

FROM DEPENDENCE TO AUTONOMY:
FRANCES BURNEY AND HER HEROINES

FROM DEPENDENCE TO AUTONOMY:

THE CONCURRENT PROGRESSION OF FRANCES BURNEY AND HER HEROINES

By

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Abstract

Frances Burney's first three novels, *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, and *Camilla*, are the works of an author at war with herself and those around her. While *Evelina* speaks and acts mainly according to the advice of her male guardians, Burney's later heroines begin to develop a sense of independence. The pitfalls of relying too much on male advice (only hinted at in *Evelina*) are developed in *Cecilia*, where the heroine is threatened by virtually every man around her. The idea that men can be dangerous to women, both physically and psychologically, is further expanded upon in *Camilla* where the members of the novel's oppressive society (including the "hero") watch obsessively over the heroine until she is driven to the brink of death.

When examining the novels of Frances Burney it is difficult to ignore the life of the author herself. As Julia Epstein writes, "Women novelists of the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth produced an imaginative literature of resistance and refusal along both class and gender lines" (*Iron Pen* 218). Burney's novels certainly qualify as "imaginative literature of resistance and refusal." In her personal and literary life,

Frances often felt troubled. She desired to abide by the wishes of the men in her life (especially her father) and yet as she matured, becoming more familiar with fashionable society, she began to question her role within that society. She found, to her dismay, that the woman and author she wished to become did not necessarily coincide with her father's ideal of who and what his "Fanny" would be.

Frances thus began to concern herself increasingly with the issue of female independence--and to admire women who had achieved this seemingly elusive goal. This process of change in Burney's personal views comes across in her novels, where her heroines progressively strain for a sense of purpose, of autonomy. Though all her heroines are somewhat reconciled to the patriarchal world in the end, their trips there are exhausting and painful. This exhaustion and pain linger within the heroines until the very end, serving to undermine and question the "traditional" ending in which the heroine gets her hero and lives happily ever after.

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From Dependence to Autonomy: The Concurrent Progression of
Frances Burney and her Heroines

by Jessica MacQueen

Chapter 1 *Evelina*

Evelina has moved from a positive to a negative approach to experience. Her language has become the language of denial and repression. In mastering the rules of etiquette, she has come to realize that certain of her natural responses are unacceptable. She never loses her capacity for discernment but she learns to control its reprehensible effects and to acquire silence, gravity and composure, the components of good breeding that Lord Orville particularly admires. (Simons *Fanny Burney* 56-57)

Throughout the course of Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, the heroine undergoes a process of change in which her responses to people and events become repressed. Is this due to a natural process of maturing on the part of Evelina, or does the cause lie in the efforts of the men around her to restrain her natural exuberance? Are the "guiding patriarchs"

in *Evelina's* life merely "guiding" or are they instead manipulative? In addition, how does the heroine compare with the author herself?

Burney and her first heroine have a good deal in common. As Judy Simons remarks, "Male approbation was always the criterion which guided [Fanny Burney's] views" (*Fanny Burney* 6). The author and the heroine have similar attitudes towards men. At the point in her life when she was writing *Evelina*, Burney was heavily influenced by various "guiding patriarchs" of her own, including her father, Samuel "Daddy" Crisp, and even the celebrated Dr. Johnson. In fact, as Julia Epstein writes, "Villars has been assumed to be modeled on Crisp" (*Iron Pen* 105).

Like *Evelina*, Burney often felt insecure about her position in the world. She constantly sought to cater to the wishes of the men around her. To abide by the wishes of these men took a certain amount of effort--to the men, "female delicacy" and innocent artlessness were essential to a young woman's character--in fact, several of their comments bring to mind the speeches of *Evelina's* Villars and Orville. Samuel Crisp said to Burney, "'I will never allow you to sacrifice a grain of female delicacy for all the wit of Congreve and Vanbrugh put together'" (Hemlow 132). When Burney's father discovered the truth of the authorship of the popular *Evelina*, his reaction was mixed, yet a good deal of it was fear: "'I perused the first Vol. with fear &

trembling, not supposing she wd. disgrace her parentage, but not having the least idea that without...knowledge of the world, she cd. write a book worth reading'" (Doody *Frances Burney* 39).

Evelina wishes to be accepted into society, as did Burney. Yet Burney also wished to be accepted as an author: Burney's "existence as an author, like Evelina's as a character, depends upon the response of those around her" (Pawl 299). Burney's insecurity is reflected strongly in her first novel. As Julia Epstein writes, "Both [Burney and Evelina] emerge as women who struggle with self-representation and authorial responsibility" ("Burney Criticism" 279). Doody argues that because Burney experienced guilt over her "unfeminine" need to write, the existence of *Evelina* came to be a matter of both guilt and secret pride to the author. As Doody writes, "*Evelina* was Frances' elopement, her rebellion, her declaration of independence" (*Frances Burney* 39).

At the opening of *Evelina*, the heroine embodies an ideal of innocence. Even before the reader is introduced to her, her purity of mind (and purity of body) are emphasized. In a letter to Lady Howard, written towards the beginning of the novel, Evelina's guardian, the Reverend Mr. Villars, describes his young ward as an "artless young creature" (*Evelina* 18). He then goes on to say:

You must not, Madam, expect too much from my pupil. She is quite a little rustic, and knows nothing of the world; and tho' her education has been the best I could bestow in this retired place, to which Dorchester, the nearest town, is seven miles distant, yet I shall not be surprised if you should discover in her a thousand deficiencies of which I have never dreamt. She must be very much altered since she was last at Howard Grove. (*Evelina* 19-20)

Evelina is thus fraught with "a thousand deficiencies." Yet in describing her, Mr. Villars uses the phrases, "innocent as an angel," and "artless as purity itself" (20). These descriptions assure the reader that impurity is not one of Evelina's shortcomings. Lady Howard quickly corroborates this impression, exclaiming to Mr. Villars: "She is a little angel!...She has...natural grace in her motions...she has a certain air of inexperience and innocency that is extremely interesting" (21). Listening to the epistolary dialogue between Mr. Villars and Lady Howard, one gets the impression that Evelina is on temporary loan to the latter, and that the former wishes to see her returned unchanged. It is as if she is a piece of literature which Mr. Villars has sent to Lady Howard for proofreading. He writes: "Restore her but to me all innocence as you receive her" (20).

Evelina's innocence is pleasing to Mr. Villars. In the following passage, he writes to his ward, describing both his worry for her, and his pride at her recounted inexperience:

My heart trembles for your future tranquility.--
 Yet I will hope every thing from the unsullied
 whiteness of your soul, and the native liveliness
 of your disposition...I am sure I need not say,
 how much more I was pleased with the mistakes of
 your inexperience at the private ball, than with
 the attempted adoption of more fashionable manners
 at the ridotto. (55)

Despite, or rather, due to her innocence, Evelina is naturally impulsive when demonstrating her emotions. She laughs out loud when she finds something funny (the ridiculous behaviour of Lord Lovel), and bursts into tears when she is upset (when she is accosted by Sir Clement at the ball). Neither of these emotions is affected. That they are genuine is corroborated by the fact that in each case the display of such emotions is socially inadvisable.

The first, perhaps most obvious emotion Evelina expresses, is that of excitement. She so desires to go to London, that she cannot help but admit her wishes to Mr. Villars, though she is aware that he may not be pleased. Yet, as she says, she cannot repress the emotion: "I cannot, for my life, resist wishing for the pleasures they offer me" (23). She qualifies the last statement by saying, "provided you do not disapprove them." Yet this is redundant, for she is aware of his potential disapproval, and tells him her feelings nonetheless. As she says, she simply "cannot help wishing for [his] permission" (24).

In the first part of the novel, when her experiences in the city are just beginning, her responses to the events

and people around her are irrepressible. When she writes to Mr. Villars about her experience at the opera, she says: "in what raptures am I returned! Well may Mr. Garrick be so celebrated, so universally admired--I had not any idea of so great a performer" (26). She then goes on to say: "His action--at once so graceful and so free!--his voice--so clear, so melodious, yet so wonderfully various in its tones--such animation!--every look *speaks!*" The disjointed, halting way in which she is writing demonstrates her exuberant emotion. As she says, her excitement is even such that she must restrain herself physically from giving in to impulse. She exclaims, "I almost wished to have jumped on the stage and joined them" (26).

Due to her upbringing in a place as isolated as Berry Hill, and to the rather confining nature of her guardian, Evelina displays a naiveté which she is, at first, hard-pressed to conceal. She is absolutely amazed at the number of people milling around at the different London functions she attends, and at one point, writes: "I looked about for some of *my* acquaintance, but in vain...for all the world seemed there" (27). Her naiveté also expresses itself when it comes to her opinions of men. She is often astounded at the rudeness and persistence of her suitors (Lord Lovel and Sir Clement Willoughby in particular), and is later disgusted at the intemperance of Lord Merton. Her surprise is no doubt due to her assumption that noblemen are refined,

and her inherent belief that every man has an essentially gallant nature. As she says, "gallantry, I believe, is common to all men, whatever other qualities they may have in particular" (72).

Due to Evelina's inordinately high expectations, she often ends up in a state of confusion, which, again, leads to the natural expression of emotion. To begin, her confusion in dealing with the men of high society leads her to present herself in a rather baffling manner. As she says of a conversation with Lord Orville, "I was too much confused to think or act with any consistency" (31). Not only are her words and actions inconsistent, but they become downright embarrassing. At the ball, when accosted by Lord Lovel, she is unable to stifle her laughter at what she sees as his ridiculous behaviour: "I drew [my hand] back," she says, "but could scarce forbear laughing" (29). As Doody writes, the expression of laughter is, in a sense, an act of power on the part of Evelina--she is so far untainted by the mores of society which prevent a woman to publicly mock another (man). According to Doody, "Evelina's free laugh illustrates women's right to look on men in their turn as sexual objects" (*Frances Burney* 42).

Evelina comes to realize that her embarrassingly honest reactions are reactions that others have successfully repressed. She comments to Mr. Villars: "These people in high life have too much presence of mind, I believe, to seem

disconcerted, or out of humour, however they may feel" (32). She constantly feels embarrassment--this is common for a Burney heroine. Burney appears to have been fascinated with the expression of this emotion, both because its results (reddening, downcast eyes) cannot be hidden and because of its ties to social convention. As Doody writes:

Burney is an acute observer of embarrassment, which is both a response to social law and an immediate manifestation of a flux of social power. Embarrassment is a signal example of an inner emotion that also *is* its outward and visible sign. Shame may be private and spiritual, but embarrassment is public and social. Embarrassment is a point of interface between the individual as known from within and social identity as known from without--and it represents the inner person's knowledge of his/her outer *persona*. (*Frances Burney* 59)

Evelina's expression of emotion both pleases her guardians (for it shows Evelina's inability to function in society without their guidance), and worries them (lest her inappropriate comments get her into trouble). Thus, they (specifically Mr. Villars and Lord Orville) attempt to keep an eye on her and to restrain her innocent bursts of emotion (though, of course, leaving intact the underlying innocence of character). The way in which Mr. Villars attempts to do this is seen in the following passage, in which he is writing to Lady Howard:

A youthful mind is seldom totally free from ambition; to *curb* that, is the first step to contentment, since to *diminish* expectation, is to

increase enjoyment. I apprehend nothing more than too much raising her hopes and her views, which the natural vivacity of her disposition would render but too easy to effect. The town-acquaintance of Mrs. Mirvan are all in the circle of high life; this artless young creature, with *too much* beauty to escape notice, has *too much* sensibility to be indifferent to it; but she has too little wealth to be sought with propriety by men of the fashionable world. (18 My italics)

The language Mr. Villars uses in the above quotation invokes images of restriction. Words like "curb" and "diminish" are used to describe the way Evelina's modes of expression are treated by her guardian. He apparently feels the need to "curb" her ambition and "diminish [her] expectation," because, as he says, (consistently using superlatives), she has "too much beauty" and "too much sensibility" for her own good. He is determined to protect her as a result, and will, as he says, work as hard as possible to do so in the ways he deems best. As he says to Evelina: "while life is lent me, I will devote it to your service; and, for future time, I will make such provision as shall *seem to me* most conducive to your future happiness" (54 My italics). He has been assigned this duty by Evelina's mother, who entrusted him with her daughter's protection.

When Evelina is out of his sight, Mr. Villars still feels a need to keep an eye on her. Thus, he gives Lady Howard the task of relating by letter what she thinks of his young charge. He writes: "I leave her to your Ladyship's own observations, of which I beg a faithful relation" (20). He

does not like to be uninformed of the state, not only of Evelina's person, but of her mind. Evelina records some of his words to her: "'Fear not...to unbosom thyself to me, my dearest Evelina; open to me thy whole heart,--it can have no feelings for which *I will not make allowance*'" (263 My italics). Evelina must thus answer for her actions and thoughts to Villars and society at large. For as Villars says ambiguously, she must behave in a morally upright fashion, but must also bow to the customs and whims of others. He writes:

But alas, my dear child, we are the slaves of custom, the dupes of prejudice, and dare not stem the torrent of an opposing world, even though our judgments condemn our compliance! however, since the die is cast, we must endeavour to make the best of it. (164)

As Evelina gradually becomes more familiar with society's norms, she is thus expected by the men around her to conform to the standards of expressing only what is necessary and doing so with good taste: Evelina is "learning that she cannot resort to instinctive natural responses (laughter, tears, running away) as social solutions" (Doody *Frances Burney* 45). Unfortunately, this process affects her attitudes towards other people. Near the beginning of the novel, Villars writes to Evelina:

Heaven bless thee, my dear child, and grant that neither misfortune nor vice may ever rob thee of that gaiety of heart which, resulting from innocence, while it constitutes your own, contributes also to the felicity of all who know you! (56)

Ironically, this "robbery" is precisely what happens by the end of the novel--Evelina becomes somewhat jaded. In a letter to Miss Mirvan, Evelina expresses her sadness at being forced to abandon her natural faith in the integrity and honesty of others:

I will endeavour to heal it by the consciousness that I have not deserved the indignity I have received. Yet I cannot but lament to find myself in a world so deceitful, where we must suspect what we see, distrust what we hear, and doubt even what we feel! (259)

By abandoning her own "instinctive natural responses," Evelina has come to realize that she cannot trust the words, actions, or responses of other people.

Evelina apparently believes wholeheartedly that she needs Mr. Villars to watch over her and protect her. She says: "Unable as I am to act for myself, or to judge what conduct I ought to pursue, how grateful do I feel myself, that I have such a guide and director to counsel and instruct me as yourself!" (160). She sees Mr. Villars' desire to protect her as a sign of his generous condescension. Indeed, Evelina writes to Miss Mirvan of Mr. Villars:

the benevolence of his countenance reanimates, the harmony of his temper composes, the purity of his character edifies me! I owe to him every thing; and, far from finding my debt of gratitude a weight, the first pride, first pleasure of my life is the recollection of the obligations conferred upon me by a goodness so unequalled. (261)

Whether or not the reader believes Evelina is totally sincere in her statement, it is undoubtable that this condescension and "goodness so unequalled" lead Evelina to feel as if her deepest thoughts should be exposed to her guardian. Though she occasionally feels uncomfortable divulging her secrets to Mr. Villars, she believes she has no right to feel this way--to her, the wish to guard her secrets is a mark of selfishness and thus riddles her with guilt. In the following passage, in which Evelina is writing to Miss Mirvan of a conversation with Mr. Villars, one can see the confessional nature of her speech. In truth, of course, Evelina has done nothing wrong:

'Say then,' cried I, kneeling at his feet, 'say then that you forgive me! that you pardon my reserve,--that you will again suffer me to tell you my most secret thoughts, and rely upon my promise never more to forfeit your confidence!--my father! my protector!--my ever-honoured--ever-loved--my best and only friend!--say you forgive your Evelina, and she will study better to deserve your goodness!' (265)

Evelina, though eager to leave Berry Hill and explore the world, nonetheless professes how much she misses Mr. Villars. She writes to Miss Mirvan: "I cannot express the reluctance with which I parted from my revered Mr. Villars" (268). Again, it is not only a deep affection which causes this "reluctance." It is also her professed inability to do without his guidance. Indeed, when she is recuperating from her illness at Mrs. Beaumont's, Evelina becomes very close to

Lord Orville, and wishes to ignore the possible consequences of this blossoming relationship. Mr. Villars perceives the possible dangers of the situation, and though benevolently forgiving, he feels he must set her straight. Evelina has fallen deeply in love with Lord Orville. Mr. Villars knows, or *believes he knows*, that due to her ambiguous status in society, his ward will have no chance of making such a marriage. In the following passage, he explains her mistake as he sees it--both the causes and the result:

Young, animated, 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!-- She saw Lord Orville at a ball,--and he was *the most amiable of men!*--She met him again at another,--and *he had every virtue under Heaven!*
(308)

Not only does Mr. Villars use language which would ordinarily be seen as derogatory (Evelina is "thoughtless of consequences" and her reason is "slow-paced"), but he seems to have her previous descriptions of Lord Orville put to memory. This observation might not be remarkable in itself, yet it helps demonstrate the (obsessive) extent to which Mr. Villars feels himself compelled to follow Evelina's thoughts and actions.

Immediately upon receiving the quoted letter, Evelina realizes the supposed rightness of Mr. Villars'

assertions. Rather than feeling a natural defensiveness upon his intrusion into her affairs, she professes herself to be grateful for his interference. She even goes so far as to regret parting from Mr. Villars, as his criticism seems to have hit upon her inherent fear that she cannot function in society on her own. She writes to Mr. Villars:

You, Sir, relied upon my ignorance;--I, alas, upon your experience; and, whenever I doubted the weakness of my heart, the idea that you did not suspect it, reassured me,--restored my courage, and confirmed my error!--Yet am I most sensible of the kindness of your silence...Oh, Sir! why have I ever quitted you! why been exposed to dangers to which I am so unequal?..But I will leave this place,--leave Lord Orville,--leave him, perhaps, for ever!--no matter; your counsel, your goodness, may teach me how to recover the peace and the serenity of which my unguarded folly has beguiled me. To you alone do I trust,--in you alone confide for every future hope I may form. (322)

Evelina is here surely indulging in melodrama. Yet there is much truth in her words when Evelina writes that her guardian "relied upon [her] ignorance." Indeed, one may find it difficult to believe that Mr. Villars' intervention in Evelina's affair with Lord Orville is purely selfless. He wishes to keep her young and dependent. Evelina then speaks more rightly than she realizes when she refers to Mr. Villars as "Guardian, Friend, Protector of my youth!" (350).

Many critics believe that Villars is passively culpable for the difficulties Evelina faces. As Julia Epstein comments, Villars conspires to keep Evelina ignorant:

"under the guise of protecting her, [Villars participates] in the blindfolding of Evelina" (*Iron Pen* 109). Susan Greenfield agrees: "Villars has his own reasons for concealing the heroine from her true parent. He wants Evelina to develop into an ideal domestic woman and believes she must stay at home with him and be humble and private for this to happen" (307). Greenfield's statement is corroborated by the text--as Villars says to Evelina,

Alas, my child, the artlessness of your nature, and the simplicity of your education, alike unfit you for the thorny paths of the great and busy world...If contented with a retired station, I still hope I shall live to see my Evelina the ornament of her neighborhood...employing herself in such useful and innocent occupations as may secure and merit the tenderest love of her friends...cheer me with a few lines, that may assure me, this one short fortnight spent in town, has not undone the work of seventeen years spent in the country. (Burney 116-7)

Much of the "work" Villars has done--that is, most of the advice he has given Evelina--is not particularly accurate or practically helpful: he informs Evelina that she has no chance of marrying Lord Orville, when in fact this is not the case. He has been separated from fashionable society for so long that much of his advice is idealistic and uninformed.

Along with Mr. Villars, Lord Orville also exerts his influence over Evelina. The difference between the influences of these two men is in the type of influence they exert. Mr. Villars, the life-long guardian of Evelina, has

evidently had a more direct effect on her behaviour. He has, as we have seen, molded her to his liking. Yet Evelina still has to undergo some change, and it is Lord Orville who influences this shorter period of change in her life. He takes over the role of the absent Villars. In actuality, this is a role which he has been asked to undertake. As Evelina says to him:

There is no young creature, my Lord, who so greatly wants, or so earnestly wishes for, the advice and assistance of her friends, as I do; I am new to the world, and unused to acting for myself,--my intentions are never willfully blameable, yet I err perpetually!--I have, hitherto, been blest with the most affectionate of friends, and, indeed, the ablest of men, to guide and instruct me upon every occasion;--but he is too distant, now, to be applied to at the moment I want his aid;--and here,--there is not a human being whose counsel I can ask!' (306)

Thus, it is easy for Orville to act as if his interest in her affairs is occasioned in large part by his desire to help her, and to abide by her wishes for a present guardian. Though one gets the impression that Orville has feelings for Evelina of a loving nature, this impression is not always corroborated by his words. When Evelina is publicly bemoaning the fact that, unlike Lady Louisa, she has no brother to protect her, Orville responds, "'Will Miss Anville allow me the honour of taking that title?...Let me...take equal care of both my sisters'" (314). He goes on to profess his servitude to Evelina, saying:

'My dear Miss Anville... allow me to be your friend; think of me as if I were indeed your brother, and let me entreat you to accept my best services, if there is any thing in which I can be so happy as to shew my regard,--my respect for you!' (315)

Is Evelina to trust what Orville says? Perhaps, for in the following passage, Orville sets himself up as both a lover and as a brother: "'I am afraid,' said he, smiling, 'since I must now speak as your *brother*, I am afraid you [should leave];--you see you may trust me, since I can advise against my own interest'" (315). In this quotation Orville shows that when pressed to choose, he is able to be more of a brother than a lover to Evelina.

Evelina is flattered by what she sees as his condescension in deeming her a member of his family. She writes to Mr. Villars, saying: "every day abounds in fresh instances of his condescending politeness, and he now takes every opportunity of calling me his *friend*, and his *sister*" (315). She is also attracted to Orville because of his similarities to Villars. She says of Orville: "I sometimes imagine that, when his youth is flown, his vivacity abated, and his life is devoted to retirement, he will, perhaps, resemble him whom I most love and honour" (72). Simons goes so far as to say, "Evelina's emotions are given free rein in the relationship that protects and Orville qualifies as a lover only when he can be safely identified with a father figure" (*Fanny Burney* 58).

Yet while Evelina may trust Lord Orville's ability to set aside his interests for her own, she should perhaps question his reasons for referring to himself as her brother. Certainly, it enables him to inquire into her affairs. Did he claim a more impersonal relationship with her, he would have no right to do so. Indeed, at a late point in the novel, Orville says to Evelina: "'Am I not your brother...and must I not enquire into your affairs?...you know not how warmly, how deeply I am interested, not only in all your concerns, but in all your actions'" (318).

When in the garden discussing Evelina, Lord Orville says to a defensive Sir Clement, "'Her understanding is... excellent; but she is too young for suspicion, and has an artlessness of disposition that I never saw equalled'" (346). He claims also that,

this young lady seems to be peculiarly situated; she is very young, very inexperienced, yet appears to be left totally to her own direction. She does not, I believe, see the dangers to which she is exposed, and I will own to you, I feel a strong desire to point them out. (346)

Sir Clement later responds to Orville's speech by saying: "'As to that, my Lord, let Miss Anville look to herself; she has an excellent understanding, and needs no counsellor'" (346). It is ironic that the clearest statement of appreciation for Evelina's intelligence comes from the foppish, annoying Sir Clement. Yet this is not surprising, for Sir Clement is intelligent himself, unlike Lovel and Merton, and

believes he is advising in his own interest. What is further ironic, however, is that Evelina would no doubt disagree with Sir Clement's words--she wholeheartedly believes that she cannot rely on her own "excellent understanding"--she has been taught to believe that she needs a man's protection.

Evelina loves Lord Orville for the protection he can offer as a man, yet she also admires his "feminine" delicacy. This is interesting when considering the character description of Mrs. Selwyn, one of Burney's more intriguing female characters. For the fact that Mrs. Selwyn has "masculine" sensibilities bothers Evelina immensely. Evelina describes her temporary female guardian to Miss Mirvan in the following language:

Mrs. Selwyn is very kind and attentive to me. She is extremely clever; her understanding, indeed, may be called *masculine*; but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet; for, in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own. In regard to myself, however, as I have neither courage nor inclination to argue with her, I have never been personally hurt at her want of gentleness; a virtue which, nevertheless, seems so essential a part of the female character, that I find myself more awkward, and less at ease, with a woman who wants it, than I do with a man. She is not a favourite with Mr. Villars, who has often been disgusted at her unmerciful propensity to satire.
(268-9)

While Evelina may indeed criticize Mrs. Selwyn for her "masculine" ways of thinking and speaking, one gets the impression that it is precisely this which leads Evelina to appeal

for Mrs. Selwyn's help in difficult situations. When accosted by Lord Merton, Evelina finds herself unable to effect his departure. In the end, she is forced to call Mrs. Selwyn to the rescue: "'Pray, my Lord,' cried I, 'let go my hand! pray, Mrs. Selwyn, speak for me'" (313). Mrs. Selwyn succeeds where Evelina does not, and one is left with the impression that too many years of relying on male authority have led to Evelina's failure in fending for herself. Thus, when an appropriate male figure is absent, the most "masculine" female presence will do.

Mrs. Selwyn represents a character type which will be developed over the course of Burney's next three novels and will culminate in *The Wanderer's* Elinor Joddrel. Mrs. Selwyn represents a certain type of female power, yet it is an ironic type. For though she asserts the potentially equal abilities and intellects of females and males, she seems to prefer the company of the latter to that of the former. Women may be less interesting than men because of the inadequacies of their educations, yet Mrs. Selwyn's efforts to "change the system" are directed towards men instead of women. In the following passage, Evelina writes to Miss Mirvan of a party she attended the night before:

The conversation, till tea-time, was extremely insipid; *Mrs. Selwyn reserved herself for the gentlemen*, Mrs. Beaumont was grave, and Lady Louisa languid...But, at tea, every body revived; we were joined by the gentlemen and gaiety took the place of dullness. (289 *My italics*)

By contrast with other figures in the novel--Lord Orville, for example--Mrs. Selwyn expects Evelina to make her own way in society, to rely on herself, as it were. Evelina gently complains to Mr. Villars:

How often do I wish, that I was under the protection of Mrs. Mirvan! It is true, Mrs. Selwyn is very obliging, and, in every respect, treats me as an equal; but she is contented with behaving well herself, and does not, with a distinguishing politeness raise and support me with others. (294)

What, then, is Mrs. Selwyn's purpose in the work? For though she is by no means a faultless champion of egalitarianism, her presence in the novel does demonstrate Burney's interest in the issue of female independence. Doody also comments that while Mrs. Selwyn is not portrayed as an ideal figure, she does manage to help Evelina to act--that is, to take action. Doody writes:

There is a high social tax on female aggression, a tax that the young single woman cannot afford, and, besides, may not something be truly lost in trading the 'feminine' for the 'masculine?' Yet if officially and at one level of the novel Mrs. Selwyn represents another bad alternative, an extreme to be avoided, we notice that this lady is associated with the heroine once the girl has begun to learn to stand on her own feet, and that Evelina's own responses in her letters have always shown a propensity to satire and judgment. (*Frances Burney* 47)

It is Mrs. Selwyn who champions Evelina's cause to her father, Sir John Belmont, and thus ensures Evelina's final social acceptance: "Mrs. Selwyn challenges Belmont to prove his conscience is clear by acknowledging Evelina. It is a

challenge on moral grounds in the realm of familial duties" (Campbell 332). In the end, then, Mrs. Selwyn is much more helpful to Evelina than either the reader or the heroine may realize.

The only other notable female figure in *Evelina* is Mme Duval. Mrs. Mirvan is a mother-figure of sorts, yet any influence she may have is nullified upon the arrival in the text of Captain Mirvan. Lady Howard also allows the Captain's insulting assaults (both verbal and physical) on Mme Duval, and says little or nothing when he is around. In Miss Mirvan's close friendship with Evelina one may see the seeds of future close relationships between women in Burney's later novels. Yet Miss Mirvan is a completely undeveloped character; not once, in fact, does the reader hear directly from this young woman.

Unlike Miss Mirvan, Mme Duval competes with Evelina for the reader's attention--indeed, one could say that her function is to provide an example of bad behaviour with which that of Evelina may be compared. As Doody comments, Mme Duval represents a metaphorical disfiguration of woman:

Madame Duval is the focus for everything that makes female life seem hopeless or depressing; she has only 'feminine' interests (dress, parties, gossip), and she is a compound of 'feminine' affectations. But she is also old, past her time as a sexual object, and therefore superfluous. She represents the lowering fate of womankind. She is Evelina's blood grandmother--she represents

maternal inheritance, matriarchal principle--and the inheritance of woman is no good, no inheritance at all. (Doody *Frances Burney* 51)

Madame Duval represents the pervasive attitudes towards women--aged women in particular--that can be found in each of Burney's novels. The race between the two old women demonstrates that the prevalent social attitudes towards elderly women (or those *perceived* as elderly) fascinated Burney. The attitudes of *men* towards older women specifically bothered Burney, and the race demonstrates the disrespect inherent in this relationship. As Epstein writes:

This scene in many ways renders Burney's most acute fictive representation of the fate of feminine beauty and the attention it fleetingly commands, and of the social place of women as figures for the self-aggrandizement of men. They have only use-value and counter-value in competitions between male interests. (*Iron Pen* 115)

The race thus represents society's larger attitudes which undermine the importance of female maturing. As Doody writes, "Nothing could be more shocking and depressing for a young girl to hear than that she need not engage in the preposterous struggle to grow up and achieve an identity" (*Frances Burney* 55).

Mme Duval not only represents a perversion of woman--so too does she represent a perversion of the role of mother. Mme Duval's most striking quality is her selfishness--she put her own needs before those of her daughter, and continues to do so with her granddaughter. As Epstein writes,

Mme Duval "prefigures the quintessential actualization of the 'bad mother' competing with her daughter" ("Burney Criticism" Epstein 280).

While Evelina's feminine worth stems partially from the fact that she is a daughter of Nature (she has not yet succumbed to the jaded attractions of artfulness), Madame Duval is a physical example of the drawbacks of art--feminine beauty is grotesquely masked with heavy makeup, wigs (her "curls"), and extravagant dress. This physical representation of artfulness represents Mme Duval's inner personality--she has an artful temper, completely opposite to Evelina's *natural* disposition. Indeed, as Mr. Villars writes to Lady Howard of Mme Duval: "She was deaf to the voice of Nature" (128). Evelina gives Mme Duval what is perhaps the worst insult that can be given to someone in their society: "she is--I must not say what, but very unlike other people" (77).

It is unfortunate that the relationships between women in *Evelina* are not stronger, for in Burney's novels it is the female-female relationship which determines the degree of feminine power present. Yet there is nonetheless a small subtext of female power in *Evelina*--one which will be further developed in her next three novels. For this subtext, Burney goes back in time, remembering the destroyed precursor to *Evelina*--*The History of Caroline Evelyn*. Burney wishes

Evelina to conform to many of the male restrictions around her, yet she does not want to portray her heroine as completely without power. Thus, she uses Caroline Evelyn as a character in her own right--she has passed away, yet her voice can still be heard--she speaks through her daughter. As Greenfield says of Belmont and Caroline Evelyn, "there is...a subtext that undercuts the patriarch and privileges Evelina's dead mother's authority" (302). The relationship between mother and child is not simply theoretical: "It is ultimately the dead mother who signs her daughter's body (stamping Evelina with her own physical features) and she who writes the letter that defines kinship relationships" (Greenfield 302).

The portrayal of Caroline Evelyn is actually quite sympathetic (as is the portrayal of Macartney's mother) in comparison with the portrayal of John Belmont (Campbell 335). Campbell argues that Burney is actually "more intent on exposing paternal than maternal nonconformity" (335). Greenfield agrees:

Although teleologically *Evelina* is designed to reunite the heroine and her father, much of the novel questions paternal authority. Both of Evelina's fathers injure and conceal women and their stories...By contrast, Evelina's dead mother is represented as a source of narrative power and legitimacy. The fathers would deny her access to a history and self; but through her transcendental union with her mother, Evelina gains these very entitlements. (310)

Burney shows how women find ways to gain power over men. Doody describes how Lady Louisa Larpent has recourse to an unusual but effective way to gain power: she "parodies the silencing of women by delicately 'speaking so softly, she could hardly be heard' (III:279), thus making her auditors strain to hear her--and so gaining power over them" (*Frances Burney* 47). Campbell claims that goodness itself can be a means to power. As she says:

the attitude Villars recommends possesses the potential of becoming self-righteous moral superiority...the heroine's and Burney's own meticulous attention to the rules governing feminine and filial conduct needs to be considered as more than meek or obsequious submission to those rules. Being excruciatingly good gives them considerable edge over the bad father, so that their virtue becomes not a little vindicatory. They are aggressively good. (334)

It is partially the genre Burney employs to describe many of the novel's events that gives the author a kind of anonymous or invisible power: farce. As Doody says, "Burney was always drawn to farce; it is a mode of demonstrating the absurdities within the permissible and customary" (*Frances Burney* 48). Like *Evelina*, Burney also uses the epistolary mode to her own purposes: she "seizes a 'masculine mode of comedy, largely derived from the public medium of the stage, wraps it up in the 'feminine' epistolary mode, and uses the combination for her own purposes" (Doody *Frances Burney* 48).

In this case her "purposes" are to expose the shortcomings of patriarchal society (Doody *Frances Burney* 49).

Various critics believe that Evelina's innocence is less than artless--that is, it is partially an act put on to placate and satisfy the men around her. Julia Epstein goes so far as to describe Evelina as "a story-teller with an ulterior motive" (*Iron Pen* 99). She describes Evelina as attempting to emphasize her innocent (ignorant?) behaviour (*Iron Pen* 96). Epstein describes the heroine as gaining in control over the course of the novel: "By volume 3, she actually controls the behavior of others toward her and determines her own social position" (*Iron Pen* 99). This is supposedly humorous to the discerning reader, who is able to see behind Evelina's "facade":

The comedy here comes from the heroine's (and her creator's) youthfully impetuous and sly inversion of powerlessness into power, as Evelina learns to manipulate social manners and fashion so that she gains the greatest possible control over her life without offending those who seek to 'guide' her. (Epstein *Iron Pen* 121)

Epstein then concludes that the reader must not take Evelina's words (written or otherwise) at face value. The reader must learn to distrust the heroine, at least in her interactions with Villars. Epstein writes: "This lack of complete trust in Evelina's account to Villars, understandable or not, must temper our critical reading of the

novel" (*Iron Pen* 101). Greenfield agrees with Epstein--she writes, "Evelina puts a spin on her words. In her letter about the London trip, she openly flatters Villars but at the same time persuades him to let her leave against his wishes--persuades him, that is, to undermine his own authority" (310).

According to Epstein, therefore, Evelina is (necessarily?) dishonest when dealing with her guardian. Yet Simons suggests that this is also the case in her relations with Orville. She writes:

all Evelina can do to captivate Orville is to maximize her assets. She plays on the image of helplessness, flattering him as a superior being and making much of her own sense of inferiority, socially, morally and intellectually. For above all, Evelina wants a champion and with an inadequate father of her own she finds in Orville a perfect substitute for Villars. Even his name suggests his appropriateness as replacement. (*Fanny Burney* 57)

The epistolary form lends itself to Evelina's ability to deceive others:

In the epistolary *Evelina*, the heroine's letters represent an expressly feminine art: the art of coaxing, flattering, and mystifying; the art of requesting and granting permission or forgiveness; and the verbal ingenuity of the woman whose survival depends upon her appearing to remain ingenuous and innocent, and whose only tool of power lies in her use of language to manipulate both her situation and the way it is presented to others. (Epstein *Iron Pen* 91)

According to Epstein, the reader can trust Evelina's words only in Evelina's correspondence with her silent friend, Miss

Mirvan: "The letters to Maria, unlike those to Villars, are direct, their style colloquial and forthright, their tone unstudied" (Epstein *Iron Pen* 101). Epstein goes so far as to posit the possible existence of another novel--one in which the relationships between women are the focus. Were this the novel in question, the reader would be able to stem his or her distrust of the heroine: "there is a second novel here, over which *Evelina* rests like a palimpsest: the novel that *Evelina's* letters and conversations with a peer, another young woman, would comprise" (Epstein *Iron Pen* 102).

The irony inherent in *Evelina*, of course, is that while it is *Evelina's* ignorance of social customs which leads her to suffer the temporary disdain of Lord Orville, it is precisely this innocence which attracts him. There appears to be, therefore, an important contrast between the varieties of innocence a woman may possess. Innocence in terms of stupidity is undesirable to a man such as Lord Orville. Innocence when referring to inexperience, however, is easily forgiven.

By the end of the novel, *Evelina* has learned to conform to the expectations of these men in her life. Yet *Evelina* conforms at the expense of the ease and impulsiveness, and thus the freedom, of her emotions. The process of change she undergoes is thus more a process of restriction than it is of maturing. She does not mature gradually over

the years, learning the problems of the world on her own. Or, if one would argue that she learns the *problems* on her own, it is plain to see that she requires (or again, believes she requires) an inordinate amount of guidance to find the answers. For *Evelina*, these answers are not to be explored at leisure. Instead, the answers have been predetermined by the men. These manipulative male figures thus attempt to restrict her natural exploration of the world around her. By denying her confidence and privacy, they direct her in the ways they deem best, while condescending to forgive her when she strays from the marked path.

Yet though *Evelina* "may indeed be seen as traditionally the most canonical of novels by eighteenth-century women" ("Beyond *Evelina*" Doody 361), it is an achievement, a start for a young woman who has yet to see much of the world. *Evelina* is not as independent as Cecilia, Camilla, and Juliet have yet to be, yet she is intelligent. She has many guardians and is herself a guardian to few (with the exception of Mr. Macartney), yet she is the precursor to a line of heroines who are guardians to other members of their sex. Thus, it is important to understand that, as Doody says, Burney "did not reach 'an answer' in *Evelina*--she merely brought one book to a conclusion" ("Beyond *Evelina*" 371). And while *Evelina* was toeing the proverbial line, Burney was

busy with her first novel, in making "an 'entrance into the world'" (Doody *Frances Burney* 65).

Chapter 2 *Cecilia*

The definition of power primarily as 'control, dominance, and influence' is of recent origin ...the primary meaning of power as late as 1933 was 'ability, energy, and strength.' Power...has been defined not just as control but also as 'ability,' as the capacity to assert 'one's will over one's body, one's own organs and functions and over the physical environment--a power which is seen as inherently satisfying and not merely as an instrument to other ends, as neither requiring nor leading to the power to command obedience in other persons.' Power as ability, that is, has been defined both as achievement or self-rule.

--Judith Newton (7)

From here on, this definition of power "as achievement or self-rule" will refer to the emerging power of the heroine in the novels of Frances Burney. From the epistolary *Evelina* to the creation of *Cecilia* four years later, there is a change in the "power" of the heroine. While the issue of feminine survival is most certainly present in Burney's first novel, it is further emphasized in the second. *Cecilia* attempts to achieve more power--that is, more "self-rule"--than *Evelina*. Power is an "achievement" towards which *Cecilia* strains, yet whether she "achieves" power is

questionable. Whereas Evelina is cheerfully reconciled to the patriarchal world by the end of her novel, Cecilia's reconciliation is painful and ambiguous. The struggle to gain self-rule is so exhausting that it cannot be "inherently satisfying." This is a result of an emerging critical voice on Burney's part directed towards patriarchal society.

That Burney was herself becoming more powerful, more independent, comes through in the character of her young heroine. Burney was familiarizing herself with fashionable society and was becoming aware of its failings. Frances Burney had matured, and this new-found maturity comes across in her new novel. As the Blooms write, "*Cecilia* moves forward from *Evelina* because the Fanny Burney of 1782 had matured in more than chronological time" ("Retreat" 226).

Burney had, as the celebrated author of the popular *Evelina*, been exposed to both the positive and the negative aspects of living and mingling in high society. As the Blooms comment, it was the fact that Burney was introduced relatively late in life to fashionable society that allowed her to distance herself from it--and thus, criticize it: "Cecilia and Fanny Burney share several worldly characteristics and are indeed suspicious of them. Both were cynical of the London round for each 'came too late into the school of fashion to be a ductile pupil'" (Blooms "Retreat" 227). Cecilia is less impressionable than Evelina (admit-

tedly, she is three years older), and is thus less apt to be enchanted with fashionable society:

Despite similarity of themes and structures, *Evelina* and *Cecilia* differ from each other with the shifting of Fanny Burney's impressions of life and change of situation. *Cecilia* irradiates less élan than its predecessor, the heroine from *Bury* never doubting the presence of threatening forces, never asking why but simply conceding the inevitability of menace. Even as her creator had burst forth from her locked world only to find herself enmeshed in a variety of social demands, so *Cecilia* sensed that confusions daily multiply, their net thrown about the innocent and guilty alike. (Blooms "Retreat" 226)

With the loss of Burney's anonymity came the loss of much of her spare time. With fame came the expectation that she would spend time attending parties, mingling with members of the ton. Burney began to resent those expectations others had of her, as *Cecilia* does in Burney's second novel. As Joyce Hemlow writes,

Cecilia's comment on 'how ill the coldness of their hearts accorded with the warmth of their professions' matches Fanny's impression as given in a journal-letter to Susan: 'My coldness in return to all these sickening, heartless, ton-led people, I try not to repress.' (165)

While Burney surely appreciated her popularity at times, she had always been fearful of being in the public eye. Straub links this quality of Burney's with that of *Cecilia*: "*Cecilia*'s alarm at public exposure--even of her philanthropy--is akin to the keen, almost morbid alarm that Burney herself felt after the publication of *Evelina* brought her before the public eye" (124).

Perhaps the most important development in *Cecilia* is Burney's expression of anger for the helplessness of women. This anger was no doubt partially a result of her own situation--after successfully publishing *Evelina*, and encouraged by various critics to attempt dramatic writing, Burney completed a play titled *The Witlings*. Yet upon reading it, her father and Samuel Crisp protested that it was too satiric--thus too "unfeminine"--and ordered her not to publish it. Instead, they encouraged her to write another novel. Yet they were not satisfied when they saw that she was following their orders; Frances had to write at a pace set by her father. It was he who corresponded with the publishers to arrange the dates Frances would submit each chapter, and the schedule which was set on her behalf was so gruelling that Frances became not only thoroughly sick of writing, but physically ill.

Frances could not have helped but feel angry and perhaps even betrayed by her father's emerging habit of putting her (and thus *his*) social popularity ahead of her health (this was to culminate in her period of service to the Queen in later years). In any case, Burney's trust in her father was starting to be shaken. It is certainly interesting that the *usefulness* of male guardians is put into question in *Cecilia*, which, as Straub comments, was written "under the surveillance of a primarily male group of mentors" (109).

The actual depiction of male guardians in this novel is remarkably dissimilar to that in *Evelina*. Arguably, the male guardians in both novels have both their own best interests at heart as well as the young heroine's. Yet in *Evelina*, the two guardians are successful--one in raising the heroine and offering morally sound advice from afar, and one in watching over the heroine when she is faced with the caprices of society. In *Cecilia*, each guardian is dysfunctional in his role; in this novel, there are *too many* guardians. Doody goes so far as to describe the existence of these guardianships as being a "calamity" (*Frances Burney* 122). As she goes on to write,

Dean Beverley, controlling Cecilia from beyond the grave by his 'will,' her false friend Monckton, and the three legal guardians make up a pressure group of five men who are all for different reasons determined to prevent Cecilia from acting for herself. (*Frances Burney* 122)

Had Burney herself become disillusioned with the overbearing presence of men wishing to control her life and her work? Doody hints that this is a possibility, for as she says, in *Cecilia*,

There are no good daddies anymore. Here all efforts at paternalism are afflicted and afflicting. The various guardians are representative of the guardians of society who perpetuate injustice and waste through customary and legal authority. Burney's vision of wrong, expressed in her fable of the guardians who strip the girl of her wealth, was probably stimulated by her sense that her guardians Burney and Crisp, her two daddies, had taken control of her own treasure, her talent, from her and had wasted it. (*Frances Burney* 122)

Male guardians (and to some extent, males in general) are associated with suffering throughout the novel. Essentially the guardians are dangerous:

the guardians have victims. There are many victims other than Cecilia who suffer from society's crazy customs and the powers of the social guardians at large. Cecilia's story is woven through a number of other stories of mistakes and deprivation; the heroine's problems and even misery are yet only aspects of a complex and general experience of suffering. (Doody *Frances Burney* 127)

Cecilia is hunted by the men (including Monckton) who want something from her. Males, especially Harrel, are associated with danger, and are "antithetical" to the "realm of domesticity" (Straub 113).

Did Burney create the unappealing portrait of Monckton (even unconsciously) with her father and Samuel Crisp in mind? Doody speculates that this may be the case:

There seems to be a connection between Monckton's proclaimed conformity, his anxious endeavors to protect the heroine from doing what she wants to do, and the cautious 'protections' of Frances Burney by Charles Burney and Samuel Crisp, so anxious that she should not deviate from the track already marked out, should not be original or act for herself in the case of *The Witlings*. (Frances Burney 113)

Frances was beginning to feel torn and at odds with herself-- she wished to please her father but was discovering that doing so was not necessarily the same as pleasing herself.

Kristina Straub writes,

The psychological conditions under which Burney wrote *Cecilia* were, then, conditions of conflict between love and work; her feminine sense of subservient relationship with masculine authority

made her genuinely sincerely obedient--a socially defined form of love--but this love was at odds with a desire to direct and control her own writing projects--a desire to be empowered by and in her own work. (110)

Thus, as Epstein writes, Burney was coming to realize that her desire to write was being influenced and even impeded by the role society had set out for her (*Iron Pen* 32).

Burney had reason to fear for her future as a young woman in high society. Initially, she believed that her male guardians could offer her protection. If she began questioning this, therefore, where was she left to turn for refuge? Straub comments,

Cecilia's experience in town parallels Burney's personal sense of being exposed and vulnerable in the midst of an emotional wasteland. The failure of domesticity and the unreliability of male protection in *Cecilia* also suggest that Burney's entry into the public realm of literary fame may have reinforced an already strong distrust of women's powers outside the limited range of personal influence over the male authority that, through cultural sanctions, structured so much of her life. (116)

Burney was forced at this time in her life to increase her awareness of financial matters. Though she was a popular and successful novelist, and though her novels sold extremely well, Burney made little money from either of her first two novels. Burney was thus beginning to recognize her exploitation at the hands of her publishers. Her subsequent disillusionment was reflected in her second novel--like her, many of the women in *Cecilia* "live inside an envelope of

continual material threat to their selfhood and to their social and economic survival" (Epstein *Iron Pen* 155). Burney might have hoped that her father would aid her in dealing with the publishers, but until later in her literary career, he appears to have believed that Frances was being paid plenty for what he saw as pleasurable writing composed during her spare time.

On the whole, in *Cecilia* one sees Burney's sad but perhaps inevitable coming to grips with the negative ways of the world. The Blooms go so far as to write that *Cecilia* "mirrored the reality of the author's soul" ("Retreat" 227). The ending of the novel and the fate of the heroine are particularly telling. Burney had come to realize that total happiness was unlikely, if not entirely impossible. So her heroine is forced to compromise, "'neither plunged in the depths of misery, nor exalted to UNhuman happiness.'" For, as Burney continues, defending the ending of her book to Crisp, "'Is not such a middle state more natural, more according to real life, and less resembling every other book of fiction?'" (Hemlow 150). She might have added that such an ending was in accordance with what her life had come to be.

Like *Evelina*, *Cecilia* is a beautiful young woman. Yet when the reader is first introduced to *Cecilia*, it is her

intelligence which is emphasized: "her countenance announced the intelligence of her mind" (*Cecilia* 6). Cecilia partly wishes to remain in her home town, supported by her remaining mother-figure, Mrs. Charleston. Yet she also desires to explore the world and the people who occupy it. The decision to leave is made for her, and Cecilia is forced to go to London, where she will stay with one of her guardians, Mr. Harrel, the husband of Cecilia's childhood friend.

Cecilia makes a valiant attempt to gain a sense of independence early on in the novel--an attempt Evelina fails to make. As Judy Simons writes, "Cecilia is an unusual heroine for her day. She starts out by asserting that she wants to 'think and live for herself'" (Intro. xii). Cecilia is more prepared for independence than is Evelina. Though Cecilia has, at the opening of the novel, never been to London, she has spent time at the grand house of Mr. Monckton, whose guests include people high on the ladder of English society. Her visits to this household are crucial, for "the opportunities they had afforded her of mixing with people of fashion had served to prepare her for the new scenes in which she was soon to be a performer" (*Cecilia* 4).

When Cecilia moves to London, she is very open to guidance from her three law-appointed guardians--at this point, she believes they will act according to the roles prescribed to them in her uncle's will. She is soon stripped of her illusions or expectations in regard to these men. Not

only do the men refuse to offer her the help she needs, but they often worsen the situations in which she finds herself. Mr. Briggs, the guardian appointed to watch over her money, will not allow her access to any of it and causes her distress on numerous occasions by publicly embarrassing her. Her second guardian, Mr. Delvile, is likewise unwilling to help Cecilia. Each time she approaches him he lectures her on the superiority of his family over hers. He is not mad (like Briggs?), yet his preoccupation with the social standing of his family more than borders on the obsessive. Mr. Harrel, Cecilia's third guardian, most influences her situation for the worse, blatantly using her for her money. Not only does he take a large part of her inheritance; he uses her as a payment in a debt of honour he has incurred with his "friend," Sir Robert Floyer. He scoffs at Cecilia's insistence that she does not wish to marry Floyer, and refuses to inform Floyer of her feelings. At this point in the work, Cecilia's independent spirit begins to really emerge. As Burney writes,

Provoked and wearied, Cecilia resolved no longer to depend upon any body but herself for the management of her own affairs, and therefore, to conclude the business without any possibility of further cavilling, she wrote the following note to Sir Robert herself. (304)

Later in the novel Cecilia is once again let down by the men around her, and she responds at once by realizing that "She was now...called upon to think and act entirely for herself"

(575). She even asserts her independence in her relationship with Monckton, the man she regards as her most helpful guardian-figure--when she believes his advice is wrong, she will not abide by it: "Mr. Monckton...began the warmest expostulation; but Cecilia, firm when she believed herself right, though wavering when fearful she was wrong, told him it was now too late to change her plan" (577).

Cecilia attempts not only to assert her independence towards individuals, but towards patriarchal society as a whole. When Mortimer Delville expresses his horror at having to adopt her name, Cecilia reacts with anger. She says to herself: "'Well, let him keep his name! since so wondrous its properties, so all-sufficient its preservation, what vanity, what presumption in me, to suppose myself an equivalent for its loss!'" (504). Unlike Evelina, who often professes her humble belief that she is inferior to those (men) around her, Cecilia never loses her sense of self-worth. She even attempts to instill this self-worth in other women--this, in turn, increases her own sense of independence. As Straub writes, "As with the allocation of her private time, Cecilia's plans for social responsibility are attempts at self-empowerment, schemes to enable herself to act and initiate rather than being acted upon" (123). While Evelina is certainly intelligent, she continually bows to the wishes of her male guardians, Lord Orville and Mr. Villars--she is constantly "acted upon." Cecilia is much

more self-assured than Evelina. As Judy Simons says, "It is Cecilia's responsible desire to be independent which singles her out from other fictional heroines of the period and from most of the eighteenth-century models of womanly perfection" (*Fanny Burney* 71).

Cecilia does of course accept Delvile's name at the end of the novel. Yet she has attempted to show her independence by choosing her own life partner. As Doody writes:

Cecilia anticipates issues to be brought up in the new feminist literature of the next decade, as also explicitly in Burney's own later novels-- including the right of the woman to take the initiative in making a sexual choice. (*Frances Burney* 147)

Aside from her misjudgment of Monckton, Cecilia successfully assesses the men in her life, including Delvile--even from her first encounter with Sir Robert Floyer, Cecilia is aware that she wishes to have nothing to do with him. Unfortunately, Sir Robert is attracted to her money, and with the help of Mr. Harrel, Sir Robert convinces himself and others that Cecilia returns his interest. When Cecilia attempts to clarify her true feelings concerning Sir Robert in a conversation with Mr. Harrel, the latter laughs off her words:

'My dear Miss Beverley,' answered he, carelessly, 'when young ladies will not know their own minds, it is necessary some friend should tell it them: you were certainly very favourable to Sir Robert but a short time ago, and so, I dare say, you will be again, when you have seen more of him.' (233)

Cecilia is forced to realize that when the interests of others are at stake, namely those of men, her words will be ignored.

To what extent does Cecilia maintain her independence in her relationship with Delvile? As Simons comments, Cecilia's dreams of independence cannot be realized in the end: "the progress of the story demonstrates the impossibility of fulfilling this dream, the wish for independence remains as an ideal" (Intro. xii). Does Cecilia thus lose her independence to the males around her (including Delvile), and if so, how is this loss portrayed? Is it portrayed as being regrettable, or happily inevitable?

After enduring many miscommunications concerning their mutual feelings, Delvile can no longer conceal his love for Cecilia--in fact, the effort to do so has severely affected his health. Yet Cecilia, having realized the near-impossibility of their marrying, (due to the stipulation in her uncle's will that her husband adopt her name upon marrying), attempts to avoid committing herself to Delvile. As Doody points out, "Cecilia...does not fall in love without putting up a good deal of resistance" (*Frances Burney* 141). Yet though she does fall in love with Delvile, Cecilia nonetheless desires to respect the wishes of Delvile's mother that they not marry.

As a result, Delvile realizes he must force an admission of love from Cecilia. Burney writes of an important encounter between the lovers:

Delvile, almost forcibly preventing her, compelled her to stay; and after a short conversation, on his side the most impassioned, and on hers the most confused, obtained from her, what, indeed, after the surprise of the preceding evening she could but ill deny, a frank confirmation of his power over her heart, and an ingenuous, though reluctant acknowledgment, how long he had possessed it. (554-5 My italics)

Like *Evelina's* Orville, Delvile takes advantage of a moment of vulnerability on Cecilia's part and coerces her into admitting her feelings for him.

Yet ironically, Cecilia is portrayed as being the stronger member of the couple. While extremely disturbed about the situations in which she finds herself, she constantly attempts to act rationally; Delvile, however, is influenced primarily by his emotions. Cecilia does display strong emotion, but only when those emotions are, as Burney writes, "too forcible to be wholly stifled" (848). The reader is earlier informed of Cecilia that "her passions, though they tried her reason never conquered it" (765). As Burney writes of the lovers: "Cecilia, who now strained every nerve to repair by her firmness, the pain which by her weakness she had given him, was sooner in a condition for reasoning and deliberation than himself" (848).

Burney goes on to use language which emphasizes the couple's unusual relationship: "'I will not droop,' said [Cecilia to Mortimer]; 'you will find, I hope, you have not intrusted yourself in ill hands'" (850). This wording hints that Cecilia holds a position of power in the relationship--a position emphasized by Delvile's wavering personality. Doody writes that Delvile is essentially a blank slate whose future depends largely on the actions of others. She refers to Delvile's costume at the ball and its possible significance:

The white masquerade habit, which conceals without substituting another signifier, ironically has significance after all. It reveals Delvile's own unwitting obsessions--his desire to remain innocent, uncommitted, uncontaminated. In terms of the novel's themes, his blank appearance is a good indication of the young man's dependence on others to supply an identity for him, and of his inability to give himself away...He is in his first appearance like most women...in possessing 'no Character at all.' He teases the heroine to find out his character, but at a deeper level of the novel he is pleading to her to help him find an identity. In some ways, he badly needs rescuing. (*Frances Burney* 134)

Doody refers to Delvile as "the babied Mortimer" (*Frances Burney* 136), and claims that most of his early life has consisted of following "the beaten track in obedience to the social and familial idea" (*Frances Burney* 136). Yet what is so fascinating about Mortimer is that he, like Cecilia, is a victim of the social system to which he belongs. As Doody argues:

Mortimer as a character has a very important role as a special example of social victimization.

Theoretically, Mortimer is at the top of the whole social pyramid...But Burney shows that the apparent beneficiary is really another sufferer. Males can suffer as well as females from the imposition and constraints of an artificial system, and trying to live up to a theoretical position and an artificial identity robs nature of its strength and puzzles the will. Overloaded with external imperatives, young Delvile shrinks and weakens. His virility is ironically threatened by the very institutions which honor only males. Even his life is in danger. The novel shows there is a suicidal tendency in all fidelity to society's arrangements. In trying to preserve their sacred idea of Mortimer Delvile, the Delvile parents are willing to risk killing the real, physical individual, the human Mortimer. (Frances Burney 136)

Unlike *Evelina's* Orville, Delvile is himself the victim of bad guardianship. Due to this, then, he is, unlike Burney's first hero, unable to act as guardian to his future wife.

Mr. Harrel and Cecilia's old friend Priscilla are foils for Cecilia and Mortimer Delvile. The Harrels represent London society. Living apparently carefree lives of extravagant spending and frenetic socializing, the Harrels require continuous external stimulation to enable them to ignore the sterility of their inner lives and the superficiality of their personal relationship. At first, Cecilia subtly advises her friend Priscilla to change her lifestyle:

'But were it not better,' said Cecilia, with more energy, 'to think less of other people, and more of yourself? to consult your own fortune, and your own situation in life, instead of being blindly guided by those of other people? If, indeed other people would be responsible for your losses, for the diminution of your wealth, and for the disorder of your affairs, then might you

rationaly make their way of life the example of yours: but you cannot flatter yourself such will be the case; you know better; your losses, your diminished fortune, your embarrassed circumstances will be all your own! pitied, perhaps, by some, but blamed by more, and assisted by none!' (194-5 My italics)

Burney's use of the word "rationally" emphasizes again to the reader that Cecilia is attempting to live her life on a rational basis, rather than a strictly emotional one. As Simons writes, Cecilia "is essentially a rationalist. While capable of intense feeling, she does not allow it to control her. She is a woman of discrimination, who judges the society she enters and finds it wanting" (Intro. xii).

Cecilia is thus appealing to a side of her friend that has been suppressed by Priscilla's years of living in London society. Cecilia's attempt to improve the lot of her friend, and to encourage some self-imposed control on Priscilla's part, is completely unsuccessful. Yet Cecilia refuses to give up her cause, for she is essentially encouraging Priscilla to increase her independence: Cecilia realizes that the Harrels are completely at the mercy of their society--they cannot function successfully outside of it, either physically or psychologically.

Not only does Cecilia find fault with the Harrels, but she quickly loses her patience with the ways of society. She resents feeling as if she is on display at parties, and endeavors constantly to engage in conversation with those around her: "At length, quite tired of sitting as if merely

an object to be gazed at, [Cecilia] determined to attempt entering into conversation with Miss Leeson" (37). This attempt fails, as Miss Leeson is more than willing to participate in the role fashionable society has set out for her—she is snobbishly silent and remains mutinously mute.

In this society, many men disparage and commodify women. Simons writes: "Continually in *Cecilia* men are seen as dehumanizing women, reducing them to commodities, objects of pleasure or means of income, and it is in such a context that Cecilia must struggle to assert her sense of personal value" (*Fanny Burney* 69). No man dehumanizes women, perhaps, with as much flair as Mr. Monckton. It is true that never in the novel does Cecilia forget the destructiveness of fashionable society. She sees its effects in virtually everyone around her. Yet at first she exonerates Monckton from being under its influence (after all, he does not even reside permanently in London). As the friend of her deceased uncle, Monckton is naturally trusted by Cecilia. As a young woman growing up in a rural area of England, where there are few educated people with whom to converse, Cecilia has come to value her conversations with Mr. Monckton:

his conversation was to Cecilia a never-failing source of information, as his knowledge of life and manners enabled him to start those subjects of which she was most ignorant; and her mind, copious for the admission and intelligent for the arrange-

ment of knowledge, received all new ideas with avidity. (9)

Thus, to a young woman somewhat secluded for much of her early life, Monckton becomes a traditional Burney "guiding patriarch." He is the one male on whom Cecilia remains dependent throughout most of the novel. The only other male figure who even comes close to competing with Monckton in terms of his ability to "guide" the heroine, is Albany, whose presence in Cecilia's life is sporadic and unpredictable. And while Albany certainly leads Cecilia to those who need her help, one gets the impression that Albany is only there to help her find her way in a geographical sense. Intellectually and emotionally, Cecilia is already aware of what she sees as her mission in life--to help those who need her, specifically women.

While Cecilia openly asks for the assistance of both men on numerous occasions, her relationship with Monckton is more formal than her relationship with Albany. Like Evelina with Orville, Cecilia sees Monckton's desire to help her as stemming from a selfless generosity on his part. She says to him at the beginning of the novel: "'And I hope, sir, you will honour me with your counsel and admonitions with respect to my future conduct, whenever you have the goodness to let me see you'" (19).

Monckton schemes to cast himself in a fatherly light in Cecilia's eyes (as does Orville in *Evelina*, with con-

siderably more success)--in this way he believes he will be able to secure her affections. Immediately, however, the reader is informed of what Cecilia is ignorant of: Monckton's desire to help her is purely selfish--he wishes to "preserve" Cecilia and her fortune for the moment that he becomes eligible and can become her husband.

Ironically, Monckton believes himself to be relatively innocent of wrong-doing. He is shrewdly perceptive of people in London society, and knows himself to be no worse than most. As Doody writes:

Monckton uses social conventions as stalking horses for private desire. He cannot admit to himself that he does anything unconscionable or out-of-the-way. Society permits gaining wealth through successive marriages, and encourages the exploitation of women as property. Our initial knowledge of Monckton should make us wonder about the value of conforming to such a society.
(*Frances Burney* 112)

Thus, the reader's disgust should not be directed solely at Monckton, but at the society which supports him and his assumptions.

One difference between *Evelina* and *Cecilia* is the importance placed on female-female relationships in the later novel. Unlike in *Evelina* (where the relations between women are never fully developed), the females who surround and warm Cecilia are most important to her survival, for they offer what little stability can be found in Cecilia's life. Her

relationships with other women offer stability in two ways-- she obtains a support-system on which she can rely, and she gains an opportunity to feel as though she may be of use to those women who in turn need her help. Doody writes of this female community:

Cecilia's sympathy draws her most strongly to women, as the people who need most help. Albany later takes her to a 'miserable house in a court leading into Picadilly' and to the third story where 'a wretched woman' lies ill with rheumatic fever, surrounded by noisy and untended children. Cecilia is able to enlist the help of 'the woman of the house, who kept a Green Grocer's shop on the ground floor' in buying provisions, hiring a nurse, and paying an apothecary (V:767-8). Later...Mrs. Matt, who worked as a pew opener in the church where the heroine's wedding was interrupted, is able--once she sees the Monckton household--to throw light on that affair. Women can be useful to each other. (*Frances Burney* 128)

Cecilia's relationship with Henrietta Belfield is particularly important, for she is Henrietta's protector; she acts as a guardian herself. Yet it is not only Henrietta whom Cecilia comes to serve, protect, and love--she also adopts this role in her relationships with other female characters (Mrs. Hill for example), many of whom are impoverished. As a (temporary) woman of means, before she herself is swindled (bribed, blackmailed) out of her money by men, she wishes to do what she can to alleviate female suffering (though she helps Harrel partially out of sympathy for him and a justified fear that he will do violence to himself, it is her

friendship with his wife which causes her to continue to support them).

Though her attempted guardianship of Mrs. Harrel is unsuccessful, that of Henrietta offers consolation to Cecilia. Not only does Henrietta Belfield become "useful," but in time she becomes a very good friend to Cecilia, who values her companionship highly. As Straub writes:

In the course of seeking to help the two women--fittingly, to compensate for inadequacies of male protection, a form of social security that Cecilia herself has not found particularly reliable--she discovers an interest in developing a personal relationship with Henrietta, who offers the possibility of good-natured, well-bred companionship (130).

Some may argue that Cecilia's need to protect other women is somewhat selfish--or is at least not *self-less*. For it is undeniable that Cecilia needs a purpose in life--a project.

As Burney writes:

But Cecilia was determined to think and to live for herself, without regard to unmeaning wonder or selfish remonstrances; she had neither ambition for splendour, nor spirits for dissipation; the recent sorrow of her heart had deadened it for the present to all personal taste of happiness, and her only chance for regaining it seemed through the medium of bestowing it upon others. (776)

Yet if Cecilia does use these women to enable herself to feel generous and good, to boost her flagging self-esteem, it is also undeniable that her results are positive. For of all the guardian-figures in the novel, none is more successful in protecting, serving, and loving women than Cecilia Beverley.

Delvile's cousin, Lady Honoria, may remind the reader of *Evelina's* sharp-witted Mrs. Selwyn. Honoria is more self-consciously feminine than Mrs. Selwyn--that is, Honoria does not hesitate to flirt with the men around her. Yet like Mrs. Selwyn, Honoria does provide a critique of men and of marriage. As Julia Epstein writes:

Lady Honoria's disruptions are knowing, insightful, and calculated. Her sharp wit refreshingly challenges the staid codes of social behaviour in the novel. She recognizes the stakes for women in this society, and she has the novel's last word. When Cecilia chides her on her lack of principles, she responds reasonably, 'Not a creature thinks of our principles, till they find them out by our conduct; and nobody can possibly do that till we are married, for they give us no power beforehand. The men know nothing of us in the world while we are single, but how we can dance a minuet, or play a lesson upon the harpsichord' (2.466). Lady Honoria tries to manipulate this slippery female role and to turn slipperiness itself into freedom. (*Iron Pen* 167-168)

Of course, for many readers, both today and in Burney's time, Lady Honoria is a foil for the steadier, "superior," Cecilia. Yet her behaviour, untouched by a fear of offending or a desire to please, may, for some, come as a refreshing change.

Mrs. Delvile attributes Honoria's sauciness to too much independence. For while Mrs. Delvile is intelligent and opinionated, she is initially relatively dependent in her position as wife and mother. As Lady Delvile says of Honoria:

'The rank of Lady Honoria, though it has not rendered her proud, nor even made her conscious she has any dignity to support, has yet given her

saucy indifference whom she pleases or hurts, that borders upon what in a woman is of all things the most odious, a daring defiance of the world and its opinions.' (498)

Oddly enough, Mrs. Delvile's words in the above passage anticipate her way of life in the final chapter of the novel--living apart from the husband she has defiantly disobeyed to support her son and a fellow woman whom she has come to love and respect.

The importance of the mutual respect between women is emphasized in Cecilia's reaction to the elder Delviles--she respects not her overbearing guardian, but his wife. As Doody writes: "what Compton Delvile might feel is of concern to no one. In a novel that displays the patriarchal, the real emotional power and the only true acknowledged authority belong to the matriarchy" (*Frances Burney* 139). Before she takes her husband's name, Cecilia "refus[es] to enlist under the banner of patriarchy, and hold[s] herself free of filial obedience to any father" (Doody *Frances Burney* 141). Cecilia, Honoria, and Mrs. Delvile thus all attempt to gain "power" as women--they simply do so in varying ways.

When Cecilia goes mad towards the end of the novel, it is essentially a result of the actions of the men around her. They are suffocating her with their "care" and their judgmental reactions. In this sense, Cecilia is not unlike Evelina. The desperation of her situation is simply taken

one step further: "Encircled and 'taken care of,' Cecilia is like Evelina at Marylebone Gardens and like herself at the masquerade, a prisoner of men pretending all around her to be gallant and in fact suffocating her with their 'protection'" (Epstein *Iron Pen* 169). Mortimer has refused to include her in his interaction with Belfield, thus leading Cecilia to fear the worst. She has been betrayed by Monckton, a man she trusted from a young age. She has been turned away and denied help by Compton Delvile, one of her law-appointed guardians. As a female, she lacks the power to right the situation, yet she cannot rely on the males around her for support--she cannot even rely on Mortimer, who loves her. The only recourse for her desperate mind is madness.

What is so disturbing about Cecilia's scenes of madness is that her attempt at female independence appears to have failed. She has lost the ability "to assert [her] 'will over [her] body, [her] own organs and functions'" (Newton 7). As Simons writes: "Cecilia has tried to resist all along the patriarchal model of womanly behaviour but these concluding scenes show her reduced to the passive, fragile and raving figure that men expect her to be" (*Fanny Burney* 77). Though Cecilia has, several times, determined "to think and act entirely for herself" (588), the possibility of this is here put into question. As Epstein writes:

Camilla went mad when she entered a social limbo as a woman inappropriately alone; Cecilia goes mad effectively for the same reason. Both heroines

recover in the arms of men who have learned their lessons from this experience: if you are going to 'take care of' and 'protect' a woman in the eighteenth century, you had better not leave her side, not for a minute. Danger lurks in every corner, and in the abstract the love of a good man serves no purpose. (*Iron Pen* 171)

The endings of *Cecilia* and *Evelina* differ markedly from one another. As Simons writes of *Cecilia*: "Her lesson is...at once harsher and more complex than *Evelina*'s for she has to learn not about conduct like her predecessor, nor about self-enlightenment...but about self-protection" (*Fanny Burney* 71). Whereas *Evelina* is assured of complete happiness in the continued correspondence with Mr. Villars, the new relationship with her father, and her marriage to the incomparable Lord Orville, *Cecilia*'s happiness is down-played. Burney describes the future that awaits *Cecilia* and her new family:

The upright mind of *Cecilia*, her purity, her virtue, and the moderation of her wishes, gave to her in the warm affection of Lady Delvile, and the unremitting fondness of Mortimer, all the happiness human life seems capable of receiving:-- yet human it was, and as such imperfect; she knew that, at times, the whole family must murmur at her loss of fortune, and at times she murmured herself to be thus portionless, though an HEIRESS. Rationally, however, she surveyed the world at large, and finding that of the few who had any happiness, there were none without some misery, she checked the rising sigh of repining mortality, and, grateful with general felicity, bore partial evil with cheerfullest resignation. (941)

The bittersweet tone of the final passages in the novel is remarkable. Why, one might ask, is the overall message of this novel so different from that of *Evelina*? The Blooms see

the ending as stemming from a growing maturity and a growing awareness of the world on the part of Burney ("Retreat" 228). Epstein would agree with this assessment, and observes that the ending is bittersweet because of the questioning of marriage in the novel--for the heroine, marriage is seen as a sacrifice:

In order to achieve the fulfillment of privatized desire, Cecilia gives up a great deal: a name, a fortune, and the ability to act independently. To gain a husband, she loses a self, and it is not at all clear in the novel's denouement that Burney believes this to be a good bargain. The flighty Lady Honoria Pemberton has, perhaps, the last word, given the entrapped helplessness Cecilia has endured until her marriage could be acknowledged: 'You can do nothing at all without being married; a single woman is a thousand times more shackled than a wife; for, she is accountable to everybody; and a wife, you know, has nothing to do but just to manage her husband' (2:465). The vision of Cecilia 'immured' in Delvile Castle--despite all that propriety and a loving husband can offer--remains a grim vision. Though in the end Burney's lovers begin to take possession of something like happiness, in a Burney novel 'happiness' simply means the calm possession of mutual knowledge, the lifting of the veil of secrecy and misunderstanding. (Epstein *Iron Pen* 173)

Indeed, the portrayal of marriage in this work is surprisingly bleak. As Simons says of the situation in this novel, "Cecilia is constantly frustrated in her aims, and must ultimately settle for the traditional goal of young heroines: marriage. And, remarkably for a novel of this period marriage is here presented as a form of compromise" (Intro. xii).

The ending of *Cecilia* was a bone of contention between Burney and her influential male guardian, Daddy Crisp, who often offered literary criticism. It appears that Mr. Crisp did not approve of the ending's ambiguity. As a young woman, Burney was often willing to abide by the wishes of her male guardians, Crisp included. Yet she refused to change the conclusion of *Cecilia*. Joyce Hemlow quotes Burney's words of defence:

Is not such a middle state more natural, more according to real life, and less resembling every other book of fiction?...I shall think I have rather written a farce than a serious history, if the whole is to end, like the hack Italian operas, with a jolly chorus that makes all parties good and all parties happy! (Hemlow 150)

Thus, Burney refused to give many readers what they expected--a guaranteed happiness that had little in common with reality.

In concluding, one must again return to a question--what is the overall message of this novel? Is Cecilia's attempt at power, self-rule, and independence a failure in the end? Unfortunately, one must answer in the affirmative. Yet, from a feminist perspective, the hope lies in the fact that never in the novel is Cecilia completely fulfilled. What might be seen as a traditional ending--the heroine marries her hero--is undercut by Burney's emphasis on the inadequacy of Cecilia's happiness. Mortimer is not enough to

provide the heroine with life-long happiness. The ending refuses to let the reader forget this fact. Burney's next novel is also about women's attempts to survive in society. Perhaps the heroine of *Camilla* will come closer to achieving the elusive female "power"--that is, "'ability, energy [,] strength,'" and, of course, "self-rule."

Chapter 3 *Camilla*

Burney's third novel, *Camilla*, was written when the author was considerably older, and after she had been forced (mainly through the wishes of her father) to act as Second Keeper of the Robes for Queen Charlotte, a position which she despised and which seriously affected her health. Once released from this position, Burney fell in love and married, then gave birth to a son. The marriage took place against the wishes of her father (he did not even attend the wedding). Burney's experience at court had further taught her not to blindly follow his advice. She knew that her male guardians could be *wrong*. This attitude on the part of Burney is partially reflected in her third novel, written to financially support her new family.

Yet *Camilla* is something of an enigma, and is the hardest of Burney's novels to categorize. There is some evidence that Burney was also troubled by the work--she rewrote parts of the novel and edited it more than once. Epstein points out that Burney worked on *Camilla* for many years, and perhaps had high hopes of its public (and, this time, financial) success. Epstein writes: "the extraordinary

period--1786 to 1836--that the work absorbed her, and the intensity of that absorption, suggest that she saw *Camilla* as her most troubling work, as the potential star in her literary crown" (*Iron Pen* 46). This stardom was not to be. Though the work was highly anticipated by the public, many of the reviews panned the writing style and were no doubt depressing to Burney, who had always cared intensely about public opinion. One thing, however, consoled her--before the reviews appeared, many had bought *Camilla* (which was sold by subscription), and the novel was thus at least a financial success.

One of the most fascinating aspects of *Camilla* is Burney's apparent world view. One would imagine that, at a point in her life when she was happily married (unlike the majority of her siblings) and was mother to an adorable little boy, her work would regain some of the joy and sprightliness which abound in *Evelina*. One might think that her portrayal of the world as a whole would be fairly positive. Importantly, Burney's husband (younger by one year), Alexandre D'Arblay, was nothing like Burney's father or Samuel Crisp. As Doody writes of Burney's husband: he "emerges as a kind and sympathetic man, never double-minded, with none of that tendency to emotional blackmail so evident in Crisp and Dr. Burney" (*Frances Burney* 20). So, by the time of the writing of *Camilla*, Burney had partially freed

herself from her overbearing male guardians. Yet a certain active bitterness remained, most likely from her years at court where she felt abandoned by her father. During those years, Burney had, for the most part, written tragic plays which reflected her state of mind.

The court years had changed Frances Burney's views of society and many people within society for the worse. Though she dearly loved her family, the world at large seemed to disgust her. While society is dangerous in *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, society in *Camilla* becomes even more so. Camilla is somewhat naive--she "expects no treachery" (Epstein *Iron Pen* 126), and these expectations are supported while she remains at home in the family fold. When she finally emerges into society, however, she finds herself in a world where little appears to make sense, and where she is soon in danger from many directions.

Like *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, Camilla is beautiful, and harbors a sweet, generous, and innocent disposition. Camilla's only character deficiency is her imagination, which is unacceptable in the world of the novel, and only serves to cause trouble for her and her family. Creativity is dangerous to Camilla, and to the other female characters in the novel. They must be perfect, and the perfection demanded is static and sterile--as Judy Simons writes, "the main impression left by the novel is one of women hounded by unat-

tainable goals of perfection, their security purchased only with the loss of their individuality" (*Fanny Burney* 95).

The superb moment of irony in the work comes with Mr. Tyrold's letter to his daughter, in which he "'put[s] upon paper what [he] most desire[s] [Camilla] to consider'" (*Camilla* 353). As he says to her, "'You will find it a little sermon upon the difficulties and the conduct of the female heart'" (*Camilla* 353). In his letter to his daughter it becomes clear that he both recognizes the stagnation of society's rules and their unfairness to women, yet wishes his daughter to bend to these rules. Mr. Tyrold pretends to see the frailty of society's conventions, yet concludes his letter to his daughter by claiming that they, as mere cogs in the machine, cannot, and should not, attempt to change the system. Epstein writes that Tyrold's sermon

is certainly the essence of established social ideology in relation to women. But it is not only a moralistic distillation of received wisdom; it represents, both literally and structurally, the language of the patriarch that Camilla must learn to translate, to speak herself, and, finally, to erase. It is the rule book and conduct manual Evelina had lacked; having it, however, Camilla is no better prepared than was her predecessor to navigate through the world. She knows now what she has to resist. Evelina remained for a time ignorant of her own powerlessness; Camilla's father asks his daughter not merely to acknowledge her powerlessness but to seek 'an accommodation to circumstances' (355) and to embrace it as '[t]he temporal destiny of woman' in her 'doubly appendant state' (356). (*Iron Pen* 129)

Mr. Tyrold focuses not only on a woman's desired behaviour in society--he also touches on the relations between potential

lovers, and what the behaviour of the female should be. Here again, however, where there are strict rules governing the behaviour of young women, these rules make little practical sense and are based on custom, not reason. As Doody writes of Burney,

In *Camilla*, she defines contemporary propriety and courtship, pointing out the insistently incongruous rules and stressing the paradoxes. The courtship of Camilla and Edgar degenerates into a tense and comic game. They are required to act by parallel and incompatible rules, though the particular strategies change from time to time. (*Frances Burney* 230)

Tyrold does admit the "inequity" of the rights of men and women. As he writes,

We will not here canvass the equity of that freedom by which women as well as men should not be allowed to dispose of their own affections. There cannot, in nature, in theory, nor even in common sense, be a doubt of their equal right: but disquisitions on this point will remain rather curious than important, till the speculatist can superinduce to the abstract truth of the position some proof of its practicability. (358)

This passage is important, yet it is also lamentably brief, and the letter is ended on a note that brings to mind the words of Dr. Marchmont--for Tyrold writes to Camilla, "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" (360). Camilla takes her father's words as law and, as Burney writes, "she determined, with respect to her own behaviour, to observe the injunctions of

her father, whose letter she would regularly read every morning" (410).

Camilla also wishes to follow the many "injunctions" of Edgar Mandlebert, who is associated with Tyrolds from the beginning of the novel. In the eyes of the Tyrolds, Camilla's parents, Edgar would make a good husband for Camilla--as Mrs. Tyrold comments to her husband of Edgar: "'he alone seemed worthy to replace the first and best protector she must relinquish when she quits this house!'" (221). Edgar believes that his close relationship with the Tyrolds gives him certain rights of guardianship over their daughters. Edgar becomes obsessed with watching after Camilla, and tells himself that this is in the interests of her parents, rather than in his own. As Edgar says to himself: "Her father has been my father, and so long as she retains his respected name, I will watch by her unceasingly" (422). He wishes not only to watch over her from afar, but to act as her close personal adviser and guardian. Indeed, he constantly asks Camilla to allow him to adopt this role. As he says to her at one point,

'tell me, candidly, sincerely tell me, can you condescend to suffer an old friend, though in the person of but a young man, to offer you from time to time, a hint, a little counsel, a few brief words of occasional advice? and even perhaps, now and then, to torment you into a little serious reflection?' (267)

He continues to excuse his meddling and downright insulting interference in her life by justifying it on account of her innocence and inexperience. As Edgar says to Camilla later in the novel, "'Your utter inexperience in life...makes me ...an adept in the comparison. Suffer me then, as such, to represent to you my fears, that your innocence and goodness may expose you to imposition'" (340).

Edgar becomes terrified when Camilla professes her affection for the young and beautiful Mrs. Berlinton. The latter is extremely popular in high society, and has many male admirers. Edgar believes that spending time with Mrs. Berlinton will lower Camilla's morals and may spoil her in the eyes of her parents and other moralists. When Camilla enters into society in the company of Mrs. Berlinton, she causes quite a stir among the young men. Edgar, of course, cannot bear to see Camilla the center of male attention:

Edgar heard this with increased anxiety. Has she discretion, has she fortitude, thought he, to withstand public distinction? Will it not spoil her for private life; estrange her from family concerns? render tasteless and insipid the conjugal and maternal characters, meant by Nature to form not only the most sacred of duties, but the most delicious of enjoyments? (444)

Upon seeing Camilla speaking "pleasant[ly]" (444) to Sir Sedley, Edgar answers his own questions--"Alas! thought he, the degradation from the true female character is already begun! already the lure of fashion draws her from what she owes to delicacy and propriety, to give a willing reception

to insolence and foppery!" (444). He cannot bear to see Camilla "spoiled," so he begs her to abandon her acquaintance with Mrs. Berlinton--in the following quotation he indulges in melodrama and begs her to "fly" from the woman he sees as a danger to Camilla's moral purity:

'Ah, my dear Miss Camilla,' cried Edgar, with energy, 'since you feel and own...and with you, that is always one...this baneful deficiency, drop, or at least suspend an intercourse too hazardous to be indulged with propriety! see what she may be sometime hence, ere you contract further intimacy. At present, inexperienced and unsuspecting, her dangers may be yours. You are too young for such a risk. Fly, fly from it, my dear Miss Camilla!...as if the voice of your mother were calling out to caution you!' (476)

Edgar wishes Camilla to replace her acquaintance with Mrs. Berlinton (and Mrs. Arlbery) with that of the dull but upstanding Lord O'Lerney and Lady Isabella--he laments, "Why does she not come this way...why does she not gather from these mild, yet understanding moralists, instruction that might benefit all her future life?" (472). Admittedly, in this one area, Edgar is found to be correct. Lady Isabella does support Camilla towards the end of the novel, offering her vital support, while Mrs. Berlinton turns out at last to be unreliable and fails the test of true friendship.

Edgar is encouraged in his obsessive watching by his tutor, a highly "respectable" man named Dr. Marchmont, who has, unfortunately, been unlucky in marriage. Fairly early

on in the novel, Dr. Marchmont advises his ward to "'study [Camilla], from this moment, with new eyes, new ears, and new thoughts.'" As Marchmont goes on to say,

'Whatever she does, you must ask yourself this question: "Should I like such behaviour in my wife?"...the interrogatory, *Were she mine?* must be present at every look, every word, every motion; you must forget her wholly as Camilla Tyrold, you must think of her only as Camilla Mandlebert; even *justice is insufficient during this period of probation*, and instead of inquiring, "Is this right in her?" you must simply ask, "Would it be pleasing to me?"' (159-160 My italics)

While one certainly wishes to ascertain whether a marriage will be compatible, Marchmont's advice is extreme. In Edgar's favour, he is more trusting of Camilla before receiving Marchmont's "advice." In fact, only moments before the above conversation, Edgar proclaims to Marchmont of Camilla,

'Let me...be her guarantee!...for I know her well! I have known her from her childhood, and cannot be deceived. I fear nothing--except my own powers of engaging her regard. I can trace to a certainty, even from my boyish remarks, her fair, open, artless, and disinterested character.' (158)

Yet Marchmont's openly misogynist remarks begin to influence Edgar, whose suspicions quickly overcome his reason and his trust. The irony is that Edgar is apparently aware himself of Marchmont's misogyny, and seems to disapprove of it--as he says to Marchmont, "'Dr. Marchmont! how wretchedly ill you think of women!'" (642). Marchmont's response only serves to emphasize the truth in Edgar's words: "'I think of [women] as

they are! I think of them as I have found them. They are artful, though feeble; they are shallow, yet subtle'" (642).

Marchmont advises Edgar to pay attention to each and every one of Camilla's actions and words. Specifically, he wants Edgar to determine whether or not Camilla will make a pliable wife. As he says to Edgar late in the novel,

'Take warning, my dear young friend, by my experience. The entire possession of the heart of the woman you marry is not more essential to your first happiness, than the complete knowledge of her disposition is to your ultimate peace...Know, first...if to your guidance she will give way.'
(645-646)

Few people in the novel are able to see Edgar's deficiencies. In fact, Mrs. Arlbery is the only character who warns Camilla that Edgar has personality flaws equal to, or surpassing those of Camilla herself. Mrs. Arlbery is psychologically astute and, though she does not know Edgar personally, she is able to describe him well to Camilla. In the following passage, she describes the way in which a man like Edgar goes about choosing a mate:

'He...makes, on a sudden, the first prudent choice in his way; a choice no longer difficult, but from the embarrassment of its ease; for she must have no beauty, lest she should be sought by others, no wit, lest others should be sought by herself; and no fortune, lest she should bring with it a taste of independence, that might curb his own will, when the strength and spirit are gone with which he might have curbed her's.' (482)

While this assessment of Edgar may be harsh, it is undeniable that Edgar is successful in curbing Camilla's "strength and

spirit." In fact, his presence, or the mere idea of his presence, begins to undermine her joy at public outings with her friends Arlbery and Berlinton. The following quotation describes an event Camilla attends and her subsequent thoughts on this event:

They had both already seated themselves as much out of sight as possible; and Camilla now began to regret she had not accompanied Mrs. Arlbery. She had thought only of the play and its entertainment till the sight of Mandlebert told her that her situation was improper; and the idea only occurred to her by considering that it would occur to him.
(321)

She is worried with good cause, for Edgar is horrified when he sees Camilla at the play. She constantly tries to please him, yet her good intentions persistently backfire, and Edgar believes she cares nothing about appearances. She does care, of course, but mainly for his sake. Edgar says:

'Alas...in either case, she is no more the artless Camilla I first adored! that fatal connection at the Grove, formed while her character, pure, white, and spotless, was in its enchanting, but dangerous state of first ductility, has already broken into that clear transparent singleness of mind, so beautiful in its total ignorance of every species of scheme, every sort of double measure, every idea of secret view and latent expedient!'
(670-671)

As in *Evelina*, where Villars is identified with Orville, in *Camilla*, Edgar is identified to a certain extent with Mr. Tyrold. Even when Camilla does not come out and say "'How like my dear father was that!'" (104), as she does at one

point in the novel, it is everywhere implied that Edgar is a more fallible version of Mr. Tyrold.

Aside from Mr. Tyrold, every male character in the novel poses a danger to one of the women. Epstein writes:

Extolling forthrightness and assertive speech, Burney paints these characters--Villars and Giles Arbe as well as Sir Hugh and Lionel--as people who trigger, practice, and sustain habits of concealment. None of them is an outright villain (despite the homologic gesture of Villars' name), but all of them are more dangerous to the heroines than the openly condemned villains such as Willoughby and Clarendel, who at least have their charms. (*Iron Pen* 142)

This is certainly true, and yet Sir Sedley and Sir Willoughby are dangerous, as are Clermont and Bellamy, Eugenia's (first) husband. The women must therefore do what they can to rely on the very small community of females in the novel.

It is important to note that Camilla is the only one of Burney's heroines with a mother who is alive and well. And yet her mother is absent--in another country--for the majority of the novel's action. Mrs. Tyrold is an extremely strong female character, and were she there, not only for Camilla but for Eugenia as well, tragedy, and near-tragedy could possibly be avoided. Thus, when, near the end of the novel Camilla exclaims, "'O my dearest Mother! how have I missed your guiding care!'" (896), it is a telling phrase. It is ironic that during her mother's absence Camilla turns

to (the younger) Eugenia as her guide. As Burney writes, to Camilla, "Eugenia seemed...oracular" (849).

Eugenia is, in fact, a remarkable young woman--she is both extremely intelligent and has high moral standards. As the reader is told, "The equanimity of her temper made her seem, though a female, born to be a practical philosopher; her abilities and her sentiments were each of the highest class, uniting the best adorned intellects with the best principled virtues" (51). Burney certainly hints at the intellectual achievements a woman may accomplish--as Simons points out, Eugenia "effortlessly outstrips her brother, her uncle and her cousin Clermont" (*Fanny Burney* 86). More importantly, Eugenia, unlike her tutor, Dr. Orkborne, does so "without any hint of pedantry" (Simons *Fanny Burney* 86). Yet though Eugenia has many strong traits, her role as guardian to Camilla is ironic, given the many personal problems Eugenia must face. For her education is confined--it does not extend to the ways of society, and thus, for the larger part of the novel, Eugenia remains an innocent idealist. As Simons writes: "Learning, Burney stresses regretfully, is no substitute for worldly awareness and those responsible for adolescent guidance must steer a delicate path between the two" (*Fanny Burney* 86). Her advice to Camilla is well-intentioned but much too uninformed to be of much help. And Eugenia must always submit to the superior knowledge of her father. As she says to him: "'I will do all, every thing you

desire!..you have conquered me, my beloved father! Your indulgence, your lenity shall take place of every hardship, and leave me nothing but filial affection!'" (304). Eugenia must not make female independence too successful, and the ending of the novel emphasizes Eugenia's inability to rely solely on herself.

Mrs. Arlbery is another female character to whom Camilla goes for advice, and as a woman who has plenty of experience with men and society, and who thrives on her reputation as an independent woman, one might imagine that she would be in a good position to be guardian to Camilla. To some readers and critics, the portrayal of Mrs. Arlbery is a positive one. As Simons writes:

The more closely we read *Camilla*, the more apparent is the dissension from establishment values. Mrs. Arlbery, attractive and witty, a woman whose own lifestyle forms a successful challenge to convention, is a character who helps sow the seeds of suspicion. Clearly, Burney found it difficult to present her in accordance with the prevailing fictional conventions. She is precisely the sort of woman that Burney admired in real life, combining an incisive intelligence with grace and vitality. (*Fanny Burney* 89)

Mrs. Arlbery appears to have none of the negative traits of the shrewish Mrs. Selwyn or the proud Mrs. Delvile. As Cutting writes of Mrs. Arlbery,

Her warmth of feeling and good natured tolerance make Mrs. Arlbery more amiable than Fanny Burney's other independent women. Mrs. Arlbery's propensity for satire, for example, is held in

check by her distaste for inflicting pain without good cause. (524)

Mrs. Arlbery seems to be wonderfully alive, possessing the ability to enliven any company. As Burney describes her,

Mrs. Arlbery perceived their youthful wonder, and felt a propensity to increase it, which strengthened all her powers, and called forth all her faculties. Wit she possessed at will; and, with exertions which rendered it uncommonly brilliant, she displayed it, now to them, now to the gentlemen, with a gaiety so fantastic, a raillery so arch, a spirit of satire so seasoned with a delight in coquetry, and a certain negligence of air so enlivened by a whimsical pleasantry, that she could not have failed to strike with admiration even the most hackneyed seekers of character; much less the inexperienced young creatures now presented to her; who, with open eyes and ears, regarded her as a phenomenon, upon finding that the splendor of her talents equalled the singularity of her manners. (89)

Mrs. Arlbery dislikes Edgar, for she suspects his obsessive criticism of Camilla and his desire to reduce any independence the younger woman may have. Mrs. Arlbery counters by attempting to encourage an independent spirit in Camilla. She cannot bear to listen to Camilla's subservient language-- as she says to Camilla,

'If he pleases?...pray never give that *If* into his decision; you only put contradiction into people's heads, by asking what pleases them. Say at once, My good uncle, Mrs. Arlbery has invited me to indulge her with a few days at the Grove; so tomorrow I shall go to her.' (248)

She talks openly in terms of war and domination. For Mrs. Arlbery has come to realize the power a woman can have over a man. As Mrs. Arlbery says to Camilla,

'Know your own power more truly, and use it better. Men, my dear, are all spoilt by humility, and all conquered by gaiety. Amuse and defy them!--attend to that maxim, and you will have the world at your feet...From the instant you permit them to think of being offended, they become your masters.' (446-7)

The reason, of course, that many women, including Camilla, will not emulate the ways and maxims of Mrs. Arlbery, is that they fear running the risk of public disapproval and humiliation. Mrs. Arlbery runs this risk, but to her, as she says, the risk is worth it: "'it's vastly more irksome to give up one's own way, than to hear a few impertinent remarks'" (248). As Mrs. Arlbery sees it, these impertinent remarks are fairly negligible, as they come from the likes of people like Edgar Mandlebert.

Mrs. Arlbery is attracted to Camilla because of the latter's intelligence and vivacity. As a result she wishes to make Camilla her pupil. As she says to the younger woman,

'You are not used to my way, I perceive...yet, I can nevertheless assure you, you can do nothing so much for your happiness as to adopt it. You are made a slave in a moment by the world, if you don't begin life by defying it. Take your own way, follow your own humour, and you and the world will both go on just as well, as if you ask its will and pleasure for everything you do, and want, and think.' (246)

Thus, by many readers today, Mrs. Arlbery is seen as a positive role model for Camilla. Indeed, as Simons writes,

Burney provides a penetrating critique of her priggish hero through the comments of the lively and independent-minded Mrs. Arlbery...Her

deflation of Edgar's rectitude, accomplished with charm and vitality, acts to undercut the values that he embodies and exposes the tension that exists in the novel between a surface conformism and an undercurrent that constantly questions and subverts. Mrs. Arlbery, a character who muddies the definition of Burney's attitude considerably, bridges the gap between sympathy and judgment that our response to Mandlebert originally elicits and creates a positive counter to the moral authority that he and the Tyrold parents try to establish. (*Fanny Burney* 89)

Mrs. Arlbery's character, though somewhat undermined, can never be forgotten. For despite the ending of the novel, in which Camilla professes her undying love and obedience to Edgar, there is a strong subtext in Burney's third novel which advocates female independence.

Yet it must nonetheless be noted that Mrs. Arlbery is certainly not all good--all good effect, that is. Like Mrs. Selwyn, she, too, has a certain reliance on men which precludes a healthy relationship with women. Though she occasionally enjoys Camilla's company, she admits to her that women are not particularly useful to her. In fact, as she says, their company is often "worse to [her], because [she] cannot possibly take the same liberties with them'" (256). Mrs. Arlbery is initially attracted to Camilla for the occasional hint of female independence she senses within her--perhaps Camilla reminds Mrs. Arlbery of herself. Yet Mrs. Arlbery fails the test of true friendship--she loses interest in Camilla when the latter becomes despondent. She cannot

bear the fact that Camilla is no longer entertaining to her. As Mrs. Arlbery says of Camilla, "'I really owe her a good turn: Else I should no longer endure her; for the tender passion has terribly flattened her. If we don't restore her spirits, she will be a mere dead weight to me'" (366).

It is also interesting to note that, though Mrs. Arlbery has evidently spent a lot of her time with men and knows how some may think, it is partially her bad advice to Camilla which further complicates the misunderstandings between Camilla and Edgar. Whereas Edgar is (initially) looking only for some word or mark of Camilla's esteem, which Camilla is eager to give, Mrs. Arlbery convinces her not to reassure Edgar of her regard, but instead to keep him wondering about her feelings for him. As Mrs. Arlbery says to Camilla, "'Attend to one who has travelled further into life than yourself, and believe me when I assert, that his bane, and yours alike, is his security'" (456). Not only must the reader thus question Mrs. Arlbery's powers of perception, but the reader may come to wonder just how happy Mrs. Arlbery really is. She professes that to live like her will bring Camilla happiness, yet her "happiness" seems strained, and less than genuine. One might say that Mrs. Arlbery tries so hard to appear happy that her happiness is negated. As a result, Mrs. Arlbery is somewhat of a paradox--strong and independent, yet extremely misguided.

Whereas Evelina is continually watched by the men in her life (Villars and Orville), as is Cecilia to some degree (by Monckton and Mortimer Delvile), Camilla is constantly under surveillance by Edgar. Yet while Evelina is content to be the object of scrutiny, Camilla dislikes it, for though she is scrutinized, her words and actions are always misconstrued by others. The scrutiny does not protect, but, as in *Cecilia*, leads the heroine to the point of desperation. As Doody writes, "Camilla is perpetually in the position of being unheard, but observed--and she hates that position... She fights back. Camilla observed becomes an observer in her turn" (*Frances Burney* 230).

Though she often asks for Edgar's advice, there are moments when the reader is shown glimpses of Camilla's rebelliousness. At one point in the novel, Camilla appears to have reached the limits of her patience with Edgar's disapproval:

Grieved, surprised, and offended, she instantly determined she would not risk such another mark of his cold superiority, but restore to him his liberty, and leave him master of himself. 'If the severity of his judgment' cried she, 'is so much more potent than the warmth of his affection, it shall not be his delicacy, nor his compassion, that shall make me his. I will neither be the wife of his repentance nor of his pity. I must be convinced of his unaltered love, his esteem, his trust...or I shall descend to humiliation, not rise to happiness, in becoming his. Softness here would be meanness; submission degrading...if he hesitates...let him go!' (582)

When reading this passage, one is invariably reminded of Cecilia's angry words--"Well, let him keep his name!" (504). These two Burney heroines can only be pushed so far, and they begin to mount a (private) protest against the men in their lives.

This temporary desire to shun overbearing male presence is, however, not precisely *emphasized*. Burney was intelligent enough to know, even unconsciously, that to advocate female defiance too openly would be to alienate most of her readership and to invite criticism. Her third novel thus ends with a reconciliation between Camilla and Edgar. The heroine blames herself and her desire for independence for the problems she has experienced:

'Ah Edgar!' she cried, 'had I trusted you as I ought, from the moment of your generous declaration--had my confidence been as firm in your kindness as in your honour, what misery had I been saved!--from this connection--from my debts--from every wide-spreading mischief!--I could then have erred no more, for I should have thought but of your approbance!' (847-848)

She then promises to abide by the wishes of Edgar concerning the women with whom she will spend her time (903).

Yet to claim that female independence is completely quashed and that male infallibility is championed is misguided. For it is important to remember that by the end of the novel Edgar has had to come to terms with his prejudices and his own blindness regarding both Dr. Marchmont and Camilla. Though he, like Camilla, is guided by good inten-

tions, he is found to be just as fallible as Camilla. As Epstein writes,

Burney, herself older now and more mature as a novelist, advocates defiance far more clearly in *Camilla*. Her heroine's chief tormentor here, ironically, is the hero-lover who is so seduced by the world's outward forms and courtesies that he becomes an officious, judgmental authoritarian, who...believes the world's gossip, reads surface appearances without sounding depths, fails to check his sources or his interpretations, and ultimately imprisons himself in his own 'punctilio' and fussy gallantry. (*Iron Pen* 125)

Edgar realizes that he must take a share in the blame for what has happened to Camilla and her family: "By the end of the novel he has more need to reform than she; and he must finally admit that his conduct has been 'a fever of the brain, with which reason has no share'" (McMaster 238).

Therefore, men in *Camilla* can be wrong, as could be the men in Burney's life. Here Burney re-examines the double message of *Cecilia*--men are women's reward, yet they are also their liability, their restriction. Burney was certainly aware that she herself was living in a patriarchal society. She thus uses more traditional story lines to temper her portrayal of a woman's gloomy fate in a man's world. As Simons astutely comments,

In *Camilla*, Burney initiates a mode of expression where the tension between conformist text and mutinous subtext shows how women were finding ways of employing traditional and acceptable forms of writing for their own purposes. It was a mode which Austen took up and became an expert in and which in turn was crucial in determining the approaches of so many women writers of the

nineteenth century. When Virginia Woolf announced that Jane Austen should have laid a wreath on the grave of Fanny Burney, it may well have been of *Camilla* that she was thinking. (*Fanny Burney* 96)

The novel is thus something of a puzzle--as Doody writes,

No simple moral scheme upholds the novel's action. Far from being a novel that justifies fathers and elders at the expense of a faulty (if teachable) heroine, *Camilla* is a novel that shows a world of fallible human beings playing mental games and tricking themselves and each other. (*Frances Burney* 215)

Doody could be more specific--the "human beings" are men and women who are continually coming into conflict with one another. For in Burney's work the relations between men and women are so emphasized as to make it impossible to ignore issues of gender--issues which are never far from the surface in Burney's novels.

Conclusion

Fanny Burney...has ties with the women who applied the new ideas of the Age of Revolution to their own sex: Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, Mary Hays, and the anonymous author of *The Female Aegis*. The preoccupation with propriety in Fanny Burney's novels was balanced by another sort of development--a growing rebellion against the restrictions imposed upon women. In this sense, Fanny Burney was a feminist. (Cutting 519-20)

As Frances Burney became more independent, so too did her heroines. Yet what was Burney attempting to say about female independence? For while the reader (contemporary, at least) may admire the attempted independence of the heroines, their attempts are eventually foiled by the "heroes" who bring the women back into the fold of patriarchal society. For the heroines, there are no attractive alternative roles other than those of daughter, wife and mother.

Yet the women's attempts to achieve autonomy are portrayed sympathetically by Burney. Her heroines are intelligent women, whose desire for independence comes naturally to them, born out of curiosity and courage. In

reading Burney's work, one may feel as though Burney's heroines are simply waiting for the right moment, the right century, to reveal their brilliant and independent spirits. Burney was therefore being purposely ambiguous--she wished to please her audience, yet felt compelled to point out the shortcomings of patriarchal society. And one must compliment Burney, who, though conflicted in her own personal beliefs of what women should be, managed to create such complex and fascinating heroines, in whom there is something with which readers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries can identify.

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