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The Didactic Tradition: Reformed Heroines in Fanny Burney's Novels

Didaktická tradice: napravené hrdinky v románech Fanny Burney

Bakalářská práce

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V Praze dne 13. srpna 2019

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KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

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Fanny Burney, English novel, Eighteenth century English literature, reformed heroines tradition, 18th and 19th century women writers

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with an analysis, as well as, a comparison of the novels *Evelina, Or, The History of Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), *Cecilia, Or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782) and *Camilla, Or, a Picture of Youth* (1796) written by Fanny Burney who was an influential author of women's literature in the late 18th century. Her novels are classified as part of the didactic tradition of reformed heroines that had been established at the time. Her main characters mostly follow a similar formula of their background, financial situation and moral virtue. What changes, however, is that the satiric quality of her lessons which reflects the society of the day and gains increased intensity and moral awareness.

The major part of the thesis is the analysis of *Evelina*. This section contains a discussion of the novel's narrative mode and the heroine's social development, family circumstances, mentor characters and her financial situation along with her attitude towards it; emphasizing the satirical purpose. In the first chapter, the focus is on the various misunderstandings and embarrassments which serve as tests that are necessary for her to evolve. Then it is commented on the social critique that is demonstrated on the characters who surround Evelina and then linked to the 18th century philosophy, drawing on the opinions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft, both significant figures of the period.

The second chapter is dedicated to Burney's next novel, *Cecilia*. It follows a structure analogous to the previous one and concerns the issues relevant to the content of the novel, because this time the author explores the commercialism rather than the right manners of the social sphere. The satire is more encompassing as the themes turn more serious. Nevertheless, the parallels in the heroines' circumstances are obvious.

Next, the comparison will continue with *Camilla* where the similarities and differences are most apparent as one may notice a further shift in the didactic ambition of the novel. The

lessons become more pronounced and the reform involves a higher number of characters, overall creating a more elaborate narrative, though the similarity of the topics remains strong.

The final part summarizes the progress of Burney's writing. It concerns the reception of the novels at the time of their publication and it is touched on the critical value of her lessons and the didactic message of these "guides" that were considered as good instructions for young women in society, one of her novels even being approved of as a study for youth.

ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou a porovnáním románů *Evelína* (1778), *Cecilie* (1782) a *Kamila* (1796) napsané Fanny Burneyovou, která byla vlivnou autorkou ženské literatury na konci 18. století. Její romány jsou součástí didaktické tradice reformovaných hrdinek, která vznikla v této době. Její hlavní postavy jsou vytvořeny převážně podle stejného vzoru jejich původu, finanční situace a morální ctnosti. Co se ale mění je satirická kvalita jejích lekcí, jež reflektuje společnost té doby a nabývá narůstající intenzity a morálního povědomí.

Hlavní částí této práce je analýza Evelíny. Tato sekce obsahuje diskuzi způsobu vyprávění tohoto románu a společenského vývoje, rodinné podmínky, mentorující postavy a finanční situaci hrdinky společně s jejím přístupem; s důrazem na satirický účel. V první kapitole, se soustředíme na různé nedorozumnění a trapné situace sloužící jako testy, které jsou nezbytné pro hrdinčin vývoj. Dále je komentována společenská kritika, která se projevuje na postavách, které obklopují Evelínu a pak je propojena s fíozofií 18. století vycházející z myšlení Jean-Jacques Rousseaua a Mary Wollstonecraftové, dvou významných osobností této doby.

Druhá kapitola je věnována Burneyové dalšího románu, *Cecilia*. Kapitola dodržuje analogickou strukturu té předchozí a zabývá se problematikou relevantní k obsahu tohoto románu, protože tentokrát se autorka zabývá komercializací spíše než správnými pravidly chování ve výhradně společenské oblasti. Tato satira zahrnuje více, neboť témata se změnila ve vážnější. Nicméně paralely mezi podmínkami hrdinek jsou jasné.

Dále se bude pokračovat v porovnání s Kamilou, kde jsou poddobnosti a rozdíly zjevnější, protože je možné si všimnout dalšího posunu v didaktické ambici tohoto románu. Lekce se stávají výraznějšími a reforma zahrnuje více postav, celkově vytvářejíc propracovanější narraci, přesto podobnost témat zůstává zřetelná.

Poslední část shrnuje vývoj stylu psaní Burneyové. Ten zahrnuje kritické přijetí románů v době jejich vydání a okrajově se zmiňuje satirická hodnota jejích lekcí a didaktický význam těchto „průvodců,“ které byly považovány za vhodné instrukce pro mladé ženy ve společnosti, a jedna z jejích románů byla dokonce scgválena jako studie pro mladé.

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I. Introduction

In the eighteenth century, women's literary tradition flourished and women contributed to the development of the novel with distinctively feminine themes. The topics of courtship and marriage with elaborate love plots were predominantly explored in the novels written by female authors. In connection to that, there developed a tradition that dealt with a young heroine's initiation to society and which had an educational purpose. In the words of Jane Spencer: "Heroines who made mistakes about the choice of friends, about reading matter, about lovers and love – in short about the young woman's place in the world – became standard in the late eighteenth century."¹ The reasoning behind the popularity of this convention is that the stories of those heroines could be taken as a source of proper rules of conduct for young women, and it could be a way to redeem the female sex by introducing a female perspective.

Such novels were closely related to the so called courtesy books which dealt with the topics of etiquette and morals purely for educational purposes. The first books of manners were written much earlier but with the development of the novel in the eighteenth century, these rules began to be fictionalized. According to Joyce Hemlow, the courtesy books were in favour because "they reflected a preoccupation with manners, which [...] is widely marked as one of the characteristics of the age."² By writing about how women view the society and describing a process in which they integrate into it, as well as, their position and functions, it was a chance for the female writers to introduce more complex female characters³ than those presented through the lenses of men who perceived women as the weaker sex. A similar opinion to Spencer is supported by Hemlow who claims that "the courtesy book offered an

¹ Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) 141.

² Joyce Hemlow, 'Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books,' *PMLA* 65.5 (1950): 732, JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/459572>, 6 Aug 2019.

³ Spencer (1986), 143.

opportunity for female writers to express their ideas of moral reform and to fulfil the function assigned to them as refiners and critics of manners.’’⁴

The novels of Fanny Burney, also known as *Madame d'Arblay*, are a significant part of this literary tradition. They portray heroines who possess endearing feminine features, virtue and a sense of morality which are all extolled characteristics in the case of women, however, the heroines in need of reform are not accustomed to the ways of high society and before they can be approved by it, they must first conform to its rules. Their naivety, that is actually clumsy inexperience, cause errors in their behaviour and these shortcomings need to be addressed in order for them to become acceptable members of society at large and by extension to be a worthy companion for a man. The aim of the novels is to lead the heroines through the process of realizing what the right choices are, mainly through negative clashes with the established order while following moral sense. In this aspect, the author is enabled to also convey her personalised opinion as mentioned in the citation by Hemlow.

This thesis focuses Fanny Burney's most notable works: *Evelina* (1778), *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796). They will be examined within the context of the didactic tradition in the eighteenth century. It begins with the analysis of *Evelina* and the other two novels are successively examined and compared among each other. The subject of study is the heroine's background and standing in society, her moral sense and obstacles that she must overcome. On one hand, these difficult affairs assist in delineating the characteristics of the heroines, and the, for the reader, clear transgressions show her lack of awareness. On the other hand, the character perceives those lapses as mistakes only in retrospect after experiencing a certain level of humiliation, an element also inherent to the process of reformation. The heroine's traits and the circumstances that draw the problems forth in the plot shall be followed by the description of the guardians and mentors who have decisive influence on the heroine's

⁴ Hemlow, 733.

development and who guide her towards mental maturity. Then there is a section dedicated to the financial conditions since material matters are a strong theme shared by the novels. It touches on issues connected to female position, which are to be resolved for the heroines by an ending in marriage, common for all three, the marriage plot being a literary convention typical of eighteenth-century novels as well.

The contemporary reader could encounter many variations when it comes to the reason for the heroine's reform as there is a number of novels which demonstrate different ways by which the conduct of young women can be corrected. Spencer includes authors such as: Catharine Trotter, Mary Davys, Eliza Haywood, Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Inchbald, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. It seems that Burney belongs rather to the conservative strand which preaches conformity in the sense that the presentation of her ideas is not overtly criticizing the patriarchal character of the society and her views are indeed conservative as opposed to the other female authors who attack the established gender roles or rather radically tackle controversial topics, incorporating various kinds of protest into their works. Despite her conventional stories the satire to be found is a highly reflective and inherent part of her style, and what is more, she shows that there is room for critique within the tradition, specifically the role of the mentor⁵.

The idea of mentor-heroine relationship is the essence of the tradition. It is the central teaching strategy and captures the order in society as it places the mentor, who is an older male, into a superior position and the need to form the heroines character in this way implies the distrust towards a woman's character. The disapproval with this inequality is expressed in *Evelina* when the lover-mentor, Lord Orville, gives up his position in a pivotal moment⁶. This also demonstrates Burney's conservatism when contrasted, for instance, with Edgeworth subverting the gender roles of the mentor and erring hero in *Belinda*, finding fault with the

⁵ Spencer (1986), 157.

⁶ Spencer (1986), 157.

lover-mentor instead of the heroine. Moreover, the female authors question the effectivity of this relationship and its incestuous implications. According to Spencer, “only by giving her heroine such an excess of delicacy that seems quite impervious to sexual desire did Burney avoid the incestuous implications of this relationship.”⁷ And in this way, she managed to show that this aspect is not an issue for her and avoided a problematic issue.

Nevertheless, the progress that had been achieved from the time *Evelina* was published to the third novel *Camilla* can be understood as a significant achievement of didacticism as it had become a widely read genre.⁸ Burney was influenced by the ongoing innovations of the didactic tradition and she tried to adapt while holding onto her views while the literary conventions were used to attack the established order in the society. Over the course of her writing career it is also possible to observe a shift in the portrayal of the characters, gradually introducing more fallibility in the males.

The conclusion to this thesis comments on the reception of Fanny Burney’s novels and their overall message in relation to contemporary society. The discussion of the reformation of her heroines will hopefully serve as a compact overview of the author’s work in the perspective of the didactic tradition.

II. Evelina

II.1 Entering Society

When *Evelina* enters London society it is her first experience away from Rev. Villars who, despite of not being her biological father, is an influential father figure to her and to whom she decides to turn, seeking advice in numerous letters that form a major part of the epistolary narrative. The life in the city is very new to her and this becomes apparent as her entrance is accompanied by many blunders. Soon into her stay in London she meets the

⁷ Spencer (1986), 160.

⁸ Spencer (1986), 164.

charming Lord Orville, who is to become her lover-mentor. The encounter takes place at a ball which is the scene set for the first in a series of errors on Evelina's part. The reader is a witness to her failure to navigate the unwritten social rules that are known to everyone to be the natural ways of the high-born community.

As Evelina attempts to adapt, it is difficult for her to think for herself and the mentor plays a significant role in her learning process. It is evident that, as was summarized by Julia Epstein, "Evelina has great trouble identifying herself as an independent agent. She reads her identity, instead, in the gaze turned on her every move by Lord Orville, who along with Villars represents the novel's tribunal of social behaviour."⁹ She is often under the scrutiny of others because the situations she finds herself in always appear to be very scandalous, even though the opposite is true. But she also partly inflicts this constant supervision upon herself for even when she is not in the presence of her guides she finds herself unsure and in her mind she still sees herself through the eyes of social judgment. As a result, her confidence in herself and her actions suffers as she is unable to defend herself against the low opinions of the other characters due to her timidity.

Nevertheless, she is by no means simple. Owing to her upbringing that took place in a rural environment, she is ignorant of the urban sophisticated ways, yet her natural wit shines through. In fact, the level of her inexperience is deliberate because, according to Jane Spencer, the heroine has a particular function, "as a naïve observer, Evelina is a satirical device."¹⁰ For example, this becomes obvious in the account of her encounters with society when she reveals the superficiality of its members:

Shy and easily abashed in company, tart and witty in her letters, Evelina manages to combine innocent appreciation with a satire on its follies. Her letters create the other characters; and young

⁹ Julia Epstein, "Marginality in Frances Burney's Novels," *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth Century Novel*, ed. John Richetti, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 198-209.

¹⁰ Jane Spencer, "Evelina and Cecilia," *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 28.

man's conceited foppishness, Mdm Duval's rudeness and ignorance, the Branghtons' inept social airs, and Mrs Selwyn's satiric bite are all conveyed through her dramatizations. She also hints at the nastiness underlying the ordered social world, evident in the barely suppressed violence of Captain Mirvan's practical joke, and while praising her hostess, Mrs Mirvan she manages to convey her dismay at the Mirvans' unhappy marriage, in which the wife's principal study seems to be healing these wounds which her husband inflicts.¹¹

Thus, as it becomes clear from the quotation above, her initiation is a crucial point in the plot rendering her both subject for reform and a reflective surface for the other characters.

Although she is unaware of the social customs she has a well-developed sense of judgment, and she does not refrain from expressing these opinions in her letters. With her blushing and unassuming countenance, she is a passive participant. Nevertheless, she is also an acute observer when the characters mentioned above are in the midst of betraying themselves to their flaws. Joanne Cutting-Gray opens her article by pointing out that Fanny Burney related to one of her sisters that "[Evelina] had been brought up in the strictest retirement, that she knew nothing of the world, and only acted from the impulses of Nature."¹² Equipped only with acute understanding of her surroundings but lacking the knowledge of correct social behaviour, she pays attention to everything she can that can be useful to her in finding the right responses of her own, unfortunately it is clear she finds herself in a company much below her.

She is surrounded by characters who are all meant to be critiqued. The Branghtons' attitude is jarring because they put on airs, but it is obvious they are socially inept as is to be observed, for instance, during their visit to the opera that they go to for the first time.

Although they go with Evelina, who had been there before, they do not think of asking her for advice and manage to look ridiculous to any observer. The reason they refuse her counsel is,

¹¹ Spencer (2007), in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, 28.

¹² Joanne Cutting-Gray, "Writing Innocence: Fanny Burney's *Evelina*," *Tulsa Studies in Women Literature* 9.1 (1990): 43, JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/464180>, 27 Jul 2019

as explained by Evelina, “they were unwilling to suppose that their *country cousin*, as they were pleased to call me, should be better acquainted with any London public place than themselves.”¹³ Any time Evelina tries to describe the correct behaviour that is customary for opera or when the party notices how her right actions mismatches theirs, they are immediately insulted. They presuppose that she considers herself to be above them, a perception that is strikingly askew as they are the ones who look down on her. This combination of pride and social inadequacy creates embarrassing situations, which are deeply affecting Evelina. At first, they do not know which way to enter and then Mr Branghton is very vocal when he becomes indignant over the price. Then during the performance, they keep talking and complaining about the play not being in English or that it is either too short or too long. In addition, they are stubbornly blind to the fact that their behaviour is overall very vulgar in such a place. Despite this Evelina endeavours to enjoy the opera only to be ridiculed for being pretentious. It is clear that, the Branghtons might think they are better than a girl with a country education but what they lack is self-awareness that Evelina possesses and that is what helps her to grow. For all their airs and sense of self-importance, they are indeed in no way superior to her.

Another faulty disposition is represented by Mdm. Duval, Evelina’s grandmother, who is ignorant, irrational, opiniated and loud in her resentment of the English, and also immune to the impact of many social transgressions she commits, even offended by advice. Essentially, she is an example of what the heroine should never aspire to be, despite Mdm. Duval being her relation. Her main adversary is Captain Mirvan who is callous and barbaric in his humour that has to do with anything that is not English because “he has a fixed and most prejudiced hatred”¹⁴ for whatever falls outside his criteria, a point made and explored in a collaborative work by Brean Hammond and Shaun Ragan. His character is painted vividly from the

¹³ Fanny Burney, *Evelina* (London: J.M. Dent, 1967) 83.

¹⁴ Burney, *Evelina* 43.

moment he is introduced but it is only when he attacks Mdm. Duval that one realizes the extent of his cruelty. He ambushes her when she sets out in a carriage in reaction to a letter that had been forged by the captain. His assault is very physical and Mdm. Duval is left in torn clothes and covered in dirt to which Evelina comments “she hardly looked human.”¹⁵ It is clear Captain Mirvan goes too far and Hammond and Ragan describe him as “an intimidating, misogynistic bully. As Margaret Doody observes, Mirvan ‘regards physical assault on a woman under the guise of jest as a sublime source of social pleasure.’”¹⁶ The barely suppressed violence of the Captain also hints at the taste in violence that is present in the male community.

The relationship between Captain Mirvan and his wife is also not to be overlooked. Spencer pointed out Evelina’s dismay over the match. In this way, through the character’s innocent observation Burney touches on the reality of the contemporary attitude to marriage as an institution that serves as protection for the woman in society. The incompatibility of the two spouses was not an unusual circumstance. In this case, Mrs Mirvan has no power over her husband’s behaviour and is there to control the damage. The reason they got married is probably because the union was favourable for both at the time. Now, Mrs Mirvan has to be the perfect wife and support her husband no matter the behaviour, for she cannot order him to stop his deplorable pastimes which are offensive and sometimes even harmful to others. The ill-suited pair is a sort of cautionary tale for Evelina. As Mary Wollstonecraft argues,

A sensible, delicate woman, who by some strange accident, or mistake, is joined to a fool or a brute, must be wretched beyond all names of wretchedness, if her views are confined to a present scene. Of what importance, then, is intellectual improvement, when our comfort here, and happiness hereafter, depends upon it.¹⁷

¹⁵ Burney, *Evelina* 137.

¹⁶ Brean Hammond and Shaun Ragan, *Making the Novel: Fiction and Society in Britain, 1660-1789* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 225.

¹⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, “Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: with Reflections on Female Conduct, in the more important Duties of Life” *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. Vivien Jones (London: Routledge, 1990) 56.

Evelina sees the repercussion for a wrong choice of partner, and that there is even a probability it is difficult to reason with him. The vulgar and uncontrollable behaviour of one spouse casts bad light upon both, the sensibility of the other matters little and is only detrimental to them because the more of opposite temperament they are the more miserable is their situation.

As part of her education, Evelina must realize she is doomed when seen associating with these individuals, and that her own character is doubted by most people she meets, her companions included. Unfortunately, during the course of the events in which she, in her own mind, seems to be an innocent party, her passivity and inability to communicate efficiently cause that her presence is interpreted as voluntary participation. A notable example is when she finds herself in the company of prostitutes and the circumstances of her involvement are assumed for her. This and many other uncomfortable situations can be taken as the catalyst for her reform as they represent lessons for Evelina and they will be explored in the next section. The reader can see her progress gradually throughout the novel. In her second visit to London, she has acquired more independence and one can see more of her personality when she makes her decision to help Mr Macartney and keep his secret. This again causes an unwanted misinterpretation of the truth but Evelina's determination supported by her newly gained social confidence¹⁸ makes it apparent to Lord Orville that she must have reasons for her actions and he opts to put his trust in her, an important sign of how much she has changed.

The heroine evolves from a shy blushing young girl, who finds herself often unable to talk, into a young, self-aware, though still a little self-conscious, woman. She was able to achieve that only after being released from the anxious watch of Rev. Villars and finding her own way in the city where the social sphere has much more to offer. Although his influence

¹⁸ Spencer (2007), in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, 30.

does not disappear, his advice comes late, after the events had already taken place, which does not allow him to prevent Evelina's misfortunes or to mould her mind, she has to act for herself and figure out how to proceed alone. As she stumbles on her way to maturity, she uncovers the shortcomings of those around her, and learns from their mistakes. Finally, succeeding in her reform and finding her independence as a woman, she also stays by the side of a male character, thus remaining under a male authority, and not disrupting the patriarchal system. *Evelina* then contains advice that was fitting for the society model at the time.

II.2 Misunderstandings As a Way to Reform

From the first moment she enters the public sphere, Evelina is constantly being tested. She encounters situations that she has no prior experience with, and oftentimes her reaction is confusing for others as she bases her conduct not on social rules but on her common sense. Therefore, her solutions are not ideal but her point of view in the letters reveals the purity of her intentions, which then seems obvious. This perspective is multidimensional as the events become her past experience which she recounts in repose, after she re-visits her embarrassment with temporal distance and has enough time to consider every angle of her interaction. Only then she writes it down in her own voice. This kind of narrative might be a deliberate strategy Burney had chosen for its retrograde nature, which is suggestive of the attitude of Wollstonecraft whose point shows the importance of choosing one's partner carefully:

Very frequently, when the education has been neglected, the mind improves itself, if it has leisure for reflection, and experience to reflect on; but how can this happen when they are forced to act before they have had time to think, or find that they are unhappily married? Nay, should they be so fortunate as to get a good husband, they will not set a proper value on him; he will be found much inferior to the lovers described in novels,

and their want of knowledge makes them disgusted with the man, when the fault is human nature.¹⁹

In Evelina's case, it is clear that her country education was insufficient and that under the protective wing of Rev. Villars she had been shielded too much from the ways of the world, especially the strict discrimination in the city. So in the time of the "delaying actions that dot the road between a young woman's emergence from her father's protection and the subsumption of her identity into that of her husband,"²⁰ which, according to Epstein, are the basis of the eighteenth-century courtship novels, the heroine has enough time to learn from new experiences that could not have occurred had she stayed at home. The second part of the citation touches on the positive outcome of learning the faults of the society and the people it is made of. In case of Evelina, after all her undesirable encounters with the abominable male tendencies, she comes to treasure Lord Orville's sensitivity. Another effect of thus chosen narrative is that the judgement of the reader is affected by the knowledge of her motivations and potential young female readers can understand the lessons fully because, in addition to readability, it demonstrates that good intentions make no difference in the end. What is more, the letter writing is a medium that makes the content relatable, for reading private correspondence can be considered a kind of an affective strategy when the reader is subjected to the private world of the characters through the familiar way of communication and connects to the material on a personal level.

As she describes her first encounter with London society, she already presents the first lesson. Evelina is confused about the conventions at a ball. Her mistake is that she refuses to dance with the first gentleman who asks her, then consenting to dance with the next. The denied partner is offended by this, which causes Evelina to remember this rule that was so insignificant for her she forgot it, and is so natural to others that Mrs. Mirvan, the woman who

¹⁹ Wollstonecraft, in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* 54.

²⁰ Epstein, in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth Century Novel* 199.

chaperoned her to the ball, did not think to instruct her because “she had taken it for granted [Evelina] must have known such common customs.”²¹ This scene demonstrates just how new she is to this world. Additionally, during her dance with the desired partner, Lord Orville, she is shy, blushing persistently and says very little, ultimately coming off as ill-mannered. She fails to justify her actions as is she unable to communicate properly, too overcome by this environment which is a proof of her innocence and presents her to the reader to be at the proper beginning of the reform she shall be subjected to.

Burney is simultaneously showing us that although she is lost, she is not without awareness, as Cutting-Gray claims, “her response is spontaneous but not discriminating, intuitively just, but not socially correct.”²² Again the attention is drawn to her natural intelligence, which implies that she is worth being reformed. During the ball, there is merely a roughness to her manners, as it seems ridiculous to her that she would dance with someone foppish like Mr. Lovel, she deals with him very clumsily. The insight here is the decision to spare herself from spending the evening with someone pretentious like him, probably not wanting to be a subject to male condescension²³ which is inherent to men due to having the privilege to dominate this social exchange. Spencer suggests that by doing this, she unwittingly presents herself as a coquette because her actions go against the established role of a woman in courtship.²⁴ After this ball, even the character is aware she should approach the situation differently in the future.

At the second ball, and with the full knowledge of the customs, she still attempts to take control, however, to have this control over the choosing process is a male right. And she merely manages to cause another faux pas. When she is approached by the rakish Mr. Willoughby Evelina is determined not to repeat the humiliation she suffered at the previous

²¹ Burney, *Evelina* 30.

²² Cutting-Gray, 46.

²³ Cutting-Gray, 46.

²⁴ Spencer (1986), 154.

dance, she lies that she is already engaged. What she did not predict was her undesired partner being discourteous to her wishes and insisting on keeping her company even after she outrightly expressed her want to be left alone. As a consequence of his impertinent presence, she insinuates that she might be engaged to Lord Orville. This only leads to another embarrassment because she freely uses another gentlemen's name without his knowledge, potentially being a cause for indignation of all parties involved. Fortunately, Lord Orville reacts positively and further establishes his role as a lover-mentor. This kind of mistake is accompanied by a strong feeling of shame that forces her to understand what behaviour is proper. In this lesson, she learns the rules and the consequences of breaking them. Misunderstandings are the tool used in ensuring her evolution. John Skinner has referred to the fact that the "novel has already been characterized as an epic of social embarrassment."²⁵ Indeed, the ball scenes are merely fragments of all the humiliation Evelina faces while on her journey to self-actualization and each of her lessons is painfully effective.

The next instance of a serious misunderstanding occurs in the Marylebone Gardens where the party she stays with goes to see a fire-work exhibit. She is subjected to another mortifying experience which reveals the harsh consequences of non-standard behaviour. She gets separated from others by accident and when she finds herself alone is exposed to strangers. It was a horrifying incident which is clearly devoted to the issue of gender politics in the novel. By finding herself on her own she is someone who ventured into the public sphere alone which others view as her being a woman who belongs on the streets. She was appalled by men taking advantage of her obvious discomfort. She describes them as men "to whom my distress [...] only furnished a pretence for impertinent witticisms, or free gallantry."²⁶ And after even a police officer acted quite violently towards her she sought out

²⁵ John Skinner *An Introduction to Eighteenth-century Fiction: Raising the Novel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 203.

²⁶ Burney, *Evelina* 217.

the safety of two women nearest to her, crying out “for heaven’s sake dear ladies offer me some protection!”²⁷ The men are ready to take advantage of her vulnerability and she even turns away from a man of law who is an official representative of the civilized structure, to seek out the protection of women instead. Inadvertently, she rejects the proper society in favour of those who are shunned by it and realizes too late that she joined the company of two prostitutes. This innocent action has a graver outcome when they run into Lord Orville again who is astonished to see Evelina with women of such repute. Evelina fails to justify herself yet again, in the words of Julia Epstein, “in typical form she remains mute and unable to express herself other than by looking at the ground.”²⁸ She still has not found her voice which will be crucial in her achieving self-actualization. Fortunately, he is still sure of her virtue and tries to warn her instead of condemning her. Therefore, there are no lasting consequences but the deep shame she experienced made her realize how important and fragile her reputation as a woman is. The paradox remains, however, that despite being ashamed of her company she feels safer with the two prostitutes rather than in the company of Willoughby or other men who are dictated by social rules to behave gallantly and help a woman in distress, and therefore they violate the collective values they are supposed to embody. What is exemplified here is that “within this world, male harassment is often masked by ‘gallantry’, an otherwise acceptable form of polite courtship but which high-born yet morally disputable men seek to exploit to their own (sexual) ends,”²⁹ as summarised by Hammond and Ragan. The society is contradictory in its nature and the problem is inherent to the members of the very same society that criticizes Evelina for appearing in a company that they had themselves forced her into, moreover, those who are considered to have fallen low actually provide the needed security.

²⁷ Burney, *Evelina* 217.

²⁸ Epstein, in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth Century Novel* 202.

²⁹ Hammond and Ragan, 219.

Another example that causes her to be suspected of impertinence comes soon after. When the Branghtons and Mdm. Duval find out her acquaintance with Lord Orville and decide to use his coach using Evelina's name, she is horrified to be perceived as someone who boasts of her relationship with Lord Orville, yet again put down by her ill-suited company. This time she attempts to speak up, nevertheless, she is still unable to stop them from their behaviour and decides to write a note to Lord Orville in order to explain that the carriage was requested against her wishes. She finally breaks the pattern of her reactions. Unfortunately, the correspondence is intercepted and her voice is suppressed and while the story returns to this incident later, the true content is never physically presented to the addressee.

The communication is an important part of her process because she repeatedly finds herself in situations that may at first seem as if they are happening to her without any contribution from her side but as she gains presence of mind she realizes the possible consequences more quickly and it is also easier for her to express herself, finally consciously trying to alleviate the consequences of those misunderstandings by her own actions. It teaches that one should take responsibility for their actions and makes a point that silence can be interpreted either way, often as compliance.

II.3 Family Figures and Mentors

The guidance that Evelina receives is strongly patriarchal. She has two key mentors that are male and the feasible feminine influence is disregarded. She has been raised by a strong father figure, Rev. Villars. However, he is not her biological father. She is in the position of an heiress who is unknown to be one. Throughout the novel she is practically nameless and uses a name that does not belong to her. In one of her letters, she writes "I

cannot to you sign *Anville*, and what other name may I claim?’’³⁰ She is then in need of the direction of her mentors for she cannot be guided by her family. It is true that Mdm. Duval is her biological grandmother and has the privilege to contribute to her reform but she is not a good influence at all and her ignorant and rude manners are a source of embarrassment for her. Her trust, therefore, remains in the man that raised her, devoting herself to a patriarchal authority. In relation to this matter, Jane Spencer has expressed the fact that “‘with its strong emotional investment in the heroine’s relationship to her father and father figures, *Evelina* honours the patriline and is ambivalent about the matriline, dividing it onto a good dead mother and a bad living grandmother.’’³¹ So there is a female figure who could have been a fit authority for *Evelina*. Nonetheless, she is not present because of her death, thus, this claim of being ‘a good mother’ is empty, and can be seen as a mere idealization which contributed to the tragic story surrounding her death, the only thing everyone remembers about her. The female voice is then disregarded and her reform is the product of a masculine perspective. Spencer argues that,

A female teacher is not always central, however. Often she plays a subordinate role to a male teacher – the heroine’s lover and her mentor – takes the dominant role. The relationship between a faulty heroine and her lover-mentor conveniently combines love story and moral lesson, and reflects the sexual hierarchy established in society³²

Although we can find some hints of feminist thinking, her way of writing is hardly oppositional.

The question of gender is notable in the temporal context since at the time of Fanny Burney’s life there was a significantly unequal relationship between the sexes. The Age of Reason that valued logic above all produced great advancements in all areas, including

³⁰ Burney, *Evelina* 21.

³¹ Spencer (2007), in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, 27.

³² Spencer (1986), 145.

philosophy, focus of which contained also the questions of the society's structure concerning man as an individual in relation to being part of a group. This involves the process of socialization. One of the prominent figures was the philosopher Jean-Jacque Rousseau who is known for his theory of The Social Contract and for creating a model of schooling system. In his work *Emile, or On Education*, he expresses his opinions on how the youth should be raised. In these theories, women have little space and they are seen primarily in their role of mothers and the matter of female cultivation is sparse. Nevertheless, he did voice his perspective and there is a section, though not substantial, which deals with the education of young girls. The way he views the part of a woman in a man's life is that they are to be taught how to be perfect companions corresponding with the man's needs, which puts them in inferior position.

Paul Thomas claims that many women read and reacted to Rousseau and especially his fifth chapter, Mary Wollstonecraft being the most vocal wrote a response *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. He supports this claim by a citation from Joan Landes, according to whom, "[Rousseau] did not just write about women. He wrote *to* them. And by the way of his address, he interpellated women as a new kind of political and moral subject... There is massive evidence that Rousseau was read, discussed, appropriated and resisted by women of his age."³³ It is highly likely, Burney was influenced by his philosophy, too. For, because of this popularity "whether Fanny Burney read *Emile* or not, she could not avoid hearing much about it in current literary discussions,"³⁴ as mentioned by Rose Cutting. Evelina's maturing process is a feminine take on a woman's education. She might have felt the need to create a story that showed women as intelligent and redeemable in objection to Rousseau's sexism, as well as, commenting on his teaching process in *Emile*, with which she disagreed. And

³³ Joan Landes, "Rousseau's Reply to Public Women," in *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988) 67, quoted in Paul Thomas, "Jean-Jacque Rousseau, Sexist?" *Feminist Studies* 17.2 (1991): 196. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178331>, 29 Jul 2019.

³⁴ Hemlow, 745.

eventually, in her third novel, as claimed by Joyce Hemlow she “takes considerable trouble to depict the disastrous progress of those who follow new systems.”³⁵ Because she thinks if young mothers are influenced by such reading it might lead them astray³⁶. Nevertheless, although radicality is present in her works she does not share it overtly and, as mentioned in the introduction, she is classified as a conservative writer in Spencer’s reading. Therefore, she manages to firmly respect the patriarchal authority.

In the first half of the novel, Rev. Villars’ opinion has the most sway over Evelina’s relationship to herself and the world around her. Although he appears as a caring fatherly figure his influence is stifling for her. According to Skinner, “some readers have even seen Burney as satirizing the over-fussy paternal figure; the circumstances of her own life certainly provided material.”³⁷ He seems to be more of a moral presence rather than being honestly interested in the well-being of his daughter. Caroline Gonda also supports this perspective by pointing out it has also been suggested by Epstein that Evelina’s account in the letters addressed to Villars are not written without prior consideration in regards to Villars’ controlling disposition.³⁸ This means that it is a significant part of her mental emancipation when she shakes of her dependence on his person.

Skinner’s modern translation of what Villars had written to her at one point gives us a clear insight in what he thinks of Evelina, as well. It implies that he is not as sympathetic to her as it may seem. He views them as something to be expected and essentially says he has never planned for her straying for so long. In letter XXIV in volume I he writes:

Alas, my child, the artlessness of your nature, and the simplicity of your education, alike unfit you for the thorny paths of the great and busy world. The supposed obscurity of your birth and situation, makes you liable to a thousand disagreeable

³⁵ Hemlow, 746.

³⁶ Hemlow, 746.

³⁷ Skinner, 206.

³⁸ Caroline Gonda, *Reading Daughters’ Fictions 1799-1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 117.

adventures. Not only my views, but my hopes for your future life, have ever centred in the country.³⁹

When this is put into terms more familiar to the present-day reader, the content sounds insensitive. According to Skinner,

the passage is more interesting for its total repression of gender awareness on the part of the writer; or, as a more astringent modern gloss might put it, 'you've been kept naïve and ignorant, so you have no prospects; the fact you're anybody will expose you to constant sexual harassment and exploitation; and I'd always intended you should stay at home and look after me, anyway!'⁴⁰

Other than the commentary in his letters he does not try to take any noteworthy action about her situation. Villars is somewhat very passive in the narrative since the advice comes after the events had already taken place, even his approval for Evelina's marriage with Lord Orville comes after everything had already been decided. Mr. Villar's distance is felt strongly as via his replies the reader accesses what happened through a second opinion and this retrospection also gives the readers a chance to think about the situation themselves, not affected by Evelina's narrative but by a moral voice that is judging the optimality of Evelina's actions. His involvement in Evelina's reform is more of a third voice commentary⁴¹ and when it comes to his influence over Evelina it is to be partially broken away from, otherwise she would achieve little progress because she would have to adhere to his strict morality and be smothered under his care.

Although this growth required a sort of rebellion, the strict patriarchal authority remains. She is a very loyal to her father figures, for Mr Villars she is a meticulous informant about everything that happens in the time of his absence. For her actual blood relation, Sir

³⁹ Burney, *Evelina* 109.

⁴⁰ Skinner, 206.

⁴¹ Skinner, 205.

John Belmont, she is determined to be a true daughter to him and when he tried to keep his distance from her, believing she must detest him, she passionately cries out:

“‘Oh sir,’ exclaimed I, “that you could but read my heart!- that you could but see the filial tenderness and concern with which it overflows!- you would not then talk thus,- you would not then banish my presence, and exclude me from your affection!’”⁴²

She assures him she is happy to be finally reunited with him and does not put any blame on him for everything his past mistakes had caused her. She highly esteems the male authorities and is forgiving of their flaws. Additionally, she is terrified of disappointing her future husband Lord Orville.

More prominent in the role of the mentor is her to-be-lover Lord Orville who, unlike Villars, is firmly in place in person as part of her visits to London. His guidance is also more subtle and he controls her reform mainly through his opinion of Evelina. The social situations in which she experiences humiliation motivate her to rise in his eyes the next time she sees him. For her, Lord Orville is a welcome presence, he is an example of the correct gentlemanly conduct. The interactions are always pleasant because in spite of the circumstances he keeps decorum and maintains a good opinion of Evelina. It is a contrast of perfect behaviour as opposed to Evelina’s stumbling around and this puts him into a position of someone to whose level she can aspire in the social sphere of the city. She develops a liking for him because he never uses his male privilege to take advantage of her as do others, like Mr Willoughby or the men whose behaviour had been commented on earlier in relation to the prostitutes. Hammond and Ragan even go as far as claiming that “‘to a certain degree, Orville can be regarded as a feminized man,’”⁴³ mainly due to his attentive nature and readiness to help those around him. This certainly removes him as a threat and his countenance and impeccable manners distinguish him from his own sex.

⁴² Burney, *Evelina* 357.

⁴³ Hammond and Ragan, 2018.

In the narrative he seems to be above her, yet his superiority is only as far as it concerns her reform since it is a cornerstone to his role as a mentor. According to Hammond and Ragan, “in Evelina’s eyes, Orville’s manners are so elegant, so gentle, so unassuming, that they at once engage esteem and diffuse complacency.”⁴⁴ He is endeared to her through his genuine politeness and it is the fact that she finds him worthy through using her own judgment that contributes to the strong impact he has on her. What contributes greatly to Evelina’s responsiveness is that Lord Orville’s way of guiding Evelina is also more liberal than that of the didactic Mr Villars. It is described by Spencer who maintains that “Orville was the perfect hero because at the crucial moment he abdicated his position as Evelina’s moral guide.”⁴⁵ Thus the process of reform comes across as more of her own doing than being led step-by-step by somebody else. She can truly achieve her own reform. Orville also repeatedly expresses trust in her; he is willing to put “blindfold trust”⁴⁶ in her, as referred to by Spencer. And this is what allows her to trust Orville in return.

II.4 The Heroine’s Financial Situation

Evelina is presented as a woman of obscure birth. Many characters including Evelina know her real identity of an heiress but, since she remains unrecognized by her father who is not aware of her situation, she has to navigate the society as someone with little protection and is primarily defined by her position of a woman. She has no money of her own but the reader is aware she has a right to a fortune. The necessity to stand as an individual, rather than hiding behind a title and promising prospects that she would owe to her substantial value on the marriage market, allows her to become aware of the harsh reality of the world and at the end of her reformation connected with learning how to deftly operate the ways of society

⁴⁴ Hammond and Ragan, 218.

⁴⁵ Spencer (1986), 157.

⁴⁶ Spencer (1986), 156.

she also matures into a polished young woman. However, when we arrive at the point of the recognition by Sir John Belmont, she does not find independence.

Upon her acknowledgement she does not get to enjoy her rightful status because there is a complication in the form of another young girl that had been raised in Evelina's place. Therefore, it is desired to resolve the situation quickly in a way that would avoid scandal. Sir Belmont puts together a plan to hide the names of the girls in marriage. This decision is revealed to her by Mrs Selwyn who announces that she is to marry Lord Orville and that "if either of you have any inclination to pull any caps for the title of Miss Belmont, you must do it with all speed, as next week will take from both of you all pretensions to it."⁴⁷ Evelina then owns the name Belmont only briefly and signs one and only letter with it, addressed to Mr, Villars. She also receives only half of what could belong to her, but Evelina is not a character who is motivated by money. Her wish to be reunited with her father and hope he will acknowledge her as his own was simply that, lacking further agenda. When he does not spend time with her she is disappointed by his dismissal and wants to "endeavour, by dutiful assiduity, to engage his kindness."⁴⁸ Furthermore, she agrees to the plan of the arranging the two marriages without much persuasion in order to spare the poor imposter, and Mr. Macartney who is to marry the girl, the humiliation of "unflattering genealogy,"⁴⁹ and does not consider her heiress privileges. In the successive novels, *Cecilia* and *Camilla*, the dramatizations of the heroines' relationship to money occupy more space and, yet again, the way the heroines treat their financial resources develops from good intentions, much like Evelina's pureness, and fit into the moral ideal.

⁴⁷ Burney, *Evelina* 351.

⁴⁸ Burney, *Evelina* 352.

⁴⁹ Burney, *Evelina* 352.

II.5 End in Marriage

The plot is concluded with Evelina's marriage to Lord Orville. This can certainly be considered a happy ending for Evelina because she rises in her station and gains a husband who has proven to be a worthy companion in her eyes. Although this is also a resolution to the romantic aspect of the novel, it is still didactic. After she withstood all the trials and finished her reform, the courtship period is followed by the next logical step, and after maturing she becomes a good wife. She does not fail to perform her duty of a good daughter either. Upon being told how soon the wedding is to take place, her reaction is that she should not act without the blessing of Mr. Villars "I should be for ever miserable, [were] I in an affair so important, to act without the sanction of Mr. Villar's advice."⁵⁰ Regardless of the possibility this was a calculating comment on her part when she writes the letter, or if she was honest in her wish, the obedience to the patriarchal authority is obvious to the very end. And after she receives the letter where Mr. Villars expresses his heartfelt consent, Lord Orville exclaims that Evelina is now "all my own."⁵¹ She is moved from one guardian to another. Thus, the exemplary nature of her story is preserved. This ending is the most ideal of the three novels, as it can be safely assumed that she found happiness in this match.

III. Cecilia

III.1 Entering Society

Cecilia, similarly to *Evelina*, is the story of a young heiress who is staying in London and the parallels between the heroines' conditions are many. Cecilia has no parents and is dependent on her guardians and mentors, the heroines share the same temperament. Evelina always chooses to act in a way that feels right to her in spite of the troubles she faces, and

⁵⁰ Burney, *Evelina* 353.

⁵¹ Burney, *Evelina* 376.

gentle and unassuming Cecilia is no different. Then the moral purity of her opinions is clear, and is defined in the voice of the narrator when she is criticizing the Harrels' way of life:

the sobriety of her education, as it had early instilled to her mind the pure dictates of religion, and strict principles of honour, had also taught her to regard continual dissipation as an introduction to vice, and unbounded extravagance as the harbinger of injustice.⁵²

This strict view is combined with the kindest of dispositions, as she is further described as a woman “whose heart glowed warmest affection and most generous virtue.”⁵³ Again, it is her concern for what happens around her which comes from a virtuous and sincere place that the author utilizes for showing us a satiric view of the world. Cecilia's reaction and disappointment about the attitude the Harrels' have towards life and material wealth already introduces the major issue Burney deals with in this novel; the commercial fixation of society.

In regard to money, Cecilia's situation is more favourable than Evelina's since her heritage is known and she is even able to access a part of her fortune. Unlike the previous heroine who had almost 'a victim status' due to her being 'nameless,' in the case of Cecilia, according to Spencer, “as an orphan heiress she has unusual power as a woman”⁵⁴ She is both handsome and wealthy which attracts suitors who have to respect her during courting and she has the advantage discriminate in her choice and does not feel pressured to get married as soon as possible. At one point in the novel, the heroine realizes her luck: “Ah, thought Cecilia, how do I rejoice that my independent situation exempts me from being disposed of for life, by thus being set up for sale.”⁵⁵

The first of the satiric portraits is Mr Harrel who lives a very shallow life which was shocking for Cecilia because generosity is in her nature and she does not respect this kind of

⁵² Fanny Burney, *Cecilia*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Oxford: University Press, 1988) 32.

⁵³ Burney, *Cecilia* 32.

⁵⁴ Spencer (2007), in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, 30.

⁵⁵ Burney, *Cecilia* 468.

lifestyle. Margaret Doody and Peter Sabor claim, that when she comes to live with the Mr and Mrs Harrel, “the world Cecilia enters is a complex and greedy society displaying all the attributes of developing commercialism, including a credit system and a high flush of consumerism.”⁵⁶ The credit system is Mr. Harrel’s doom because it allows him to have a large debt and still live lavishly for quite some time. This enables him to hide the true state of his finances and when the debts become too overbearing, he commits suicide.

What is startlingly different in comparison to *Evelina* is the form which is no longer epistolary, but a third-person narrative and the dialogue is described objectively. The reason may be that the personalized account of *Evelina* that in itself affected the reading of the novel is exchanged for more educational, because the ideas are presented like actual lessons, or at least, sharing of insights among the characters. As stated by Staves, “using an omniscient narrator, she revealed her capacity for penetrating observation and analysis of her social world and her willingness to judge it”⁵⁷ Cecilia is the centre of the novel but the third voice narration allows Burney to comment on the characters and situations, therefore the author has more space to illustrate the characters and guide the reader to realize their qualities, mainly flaws, more acutely. What is noticeable about *Cecilia* is that although still comical, as Burney has a talent for writing amusing scenes, the tone shifts to more serious. For instance, the myriad of personalities has more negative representatives than the positive ones and there is the presence of death in the story. As an example of one of the more playful scenes is the masquerade, yet it contains a disturbing demonstration of male sexuality under the pretence of good fun.

The masquerade is an event that is notoriously the most revealing of people’s true, because they are protected by the anonymity the mask provides and are forgiven

⁵⁶ Doody and Sabor, introduction to *Cecilia* xvii.

⁵⁷ Susan Staves, *A literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain 1660-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 429.

transgressions that would otherwise have disastrous consequences when it comes to the perception of their character. In *Cecilia*, the masquerade also serves as an outlet for the assertion of the characters' nature. It had become a parade of personalities in which Cecilia becomes an easy target. She was told by Mr Harrel that as a lady who is part of the household that holds the event, she is not required to wear a costume. However, when she chose to attend in her regular clothing, she soon regretted her decision. Epstein states that:

Cecilia replays Evelina's outing with the public women in Marylebone by choosing to attend the masquerade in her own dress: that is in a roomful of masks and elaborate disguises, she presents herself unadorned. As a consequence, her very ingeniousness, her public identification of herself as herself in a world of dissembling and mimicry, marks her paradoxically different and draws attention to her⁵⁸

The fact that her identity is known makes her vulnerable amid the masked figures who shamelessly take advantage of not being held responsible for their actions since no one can be sure who to hold accountable. Epstein identifies the segment as reminiscent of the scene in *Evelina*. The reason for this is probably the fact she is unprotected from the advances of men. While Evelina wandered the street and interacted with prostitutes and marked herself open to sexual advances, Cecilia finds herself in a situation when she is pursued by someone whom the circumstances permit to make unconcealed sexual advances. She is followed by a devil whose disguise is undoubtedly symbolic. His figure is described as follows: "He was black from head to foot, save that two red horns seemed to issue from his forehead; his face was so completely covered that the sight only of his eyes was visible, his feet were cloven, and his right hand held a wand the colour of fire."⁵⁹ His dark features are intimidating and the cloven feet are evidently emblematic of the animalistic nature of a demon. Additionally, to take the symbolism even further he holds a phallic object. For a while, she is unable to escape him and any attempt to free her is prevented by him. Contrastive in colour and behaviour is the white

⁵⁸ Epstein, in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth Century Novel* 203.

⁵⁹ Burney, *Cecilia* 107.

domino, who says to Cecilia “you will find me as inoffensive as the hue of the domino I wear”⁶⁰ The black-clad figure is actually Mr Monckton who has dubious intentions for Cecilia desiring to make her his own mainly to gain right to the estate along with a provision she is to inherit when she marries. And the costume of the domino hid Mortimer Delvile, her future husband.

III.2 Mentors

Evelina’s misunderstandings appeared as serious errors but her mentors were patient, and other than embarrassments and few dangerous situations that ended well for her, there were no grave consequences. Furthermore, Mr Orville who did not get the benefit of a detailed explanation why she had acted the way she did, kept his hope in her innocence. Cecilia and Camilla lack the trust of their lovers-to-be and the struggle to defend themselves is much worse. When it comes to the advisors in the novel, while Evelina had two well-meaning mentors, Cecilia has three deeply flawed ones, also none of them fills the fatherly role. The only one who could do this is, again, absent and actually has caused more harm than good when he made Cecilia’s rights to the estate conditional. The other guardian’s functions are various as their characters are contrastive. They each represent different values, as Doody and Sabor summarize, Cecilia had “Harrel for friendship, Briggs for money, Delvile for class and respectability.”⁶¹ However, they no longer represent protection and gentle counsel, they are all deeply flawed and ultimately they are part of her problems.

Harrel only profits from her acquaintance. His debts cause Cecilia to lose a major portion of her wealth. She relents to pay after being emotionally blackmailed by him when he threatens to cut his own throat:

⁶⁰ Burney, *Cecilia* 107.

⁶¹ Doody and Sabor, introduction to *Cecilia* xxix.

Her terror was now inexpressible; she believed him in the very act of suicide, and her refusal of assistance seemed to signal for the deed; her whole fortune, at that moment, was valueless and unimportant to her, compared with the preservation of a fellow-creature: she called out with all the vehemence of agony to beg he would open the door; and eagerly promised by all that was sacred to do everything in her power to save him.⁶²

Here, Cecilia demonstrates her charitable nature, agreeing after she is subjected to Mr Harrel's suffering even if it is pretended. In the end, the burden of the debts becomes too much and he shoots himself anyway. Doody and Sabor claim that "[Burney] shows how all her characters are influenced by a system of power that they cannot control."⁶³ In context to property rights, the theory of Jean-Jacque Rousseau might provide an insight into this issue. His critical opinions expressed in the *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Man* where he considers wealth, social standing and societal position based on property to be unique to civil society. However, it defies the nature of man, which is the root of moral degradation of society. According to his ideas, its members became increasingly egoistical due to their rights to property that are not based on any relevant grounds, but are supported by the government. Again, as Rousseau was widely read the time this philosophy could bleed through into the novel. Franny Burney's sensitivity to such issues is clear as her work becomes increasingly critical and the problems she touches upon more serious, also her satirical portraits turn sharper as everything is morally tinted. Despite her disagreement with Rousseau when it comes to the sexual politics and innovative systems, this work is devoid of these questions and it is not impossible that together with her strong opinions on the matter she was inspired to demonstrate the point that we the characters are victims of this system they so strongly adhere to.

⁶² Burney, Cecilia 265.

⁶³ Doody and Sabor, introduction to *Cecilia* xxix.

There are also men who operate as advisors even though their role is less important. One is Mr Monckton whose presence is very negative, almost villainous in the novel. He wants to take advantage of Cecilia's lack of parents and to keep her and her money for himself. His motives are clear, "this being her situation, he long looked upon her as his future property, and as such he had indulged his admiration, though he had not more vigilantly inspected into her sentiments, than he had guarded his own from a similar scrutiny."⁶⁴ Mr Monckton is a greedy character who is already married to an old woman with the same design of gaining financial security. His fixation on Cecilia proves to be rather sinister, as he follows her around as the devil and tries to ruin her happiness when he cannot have her. Ironically, he is trapped in this marriage beyond the end of the novel. Mr Monckton is not the only one who singled Cecilia out as his future spouse. She has many suitors, and most of them look forward to the money the marriage would bring them. The chillingly material mindset is apparent on the fact that Mr Harrel promised her to Mr Floyer, basically selling her. Another secondary guardian is Mr Albany who challenges Cecilia to think of others less fortunate than her.

She also has a female mentor. Her biological mother is not alive but she finds a surrogate mother in Mdm. Delvile. She is at first the ideal feminine influence on young Cecilia, yet her character reveals itself to be quite problematic. Her affections change when she objects to the marriage between Cecilia and her son. The complete turnabout had been commented on a lot and it is one of Burney's attempts to make the novel more realistic.

Doody and Sabor:

Mrs Delvile represents what the eighteenth-century critics called a 'mixed' character. (...) Burney explained: 'I meant in Mrs. Delvile to draw a great, but not perfect character; I meant ... to blend upon paper, as I have frequently seen blended in life, noble and rare qualities with striking and incurable defects.' It is inevitable that Mrs Delvile should respond with irrational intensity to the idea of her son marrying Cecilia and thus losing the family name.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Burney, *Cecilia* 9.

⁶⁵ Doody and Sabor, introduction to *Cecilia* xxviii.

At first she is the epitome of elegance and this connection is advantageous to Cecilia since she is such a role model. However, the pride in the name Delvile is shared by the whole family and she hates Cecilia for threatening their legacy. This is an interesting reaction coming from her since it was not originally her name and her pride should be misplaced. However, the patrilineality ensures the woman never holds onto her individuality, either bearing the name of her father or her husband, thus a woman becomes the conservative bearer of male values and heritage. The issue Cecilia has with her having right to the inheritance only if she succeeds to continue the male name of her line is showed as only problematic by Burney. And it is critiques such as this that actually mark her more as radical.

III.3 Financial Situation

Cecilia is a wealthy heroine though she manages to lose everything. Her strong characteristic is her mind being controlled by emotions when it comes to others and it causes her to give up money with not enough care about her own future, a reason why she manages to lose her personal fortune. And later in the novel, when the constriction of the name rule proves to be a huge obstacle Cecilia, unfortunately, cannot fall back on her ten thousand pounds. At least in the beginning of the plot her situation lent her some power. Though one cannot be mistaken about her being free, her fortune allowed her many privileges and a certain amount of control over the courtship. Nevertheless, she enters society not as free agent but as a property waiting to be taken⁶⁶ because most of the suitors that approach her throughout the novel, see her synonymously with her wealth. As described by Claudia T. Kairoff as Burney painting “a harrowing portrait of a society so obsessed with acquisition that Cecilia herself seems no more, at times, than a bit of red meat encircled by prowling

⁶⁶ Doody and Sabor, introduction to *Cecilia* xvii.

lions.’⁶⁷ This further solidifies the purpose of illustrating how the male characters are trapped in the system as even the decision of choosing their spouse is not determined not by the character, or even compatibility but they are looking forward to the material benefit they would find in matrimony as another addition to their wealth.

Cecilia’s response to the society’s obsession with money is the endeavour to preserve her independence and the injustice she sees all around her she tries to balance it with altruism. She helps the woman she at first believes to be a beggar and who turns out to be owed money by Mr Harrel, then aids Mr Harrel financially and helps Mr Belfield when he is sick. According to Spencer, she is “an innovative heroine, keen on her independence and power to do good, Cecilia is like those altruistic eighteenth-century women discussed by Betty Rizzo, who ‘had begun to discover in charitable societies and purposes a challenging as well as acceptable use of their talents.’”⁶⁸ And in the time of her independence she devotes her life to helping others who are less fortunate than her, and in this way proving her morality externally as well as internally.

III.4 Ending in Marriage

The marital union in this novel is significantly less idyllic than Evelina’s sweet romance. This time there are several conditions that hinder the heroine’s happiness. The fact that her suitor must be willing to give up his name is inconceivable to the Delvilles and even though Mortimer is willing to marry Cecilia without her fortune the whole affair is very dramatic. First the Mortimer’s parents disapprove because of the name, they are forced to get married in secret but Cecilia lost her personal fortune, in the end all are aware she brought nothing into the family. This is another noteworthy change in comparison with *Evelina* which

⁶⁷ Claudia Thomas Kairoff, “Gendering Satire: Behn to Burney,” in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) 289.

⁶⁸ Spencer (2007), in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney* 31.

was more ‘black and white,’ and the mistakes and the correct solutions are more transparent. In *Cecilia*, the number of characters with their own designs and richness of the world go far beyond a singular perspective bound by the limits of textual testimonials of this one person, and the third person narrator enhances this. Burney’s views are more jaded, the fairy-tale-like ending never comes and in the dramatic events that accompany the two lovers there are ill-meaning characters who actively intervene. Mr. Monckton betrayed them to Mr Delvile and there was even a duel, in which he was seriously injured by Mortimer.

The matter of taking Cecilia’s name and for the husband to become Mr Beverley is a clause that is very problematic, and it is the reason Mr. and Mrs. Delvile refuse the match. The reason for this is that when one gives up their name their identity is lost and a new one is gained along with the new name. This is a practice that is customary for women who in this sense are a property and the reversal of the roles feminizes the man. What is more, the sense of superiority the Delviles put into their name prevents Mortimer to part with his source of pride, as Staves states, Delvile is obsessed with the high rank of his ancient family⁶⁹ that he has a right to. This issue draws attention to the flaw in societal customs because it has the potential to become a great problem. *Cecilia* ends on a bitter note when the narrator concludes:

[Cecilia] knew that, at times, the whole family must murmur at her loss of fortune, and at times she murmured herself to be thus portionless, tho’ an HEIRESS. Rationally, however, she surveyed the world at large, and finding that of the few who had any happiness, there were none without some misery, she checked the rising sigh of repining mortality, and, grateful with general felicity, bore partial evil with cheerfullest resignation.

So even after all the complications are solve, the financial complication left its mark.

Inarguably, it is more probable ending than Evelina’s and it is clear Burney wanted to make this novel more realistic. Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom cite the author’s explanation of

⁶⁹ Staves, 427.

her motives “[Burney] defended the realism of *Cecilia*’s ending wherein ‘the hero and heroine are neither plunged into the depths of misery, nor exalted to UNhuman happiness.’”⁷⁰

IV. Camilla

IV.1 Family

In Fanny Burney’s third novel, *Camilla*, there is another shift and the tone has gone far from the comical romance of *Evelina*. Same as *Cecilia* she decides to write a novel that despite an abundance of humorous scenes is again melodramatic, and she continues to exacerbate the heroine’s troubles. As argued by Betty Rizzo, “in *Cecilia* and *Camilla* disaster really threatens and we realize that for Burney uniformed sensibility can result even in death and destruction.”⁷¹ The number of scenes when *Camilla*’s circumstances are misunderstood is greater and, unlike the first novel, the described society’s reactions are stronger and strikingly negative. *Camilla* is also the most structured, as it is carefully considered to paint a vivid palette of characters and moral lessons. Edward Bloom and Lilliana Bloom state that “Its overall-design was clear to her from the very beginning. She always meant it to be, as she once asserted, ‘sketches of Characters & morals, put in action, not a Romance.’”⁷² This is true also for her choice of third person narrator which enables the author to incorporate a commentary and this distance allows to highlight the fact that this time the characters are more interrelated for the didactic purposes. Yet this is done without a focus on specific descriptions but on how the characters interact with the world, how they see themselves and are seen by others.

For instance, the sisters and cousin represent different combination of inner and outer qualities. Indiana is beautiful but very shallow and not very considerate. The most contrastive

⁷⁰ Fanny Burney, *Camilla*, ed. Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom (Oxford: University Press, 1983) xvii

⁷¹ Betty Rizzo, “Renegotiating the Gothic,” in *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century ‘Women’s Fiction’ and Social Engagement*, ed. Paula R Backscheider (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000) 83.

⁷² E. Bloom and L. Bloom, introduction to *Camilla* xiv.

to her is Eugenia who is described as ugly by many in the book because she has small-pox scars and has a physical deformity caused by accidents for which Sir Hugh is to blame. While Indiana's pride in her looks prevents her from a more emphatic interaction with the world, Eugenia is kind and considerate to a fault. She is very intelligent because she takes her studies very seriously and since the guilty Sir Hugh Tyrold could not forgive himself for the life-long suffering Eugenia must endure, he also named her a sole heiress. Therefore, she possessed all important qualities but the looks. The lesson Burney incorporated here is that the external does not have to reflect the internal what many characters fail to see. When Eugenia leaves the safety of her home, she is called ugly and hardly tolerated for her company and money. The fickleness of the opinion others have of her is shown on the scene when she throws money to poor people and they praise her enthusiastically despite their earlier disgust. The sisters serve as foils to Camilla who is somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. She is not lacking in the looks department and is considered beautiful enough, though she is no match for Indiana, and she has the ability to discern bad intentions beyond the ruse of faked kindness that Eugenia fails to see. She then fits into Burney's model of heroines in the discussed novels who are intelligent, pretty, kind, even-tempered and quiet; an ideal.

Dissimilarly from Evelina or Cecilia, Camilla has a complete family with both of her parents alive and even grows up among siblings. This does not necessarily mean it is advantageous for her, for before one considers the characters outside of the family there is already enough critical material within. When discussing the shift in tone of the third novel, Rizzo claims that,

The harm comes from every direction: from the mistreatment of lovable fools like Sir Hugh; from the intolerance of the misogynistic and controlling Dr. Marchmont; from the pretended kind ministrations of the nest-feathering Mrs Mittin; from the selfish extravagance of the favourite brother Lionel; and from the quiet schemes of the seemingly submissive Miss

Margland.⁷³

Sir Hugh, for the most part, serves as a comic character and his good-natured actions cause more harm than good. Dr Marchmont is one of the characters who hinder Camilla's happiness she would find with Edgar whose affection for Camilla is unquestionable and without the intervention from the other characters would surely be together much sooner, which would consequently prevent many of the extremely dramatic events that happen to Camilla in the novel.

IV.2 Mentors

Although she is not orphaned, her mother is absent for a significant part of the novel and her father Mr Tyrold who is, once again, a member of the church, is not an overbearing mentor either. Caroline Gonda claims,

Clearly one important difference is the fictional father's own attitude to the relationship: Mr Tyrold is often concerned, anxious, at times overwhelmed with paternal cares for Camilla. But they remain just that, paternal. The reluctance and possessiveness in aroused in *Evelina* by the threat of the daughter's marriage, in *Camilla* is given comic form by Sir Hugh, whose schemes to keep Camilla for himself are to open to present serious threat.⁷⁴

Mr Tyrold's influence then is not stifling for her and she does not need to go against his authority in order to find hers. She is already rounded when it comes to her erecting her boundaries. In this relationship, it is the parents who, according to Edward and Lillian Bloom, needed a little change: "She wanted her guardian figures, in this case Mr. and Mrs. Tyrold, to achieve the grace of self-awareness and to acknowledge their own flaws: the first one admitting to parental indulgence and the other to hyper-righteousness."⁷⁵ An innovation from the previous novels where the heroine is being the only one reformed. The one who would

⁷³ Rizzo, in *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement* 90.

⁷⁴ Gonda 137.

⁷⁵ E. Bloom and L. Bloom, introduction to *Camilla* xv.

potentially take care most about Camilla is Sir Hugh but his careless actions render him both ineffective father figure and mentor. He is contrasted to Mr Tyrold's sensible approach, however, his advice is abstractive which makes him a remote influence.

The most significant mentoring relationship for her is the advice of her future husband Edgar. She willingly learns from him and he is glad to teach her and help her. She is also continuously tested by Edgar who is prompted by Dr Marchmont who has a need to educate him on nature of women, unfortunately for both Edgar and Camilla, he is embittered and misogynistic and he cautions him against getting married to her. Edgar keeps listening to him without realising how biased his opinions really are. Edgar is increasingly distrustful towards her and after he sees her with Sir Sedley Clarendel he thinks of the worst. Camilla is innocent and the reason she still communicated Sir Sedley was merely her generousness and sweet disposition. But Even after showing the letters the pair exchanged Edgar is still angry, showing a lack of trust in her.

In this aspect, *Camilla* contains the conflicts in the conception of feminine perfection. There are two kinds of contradictory advice that is given by each of the lovers and it touches on the contemporary view of the female ideal. According to Gonda:

The conflict between Dr Marchmont's and Mr Tyrold's exposes the contradiction of female heterosexuality as it is constructed in this period: Dr Marchmont's rule lays down that a man must be sure of his wife's virtuous love, yet Mr Tyrold's advice suggests that woman's virtuous love must be utterly passive, concealed or preferably non-existent until called into being by the man's choice of wife. The best guarantee of that love's worth is its refusal to 'come forward,' its shy responsiveness, the 'greater flexibility of taste' which Gregory claimed Nature had granted to women.⁷⁶

The expectation that are place on Camilla are irreconcilable, thus it is impossible for her to please both sides. Marene LeGates argues that the portrayed image in of women changed in

⁷⁶ Gonda, 133.

the eighteenth century: from woman presented as a shrew being more prominent character than her virtuous counterpart and it is “replaced by the image of the chaste maiden and obedient wife, popularized by in the sentimental novels particularly.”⁷⁷ Chastity is synonymous with virtue and Camilla would jeopardize that if she approached Edgar openly, as women were considered sexually unstable and as Gonda asserts it is better when her love cannot be detected. Edgar then, by listening to Dr Marchmont’s advice, expects the opposite and sets himself up for conflict in advance.

IV.3 Financial Situation

At the beginning Camilla is financially secure and she is supposed to be the heiress to her uncle’s fortune. The reason for this is that she is his favourite out of the three girls. He bases his partiality on her charm: “I can’t well make out what it is that is so catching in her; but there is something in her little mouth that quite wins me; though she looks as if she was half laughing at me too: which can’t very well be, neither.”⁷⁸ Camilla is then affected by Sir Hugh’s capricious character and when he decides make Eugenia his heiress there is no other reason for him to reconsider Camilla’s position than his subjective feeling and he chooses Eugenia to alleviate his own conscience since he realizes he is the sole destroyer of her future.

After she loses her future fortune to poor Eugenia, much like Evelina who easily reconciles with the fact that the impostor child receives half of what is rightfully hers, Camilla simply accepts that she is no longer an heiress. In her perspective, she is deprived of her fortune for altruistic reasons and her disposition is supportive of that. Her generousness in the novel is exemplified, for instance, when she joins a raffle. She pays money for the possibility of winning a locket. She soon regrets her decision when she realizes she cannot give money to

⁷⁷ Marlene LeGates, “The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10.1 (1976): 23. JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2737815>, 10 Aug 2019.

⁷⁸ Burney, *Camilla* 11.

the poor and Edgar who also feels strong affection for Camilla offers to go retrieve the money for her. When she gets the sum back, she is glad she can give it to the ones in need.

Later in the novel, she is lead into debt and money figures as a way her fate is controlled. As a woman, Camilla is helpless at the centre of the circumstances; Rizzo claims that “Burney is most impressed by the manner in which the cards are stacked against women by providing them no chance of managing alone.”⁷⁹ Yet the blame is put on Camilla and she is overcome with guilt. Claudia Johnson argues, “bizarrely, no one in the novel is troubled by the insanely exaggerated sense of guilt that makes Camilla, whose debts are so modest, shoulder criminally intense responsibility for her family’s ruin, while the massive depredations of Lionel and Clermont, legitimate heirs, receive scant mention.”⁸⁰

IV.4 End in Marriage

The plot focusing on the lovers is based on a misunderstanding. The union is delayed mainly because of the misconception that Edgar wants to marry Indiana instead of Camilla. Reasons why the heroine’s marriage is being prevented are again outside her control. *Camilla* who is overshadowed by Indiana’s beauty and does not want to go against her when everyone is on Indiana’s side and another hindrance in the way is the fact that there are characters who actively try to prevent their marriage for their own gain. The schemers are no longer like Mr Monckton who was extremely selfish and deliberate in his sabotage of Cecilia but Camilla is losing against characters who are after their own goals, for example, the machinations of Miss Margland hoping for a life in London.

⁷⁹ Rizzo, in *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century “Women’s Fiction” and Social Engagement* 83.

⁸⁰ Claudia S. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentimentality in the 1790s-Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 142.

Like in the second novel, the ending for the pair is not idyllic. As pointed out by Joseph F. Bartolomeo “once again, the ‘happy’ ending seems contrived, and pales before the romantic, familial, financial, and social crises that the novel depicts.”⁸¹ At first, they were parted by misunderstanding, then by Edgar’s reluctance and finally by the gravely serious trouble Camilla had to face, and in the duration of the novel there is not much groundwork for a properly romantic end. When she marries Edgar she is provided with security, same as Evelina and Cecilia with their respective partners. However, the tragic events that precede this, nearly caused her death. And she owes everything to her husband because he decided to save her,⁸² whose ability to do so stems from his male privilege. In addition, Camilla and Edgar cannot expect marital bliss since the courtship period is stained by Edgar’s constant tests that show his lack of trust in Camilla.

⁸¹ Joseph F. Bartolomeo, “Restoration and Eighteenth-century Satiric Fiction,” in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) 273.

⁸² Rizzo, in *Revised Women: Eighteenth-Century ‘Women’s Fiction’ and Social Engagement* 90.

V. Conclusion

When compared one can see the change Fanny Burney's novels undergo as she gains experiences and name as an author. Burney's reception was very favourable and she had made hundreds of pounds on each of her novels that were both popular and valued in her time. They contain valuable lessons for young women and, at the same time, there is satiric quality that invites the readers think about the society themselves as well as spelled out situations on which there are demonstrated direct suggestions how to act. With these satirical overtones she illustrates the social world together with its dangers and points out what young women might encounter and provides a precedence of how to judge the situations.

In her books, Fanny Burney creates heroines who are all equipped with intelligence and sense of good judgement. They are naturally good, much like Rousseau's opinion that children are born like this but they are corrupted by the society. They have to learn the ways of the civilized rather than natural world around them. However, women deal with very different issues than men when they are looking for their place in society. On their journey to maturity, they face many obstacles that have to do with their social standing and financial position in the hierarchy. Burney illustrates these problems in society which the heroines encounter in different intensities and they learn how their actions are understood. Thus, she presents an overview of correct conduct from numerous perspectives. The novels are concise guides for women encapsulated in an interesting narrative and touched with feminine sensibility that women can relate to and it represents a certain standard that young girls can adopt as their own before they are able to act according to their own experience. Some of the more serious dangers illustrated here are Evelina's meeting with the prostitutes and clear warning about the true nature of men, how to handle their finances and to be discriminate of the character's of others.

Fanny Burney has a need to react to the issues in the society. To learn the heroines must understand the world around them, as they are shaped by the society and its gaze. Women are walking a very thin line because their reputation is constantly in danger to be questioned and the its loss is very destructive. As the distinction between respectable and fallen women is part of the same system of ideas the change in perception comes quickly and the separation might easily become blurry like in the case of Evelina. It is clear, that with each novel her ambition grows. The richness of the narrative and seriousness of the issues rises and the troubles the heroine must overcome are more and more dramatic, with endings that do not promise contented life for them. What can also be observed is the heroines are depicted to be gradually more constricted by the circumstances outside their control rather than by their own. Furthermore, her satire is turns quite scathing but one does not focus on this because it is done from a very demure place, never outrightly challenging the existing societal structure.

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