CHARACTERIZATION IN THE NOVELS OF FANNY BURNEY

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OF

FANNY BURNEY

By

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The thesis examines Miss Burney's methods of characterization and the extent to which they succeed or fail. Cahpter One is mainly biographical. Chapter Two attempts to show where Miss Burney's originality lies and how she adapts her methods of characterization from earlier fiction or from the stage. Chapters Three and Four, which support the general scheme outlined in Chapter Two with detailed character studies, are devoted to selected characters from all her novels, though the emphasis is on Evelina and Cecilia. The analysis of character is broadly based on Forster's classification into flat and round and the thesis draws more attention to Miss Burney's debt to the stage than previous critics have chosen to do.

PREFACE

The research on which this thesis is based was completed in the academic year 1967-68 under the supervision of Professor R.W. Morton whose advice is gratefully acknowledged. The final version has been delayed for a variety of personal reasons and by the difficulties of communicating across the Atlantic. Developments of Burney scholarship and criticism since then are not considered in this report.

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INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the research of the Victorian editor of The Early Diary of Frances Burney, Mrs. Annie Raine Ellis, and of our contemporary, Miss Joyce Hemlow, we know a good deal about the Burney family and about the early life of Frances Burney. Though the present aim is to analyse the way in which Miss Burney portrayed character in her novels, and the nature of her successes and failures, rather than to add to our already copious supplies of biographical details, it is useful to summarise by way of introduction to the analysis those aspects of her life which have direct bearing on the way her talent developed and on the way she perceived real character and literary stereotype.

Frances was the third of five surviving children of Dr. Charles Burney's first wife. His second wife, the former Mrs. Allen, bore him two more children and also brought two children by her former marriage into the family. From the start it was a talented and busy family with little time to spare. Both Frances's mother and her step-mother were occupied with a growing family and with household cares, while the second Mrs. Burney, who was something of a blue stocking, devoted time to reading and culture. Meanwhile Dr. Burney often worked from dawn until late evening to maintain them all, then stayed up until the small hours of the morning studying and writing. Frances's eldest sister, Hester, applied herself to studying

music with sufficient industry to become a talented pianist of some small reputation. Her eldest brother, James, began fairly early to make a career for himself in the navy, gaining enough fame to join Captain Cook's expedition to the South Seas and to end his career as an admiral. A younger brother, Charles, became a noted classical scholar. Two of the girls, Hester and Susan, were sent to school abroad, but plans to do the same for Frances and her half-sister, Charlotte, were never realized. Thus Frances Burney had very little education beyond what she gave herself, as her father was the first to admit.

As a child Frances appears to have been slower to learn than the rest, hence their calling her the little dunce, but she was bright and lively in family activities. Her own mother had said she had no fears for her, but no one saw foreshadowings of unusual ability in her. In fact she did not succeed in learning to read until she was nearly nine years old. Yet once she had learned to read and write, she practised industriously until she became her father's favourite copyist for the manuscript of a book he was writing about music. She retained this post ever afterwards. She may even have absorbed the rudiments of a fluid prose style from her work in copying.

Her position in this cultivated family aided her development in other ways. For example, it gave her an unusual degree of freedom in her choice of reading matter. The family's collection of books seems to have been completely open to her, as there was no one with enough free time to oversee or to criticize her selection. The result is that we are told of her reading the sentimental ladies' books of the day, such as Letters of Henry and Frances, yet we can see

unmistakable signs of her having read Smollett's racier novels too, normally forbidden reading for young ladies, one would think. She seems to have dipped also into various histories and into playbooks, as well as into didactic and religious works. On the positive side, this eclecticism in her reading gave her a wide background of literary sources on which to draw. On the negative side, since she lacked mature guidance and supervision to inform her judgements this eclecticism also accounts for odd excrescences of vulgarity in some of her work.

In addition, her father and family unwittingly provided her with curious and varied objects on which to practise her observing and reporting abilities. Some of the most often quoted passages of the diaries must be those which describe Dr. Burney's famous musical evenings at the Burney house. To these came the nobility and the social lions of London and even of foreign society, giving her material for her later pictures of the ton. Though she was lively within the family, among strangers Frances was often silent and seemed shy. Underneath the shyness, however, she was minutely and intelligently observant of what was going on about her. As a result, when guests had gone, she could parody their graces and foibles, often remembering speeches and conversation verbatim. This discriminating skill in detecting characteristic traits and mannerisms in the objects of her observation constitutes the main charm of The Early Diary, a work consisting of fragments of a diary, kept between 1768 and 1778 and written initially for her own amusement, and parts of journals and letters written during the same period to entertain her friends.

Miss Burney's journals and letters were immensely popular among

her family and friends, often being passed to Susan, to Mr. Crisp, an old friend of Dr. Burney, and by him on further to various of his relatives who were also admirers of Miss Burney. When travel was difficult, as it often was in those days, these journals had to take the place of conversation, and so she developed a rapid, easily flowing, natural style of writing, which was useful when she came to write her novels. The following anecdote about a visit Garick paid to Dr. Burney in his study one morning is characteristic:

> My father was beginning a laughing sort of apology for his litters, and so forth, but Mr. Garrick interrupted him with - 'Aye, now; do be in a little confusion; it will make things comfortable!' He then began to look very gravely at the hair-dresser. He was himself in a most odious scratch wig, which nobody but himself could dare be seen in. He put on a look in the Abel Drugger style of envy and sadness, as he examined the hair-dresser's progress; and, when he had done, he turned to him with a dejected face and said, 'Pray, Sir, could you touch up this a little?' taking hold of his own frightful scratch. The man only grinned and left the room. 1

It is a sad fact that over the years Miss Burney destroyed a large part of her early writing, some of it for fear of its giving offence if it fell into the wrong hands after her death. She burned a collection of her earliest pieces of fiction on her fifteenth birthday because her family, especially her step-mother, disapproved of her "scribbling". Among the pieces burned was a prototype novel, "The History of Caroline Evelyn", the plot of which might have been taken from one of the melodramas of the contemporary theatre. It is worth reciting here because it helps to draw attention to the debt Miss Burney owes to early theatrical tradition.

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1 The Early Diary of Frances Burney, ed. Mrs. A. Raine Ellis (London: Bell, 1913), II, pp. 28-29.

The story begins when Mr. Evelyn, a quiet and virtuous young man, who is making the Grand Tour with his tutor, Mr. Villars, falls in love with and marries a barmaid, whose only redeeming feature is her beauty. They soon have a daughter, Caroline, but Mr. Evelyn quickly dies with his heart broken by the realization of the mistake he has made in his choice of partner. Recognizing his wife's low intelligence and her misconduct, he leaves his child to the guardianship of Mr. Villars, who raises her almost as his daughter until her eighteenth year. Then he has to let her go to her mother in France. The former barmaid, by this time remarried to Monsieur Duval, under persuasion from her husband tries to compel her daughter to marry one of his nephews. Instead, Miss Evelyn is forced by this pressure into the arms of a young English profligate, Sir John Belmont, who induces her to elope and marry him secretly and without witnesses. When he learns, however, that Madam Duval will keep the girl's inheritance from her for her disobedience, he takes his pregnant wife back to England, where he abandons her, tears up the marriage certificate, and denies that the marriage has taken place. Anguished and in disgrace she takes refuge again with Mr. Villars, where she bears a daughter, Evelina, and dies.[2] There is a well worn pattern here of female innocence persecuted and destroyed by male egotism, the stuff of which so many plays and novellas were made, especially by the female writers of the time.

In the years immediately following the destruction of this first novel, she produced no more fiction, but seems to have been unable to resist turning over in her mind possible story outlines. These were not intended for publication, but her urge to write was irresistible.

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2 B.G. MacCarthy, The Later Women Novelists, 1744-1818 (Cork: University Press, 1947), 98.

When she turned to fiction again, writing in secret, she abandoned her early stereotyped plot, and took up the more interesting and original theme of the difficulties of Caroline Evelyn's allegedly illegitimate daughter, a girl of gentle birth and breeding, who possesses beauty, but has neither legitimate connections, money, nor influential friends. In Evelina these are used to complicate the beautiful and innocent young herpine's courtship and setting out into the world, the constant themes of Miss Burney's novels. While she was in the process of working on Evelina she was tempted to send the manuscript to a publisher, perhaps in emulation of her father, who was about to publish a musical work. It was accepted for publication by Mr. Lowndes, who paid her £20 for it. The book was more successful than she could even have dreamed of its being and she was precipitated out of obscurity into fame within a matter of months. However, Evelina owed its enthusiastic reception not only to merit, which it had in abundance, but in a large measure to the timing of its appearance on the literary scene.

By the time Evelina was published in 1778, the great male writers, with the exception of Sterne, whose works had been pre-eminent through the preceding half century, were all dead. The last of their novels, Smollett's Humphrey Clinker, had appeared seven years before, Sterne's A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy and Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield were already a decade or more old. That no one of comparable merit had yet emerged to take their place is shown by William Kendrick's review of Evelina. In the London Review for February, 1778, he wrote:

> There is much more merit as well respecting style, character and incident than is usually to be met with among our modern novels. 3

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3 The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, ed. Charlotte Barrett (London: Macmillan, 1904-1905), I, 28.

Even more favourably, Ralph Griffiths, writing in the Monthly Review for April, 1778 (Diary and Letters, I, 28) said:

This novel has given us so much pleasure in the perusal, that we do not hesitate to pronounce it one of the most sprightly, entertaining, and agreeable productions of this kind which has of late fallen under our notice. A great variety of natural incidents, some of the comic stamp, render the narrative extremely interesting. The characters, which are agreeably diversified, are conceived and drawn with propriety, and supported with spirit. The whole is written with great ease and command of language.

Griffith's only reservation from this praise was Captain Mirvan, whose manners, he said, "are rather those of a rough uneducated country 'Squire, than those of a genuine sea-captain."

This is satisfactory commendation for a young writer's first work, one would think, but praise ran even higher. The Critical Review, deigning by September to acknowledge Evelina's appearance, compared it favourably with Richardson.[4] Even the celebrated Dr. Johnson agreed with this reviewer, if we may believe Madame D'Arblay's account in her later diary of a conversation with him, (Diary and Letters, I, 90).

'It's very true, continued he, 'Richardsonwould have been really afraid of her; there is merit in Evelina which he could not have borne. No; it would not have done! unless, indeed, she would have flattered him prodigiously. Harry Fielding, too, would have been afraid of her; there is nothing so delicately finished in all Harry Fielding's works, as in Evelina.'

Naturally, the greatest and most enthusiastic praise came from friends and from the Burney family itself. Even her father, whose disapproval she had been most afraid of, pronounced it, (Diary and Letters, I, 33) "the best novel I know excepting Fielding's, and, in some respects better than his."

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4 Austin Dobson, Fanny Burney (London: Macmillan, 1903) p.83.

Certainly, in her preoccupation with character, Miss Burney most closely resembles Richardson, for her plots, though interesting and full of incidents, are very simple compared with Fielding's masterfully constructed pieces. The following summary of Evelina shows a straightforward chronological progression with none of the doubling back to connect with earlier scenes favoured by Fielding.

At the age of seventeen and after a retired country upbringing, Evelina leaves her guardian's protection to visit London with her old friends, the Mirvan family. In London she has numerous slight but amusing adventures, as she learns to find her way in the mazes of social custom. There, too, she meets and falls in love with Lord Orville, a man far above her supposed station as Mr. Villars's ward. At the same time, she is beset by a wealthy profligate, whose charms her virtue and good sense withstand in spite of her inexperience. Her vulgar grandmother, who has unexpectedly come to England to claim her, provides some early complications by forcing her grand-daughter into humiliating situations which are open to misinterpretation by Lord Orville. Later her courtship is further complicated when she helps an unfortunate young poet, Macartney, in whom Lord Orville suspects a rival. Another strand of the plot concerns her efforts to win the affection of her father, whom she has never seen. This has little bearing on the love story, but brings excitement to the last volume, in which she finally has an interview with Sir John Belmont. The story ends with Evelina married to her adoring lord and fully acknowledged by her father as his legitimate daughter. The very simplicity and rapid pace of Evelina's plot coming after the vogue of tortuous French romances, which might take up to ten years in compiling, may have contributed to the book's success.

After the phenomenal and unexpected success of Evelina, Miss Burney was in a quandary as to her future, for she seriously doubted being able to duplicate her achievement, as the following entry in her diary shows (Diary and Letters, I, 40):

I see about me, indeed, many hills of far greater height and sublimity; but I have not the strength to attempt climbing them; if I move, it must be downwards. I have already, I fear, reached the pinnacle of my abilities, and therefore to stand still will be my best policy.

Her old friend, Samuel Crisp, appears to have agreed with her that her best policy was to rest on her laurels. He felt that Evelina was the product of sheer irrepressible genius and that a work written with greater deliberation and self-consciousness could only be less successful. Yet her other admirers urged her on. Among others, a certain Mr. Pepys, a family friend, felt she had a good chance of success as a writer of tragedy, while it was suggested just as frequently by some that she should write a comedy, and her father decidedly favoured the idea of her trying her hand at another novel immediately.

In fact, she chose to try a comedy, "The Witlings", but it was suppressed on the advice of both Dr. Burney and Mr. Crisp. One suggested reason for its suppression is that it bore too close a resemblance to Moliere's Les Femmes Savantes, though it is known that Miss Burney had never read that work; another is that her advisers felt that a certain pretentious character in the play looked and sounded too much like Mrs. Montagu, the queen of the blue stockings, and did not want to involve the timid Frances in combat with the older, more experienced woman. [5]

From this disappointment, however, she rescued the heroine and

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5 Joyce Hemlow, "Fanny Burney: Playwright, University of Toronto Quarterly, XIX (1950), 174

the situation which was to become central to her next novel, Cecilia, published in 1782. Contrary to Mr. Crisp's dire predictions, it, too, was a great success, though a modern reader can detect a toning down of the liveliness of Evelina, which was probably due to self-consciousness. There is nothing in Evelina that a lady should not have written, but we know (Diary and Letters, I, 461) that Mrs. Montagu expressed surprise that "so delicate a girl should have written so boisterous a book". Evelina had been conceived for Miss Burney's own pleasure with no readership in mind; recognizing her vast public, when she came to write Cecilia, she was on her best behaviour and determined to make her main character exemplary, with the result that incidents in the book are usually contrived, rather than arising naturally from the interaction of the heroine's character with her surroundings.

Again her theme was courtship and marriage. The beautiful young heiress, Cecilia Beverley, having lost both her parents and the uncle who has looked after her since their death, goes to London to spend the last year of her minority with the Harrels. Mrs. Harrel is a former school friend and Mr. Harrel is one of her three new guardians under her uncle's will. At a masquerade party given by her guardian she meets Mortimer Delvile, the son of another guardian. Though the couple soon fall in love, Mortimer is prevented from declaring his affection by a clause in Cecilia's uncle's will, which says that the man she marries must adopt her name or forfeit her inheritance. As the last of his family, Delvile cannot give up his name and has been destined by his parents to marry a woman of high rank and great wealth, so the lovers separate without admitting their feeling for one another. Both are unhappy. Then Delvile accidentally overhears Cecilia

soliloquizing about her love for him and at last the surprise, his pleasure and even his honour forbid him to conceal his affection any longer.

So far the plot very closely resembles that of Evelina with our interest centring on the heroine's difficulty in understanding and interpreting the hero's feelings towards her. There are even similar complications provided by another noble suitor, Sir Robert Floyer, and an impoverished young writer, Belfield, who appears to be a rival when Cecilia befriends him and his sister. After this the plot becomes much more contrived.

Delvile's parents will never consent to his renouncing his name, so he wins Cecilia's reluctant agreement to a secret marriage. The wedding is stopped by a stranger, who calls out during the ceremony that he knows of an impediment to the match and disappears. The man is really Cecilia's old friend, Mr. Monckton, who has schemed to marry her himself when his wife dies, but in the confusion no one recognises him. As the ceremony cannot be completed, the lovers' only recourse is to openly ask the consent of Mr. and Mrs. Delvile, who refuse it. Then a compromise is found; if Cecilia relinquishes the £10,000 left by her uncle, Delvile can keep his name and theywill still have the £3,000 left by her father. If this had taken place, it would have made an agreeable ending to the book, but for some reason Miss Burney felt she had to stretch the story further. As a result a new obstacle is found; by this time Cecilia is in debt to a money-lender for all of the £3,000 she expects to inherit from her father. Under threats of suicide Mr. Harrel has forced her to borrow most of it for him to keep him from bankruptcy. She has used the negligible

amount left for charity and to pay her own small bills at the booksellers. If she marries Delvile, therefore, and he keeps his name, she will be penniless. Nevertheless they decide to marry, keep the name Delvile and give up Cecilia's inheritance. Mrs. Devile finally gives her consent, though Mr. Delvile still withholds his. Unfortunately as soon as the wedding is over, Delvile has to leave his bride to escort his mother to France, as the tensions of the crises preceding the wedding have resulted in her being alienated from his father and becoming dangerously ill. While he is away, Cecilia learns that her wedding has become public knowledge and she is dispossessed of her house by the cousin to whom her uncle's will awards it for her failure to comply with his terms. Harried and distressed, she turns to Mr. Delvile, senior, as her only hope, but he turns her from his door without hearing her message. She then prepares to go to Delvile in France and enlists Belfield's aid in getting ready. Without warning, their paths cross that of young Delvile, who has come to England unexpectedly to see his wife; he misinterprets Belfield's assistance and they go off to fight a duel. Cecilia tries to follow them to explain what has happened before either can be hurt, but is prevented by a silly accident. Succumbing to the stresses she has undergone for so long, she then runs mad. She is confined for some time by some shop people and is close to death when Delvile comes to find her, after having had all explained to him by Belfield. Finally she is restored to health, to the good graces of her father-in-law, and to happiness with Delvile.

There are suggestions of hard labour, especially in the last half of Cecilia, that are absent from Evelina. Though we are told that Cecilia was greatly condensed in copying, an almost excessive number of minor characters and minute complications remains, as if Miss Burney had felt on starting to write that she must choose the largest possible canvas, to avoid running out of material. [6]

Still, the public, which had received Evelina with such enthusiasm, was prepared to give her new novel a warm welcome. Among other rewards brought by this second success was the offer of a position at Court as Second Keeper of the Robes. Miss Burney knew that this post, though a great honour and fairly lucrative, would involve long hours, absence from surroundings and people she loved, and endless, tedious subservience to protocol; but refusal was almost impossible and her father urged her to accept. She stayed unhappily at Court for several years and ended her service by resigning and returning to her family in 1791, giving ill health, exacerbated by the strenuous demands of Court routine, as her excuse.

The great events of the years after Court service were her marriage to the impoverished emigré, General D'Arblay, and the birth of her only child. These were forceful reminders of her own lack of money, for she had made poor bargains in selling her first two novels and had not made more than one or two thousand pounds at the most for all the months of work that had gone into them. Once again she was prompted to write to supply this deficiency. The result, after an

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6 MacCarthy, p. 116

abortive blank verse tragedy, which was hooted off the stage of Drury Lane Theatre on its opening night, was another novel, Camilla, which was published by subscription in 1796. The list of subscribers contains many famous names, but there is no doubt that the most impressive one was that of the Queen, to whom she had been allowed as a special favour to dedicate the work. Because the Court disapproved of novels, in writing Camilla, even more than in Cecilia, self-consciousness overcame Madame D'Arblay. Miss MacCarthy accurately describes her situation thus: "Her brain was paralyzed by the necessity for extreme refinement and decorum, and in her efforts to sift her material she was left with only the veriest trifles for her subject". [7]

The plot in Camilla is a very slight one, consisting of very minor complications in an otherwise straightforward and suitable courtship between Camilla Tyrold and her neighbour, Edgar Mandlebert, who have been friends since childhood. The first obstacle arises when Camilla's Uncle Hugh mistakenly assumes that Edgar loves another of his nieces, Indiana. By giving his approval to the match, he forces Camilla to assume a show of indifference towards Edgar, rather than lay herself open to accusations of trying to win her cousin's beau. The next obstacle arises when Edgar tells his tutor, Dr. Marchmont, that he loves Camilla. Having been unfortunate in love, the doctor warns Edgar to wait and to watch Camilla closely to make sure that she really is what she seems. The self-consciousness which Edgar's close scrutiny of her every word and deed produces in Camilla helps to provide a host of tiny flaws and follies, which must be explained away before he is prepared to open his heart to her. The book has several subplots, some

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7 Ibid, 123.

developing the courtship theme; Camilla's sensible older sister, Lavinia, for instance, is eventually courted and won by a rejected suitor of Camilla's, while Indiana makes a glamorous but imprudent elopement, and the deformed younger sister, Eugenia, is first abducted for her money, then married for love.

Combined with this light subject matter, Miss Burney had adopted a weighty and ponderous style wholly inappropriate to a domestic novel. She had always tended towards pomposity when writing seriously and self-consciously, as the "heights and sublimities" show in her diary entry relating her doubts about her ability to go on after writing Evelina. This tendency to be pompous had been further exaggerated by her admiration of Dr. Johnson, who had become her close friend after the publication of her first novel. If her literary taste had been a truly cultivated one, it would have prevented this unfortunate combination, but, as we have shown, she had never had an opportunity to cultivate either her taste or her mind, except under her own inexpert guidance.

The reading public accepted Camilla from Dr. Johnson's "little Burney", but The Wanderer, published eighteen years later, proved too bitter a pill. It is a novel of persecution and female helplessness which resembles the conventional tales of seduction in that the heroine is helpless before fate as earlier heroines were helpless before their seducers. The heroine is unconvincing, minor characters are poorly developed and the author's attachment to Johnsonian diction, which had so badly marred Camilla, is unrelenting. Again Madame D'Arblay had forced herself to write, not for the love of it, as she had written Evelina, but for money and she had written it under harrassing

circumstances over a period of ten years. It is such a dismal failure that it would be pointless to spend much time on it in a paper which sets out mainly to examine her successful work. For the same reason, Camilla will be treated only briefly.

It has often been remarked that Evelina marks the entry of the lady into the ranks of the English novelists, a fact which may go some way towards explaining the tremendous impact the book had on the contemporary reading public. Of course, women had written fiction for many years, but not in the same circumstances or of the same type. The careers of Fanny Burney's female predecessors resemble hers mainly in their lack of formal education. In this respect they were at a serious disadvantage compared with the male writers, for most of the men had had a good deal of formal education and many had attended a university. The contrast between the earlier women writing from desperation and Miss Burney's career begun for amusement is very great.

Aphra Behn, Mrs. Manley and Eliza Haywood, to name the most famous women, were gentlemen's daughters who came to writing as a last resort. Mrs. Manley's is a fairly typical case. Born into a wealthy family, she was orphaned while quite young and left friendless and unprotected. In this state she was betrayed into a bigamous, and therefore invalid, marriage with her cousin. When she became pregnant, he deserted her, leaving her penniless. She took to working as a hack writer as the only means available for her support. Writing for a living, especially hack writing, brought the women into a man's world and a very rough one at that. Eventually the women thus reduced entered into the spirit of their work and even surpassed some of their male rivals. The women who survived and wrote successfully came to

to think like the men they imitated and vied with; as a result their work, though successful, is unoriginal. When Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood wrote for the theatre, they borrowed old plots of roguery and seduction, relying for their success and fame on a trick of making them "warmer" or more erotic than their rivals had yet dared to do. In their tales, novellas, and romans a clef they again produced nothing really new in plot or characterization, but wrote of a man's world and of female characters seen from a man's point of view, as alluring sexual objects. Their seduced heroines languish and sigh in the throes of love in a more explicit and prurient way than previous heroines had done, but show no other personal traits beyond beauty and melting softness, in short, complete desirability from an erotic point of view. Fanny Burney on the other hand, was not only the first English female novelist to adopt normal, respectable courtship as her main theme, but she was also the first novelist to create a convincing lady for her heroine.

We have seen that after the publication of her first novel, Miss Burney's gifts were rated by her contemporaries almost equal to those of Richardson and Fielding. Perhaps now we feel this to be an exaggeration, but even so we must acknowledge that her talent was considerable, as her style, her ability to construct a simple but interesting plot, her vivid evocation of the social scene, and her skill in characterization amply demonstrate.

After the turgid style of the French romances with their heroic diction, Miss Burney's natural, conversational style in Evelina must have come as a relief. We have suggested two sources for her style, one in her father's musical works, which she prepared to go to the

printer's and another in her diaries and journals. She was so conscious of her informality in writing that at least once she questioned the freedom of her style, only to be rebuked by the more discriminating Mr. Crisp, who told her: (Diary and Letters, II, 41):

> You cannot but know that trifling, that negligence, that even incorrectness, now and then in familiar epistolary writing, is the very soul of genius and ease; and that if your letters were to be fine-labour'd compositions that smelt of the lamp, I had as lieve they travelled elsewhere. So no more of that, Fanny, and thou lov'st me. Dash away, whatever comes uppermost, and believe me you'll succeed better, than by leaning on your elbow, and studying what to say.

Besides cultivating an engaging manner of writing which constitutes one of Evelina's great charms, the diaries most probably served a second purpose in suggesting to her the epistolary style of her first novel, though there are other possible sources for it. The ladies' book shelves of the day abounded with courtesy books designed to instruct them on how to improve their conduct. Miss Hemlow provides us with evidence that at least some of these were well known to the Burneys and shows further that many of them were written in the form of imaginary letters. Hence we find mention of Mrs. Chapone's Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Charlotte Palmer's Letters on Several Subjects from a Preceptress to her Pupils who have left School, Albrecht von Haller's Letters to his Daughter, and even of Chesterfield's Letters to his Son.[8] An equally obvious source might be Richardson's novels. When, however, we consider Miss Burney's native habit of scribbling, as her friends called it, and consider that the situation of her first heroine, travelling amidst new scenes and away from her beloved family, had often been Miss Burney's, as we can see from her jounneys to Mr. Crisp at Chessington, for example, we need not assume

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8 Joyce Hemlow, "Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books, PMLA LXV(1950), 732-761.

that she borrowed her style from anywhere. The courtesy books and Richardson may simply have increased her confidence in what she herself had developed. At any rate the epistolary style adds directness and vivacity to her first novel, which the others, with their omniscient author, definitely lack.

Unfortunately, as we have mentioned already, Miss Burney did not maintain her attractive style. We have noted that she had always worried about its propriety; no doubt she felt, while writing her later novels, that as a recognized literary figure she ought to write in a more formal and imposing way and therefore adopted Dr. Johnson as her model. She also exchanged the epistolary convention for that of the omniscient author, losing a lot of freshness and directness in the process. Cecilia does not suffer very badly, but Camilla and The Wanderer, written in middle-age after the dull years at Court, are seriously marred and suffer in addition from cumbersome turns of phrase and sentence patterns she had adopted from French, no doubt because of her new ties with France established through Monsieur D'Arblay.

We can see a similar pattern of great success followed by a gradual decline, when we look at Miss Burney's plots. The best is that of Evelina, which is unhackneyed and fairly swift in pace compared with much contemporary writing. It is also less contrived and more convincing than contemporary plots, most of the complications to the courtship arising naturally out of the interaction of the personalities of the various characters. As we have suggested, the early part of Cecilia successfully follows the same pattern, but as soon as the lovers declare their mutual affection, Miss Burney stoops to contrivance and artifical devices to stave off their union and her story ceases to convince. Once it ceases to command belief, its repeated delays

become irritating and dull for the modern reader, even if it maintained the interest of her more emotional, less sophisticated contemporaries. In Camilla and The Wanderer plot becomes so thin as to be almost non-existent. Camilla loves Edgar, Edgar loves Camilla: we are sure they will marry sooner or later. The plot, then, consists solely of obvious delaying tactics. It is the subplots which provide the book with its greatest excitement; Lionel's criminal escapades and their consequences, Eugenia's abduction and forced marriage, followed by her husband's murder, or Mrs. Berlinton's course towards dissipation are by far the most dramatic events in the book, but none of them is fully developed. In a similarly monotonous way, The Wanderer depends on producing new forms of persecution for the heroine, though we know she will be happy somehow in the end and that happiness, when it comes, will be all the more profound for its contrast with the suffering which has gone before.

After style and plot another great source of delight to Miss Burney's contemporaries, and perhaps even more so to readers of the present age, lies in the kind of scenes which are enacted in her novels. She was fascinated by the glitter and pomp of high society as well as amused and occasionally annoyed by it; as a result she acheived a new literary view of London and society above the working class. Even before she came on the scene, Fielding, Smollett and Defoe had begun to explore their world and society panoramically during the unwinding of their plot, but the breadth of their view would not allow them time to concentrate on the details of any single area.

Defoe was indefatigably a desbriber of people; his heroes and heroines move up and down the social scale if anything more often than

they move from place to place. In Roxana he pictured the merchant, the highly paid courtesan, and even a prince; in Moll Flanders and Colonel Jacque the prostitute, thief, pickpocket, pimp, debtor, transported felon and kept mistress as well as merchants, shop-keepers and other members of the trading classes. Yet his social range is noticeably broader in the lower ranges than in the upper and only in Roxana did he attempt the presentation of a nobleman. Moreover the actual descriptive de_ment is brief, since Defoe was always writing a middle-class success story. What was most important to him about each social type he portrayed was the effect it had on the hero's financial status.

As Defoe ransacked the class structure for background material against which to display the rises and falls of socially mobile heroes and heroines, so Fielding and Smollett at their best exploited v_arieties of moral being and of geographical location to contrast town and country, highway and spa. Though Fielding was greatly concerned with the intricacies of a masterly plot and was often imprecise about geographical location, his exploration of moral types has a wide range. In Amelia, he represented the miserable nomadic life of military men without patrons or influence and the wretchedness of debtors, hunted by bailiffs and finally jailed until they rot. In Jonathan Wilde, he created a central character who is criminal and ends his life on the gallows. In Joseph Andrews, a parody of Richardson's Pamela, a vituous country lad encounters the onslaughts on his virtue of Lady Booby, a sensual aristocrat steeped in the fashionable vices of the town. In Tom Jones, the viciousness of London is emphasized by the ruthless attempts

of Lady Bellaston to separate Tom from his beloved Sophia and gratify her own lust for him. The picture of London which the demands of his plot led him to paint is consistently biassed towards the low, vicious and unpleasant and his view of the upper classes is consistently a black one. Smollett, too, presented London as a pit of depravity and filth, pitting the scarceness of human kindness against the oceans of lust, cruelty, selfishness, egotism and sycophancy which extends to the Capuchin monk, who steals Roderick Random's money on the way to Paris, but reaches its crest in Strutwell, Straddle and Swillpot in London.

By profession or circumstances Defoe, the middle-class wide boy; Fielding, the magistrate, and Smollett, the neglected immigrant writer, were disposed to see the imperfections in human behaviour. Though, particularly in Fielding's case, they may have believed in the ultimate triumph of good, the behaviour about which their experience inclined them to write was weighted, in spite of a conscious broadness of view, towards displaying the baseness of human nature.

The view of society which could be revealed to a lady was very different. Aside from the fact that to acknowledge consciousness of so much vice and depravity would have been damaging to the reputation of either a heroine or an authoress, it was unlikely that she would see much of it, largely confined as she was to drawing rooms and ballrooms. Inns, jails, highways and sometimes even the servants' quarters were forbidden territory for her. In fact, the limits of a young lady's world are conveniently defined for us in Miss Burney's first novel and can usefully be summarised here. Edwine Montagu and Louis L. Martz have already drawn attention to the fact that Evelina is divided into three sections exclusive of the introductory background material and brief

conclusion, each section being a separate volume in the original edition.[9] The first section consists of Evelina's introduction to London and her first glimpse of high society in the company of the Howard Grove family. A country interlude at Howard Grove separates this from the second section in which Evelina sees London from the point of view of the still respectable but definitely middle-class Branghtons. A second country interlude follows, this time with Mr. Villars at Berry Hill. In the final section Evelina visits the Hotwell, where she mingles with the cream of society, so that Miss Burney achieves a social range largely neglected by other novelists. The greater part of Cecilia, too, is taken up with the public places and private entertainments enjoyed by London middle-class and high society, apart from one episode at the Delviles' gloomy family castle. In Camilla, though London is ignored and much of the action takes place in country houses and their estates, we are again brought into contact with high society and its ways, when the company travel to a spa. What the background of Evelina and her other novels lacks in area of coverage by omitting the lower, the criminal, and the highest aristocratic classes is made up for in the density of coverage of the middle range. Only in The Wandererdid she attempt to use the wider geographical location of her predecessors.

Miss Burney was forced by the limits of her environment to be more detailed in her observations than the male writers with their broader scope had ever been. The bit of London we see in Fielding's novels consists of the dissipated households of Lady Booby and Lady Bellaston, of Newgate and the verge around the King's Court. Defoe's

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9 E. Montagu and L.L. Martz, "Fanny Burney's 'Evelina'", The Age of Johnson (Newhaven: Yale U.P., 1949), p.147.

is normally imprecise as to actual location. Only Smollett achieves a similarly detailed and factual description of the city, and then it is from a completely adverse point of view, whereas Miss Burney deals mainly with its agreeable everyday features or laughs at its follies; only occasionally does she seriously attack a major failing, and even then the failing is usually insensitivity of some kind rather than crime or depravity. The London society in her novels has a plausibility and a balance which is more convincing than the bias towards evil of her predecessors.

So detailed are her descriptions that her works would provide a good source of material for a social historian of the period; a few examples help to show how much she tells us about places and customs. In the two early novels, she describes St. James's Park, Ranelagh, Cox's Museum, the Pantheon, Vauxhall Gardens, the Italian Opera; tells us of puppet shows, Don Saltero's and White's; and gives us a taste of the private amusements of the rich by describing a private ball, a ridotto, a masquerade, a rout, a bankruptcy sale and a visit to a milliner's. In Evelina and Camilla, we learn about the way of life at the spas in the height of the season, with the dissipation of the very wealthy, their indolence and extravagance. A look at one or two of these descriptions will give some idea of the thoroughness with which she performs her task. We learn, for instance, in one of Evelina's letters to Mr. Villars (Evelina, I, 178-192) that Vauxhall is "very pretty but too formal". She complains that it consists too much of straight walks in balanced rows, but finds that "the trees, the numerouslights, and the company in the circle round the orchestra make a most brilliant and gay appearance". In addition, she is diverted by a concert and

an elaborate water cascade. This seems to exhaust the entertainments of the place, though the chief pleasure was to walk in order to see and be seen, but we are told both here and in Cecilia that Vauxhall also offered refreshments of a high quality which visitors ate in separate enclosures known as boxes. A final detail, though a less pleasant one, is that part of Vauxhall's attraction was a series of long walks remote from the illuminated part of the gardens and consecrated to lovers and pranksters. All in all it was considered by London dwellers to be less genteel than Ranelagh, the meeting place of the ton, or cream of society but it was also less expensive.

Of the private entertainments, the masquerade described in Cecilia shows how much Miss Burney tells us about social behaviour. The extent to which the mask allowed freer behaviour can be gauged, the showing of costumes to host and hostess in lavish receptions before the official party can be examined, and the manners of visitors are of as much interest to us as to the wondering heroine: (Cecilia, I, 99-124).

> Even the local cant of, 'Do you know me? Who are you?' and 'Iknow you'; with the sly pointing of the finger, the arch nod of the head, and the pert squeak of the voice, though wearisome to those who frequent such assemblies were, to her unhackneyed observation, additional subjects of amusement.

Miss Burney's observation covers the whole atmosphere of an occasion and the success of her reporting has led Lord David Cecil and Austin Dobson to set plot at nought and to assert that the description in itself is Miss Burney's major theme. As Cecil puts it:

> With Fanny Burney the courtship which is the subject of analysis is merely the central theme of the action; and the action is, as we have seen, secondary to her picture of society as a whole.... The novel to her was not the expression of an imaginative conception, but merely a means of recording her observations of the world, which she organized

into an artifical unity by using any convention of story-writing she found ready to hand. 10

This is certainly an exaggeration, but it shows how strong an effect could be produced by what was one of her major talents.

Finally, both the reviewers and Miss Burney's friends pointed to the greatest source of merit and of lasting interest in her work. As Dr. Johnson said (Diaryand Letters, I, 90), she was a "character-monger", in her novels as much as in her letters and diaries. Among others, Miss MacCarthy recognized long ago that her skill often lacks incisiveness. She says:

In one of the prefaces in Tom Jones Fielding had said that the true discerner is he who can distinguish the fine shades of human personality. Such distinctions were always quite beyond Fanny Burney. In the masquerade of life she could recognize the villain by his moustache, the ingenue by her downcast eyes, the fop by his affectation, the miser by his clutching fingers, the vulgarian by his bad manners. 11

In spite of its partial truth, this is surely too harsh. The diaries were intended for amusement not for publication and minor characters in the novels are intentionally obvious and exaggerated for the same purpose of amusement. Miss Burney was also capable of finer discernment on occasion, as we shall see. Though her portrayal of character may not normally have been deep, yet she dealt in a great variety of human types and portrayed them supremely well. Lord David Cecil points out, furthermore, that at their best her minor characters are not mere conventional types:

Their creator had an extremely sharp ear for dialogue, for the particular accent of silliness or pomposity which distinguishes one fool from another. She may represent these figures in only one aspect, but that

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10 Lord David Cecil, Poets and Story-tellers (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 217.

11 MacCarthy, p.95.

aspect is drawn straight from life; and life still throbs in it. [12]

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12 Cecil, p. 217.

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE WAYS IN WHICH LITERARY CHARACTER CAN BE PORTRAYED AND USED.

Miss Burney's facility for bringing to life the eighteenth century milieu, or at least that part of it which was accessible to her, has been examined in Chapter One. Another merit, that of developing eventful plots which sustain interest, has been dealt with briefly because her success in this respect was not consistent. Her prose style, too, has been only briefly examined because of its rapid decline, which seems to have had personal rather than literary causes; her growing self-consciousness and her admiration of Johnson were crucial. Of the virtues set out in the introduction, her skill in portraying character remains to be examined. In spite of occasional weaknesses and even a few downright failures, in this area she showed her ability most consistently, often making good use of literary convention rather than slavishly imitating, frequently showing sparkling originality. This most permanent aspect of her work is examined closely in the last two chapters. In order to display clearly her originality and her skill, it seems useful to review in this chapter both the conventional treatment of character on the stage and in the novel and the uses to which characters were put.

It seems valid to say that there are two basic modes of portraying character in fiction. The two modes have been given various names, but the most telling ones are those assigned by E.M. Forster when he

referred to them impressionistically as "flat" and "round". [1] Flat characterization may be likened to the work of the caricaturist in portraiture. As the latter selects and exaggerates the most outstanding features of his subject's face and figure to represent him in an otherwise indistinct likeness, so the writer selects one or two outstanding mannerisms, habits, patterns of speech, or peculiarities of dress and appearance to bring individuality to an otherwise undistinguished human outline. Of necessity flat characters are normally delineated by externals and are static; we are never told by what mental processes and sufferings they reached the state in which we see them. We must simply accept them as they are. As E.M. Forster says:

> In their purest form, they are constructed around a single idea or quality... The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as: 'I never will desert Mr. Micawber' - Or: 'I must conceal, even by subterfuges, the poverty of my master's house'. There is Caleb Balderstone in The Bride of Lammermoor. He does not use the actual phrase, but it completely describes him; he has no existence outside it, no pleasures, none of the lusts and aches that must complicate even the most consistent of servitors. He is the idea, and such life as he possesses radiates from its edges and from the scintillations it strikes when other elements in the novel impinge. 2

Until very late in the novel's history, flat characters predominated. The picaresque hero is always flat; very often he is a number of flat characters under the same name, being now a swashbuckling hero, now a lover, as the tale at hand demands. Fielding's Squire Western and Miss Burney's Mr. Delvile illustrate the flat character in the early novel.

The Squire has only one real moral quality, that of selfishness, revealed as a ruthless devotion to his dogs and horses, his meals and his bottle. Even his bonhommie is explained by this quality,

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1 E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Harmondsworth: Pengiun, 1962), pp. 75-84

2 Ibid., 75.

for his good nature is merely that which is expected of a worthy bottle companion. He cannot bear to be opposed by his sister or to have his wishes thwarted by his supposedly beloved Sophia, even though unthwarted they seem to consign her to eternal misery; and in his determination to keep all of his game for his own hunting he is prepared to sacrifice Black George's innocent family. He stands without justice, love, or compassion, as no real human being ever stood. Yet the reader can accept him without noticing his implausibility both because his single quality, though overstressed, is a lifelike one, and because his place in the novel is a small one and he serves his purpose adequately; Fielding simply wants him to motivate Sophia's flight, which Blifil and an implacable father make inevitable. At the same time, he has a didactic purpose, for he exemplifies the truly selfish man whose money and joviality let him pass for a kind one.

Miss Burney makes similar use in Cecilia of Mr. Delvile, who is a man of only one quality, pride. The nobility of his family and his own importance are his sole topics of conversation. For his pride he will prevent his son from marrying the virtuous and lovely woman of his choice and consign him to the arms of a woman for whom he feels no affection. For his pride he will part from his wife with complete indifference and will turn his friendless daughter-in-law from his door. In the end it is his pride again which forces him to take Cecilia under his roof, for once she bears his name he cannot hear of her remaining in unsuitable lodgings. Like the Squire's, his character is very thin, but he carries apparent weight because he does all that Miss Burney requires of him. She has no interest in his feelings; she merely needs a reason for keeping the lovers apart in the first two volumes and, after

the marriage, another stimulus to work on Cecilia until she can produce her in her mad ravings.

Round characters are a little more difficult to limit by definition, but their ranks include any literary character who is shown in several stages of psychological development, or some of whose character traits are explored in depth, or finally whose character, if simple and superficial, is explored to its fullest extent. The polar opposite to E.M. Forster's purely flat character is a central figure from a twentieth century stream of consciousness novel. Such purely round characters are the culmination of a trend towards round characterization in the English novel begun most noticeably by Richardson in Clarissa. Where Richardson tried to plumb the depths of part of Clarissa's nature in a limited situation, the stream of consciousness writers try to show their characters from every possible aspect: through the eyes of other characters, the thoughts of other characters, their own thoughts, impressions, confusions. James Joyce, for instance, builds up his picture of Stephen Daedalus or of Leopold and Molly Bloom by piling up before the reader an immense heap of minute connecting or contradicting details. The details are grouped into thought monologues held together by word associations, only occasionally by logic, or into descriptions of sequences of slight movements and gestures. Word by word accounts of a minute's or even an hour's thoughts are the stuff of Joyce's characterization. Another example occurred in France, approximately half a century before Joyce, when Gustave Flaubert used very similar techniques, though with less sophistication than Joyce or Virginia Woolf. He presented his characters' thoughts through the convention of the omniscient author, as, for example, in Un Coeur Simple,

whose central character is Félicité, a peasant girl employed as a maid in a middle-class household. Félicité's character is revealed to the reader through the author's constant preoccupation with her point of view. He piles up the details of her humdrum life: a brief flirtation in her youth, her patient acceptance of its coming to nothing and her not marrying, her attachment to the children of the household, their growing up and leaving home, her retirement from service, pensioned off with the family pet. Her constant, patient acceptance of her lot, which does not show dramatic development, nevertheless has a palpable fullness to it that charges the final stages of her life with great pathos. Because she is simple in the extreme, having no idiosyncrasies or outstanding features to caricature, flat characterization could not match Flaubert's achievement with a whole all of whose parts lack distinction. Of course, there must be literary figures who hover on the border between the two modes, but they are relatively few and broadly speaking, the definitions are exclusive.

Flat characterization was the predominant traditional mode of character portrayal up to and even beyond Miss Burney's time. It was used by the early poets, such as Chaucer and Spenser, by nearly all of the early fiction writers, and by most of the dramatists, though Shakespeare provided some notable exceptions. Characterization in the theatre was predominantly flat, for in the days of disguise, coincidence and frequent soliloquies or asides, the stage lacked subtle devices for portraying the internal workings of the mind. For this reason, character was less important than plot. During the long history of the theatre, though the aims and styles of dramatists varied, their method of characterization remained the same. Over the

centuries dramatists built up a stock of characters, each new age or fashion adding a few more, until by the Restoration period most characters could be slotted into recognized categories. The Restoration dramatist manipulated his standard figures to contrive intriguing situations. Stage characters were typed in very early times by their virtues and vices, later by social conduct and manners, or by trade and profession.

The hero of the Restoration comedy of manners is always a ladies' man. In Etherege's Beaufort (The Comical Revenge) we have one type of hero, a faithful lover, in Congreve's Mirabel (The Way of the World) another, an unfaithful one, while Wycherly's Horner (The Country Wife) represents a special offshoot of the species, the agreeable rake. All three types of gentleman act in basically the same manner; all employ their time in making love in almost the same superlatives. The difference lies only in the number of ladies on whom the hero bestows his attention. The first makes love to only one lady in all sincerity; the second proposes sincerely to one, but at the same time diverts himself with many; and the third insincerely applies his talents to all females alike. Secondary male characters are mainly of four types. The hero's friends are often slightly more insipid versions of himself like Farquhar's Richmore (The Twin Rivals) and Colonel Standard (The Constant Couple), or Vanbrugh's Worthy (The Relapse). Other types are coxcombs priding themselves eternally on their wit and popularity, like Brisk in The Plain Dealer and Tattle in Love for Love, or cuckolds always consumed with jealousy and usually lecherous, like Pinchwife in The Country Wife or Fondlewife in The Old Bachelor, or they may be fully

blown fops, like Sir Fopling Flutter in Etherege's comedy of the same name, constituted around an obsession with dress and delicacy. Naturally, the greatest variety of types exists among the minor characters, who really are only one dimensional. Jeremy in Love for Love is probably the best example of that mixture of pertness and wit, the valet confidant, while Sir Wilfull Witwould from The Way of the World perfectly exemplifies that boisterous savage, the country squire. There are innumerable representatives of the professions. The covetous merchant, like Gripe (Love in a Wood) and Smuggler (The Constant Couple), and the prurient, confident pimp, such as Setter (The Old Bachelor) and Coupler (The Relapse), are members of long standing, as are the incompetent quack and the dishonest lawyer. The very simplest Restoration types have no personal qualities at all, consisting merely of a name and a profession or trade, for example Mendlegs, hosier attendant on Vanbrugh's Sir Novelty Fashion, and Farquhar's Lyric and Rigadoon, respectively a poet and a dancing master in Love and a Bottle.

Women characters also tended to fall into standard categories, many of them with male counterparts. In the lower ranks we find the shrew, the prostitute and the bawd, as well as the obliging confidante and the dragonish duenna. The counterpart of the coxcomb and the fop is the coquette, such as Congreve's Belinda in The Old Bachelor. Two more common varieties of secondary females are the husband-hungry old maid and the man-hating prude, the two being often combined, as are the former and the duenna, in a picture of hypocrisy. But the women's roles are not always as clearly defined as those of the men and it is among the heroines that individualization and vitality seem to be

particularly lacking. Of course, we can find exceptions, like the occasional coquette or the hoydens, Miss Prue (Love for Love) and Mrs. Margery Pinchwife (The Country Wife), but perhaps because most of the playwrights were male, the gentler, unaggressive sort of female, like Etherege's Aurelia (The Comical Revenge) or Congreve's Araminta (The Old Bachelor), is usually just a collection of responses, sometimes ill-assorted and inconsistent, to the male characters. In many plays her appearances are few in any case. Having nothing individual or positive about her, when she does appear she can be made to move mechanically to motivate or reward the hero, as the vicissitudes of the plot require.

The predominance of character in literature had to wait for the great novelists, particularly for Richardson, and a believably rounded picture of virtuous womanhood for Fanny Burney. Ian Watt draws our attention to the fact that not until the eighteenth century were literary characters even endowed with names like those of their real life contemporaries. Names in literature were either historical or type names unlikely to occur in real life. Often characters lacked either surname or given name; Watt cites Euphues and Mr. Badman as examples. Defoe made the first attempt to give his characters names which might occur in real life. Richardson too, though choosing subtly appropriate names, made progress in this direction. We can read of Moll Flanders or of Pamela Andrews and Mr. John Belford without our credulity's being overtaxed, as it is when we read of Bunyan's Fellowship, Spenser's Pyrocles, Mrs. Haywood's romantic Idalia, Smollett's Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle, or even Fielding's Allworthy, Thwackum and Square.[3] These names are an aspect of their character's

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3 Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 19-21.

flatness because they draw attention to one of the few qualities which give him a semblance of life.

As we know, the novel was a late arrival on the literary scene. The years prior to its appearance were dominated by poetry, much of it reflective or satirical and therefore making little use of characterization, and by drama. While we have no evidence that Miss Burney was extensively acquainted with or influenced by poetry, a great deal of evidence exists to prove her close acquaintance with the stage. Her diaries tell us that she was an admirer of Shakespeare; certain dialogues in Evelina prove she knew Love for Love in detail; and Austin Dobson confidently asserts that she knew The Clandestine Marriage by heart.[4] The Early Diary is full of references to plays that she and her family had attended; Coleman, Garrick, Rowe, Marivaux, Foote, Dryden, Cibber, Goldsmith, Jonson, Cumberland, Fielding are all mentioned as authors of plays she had read or, more often, seen. The diaries show us too that David Garrick and Richard Sheridan were close and highly regarded family friends.

To show how deeply the dramatic influence penetrated, we need only examine Miss Burney's method of presenting her characters, which is a theatrical one. In The Early Diary she habitually sees the visitors to her father's drawing room as characters entering upon a stage to begin a dialogue. Occasionally she even includes stage directions, as in her description of her father's concert given in honour of Prince Orloff (The Early Diary, II, 94): "Enter the Dean of Winchester." This gentleman is very briefly described in three

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4 Dobson, 73.

or four lines, then he enters into dialogue with Dr. Burney. Other characters are similarly given their entrance, described in a very few words, and allowed to develop this brief portrait in conversation. It is not surprising that an early habit of seeing real life in dramatic terms should have led to a dramatic presentation in her novels, with the result that dialogue is usually of more importance than action and her material is organised into scenic groupings connected by a few lines or paragraphs of narrative. All of the important incidents in Evelina, such as Evelina's first meeting with Lord Orville, his advising her about the prostitutes she accidentally picks up at Marylebone Gardens, his jealousy over her meeting with Macartney, and his proposing marriage, rather than being merely narrated, are set out like scenes in a play with each character speaking his own part.

No doubt Miss Burney was also indebted to the early novelists for some of her skill; certainly she had read some of the works of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne; but we should remember that many of the first novelists were themselves heavily indebted to the theatre. Fielding's work most clearly exemplifies this debt. We must not forget that he was a successful dramatist before he turned to the novel, so we should not be surprised that plot was still his greatest concern and that he relied on manipulating characters, who are scarcely more than mere humours, within his complicated plots to convey his moral rather than conveying it by a deeper study of one or two characters, as Richardson tried to do in Clarissa, Pamela and Sir Charles Grandison. Yet Richardson, too, made use of flat characters such as Mrs. Jewkes and Mrs. Sinclair, true Restoration bawds, to fill in his background economically without diverting valuable space from the main theme and

characters. Like Fielding, Smollett had begun his literary career by writing for the stage. Except for Matthew Bramble in Humphrey Clinker all his characters are flat and some of them are actually stage types, like Tabitha Bramble, the shrew, and Narcissa, the delicate, rather vapid heroine in Roderick Random. Smollett's plots, however, come from the picaresque tradition of very early fiction rather than from the stage. We shall not consider Defoe at this point, as there is no evidence of Fanny Burney's having been well acquainted with his work. Sterne, too, requires little comment, since those of his works published prior to the appearance of Evelina were not novels. In the end, we can probably say that the novelists did influence Miss Burney, but that, with small exceptions, their greatest contribution to her writing was in reinforcing the lessons she had learned from the theatre.

Two characters from Evelina are especially worth examining at this point, both because of the critical concern they have always aroused and because they illustrate the influence of both the theatre and earlier novels. They are Captain Mirvan and Madam Duval. For Evelina Miss Burney had introduced witty verbal humour in Sir Clement Willoughby's dialogues and injected an original note with some intrinsically humorous characters of her own, the Branghtons. What she was short of was strongly humorous situations and these she tried to supply in practical jokes played with Sir Clement's help by the Captain on Madam Duval. The idea of doing so could easily have been supplied by the theatre, which often raised a laugh by rowdy horse play, as Goldsmith shows us in She Stoops to Conquer, but in fact close investigation shows that the particular incidents used were inspired by Smollett, who may have absorbed his idea of humour from the picaresque

tradition or from the stage with both of which he was very familiar. In Evelina's ignorant, pretentious and insensitive grandmother Fanny Burney had an obvious subject for this kind of farce.

Opinions about Madam Duval have varied widely. To the twentieth century reader she seems very contrived and not especially funny, for her characteristic insensitivity and vulgarity are too painful and her diction too artificial for us to laugh at them. Still, considering the point historically, we must say that she is partially successful, as she was an especially popular figure when the book was published and for some of the very qualities we deride. Her diction with its "ma fois", double negatives, double superlatives and other irregularities became current in speech all over London. Miss Burney's contemporaries were probably fairer to her than we are when we invoke modern realism as a standard by which to judge Madam Duval. The numerous Englishmen making the Grand Tour between 1700 and 1778 must surely have noticed that French people did not really speak that way, But Madam Duval's French has no connection with real life; it is purely a stage convention and part of an old tradition. Dufoy, the valet in The Comical Revenge, Mademoiselle in The Provok'd Wife, and La Verole in The Relapse, for example, speak her kind of laguage. Having adapted a stage Frenchwoman for one of her farcical characters, Miss Burney had next to create a suitable partner for her and again she made use of a basic stage type.

The usual source of rowdy humour in the comedy of manners was the country squire, but the sailor, like Congreve's Ben Legend in Love for Love, occasionally served the same purpose, though social conditions, the long absences at sea for months or even years, scarcely

gave writers an opportunity to study him. Miss Burney points to the dramatic part of Mirvan's origin when the theatre party, who have been to see Love for Love, begin to label each other with the names of various characters. The Captain says to Lovel (Evelina, 70), "Why, now, I should have thought you might have taken some notice of one Mr. Tattle, that is in this play." Tattle is a pretentious, vain, gossiping young man and Lovel is stung by the remark, so that he replies, "Pray, Sir, give me leave to ask - What do you think of one Mr. Ben, who is also in this play?" This comparison is extremely apt. Congreve's Ben has, indeed, one important feature in common with Captain Mirvan in the great violence of his manner. The following parts of his quarrel with Miss Prue, for example, are equal to any of the Captain's quarrels with Madam Duval. Miss Prue has just told him that she does not care for him and has another lover. He replies:

> I tell you one thing, if you should give such language at sea, you'd have a cat o'nine tails laid across your shoulders. Flesh! Who are you? You heard t'other handsome young woman speak civilly to me, of her own accord. Whatever you think of yourself, Gad, I don't think you are any more to compare to her than a can of small beer to a bowl of punch....
> What does father mean to leave me alone as soon as I come home, with such a dirty dowdy? Sea-calf? I an't calf enough to lick your chalked face, you cheese-curd you. Marry thee! Oons, I'll marry a Lapland witch as soon, and live upon selling of contrary winds and wrecked vessels. 5

Note, though, that this violence is all verbal. The Captain's violent actions come not from Congreve but from Smollett. One of the many tricks played in Roderick Random is, in fact, to terrify Captain Weazel and some passengers in a waggon with a pretended highwayman. 6

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5 William Congreve, Love for Love, Act III, Lines 358-364 and 373-377.

6 Tobias Smollett, Roderick Random (London: Dent, 1927), 64.

This is probably where Miss Burney got her idea for Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement's bogus attack on Madam Duval's carriage (Evelina, 133-134), though another obvious influence here is Tony Lumpkin in She Stoops to Conquer. Futhermore, there is an episode in Peregrine Pickle in which a baboon is dressed up to resemble Peregrine's brother, set on a good horse, and sent off to run in a hunt in which Gamaliel Pickle is actually a participant, with the result that the animal is struck with a whip, though there are no consequences for the human victim besides his humiliation. [7] This is almost certainly the origin of the incident in Evelina in which the Captain dresses up a monkey to look like the London fop, Lovel, and brings him into Mrs. Beaumont's drawing room, with the result that Lovel strikes the animal with his whip in a fit of pique and in return has his ear severely bitten (Evelina, 381-383).

From the examples of flat characters already examined, we can see that they can serve a number of different purposes. Miss Burney makes full use of most of them. Flat characters can represent a moral attitude, as do Squire Western and Mr. Delvile or as Lord Merton and Lady Louisa Larpent represent aristocratic decadence, Miss Larolle s frivolity, Indiana Lynmer selfishness, to name further examples from Miss Burney's works. Like Squire Western and Mr. Delvile again, they can be used to motivate other characters or to complicate the plot, as Miss Burney uses Morrice and Harrel in Cecilia, or Lionel Tyrold in Camilla. They can fill out a novel's background like extras on the stage. In Cecilia even more than in Evelina we get the

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7 Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (London: O.U.P., 1964), 585.

impression of full rooms, crowded theatres and busy social life. Yet, once we investigate, we find that we can count the figures who create this impression on the fingers of both hands. Each one carries about him the aura of a numberless tribe like himself. E.M. Forster explains:

> One great advantage of flat characters is that they are easily recognized whenever they come in - recognized by the reader's emotional eye, not by the visual eye which merely notes the recurrence of a proper name. In Russian novels, where they so seldom occur they would be a decided help. It is a convenience for an author when he can strike with his full force at once, and flat characters are very useful to him, since they never need reintroducing, never run away, have not to be watched for development, and provide their own atmosphere- little luminous disks of a pre-arranged size, pushed hither and thither like counters across the void or between the stars; most satisfactory. 8

For Miss Burney's first heroine to be caught with her cousins, the Branghtons, or Madam Duval by any of her "quality" friends is enough for us to realize that she is in a socially embarrassing position without their having to do anything specifically gauche or vulgar. Similarly, in Cecilia, we know that if the heroine has any dealings with Mr. Delvile she will feel humiliated, and that if Mr. Monckton gives her advice, she should be wary of following it. Besides serving these functions, flat characters can also be extremely funny and sometimes provide comic relief, as in the case of Captain Mirvan and Madam Duval or, more strikingly, of Morrice and the ton characters in Cecilia. In general, the more functions a flat character successfully combines, the weightier and more satisfying he appears to be to the reader.

Round characters work in a much more subtle way than flat ones. If they are fully delineated and convincing, they can never be manoeuvred as easily as flat ones can. Nor do they amuse in the same way. We may smile with a round character, but we understand his hurts

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8 Forster, 76.

and distresses too well to abandon ourselves to laughing heartily at him. E.M. Forster explains the importance of literary character in a way especially relevant to round character:

> For human intercourse, as soon as we look at it for its own sake and not as a social adjunct, is seen to be haunted by a spectre. We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly, and, apart from the general pleasure of reading, we can find here a compensation for their dimness in life. In this direction fiction is truer than history, because it goes beyond the evidence, and even if the novelist has not got it correctly, well he has tried.... And that is why novels, even when they are about wicked people, can solace us; they suggest a more comprehensible and thus a more manageable human race, they give us the illusion of perspicacity and power. 9

Most of Miss Burney's characters are flat and though they are usually superbly done, they have not been consistently appreciated. Both Miss MacCarthy and Lord David Cecil criticize Miss Burney for the predominance of flat characters in her novels. Miss MacCarthy complains that "her preference for caricature verging on the grotesque is certainly vulgar. It is the same impulse that drives a crowd to pay its penny for a sight of the pig-faced lady". [10] Lord David Cecil, though a real admirer of Miss Burney, concludes that:

> Her comedy characters- the Branghtons and the Larolles- though vividly dramatized are shallowly conceived. They talk vivaciously and convincingly, but we are never allowed to penetrate beneath that talk to discover the combination of qualities which went to produce their comic exterior... Her observation was not intelligent enough to vitalize a deeply complex nature whose demeanour was uncoloured by any obvious idiosyncrasies. 11

Though one wonders if Miss MacCarthy also finds Dickens vulgar for allowing flat characters to predominate in his novels, one must admit that for the most part their criticism is valid. Miss Burney was not good with complex characters like Mrs. Delvile, whom Cecil quotes as

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9 Forster, 70-71.

10 MacCarthy, 112.

11 Cecil, 221.

an example of inadequate characterization. Only once does she succeed in creating a truly convincing round character and that is Evelina.

Miss Burney introduces her first heroine in the Preface to Evelina with the following words "The heroine of these memoirs, young artless and inexperienced, is 'No faultless Monster that the world ne'er saw:' but the offspring of Nature and of nature in her simplest attire." Like Flaubert's simple Félicité, Evelina, through her youth and inexperience, is a relatively shallow character, well suited to Miss Burney's superficial observance of life. Her unquestioning obedience and her modesty which would seem artificial and wooden in a more sophisticated woman, are appropriate to a girl of her youth and in her retired and dependent situation. Her charity, too, belongs to her youthful, tender heart, for the sympathies of young people are soon aroused. Equally appropriate to her youth and inexperience are her imprudence and the unexpected and rather ill-mannered frivolity which allows her to laugh in the face of a beau, whose affectations unwittingly amuse her at a ball. The book ends with her consigned to the guidance and protection of Lord Orville, just as she has been under Mr. Villars's protection up to this point, but, if we may believe her letters to Mr. Villars, she has learned wisdom by the end of the story, even if we do not see her given an opportunity to put it into practice. Though her development is slight, Evelina is a round character because her callow nature is fully explored and because by the end of the novel we fully understand her.

3

SERIOUS AND MELODRAMATIC CHARACTERS

There is no doubt that Miss Burney's first aim when she started to write was to entertain, beginning with entertaining herself and her friends with her adolescent writings. Until the completion of the first volume of Evelina at least, this remained her major purpose, but the publicity which would inevitably attend upon Evelina's publication made her quickly formulate another one. We know that novels and novelists in general, and women novelists in particular, were held in very low esteem by society. Although throughout her writing she had avoided the excesses of the romance style and the novella and even the fairly harmless sensuality of Fielding, Richardson and Smollett, yet under the threat of the impending public glare, the respectable Miss Burney had to find a justification for her work and she found it in a didacticism which became increasingly prominent as her work continued. In the Preface to Evelina, written just prior to its publication, she states her ostensible purpose:

> Perhaps, were it possible to effect the total extirpation of novels, our young ladies in general, and boarding-school damsels in particular, might profit from their annihilation; but since the distemper they have spread seems incurable, since their contagion bids defiance to the medicine of advice or reprehension, and since they are found to baffle all the mental art of physic, save what is prescribed by the slow regimen of time, and bitter diet of Experience, surely all attempts to contribute to the number of those which may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury, ought rather to be encouraged than contemned.

Both purposes must be kept in mind when one examines her work.

To entertain her readers in all her works she chose a subject of lasting interest, especially to women, that of courtship and marriage, and gave it a predominance hitherto unknown in the novel, for we have seen that the primary theme of the novellas was seduction, rather than courtship, and legitimate affection was not the major interest of the great male novelists. As Lord David Cecil says:

> Although her plots are constructed within the same convention as Fielding's, their emphasis is different. The Fielding type of plot turns on love and marriage; but Fielding was not particularly interested in the feelings of his hero and heroine for each other.... Fielding, like most very masculine men, has no objective interest in observing the process of courtship. Fanny Burney had; and she gives up a great deal of her space to tracing it. 1

This constant theme led her to evolve a group of characters basic to each of the novels, though varying slightly from one work to another. We shall first examine these basic characters, nearly all of whom were intended to be serious or tragic, and their roles.

The heroine in each of her novels is of the greatest importance, since everything that takes place is seen from her point of view. She will be closely examined in Chapter IV, since she is not of the same type as the rest of the characters to be examined in this chapter. The hero is truly a lover, rather than the seducer, adventurer, or picaresque traveller of most earlier fiction. The plot turns on the growth of love between these two people, their recognition of its existence and gradual coming to an understanding, and it ends with their marriage. But an "ordinary, legitimate, everyday courtship" [2] can hardly provide enough interest to fill a book without some outside complications. In Miss Burney's first

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1 Cecil, 214.

2 Ibid., 215.

three works these are provided to greater or lesser extent by an apparent rival or rivals for the heroine's affections. The love of her first hero, Lord Orville, for Evelina receives several setbacks from the ostentatious assiduity of Sir Clement Willoughby, and when this is explained, her association with the poet, Macartney, provides another series. Macartney is a young man for whom she first feels pity, after rescuing him from an unpleasant fate, and in whom she later discovers a brother, but having been sworn to secrecy by Macartney she cannot reveal these facts to Lord Orville to clear herself. In Cecilia Sir Robert Floyer is the counterpart of Sir Clement and Macartney's role is taken over by Belfield, another young and starving intellectual. In Camilla Miss Burney used another noble rival, Sir Sedley Clarendel, and created an apparent rival of a new type in Major Cerwood, though he is a very minor figure. Besides their roles as complicators of the plot, Macartney and Belfield have little melodramatic sub-plots of their own, offshoots of the main story which are designed to entertain the reader in a slightly different way from that of the main plot. The anchoring device for the romantic combinations is the father-mentor figure. Mr. Villars, Evelina's guardian, is a bridge between the purpose of entertaining and that of teaching, which we said was the second of Miss Burney's basic aims, for within the story he loves and comforts Evelina and receives her confidences and at the same time gives her reams of good advice which can serve as a guide to good conduct for the reader. His role is assumed much less satisfactorily in Cecilia by the moralizing madman, Albany, whom Cecilia befriends. Albany is a less successful figure in the scheme of entertainment, for he is not much use in the story, offering little help to Cecilia in her troubles,

but he carries a heavy didactic role, for, as part of the great world from which Mr. Villars has retired, he sets out to castigate the vice which he sees everywhere around him. In Camilla the official mentor is Camilla's real father, Mr. Tyrold, but with lessons in virtue and manners being constantly taught through the medium of the heroine's actions and the hero's reactions to them, the hero, Edgar Mandlebert, fulfils most of the functions of the earlier mentors, and the mentor as a separate figure becomes superfluous. Mr. Tyrold's part is therefore very small by comparison with those of either of his predecessors. In The Wanderer the mentor has become the merest shadow. We hear from time to time of Juliet's guardian, the bishop; we see Juliet trying to put his precepts into practice; but mercifully he never actually appears to fatigue us with his sermons.

We have just said that the mentors bridge the gap between the purpose of entertaining and that of teaching. In the scheme of Miss Burney's didacticism the other characters we have just examined enact their second role. Lord Orville, Mortimer Delvile, Edgar Mandlebert and Harleigh, in his infrequent appearances in The Wanderer, were intended to be models of virtuous male conduct, which is why they are rewarded with the heroine's hand and heart in the end, while the serious rivals are cast off, each of them having displayed one or more undesirable traits, pride and profligacy in the cases of Sir Robert and Sir Clement, foppery and shallowness in that of Sir Sedley. We must remember that neither Macartney nor Belfield nor Major Cerwood was really a candidate for the heroine's affection; they merely figured as such in the hero's imagination because he did not know all the facts relating to their acquaintance with the heroine.

Now let us see whether or not these characters are successful. We said in Chapter Two that a character gains weight according to the number of functions he fulfils or the number of levels on which he works. We said further in this chapter that Miss Burney had two main purposes, in writing, to each of which her characters were intended to contribute. Whether we consider her characters to be successful or only partially so will depend, then, on the extent to which they entertain and teach. Another factor to be taken into account is changing literary taste. Some characters, like Madam Duval, will be seen to have succeeded with Miss Burney's contemporaries, but not to have contained enough human nature to stand up to the passing of two centuries. In the next two chapters, using the criteria just discussed, we shall assess each of Miss Burney's main characters and some typical examples of the minor ones and attempt to show where they succeed or fail.

Miss Burney's task in creating her first hero was a difficult one in as much as she had never known a noble suitor. Truly, as Austin Dobson remarks, "She had seen and heard a live fine gentleman in Fulke Greville; and in Mr. Anthony Chaumier and Mr. Charles Boone friends of the family, had conversed with some flesh-and-blood specimens of men of the world," [3] but she had never known them in the circumstances under which Evelina knows Lord Orville. In the case of most of the fine gentlemen who visited the Burney house from time to time, she hadhad only the most superficial acquaintance with them, so that she had only the drama to fall back on. Lord Orville, whom Miss Burney intended to be a model of gentility, has been variously described by modern critics as "really a nobleman, though somewhat shadowy," [4]

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3 Dobson, 73.

4 Ibid.

and as "merely 'a condescending suit of clothes'". [5] In fact, he is one of the faithful lovers, whose type we have already come across on the stage. He has the qualities of sincerity and absolute faithfulness to his love, for, as long as Evelina is respectable, he does not care that she is poor and of a lower social station than himself. He shows some physical courage in challenging Lovel to a duel and a great deal of moral courage in openly disapproving of the affected manners and trivial pursuits of his social peers, but these qualities are not sufficiently brought out. What we remember chiefly about Lord Orville is his rather bland courtesy, his ability to find the right phrase, polite but not too extravagant, for every occasion. The fact that Miss Burney adapted him from the stage is one reason why Lord Orville appears to be rather shadowy. The dramatists did not have to concern themselves with conveying in words the physical existence of their characters for the obvious reason that drama involves real bodies in the audience's sight. Lord Orville seems almost disembodied, for Miss Burney does very little to invest him with a physical presence. By contrast Fielding's characters, for instance, seem very solid, for we see them eating and drinking with gusto, making love and fighting. Yet Lord Orville is not by any means a failure, for he fulfils his main roles at least adequately. The vivacity of the heroine, through whose eyes we see him, prevents our being aware of his bloodlessness until we examine the novel very closely. Furthermore, he is completely unobjectionable as the winner of Evelina's hand, being the only virtuous and presentable man in the book besides Mr. Villars, and having in his cardboard way shown affection for her from the dawn of their relationship. Miss Burney's contemporaries, who had few

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5 MacCarthy, 106.

better precendents of characterization to judge by, were more favourably impressed by him than we are. Dr. Burney commented (Diary and Letters, 33):

> Lord Orville's character is just what it should be; perfectly benevolent and upright, and there is a boldness in it that struck me mightily, for he is a man not ashamed of being better than the rest of mankind.

Mortimer Delvile in Cecilia is less shadowy than Lord Orville because Miss Burney makes us more aware of him as a physical presence; he protects Cecilia at the Harrels' masked reception; he is injured in saving Cecilia from a scalding when a teapot overturns; he rashly lets his passions get the better of him and fights a duel with Mr. Monckton, a very different object for a challenge from the flighty Lovel, who could be expected to refuse. Yet he is still an embodiment of the dramatic type used in Evelina. Apart from his assistance to young Belfield, we never see him occupied by anything but his love, and an apparent denial of fulfilment causes him to pine and sicken in a way that could only happen on the stage. He is as satisfactory as Lord Orville in that he is an acceptable object of the heroine's affection, but he is not an especially memorable figure.

Camilla's lover, Edgar Mandlebert, is of the same breed basically, but his character is strongly tainted by the influence of the heavily didactic courtesy books, which we have seen were very popular at the time and which we know were read at Court. The difference between the self-conscious hero and the openly didactic one is one of degree. Delvile shows impossible moral rectitude in only one instance, when he refuses at first to thwart his parents' wishes by proposing to marry Cecilia, whom he loves. But Delvile's

humanity finally triumphs when he sees that his parents are being unreasonable and that he has already won Cecilia's heart. Edgar, on the other hand, is prevented by no substantial obstacle from marrying Camilla, yet he keeps retreating on the slightest provocation from proposing to her. The mere suspicion of frivolity in Camilla, prompted by her visits to Mrs. Arlbery and her persecution by Major Cerwood, makes him start back in horror. Several times he renounces her in his imagination for similarly trivial faults, without ever asking her for any explanation or excuse. Only fortuitous circumstances bring about their reconciliation after most of these incidents. The two sources of his character sometimes make him appear inconsistent, for while the Restoration lover never really feels Camilla to be capable of any ill, the courtesy book model forbids his declaring his affection for her until she is proved free of any human failing. The result of his severity and his inconsistency is that he is both less convincing than Lord Orville or Mortimer Delvile and less satisfactory as the winner of the heroine's affection. On the whole, we are not entertained by him and the modern reader may be severely irritated. His only measure of success is at the didactic level, and even then he makes virtue seem unnecessarily rigid and unpleasant. Because of the Queen's patronage, as was noted in Chapter One, the balance between entertainment and didactism maintained through Evelina and Cecilia was upset when Miss Burney came to write Camilla, in favour of the latter. As a result, her characterization suffers and so do those of her readers who expect to find again the entertainment they enjoyed in her two earlier works.

It is difficult to see why the mentor figures in Miss Burney's

novels should be so unsatisfactory. After all, she had a mentor in her own father, who, though he had his prosy moments when being very serious, was normally far from dull. Besides, there were other mentors in literature apart from in the courtesy books. Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose, Fielding's Parson Adams and even Squire Allworthy act as advisers to young people and still manage to be highly entertaining. Perhaps these characters have some quality that Miss Burney's mentors lack. The best of her mentors, Mr. Villars, besides being wise, shows a great deal of natural tenderness and affection for his ward, which disposes the reader to like him. Were he also to show some human weakness and a sense of humour, like Fielding's and Goldsmith's characters, he would be quite engaging. Unfortunately Miss Burney seems to have feared that any touch of weakness or humour would be disrespectful in her and would detract from his dignity. The little flame of life he is given is crushed and overwhelmed by unrelenting gravity and by his sermonizing, which the directness of its presentation through the medium of his letters emphasizes. Miss Hemlow points out that, when extracted from their setting, the body of his letters can be seen to be a kind of abbreviated courtesy book "astonishingly complete in such standard topics as fortitude, prudence and the dangers of being led astray by the imagination." [6] The style of his letters, too, is unnaturally elaborate and contorted and his language rather stilted, as the following example relating the fate of Evelina's father demonstrates (Evelina, 3):

> Thither he was followed by shame and repentance: feelings which his heart was not framed to support; for, notwithstanding he had been too weak to resist the allurements of beauty, which nature, though a niggard

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6 Hemlow, Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books, 759.

to her of every other boon, had with a lavish hand bestowed on his wife; yet he was a young man of excellent character, and, till thus unaccountably infatuated, of unblemished conduct.

To Miss Burney's contemporaries, who considered Mr. Tyrold's letters to Camilla to be the "brilliant" [7] of that novel, the didacticism of Mr. Villars's letters was their complete justification and no doubt overrode any considerations of style. To the twentieth century reader, now that didacticism has fallen out of fashion, they are a rather boring intrusion.

Her second mentor, Albany, has all Mr. Villars's faults in greater measure. For instance, his concern with good and evil is carried to such an extent that it becomes ludicrous. "Oh, times of folly and dissipation! oh, minions of idleness and luxury! What next will ye invent for the perdition of your time? How yet further will ye proceed in the annihilation of virtue?" (Cecilia, I, 63), such is the formula of his characterization. Where Mr. Villars naturally worries about Evelina's innocence and the evils of society which may attack it once she leaves Berry Hill, Albany is unnaturally obsessed with vice everywhere and never stops his fight against it, as though by sermonizing at assembly, play and opera he could tire it to death. His diction, too, is more stilted than that used by Mr. Villars, for he speaks in ponderously balanced Johnsonese. The following oration, for instance (Cecilia, II, 449), pronounced over Cecilia whom he believes to be dying is intended both to comfort her and to wring the reader's heart. Today it can only produce laughter at its exaggeration:

Sweet flower! untimely cropt in years, yet in excellence mature; early decayed in misery, yet fragrant in innocence! Gentle be thy

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7 Ibid., quoting the Monthly Review.

exit, for unsullied have been thy days; brief be thy pains, for few have been thy offences... She was the handmaid of charity, and pity dwelt in her bosom! her mouth never opened but to give comfort; her footsteps were followed by blessings! Oh, happy in purity, be thine the song of triumph!- softly shalt thou sink to temporary sleep,- sublimely shalt thou rise to life that wakes forever.

For a modern reader Albany fails at all levels, lacking even Mr. Villars's scanty humanizing qualities and being too exaggerated for one to appreciate his advice. Yet, as with the problematic characters in Evelina, the eighteenth century public somehow loved him. Miss Burney wrote to Mr. Crisp (Diary and Letters, II, 142), "My father's present favourite is the old crazy moralist, Albany. He is quite delighted with him." Later, in her diary, she told an anecdote about the housekeeper of someone Mrs. Thrale had visited (Diary and Letters, II, 183). When Mrs. Thrale had asked the woman what part of Cecilia she liked best, she had replied, "Oh, Madam, I liked it all better than anything I ever saw in my life; but most of all I liked that good old gentleman, Mr. Albany, that goes about telling people their duty, without so much as thinking of their fine clothes." Dr. Johnson, who was with them while Mrs. Thrale was relating the story, added, "I am all of the old housekeeper's mind; Mr. Albany I have always stood up for; he is one of my first favourites. Very fine indeed are the things he says."

Miss Burney's contemporaries no doubt overlooked his language because of the truth they saw in his sentiments and because they were accustomed to the use of high flown diction and erratic behaviour to denote madness in the theatre. Indeed Miss Burney tried to explain his occasional slipping into blank verse as one of the signs of his madness, but to the modern reader there is no excuse for such excruciating pompousness.

As we have said, Miss Burney's third mentor, Mr. Tyrold plays only a small part in Camilla, his greatest importance lying in the long discourses on right conduct either pronounced or written to his daughter, when he fears she may become contaminated through taking part in scenes of dissipation in the great world. Because of their length and compactness these have even more the air of an abbreviated courtesy book than Mr. Villars's letters. They certainly maintain a more consistent tone of the conduct book, their advice being of a very general sort, while most of that given to Evelina, though capable of a wider application, is specific to her difficulties at the time. There is nothing in Mr. Tyrold besides his didacticism, so that he makes little, if any, impression on the modern reader, though he greatly pleased his author's contemporaries.

Fielding and Goldsmith have shown us that didacticism and entertainment are by no means incompatible and by contrast have highlighted one of Miss Burney's faults in constructing her mentors, her failure to relieve their gravity and to humanize them with any touch of weakness or humour. Another fault lies in the flatness of these characters, for sympathy with a very serious character can be created only when he is developed in sufficient depth for us to be lured into making the necessary emotional effort. E.M. Forster underlines this when he writes that flat people "are best when they are comic. A serious or tragic flat character is apt to be a bore. Each time he enters crying 'Revenge!' or 'My heart bleeds for humanity!' or whatever his formula is, our hearts sink." [8]

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8 Forster, 80.

Unfortunately this was an age when love of tragic flat characters was at its height, with the result that tragedy during the late eighteenth century was often only melodrama. Melodrama was especially popular during the period because of the cult of sensibility. As Miss Burney was profoundly influenced by this fashion in the way she created her serious and tragic characters, it will be useful to spend a little time in examining the aims of the melodrama and the reasons why it failed. As we have said, the basis of melodrama was sensibility, which Miss MacCarthy defines as differing from sentiment "mainly in degree." "Sentiment," she says, "is, in a sense, the norm of feeling. Sensibility was an excessive vulnerability to feeling. It arose from an idealisation of spiritual delicacy... This was sensibility at its healthiest- an exquisite susceptibility to emotion by which one felt one's way throughlife, by which one lived at the highest possible level." [9] Sensibility was a necessary attribute of all eighteenth century heroes and heroines and was an ideal towards which most eighteenth century novelists strove. It strongly colours Richardson's novels and Sterne's writing and attracted Fielding's irony in his first description of Sophia in Tom Jones, though he too, on occasions, strove to arouse his readers' sensibility. Happiness was felt to give sensibility little scope, but suffering was more amenable, as it could take place in innumerable ways at many different emotional levels, a fact which Richardson fully exploited in Clarissa. Miss MacCarthy conveniently points out for us the common irritants of sensibility: love, pain, terror, remorse, beauty and pity for the sufferings of others. Its failing, as she says was

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9 MacCarthy, 34-35.

due to its falsity. It was essentially egotistic, complacent of its own capacity for feeling, and in unskillful hands it was usually highly improbable, unrealistic, and inartistic, its characterization being marred by false notions of nobility and of villainy, and false notions of virtue, too, as Richardson's Pamela exemplifies. Unhappily we cannot deny that Miss Burney was sometimes one of these same unskillful users of melodrama, as we shall see, throughout the rest of this chapter.

Certain characters stand out from the smoothly and elegantly amusing flow of her novels. The really jarring characters in Evelina are Macartney and Sir John Belmont. The former is virtuous and honourable, but through no fault of his own is also very unfortunate. Miss Burney intended our hearts to be wrung by his distress but the story of his deserted unmarried mother, of his love for the girl who, unknown to him, is his sister, and of the duel in which he almost kills the man, whom he later discovers to be his father, might have been taken from one of the stage melodramas of the period. His sentiments have a false ring to them; and the author is too conscious of the pathos of his position and the position itself is too exaggerated and contrived to be convincing to any reader outside the cult of sensibility. Yet outside his subplot, Macartney functions in several useful ways, which keep him from being a failure. Though it is doubtful whether he serves the novel didactically, since his misfortunes arise from his mother's errors rather than his own, still he assists in the work of entertaining by helping to spin out the plot after Sir Clement Willoughby's eclipse and by giving the heroine an opportunity to demonstrate her courage,

thereby showing us a new aspect of her character.

Sir John Belmont, on the other hand, is the embodiment of unmitigated viciousness turned to repentance under the influence of remorse and of satiety with wild living. The modern reader would be more sympathetic toward his repentance if he didn't show such relish in expressing it, as for example, in this request to his daughter, "Wilt thou, in obedience to her will, own for thy father the destroyer of thy mother?" (Evelina, 367). The result hoped for again is that every possible horrified shudder and compassionate tear will be wrung from the delighted sentimental reader and again it leaves the modern reader cold. The other stumbling block with the tragic characters, as with Albany, is that they speak in the heightened style prescribed by earlier writers and especially by dramatists for conveying feelings of extraordinary depth. Thus Sir John expresses the torment aroused in his soul by his wife's bitter letter in the following bombastic lines:

> Acknowledge thee, Caroline!-yes, with my heart's best blood would I acknowledge thee!- Oh that thou coulds't witness the agony of my soul!- Ten thousand daggers could not have wounded me like this letter! (Evelina, 367).

and the modern reader laughs at his affectation and exaggeration.

Fortunately for our scepticism, the relish with which this was read by Miss Burney's contemporaries can be shown by several entries from her diary, like the following one (Diary and Letters, I, 33). Dr. Burney, who was reading the entire book aloud to some ladies of his acquaintance, is quoted as saying:

> And the scene between her [Evelina] and her father, Sir John Belmont, is a scene for a tragedy! I blubbered at it, and Lady Hales and Miss Coussmaker are not yet recovered from hearing it; it made them quite ill; it is indeed, wrought up in a most extraordinary manner!

He was not alone in insisting upon the dramatic qualities of the scenes

with Macartney and Sir John. Another entry (Diary and Letters, I, 159) runs:

> Mr. Pepys [William Weller Pepys] ... says you should try at a tragedy. He is in love with the character of Macartney, the pistol scene, and the denouement with Sir John Belmont.

One can be grateful that melodrama in Evelina extends no farther than Sir John, Macartney and their subplots, for it permeates the other novels and spreads its blight all through them, which is not surprising when we look at the acclaim it had received in Evelina.

Cecilia is full of attempts to arouse pathos by appeals to the reader's sensbility. One of these is Albany's recital of his history, in which he takes over Sir John's role as villain. He reveals to the heroine that his present state of unswerving virtue has been brought about by an early life of dissipation, in which he betrayed a young girl who loved him and abandoned her. The girl fell into prostitution and on being taken back by her then remorseful lover, starved herself to death to atone for her shame. This is another place where we feel the strain Miss Burney was under in trying to surpass her earlier success. Just as Albany's language is more stilted and his rectitude more rigid than that of Mr. Villars, so his former wickedness is carried to an extreme to surpass Sir John Belmont's. The shameful episode is made more distasteful by the fact that it serves no useful purpose, though it might have done. Miss Williams in Roderick Random gives a similarly sensational account of a young girl's descent into prostitution, but, although it is a digression from the story, we can see a justification for it, as there are unmistakeable signs that Smollett included it at least partially to make the public aware of the wretched condition of the prostitute at all times and especially when

she became infected with venereal disease. Albany's crime and his remorse are there simply for the reader to enjoy, if he can.

Macartney's parallel in Cecilia, young Belfield, fortunately has a much less dramatic story and is useful both didactically and in adding to the entertainment of the main plot. His misfortunes arise from his discontentment with his lot and his attempts to climb the social ladder. Moreover, Belfield takes over Macartney's main functions of complicating the plot by arousing the hero's jealousy and of being an object on which the heroine can lavish her charity and sympathy, for the reader and the hero to see.

Another of Miss Burney's attempts at pathos is Mrs. Hill, the wife of a carpenter who, when Mrs. Hill meets Cecilia, has been unable to work for nine months because of falling from a ladder while working at Mr. Harrel's country seat. His death is expected to occur quite soon. Meanwhile Mrs. Hill, who is apparently very ill herself from deprivation, has tried almost daily to collect their bill of twenty-two pounds from the Harrels, for which she has received only abuse. To make matters worse she has five daughters, some of them too young to work, and the prop of the family, her beloved seventeen year old son, has died after a lingering consumption. The family have further impoverished themselves by buying delicacies for him during his illness and by arranging for him to have a lavish funeral, even though it meant all but the baby had to go without dinners. Macaulay praised this section of the book highly:

> Madame D'Arblay was most successful in comedy... But we are inclined to infer from some passages, both in Cecilia and Camilla, that she might have gained equal distinction in the pathetic.... We would mention as examples, Mrs. Hill's account of her little boy's death in

Cecilia, and the parting of Sir Hugh Tyrold and Camilla when the honest baronet thinks himself dying. 10

Here he had certainly let his sensibility run away with him. Like the other melodramatic and pathetic characters, Mrs. Hill and her family in no way ring true as artistic creations, and fail for basically the same reason. They are too exaggerated. Mrs. Hill's troubles are too numerous, too serious, and happen coincidentally too close together, her family is too large and too helpless, and she herself is too humble and servile under obvious mistreatment for credibility.

A more important and damaging melodramatic excrescence, far exceeding anything in Evelina, is Cecilia's madness and near death at the end of the book. Certainly Cecilia has been severely tried, though many of her difficulties are due to excessive punctiliousness on her part rather than to unavoidable circumstances, but the modern reader knows that madness does not take hold so suddenly, nor does it necessarily manifest itself in hallucinations, raving and fits of tearing one's garments with one's teeth. Once again we see Miss Burney using a stage tradition that dates back to Shakespeare and even before. There is a similar scene in Camilla, in which the heroine finds herself delirious and dangerously ill at an inn on the road some miles from home. Both fits make the heroines implausible for those sections of their respective books, but both serve the same important purpose. In each case the hero and heroine have fallen out of sympathy and have become separated. The hero determines to remain aloof for reasons which seem incontrovertible to him, while

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10 T.B. Macaulay, quoted by Mrs. A. Raine Ellis, Cecilia, I, 83.

the adoring heroine is unable to make a satisfactory explanation. The dangerous collapse, however, permits a reconciliation to take place by giving emotion on both side an opportunity to bypass reason, thus saving the characters and their author a lot of difficulty.

A similar catalogue of melodramatic and pathetic characters can be collected from Camilla. There is Camilla's unfortunate younger sister, Eugenia, the most beautiful of the Tyrold children. Through the negligent kindness of her Uncle Hugh, she first becomes horribly scarred with small pox, then hideously crippled by being dropped from a see-saw and fallen upon. She is rejected with scorn by the cousin her uncle has destined her to marry and sees the man she loves fall in love with her selfish but beautiful cousin, Indiana. Before she is allowed to settle down to living happily ever after with the man of her choice, she is also abducted by a suitor for her money, whom she has hitherto gently rejected, forced to marry him, made miserable by his neglect, and freed only when someone murders him. Through all her trials she remains smiling, sweet-tempered, and wholly unconvincing. Again we withhold our sympathy because the exaggeration in this character prevents our becoming really involved with her. Besides the exaggeration with which Eugenia's character is drawn, the sheer ludicrousness of some of her mishaps, falling off the see-saw, for instance, makes her an unbelievable and rather unsympathetic character. Aside from infirmities, the poor girl suffers from having been educated like a boy, the only reparation her uncle could think of for her lost beauty. Here another part of her didactic usefulness comes in. Not only does Eugenia demonstrate the proper way to meet adversity, but she also exemplifies the ills attendant on too revolutionary an

education for young females. Neither purpose is fulfilled well because of the basic flaws in her characterization. Indiana's elopement with a penniless officer, Bellamy's villainous machinations, and Edgar's relief of a sick and starving convictand his family are further examples of attempts at melodrama and pathos.

Miss Burney's last novel is unnecessarily full of the exaggerated and improbable. The heroine herself is a young woman of the most delicate sensibility, who undergoes acute suffering at the hands of cruel society. Another character, Elinor Joddrel, follows Eugenia in illustrating the damaging effects of an extraordinary education; an example of emancipated woman, she is led by her strange ideas on free thought and women's rights to at least half a dozen suicide attempts because she cannot capture Harleigh's affection, and an equal number of reproaches to Harleigh and Juliet in the agonizing style of Caroline Evelyn's letter to Sir John Belmont, all to no avail. It is the hapless and relatively passive Juliet who wins Harleigh in the end. Juliet's old friend, Gabriella, whom she discovers in the silent woman who glides in and out of her old room at the milliner's to weep alone over a grave in the churchyard, is a similarly pathetic figure. None of these is successful, for they combine most of Miss Burney's faults in characterization and have none of her virtues. They are too flat to be taken seriously, too exaggerated to be convincing or entertaining, too obviously false in their sentiments, so that they fail even at a didactic level.

Though all of Miss Burney's serious and tragic characters, at least all in her first three novels, were a great success in her own

time, they are a disappointment for a modern critic, for her serious characters, the heroes and the mentors, are at best only adequate and her pathetic and tragic characters on the whole are unconvincing. Those in the two earlier novels come off best, since she had such a power of telling a varied and fascinating story and used some of her characters so well in developing her themes that occasional weaknesses are easily overlooked. By the time she came to write Camilla, however, her story had become sufficiently stilted to leave her faults in characterization more exposed. Finally in The Wanderer, the excesses of melodrama and sensibility took complete control; her plot became merely turgid, as she attempted to provide a stream of affecting situations; the result is that the characterization throughout the work is left nakedly unsatisfactory and unconvincing.

IV

COMIC CHARACTERS AND HEROINES

At last we come to Miss Burney's comic characters, among whom we should find her most successful creations, since, as we have said, flat characterization best lends itself to comedy. In a subsection at the end of the chapter we shall finally discuss Miss Burney's heroines, as they were originally humorous rather than tragic or pathetic figures. Certainly we would never laugh at Evelina or Camilla in the wholehearted and untroubled way we laugh at some of the lesser figures, but much of the time we laugh with them, particularly with Evelina, who is very much aware of the funny side of everything and is the first to laugh at herself. Though she takes her mistakes more seriously, Camilla follows in Evelina's footsteps in having a gay heart and in completely enjoying life; some of her gaiety inevitably rubs off on to the reader. Cecilia and Juliet are less appropriate figures for this chapter, though Juliet alone belongs with the pathetic figures of Chapter Three, where she has been mentioned, but it is convenient to keep the heroines together in order to follow their development, rather than treating them separately.

It would be pleasing to be able to say that every one of the comic characters was equally successful, but unfortunately even among these there are a few failures. Morrice and Mrs. Belfield in Cecilia and Mrs. Mittin and Lionel Tyrold in Camilla are the very noticeable

ones. They share with the Branghtons, who will be examined later, their amusing obtuseness and, in the case of Mrs. Belfield and Mrs. Mittin, their lower middle-class vulgarity, but they suffer from being too heavily drawn. The pairs take over the function of providing low humour, the function performed in Evelina by Captain Mirvan and Madam Duval. The young lawyer, Morrice, for instance, is intended to amuse us with his pranks and ill manners, as the Captain did formerly. At times, as in his game of musical chairs at Mr. Monckton's farewell breakfast for Cecilia, he succeeds. He has a serious function as well. In the business of the novel he helps to complicate the plot. When Cecilia repents having consented to marry Delvile secretly and sets off early to meet him in London in time to tell him that the wedding is off, it is Morrice's ill-bred officiousness in commandeering her carriage which delays her until it is too late. It is Morrice who discovers and reveals to her acquaintances that Delvile is the masked stranger who is following them on the way to London. Finally, it is Morrice who turns her meeting with Delvile late at night before the intended wedding into a compromising situation, which almost necessitates her consent to the secret marriage. He serves a slight didactic purpose as well by illustrating the inadequacy of the typical social climber to fill the position towards which he is striving, for Morrice will never attain the polish of a real gentleman. Madam Duval's comic counterpart is Mrs. Belfield, whose talent, like Madam Duval's for exposing her own vulgarity is sometimes laughable, though the distress she causes the heroine is more acutely painful than the embarrassment Madam Duval causes Evelina. Like Morrice, Mrs. Belfield besides being comic

provides an important complication to the plot by leading Delvile and others to assume that Cecilia's attachment is to her son. Didactically she is another example of a social climber who fails, a mother who, through pride, has brought up her son to scorn his father's business and to have ambitions and attitudes which are above his station, with the result that he can be neither a gentleman, for he has not enough money, nor a businessman for he has no interest in or knowledge of his trade. He is reduced to abject poverty. Considering the number of levels on which these characters work, Morrice and Mrs. Belfield ought to be successful, yet they are not. The cause of their failure has been isolated by Mrs. Raine Ellis, who explains:

> It may be doubted if sayings or doings such as those of Morrice and Mrs. Belfield should be so closely copied from Nature as to stir in us the same feelings or irritation which they would excite in real life. To tease, or worry, is a poor aim of fiction. 1

Exactly the same comment might justly be made on Lionel Tyrold and Mrs. Mittin. Camilla is occasionally thoughtless in matters of strict decorum, but a great many of the faults she commits are faults she has been led or dragged into committing by others. It is the frowsy Mrs. Mittin, for example, who causes Camilla to incur a good part of the debt which weighs so heavily on her mind, by insisting that she dress more fashionably at Tunbridge Wells and running up a large bill for her at the milliner's in the process. Lionel is another prankster like Morrice, basically good-natured but insensitive and thoughtless. He often complicates Camilla's relationship with Edgar by making her do wrong when she really wishes to obey her lover,

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1 A. Raine Ellis, Introduction to Cecilia, p. xiii.

as, for instance, when he draws Lavinia and Camilla into the forbidden company of Mrs. Arlbery's party from an innocent walk on the downs. Though they are intended to be comic, the repeated insensitivity of these characters and the seriousness of the consequences of their actions prevent our being very amused by them; nor do they have an important didactic purpose to justify them, though Lionel's greatest act of thoughtlessness in robbing his uncle and his punishment show that crime does not pay.

At the opposite end of the comic scale from the vulgar humour just discussed is the sophisticated verbal humour of the comedy of manners, which we often see in Miss Burney's rivals. The scene between Sir Clement Willoughby and Evelina at the ridotto, for example, is full of the witty dialogue we are accustomed to find in the stage comedies of the period. Evelina knows she ought not to dance with a stranger and that if a stranger asks her and she refuses by politely saying that she will not dance at all, then she will be prevented from dancing if an acquaintance asks her subsequently. Therefore when Sir Clement, a stranger, persists in asking her to dance, she tries to avoid the difficulty by telling him she is already engaged. Unsatisfied with her blushing answer, he first persecutes her with questions about her supposed partner, then teases her by going round all the old or ugly men in the room, asking her if each is the man to whom she is engaged for the dance. His familiarity, quick wit and dramatic flair make even the troubled Evelina laugh. Finally thinking to outwit him, she pretends, with her eyes on Lord Orville, that she sees her partner, but instead of leaving her, Sir Clement asks her the gentleman's name

so that he may ask his permission for another dance. To avoid a confrontation, Evelina tells him that she does not know, to which Sir Clement delivers the following reply (Evelina, 34-35), turning against her the excuses she had used earlier, when trying to decline dancing with him, in a way that makes her laugh despite her awkward situation:

> He assumed a most important solemnity: 'How!-not know? - Give me leave, my dear Madam, to recommend this caution to you: Never dance in public with a stranger,- with one whose name you are unacquainted with,- who may be a mere adventurer,- a man of no character, consider to what impertinence you may expose yourself.'
>
> Was ever anything so ridiculous? I could not help laughing, in spite of my vexation.

The flaws in Sir Clement's character, which Miss Burney's moral scheme necessitates so that he may be beneath the heroine's serious consideration as a suitor paradoxically makes him a more lively figure than the implausibly perfect hero, whose virtues sometimes make him seem in Sir Clement's words (Evelina, 340), "cold, inanimate, phlegmatic."

Having drawn an agreeable rake in Sir Clement and a disagreeable one in her second rival, Sir Robert Floyer, Miss Burney next produced the splendid Sir Sedley Clarendel, who unites Sir Clement's wit and charm with an amusing foppery under which he hides more sterling qualities. Had she spent more time in filling him out, he might even have been a round character, but he is drawn with too much haste. In the earlier volumes he appears only as Mrs. Arlbery's satellite, but once he has rescued Camilla from probable death in Mrs. Arlbery's runaway coach at the expense of injury to himself, Camilla feels sufficiently impressed with his goodness, at least in comparison with her other suitors, to borrow money from him when she finds herself unable to pay

the admission fee for a monkey show, which Mrs. Arlbery's party wishes to attend. Thereafter his attitude towards her changes and he becomes more prominent in the story. His delight in her condescension on this occasion is so great as to make him forsake his fashionably affected world weariness and indifference to everything. We are told (Camilla, III, 241) that "Sir Sedley, by no means suspecting the necessity that urged this condescension, was surprised and delighted, and almost without knowing it himself, became all that was attentive, obliging and pleasing." At this point Miss Burney drew better than she knew and her character got out of hand. She intended him to be as undeserving of the heroine as Sir Clement, for whom one feels pity, though one is forced to acknowledge the justice of Evelina's final choice. She tried to disguise Sir Sedley's love as selfishness aroused by pride in the affection he imagines the heroine to feel for him (which, after all, is not completely lacking), but so natural is his descent into love that we find his generous responsiveness much more attractive than Edgar's icy search after perfection. Faced with Clarendel and Mandlebert as Camilla's chief suitors, reason acknowledges her choice of Edgar as correct from the didactic point of view, but our hearts condemn her.

Many years after creating Sir Clement and Sir Sedley, Miss Burney again used her talent in writing for the comedy of manners to vitalize the charming older rake, Sir Jasper Harrington, who is one of the more successful figures of The Wanderer.

A large number of characters show Miss Burney's success in yet another comic vein, that of social satire. All Miss Burney's ton characters amuse us by their affectation and their contrasting views of

what constitutes gentility. All the ton aim at impressing their friends and the reader with their fashionableness and their importance, but each falls short, at least of the latter goal, and merely succeeds in making himself ridiculous by pursuing his favourite affectation relentlessly, without regard to its appropriateness to the company and occasion or to common sense. For Mr. Lovel in Evelina or Mr. Meadows and Captain Aresby in Cecilia fashion and gentility are encompassed by foppery, ennui and jargonism respectively; for Lady Louisa Larpent, again in Evelina or Miss Larolles and Miss Leeson in Cecilia the key affectations are delicate langour, voluble high spirits and cold superciliousness. The following extract, taken from a visit made by the ton in Evelina to the city of Bath (Evelina, 375), uses Mr. Lovel as an example to show how these characters amuse us with their pretentions:

'Really now', cried Mr. Lovel, looking also into the bath, 'Imust confess it is, to me, very incomprehensible why the ladies choose that frightful unbecoming dress to bathe in! I have often pondered very seriously upon the subject, but could never hit upon the reason.'

'Well, I declare,' said Lady Louisa, 'I should like of all things to set something new a-going; I always hated bathing, because one can get no pretty dress for it! now do, there's a good creature, try to help me to something.'

'Who, me!- O, dear Ma'am,' said he, simpering, 'I can't pretend to assist a person of your Ladyship's taste; besides, I have not the least head for fashions. - I really don't think I ever invented above three in my life! but I never had the least turn for dress, never any notion of fancy or elegance.'

'O fie, Mr. Lovel! how can you talk so?- don't we all know that you lead the ton in the beau monde? I declare, I think you dress better than anybody.'

'O, dear Ma'am, you confuse me to the last degree! I dress well!- I protest I don't think I'm ever fit to be seen! I'm often shocked to death to think what a figure I go. If your Ladyship will believe me, I was full half an hour this morning thinking what I should put on!'

'Odds my life,' cried the Captain, 'I wish I'd been near you! I warrant I'd have quickened your motions a little; Half an hour thinking what you'd put on; and who the duece do you think cares the

snuff of a candle whether you've anything on or not?'

'O pray, Captain,' cried Mrs. Selwyn, 'don't be angry with the gentleman for thinking, whatever be the cause, for I assure you he makes no common practice of offending in that way.'

The contrast between the true gentility of Evelina and Cecilia or of Lord Orville and Mortimer Delvile and the spurious gentility of the ton makes the latter doubly laughable. In Camilla Sir Sedley, Mrs. Arlbery, Mrs. Berlinton, the military men and Lady Alithea Seymour form part of a similar group. Like the first three novels, The Wanderer has a large proportion of society characters, but in this more serious work Miss Burney drew society with more bitterness than humour.

Besides amusing us, the best ton characters, those in the first three novels, fascinate us by portraying a way of life with which we are not familiar and which many of Miss Burney's contemporary readers, no doubt, knew only at a distance. They are flat and exaggerated, but each contains a kernel of truth about the customs of his time, as contemporary comment verifies. As groups in their respective novels rather than as individuals, the ton characters impress us, too, by the importance of their didactic role. In Evelina Lord Orville represents the small, really virtuous part of London's upper-class, while the ton and many of the minor characters represent the larger less virtuous part. What we are shown of Lady Louisa's affectation, Lovel's foppery, Mrs. Beaumont's pride, Lord Merton and Jack Coverly's dissipation, constitutes a serious social critcism. By contrast with the prudent and thoughtful Orville, these members of the upper crust have abdicated the responsibilities which wealth, educational opportunities and political power bestow. The same criticism is made even more strongly in Cecilia, where the Harrels

in particular bring great hardship to their tradesmen by spending extravagantly and then refusing to pay their bills because it will mean curtailing their expensive way of life. Evelina's chaperone, Mrs. Selwyn, emphasizes the shortcomings of the ton by showing up their shallowness and ridiculing their trivial preoccupations. At the same time the slightly mannish female intellectual is herself another social type and as such comes in for her share of the heroine's gentle criticism. Like most of the ton characters she shows herself highly insensitive to other people's feelings, and insensitivity was another of the targets of Miss Burney's satire. Though a much more likeable character, Mrs. Arlbery takes up a similar role in Camilla, commenting alike on Sir Sedley and his indolent kind and on the rigidly virtuous Edgar. Like Mrs. Selwyn, too, she is criticized by the author for failings in her own conduct. In Cecilia it is Mr. Albany who most openly and bitterly castigates the hardness of society's heart, but Mr. Gosport puts in a wittily sarcastic comment from time to time in the manner of the two ladies. As Miss Burney's diaries show, she was particularly irritated by insensitivity in the people around her, but her criticism of insensitivity through the characters in the novels is more than simply a venting of her spleen; she was dissecting for scrutiny one of the roots of social injustice and pain.

The way in which Miss Burney caught the precise affectations of her time caused her ton characters to be widely praised as original, though fashionable affectations such as foppery were already well known in literature. The comedy of manners dealt necessarily with high life where the emphasis on good manners prevailed, and therefore middle and lower-class characters, mere attendants on the aristocratic

world, were only of marginal importance for the dramatists. But in surveying for the reader the small part of society with which she came into contact, Miss Burney was bound to notice not only the distinctions between one kind of affectation and another, but also the social distinctions between the upper-class and the middle-class, who were so observant of the ways of their "betters". Her middle-class characters, the tradesmen and their families, therefore, are more striking than the ton as examples of her originality. She created them not from any literary source but from the people around her. Among the references to celebrities in The Early Diary we find occasional allusions to much more ordinary people, the Burney aunts, for instance, and their middle-class friends. No doubt it was from people like them and from the family's own tradesmen that she drew her most famous minor characters.

There can be no doubt whatsoever that the Branghtons and Mr. Smith in Evelina were and are the most popular of Miss Burney's creations. Mrs. Thrale commended Mr. Smith especially and Dr. Johnson was highly delighted with the whole group, as numerous quotations from Miss Burney's later diary can show. On one occasion just after the publication of Evelina Mrs. Thrale wrote to Dr. Burney (Diary and Letters, I, 72):

> So far had I written of my letter when Mr. Johnson returned home, full of the praises of the Book I had lent him, and protesting there were passages in it which might do honour to Richardson.... He was particularly pleased with the Snow Hill scenes, and said that Mr. Smith's vulgar gentility was admirably portrayed.

Later Johnson is quoted as saying (Diary and Letters, I, 48):

> Oh, Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith, is the man! Harry Fielding never drew so good a character!- such a fine varnish of low politeness!- such a struggle to appear a gentleman! Madam, there is no character better drawn anywhere- in any book or by any author.

On another occasion when he wanted to reprove Boswell's ignorance, he did so by asking him if her were a Branghton.[2]

Though the characteristics of the Snow Hill group were new to literature, Miss Burney's method of presenting them was still that which she had learned from the theatre. Just as she first conceived the characters for her plays as types of very generalized nature, so she began her characterization of the Branghtons in a similar way, by beginning with a brief, very generalized sketch, as we can see from the following extract (Evelina, 57):

> Mr. Branghton appears about forty years of age. He does not seem to want a common understanding, though he is very contracted and prejudiced: he has spent his whole time in the city, and I believe feels a great contempt for all who reside elsewhere.
>
> His son seems weaker in his understanding, and more gay in his temper; but his gaiety is that of a foolish, overgrown school-boy, whose mirth consists in noise and disturbance. He disdains his father for his close attention to business, and love of money; though he seems himself to have no talents, spirit, or generosity, to make him superior to either. His chief delight appears to be tormenting and ridiculing his sisters; who, in return most heartily despise him.
>
> Miss Branghton, the eldest daughter, is by no means ugly; but looks proud, ill-tempered, and conceited. She hates the city, though without knowing why; for it is easy to discover she has lived nowhere else.
>
> Miss Polly Branghton is rather pretty, very foolish, very ignorant, very giddy, and, I believe, very good-natured.

Having outlined the limits of their characters in a general way, she proceeded to show their particular brands of foolishness and ill-breeding in action, starting with the lengthy adjustments to their toilet with which the young ladies begin their visit. She showed the quarrelsome teasing of young Branghton and the trivial mentality of the family by the seriousness with which they conduct their petty

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2 MacCarthy, 110.

disputes, for example those about their ages and their heights (Evelina, 57-58):

> The son is twenty; the daughters upon hearing that I was seventeen, said that was just the age of Miss Polly; but their brother, after a long dispute, proved that she was two years older, to the great anger of both sisters, who agreed that he was very ill-natured and spiteful.
>
> When this point was settled, the question was put, Which was the tallest?- We were desired to measure, as the Branghtons were all of different opinions. None of them however, disputed my being the tallest in the comapny; but, in regard to one another, they were extremely quarrelsome: the brother insisted upon their measuring fair, and not with heads and heels, but they would by no means consent to lose those privileges of our sex; and therefore the young man was cast as shortest; though he appealed to all present upon the injustice of the decree.

She illustrated their impertinence by the questions the sisters ask Evelina about her dress (Evelina, 58):

> This ceremony over, the young ladies begun, very freely, to examine my dress, and to interrogate me concerning it. 'This apron's your own work, I suppose, Miss? but these sprigs a'n't in fashion now. Pray, if it is not impertinent, what might you give a yard for this lutestring?- Do you make your own caps, Miss?' and many other questions equally interesting and well-bred.

Their ill-natured curiosity manifests itself in the way they are immediately drawn to Madam Duval's recital of Evelina's history, and the relish with which the insensitive Miss Branghton suddenly exclaims to her sister (Evelina, 58), "Lord, Polly, only think! Miss never saw her papa!" Miss Polly's response shows her foolishness, "Lord, how odd! why, then, Miss, I suppose you wouldn't know him?" The remarks are disturbing enough to make Evelina lose control of herself and run out of the room. Almost the whole chapter introducing the Branghtons consists of dialogue either directly or indirectly presented, interspersed with Evelina's comments on the tone and manner of each speaker. Action is kept to a bare minimum and consists merely of disposition of the players about the stage.

We have seen in our examination of the ton characters that humour usually arises from incongruity, normally the incongruity between our aspirations and our achievements. It is for this reason that the Branghtons and their lodger, Mr. Smith, are intrinsically humorous. Young Branghton, for instance, assuming he is in Evelina's good graces for his father's proposal of marriage on his behalf, in attempting to consolidate his position alienates her even further (Evelina, 236):

> Young Branghton was extremely troublesome; he repeatedly laughed in my face, and looked so impertinently significant, that I was obliged to give up my reserve to M. du Bois, and enter into conversation with him merely to avoid such boldness.

We see the same incongruity in Mr. Smith. His preoccupation is gentility, but the direction of his efforts to achieve it shows that he falls as far short of understanding it as does his companions. Polly describes him (Evelina, 159):

> I assure you he's quite like one of the quality, and dresses as fine, and goes to balls and dances, and everything , quite in taste; and besides, Miss, he keeps a foot-boy of his own too.

The effect of his "fine" dress on a person of real taste such as we know Evelina to be is illustrated by the way she describes him on the occasion of the Hampstead assembly (Evelina, 204-205):

> In the afternoon, when he returned, it was evident that he purposed both to charm and astonish me by his appearance: he was dressed in a very showy manner, but without any taste; and the inelegant smartness of his air and deportment, his visible struggle against education to put on the fine gentleman, added to his frequent conscious glances at a dress to which he was but little accustomed, very effectively destroyed his aim of figuring, and rendered all his efforts useless.

The same fate befalls his attempts to prove himself a ladies' man. On his first appearance he gives Evelina his particular attention by officiously leading her to the best chair in the room,

whereupon she demonstrates her true good-breeding by rising and offering her seat to Madam Duval, the senior lady of the party. At their next meeting he insults Miss Branghton by a clumsy joke, intended to compliment her cousin, which only Evelina seems to notice and which, she points out, disagrees with his professions of liking always to please the ladies. Miss Burney made the difference between true and false politeness more striking by showing Mr. Smith's intentional rudeness to Evelina at Marylebone Gardens, because she had refused to dance with him at the assembly. It contrasts tellingly with Lord Orville's continued respect and attention in the garden at Bristol, although he suspects her of having an assignation with a rival.

The shallowness which is an intrinsic part of the character of the Branghtons and Mr. Smith lends itself to caricature, but there are other reasons for their success. The key to one of them lies in a statement by Lord David Cecil, "they consist of only one aspect, but that aspectis drawn from life; and life still throbs in it." [3] Nothing could be more natural than the Branghtons' conversation. Their very triviality, spite and vanity are qualities which most people see around them every day. On the other hand, no one has ever been as infallible as Mr. Villars, as unfailingly polite as Lord Orville, as dastardly as Sir John Belmont, or as particular in love as Edgar Mandlebert. E.M. Forster hints ata second reason in his comments on Dickens and Wells, who were also masters of flat characterization:

It is the deft and powerful hands of their maker that shake them and trick the reader into a sense of depth. Good but imperfect novelists

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3 Cecil, 217.

like Wells and Dickens, are very clever at transmitting force. The part of their novel that is alive galvanizes the part that is not, and causes the characters to jump about and speak in a convincing way. 4

Evelina is alive and imparts her vivaciousness to her cousins, with whom she is very successful, for they have shallow natures like her own. She had less effect on the serious characters because Miss Burney's own shallow view of life did not give her the necessary insight into deeper natures and more complex situations.

Like all Miss Burney's most impressive characters, the Snow Hill group serve more than one purpose. Besides being highly amusing and entertaining, they add slight complications to the plot, being indirectly responsible for Evelina's being found by Lord Orville in a rather compromising situation with Sir Clement after the opera and later being responsible for her beginning a correspondence with Lord Orville which, on Sir Clement's returning her a forged and insultingly familiar letter purporting to be from Lord Orville, results in the separation of the lovers. In addition the Snow Hill group adds a new dimension to Miss Burney's social satire. By aping the manners of the upper-class, the only distinction they can see between "the quality" and themselves, they show how rare true gentility is. Miss Hemlow explains the satire in Evelina as follows:

Laughter arises from abberations in behaviour, incongruities which become conspicuous when ranks of society differing in notions, ideas, and ideals are placed in juxtaposition. Though in this kind of exposé the vulgar suffer most, yet their shrewd (or sometimes uncomprehending) assessment of their betters serves to illuminate the sins, follies, and pretentions of the upper classes. 5

Mr. Briggs performs a similar function in Cecilia. His parsimony is a reflection on the wanton extravagance of the Harrels

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4 Forster, 80.

5 Hemlow, Fanny Burney: Playwright, 182.

and their social set. Besides this, his disrespect mercilessly exposes the emptiness and ridiculousness of the haughty pride Mr. Delvile, senior, mistakes for nobility. Yet his character is less rich than that of the Snow Hill family Miss Burney wished to imitate because he is too flat, too impossibly exaggerated, consisting as he does of an unrelenting miserliness and a peculiarly clipped way of speaking. Where the Branghtons' qualities are drawn from life, Briggs is mainly a figment of the imagination. No one, however careful he was of his money, has ever carried his parsimony so far as to go about the house undressed to save wear and tear on his clothes, to write on a slate to s$_a$ve money on paper and ink and then refuse to sharpen the slate pencil because of the waste or to live solely on gruel, cold water, and stale meat, as Briggs does. The only time he really comes to life occurs when he is teamed with the other tradesmen, the complacent Hobson and the servile Simkin, whose qualities are again, like those of the Branghtons, such as can be found in life. Then, like the ton the three one-dimensional characters interact to give the effect of a whole much greater than the sum of its parts and we feel we are seeing many aspects of the tradesman's world. Briggs was a controversial figure at the time of publication. "'What disputes too', said Mrs. Chapone, 'there are about Briggs. I was in a room some time ago where somebody said there could be no such character; and a poor little mean city man, who was there, started up and said, 'But there is though, for I'se one myself!'" Diary and Letters, II, 257, quoted by A. Raine Ellis in Cecilia, I, 440. He was certainly less admired than the Branghtons and has not attracted any acclaim from modern critics.

In Camilla Miss Burney again attempted to recreate the middle-class figures, who had been so successful in her first novel. This time she made them a very loosely connected group consisting of Mr. Dubster, the apprentice made good through fortunate marriages, his friend, Mrs. Mittin, her friend, Mr. Dennel, and Mr. Dennel's daughter. Mr. Dennel holds very much by Mr. Branghton's values; he is attracted to Mrs. Mittin in spite of her appalling vulgarity, because she is very thrifty, and thrift to him ranks among the supreme virtues. His daughter is very young, frivolous, shallow and ignorant; she is given to making humorous remarks in the style of Polly Branghton. When Mrs. Mittin, for instance, reveals to Camilla and Miss Dennel that she is not really a Mrs., but finds it more convenient to assume that title, Miss Dennel embarrasses her by remarking that she is very old to be unmarried and adds further that she intends to be married by the time she is fifteen, because she hates the sight of an old bride. The Dennels are certainly much more credible than Mr. Briggs and in them we often feel the Snow Hill spirit. Their importance is enhanced, too, by their having a more serious function. Miss Dennel is selfish and irresponsible, thanks to an injudicious upbringing, and marries only to gratify her whims and her father's greed, with the result that her marriage is unhappy. In this she is a contrast to the well principled heroine, who is finally rewarded with a happy marriage to a wealthy man whom she truly loves. Mr. Dubster is another young man like Mr. Smith, who specializes in aping the quality. He is more exaggerated, but he certainly gives the reader some very amusing moments, in spite of occasionally being too obtuse and stupid to laugh at.

He is at his best when solemnly persecuting Camilla with his attentions at the public breakfast, thinking that it will please her to dance with him because Lionel has told him so as a joke, while Camilla wishes only to escape him. The guided tour around his new house, which he gives Camilla and Eugenia, is also extremely funny, since his little house encompasses in its small space all the grottos, follies, stained glass, emblems and heraldic devices of an enormous and ancient family mansion.

The Wanderer suffers from a dearth of humour of all types, as it suffers from having only short measure of all Miss Burney's best qualities. It has poor relations of the Dennels and the Branghtons in Mr. Tedman, Juliet's grocer patron, and his pretentious daughter, but their part is much too small for them to attain the importance of their predecessors.

Having looked at Miss Burney's low comedy, sophisticated verbal humour, satire of the upper-classes, and her tradesmen, we come to her most important figure, the heroine. We shall begin our examination with Evelina, not only the first but also the most convincing and amusing of them. When we try to discover the reason for Evelina's popularity, one thing we must take into account is the nature of the heroines who preceded her. Most, like Sophia in Tom Jones, played a very small part. Miss MacCarthy explains, "Male novelists had shown themselves able to create minor women characters convincingly, e.g. acidulated spinsters, redoubtable matrons, adventuresses and serving-maids, but they had always failed to create a convincing heroine." 6 Fielding and Richardson tried to create major heroines in Amelia, Pamela and Clarissa but they were only partially successful.

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6 MacCarthy, 102.

Richardson certainly tried to enter more deeply than any of his predecessors into the processes of the female mind during the period of courtship, but he had a peculiarly masculine point of view. Wish-fulfilment fantasy was obviously largely responsible for the way in which he focussed on female submission and helplessness as opposed to male aggression and dominance. For this reason we see his most famous heroine, Clarissa Harlowe, simply as a hunted object all of whose virtues tend to make her a more worthy quarry. Richardson explored in depth and in a realistic way Clarissa's reactions and distress under the very special set of circumstances in which she is placed; but she has no existence beyond the trap formed by her implacable family and her satanic lover. His first heroine, Pamela, does not even react convincingly in her similarly limited circumstances, for we can say that her ecstatic acceptance of the would-be seducer or rapist, Mr. B., as a husband is an unconvincing reaction for the virtuous young woman Pamela is supposed to be.

Fielding's Amelia has the advantage over Richardson's characters of appearing under more ordinary circumstances and he puts many realistic touches into her character, for instance allowing her the self-indulgence to send out for half a pint of white wine to comfort herself with when she feels depressed while left alone for an evening with only her children and her worries. She is not too sentimental in her relations with her family and she shows a down to earth passionate love for her husband rather than the etherialized affection of many contemporary heroines. Yet she is still very much a man's idealization. Though she suffers greatly through her husband's errors, she takes him gladly to her heart without any recriminatory

thoughts once he has seen and acknowledged his mistakes. In the same idealistic way, she is utterly impervious to the solicitations of the amourous peer, who is so much more appreciative of her charms than is her husband; never does the tiniest thought of using him for revenge on her wandering Billy ever cross her mind. Miss MacCarthy points out the difference between the male and female writers in this matter:

> Beauty and virtue are the philosopher's stone in the men's novels. Tom Jones may go a-roving from Sophia, but he will return when he is weary of folly; she cannot really lose him if she is beautiful and good. Women knew that beauty and virtue were no talisman, and that one might retain both, without winning happiness. Nor did they account it happiness to await the magnanimous return of the prodigal. Fielding, Smollett and Richardson take it for granted that the woman is ready to take back the young hero after a thousand amorous adventures..... If the young man sows wild oats, then he must eat bitter bread. That is the woman's attitude. 7

We never see Miss Burney favouring a profligate.

In two of his pseudo-autobiographies, Moll Flanders and Roxana, Defoe attempted to write from a woman's point of view, but he fell as far short of achieving a realistic heroine as did Richardson though not for the same reason. Defoe's women are too flat and the few qualities they have are not drawn from life. They hold us mesmerized while we read because they are so busy and describe their spheres of action in such minute detail, but in fact they are simply counters in a financial game. Both Moll and Roxana have several husbands and many lovers but show little convincing feeling for them. Each has many children whom she professes to love, but they are very quickly forgotten in her pursuit of money and no attempt is made to recover them in prosperity. Sexual contacts to these women seldom

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7 MacCarthy, 108.

have any meaning beyond the monetary recompense they receive. Even their boasted education and talents add little to their character, for we seldom see them used. The only point of these nominal accomplishments is to increase their market value, for their attitude is that of the merchant and their bodies the commodity they sell.

Something of the impact made by Evelina may be realized, then, when we say that besides possessing the conventional attributes of the heroine, she is really a woman and really young. Into her Miss Burney infused her meories of herself at seventeen. The first thing that strikes us about Evelina is her artlessness and naiveté, conveyed even in the headlong enthusiasm of her epistolary style, as we see it in her first view of London. The numbers of people and the splendour of their dress overwhelm her. On the other hand, she is disappointed at not seeing the streets of the great city paved with gold. She writes (Evelina, 15-16):

> The houses and streets are not quite so superb as I expected... This morning we went to Portland Chapel; and afterwards we walked in the mall of St. James's Park, which by no means answered my expectations.... When Mrs. Mirvan pointed out the Palace to me- I think I was never more surprised.

She amuses us in the same way that any high-spirited, bumbling young creature does, as she takes pleasure, as well as sometimes finding pain, in gradually finding her feet socially. She cannot disguise her ignorance of social customs; at the private ball, for instance, rather than captivate the men with her beauty and grace she offends Mr. Lovel outrageously and leads Lord Orville to asses her (Evelina, 24) as "a poor weak girl" by being too shy to tell him how new she is to such scenes. Yet none of Evelina's social lapses are terribly serious; she never fails to sympathize with real distress.

Even in her worst lapse of manners, laughing in Mr. Lovel's face, although we admit the impropriety, we cannot help feeling he deserves it and, having once been similarly young and inexperienced ourselves, we find her easy to forgive. There is a delightful contrast between the desirable woman her beauty makes her appear to be and the unsure child we know she still is underneath. Anxious not to make an unfavourable impression on the handsome and courteous stranger, Lord Orville, who asks her to dance at the assembly, she is immediately paralyzed with terror on being told he is a nobleman, struck dumb by his wit and urbanity, and finally caught by him trying to sneak away and hide as a means of extricating herself from a situation where she is uncomfortably out of her depth. At the ridotto, her eagerness to make a better showing leads her into telling the lie to Sir Clement about being already engaged to dance. Her shame at being exposed in this harmless fib makes her burst into tears in fromt of all the company, a childish but a very natural reaction.

Finally we must see that Evelina has a real woman's preoccupations. At a trivial level, she cannot resist the fascination of dress, of people and of details of the social scene. More important, unlike her predecessors, she is not concerned with rape or with the problems of seclusion and attempted seduction, but with the difficulties of an ordinary courtship, above all with the problem of how a modest young lady can tell if the young gentleman she loves returns her affection before he actually makes his declaration. Her love rings true to the feelings of a young woman. She is attracted at first sight, becomes more involved with each successive meeting, realizing only late in the story that the emotion she feels for

Lord Orville is really love, not simply friendship and respect, and finally, on his first openly broaching the subject, candidly confesses her affection for him. Not for her Pamela's unemotional reserve until the magic word "marriage" is heard; nor does she practise Clarissa's deceit in withholding her feelings from the man she loves from a false sense of modesty.

Not only is Evelina the most successful and convincing of Miss Burney's heroines as an engaging personality but she succeeds in a didactic sense too, and in a didacticism which in no way detracts from her reality, as it induces no stiffness or artificiality. In Miss Burney's least intentionally didactic work, the heroine illustrates true good-nature rather than virtuous perfection and complete propriety, which is after all only an outward show. Whatever her slight failings, she had completely upright principles, which show through most of her attitudes and actions. For example, in ridiculing Mr. Lovel, who is a highly laughable figure from any point of view, she also shows how meaningless it is to be a man of fashion from the point of view of being useful to society; in comparing Lord Merton with Lord Orville, a natural reaction in a lover, she shows how objectionable the fashionable manners of her time are. She also makes a foil to reflect the failings of the other characters. Her good-nature, the result of her retired and obscure upbringing, contrasted with Madam Duval's vanity and insensitivity, shows how worthless money is without good breeding. Contrasted with the haughtiness and affectation of Mrs. Beaumont and Lady Louisa Larpent, it shows how useless high birth is without intelligence and modesty. Compared with the caustic Mrs. Selwyn, Evelina shows that even virtue and wit can be unattractive

unless softened by sweetnes and delicacy.

Of Miss Burney's later heroines, Camilla is the one who most closely imitates Evelina's naturalness, for besides her sweetness and beauty, there is a boisterousness and cheerful good humour about her, which keeps her from becoming a completely sentimental figure. She shares Evelina's preoccupation with love and courtship and has a very difficult problem indeed in understanding Edgar's vacillations. She amuses us in a similar way, too, with the naive enthusiasm with which she looks at life, but she is less consistently lifelike because of the didactic needs of the novel which she is forced to serve. She is not as capable of variation as Evelina, or as free to be natural, as she must never deviate far from perfection. As a courtesy book model her faults must be of the most trivial kind and then be only superficial or actually a matter of mistaken appearances. Such a character cannot be convincing throughout five volumes, though she does win us over on many occasions.

Cecilia is a much more self-conscious heroine than Evelina, just as her author was more self-conscious because of fame thn Evelina's had been. Though supposedly only seventeen, Cecilia's preoccupations and attitudes, not to mention her style of expression, are those of someone much older. Evelina has a natural reaction to town society and to town entertainment when she first experiences London life after the seclusion of the country. Though aware of its triviality and later, after testing it, coming into a feeling of dissatisfaction with its dissipation, she at least enjoys its novelty at first. Cecilia, on the other hand, seems to have been born with the wisdom to disapprove of town life entirely, and, most improbably, it never has any attraction

for her, not even when it is introduced by her closest childhood friend. With all her wealth she is unmindful of the pleasures of dress and of public amusements, preferring to devote her time to good books and to the poor. Yet even here her zeal is not a youthful one. She is never carried away by enthusiasm; her charity is of a prudent sort. For example, when she sees that the wants of Mrs. Hill, the poor carpenter's wife, have been temporarily relieved by Mr. Arnott, Mrs. Harrel's gentle brother, she puts up her purse until they become urgent again. Not even her marriage can move her to expressions of joy, for she sees only the seriousness of it. Her first consent to a secret marriage is wrung from her by force of circumstances rather than given of her free will. When the marriage actually takes place, she is completely awed by the solemnity and gravity of the occasion. We cannot help feeling that in her love she shows too much concern for preserving her own rigid virtue and too little for the feelings of the young man she supposedly loves. Cecilia performs satisfactorily in many scenes, particularly those describing functions with large numbers of people, but the picture of her character as a whole is not as convincing as that of Evelina and for naturalness is surpassed in many places by Camilla.

Where Cecilia is spoiled by the need to be completely exemplary and Camilla by the demands of the didactic element of the plot, Juliet in The Wanderer is spoiled by being a sentimental heroine. Like Cecilia, she is an exemplary figure with none of the liveliness and naturalness of Evelina and Camilla, but she is much more conventional than Miss Burney's other heroines. She is consistently idealized and her reactions are high-souled and melodramatic, rather

than realistic. At no point does Juliet ring true as a young lady and nowhere can the reader really identify with her. Even Miss Burney's contemporaries found this work old fashioned in all its aspects, and it was largely ignored in spite of the reputation of its author.

Having begun her career by stepping unexpectedly into the limelight, Miss Burney ended by returning into obscurity, but although her talent had declined, she had still made several important contributions to the novel and its development and had paved the way for later lady novelists. She was not at her most original with her serious and tragic characters, though at her best even with these characters she could achieve an effect equal to that of the most noted writers for the stage. Some of her originality emerged in her creation of her middle-class characters and in the gentle but telling social satire for which she used them. A more important contribution was making the writing of novels a respectable occupation for women and in introducing to the English novel a truly feminine point of view. Her preoccupation with courtship and the problems of communication and understanding between the sexes in delicate emotional matters has been one of the most popular themes with novelists for nearly two hundred years.

Fanny Burney was also one of the first novelists to concentrate attention on people's psychological states rather than on their external behaviour. Richardson had also done this in his novels, but the people on whom he concentrated were normally placed in highly unusual situations of tension and stress, whereas Fanny Burney's were studied

in the situations of ordinary life. This is particularly true of Camilla where as we have said, many of the incidents are positively trivial and simply concern problems of misunderstandings among the three households of Mr. Tyrold, Sir Hugh Tyrold, and Edgar Mandlebert. This concentration on the emotional states of a very limited group of people aroused the interest of Jane Austen, who was one of the subscribers to Camilla. Miss Austen based a good deal of her work on situations and characters originally found in Miss Burney's novels. The best known example of this borrowing is Pride and Prejudice, based on the plot of Cecilia, from which the title was taken, but Jane Austen made the situation more realistic than Fanny Burney had managed to do. Where Fanny Burney's lovers yearn idealistically for one another and are kept apart by the prejudice of Delvile's father and that of Cecilia's uncle, as reflected in his will, Jane Austen's lovers are separated at the start by their own class prejudices. In Sense and Sensibility Miss Austen adapted many separate pieces from the Burney novels. Marianne Dashwood's situation in respect to Willoughby is like Camilla's in respect to Edgar, but Marianne, tremblingly alive to the pangs of love, again like Camilla, acts characteristically by refusing to wait patiently until her lover decides to declare his feelings honestly. Willoughby, whose actions are like Edgar's, turns out to be a cad, as any man must be, one would think, who could keep his loved one in suspense for so long unnecessarily. Elinor Dashwood seems to be an expansion of Camilla's quiet and unexciting older sister, Lavinia. Miss Austen's greatest novel, Emma is similarly loosely based on a situation in Cecilia, in which Cecilia, young Delvile and poor Harriet Belfield form a love triangle.

After some heartache for the two women, however, all ends happily with Cecilia marrying Delvile and Harriet marrying Mr. Arnott. Jane Austen's similar triangle involves Emma, Mr. Knightly and another Harriet and ends with Emma married to Mr. Knightly and Harriet more suitably married to a man of her own station. In all her adaptations Jane Austen made both plots and characters much more realistic than Fanny Burney had done. She was quite probably more intelligent; certainly she was better educated and had surer taste. Another of Jane Austen's advantages was that she was less self-conscious, because society had become less suspicious of women writers; also none of her works was published without extensive revision, which she could afford to make, as she did not labour under Fanny Burney's financial insecurity. None the less, it may be seriously doubted if she would have written so well had she not had Miss Burney's work to draw on and to inspire her.

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