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Katherine Gustafson, Harvard University

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"The Younger Part of our *Male* as well as *Female* Readers:"[1] Frances Burney and Youth Fiction in Late-Eighteenth-Century England

KATHERINE GUSTAFSON

In June 1778 the *Westminster Magazine* lauded *Evelina, or, A Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778) as a novel "equally useful and entertaining to the younger part of our *male* as well as *female* Readers" (325). The value of this review lies not in its praise but in its identification of the extent of *Evelina's* audience; it explicitly names youths—both young women and young men—as the novel's ideal readers.[2] Its focus highlights Frances Burney's reception in the eighteenth century as a youth novelist. With her novels approved for young readers by the *Westminster Magazine* and the *Critical Review*, Burney's reputation was so entrenched by the 1790s that prominent educators, such as Catherine Macaulay, Charlotte Smith, and Erasmus Darwin, recommended her books as well.[3] Burney's novels were not simply recommended to young persons but read by them as well. Burney records young women reading *Evelina*, from Lady Hales's five daughters (the oldest of whom was thirteen) who wept at the novel's conclusion (3: 31) to a sixteen-year-old girl named Augusta who so adored the author that, as Burney says, she "quite *bores* every body with my praise" (3: 424).[4] Jan Fergus has found that provincial schoolboys also enjoyed Burney and frequently rented *Cecilia* from circulating libraries: "No other novel was demanded so insistently at Rugby" (120).

Burney's popularity with youths, especially young men, challenges the longstanding scholarly assumption that the author primarily wrote for and about women. Burney's representation of what Julia Epstein calls a "woman's place in the eighteenth-century gender economy" (4) has inspired feminist scholarship for nearly four decades and with fruitful results. Alongside Epstein, literary critics, such as Patricia Meyer Spacks, Kristina Straub, and Margaret Doody, have illuminated Burney's complex depiction of young womanhood.[5] Nevertheless, we still have only a partial understanding of how Burney constructed the experience of youth. We have insufficiently explored her configuration of young manhood and, more generally, her portrayal of aging.

This critical attention, in part, reflects the traditional (but now changing) presumption that eighteenth-century novels were read overwhelmingly by women. Like most literary historians, scholars of

Burney rarely discuss her audience. Those few critics who do presume Burney's readers were female.[6] Kristina Straub, for example, observes that "the eighteenth-century novel generally imparted to young women readers ideas and expectations about female life" (3) while Deidre Lynch notes that Burney's "novels [gave] middle-class women guidelines as to how . . . they might understand their lives" (191). Fergus's data, however, empirically illustrates what Jane Austen asserts in *Northanger Abbey* (1817): that men and women of all ages read fiction, especially young men and women. It demands that we reconsider how Burney's fiction was marketed, received, and, in turn, written.

Guided by Hans Robert Jauss's theory that literature gains meaning "through the interaction of author and public" (15), this essay investigates *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance Into the World; Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782); and *Camilla, or a Picture of Youth* (1796) alongside eighteenth-century periodical reviews, marketing materials, and Burney's own correspondence to show how Burney's reception as a youth novelist impacted her writing. Burney's novels changed dramatically from the 1770s to the 1790s, especially in their conceptualization of young persons. Updating Samuel Richardson's characters in *Evelina* to great critical acclaim, Burney then expanded the number of youths in *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796). She also undermined the youthful models she created in *Evelina*. *Cecilia's* and *Camilla's* protagonists are as virtuous as those in *Evelina*, but are decreasingly able to function in society. In short, they appear less mature. By studying Burney's representation of youthful characters, this essay reveals Burney's second and third novels to be critiques of the pedagogic function of sentimental fiction, especially her own oeuvre.[7]

Eighteenth-Century Publishers and Youthful Readers

Despite Samuel Johnson's assertion that "the young, the ignorant, and the idle" read novels as "lectures of conduct, and introductions into life" (150), scholars rarely discuss eighteenth-century youths and their role in the novel's development.[8] Literary historians acknowledge youths (especially young women), but as Anja Müller observes, they have not paid the same attention to aging as to other social formations such as gender, class, or race (5). Historians of children's literature share this blind spot, ignoring youths altogether or subsuming them into childhood.[9] Yet, Johnson specifically names "the young" as a key group of novel readers with

a unique style of reading. "Susceptible of impressions; . . . easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account" (150), youths read novels to learn about the world, but are vulnerable to misunderstanding much like the heroine of Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote; or the Adventures of Arabella* (1752).

While actual reading practices are difficult to determine, the role of imagined audiences in the production of the eighteenth-century novel should not be discounted. Johnson exemplifies the process of audience formation that Jon Klancher and Marilyn Butler argue occurred in eighteenth-century review journals (Klancher 24, Butler 122). Johnson homogenizes a diverse social group into one audience, "the young." Defining youths as a category of reader, he then articulates a literary standard based on their supposed needs, one that would teach them about the world through a heightened form of realism that polarized vice and virtue. Johnson's essay reflected a broader cultural anxiety that the youthful enthusiasm for novels was as unstoppable as it was risky. Social reformers like James Fordyce denounced novels as morally corrupting, and reviewers bemoaned that "idle novels, loose plays. [sic] and other modern trash [are] usually found in the hands of young people, and fit only to pervert both their manners and morals."[10] Drawing on the aesthetics Johnson celebrates, reviewers assessed novels according to the type of instruction they offered the young. The *Critical Review*, for example, praises Frances Brooke's *The Excursion* (1777) for "deter[ring] young ladies from launching out into the world . . . without discretion" (63) and recommends Edward Bancroft's *History of Charles Wentworth* (1770) to "those young men whose lively passions hurry them to dangerous indiscretions" (363). When tracked over several decades, the sheer number of reviews presuming that youths read novels is significant. Equally striking is that publishers responded to concerns about youthful novel reading in the second half of the eighteenth century with new products and increased marketing. The 13 June 1780 *Gazetteer* advertisement for *A Father's Instructions* deems the work "A Proper PRESENT for YOUNG PERSONS of either SEX." Similarly, the *Select Collection of Oriental Tales* (1776) promises in its subtitle "To Form the Minds of Youth to the Love of Virtue and True Wisdom," and these were far from isolated examples. Novels themselves increasingly featured young characters engaged in conflicts stemming from their youth, from Richardson's *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* (1748) to Burney's *Camilla* (1796). At all levels (writing, production, and

review), the publishing industry constituted youths as an audience and then proffered fiction tailored to them. Although overlooked by scholars, a market for youth fiction, which was enmeshed in the novel market, existed at least by the mid-eighteenth century,.

While a reconsideration of the novel's history to accommodate the role of young readers is outside the scope of this paper, a brief outline of this market will help contextualize Burney's novels. Richardson provides an excellent means of tracking its growth: *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) was arguably the first novel marketed to young readers. Its title page boldly proclaims "the YOUTH of BOTH SEXES" as its intended audience, and it proffers a new type of narrative written exclusively for them. Founded in "TRUTH and NATURE," *Pamela* promises to amuse without titillating young minds:

PAMELA:

OR,

VIRTUE Rewarded.

In a SERIES of

FAMILIAR LETTERS

FROM A

Beautiful Young DAMSEL,

To her PARENTS.

Now first Published

In order to cultivate the Principles of VIRTUE and RELIGION in the Minds of the YOUTH of BOTH SEXES.

A Narrative which has its Foundation in TRUTH and NATURE; and at the same time that it agreeably entertains, by a Variety of *curious* and *affecting* INCIDENTS, is intirely divested of all those Images, which, in too many Pieces calculated for Amusement only, tend to *inflame* the Minds they should *instruct*.

In TWO VOLUMES.

The SECOND EDITION.

To which are prefixed, EXTRACTS from several curious LETTERS written to the *Editor* on the Subject.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for C. RIVINGTON, in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*; and J. OSBORN, in *Pater-noster Row*.

MDCCXLI.

Title Page to Samuel Richardson, *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded.* 2nd ed. London, 1741.

However successful (or sincere) the title was, Pamela undeniably impacted the evolution of the youth fiction industry in the second half of the eighteenth century. Richardson's novels were heavily marketed to young persons, with nearly a third of all advertisements for his work between 1740 and 1760 explicitly mentioning young readers.[11] Richardson's novels also were adapted into new literary products for the young in the 1750s and 1760s. *The Paths of Virtue Delineated; or the History in Miniature of the Celebrated Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe, and Sir Charles Grandison, familiarized and adapted to the Capacities of Youth* first appeared in 1756 followed four years later by advertisements for *The New Impenetrable Secret; or Young Lady and Gentleman's Polite Puzzle*, a card game containing sentiments from Richardson's novels.[12] These works point to the growth of a fiction market aimed exclusively at the young. Publishers sought through such adaptations to capitalize on the popularity of Richardson with young readers and the adults who bought books for them.

This market reached a highpoint at the end of the eighteenth century. Historians of children's literature celebrate the 1780s and 1790s as a groundbreaking era in children's fiction.[13] Less recognized is the related expansion of literature for young persons, with writing and marketing trends often following changes in children's publishing. For example, didactic fiction was largely written for children in the 1780s, but, beginning in the 1790s, Charlotte Smith and Maria Edgeworth began writing moral fiction specifically for teen readers.[14] These works influenced Smith's and Edgeworth's full-length novels, which often explored the effects of childhood education on adults. At the same time, authors such as Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Hays, and Burney herself pushed the narrative parameters established by Richardson and Johnson with gritty realities, flawed characters, and protagonists whose virtues are unrewarded.

By the 1790s Richardson became a focal point for a debate about the best type of realism for young readers even as his advertisements began to decline. Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor observe that Richardson's novels served reviewers as the benchmark for good fiction for young women until the mid-1790s (208). While mainstream critics continued to praise Richardson, publishers appeared to move away from his fiction. Advertisements for Richardson's novels dropped from a total number of 346 between 1740 and 1760 to 106 between 1781 and 1800. The decline in those advertisements naming youths is even more dramatic, from 115 between 1740 and 1760 to 7 between 1781 and 1800. Publishers, it seems, thought that youths would favor newer fiction and a different style of

realism, one exemplified in *Cecilia* and *Camilla.*

Evelina: Revising Literary Prototypes

Born in 1752 and publishing novels in 1778, 1782, and 1796, Burney's professional career bridged, and likely catalyzed, this period of literary change. The September 1778 issue of the *Critical Review* hails Burney as Richardson's successor for *Evelina's* moral and aesthetic merits:

> The father of a family, observing the knowledge of the world and the lessons of experience which it contains, will recommend it to his daughters; . . . even the sons of the family will forego the diversions of the town or the field to pursue the entertainment of Evelina's acquaintance, who will imperceptibly lead them, as well as their sisters, to improvement and to virtue. (202–03)

The review anticipates Burney amusing and educating readers as Richardson once did. It also sees Evelina appealing to youths on an almost personal level, as a friend as well as an exemplar. The *Critical Review*'s observation corroborates Burney's own thoughts about her narrative method. As Burney explains: "I have only presumed to trace the accidents & adventures to which a '*young woman*' is liable, I have not pretended to shew the World what it actually *is*, but what it *appears* to a Girl of 17" (EJLFB, 3: 1, original emphasis). While Burney adopts Richardson's epistolary form, her heroine more accurately reflects young women's perspectives. *Evelina* thereby revises the character of the female ingénue and, by extension, the virtuous suitor.

Scholars have long seen *Evelina* as a novel of female education in which the heroine must learn a code of conduct marked by passivity, obedience, and the appearance of sexual virtue to gain Lord Orville's approval. As Joyce Hemlow famously argues, male characters like Orville (and later Mortimer Delvile and Edgar Mandlebert) serve as *monitors*, watchful guardians who endorse the feminine values taught in conduct books (756; 759).[15] Evelina does learn to accommodate herself to such rules; however, by placing these acts of conformity in the context of an epistolary narrative, Burney represents Evelina's education as more rigorous and self-driven than has been noticed. Far from merely tracing Evelina's attainment of female perfection, the novel is organized around increasingly complex lessons in analysis. In the first volume, Mr. Villars

sends Evelina to London because "the time draws on for experience and observation to take place of instruction" (20).[16] He frames Evelina's second trip to London as a more active test of her reason, cautioning: "you must learn not only to *judge* but to *act* for yourself" (166). Her education culminates in her sojourn to Bristol Hotwell when Evelina disobeys Mr. Villars's injunction to flee Orville. Initially following her guardian's order, Evelina rejects it upon further reflection: "I begin to think, my dear Sir, that the sudden alteration in my behaviour was ill-judged and improper" (341). Words such as "think" and "judge" repeat Mr. Villars's rhetoric, recasting her disobedience as a reasonable and, thus, justifiable act.

This insight into Evelina's education transforms the dynamics of courtship in the novel. Evelina is not the only character that develops over the course of the narrative. Courtship educates both Evelina *and* Orville, for they each learn to meet the other's expectations. As Ruth Yeazell has noticed, Evelina reads her suitors as much as they read her (137). By making Willoughby and Orville the subject of Evelina's scrutiny, Burney disrupts a more accepted model in which the suitor judges and then teaches the ingénue—one seen, for example, in Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*. Orville may watch Evelina, but such moments often reveal his changing perception of her. If Evelina must learn to assess the world around her, Orville must do the same. Dismissing Evelina as "a poor weak girl" (37) at their first meeting, Orville learns to see her more accurately as the novel progresses:

> I did not, at our first acquaintance, do justice to the merit of Miss Anville; but I knew not, then, how new she was to the world; at present, however, I am convinced, that whatever might appear strange in her behavior, was simply the effect of inexperience, timidity, and a retired education, for I find her informed, sensible, and intelligent. She is not, indeed, like most modern young ladies, to be known in half an hour; her modest worth, and fearful excellence, require both time and encouragement to shew themselves. (346–47)

As he learns, feminine virtues, such as artlessness, sweetness, and docility, are difficult to discern at fashionable events. Evelina's virtue resides in her difference from "most modern young ladies," who, Pamela Perkins explains, practiced a "highly stylized code of behaviour . . . to signify 'innocence'" (eighth paragraph).

Critics certainly have noticed Orville's gentility. Emily Allen and

Kristina Straub interpret it as part of the novel's idealization of courtship (Allen 443, Straub 158, 160), while G. J. Barker-Benfield sees Orville embodying a new, gentler type of masculinity (247). My own account seeks to consider such insights with greater precision by noting that Orville does not embody a new type of manhood so much as a new type of young manhood. Twenty-six but unmarried, Orville is on the cusp of adulthood but has not achieved its primary sociological marker in marriage. He first appears to Evelina as serious and measured, a confident man of the world, but he loses his confidence over the course of the narrative. The more he converses with Evelina, the more diffident he seems. For example, after the Marylebone Garden's incident, Orville struggles to ask Evelina about her companions:

> 'I should be extremely sorry to appear impertinent,—yet hardly know how to avoid it.'
>
> 'Impertinent! O my Lord,' cried I, eagerly, 'that, I am sure, is impossible!'
>
> 'You are very good,' answered he, 'and encourage me to be ingenuous—'
>
> Again he stopped; . . . at last, without looking at me, in a low and hesitating manner, he said, 'Were those ladies with whom I saw you last night, ever in your company before?'
>
> 'No, my Lord,' cried I, rising, and colouring violently, 'nor will they ever be again.' . . .
>
> 'I will own myself to have been greatly surprised,' continued he, 'when I met you yesterday evening, in company with two persons who I was sensible merited not the honour of your notice; . . . I was satisfied that their characters must be unknown to you, and I thought with concern of the shock you would sustain, when you discovered their unworthiness. (240–41)

Here and elsewhere, false starts, apologies, hesitance, and what Orville later describes as a concern that he is "destined to do or say something I ought not" (304) characterize his interactions with Evelina. Orville's

anxieties about appearing too forward or doing the wrong thing resemble Evelina's concerns, making him appear inexperienced. Moreover, it is Lord Orville's reputation that suffers even though sentimental novels typically focus on young women's reputations.

Revising *Evelina*: Youthful Characters in *Cecilia* and *Camilla*

Given *Evelina*'s success, one might expect to see in *Cecilia* and *Camilla* iterations of the same theme, but these novels differ radically from *Evelina*. They are more complicated; they represent a darker reality, and they are populated by decreasingly imitable protagonists. Periodicals responded to these distinctions ambivalently, endorsing *Cecilia* and *Camilla* while worrying about the exemplarity and naturalness of her characters.[17] Reviewers' concerns suggest the discordance between public expectations and Burney's evolving intentions. Literary critics anticipated *Cecilia* and *Camilla*, like *Evelina*, would model behavior for young readers. Instead, they confronted protagonists who seemed irresponsible.

My research suggests that Burney increasingly criticized in her next two novels the ideal characters she established in *Evelina* and that her critique was part of a reconceptualization of the sentimental format. She clearly expresses this intention in a letter written to her father on 18 June 1795 in which she refuses to call *Camilla* a novel (3: 117).[18] Part of her reasoning is pragmatic as it ensures that young readers can better access her work: "the Word Novel was long in the way of Cecilia, as I was told, at the Queen's House. And it was not permitted to be read by the Princesses" (*JLFB* 3: 117). Narrative ambitions offer another reason: "I own I do not like calling it a *Novel*: it gives so simply the notion of a mere love story, that I recoil a little from it. I mean it to be *sketches of Characters & morals, put in action*, not a Romance" (*JLFB* 3: 117). Burney envisions a more complicated structure in which multiple characters form a backdrop to "one *Heroine* shining conspicuous through the Group" (*JLFB* 3: 129). These characters do not exemplify virtues; they test them in real world settings.

One result is that *Cecilia* and *Camilla* investigate identity formation in multiple ways. In contrast to Evelina who has one female friend, Cecilia befriends three young women—Mrs. Harrel, Henrietta Belfield, and Lady Honoria—who each embody different modes of female youth: the foolish young woman undone by material consumption; the financially distressed young woman of sensibility; and the fashionable wit. This social landscape

further broadens in *Camilla* as the heroine is compared to four young women: the fashionable Indiana Lynmere, the romantic Mrs. Berlinton, the domestic Lavinia Tyrold, and the deformed Eugenia Tyrold. The number of male characters also expands. Orville is differentiated from Sir Clement Willoughby and Mr. Lovell; Delvile and Mandlebert are measured against numerous young men, from the dissipated Mr. Harrel, downcast Mr. Arnott, and existentially confused Mr. Belfield in *Cecilia* to the irresponsible Lionel Tyrold, extravagant Clermont Lynmere, and rash Henry Westwyn in *Camilla*. These novels thus offer young readers multiple subject positions, which may explain what Fergus observes was *Cecilia*'s popularity with schoolboys.

In addition, *Cecilia* and *Camilla* significantly complicate the models of young womanhood and young manhood established by Evelina and Orville. Cecilia, Devile, Camilla, and Edgar are as virtuous as their predecessors, but their narrative rewards are delayed and problematized, thereby undercutting the narrative format of *Evelina*. The most significant issue is their courtships. *Evelina* psychologizes courtship as a developmental step to maturity, which is symbolized in marriage. *Cecilia* and *Camilla* disrupt this model; courtships illustrate the protagonists' juvenilities, including both their personal immaturities and the customs that infantilize them.

In *Cecilia*, generational conflicts and legal entanglements thwart the protagonists' attempts to marry and highlight their dependence upon adults. At nearly twenty-one, Cecilia is on the cusp of legal adulthood but constrained by her uncle's will to reside with one of three guardians. Far from protecting Cecilia, her guardians prove inadequate and even dangerous. Their mistreatment demonstrates the vulnerability of youth; Cecilia must endure Mr. Briggs's impertinence, Mr. Delvile's arrogance, and Mr. Harrel's exploitation because she is legally a minor. Her twenty-first birthday, though, fails to bring independence as the surname clause of her uncle's will prevents her from marrying Delvile. Although an adult, she remains functionally a juvenile. Cecilia's difficulties arguably illustrate the constraints of a patriarchal culture, but Devile is also beholden to his parents thus recasting dependency as a problem inherent to the young, not simply to young women. Delvile's parents insert themselves into the couple's courtship, first by refusing their consent and then by forcing Delvile to choose between his mother and his fiancé.

While familial obligations pain Cecilia and Delvile, their sufferings are exacerbated by their inexperience, idealism, and impetuosity. They do

not lack virtue, but they act on instinct and without foresight. Cecilia's generosity to Mr. Harrel clearly demonstrates the distinctions between her virtues and those of Evelina. Both characters wish "to act with uprightness and propriety" (*Evelina*, 336), but Cecilia's is more passionate, struck with a "fervent desire to ACT RIGHT" (55).[19] Cecilia gives away her inheritance when touched "by common humanity" (808). Easily coerced by the corrupt Mr. Harrel, her untested ideals worsen her precarious situation. First moved by Mr. Harrel's "agonies of despair" (296), Cecilia promises her paternal inheritance to him; then, regarding her promise as "an oath the most solemn" (296), she insists upon paying. Mr. Monckton later explains the naiveté of her thinking: "the most delicate conscience would have absolved you from performing" an obligation so coerced (296). He further criticizes her acceptance of this loss as a "youthful philosophy" that "will not lessen your regret hereafter, when the value of money is better known to you" (297). Although selfish, Mr. Monckton is a realist, and his advice proves prophetic. Finding herself unable to marry Delvile because of her lost estate, Cecilia later laments: "Oh had I foreseen this moment!" (808).

Like Cecilia, Delvile displays many of the same qualities as his predecessor but must learn moderation. Though "manly, generous, open-hearted and amiable, fond of literature, delighting in knowledge, kind in his temper, and spirited in his actions" (252), Delvile suffers from an "impetuosity of temper" (858), which persistently (if inadvertently) distresses Cecilia. He often bemoans his rashness but does nothing to control it. For example, he apologies to Cecilia after his duel with Mr. Monckton—"I deserve, indeed, to be blamed!—entrusted with your peace and happiness, to suffer rage, resentment, violence, to make me forego what I owed to such a deposite!" (841)—but he forgets his contrition soon after. Finding Cecilia delirious, he becomes "too desperate to be tractable" (911). When she recovers, he becomes so elated that he must be temporarily banned from her sight. As Dr. Lyster admonishes: "You must be calmer, Sir. . . . These heroicks . . . will not do for an invalide" (925).

Such immaturities are more exaggerated in *Camilla*. While legal exigencies impede Delvile's and Cecilia's union, Edgar's and Camilla's courtship is derailed solely by their own immature mismanagement. Rejecting the youthful models established in *Evelina* as untenable in the real world, *Camilla* realizes the revision begun in Cecilia. Perkins sees *Camilla* as a reversal of *Evelina*, which investigates the serious consequences of *Evelina*'s comic blunders in order to criticize Rousseau's educational program for women.[20] Reared with "as much simplicity as is compatible

with instruction," Camilla cannot think rigorously (357).[21] Her forays into adult society reveal the deficits of her reason. When agitated, as she is by Edgar's growing coldness, Camilla loses whatever ability she has to think rationally: "the ardour of her imagination, acted upon by every passing idea, shook her Judgment from its yet unsteady seat, and left her at the mercy of wayward Sensibility" (680). Evelina learns judgment through her travels. Camilla does not. She behaves in more immature ways.

While insightful, Perkins's reading does not address the full extent of Burney's educational project in *Camilla*, for Burney criticizes other educational programs for women. Despite the "airy thoughtlessness" of her nature (51), Camilla's "understanding had been sedulously cultivated" (52). She, in fact, is more reasonable than the fashionably educated Indiana, more ethical than the romantically educated Mrs. Berlinton, and more pragmatic than her classically educated sister Eugenia. Burney also investigates the failings of male education. While Lionel, Clermont, and Edgar have been carefully educated (either at university or abroad), they all display the irresponsibility culturally associated with youth. Edgar, in particular, proves to be overly reliant on his childhood tutor. His dependence on Dr. Marchmont when choosing a bride is as inexplicable as it is juvenile. At nearly twenty-one, Edgar has reached the age of independence and has finished his education. He should be able to decide for himself, a point made by the November 1796 *British Critic* in its review of the novel. He also has known Camilla since childhood, and he recognizes Dr. Marchmont's misogyny. Nonetheless, he concedes to the judgment of a childhood authority figure.

Such overreliance correlates to his sensibility and his immaturity. "Serious and meditative; but liberal, open, and candid" (57), Edgar resembles Orville in everything but judgment. Overcome with emotions, he oscillates between worshipping and vilifying Camilla. First extoling her "sweetness, her innocence, her benevolence, joined to a spirit of never-dying vivacity" (160), Edgar is so shaken by Dr. Marchmont's doubts about women that he willingly becomes a *monitor* of Camilla's conduct, noticing even minute lapses in propriety. As Hemlow suggests, he certainly reflects a male perspective (759); his analysis, though, is demonstrably flawed by Dr. Marchmont's ill will: "Nothing must escape you . . . even justice is insufficient during this period of probation, and instead of inquiring, 'Is this right in her?' you must simply ask, 'Would it be pleasing to me?'" (160). Such scrutiny all but ensures the dissolution of Camilla's and Edgar's engagement, for no woman realistically could withstand this test,

especially one as thoughtless as Camilla.

Guided by mistrust on one side and precipitancy on the other, Edgar's and Camilla's courtship parodies Orville's and Evelina's courtship. Far from illuminating Camilla's character, Edgar's watchfulness confirms his erroneous suspicions. His instability, moreover, agitates Camilla, leaving her less (not more) careful of her reputation. While Evelina and Orville each evolve through courtship, Camilla's and Edgar's interactions exacerbate their immaturities. After Marylebone Gardens, for example, Orville visits Evelina to elicit her explanation. His reassurances and politesse encourage her to relate "instantly . . . to him, as well as I could, the accident which had occasioned my joining the unhappy women with whom he had met me" (*Evelina* 242). By contrast, Edgar's discussion with Camilla after a similar disaster in Tunbridge Wells leads to greater misunderstanding. Camilla offers to explain herself, but, "too hasty in a confession which some apologising account should have preceded" (640), she misrepresents her error:

> 'The letters of Sir Sedley Clarendel I know you think I ought not to have received. . . . And, indeed, I acknowledge myself, in that affair, a most egregious dupe!'
>
> She blushed; but her blush was colourless to that of Edgar. Resentment against Sir Sedley beat high in every vein; while disappointment to his delicacy, in the idea of Camilla duped by any man, seemed, in one blow, to detach him from her person. (640)

Rather than determining their compatibility, Edgar's and Camilla's conversation reveals how their emotions cause unnecessary confusion. In her haste, Camilla forgets to mention those details that would prove her innocence. Rapidly experiencing anger, regret, and disenchantment, Edgar fails to understand Camilla's meaning. While Orville assumes that "credulity is the sister of innocence" (*Evelina* 241), Edgar is not so lenient. Emotionally overwrought, he ascribes to the word "dupe" more serious connotations than Camilla intends, interpreting her ability to be "duped" by any man as a sign of her worthlessness.

By linking Edgar's and Camilla's emotional excesses to their upbringings, Burney criticizes their educations. More important, she rejects the pedagogical value of those very character models praised by review journals as instructive to youth—including those models she established in *Evelina*. *Camilla* illustrates more forcefully than *Cecilia* the failure of

sentimental protagonists to court successfully and, thereby, achieve the status of adults. Camilla's and Cecilia's innocence renders them nearly unfit for their societies; so too do Edgar's and Delvile's sensitivities. Both couples signify immaturity in Burney's moral universe.

Conclusion: Burney and Changes in Realism

Discussing Burney's configuration of youth allows for a more capacious understanding of her literary project, which endeavors to subject young men as well as young women to close scrutiny and critique. It also illustrates how her novels developed over the last two decades of the eighteenth century. Burney's protagonists become more extreme, and the world they inhabit radically changes. Through this disjunction, Burney criticizes her own writing and that of other novelists following her original models. If Burney's characters appear increasingly immature in the course of her writing, it is because her aesthetic and moral project changed over time. *Evelina* offers characters that combine the exemplarity of literary models like Pamela and Sir Charles Grandison with the perceptions of actual young persons. Orville and Evelina appear simultaneously ideal and real: scrupulously moral, genteel, and sensitive yet nervous and unconfident. *Cecilia* problematizes these protagonists by presenting their conception of virtue as too rigid to be protective or even recommended. *Camilla* extends this critique even further both by embedding the courtship narrative within a larger story about education and by making the hero's and heroine's thoughtless miscalculations a more determining force in their suffering than cultural exigencies.

In representing youthful heroes and heroines debilitated by their environments, Burney reflected and influenced changes taking place in the 1780s, 1790s, and early 1800s in the types of literature produced for young readers. In the years between the publication of *Cecilia* and *Camilla*, didactic children's fiction gained popularity, and the constitution of novelistic realism itself underwent reform. While reviewers continued to assess novels according to the literary standards articulated by Johnson, Richardson, and others, writers increasingly gave nuance to this model or rejected it outright. Mary Hays famously challenges writers "to describe life and manners in real or probable situations, to delineate the human mind in its endless varieties, to develope [sic] the heart, to paint the passions, to trace the springs of action, to interest the imagination, exercise the affections, and awaken the powers of the mind (181). Hays articulates a

form of literary realism, which Burney began developing as early as the 1780s in *Cecilia* in order to push sentimental fiction beyond the romance plot and to extend its pedagogic function. Burney places seemingly ideal characters into "common life" in order to reveal not only their flaws but also the problem of idealized models as instructive tools for youth. Other writers joined Burney, but she was arguably an innovator in this new type of narrative.

NOTES

[1] See the review of *Evelina* in the June 1778 issue of the *Westminster Magazine* (325).

[2] I use the terms "young person" and "youth" throughout this essay because they were the most common phrases in the eighteenth century to denote the group we call adolescents. The age-criteria for this stage was not absolute because the distinctions between childhood, youth, and adulthood were determined, in part, by social rituals such as the completion of education, professional independence, and marriage. Sarah Trimmer defines young persons as individuals between the ages of fourteen and at least twenty-one in *The Guardian of Education* (65).

[3] See the *Critical Review*'s assessment of *Evelina* in its September 1778 issue. Also see *Macaulay's Letters on Education*, Smith's *Rural Walks*, and Darwin's *Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*. In addition, the *Young Lady's Parental Monitor* added Burney's novels to Sarah Pennington's recommended book list in its reprint of her *Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters*. These reading lists reiterated books commonly acknowledged to be appropriate for youth.

[4] All journal references are from *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, which will be parenthetically denoted *EJLFB*.

[5] See Epstein's *The Iron Pen*, Straub's *Divided Fictions*, and Doody's *Frances Burney: the Life in the Works*. Other seminal studies include Hemlow's "Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books"; Staves's "*Evelina*: or, Female Difficulties"; Cutting's "Defiant Women: the Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney's Novels"; Craft-Fairchild's *Masquerade and Gender*;

Dobbin's "The Novel, Women's Awareness, and Fanny Burney"; and Yeazell's *Fictions of Modesty*. For more recent criticism see: Allen's "Staging Identity: Frances Burney's Allegory of Genre"; Eckersley's "The Role of Evelina's 'Worthiest Object' in Frances Burney's Resistance to Eighteenth-Century Gender Ideology"; Cope's "*Evelina*'s Peculiar Circumstances and Tender Relations"; and Jones's chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*.

[6] See, for example, Straub (3), Epstein (6), Dobbin (44), and Lynch (191).

[7] Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814) also considers the vulnerabilities of the young. However, this essay will focus on Burney's first three novels. *The Wanderer* does not investigate the mental development of the young to the same degree that *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, and *Camilla* do. Its protagonists' sufferings are, for the most part, occasioned by difficult circumstances rather than poor judgment.

[8] Patricia Meyer Spacks's *The Adolescent Idea* is one of the only works to consider the significance of youth in eighteenth-century novels. While Spacks provides an important critical vocabulary for this topic, she sees adolescence as a stable category with universal characteristics rather than a historically dynamic group.

[9] For example, Mary Jackson defines youth as the last stage of childhood (21) while F. J. Harvey Darton fails to mention youth at all.

[10] See the review of *The Whole Duty of an Apprentice* in the October 1755 issue of the *Monthly Review* (303).

[11] Surveying approximately 640 advertisements for Richardson's novels using the *Burney Collection Newspapers*, I have found that between 1740 and 1760 there were 346 advertisements for *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, or *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, of which 115 explicitly addressed youths.

[12] *The English Short Title Catalog* does not contain a record for *The New Impenetrable Secret*; however, advertisements for this work appeared 68 times in various newspapers between 1760 and 1768.

[13] For discussions of children's literature in the Romantic era, see Clarke's "'The Cursed Barbauld Crew'"; Kinnell's "Sceptreless, Free, Uncircumscribed? Radicalism, Dissent and Early Children's Books"; Richardson's "Romanticism and the End of Childhood" and *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*; Donelle Ruwe's *Culturing the Child* and "Guarding the British Bible from Rousseau"; Tucker's "Fairy Tales and Their Early Opponents: in Defense of Mrs. Trimmer"; and Myers's "Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers" and "Romancing the Moral Tale."

[14] In her preface, Smith insists that *Rural Walks* (1795) is intended for twelve- to thirteen-year-old girls (3). Edgeworth published *Moral Tales for Young People* in 1800, followed by *Popular Tales* in 1804.

[15] In addition to Hemlow, see Perkins, "Planting Seeds of Virtue" and Vallone's "Crisis of Education" (65) for discussions of the pedagogic function of *Evelina*. Also see Epstein (99).

[16] All references are to the Oxford University Press edition of *Evelina*.

[17] The December 1782 issue of the *Critical Review*, for example, worries that young women will follow Cecilia's example and give up their fortunes. Similarly, the October 1796 issue of the *Monthly Review* was puzzled by Edgar's reliance on his misogynistic tutor in managing his courtship.

[18] All references to this letter are from the *Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay)*, which will be parenthetically abbreviated to *JLFB*.

[19] All references are to the 1999 Oxford University Press edition of Cecilia.

[20] Perkins, eighth paragraph.

[21] All references are to the 1983 Oxford University Press edition of *Camilla*.

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