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Declining Buckles and Movable Shoes in Frances Burney's *Cecilia*

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A necessary accessory and a fashionable ornament for both sexes, the shoe buckle is a prominent part of eighteenth-century sartorial history and the history of everyday life. Eighteenth-century newspapers contain accounts of lost and stolen buckles alongside advertisements for innovations in design such as "Hands's New-Invented Brunswick Spring Shoe-Buckle" (*World* 1790). In literature, the shoe buckle is an important marker of wealth, class, and gender identity. In Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) the heroine inherits "a Pair of rich Silver Buckles" (19) from her deceased Lady's closet, while in *Clarissa* (1747–48) Lovelace admires Clarissa's "blue satin [her] shoes. . . . Neat buckles in them" (400). Later references to shoe ornamentation reflect the buckle's decline in popularity; these include Camilla's purchase of "shoe-roses" (Burney 743) and the Bennets' similar purchase for the Netherfield ball in *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen 67) [See fig. 1]. In everyday accounts, the buckle becomes a marker of luxury and wealth, as well as a means to critique the spending habits of the wealthy. The author of a newspaper column titled "*The* Habits *of the* Times" exclaims: "It is no less strange than true, that in the Expenditure on the last mentioned little Article in Dress, the Shoe Buckle, *a certain Young Gentleman's* Quarterly Account amounted to no more than Four Hundred Pounds!!" (*Public Advertiser* 1782).

British toymakers were the primary producers of buckles although consumers could also procure the accessories from jewellers. Birmingham toymakers represented a significant part of the market with estimations "that during the 1780s more than two and a half million buckles were produced by Birmingham toymakers for internal consumption and export" (Riello 82). William Hutton's *History of Birmingham* (1781) gives a short history of the shoe buckle in terms that emphasize its changeful nature and its growing association with femininity near the end of the century:

> The buckle seems to have undergone every figure, size and shape of geometrical invention: . . . . The large square buckle is the *ton* of the present day. The ladies also, have adopted the reigning taste: It is difficult to discover their beautiful little feet, covered with

> an enormous shield of buckle; and we wonder to see the active motion under the massive load. Thus the British fair support the manufactures of Birmingham, and thus they kill by weight of metal. (78)

Hutton emphasizes the mutable patterns of taste and the power and violence of consumerism when he aligns the success of the Birmingham trade with feminine fashions.[1] He also foreshadows the impact that the decline in popularity of the buckle will have on the producers of these commercial products.

The popular means of securing one's shoe since the Restoration, by the late 1780s the buckle was falling out of fashion. In 1792, the buckle-makers of England presented the royal family with a petition to support the use of shoe buckles over shoe ties, which they argued were "daily proving fatal to [their] trade" (*Appeal* 5), and the encouragement of which "virtually takes a part in snatching the bread out of the mouths of thousands of poor and industrious families" (*Appeal* 3). The decline of the shoe buckle as a fashionable ornament came about in response to the French Revolution, and the more extensive use of the lower-class shoe tie to signal equality and the levelling of classes [See fig. 2 and 3]. Even before the French Revolution increased the association between the shoe buckle and "conservatism and bigotry" (Riello 82), the aesthetic of the buckle was changing to reflect "more natural styles" as "shoe styles were gradually becoming simpler during the 1780s" (Pratt and Woolley 52, 54) [See fig. 4 and 5].

Although Frances Burney had no way of knowing that buckles would go out of fashion about four to seven years after she published her novel, *Cecilia* exhibits an awareness of the eventual decline of the buckle in reaction to Revolutionary principles. In *Cecilia*, Burney explores the connections between bodily, social, and emotional (or sympathetic) movement. Burney and other authors' use of fashionable footwear as a metaphor for more abstract ideas about the revolutionary movements of fashion, class relations, and sympathetic feeling mean that when I use the words "movement" or "rise" and "decline," I can refer to both the object of fashion (the shoe or buckle) and to more abstract ideas about self and national identity in the late eighteenth century. The shoe is not only a useful covering for the foot but also a fashionable ornament that goes through the sorts of revolutions that Hutton speaks of in his *History of Birmingham*. In addition, the shoe and its ornaments act as metaphors for the emotional impact of being "moved" at the thought of someone else's plight—putting oneself in another's

shoes. In *Cecilia*, exterior displays of luxury and aristocratic identity (such as the buckle) lead to ruin and violence. Burney also constructs Cecilia as a metaphorical ornament caught between economic and moral identities, closely aligning discourse on fashionable objects, aristocratic ruin, and moral sympathy as they are visible in the motions and emotions that construct Cecilia's identity.

Violent Buckles and Moral Ornaments

Burney explores the relationship between gender, economy, and falsity when she has Mr. Briggs use the quartz, or Bristol Stone shoe buckle, as a metaphor for the false representation of self. Bristol stones, which originated from the quartz deposits in Bristol, were a popular alternative to diamonds in the eighteenth century. These stones "were much worn by fops and dandies, set in buttons and buckles in much the same way as diamonds" and were "ideal for travelling jewels" (Becker 32). Although Burney satirizes his parsimonious economic plan as one that cannot benefit any member of society (least of all himself), Briggs' metaphor still foreshadows the ruin and decline that result from falsity. "I'll give you some advice," he tells Cecilia. "Take care of sharpers; don't trust shoe-buckles, nothing but Bristol stones! tricks in all things. A fine gentleman sharp as another man. Never give your heart to a gold topped cane, nothing but brass gilt over" (95). Briggs' advice sets up the metaphor of ornament that Burney will go on to develop throughout the novel.[2]

He also references forms of false ornamentation that did, in fact, hold some value in the eighteenth-century market. Shoe buckles of the late eighteenth century were often embedded with imitation stones, either in Bristol stone or in paste. Paste was "a high-quality transparent lead glass" developed by the English in the seventeenth century and perfected as cut jewellery by Parisian Georges Frédéric Stras around 1724 (Becker 14). Briggs mentions the less attractive of the two options, as Bristol stones "did not have the same scintillating brilliance as paste" with "a more transparent, more diluted shine" (Becker 32). Paste, on the other hand, was a popular alternative to expensive diamonds from around 1700 to 1865 (Lewis 36), and "it was certainly not long before workers found that paste could in many ways outdo the genuine article, in exciting cutting, setting and design which all produced a look quite distinct from that of diamonds" (Becker 17). This popularity is explicit when one surveys the number of artifacts that remain

[see fig. 6, 7, and 8].[3] Briggs' comment about the "gold topped cane" is also relevant to a discussion of shoe buckles, as producers of buckles and other accessories that required precious metal often used either gilt or imitation gold [see fig. 9].[4] As Marcia Pointon explains, "in the mid-eighteenth century the Pinchbecks, father and son, perfected the production of imitation gold and paste stones," which "rapidly became synonymous with anything counterfeit. . . . The very popularity of Pinchbeck contributed to a more general debate about authenticity and appearance" (20). Just as pastes were valued for their greater flexibility, Pinchbeck gold, too, became valuable as a metal that "had all the appearance of fine gold and did not tarnish or deteriorate" (Dawes 39).[5]

In his use of popular but fake objects as metaphors for sharps who masquerade as gentlemen, Briggs rightly identifies falsity and ornamentation as the aspects of consumer society that most endanger Cecilia's wish to find happiness and avoid violence. His references to gems and gold connect that desire to moral worth because, as Pointon notes, "jewellery history might be said to be the history of transforming economic value into transcendent (aesthetic and moral) worth" (23). In this example, Cecilia's ability to decipher authentic from superficial wealth, status, and moral worth affects her ability to become a kind of ornament that in turn embodies those very qualities; her challenge is to achieve this transformation without violence or a loss of moral and economic value—a challenge that Burney suggests is impossible to overcome without balance.

Mortimer Delvile references the image of falsely-jewelled buckles again when Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Belfield battle for Cecilia's attention: "Ah, madam . . . those *French beads* and *Bristol stones* have not, I find shone in vain! . . . If Mr. Briggs . . . does not speedily come forth with his plum friend, before the glittering of swords and spears is joined to that of jewels, the glare will be so resplendent, that he will fear to come within the influence of its rays" (141; original italics). Delvile aligns the male display of "Bristol stones" and "French beads" (probably making reference to the gilt or gold beadwork found on buckles) with a similar aristocratic display of "swords and spears" here. To Delvile, Cecilia seems to be under the power of such superficial displays of identity when she occasions a duel, but she also takes on a position of trinket or fashionable ornament when Floyer and Belfield fight over her attention. Delvile aligns Floyer and Belfield with the English and French false jewels that adorn the shoe buckle while Cecilia is cast in the role of the traditionally superficial woman who only considers outward

appearance. Briggs' opinion that "The Spectator, Tatler and Guardian, would make library sufficient for any female in the kingdom" (186) fits with his characterization of femininity as susceptible to ornament and thus closely aligned with the very same. In *Spectator* number 15, Addison argues that women "consider only the Drapery of the Species, and never cast away a Thought on those Ornaments of the Mind, that make Persons Illustrious in themselves, and Useful to others" (492). Cecilia's attempt to stop the violence that arises from superficial display makes it seem as though she falls for the "Bristol Stones" that otherwise would not cause her concern, and this suspicious public appearance due to correct moral identity continues to cause her trouble as the novel progresses. The fashionable display of men such as Belfield and Floyer undermines her "ornaments of the mind" as well as her plan of being "useful to others."

Delvile's alignment of jewels and swords draws attention to the relationship between ornaments, the superficial display of aristocratic identity, and the violent action that Cecilia fears. Belfield's involvement in an upper-class duel also reconfirms the connection between ornamental display and violent action when it leads to his ruin and resultant physical and economic decline. However, it is not only the duel that causes Belfield's near death and his mutability; the root of his problem lies in his rejection of trade in an attempt to become "the ornament of the city" with the indulgence of his mother and linen-draper father (214). When the duel ruins Belfield's chance for a position at court, he eventually falls into a position as an agricultural laborer, which he claims holds "the true secret of happiness, Labour with Independence" (664). His final and most fulfilling employment, however, is in the army:

> The injudicious, the volatile, yet noble-minded Belfield, to whose mutable and enterprising disposition life seemed always rather beginning than progressive, roved from employment to employment, and from public life to retirement, soured with the world, and discontented with himself, till vanquished, at length, by the constant friendship of Delvile, he consented to accept his good offices in again entering the army; and, being fortunately ordered out upon foreign service, his hopes were revived by ambition, and his prospects were brightened by a view of future honour. (940)

In his movement from trade to social ornament to soldier, Belfield enacts David Hume's theory that laboring manufacturers or tradesmen are necessary for the maintenance of national identity because they provide the

nation with soldiers during times of war, without depriving the public of "necessary" labor. Hume argues,

> . . . it is easy for the public to convert many of these manufacturers into soldiers, and maintain them by that superfluity which arises from the labour of the farmers. . . . And to consider the matter abstractedly, manufactures increase the power of the state only as they store up so much labour, and that of a kind to which the public may lay claim, without depriving any one of the necessaries of life. The more labour, therefore, that is employed beyond mere necessaries, the more powerful is any state; since the persons engaged in that labour may easily be converted to the public service. (161)

Belfield is "volatile" and "discontented" when his employment is "mutable" and not aligned with a moral purpose, but as soon as Delvile enables his "foreign service," Belfield can once again have "ambition" and rise morally and economically. Belfield's movement from failed linen-draper to a metaphorical "Bristol stone" of the *bon ton* to an agricultural and then textual laborer (as a scribe and hack writer) charts a movement from the upper-class violence of the duel to the morally-sanctioned violence of war and from a fashionable to a moral ornament.

Mr. Harrel's character aligns ornamental display with violence because he attempts to maintain a fashionable display of upper-class identity while simultaneously declining into economic ruin. This false display of self leads to an improper consumption of luxury goods, according to Hume, who argues that "innocent luxury, or a refinement in the arts and conveniences of life, is advantageous to the public" but "wherever luxury ceases to be innocent, it also ceases to be beneficial. . . . A gratification is only vicious when it engrosses all a man's expense, and leaves no ability for such acts of duty and generosity as are required by his situation and fortune" (175-76). Despite the fact that Harrel's gratification is vicious, the violence of his suicide does lead to the moral ornamentation of Cecilia. As Mortimer Delvile tells Cecilia on the night of Harrel's death: "Amiable Miss Beverley! what a dreadful scene have you witnessed! what a cruel task have you nobly performed! such spirit with such softness! so much presence of mind with such feeling!—but you are all excellence! human nature can rise no higher! I believe indeed you are its most perfect ornament!" (422). Cecilia's status as a "perfect ornament" rises out of violence and economic turmoil; however, violence and economic turmoil also limit her ability to provide charitable relief to the lower classes and thereby develop her usefulness to and sympathy for others.

Harrel's vicious self-gratification is a major cause of Cecilia's economic decline and the decline of those who might benefit from her charity. Just as the fashionable female controls the fate of the Birmingham toymakers, so too does Cecilia's wealth or poverty impact the fate of those who labor on her estate. In this way, moral economy both relies on, and suffers from, fashionable consumption and excess luxury. Cecilia's negotiation is not unlike the one that Adam Smith uses as an example when, in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), he argues: "what all the violence of the feudal institutions could never have effected, the silent and insensible operation of foreign commerce and manufactures gradually brought about" (264). Smith uses the example of a pair of diamond buckles to demonstrate the effect that commerce has on the maintenance of the landowner's estate:

> For a pair of diamond buckles perhaps, or for something as frivolous and useless, they exchanged the maintenance, or what is the same thing, the price of the maintenance of a thousand men a year, and with it the whole weight and authority which it could give them. The buckles, however, were to be all their own, and no other human creature was to have any share of them; whereas in the more antient method of expence they must have shared with at least a thousand people. (264–65)

Cecilia attempts to balance Smith's picture of commerce and manufacture with his picture of a benevolent landlord cognizant of the importance of community. However, her role as an ornamental heiress (and her association with superficial display such as the Harrels') makes her no more able to support the lower classes consistently than a fashionable ornament such as a buckle can dictate its own commercial movement.[6]

Cecilia's departure from her estate at Bury spreads "the utmost consternation among the poor in general, and the lower class of her own tenants in particular, and the road was soon lined with women and children, wringing their hands and crying" (873). Indeed, when Delvile proposes that Cecilia relinquish her name and be content with only her (nonexistent) "paternal 10,000*l*." (804), she understands not only that the happiness of the industrious poor depends upon her ability to control her response to the violence of "Bristol stones" but also that Mr. Harrel's deceit and vicious luxury dismantle her own happiness: "She lamented, however, with bitterness, her unfortunate connexion with Mr. Harrel, whose unworthy impositions upon her kindness of temper and generosity, now proved to her an evil far more serious and extensive, than in the midst of her repugnance to them

she had ever apprehended" (810). For Cecilia to be happy, she must sacrifice the happiness of others and her ideal involvement in that happiness—thus declining both morally and financially in order to join herself to Delvile in marriage.

In exchange for this decline, she becomes the moral ornament of the aristocratic family, which allows them to rise morally and counteracts their decay by opening them to sympathetic feeling. Mortimer Delvile desires this role for Cecilia but underestimates the importance of aristocratic display over moral ornamentation. Upon the occasion of his first proposal to her he argues that his family

> . . . adore Miss Beverley, and though their consent to the forfeiture of their name might for-ever be denied, when once they beheld her the head and ornament of their house, her elegance and accomplishments joined to the splendour of her fortune, would speedily make them forget the plans which now wholly absorb them. Their sense of honour is in nothing inferior to their sense of high birth. . . . (564–65)

As it turns out, their sense of high birth is much too important to their construction of aristocratic identity for them to sacrifice it, even to a moral ornament as genuine as Cecilia Beverly. What ensues instead is an action of rise and fall that allows for the balance (or "levelling") that Burney's novel experiments with: the heiress loses her inheritance in order to gain her happiness, thus adding moral superiority to the Delvile name. In response to Dr. Lyster's observation that "there is evidently throughout this world, in things as well as persons, a levelling principle, at war with pre-eminence, and destructive of perfection," Delvile whispers to Cecilia, "how much higher must we all rise, or how much lower must you fall, ere any levelling principle will approximate us with YOU!" (937). But this is just what happens. Cecilia becomes safely embedded in the Delvile name, and Burney explicitly links her journey there with that of a fashionable ornament in danger of losing its economic value at the expense of the moral improvement of its wearer.

Delvile once again foreshadows Cecilia's alignment with such an ornament when he tells her he wishes for "the secret certainty I cannot be robbed of you" (824). Despite his wish, not only is he robbed of Cecilia, but Cecilia is also robbed of herself when she fears that Delvile and Belfield will duel over her honor. Her fear of the duel is connected to her objectification as an economic or moral ornament rather than a sympathetic one. She also fears what Margaret Anne Doody argues "is a general taint" in the novel:

"that those men who advance themselves expect unconsciously to do so at the expense of women" (130). Cecilia, however, gains agency after facing violence because she finds balance between her economic and moral roles. In this sense she does what Julie Park argues reflects Burney's use of free indirect discourse: she holds "in perpetual suspension the feminized roles of being subject and object at once, the very condition of both the abject and the automaton" (29). Similarly, Deidre Lynch speaks of "the *double* logic of the culture of consumption: a logic that at one moment foregrounds the visible female body and at the next foregrounds a female self whose embodiment is suspended" (169–70). In *Cecilia*, this suspension between subject and object, to use Park's terminology, exists because Cecilia struggles to align her position as a moral ornament with the economic loss that brings that ornament into being and robs her of her agency to feel for others.

Moveable Shoes and Sympathetic Ornaments

Cecilia must construct a kind of sympathy that affords her agency within her status as an economically declining yet morally ascending object. The novel works through the paradoxical relationship between interior morality and superficial ornamentation by allowing its heroine to take on the position of an economic and moral object and a sympathetic subject. However, sympathy without economic usefulness is not enough for Cecilia as Burney aligns the deterioration of Cecilia's economic state with the physical manifestation of her position as an object (in her flight and madness). The idea that she must keep secret and yet display her identity as the moral ornament of the Delvile name leads to a negotiation similar to the one that Jennie Batchelor argues reflects "the circular logic that characterizes so much anti-fashion writing of the period. . . . To codify a woman's dress, table and house in terms of a set of visible and identifiable moral characteristics was . . . to provide her with a series of masks behind which she might conceal her true thoughts and desires" ("Let your Apparel manifest your Mind" 124, 125). For Cecilia, this secrecy is violent because it fails to validate her as an individual and undermines her role as a movable—or feeling—human being in favor of her role as a moral object.[7]

When she fears that Belfield will once again draw his sword, this time against Delvile, Cecilia's "terror for Delvile, horror for herself, hurry, confusion, heat and fatigue, all assailing her at once, . . . the attack was too strong for her fears" (896); her motion becomes out of control "till quite

spent and exhausted, she abruptly" runs into a pawnbroker's shop where she sinks "upon the floor, and . . . [sits] for some time without speaking" (897). The owners of the shop conclude that "she's a gentlewoman . . . because she's got such good things on" (898) and eventually advertise her, just as they would stolen property, in the *Daily Advertiser*. Their ad focuses on Cecilia's appearance and her alignment with Delvile, which acts as a mark of ownership:

> MADNESS
>
> Whereas a crazy young lady, tall, fair complexioned, with blue eyes and light hair, ran into the Three Blue Balls, in ——street, on Thursday night, the 2d instant, and has been kept there since out of charity. She was dressed in a riding habit. Whoever she belongs to is desired to send after her immediately. She has been treated with the utmost care and tenderness. She talks much of some person by the name of Delvile.
>
> *N.B.* She had no money about her.
>
> May, 1780 (901)

This loss of self realizes Delvile's fear that he will be "robbed" of Cecilia, and it also robs Cecilia of all the property that defines her role as an heiress; even her pockets are empty, as they "had been rifled of whatever . . . they contained" by the mob that surrounded her on the streets of London (898). As Susan Greenfield observes, Burney connects images of loss directly to the interior workings of the mind: "the reader, like Cecilia, attends to what has disappeared. We enter a mind cut off from the world, preoccupied not with the crowded craze of exchange, but with what is missing" (58). Burney conflates the loss of property with that of identity when she references the *Daily Advertiser* in which pleas for the return of property, such as buckles, were often published. The advertisement in *Cecilia* mimics the structure and intent of one example from 1778:

> *Publick Office, Villiers-Street, Strand.* Stolen on Monday Morning last from a Gentleman's Lodging in Salisbury-Street, Strand, an oval threaded Gold Shoe-Buckle, Steel Tongue and Chape. If offered to be pawned or sold stop it and the Party, and give Information at the above Office, and you shall receive One Guinea. (*Daily Advertiser*, Saturday, April 11, 1778)

In her ad for Cecilia, Burney replicates the physical description of the object and the economic value of its ownership: "N.B. She had no money about her" (901). This conflation of lost property and self as property equates loss with

commercial exchange and emphasizes Cecilia's role as an object.

When Albany finds Cecilia it is obvious that she is a lost and declining object: "Her dress was in much disorder, her fine hair was dishevelled, and the feathers of her riding hat were broken and half falling down" (902). Similarly, Mortimer Delvile contemplates "in dreadful stillness the fallen and altered object of his best hopes and affections" (907). Mr. Delvile sees immediately the connection between "the refuge he so implacably refused her on the night when her intellects were disordered" and her current state of loss of self: "His pride, his pomp, his ancient name, were now sunk in his estimation; and while he considered himself the destroyer of this unhappy young creature, he would have sacrificed them all to have called himself her protector" (912). Mr. Delvile's guilt causes him to think about something other than his ancient name and someone other than himself; drawn into a relationship with Cecilia that clearly defines him as the moral inferior, Mr. Delvile becomes "tortured with parental fears" as he is "pursued by the pale image of Cecilia" (913). This is because in her deteriorated form he comes face to face with the physical repercussions of his aristocratic display of self. In this instance, Cecilia elicits the feeling of sympathy that the rejection of shoe-buckles was meant to elicit in the early years of the French Revolution. In her state of suffering and insensibility, Cecilia is the catalyst for the development of others' sense of moral correctness and sympathy, thus involving her in the kind of charitable act that will bring her happiness.

Burney contrasts this rise of sympathetic community with the fashionable sympathy that Miss Larolles expresses when she speaks of the sale of the Belgrades' goods to pay their creditors. Her account of Lady Belgrade's buckles displays superficial sympathy and draws attention to the life-cycle of fashionable consumption; she tells Mrs. Harrel: "I hear the creditors have seized every thing; . . . they have taken those beautiful buckles out of her shoes! Poor soul! I declare it will make my heart ache to see them put up. Its quite shocking, upon my word. I wonder who'll buy them. I assure you they were the prettiest fancied I ever saw" (31-32). The decline of this particular pair of "beautiful buckles" foreshadows both the execution and loss that the Harrels undergo, and the execution and loss of Cecilia's identity as an heiress.[8] The buckles' decline also connects objects to human identity in a way that means performing sympathy for the object is the same as performing sympathy for the individual. As Cynthia Wall explains, "the idea of estates for sale, of household goods up for grabs to the highest or luckiest bidder, is part of a culture that was absorbing and performing its

culture in front of itself, for flagrantly social and competitive reasons, or for . . . personal and self-defining ones" (176). Lady Belgrade's loss of her buckles to another member of society exposes her identity as one constructed upon fashionable display; but their transfer from one owner to the next also exposes the connected nature of the *bon ton* community of commodities. In contrast, the loss that the tradesman, or "fancier," will experience from the execution of this object elicits yet another kind of sympathy and emphasis on community.

Miss Larolles' emphasis on how her heart will "ache to see" Lady Belgrade's buckles "put up" also constructs her sympathy in contrast to the sympathy that Cecilia has for Henrietta Belfield. However, the impossibility of feeling what another does means that true sympathy requires equal parts of suffering on both sides. Miss Larolles uncovers the difficulty of this task in the very language she uses to describe the sale of the Harrels' goods:

> "But the most shocking thing in nature," . . . "was going to the sale, I never missed a single day. One used to meet the whole world there, and every body was so sorry you can't conceive. It was quite horrid. I assure you I never suffered so much before; it made me so unhappy you can't imagine." "That I am most ready to grant," said Mr. Gosport, "be the powers of imagination ever so excentric." (600–01)

Miss Larolles' cries of "you can't conceive" and "you can't imagine" underscore the impossibility of completely inhabiting the shoes of the other, and Mr. Gosport's dry rejoinder reminds the reader of Adam Smith's description of sympathy:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. . . . our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. (8)

The kind of sympathy that Miss Larolles exhibits, however, does not require such imagination because hers is one of what Smith terms "general lamentations, which express nothing but the anguish of the sufferer, [and] create rather a curiosity to inquire into his situation, along with some disposition to sympathize with him, than any actual sympathy that is very sensible" (11). Instead, Miss Larolles wishes to enter into the commodification of the Harrels' suffering only so far as it is a ticketed event.

In contrast, when Albany recommends Henrietta and Cecilia to their "mutual tenderness" in volume II, book III, he begins the exchange of identity that the movement of the novel depends on for its eventual ending; he tells them: "The Poor not impoverished by their own Guilt, are Equals of the Affluent, not enriched by their own Virtue. Come, then, and let me present ye to each other! . . . lighten the burthen of each other's cares, by the heart-soothing exchange of gratitude for beneficence!" (206). Cecilia's fall tests the truth of this statement when it means she lacks all sensibility or ability to imagine the existence of anything outside of her own mind. Henrietta reacts to this insensibility most volubly because she aligns her identity so closely with Cecilia's: ". . . She does not see me, she does not know me,—she does not hear me! her hand seems quite lifeless already, her face is all fallen away!—Oh that I had died twenty deaths before I had lived to see this sight!" (915). Henrietta *is* dying in a sense because Cecilia performs too well what Smith says is impossible, and the two characters need one another to construct their identities.

Thus, Cecilia's state of insensibility is a necessary temporary stagnancy in order to reset her sympathetic relations with others. In order for a balance between moral ornament, economic status, and sympathy to occur, Cecilia must decline to the point of insensibility (or a replica of death) and then begin a slow but tempered rise into sensibility again. When Albany thinks she is dying he says, "Great and aweful is the change she is making; what are human revolutions, how pitiful, how insignificant, compared with it?" (916-17), and he is not far off the mark. Cecilia becomes an insensible object, elicits extreme sympathy from those around her, and then rises again to a moderate and balanced existence. Delvile's claims that "it were impious to lament" that Cecilia "shouldst be parted" from him if she is parted from herself and that his happiness will be buried with her result in the return of her sensibility (919). Cecilia's economic decline makes her available as an object of moral ornamentation and sympathy for both the lower-class Henrietta and the aristocratic Delvile as both base their ability to feel happiness on her sensible existence, and she wakes at the hint that her sensibility is tied to their existence. This revolution of human existence mirrors that of a fashionable ornament, such as the buckle, which must balance moral and economic demand if it is to survive on the market. Cecilia's revolutionary movement and final balance also portray a lack of distinction between an interior (morally motivated self) and an exterior (ornamental or economic self) because they show how both versions of self are necessary for extreme

sympathy. This sort of relationship between interiority and exteriority, Deidre Lynch argues, "does cultural work" in Burney's fiction in the form of an "unaccountable" character: "This is also a way we can start to specify the cooperative relation that links psychological fiction's promise of self-recovery to consumer culture's promise of reembodiment and links psychological fiction's inside stories to consumer culture's carbon-copy images of bodies beautiful" (174).

It is also the novel's way of overcoming the close alignment between morality and ornamentation that threatens to turn Cecilia's sympathy for the other into just another object of ornamentation. In *Dress, Distress and Desire,* Jennie Batchelor argues:

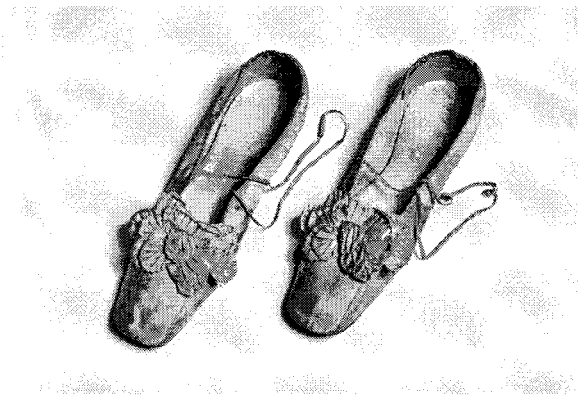
> Sentimental literature's frequent attempts to write dress into its formulation of a feminine ideal which married moral, physical and economic desirability fatally undermined sensibility's efficacy by associating it with a series of values (or rather a lack of values) that had always threatened to push sentimentalism to the margins of literary and cultural significance: fashionableness, speciousness and impermanence. (16)

When Cecilia completely embodies the role of declining ornament, she opens up the possibility for a sympathy based not on moral ornamentation but on a sympathetic relationship with the community that defines her selfhood. In one sense this is to deny the existence of the object and thus to erase its connection to sympathetic feeling, and in another it is to begin again the cycle of its production, consumption, decline, moral incline, and dissolution.

When she wakes, Cecilia understands the importance of this balance between the self and other and accepts some of the violence of the commercial revolutions of sympathy and selfhood: "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 chearfullest resignation" (941). In other words, Cecilia achieves a balance between her rising moral/sympathetic roles and her declining economic state, and just as she does so she sees a relationship between economic power, sympathy, and happiness that indicates mortality and decline are necessary to human equality. Similarly, French buckle-makers of the late eighteenth century attempted to align the economic role of the buckle with its moral implications by introducing the leather "boucle à la Nation," which was

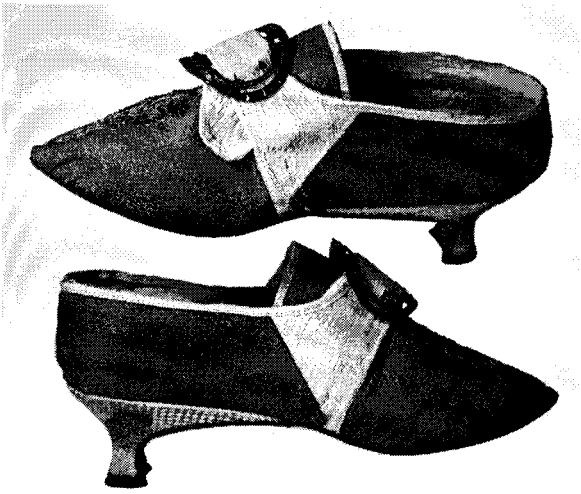
imported from England (Riello 81). [See fig. 10] Burney thus foresees the role that objects such as the buckle will play in the moral negotiation of national and self-identity in the years leading up to the French Revolution. In response, she argues for a balance between economy and sympathy that the novel suggests will lead Cecilia to a happiness less apt to decay or decline when faced with revolutionary movement or violence.

Figure 1



Satin, with silk ribbon, cotton and leather with elastic and sewn with cotton thread, made 1820-1850 – Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 2

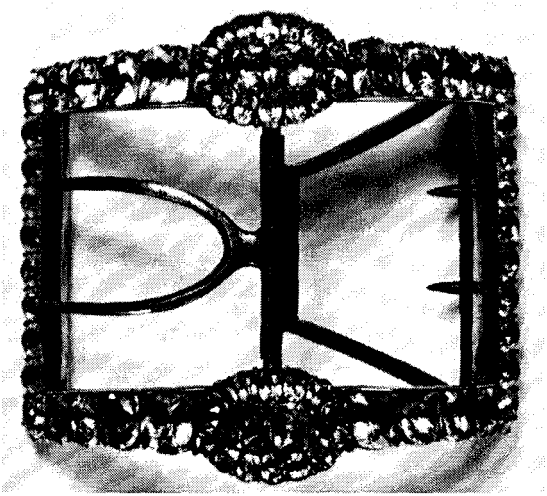


Leather sole and heel, and uppers of figured silk embroidered with silver-gilt thread and spangles, made 1770-1785 – Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 3

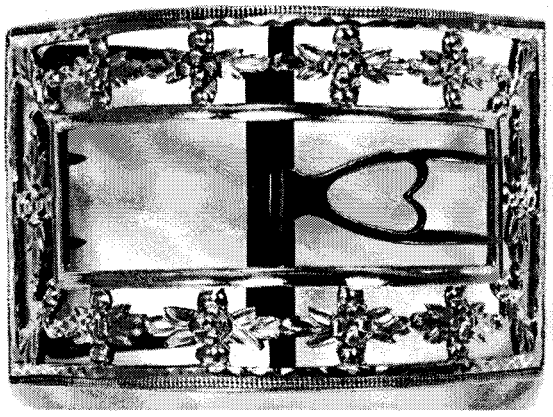
Leather and silk velvet, with a ribbon tie (ribbon not original), made 1805–1810 – Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 4



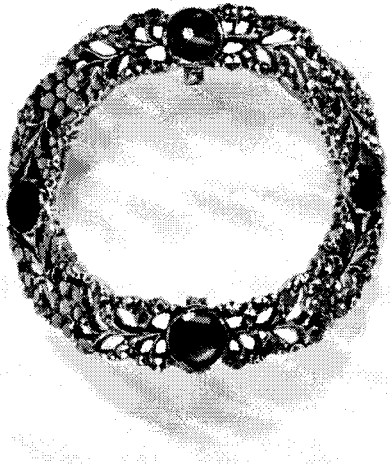
Silver set with pastes, ca. 1780s – Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 5



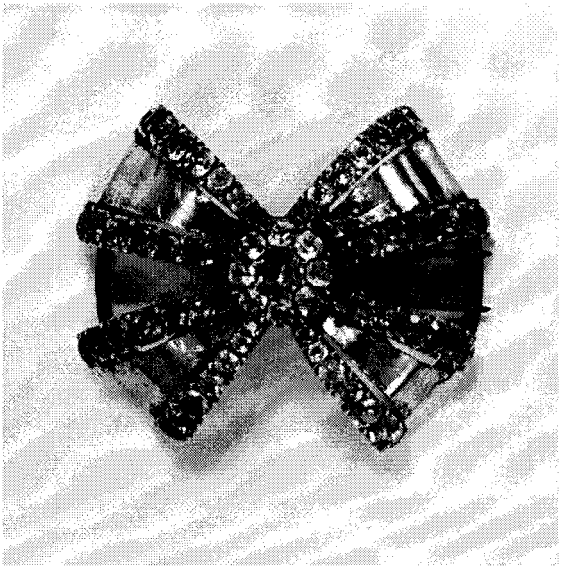
Silver, bright-cut and granulated, with steel, ca. 1790 – Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 6



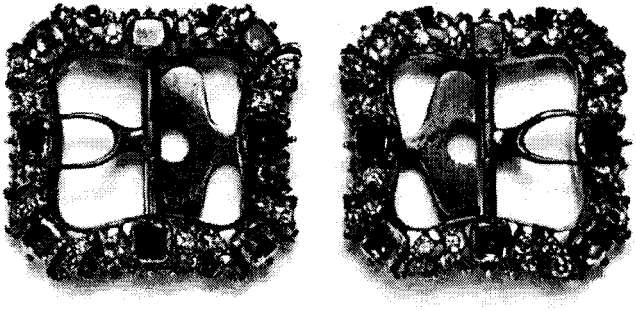
Silver set with pastes and pyrites commonly known as marcasites) – ca. 1780. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 7



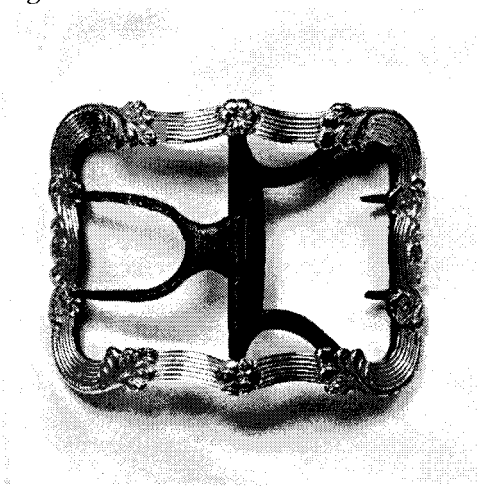
Silver set with pastes (ca. 1760). Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 8



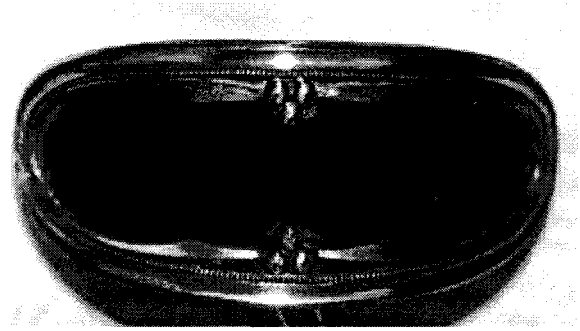
Brilliant-cut diamonds and sapphires, set in silver and gold, and steel prongs (ca. 1750). Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 9



Stamped gold on brass, steel prong, ca. 1770-ca.1780 – Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 10



Metal, leather, ca. 1795 – Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

NOTES

[1] Fashionable consumption creates a circular relationship between producers and consumers, as McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb explain: "The pursuit of luxury could now be seen as socially desirable, for as the growth of new wants stimulated increased effort and output, improved consumption by all ranks of society would further stimulate economic progress.... Higher real wages would act as an incentive to greater effort for the workforce, and would allow the workers to benefit from the growing output of consumer goods. Their increased consumption would further boost demand and the results of this 'benign circle' would be in the interests of the workforce, the entrepreneurs and the economy" (19).

[2] Briggs's metaphor is not unprecedented. In George Colman's *The Man of Business* (1775), Handy says Mrs. Golding is "no more like persons of fashion, than a Bristol stone is to a diamond!" (53). Similarly, the author of The lady's preceptor (1743) makes the comparison between "true politeness" and diamonds: "and we may say of True Politeness, that, / Tho' sought by all, to few the Gem is known; / Most for the Brilliant, wear the Bristol Stone" (d'Ancourt 4).

[3] Newspaper lost and found advertisements also exhibit the popularity of paste and Bristol stones. One example is unique in its account of stolen items under production. It is worth citing at length here as it shows the array of possible finishes available to the buckle consumer: "Public Office, Bow-street, May 28, 1781. Stolen on Monday last from a House in James-street, Golden-square, the following Articles, not finished, viz. A square Paste Shoe-buckle, three inches long, with two Rows of Paste, and a strait Piercing running between the Stones; a Paste Shoe-buckle on Cement, a Paste ditto without Stones on Cement, ... a flat Shoe-buckle, with a Cluster in the centre, a Row running from the Cluster pierced, and a Rim of Gold within and outside the Buckle; about 200 Gold Beeds [sic], some soldered on Pieces of Silver half an inch long, and 10 or 11 gold Beads on each Piece.... If offered to be pawned or sold, stop them and the Party and give Notice to Sampson Wright, Esq; at the above Office, and you shall receive Two Guineas Reward from the Owner" (*Public Advertiser*, 30 May 1781).

[4] Gilt or imitation gold was often used in buckle-making. As Lewis explains: "Although typical eighteenth-century paste jewellery was made mainly in silver, small pieces of gold may be used for decoration on the front; these often take the form of narrow engraved strips or tiny beads. Frequently the finest paste buckles and buttons are attractively bordered by these bands. . . . Gold beads were sometimes used in the same way, particularly in Spanish and Portuguese jewellery" (49).

[5] It was developed by Christopher Pinchbeck in 1720, and his sons carried on the business until 1788 (Shenton 40).

[6] Catherine Keohane and Cynthia Klekar deal with this attempt to balance an older form of benevolence with the modern complexities of the economy in more detail; both argue that Cecilia overestimates the economic agency she has to practice charity in her own way. Klekar argues *Cecilia* shows that "female benevolence certainly had its place in the eighteenth century, as long as women's charitable efforts reinscribed masculine and hierarchical values" (112), while Keohane notes that *Cecilia* highlights "the complicated intersections of charity and debt" and "provides insight into two models of participation: one system which, like Cecilia's plan, values both the self and others; and another which is wholly self-directed" (380). I maintain that *Cecilia* ultimately argues for the importance of a sympathetic relationship with a community of others in order to bring balance to the violence of (necessary) fashionable production and consumption.

[7] This secrecy is also connected to loss and madness as a struggle to balance interior and exterior identity leads to mental decline for Cecilia. As Susan Greenfield argues, "in some contexts (like the scenes of Cecilia's madness) thought seems to thrive on the lost or nonexistent, and the mind's apparent detachment from market culture makes the self an individual. On the other hand, the language of unreality and loss on which the inner self depends is also the language of finance" (61).

[8] Buckles are also a good choice of metaphor for the loss of identity because "the lack of design variation in eighteenth-century shoes" meant that they acted as objects of individualization (Riello 77).

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