pursuit of his studies," Dr. Marchmont thinks people as interesting as the things they write, while his brother scholar is so obsessed with his studies that people and things in the world outside of books are "sunk in oblivion" (p. 749). Dr. Orkborne's inner disorder is reflected in the disorder that constantly surrounds him. A servant complains to Sir Hugh that the tutor's room is a mess because

He won't let a chair nor a table be dusted in his room, though they are covered over with cobwebs, because he says, it takes him such a time to put his things to rights again; though

all the while what he calls being to rights is just the contrary; for it's a mere higgledy piggedy, one thing heaped o'top of t'other, as if he did it for fun. (p. 187)

When Sir Hugh, as a surprise for the scholar, has book-cases built and instructs the servants to put all the loose books and papers on the shelves, his plan enrages Dr. Orkborne, who rewards his well-intentioned host by calling him a "blockhead." And whenever confusion occurs, instead of helping put things to order, the Doctor doubles the confusion by withdrawing into his studies. When the threat of the mad bull causes pandemonium, Dr. Orkborne retreats into himself, abandoning Eugenia to the advances of Bellamy. After the panic has subsided, Dr. Marchmont finds the absent scholar standing exactly as he had before, "looking now upon his tablets, now up to the sky, but seeing nothing any where" (p. 139).

Sent by Sir Hugh to accompany his nieces back from Mrs. Arlbery's, he insists upon taking all his books and papers for the four- or five-mile trip and becomes so immersed in them that Jacob, the coachman, can get no response from him. Jacob reports to his master,

I goes up to the coach door, to ask the Doctor if he would get out, or only send in to let the young ladies know he was come for them; but he was got so deep into some of his learning, that, I dare say I bawled it three good times in his

ears, before he so much as lifted up his head; and then it was only to say, I put him out! and to it he went again, just as if I'd said never a word. (p. 200)

When Camilla and Eugenia become alarmed at the doctor's two-hour absence, they find that he has been lost in his books and has failed to join his party on the yacht. Discovering them gone, he orders a boat to follow them but immediately "falls to writing." When he "had scribbled all he could scratch out of his noddle," he finds, to his amazement, that the yacht has been gone an hour. His obsession with his writing causes him to neglect his duties, his relationship with other people and, since he often forgets to eat, even his own bodily needs. His life lacks balance because only the intellectual side of him is truly alive while the social and emotional parts have atrophied. He is a fairly successful scholar but an utter failure as a human being.

Although Dr. Orkborne is the most extreme example of the danger of book worship, other characters also over-value education. Sir Hugh, for example, although he is ignorant himself, or perhaps because he is, is awed by formal learning. He has "a reverence almost awful" of his brother's learning and attributes his own unhappiness to a lack of it. The narrator says:

His imagination, neither regulated by wisdom, nor disciplined by experience, having once taken this turn, he soon fancied that every earthly misfortune originated in a carelessness of learning . . . . even inevitable calamities he attributed to the negligence of his education, and construed every error, and every evil of his life, to his youthful disrespect of Greek and Latin. (p. 34)

He hires Dr. Orkborne to tutor him, an attempt that ends badly as, without either youth or intelligence, "His head soon became confused, his ideas were all perplexed, his attention was vastly strained, and his faculties were totally disordered" (p. 39). Exasperated, he decides to give up "all this hard jingle jangle," but retains his awe for education, which he confuses with other qualities. When Edgar snatches Eugenia away from the small pox victim, Sir Hugh says he "had no doubt he [Edgar] would become the first scholar of the age" and later writes to Mr. Tyrold, "Master Mandlebert's behaviour has done the greatest honour to the classics," confusing formal education with courage and good sense (pp. 24, 26).

His awe for learning also disorders his priorities and causes him to misinterpret Lynmere's behavior. When Lynmere's rudeness causes everyone extreme discomfort, his uncle takes their reaction to be respect and "imagining the taciturnity of the rest of the party to proceed from an awe of the knowledge and abilities of his nephew, soon became himself so infected with fear and reverence, that,

though he could not be silent, he spoke only to those who were next him, and in a whisper" (p. 577). Later, after Clermont has insulted both his uncle's horses and his devoted old groom, Sir Hugh excuses his behavior because "it was more easy for him to doubt his senses, than to suppose so accomplished a scholar could do anything but what was right" (p. 583).

Characters in Camilla are judged not only by the way they order their passion and their priorities, but also how they manage their money. Lionel's extravagance robs one uncle of his health, the other of his home, and his father of his freedom. Lynmere contributes to Sir Hugh's financial distress by running up bills amounting to a shocking sum of 1300 pounds. Camilla herself falls prey to the temptation of extravagance beginning with the raffle for the locket, which makes her powerless to relieve a poor woman's very real distress, an event that foreshadows a later and more serious one. In a second raffle Camilla throws away money she doesn't have to waste, a foolish expenditure which, combined with her other debts, makes it impossible for her to rescue a shopkeeper "from bankruptcy and his children from beggary" (p. 711). Her financial problems grow rapidly as she borrows more and more to feed Lionel's greed or her own

extravagance. Finally in a charitable impulse, she borrows to help the poor shopkeeper.

This last debt, combined with her others and with those of her brother and cousin, lands Mr. Tyrold in Winchester Prison, an event that puts Mrs. Mitten into a "quiver," all of Winchester in "an uproar" and everybody in a "turmoil!" (p. 823). Camilla, filled with guilt, suffers the most profound emotional disorder as "Words of alarming incoherency proclaimed the danger menacing her intellects, while agonies nearly convulsive distorted her features, and writhed her form" (p. 824). Her emotional disorder is heightened when she is faced with the disorder in Sir Hugh's abandoned house where "Nothing was in its wonted order" (p. 851). Her emotional disorder leads ultimately to a spiritual disorder as, distraught and despairing, she wishes for her own death.

Violence is also a constant threat to order and reason. In Evelina and in Cecelia, cruelty and brutality often threaten; in Camilla they become painful realities. While the fear of abduction only hovers over Evelina, Eugenia, already the victim of disease, accident and the cruel taunts of insensitive people, is not only abducted, but forced into a miserable marriage with Bellamy, who abuses her verbally and physically and threatens her life.

His threats end ironically with his own "shocking exit," as he accidentally shoots himself.

This murky terror which always lies just beneath the smooth surface of polite society descends to the mistreatment of animals, an event that happens more than once. At the monkey show the awful contortions and noises of the twenty trained monkeys are kept "in tune" by the trainer, who "dealt about such fierce blows with a stick, that they set up a general howling, which he called the Wocal part of his consort, not more stunning to the ear, than offensive to all humanity" (p. 430). All humanity is not offended, however, and with the exception of Mrs. Arlbery's party, the audience claps and shouts for more. Camilla witnesses another act of inhumane treatment when the trainer of a "learned bullfinch" explains that to maintain his authority he "licks him" or "may pinch 'em to a mummy," measures that are costly as well as cruel since he says, "For one that I rears, I loses six or seven. And sometimes they be so plaguy sulky, they tempt me to give 'em a knock a little matter too hard, and then they'll fall you into a fit, like, and go off in a twinkle" (p. 493). This heartless tyranny over helpless animals is a perversion of man's relationship with beasts just as Bellamy's abuse of Eugenia is a perversion of man's relationship with woman.



Throughout her journey into experience Camilla is threatened by chaos--by passions difficult to control, by wild extravagance, by physical violence and cruelty. Throughout this onslaught of experience she must retain her innocence and perfect her virtue by gaining prudence and by learning to impose order on her chaotic passions within and on the senseless disorder without. Patricia Spacks sees this process as a negative one, asserting that Camilla resolves the conflict of the demands placed on her "by yielding to the authority of parents and husband," or "giving up" rather than "growing up."<sup>38</sup> Rose Marie Cutting writes, "If a woman's whole life (and 'fortune') depends on pleasing and winning a man, then Camilla's story is also a fitting parable for the general fate of women."<sup>39</sup> The resolution is not, as these feminist readings suggest, a regression, a submission, but a process of moral growth in which Camilla retains her innocence while she achieves social and moral maturity, equipping her ultimately to marry Edgar. Able now to deal with the world, she is ready to assume her place in the community of man and to create with Edgar a sane and

<sup>38</sup> Spacks, pp. 133-34.

<sup>39</sup> Rose Marie Cutting, "Defiant Women: The Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney's Novels," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 17 (1977), 521.

ordered life which defies the evil and chaos and cruelty that threaten.

In Camilla, as in Evelina and Cecelia, although the structure, the most important themes, and the characterization show the influence of romance, other features reveal new interest in realism. Burney herself maintains adamantly that Camilla is "not a Romance" but "sketches of Characters & morals put in action."<sup>40</sup> Burney attempts to concretize and localize her story and to people it with believable characters in order to make the moral more immediate and affecting. And as in her previous two novels, in Camilla, she succeeds to a great extent in achieving the realism she so clearly desired.

Since the aims of the romance and the sort of courtesy book realism Burney wanted are both moral instruction, several features of Camilla, such as setting, serve the concerns of both realism and romance. Again as in the earlier two novels, the narrative is fixed in space. Camilla's family lives in the village of Etherington, which though fictional itself, is situated in the real county of Hampshire in the New Forest. All her journeys are to real places. First she goes to Tunbridge Wells, a health spa, where she visits actual places such as the Pantiles,

<sup>40</sup> Burney, Journals and Letters, III, 117.

Mount Pleasant, Mount Ephraim, and Knowle. Her second journey is to another real resort, Southampton, where she visits High Street, Charing Cross, and Temple Bar. And finally, on her distraught journey home, she passes through Alton, Alresford, and Bagshot, all actual names of real towns. Other, familiar contemporary spots are mentioned by characters. Mr. Dubster speaks of the dwarfs at Exeter Change, a freak show in London, Lord O'Lerney mentions Ranelagh, Cheltenham, and Bath, and Mrs. Mitten refers to a man who lives in Shug Lane. The romantic Mrs. Berlington reads Rowe's letter from the dead (or Friendship in Death: In Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living, 1728) and Hamond's elegies (published 1743), both popular contemporary works. These details of setting have the effect of fixing the tale in time and in space, lending the story verisimilitude and immediacy.

But setting is also moral and psychological. Mr. Dubster's house is described in detail, not for the purposes of formal realism, but for the purposes of revealing Mr. Dubster. The house is

a small house, just new fronted with deep red bricks, containing, on the ground floor, two little bow windows, in a sharp triangular form, enclosing a door ornamented with small panes of glass, cut in various shapes; on the first story, a little balcony, decorated in the middle and at each corner with leaden images of Cupids; and, in the attic story, a very small venetian

window, partly formed with minute panes of glass, and partly with glazed tiles; representing, in blue and white, various devices of dogs and cats, mice and birds, rats and ferrets, as emblems of the conjugal state. (p. 274)

Like Mr. Dubster himself the house is a hodge-podge of ostentatious and discordant elements; like its owner the house is totally without taste or beauty or grace.

Even more revealing is the description of the grounds. What he pretentiously calls a "lake" appears to Eugenia only a "very dirty little pond, with a mass of rubbish in the middle." Indeed, as she suggests, there is nothing but "rubbish all round, and everywhere" (p. 275). To get to his "island" which is what he calls the mound of rubbish, the young women have to walk a plank which he calls his "bridge." Their tour also includes a visit to his "labyrinth," which turns out to be no more than a walk, half-finished, through brushwood. After this they are treated to a trip to his "summer house," like everything else half-done and a mass of confusion. The house and the grounds are a cheap, shoddy imitation of a country estate just as Mr. Dubster himself is a sleazy and unconvincing copy of a country gentleman.

Another fully realized interior, Sir Hugh's house, also serves a symbolic purpose. Camilla walks through the deserted house, room by room, noting the absence of servants, of the usual cheerful fire, of horses and pets,

coming finally to her uncle's chamber, which is described in detail:

It looked despoiled and forsaken. Nothing was in its wonted order; his favourite guns hung not over the chimney-piece; the corners of the room were emptied of his sticks; his great chair was in a new place; no cushions for his dogs were near the fire; the bedstead was naked. (p. 851)

The details in this description add a limited amount of formal realism, but the symbolic function is far more important. The sense of awful desolation, of lifelessness, even of death that pervades the house is the consequence of Camilla's, Lionel's, and Clermont's imprudence. The terrible emptiness, the lack of warmth and light and life in the house, is an emblem of the spiritual state of sin, or specifically, here, of selfish extravagance. The scene affects Camilla strongly, causing her guilt, emotional anguish, even spiritual despair. The scene also has psychological realism since Camilla's disturbed state of mind colors it. As she looked out from the windows of the house, "she thought the melancholy of her own mind pervaded the park" (p. 850)

Not only landscape and interiors but also "things" receive detailed attention in Camilla. At the first raffle the locket that tempts the heroine into extravagance is described as

A beautiful locket, set round with pearls, ornamented at the top with a little knot of brilliants, and very elegantly shaped, with a space left for a braid of hair, or a cypher, was produced, and, if by magnetic power, attracted into almost every hand the capricious coin . . . . (p. 93)

The details add verisimilitude but even more importantly they make vivid the lure of "things," the mesmerizing power of material possessions to create desire which overrides prudence. Later, at Tunbridge, Mrs. Mitten makes an exact inventory of Camilla's wardrobe, noting each problem with her gowns and declaring that her wardrobe is a disgrace and must be refurbished (p. 517).

Mrs. Mitten's constant attempts to persuade Camilla to buy gowns and hats and shoes gradually wears away her resistance, and by the time she visits Southampton her simple wardrobe has been replaced by a much finer one.

The narrator says:

Her robe was everywhere edged with the finest Valenciennes lace; her lilac shoes, sash, and gloves, were richly spangled with silver, and finished with a silver fringe; her ear-rings and necklace were of lilac and gold beads; her fan and shoe roses were brilliant with lilac flowers, and her plumes of lilac feathers, were here and there tipped with the most transparent white beads, to give them the effect of being glittering with the dew. (p. 721)

The richness of the ensemble suggest a decadent luxury that is symbolic of Camilla's vanity and her loss of control over her finances.

The price of each "thing" that is described is also reckoned exactly. Things do not cost a lot or a little, but just so many shillings and so many guineas. The cost of a raffle ticket on the locket is exactly a half guinea, the hat Mrs. Mitten has retrimmed for her costs exactly five guineas, and the earrings, which are worth ten guineas, are raffled at a half-guinea a ticket. Camilla's borrowings are tallied carefully. She borrows two guineas from Mrs. Arlbery, twenty from Eugenia, three from Lavinia, and incurs a debt of two hundred pounds to Sir Sedley for Lionel's sake. Finally, in a scene of awful reckoning, all her debts are catalogued one by one. She owes thirty pounds for her gown, trimmings and jewelry, nine guineas for her cloak, five pounds for miscellaneous small articles, fifty-five pounds for her note to aid the poor Higdens and sixteen pounds from her Tunbridge extravagances, making a grand total of one hundred and eighteen pounds nine shillings (pp. 743-44). It is not the sum itself that matters, really, but the insidious nature of the evil of greed and vanity. Each new debt, however trivial, makes her more powerless to pay old ones

and so she becomes hopelessly mired, by banal expenditures, in self-perpetuating debt.

Not only setting, but also characterization, shows the influence of realism. Although most of the major characters, including Camilla, Eugenia, Lavinia, Edgar, Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold, and Bellamy, are typically black and white, other characters are more complex mixtures of good and evil, weaknesses and strengths. Sir Sedley, for example, is mainly a target for social satire, but though he is an egregious fop, his affectation is mitigated by other admirable qualities. He is capable at will of "burying all foppery in compassion and good nature" (p. 324). Compared to other affected types such as Lord Newford and Sir Theophilus Jarrard, he is "A man as much their superior in capacity as in powers of pleasing" (p. 398). And finally his rescue, at the hazard of his life, of Camilla from the run-away carriage demonstrates another admirable quality--his "natural courage" (p. 404).

Mrs. Arlbery also shows this realistic mixture of good and bad. She is "full of caprice, coquetry, and singularity," yet she has "an excellent and uncommon understanding." Although she is "guilty of no vice," she has "offended or frightened almost all the country around, by a wilful strangeness of behaviour" (p. 194). She is



kind and generous to Camilla, yet gives her advice that almost causes her to lose Edgar.

Lionel, too, shows a deviation from the romance tradition of characterization, since at the end there is a suggestion that, despite all his wicked ways, there is still a possibility of redemption. This seems unlikely in light of the fact that we are told early that "his defects, though not originally of the heart, were of a species that soon tend to harden it" (p. 239). Yet at the end, we find not only that he changes but that he changes in a way not at all typical of the romance in which, as Miller tells, changes in characters usually take place not gradually but through a "'conversion-experience,' the fundamental reorientation of the soul."<sup>41</sup> Lionel, on the other hand, goes abroad where eventually we are informed, "time aided adversity in forming him a new character" (p. 909).

And finally in Camilla, as in Burney's first two novels, much of the realism inheres in the satire on manners. And again as in Evelina and in Cecelia, manners, which are intimately connected with morals, lie at the very heart of social relationships. Mr. Tyrold, speaking of men's social ties with each other, says, "That species of independence, which proudly flies all ties of gratitude,

<sup>41</sup> Miller, p. 58.

is inimical to the social compact of civilized life . . . ." (p. 232). Manners figure importantly in this social contract. Bad manners are more than a breach of etiquette; they are a breach of the contract itself. Throughout Camilla, manners function as an index to a character's attitude, intention, and virtue. True good manners such as Edgar has are not a set of rules but an attitude of consideration and kindness. In a telling scene of contrast, Lionel's merciless teasing of Melmond is followed by Edgar's sensitive awareness of the victim's distress and his attempts to put the young man at his ease. Camilla, observing this, remarks, "How like my dear father was that! to give relief to embarrassment, instead of joining in the laugh which excites it!" (p. 104). Mr. Westwyn, a simple, straightforward man, possesses the same natural good manners. When he observes a scene in which Clermont is rudely abusing a waiter who is behaving in a civil manner, he sees immediately that Clermont is at fault, saying, "If any body's helped, let it be the waiter; for he's here to do his duty: He don't come only to behave unmannerly, for his own pleasure" (p. 667).

Most characters, unfortunately, do not possess the good manners of Mr. Tyrold, Edgar, or Mr. Westwyn, but are either coarse and loutish, or affected and foppish. Mr. Dubster, whose insensitivity rivals that of the vulgar

Branghton tribe, embarrasses Camilla by forcing his attentions on her and by speaking rudely of Eugenia as "that ugly little body" (p. 77). Later when the two sisters take the tour of his house and grounds, he seeks to satisfy his own morbid curiosity about Eugenia's physical defects by quizzing her with such painful questions as "was it a fall? or was you born so?" and when Camilla whispers that it was a fall, he continues, "I take it then . . . that was what stunted your growth so, Miss? for, I take it, you're not much above the dwarf as they shew at Exeter Change?" (p. 280). After the passing women have tortured Eugenia with more cruel questions, he says, "they can't do you no hurt; though they are rather rude, I must needs confess the truth, to say such things to your face. But one must not expect people to be over polite, so far from London" (p. 289). This remark reveals that he is too stupid to realize that his questions have been hardly less painful and also that he wrongly believes rudeness cannot hurt. We know, too, from his association of London and politeness that he confuses fashionable manners with genuine courtesy.

At the other extreme are a group of affected types, who are slaves to tonnish manners. Ton, the narrator explains, is very difficult to define, but "its establishment and its glory is built upon vanity that knows no

deficiency, or insolence that knows no blush" (p. 464). Clermont's manners provide a good example of this vanity and insolence. His treatment of Eugenia is so appallingly rude that she "had never yet thought herself so plain and insignificant, and felt as if, even since the morning, the small-pox had renewed its ravages, and she had sunk into being shorter" (p. 577). He insolently criticizes his uncle's horses, his groom, insults the servants, demands unavailable delicacies and assaults a waiter, all under the guise of superior taste, education, and manners. The manners of Lord Newford, "a young nobleman of the ton," are also typical of this set. On entering a room he first takes "a staring survey of every thing and every body around." Then, "He asked Mrs. Arlbery how she did, without touching his hat; and how long she had been at Tunbridge, without waiting for an answer; and said he was happy to have the pleasure of seeing her, without once looking at her" (p. 395).

But Sir Sedley Clarendel, who "labours harder to be affected than any ploughman does for his dinner" (p. 264), is the undisputed master of tonnish manners. When Camilla first meets him, his every gesture is the height of affectation, as he sniffs, squirts, and sprinkles various fragrances about him to sweeten the air. He immediately proceeds to offend Miss Margland by taking her chair and

to embarrass Camilla by examining her rudely. He keeps abreast of all the latest fads in manners. Reluctantly surrendering his chair to Mrs. Arlbery, he comments that since she is so tired "I must positively do the thing that's old fashioned" and "I have the honour to give you my chair - at the risk of my reputation" (pp. 87-88). But he balks at Mrs. Arlbery's request that he "be civil, and stike us all with astonishment!" by escorting Camilla to her coach, replying, "but nobody's civil now, you know; 'tis a fogramity quite out" (p. 106). Always anxious to be avante garde, he says, "I begin to tire of ennui. 'Tis grown so common. I saw my footman beginning it but last week" (p. 465). Bored with boredom, he has taken affectation to its absurd limit.

The language of the objects of satire is quite as empty of meaning as their foppish manners. The conversation of two men of the ton, Lord Newford and Sir Theophilus Jarard, is

made up of a few disjointed sentences . . . in cant words, emphatically and conceitedly pronounced, and brought round upon every occasion, and in every speech, with so precise an exclusion of all other terms, that their vocabulary scarce consisted of forty words in totality. (p. 464)

Clermont's attitude toward language is also the fashionable one. When his uncle asks him the meaning of the faddish

terms "quoz" and "quiz" and suggests that his nephew has "got rather a particular odd way of speaking to persons," Clermont replies, "You descant too much upon words, sir; we have left off, now, using them with such prodigious precision. It's quite over, sir" (p. 601). Mrs. Arlbery, also a prominent member of the ton, uses language as a witty weapon and receives so much pleasure from "uttering a bon mot she thought more of its brilliancy than of the pain it might inflict." She says of wits that though they may have good hearts and good nature, they, unlike "the careful prosers who utter nothing but what is right, or the heavy thinkers who have too little fancy to say anything that is wrong," they find pleasure in their "own rattle" (p. 780).

People outside the modish circle also abuse language. Dr. Orkborne, for example, cannot carry on a simple conversation because he knows only the language of scholarship and is utterly amazed that Dr. Marchmont can speak so that "scholastic attainments were not required to elucidate a single sentence" (p. 147). Sir Hugh shares the doctor's awe, though not his understanding, of the language of learning and tells Clermont, "if you don't care for our plain English conversation, which, indeed, after all your studies, one can't much wonder at, nobody can be against you and the Doctor jabbering together a

little of your Greek and Latin" (p. 566). The abuse of language by these characters, whether it be the cant phrases of the fashionable, the witty barbs of Mrs. Arlbery or the scholarly jargon of Dr. Orkborne, has one thing in common. They all undermine the function of language, which is to communicate meaning just as the affected posturing of these same characters distorts the true meaning of manners which, rightly understood, are outward manifestations of kindness and consideration and sensitivity.

The satire on manners in Camilla, though occasionally brilliant, is on the whole less effective here than in the earlier two novels because it is so often undercut or diluted by new strains of benevolism and new theories of laughter. During the course of the eighteenth century, the emphasis on satire as a necessary corrective force was giving way to an emphasis on a new kind of comedy and humour based in ideas of good nature and sympathy.<sup>41</sup> This shift in emphasis, largely responsible for the new lovable "humours" characters, is evident in Camilla. In earlier Burney novels the attack on fops and fools is entirely satirical, but in Camilla, we see a new tolerance of the

<sup>41</sup> Stuart Tave, The Amiable Humorist; A Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1960).

targets of satire. Sir Sedley, as we have seen, though an affected fop, is largely forgiven because he has "good nature" and is, in Mrs. Arlbery's words, "upon the whole, what may be called a very good sort of man" (p. 401).

None of this sort of acceptance or forgiveness is available in Burney's earlier writing. No good nature or benevolence mitigates the absurd pretensions of the foolish Mr. Smith or the absurd Branghton sisters in Evelina. No courage or good parts create sympathy or admiration for the affected types such as Sir Robert Floyer or Mr. Meadows in Cecelia. In the first two novels the targets of satire, who call forth no reaction in the reader's mind except contempt, function solely to expose folly and vice in order to correct it. But by the time Camilla was written such purely satiric writing, because it was fundamentally at odds with the newer beliefs in the innate goodness of man, had fallen out of favor and was considered to be ill-natured.

The new tolerance toward folly fostered by the newer attitudes inheres in Camilla most obviously in the character of Sir Hugh, a humorist in the tradition of Parson Adams, Matthew Bramble and Uncle Toby. Like his predecessors, Sir Hugh is a simple, good man, two qualities which are often juxtaposed in descriptions of him. When he meets Bellamy in the churchyard, he says, "Sir, if you



are a stranger, as I imagine, not knowing your face, you are welcome to a place in my pew, provided you don't get a seat in a better; which I'm pretty much afraid you can't, mine being the best" (p. 216). The silliness of the remark is cancelled by the kindness of the welcome. In a similar example, the old baronet remarks to his faithful servant Robert,

I had fully intended making you the proper lecture upon your not coming in time; but as it has turned out not to be your fault, on account of an accident, I shall say no; except to give you a hint not to do such a thing again, because we have all been upon the point of being tossed by a mad bull; which would certainly have happened, but for the lucky chance of its turning out a false alarm. (pp. 146-47)

Again, our attention is focused less on the foolishness of his words than on the generosity of his behavior. His actions are always well-intentioned and grow out of a loving and generous heart. The real affection that other characters, including all the Tyrols, Edgar, and his old friend Westwyn, feel for him is testimony to his goodness. Mr. Westwyn speaks for the others when he says of Sir Hugh that "he's so stuffed full of goodness and kindness, that there's no room left in him for anything else" (p. 626). He is consistently described as having an "artlessly sweet" temper, a nature that is all "sweetness," and a heart

that is characterized by "goodness" and "kindness" (pp. 10, 590-91).

The importance of good nature in Camilla is made explicit by the narrator, who says:

No one single quality is perhaps so endearing, from man to man, as good-nature. Talents excite more admiration; wisdom more respect; and virtue, more esteem; but with admiration envy is apt to mingle, and fear with respect; while esteem, though always honourable, is often cold: but good-nature gives pleasure without any alloy; ease, confidence, and happy carelessness, without the pain of obligation, without the exertion of gratitude. (p. 333)

This passage is about Sir Hugh and it colors our view of everything he does and is. Another, less tolerant, more stringently moral view might result in a different appraisal of his character. Although his heart is good, his lack of judgment leaves Eugenia scarred, crippled and with delusions about her appearance, while his unthinking generosity encourages both Lionel and Clermont in their profligate ways. All in all, the well-intentioned bumbling of Sir Hugh cause as much misery as the most wicked machinations of the most malevolent villain, Bellamy. But all is forgiven Sir Hugh because he has good nature, which for the first time in Burney, is exalted above wisdom or virtue.

Critics generally agree that Camilla is inferior to either Evelina or Cecelia. They do not agree on why.

White suggests that Camilla suffers from too many subplots and an inconsistent point of view.<sup>42</sup> Horner complains that there is too little humour in Camilla and Hale agrees, saying "no humor brightens the pages of Camilla."<sup>43</sup> Actually, the reverse is true. Not only is there too much humor but it is too "bright," too cheerful. As we have seen, the beliefs and the aims of satire and romance are complementary. Both are based on the assumption that man is basically corrupt and in need of correction; both take account of the reality of human failure and the possibility of human redemption; both aim at correcting vice and folly. The assumptions and aims of humor and romance, on the other hand, are profoundly hostile. The tolerant, sympathetic humor found in Camilla, which not only forgives but even appreciates fops like Sir Sedley and fools like Sir Hugh, is based in beliefs about the natural goodness of man and is fundamentally at odds with the view of man that informs the romance, which, believing man to be bad, hopes to make him better.

Although critics are right to suggest that Camilla is flawed by inconsistencies in point of view or by problems

<sup>42</sup> White, p. 79.

<sup>43</sup> Joyce Horner, The English Women Novelists and Their Connection with the Feminist Movement (1688-1797) (Northampton, Mass.: Folcroft Library Editions, 1973), p. 137; Hale, p. 20.

of length or style, these are relatively minor compared to the very major and basic conflict in attitude and aims which resulted when Burney substituted humor for satire. The blend of romance and realistic satire in Evelina and Cecelia provided an integrity of attitude and purpose that is, unfortunately, lacking in Camilla.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

A Note on The Wanderer

Eighteen years elapsed between the publication of Camilla and The Wanderer, Burney's last novel. During these years, Burney suffered many disappointments, both personal and artistic. Her beloved sister, Susan, died, her health failed, and her three comedies written in this period went unappreciated and unproduced. The Wanderer was yet another disappointment.

Written, like Camilla, to meet urgent financial demands, her fourth and final book enriched her by 1,500 pounds but sunk her reputation with both readers and critics, who treated The Wanderer, in Burney's words, "very harshly." Although the booksellers anticipated a fourth printing at least, the second edition never sold out and sales totalled only 3,600 copies. For this, Burney blamed the booksellers who "fixed the rapacious price of two guineas which . . . damped the sale."<sup>1</sup> Critics, as

<sup>1</sup> Fanny Burney, Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, ed. Charlotte Barrett (London: George Bell and Sons, 1891), IV, 228.

unfriendly as the reading public, damned the novel for its style and for its unrealistic portrayal of contemporary society.<sup>2</sup>

The reputation of The Wanderer has not improved today when, as Adelstein contends, it is read "only by Burneyites and dedicated scholars of the eighteenth-century novel."<sup>3</sup> It takes great dedication, indeed, to wander through the 2,000 pages of this novel, which is surely the least successful of Burney's four. Macaulay has rightly suggested that The Wanderer is "a book which no judicious friend to her memory will attempt to draw from the oblivion into which it has justly fallen."<sup>4</sup> As a "friend to her memory," I will not do her this disservice. For this reason--that it is bad--and for a second reason--that it is late, a nineteenth rather than an eighteenth-century novel--I have not devoted a full chapter to The Wanderer. A brief plot summary will make abundantly clear that it, like the first three novels, is essentially a romance in plot, characterization, and theme.

<sup>2</sup> Joyce Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 341.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Adelstein, Fanny Burney, Twayne English Authors Series, No. 67 (New York: Twayne, 1968), p. 129.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay, quoted in Will Taliaferro Hale, "Madame d'Arblay's Place in the Development of the English Novel," Indiana University Studies, 3 (January 1916), 33.

The novel begins in medias res as Juliet, called at first "the Incognita," begs passage on a ship bound from France to England. Her shabby dress, blackened and patched face, and refusal to give her name make her a figure of both mystery and ridicule. When she accidentally throws her purse overboard, she is as destitute as she looks and is forced to depend entirely on the charity of her shipmates. We learn later that she is in this unenviable position because of her peculiar situation which is this: The unacknowledged but legitimate daughter of Lord Granville by his first and secret marriage to a commoner, she has been reared in France by a bishop in an arrangement, made by her father, which includes the stipulation that she inherit only if her relationship to him is kept secret and only if she remains in France. When the bishop is taken prisoner during the Revolution, a fortune hunter, who is a commissary in Robespierre's forces, threatens to kill her guardian unless she marries him and signs over to him her considerable legacy. After the marriage but before the papers are signed she escapes, disguised as she is when we first meet her, to England, where she removes the disguise and is revealed as a beautiful young woman. Absolutely alone and friendless, she is subjected to a seemingly endless series of brutal social and economic humiliations and hardships as she

struggles unsuccessfully to support herself in a variety of occupations, including music teacher and milliner. During this time she meets her half-brother and half-sister, Lord Melbury and Lady Aurora Granville, with whom she becomes friends, a friendship which is interrupted, however, because Juliet, lacking both a name and a pedigree, is not considered a fit companion for them. She also becomes the unwilling third party in a love triangle involving two young people she has met on the boat-- Harleigh and Elinor Joddrel. Elinor becomes so jealous of Harleigh's love for Juliet, or "L.S." as she is then called, that she attempts suicide three times.

Her trials multiply as she is accused of stealing and forced to wander through the countryside, again in disguise, and totally dependent on the charity of rural people who, for the most part, treat her no more kindly or charitably than the fashionable set has. Finally, and mercifully for both Juliet and the reader, the story ends when the "Incognita" learns that her wicked husband is dead and the bishop released from prison. After nearly 2,000 pages of nightmarish trials, she acquires a family by the acknowledgement of her relationship to Lord Granville and a husband by her marriage to Harleigh.

Even from this sketchy outline, the romance influence on plot is clearly visible. Juliet's situation is plainly



that of the typical romance heroine. Orphaned and raised by a kindly father substitute, her birth and identity are shrouded in mystery--the stigma characteristically attached to the heroine. Her search for her identity and her rightful place in society takes the form of a quest as she is forced to leave her home and is thrust into the world, nameless, friendless, and fortuneless, to undergo a bizarre series of trials, including the obligatory incest-threat, which test her prudence, courage, and virtue. Her well-deserved reward is the standard acknowledgment, inheritance (30,000 pounds), and husband. The plot, like that of other Burney novels, has been widely criticized. Adelstein objects to the "dependence on coincidence," while Cutting regrets the happy ending and specifically the marriage which she sees as "A mechanical reconciliation . . . between Juliet and English society."<sup>5</sup> Also troubled by the ending, Spacks argues that "the happy ending of The Wanderer and the novel's artifices of plot and character seem to comprise a bitter mockery, so inadequate are artifices of plot to solve the problems here richly exposed."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Adelstein, p. 129; Rose Marie Cutting, "Defiant Women: The Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney's Novels," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 17 (1977), 529.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia M. Spacks, Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 188.

Characterization in The Wanderer is also typical of romance. More than any other Burney heroine Juliet is a paragon from beginning to end. As White suggests, "there is really no change at all in Juliet. She is the same at the end of the book as she was in the beginning."<sup>7</sup> Unlike Evelina and Camilla, she is mature and prudent from the moment we meet her. Even more than Cecelia, who lacks only prudence in matters of love and money, Juliet is "finished," with no lessons to learn, only suffering to endure. Her natural beauty and nobility shine forth even through her humble clothes and situation. Like the princess who cannot bear the pea or Havelock with his tell-tale light, Juliet has "signs" that reveal her breeding. Her blackened and patched face cannot obscure the fact that she has a fine nose and eyes, and, even in her inferior position at Mrs. Maple's house, her talents and manners reveal her as somebody, rather than the nobody she appears.

Harleigh, her faithful lover, is similarly drawn without one blemish or weakness to mar the perfection of his knightly virtue. He is courteous, brave, loyal and selfless in his treatment of Juliet. Even more telling is his patient treatment of Elinor, whose possessiveness, mad

<sup>7</sup> Eugene White, Fanny Burney, Novelist (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1960), p. 8.

ravings, and extravagant suicide attempts would have caused a lesser man to react less nobly.

The villains are also consistent and stable. Mrs. Ireton is always full of ire, her son and his friend, Riley, dependably malicious, Selina consistently fickle and selfish. None of these characters change in any appreciable way. Significantly, at the end, when Juliet and Harleigh are happily married, certain persons, including Riley, Ireton and Selina, are excluded from Harleigh Hall. The consistency and the degree of good or evil in the characters have bothered critics such as White, who finds not only the "irreproachable perfection" of Juliet and the "eternal devotion" of Harleigh but also the malice of other characters "incredible."<sup>8</sup> Burney makes it clear in her preface to this novel that she intends the characters to be "general," "without any species of personality."<sup>9</sup> This feature of character, of course, traces directly to the romance tradition where characters, because they represent moral qualities, are generalized rather than particularized.

The themes of The Wanderer also reflect the stringently moral concerns of romance. As Hemlow suggests, the

<sup>8</sup> White, pp. 126-29.

<sup>9</sup> Fanny Burney, The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1814), I, ix. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text.

most important aim of The Wanderer "is to distinguish . . . between good and faulty behavior; to delineate and reward perfect conduct, and to describe and punish its reverse."<sup>10</sup> Good behavior depends on the moral vision that allows one to penetrate through false appearances to reality, a theme that is underscored by Juliet's numerous disguises and by her apparent lack of an identity or a place. Virtuous action also involves prudence or the ability to act wisely, including ordering oneself and the chaotic outer world, an ability that some characters, such as Elinor, need to learn. These themes, emphasized by a narrator who intrudes freely, serve the overtly didactic aims of the novel.

In The Wanderer, as in Burney's first three novels, romance concerns and techniques are also supplemented by newer, more realistic ones. Real place names are used, fixing the narrative in space. In addition, both settings and characters are described with some fullness. Here, as in Burney's other novels, the speech of minor characters is idiomatic and contrasts sharply with the stylized language of the major characters. And finally money, a major concern in Camilla, becomes even more important in the last novel, where money is carefully counted, and

<sup>10</sup> Hemlow, p. 342.

where lack of it causes very real difficulties for the heroine.

So The Wanderer, like Burney's first three novels, exhibits features of both realism and romance, but has closer affinities with the romance in its plotting, characterization, and themes. An appreciation of this will answer the critical objections which focus on improbable plots dependent on coincidence, characters too good or too bad to be credible, and obvious didacticism. It will not serve as an argument that the novel is successful; it will explain, however, at least in part, why it is not. The novel is certainly flawed for several reasons. The first two are not related to the romance at all. First, the plot, which sounds interesting when reduced to its starkest outline, is tedious and repetitious when drawn out for 2,000 pages. Secondly, the style, which is elephantine, makes reading a heavy chore. The third and most important flaw in the novel is directly related to romance and can be understood only in terms of that tradition. Burney made an unfortunate choice when she paired romance with concerns other than the satire on manners she had wisely chosen in Evelina and Cecelia.

Since The Wanderer was not begun until 1800 and not completed until 1814, the influence of romanticism is clear in this novel in several ways. Elinor Joddrel is an

extravagantly romantic young woman, independent, free-spirited, strongly in favor of the French Revolution, and so saturated with ideas of romantic love that she cannot love Albert's brother, Dennis, who loves her, but only Albert, who does not. She seems to enjoy not only the unrequited nature of the love but also her own histrionics, especially her stacy suicide attempts. Although Burney does not completely approve of Elinor and certainly does not intend her as a model of female virtue, there is some sympathy and admiration in her portrayal of this "new woman."

New strains of romanticism are also evident in Burney's treatment of nature. When Juliet escapes into the New Forest, nature is described in a way that is new for Burney, becoming, in a Wordsworthian fashion, a solace, a religious force, a teacher, and making Juliet "cease to sigh for social intercourse" (IV, 277). And when Juliet first encounters the rustic country families, her view of them is clouded by romantic ideas about the natural goodness of simple folk. Eventually she discovers that her idyllic picture of country life is false, that the charms of the farm wear thin without good books and good talk, that envy and malice are found as often in the country as in the city. Finally, she concludes that although there are good people such as Dame Goss and Dame Fairfield who are

pictures of "untaught benevolence and generosity," these qualities are even more pleasing when they are polished into the "cultured fruits of religion and of principle" (IV, 239). Natural innocence, goodness, and honesty are heightened and refined by manners. So finally the romantic views of Elinor and romantic notions about natural goodness are undercut. But though these ideas are found lacking in many respects and are criticized in a mild sort of way, they are not satirized. Had they been, the novel would have had more integrity of design and purpose. As Miller suggests, "It is difficult to think of two literary entities more totally distinct and different, indeed antithetical, than the Romance and the Romantic."

#### Burney's Achievement

All four of Burney's novels, then, are essentially romances in all major aspects of plotting, characterization, and theme. This fact, which has gone virtually unnoted by Burney critics, is largely responsible for the inadequate understanding and low assessment of Burney's fiction, which can be fully appreciated only in the context of the romance tradition. Biased by modern realistic perspectives and misled by Burney's own insistence on the realistic aims of her novels, critics have frequently criticized her

plots for their complexity, lack of credibility, reliance on coincidence, and "contrived" endings. Characterization, the other area most often designated as a "weakness" by critics, has been viewed as inadequate because characters are too good or too bad to be believable, because their individual motives are not probed and analyzed, and because they change little, if any. Other criticisms focus on the didacticism and the intrusive narrator, both of which make the novels less dramatic and lessen the illusion of reality. Underlying all these criticisms is the assumption that good fiction is realistic fiction, that plots should be seen to describe events as they might "really" happen to us or someone we know, and that characters should seem "really" to be people we might be or meet. Another such assumption is that the best method of narration is the dramatic, which is intrinsically better than other modes because it is less suggestive of artifice and provides more opportunity for irony. And finally it is based on the assumption that reality is what we can see and hear and touch and should include many details, often unlovely, of daily living.

Romance writers did not share with realistic critics any of these assumptions, and since her methods and attitudes, like those of most eighteenth-century novelists, were formed mainly by that powerfully influential tradition,



neither did Burney. Instead, her fiction is informed by the attitudes and assumptions, as well as the techniques, of the romance. The world view of romance which is Providential and profoundly moral produces plots, like Burney's, which center on the quest of an adolescent for moral maturity and are characterized by coincidence or Providential intervention. And because the romance interests itself in permanent values, it produces characters, like Burney's, who are stable representatives of moral qualities, rather than developing individuals with unique personalities and motivations.

Burney did, however, respond to the new interest in realism by expressing a desire to make her stories probable and her characters believable. This she accomplished, for the most part, by fixing her narratives in time and in space and by focusing on contemporary manners, which become the object of satire in the first two novels. This leads us to a second important conclusion.

An awareness of Burney's affinities with romance will also help to answer a question that has baffled critics-- that is why the quality of her fiction declines, why Evelina and Cecelia were successful while Camilla and The Wanderer were far less so. Many critics have advanced theories to account for this falling off. Steeves suggests that Burney "almost pitifully lost touch with living

reality."<sup>11</sup> Hemlow blames Burney's increasing tendency to focus on "courtesy book" virtues for the failure of the later novels.<sup>12</sup> According to Hale, the problem is that she began to pander to the reading public.<sup>13</sup> The Blooms argue that she "imitated herself" and that her "imaginative faculty hardened into stereotypes."<sup>14</sup> Nearly all critics mention the stilted, inflated style of both the narrator and the characters of the last two novels as difficulties.

The critics are right about the steady decline in the novels. Evelina is Burney's finest novel in every way. Cecelia, in my opinion, needs only to be shorter to be as good. But Camilla and The Wanderer are clearly inferior to Burney's first two novels. The explanations mentioned by critics all have merit and help to account for certain weaknesses of the later novels. Even taken together, however, they fail to explain the suddenness and the extent of the ebb in quality which takes place after Cecelia. A much more fundamental flaw, I would suggest,

<sup>11</sup> Harrison R. Steeves, Before Jane Austen (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Joyce Hemlow, "Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books," PMLA, 65 (September 1950), 761.

<sup>13</sup> Hale, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Lillian D. Bloom and Edward A. Bloom, "Fanny Burney's Novels: The Retreat from Wonder," Novel: A Forum on Fiction, 12 (April 1979), 218.

is a basic lack of integrity in both novels. In Evelina and in Cecelia, the romance is happily coupled with satire on manners, which is entirely compatible since both satire and romance are severely moral modes, based on the assumption that man, being basically evil but capable of redemption, needs correction. In Camilla, romance is unwisely yoked with gentle humor rather than with satire, a pairing which is incompatible since humor of the kind we have in this novel is based on ideas of good nature and so tolerates and accepts, rather than corrects, folly. In The Wanderer, romance is unhappily mated with romantic attitudes that are profoundly inimical to the assumptions and aims of romance.

Although Burney's last two novels are flawed in this basic way, they are still more interesting than critics are willing to admit and deserve more attention than they have received. The tendency to underestimate the value of the first two novels, especially Cecelia, results from graver misunderstandings about what Burney attempted and what she performed. Assuming that she attempted to write realistic novels, critics have also assumed that she failed in this. Approaching the novels in their proper context--the romance--takes care of these objections and allows us to appreciate Burney's fiction for what it is intended to be and not what we might wish it had been.

The excellence of Evelina and Cecelia alone should secure Burney the rank of a major eighteenth-century novelist, a place she has been long and unfairly denied. Although we can never again expect to hear Evelina described as Sheridan described it, as "superior to Fielding," or Cecelia described as Charlotte Burney described it, as "as much liked and read . . . as any book ever was,"<sup>15</sup> we can perhaps hope to see these two novels regain some of the enthusiastic appreciation they enjoyed when they were read and applauded by the most illustrious writers and thinkers of their day.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Sheridan, quoted in Hemlow, History of Fanny Burney, p. 102; Charlotte Burney, in The Early Diary of Fanny Burney, 1768-1778, ed. Annie Raine Ellis (London: George Bell and Sons, 1913), II, 307.

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