Evelina: From Ingenue to Social Success

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EVELINA: FROM INGENUE TO SOCIAL SUCCESS

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Author

Donald Ball
Robert Maccubbin
Leroy Smith
DEDICATION

The writer dedicates this master's thesis on Fanny Burney to Doris Lessing, the British novelist who wrote, "There are no laws for the novel. There never have been, nor can there be."
ABSTRACT

This study describes how Evelina achieves social success by cultivating the acquaintance of certain characters and discouraging that of others. Learning to distinguish between those who can help her and those who cannot or may even actually damage her interests is part of an education in prudent conduct.

Thus, Fanny Burney stays well within Eighteenth Century English literature's standards of moralism. But she also presents a novel that is more than just a satire of bourgeois pretension or simply the travails of a static personality moving through a series of episodes.

This study elucidates the significance of both her guardian, the Rev. Arthur Villars, and Evelina's own increasing independence of action as critical considerations in the thematic and narrative structures. It concludes that her successes in finding her father, winning an inheritance and becoming married to an aristocrat are products of independent actions grounded firmly in Villars' teachings.
EVELINA: FROM INGENUE TO SOCIAL SUCCESS
A rural innocent, Evelina survives assorted trials in a sophisticated city, London, to regain a father, inherit a fortune once denied her, and win marriage to a cultured aristocrat. To achieve these successes, the naive "little rustic" learns how to cultivate those individuals valuable to her future security (Madame Duval, Lord Orville, and Mrs. Selwyn), and to discourage those who are not (the Branghtons, Mr. Brown, Mr. Smith, Lord Merton, Jack Coverley, and Sir Clement Willoughby). As she comes to know each of these characters better, she makes prudent choices among them, based on the teachings of her cleric-mentor at Berry Hill as well as the cumulative lessons of experience. In the end, Evelina emerges victorious and can call upon her guardian, the Rev. Arthur Villars, for his "congratulations" (355) on her success in society.

Fanny Burney portrays a young woman who becomes steadily more sophisticated in her dealings with new acquaintances she makes outside isolated Berry Hill. This characterization makes the novel more than just a satire of bourgeois manners or the story of a static personality that does not change, as some of the more common interpretations have held. Instead, it is a depiction of personal growth. By contrasting Evelina with a series of one-dimensional figures -- Forster's "flat" characters -- Burney pushes to the forefront the change her heroine undergoes in her travels. The result of this change is that, by the end of Evelina, the once isolated ingenue who had spent her childhood with a possessive guardian in "secluded retirement," as Burney describes it in the
original preface to her best-known novel, is an unqualified social success.

To understand how Evelina makes choices in society requires an examination of her position and character at the outset of the domestic "Grand Tour" on which she is about to embark. Central to this examination are Villars' attitudes toward his ward and his motivations for allowing the trip, as well as the extent to which Burney permits her heroine to make decisions on her own. Like the foundation of a building, these considerations are the underpinnings of the narrative and thematic structures of Evelina. The novel is meaningless without them, and so they require treatment comparable to that of her actual experiences outside Berry Hill.

Employing a narrative technique used frequently in the Eighteenth Century, Burney sets the stage for Evelina's later growth by establishing her at the outset as the rural, naive, socially-unformed ward of a moral and possessive clergyman. She is being given the opportunity, Burney writes in the original preface, to make "her first appearance upon the great and busy stage of life." Her innocence stems from her having known only one way of living, i.e. with Villars, until Lady Howard invites her to Howard Grove. It is important to review Villars' qualifications as guardian because it is from the environment that he establishes that Evelina brings her initially pristine character. Burney had good reason for choosing Villars for this role.

He had considered the marriage of Evelina's grandfather,
Evelyn, whom he had tutored, "ill-judged" (14), and Villars rued the potential for Evelina to make the same mistake. His moral instruction is praiseworthy in this respect. With her grandfather's downfall in mind, Villars was all too well aware that "the mind is but too naturally prone to pleasure, but too easily yielded to dissipation" (18). His predominant passion, therefore, was "to guard her [Evelina] against their delusions, by preparing to expect -- and despise them" (18). This is what he has taught her.

Villars remains mindful that Evelyn's daughter -- Evelina's mother -- over whom Evelyn had given the cleric sole guardianship in a death-bed plea, had suffered a disaster similar to her father's. The "misery and disgrace" and the "wrath and violence" (14f) Evelina's mother had experienced while living with Madame Duval and her husband in Paris led her to plunge "rashly, and without a witness" (15) into a hasty marriage with "a very profligate young man" (15), Sir John Belmont. Belmont later destroyed the marriage certificate and absconded. The birth of the child, Evelina, resulting from the mistaken union, ended in Lady Belmont's death.

Moreover, as a widower deeply grieved by the loss of his own wife after a long and stable marriage -- one that contrasted so sharply with those of Evelyn and his daughter -- Villars appealed even more as the ideal guardian. Such a man, Evelina's grandfather realized, would present none of the potential for the risks that had tempted and finally killed himself. In addition, Evelina, especially because of her troubled family history, would be a source of joy --
"she is the only tie I have on earth," Villars declares (16) -- to a cleric who could form her in his own image and break the chain of "infinite misery" (16) that had preceded her birth. "This child, Madam," Villars writes Lady Howard, "shall never know the loss she has sustained"; his "fondest wish" is "the desire of bestowing her on one who may be sensible of her worth, and then sinking to eternal rest in her arms" (15). Finally, the cleric's secluded life in rural Berry Hill is ideally suited to keeping out the potential for misfortunes such as those that had plagued Evelina's mother in cosmopolitan Paris.

Thus, to her imminent, tremulous travels abroad in England, Evelina brings an "ignorance of the forms, and inexperience in the manners of the world"; Villars' teachings constitute the sole, theoretical basis for her conduct. She comes to the reader as "helpless" (15) and "ingenuous" (21). She is an adolescent who has "a certain air of inexperience and innocency"; she is "so infinitely engaging" that Lady Howard calls her "a little angel" (21). Burney carefully chose her heroine's biblically-inspired name to suggest an initially pristine character, and there are references throughout the novel to Berry Hill as "paradise."

Because she has lived unsullied under the protective aegis of her guardian, who has kept the intrusive temptations of secular life at bay, Evelina lacks, as critics have put it, "an empirical foundation" of practical experience in dealing with a range of people whose moral standards may not be as high as Villars', characters more accustomed
to the practical compromises life in complex society demands. The clergyman's moral teaching was useful, but only to a point. The world now beckons, as Lady Howard asserts, to a seventeen-year-old girl:

It is time that she should see something of the world. When young people are too rigidly sequestered from it, their lively and romantic imaginations paint it to them as a paradise of which they have been beguiled; but when they are shown it properly, and in due time, they see it such as it really is, equally shared by pain and pleasure, hope and disappointment.

(17)

Villars concedes this, noting, "the time draws on for experience and observation to take the place of instruction" (18), and, thus, the stage is set for "the little rustic" to go her own way.

Once abroad, the friction between two recurring elements -- the moral conscience she has developed during her long, reclusive tutelage with Villars and his practical aspirations for her to win her patrimony and a husband "sensible of her worth" -- is used by Burney to help sustain the development of Evelina's character in the narrative. Evelina must adhere to Villars' theoretical moral principles but not undermine the realization of his material goals for her: inheritance of a fortune denied her wrongly and a proper marriage.

His multiple motives for sheltering Evelina and for permitting her first trip away from home are the standards against which one can
measure her development. He kept her protected from potential "dissipation" (18), as he explains in a letter to Lady Howard, because "the mind is but too naturally prone to pleasure" (18); he had sensed the "peculiar cruelty of her situation" as a child who, through no fault of her own, had been left bereft of her proper financial and filial inheritances. His compassion is noble; it earns the reader's praise. It also suggests the problematic nature of his relationship with Evelina.

Although Villars, as a crigic has written, "blames her vulnerability on the family's actions prior to her birth and specifically on her father's denial of his marriage and Evelina's existence," he has, by enforcing her isolation, prohibited his ward from availing herself of opportunities she might use to test his aspirations for her, urging her to exercise a "prudence" (25) in her dealings with a world she has not yet known, "a place which your imagination has painted to you in colors so attractive" (25). Evelina has lived "protected by her own enclosing world," somewhat like Burney herself, who assumed the pseudonym "Miss Nobody" and lived in fragile retirement while her siblings went off to sea or to Paris for educations. Villars states at the outset that, for the seventeen-year-old Evelina, "the time draws on for experience and observation to take the place of instruction" (18) within the confines of Berry Hill. He explains it this way to Lady Howard:

In detaining my young charge thus long with myself in the country, I consulted not solely my own inclination. Destined, in all probability,
to possess a very moderate fortune, I wish to contract her views to something within it. The mind is but too naturally prone to pleasure, but too easily yielded to dissipation: it has been my study to guard her against their delusions, by preparing her to expect -- and to despise them. But the time draws on for experience and observation to take the place of instruction. If I have in some measure rendered her capable of using one with discretion, and making the other with improvement, I shall rejoice myself with the assurance of having largely contributed to her welfare.

This "artless young creature" (18) has received only positive responses to her innocence; she has no grounding in the outside, open world where that same angelic demeanor and "the natural vivacity of her disposition" (18) can, and she learns do, inspire contrary reactions.

When she leaves Berry Hill, Evelina faces a dilemma: she must stay within the bounds of Villars' concerns for her moral welfare but not be allowed to undermine the realization of his twofold aspirations for her, marriage to someone "sensible of her worth" and the inheritance of the fortune wrongly denied her. These reasons behind what Burney calls in the original preface Evelina's "entrance into the world" (8) outside Berry Hill will take her along a course used frequently in novels of the period, used so often that Jane Austen was led to parody it in the opening chapters of Northanger Abbey. That course -- her progression from Berry Hill to Howard Grove and London being the narrow female version of the more
cosmopolitan excursions of young men exposed to decadence and popery on the continent -- had, as its primary objective, marriage. Judith Lowder Newton puts it this way: "Evelina's entrance into the world, like Fanny Burney's, is patently an entry into the marriage market, and the assemblies, operas, plays, and pleasure gardens, while initiating her into knowledge of society, also function as occasions upon which she is displayed." Having kept Evelina from the world for so long, Villars must, despite his serious reservations, come to terms with her age and confront the inexorable progress of time and events. He concedes Lady Howard's assertion that youth shown the world "properly, and in due time ... see it such as it really it" -- not merely as a product of their "sequestered" imaginations (17). Burney employs Evelina's childhood isolation in this way as a narrative device, in effect, to set her up for the difficult trials that are to ensue abroad.

Villars' second motivate for allowing Evelina into the outside world is financial, a familiar Burney theme. He wants her to lay claim to her fortune. As a narrative device, this is given at least as much weight as his concern for the maintenance of her moral character. "The quest (for the money from Belmont) is of Villars' authoring," in the words of Emily Patterson, "for it is he who is stung by the inequitableness of Evelina's modest income and sequestered life." But Patterson goes too far in her criticism when she also asserts that his "financial ambitions turn the novel," although this motive is intertwined with Villars' concerns for ensuring her
morality and for her winning a suitable marriage partner. Burney mentions this aspiration throughout the narrative; Villars neither forgets it nor does he fail to invoke it when he sees danger threatening Evelina's quest, which is also his quest. The clergyman does allow Evelina a measure of independence. But, conscious of Madame Duval's rights as Evelina's grandmother, as well as her inclination to distribute her money among her London relatives, he is quick to act on his ward's behalf. In the beginning, he warns her, for example, to:

> Be careful ... that no remissness of attention, no indifference of obliging, make known to (Madame Duval) the independence I assure of, but when she fixes the time for her leaving England, trust to me the task of refusing your attending her: disagreeable to myself, I own, it will be; yet to you it would be improper, if not impossible.

(55)

When toward the end of the novel, he learns that "an acknowledged daughter and heirness of Sir John Belmont should be at Bristol, and still my Evelina bear the name of Anville," he is "astonished," finds it "inexplicable," and immediately reminds Evelina that "whoever this young lady may be, it is certain she now takes a place to which you have a right indisputable" (336). That place is as Belmont's heiress. Villars takes a course here similar, for example, to that taken by Hugh Tyrold who, in Camilla, saw in Camilla's proposed residence with his brother the chance for her to "secure an ample fortune,"¹³ and a similar division between "a love
plot and a plot of hard cash" occurs in another subsequent Burney novel, *Cecilia*.

In *Howard Grove*, Evelina starts her entrance into the world; this period serves as a transition to her adventures in London. She is awakened to the possibility of conduct and dispositions different from Villars' through the presentation of a new set of chaperones, the way they interact, and the generally hurried tenor of life there. The salty Captain Mirvan, for example, playfully points up Madame Duval's insouciance but evinces a playful worldliness of his own -- "though he railed against the dissipation of the women, [he] did not oppose it" (56f). Mirvan serves as an early example of people who have not been sequestered, who know the world, and who have a socialized perception of what really happens to people. He obviously "does not belong in the punctilious society of Mr. Villars, Lord Orville, and the others. Yet he is dearly preferable to Mr. Smith and the Branghtons because he lacks their pretensions and affectations." Perhaps he could have served as an adequate father-figure because of his knowledge of the world and people. He cuts right to the pit of Duval's pretensions as, for example, in their sharp exchange about hats in Ranelagh (59) and in the chariot ruse. His distaste for affectation reflects Burney's own scorn for "the true ridiculous." Evelina seems to sympathize with the mistreatment of Madame Duval but notes that despite Mirvan's "rudeness" (65), her grandmother "seems to be naturally strong and hearty" (66). Mirvan, with his "rough-house comedy," executes on
Madame Duval the lesson Villars might like to have effected himself but was constrained by his profession from doing.

Burney's use of Mirvan and other patriarchal figures less decorous than Villars allows room in the narrative for Evelina to act on her own. Newton puts it this way: "In effect, Burney siphons off what must have seemed to her most restrictive and objectionable in a patriarchal order and either omits or confines it safely to the trading classes. So, thus, Evelina is left to maneuver about of her own accord," to establish her own set of perceptions. Edward Bloom also has noted the way Evelina takes personal initiative. "As she tests her values empirically, discarding the naive for those more sophisticated, she shares with her guardian the responsibility for confirming the worth of prudence. At the outset, in other words, Villars establishes the problem as in the opening act of a drama; thereafter Evelina takes a dominant position, involving herself in complications, being involved in them, and generally creating a climate of discovery." Evelina would like to receive firsthand guidance to help her navigate these uncertain waters: "I am too inexperienced to conduct myself with any propriety in this town, where everything is new to me, and many things are unaccountable and perplexing" (48); "a thousand times I wish I never left Berry Hill" (53); and "I shall have no happiness till I am with you again," she writes Villars (54). This atmosphere of doubt and disorder is compounded by the failure of some adult characters to assume a more prominent role in Evelina's
decisions, leaving her even more to her own devices. Mirvan's wife, for example, relieves the tensions of uncomfortable situations but acts primarily in the shadow of her husband and sometimes even as a catalyst for new social activities that inadvertently lead to additional dilemmas for Evelina.

Moreover, Evelina perceives a sharp contrast with the slower, secluded life of Berry Hill. The change impresses her. The short, breathless prose of her first letter written home -- "Miss Mirvan is making caps; everybody is so busy -- such flying from room to room! -- so many orders given and retracted, and given again! -- nothing but hurry and perturbation" -- testifies to this. A young girl of "innocency" is discovering a new and larger world. It is a special world apart, really, from anything she had known, and her sense of wonder at it is reinforced by the "full splendour" of London, a world of opportunity of which she naturally wants "to partake" (24). "I believe I am bewitched," she declares (24).

Her early letters brim with narratives of the sweep of events in London -- meeting new people, attending plays, seeing operas. "O my dear Sir," she writes after a play, in the ecstatic prose that becomes characteristic of her at this stage, "in what raptures am I returned?" (26) This early excitement does wane eventually, but that is an expected result of her increased familiarity with this new environment, of the "natural progression" to which Burney referred in her original preface; indeed, it is a mark of her success in it.

Her desire to join in this whirl is palpable; she feels greatly
disappointed if excluded. "I looked about for some one of my
acquaintances," she writes of a stroll on the mall at St. James
Park, "but in vain, for I saw not one person that I knew, which is
very odd, for all the world seemed there" (21). She longs to be a
part of this magnificent city; she will even, as she says, "Londonize"
herself (25), absorbing this world of shops, balls, operas, Ranelagh
-- in short, this is "paradise" (38). Her application to London of
this term, which she formerly reserved for Berry Hill, reflects her
youthful excitement in the new city. Later, with maturity, she will
temper this innocent outlook, this "vivacity" (18), and declare her
yearning to return to Berry Hill. She will, in effect, confirm
Lady Howard's prediction (17).

Thus, by the time Evelina stands on the verge of making her
first sojourn in London, the stage has been set for changes in her
life based on standards different from those of Berry Hill. Whereas
her theoretical moral training may have been sufficient in that
isolated spot seven miles from Dorchester, it lacks adequate
grounding in the ambiguousness of man's conduct in the cosmopolitan
world abroad. Her initial infatuation with London is, as one critic
has put it, "fancy without grounding in empirical data."20 Here is
another familiar Burney theme. In Camilla, Hugh Tyrold rues
"imagination unregulated by wisdom, nor disciplined by experience."21
Because Evelina lacks a complete acquaintance with the world and its
ways outside Berry Hill, she is vulnerable to falling into the
adventures -- some comic, some less so -- that mark her stays in
London and provide the core of her social "education."

Her amazement at the largeness, importance, electricity, and difficulties of London life, coupled with her childhood grounding in Villars' strictures, lead her to adopt mannerisms that are sometimes so stilted that they earn her the mockery even of the Branghtons. One of her earliest and impressive experiences is a visit to Drury Lane Theatre, where "the celebrated Mr. Garrick" (25) performs and leaves her in "raptures" (25); the "ease," "vivacity," and "grace" (26) of that well-known actor seemed, no doubt, preferable to the stammering and giggling with which she reacted to Lord Orville and Willoughby upon meeting them in the first private ball. Burney's short, staccato phrases reinforce Evelina's sense of excitement: "This moment has arrived. Just going to Drury Lane Theatre. The celebrated Mr. Garrick performs Ranger. I am quite in ecstasy. So is Miss Mirvan. How fortunate, that he should happen to play! ... I can write no more now. I have hardly time to breathe" (25). Garrick's performance comes at a crucial moment during the early stages of her first sojourn in London as she casts about for models of conduct. In this search, she will attempt to adopt Garrick's theatrical style, apparent, for example, in her first encounter with Willoughby at the ridotto. But she is not capable of emulating a skilled actor's facile stage presence, at once forceful yet relaxed. The more worldly Willoughby spots her inability and mocks it immediately, of course, and this misfortune, she concedes in a letter, was her fault: it stemmed from a
"consciousness that betrayed my artifice" (29). Her "artifice," unlike that of the actor, fails.

Her reconstruction of and comment on this encounter also point up Villars' moral influence and the way in which it generates in Evelina what Patricia Spacks calls an "aspiration to the negative condition of blamelessness. Evelina is constantly beset by fears of being thought bold, or rude, or unwomanly." It is, to put it simply, the fear of doing wrong. She must fend off the various assaults made against her without giving offense or suggesting snobbery. She seeks to achieve, in Susan Staves' words, "true delicacy" that "is opposed to cruelty, impertinence, and boldness" and "superior to artificial decorums" at the same time.

This is a difficult balancing act, to be sure. On April 4, she attended the ball, her first encounter substantially important to her future security, and was certainly thinking of Villars' advice issued only a week before in his letter of March 28: "I aim not at an authority which deprives you of liberty, yet I would fain guide myself by a prudence which should save me the pangs of repentence" (25). Like Sir Hugh, Villars fears, he tells Evelina, her "impatience to fly to a place which [her] imagination has painted to [her] in colors so attractive" (25). The strength of his influence is such that once Evelina has offended Willoughby by rejecting him at the ball (if we can consider rejecting Willoughby much of an offense), she is forced to admit her errancy -- "and thus was my deviation from the truth punished; and thus did this man's determined
boldness conquer" (43). This assertion implies her dilemma: Villars has provided the conceptual basis for prudent conduct, but it is Evelina who must deal directly with such situations, seeking not to offend while avoiding being coerced into offensive behavior.

Life in London permits Evelina to begin experiencing and differentiating between the good and bad behavior among associates, chaperones, and suitors. "In Fanny Burney's England, the ideal young woman exemplifies perfect innocence," and this "angelic" demeanor and disposition can, and does, inspire contrary responses, leading to frequent tribulation for the heroine. "Good breeding is good character," as Spacks puts it, but, as Evelina treads the soft ground of "delicacy," she is quick to discover that "social mistakes endanger her moral status." She must learn to act independently because neither of her exemplars, Orville and Villars, occupies all that much of her time away from Berry Hill. In part because it was necessary for Burney to reduce their presence to meet the needs of the plot as well as to develop comic sections of the narrative, they both remain "wooden presences," "type-figures ... who exist for their predominant traits." Villars fades fairly quickly from her life; his active role is confined mostly to the opening pages of the novel. His didactic letters are not frequent -- they total only fifteen of the eighty-four that make up the novel -- and, thus, are not sufficient to provide any sort of continuous monitoring of the complexities of Evelina's new life. Orville
occupies primarily the later stages of the narrative, with only scattered appearances in the central portion and never in the beginning. Evelina is feeling her way along; indeed, the source of conflict is her upbringing versus what she encounters in unfamiliar and confusing situations without having good models to whom she can turn immediately. Burney periodically reminds the reader of the value that increased contact with good models might have had when she calls in Villars' occasional letters. These letters, for example, balance Evelina's hasty acceptance of the fraudulent letter as being Orville's authorship. The clergyman calls for more sensible caution, based, ironically, on the very descriptions of Orville that Evelina herself has provided. But the reluctance with which she eventually concedes the possibility of a fraud reinforces the concept of the distance that has emerged between her tutor and her and illustrates simultaneously the rising confidence of Burney's heroine to make decisions on her own.

Though we know, of course, that Villars never disappears from her life -- she hurries to him as the novel closes -- there is room for her to begin making choices bearing on her future, cultivating those relationships that can help her and discouraging those that cannot. She keeps in mind Villars' choices of which individuals he believes she should accept or spurn, but there remains considerable room for her volition. Villars is not on hand to anticipate every new acquaintance she makes or situation that develops. Her choices -- Lady Howard, Evelina's grandmother, Evelina's father, Lady Selwyn,
and Lord Orville -- are those that can help her win marriage to a gentleman, the conventional goal of a genteel woman in the Eighteenth Century, and gain her fortune, too. Keeping in mind these considerations, Villars provides general guidance -- the "hortatory element"\textsuperscript{28} -- over the course of the novel, but it is Evelina who must learn how to behave in society in a way that supports these relationships. She is the one who must acquire a social education. She must balance the claims of upbringing with the demands of new experience, and this requires ample latitude for action. It is, for example, Villars who, conscious of Madame Duval's rights as Evelina's grandmother, must warn his ward early on to "be careful, therefore, that no remissness of attention, no indifference of obliging, make known to her the independence I assure you of" (55). But it is Evelina who must deal directly with Duval's volatility, an effort requiring no little prudence and discretion. Villars provides a framework in which Evelina can act. He does comment on the desirability of new acquaintances, but such advice normally appears in letters Evelina receives some time after the relationships already have begun to develop.

Conscious of what she must do, Evelina adds to Villars' advice perceptions she first developed in London. Garrick impresses her deeply, and Sir Clement provides a testing ground. Orville, of course, contrasts sharply with Willoughby; and it is her early impressions of Orville, whose demeanor evokes that of Garrick, that inform her conduct and become guides for her choices for
much of the rest of the narrative. Suave, urbane, humorous, and graceful even under the pressure of the most delicate social problems, Lord Orville becomes both her model and a realistic marital objective, that is, one matching her own conceptions.

"I am very indifferent as to [Willoughby's] opinion," she tells Villars, "but for Lord Orville--" (48). The London aristocrat provides a convenient and suitable object to which Evelina can transfer Villars' moral code for acting "with propriety" (48) in the city. At the same time, he can help her realize her own social aspirations and her tutor's aspirations for her. His conduct is strictly proprietary and, thus, by implication, moral in Evelina's eyes. Because it is so codified, it surpasses the normal greyness of everyday conduct; what Burney means for him to symbolize as a role model and potential marriage partner for Evelina is clear. Moreover, it somehow approaches art -- serene, imperturbable, and permanent -- a bit beyond life, like Garrick on the distant stage, or the unchanging, secluded Villars in Berry Hill. Orville is a man "good within society," the urbanized counterpart whose sensible deportment and decorum she strives to achieve in her quest for success. He is prudence personified.

In this respect, Evelina's choice of Orville is correct. It moves her toward social success -- marriage to a gentleman. He lends himself to praise as an individual and meets with Villars' approval as one who can guarantee the beauty that other women risk losing or, as with Madame Duval, have lost. When Orville appears
at Queen Anne Street, he gives "a universal restraint to everybody" (59), much the same effect Villars would have, and one contrasting sharply with the "freedom of supposition" (40) that Willoughby exudes. Orville is "so elegant, so gentle, so unassuming" (72). He indulges in neither the "sneering speech" (79) nor the "self-complacency" (78) of Lovel, neither the coarseness of Madame Duval and Captain Mirvan nor the pretensions of the Branghtons. "He is intelligent, courteous, sensitive, polite, and aristocratic," as one critic accurately sums up his character. "His vices are non-existent, for he does not play cards, drink, or race his phaeton [the sports car of the day]. In addition, he exudes strength, firmness, and masculinity, being able to protect Evelina from Mr. Lovel and Sir Clement without involving himself in a rash duel." A typical description of him by Evelina notices that he is "most assiduously attentive to please and to serve all who are in his company, and, though his success is invariable, he never manifests the smallest degree of consciousness" (72). The movement away from easily perceived "consciousness" or "artifice" is what Evelina seeks. She remembers what it cost her in her first outing at a ball, and would be graceful, articulate, and humane without being perceived as starchy or arrogant. She would use "consciousness" in a positive way, like Orville. He is her best model, and the contrast between her conduct in the early stages of her London sojourn and the success she wins in the end testify to this. At the outset, for example, she handles herself uneasily at the opera,
and then blames the resulting chagrin on her fellow theatergoers by saying "they hastened away without listening to me" (85) and even goes on to mingle regret with a sense of smugness and relief: "Though I was extremely mad at this visit, yet I so heartily rejoiced at their going, that I would not suffer myself to think gravely about it" (85). Her behavior earns her even the indignance of Madame Duval, who accuses Evelina of assuming "fine airs" (87). We may not be inclined to accept the vulgar Duval's judgment on any subject, but her accusation points up the manner in which Evelina's worthy intentions to avoid offense end up misperceived -- the accusations of "snobbery" -- as a result of her conduct as she clumsily feels her way along toward the kind of acceptable, inoffensive behavior of an Orville. This is the heart of Evelina's quest. When she believes she has displeased Orville, she writes, "I am inexpressibly concerned at the thought of his harbouring an opinion that I am bold or impertinent [the same terms with which she described Lovel, p. 82], and I could almost kill myself for having given him the shadow of a reason for so shocking an idea" (72). We note the contrast between this response and that she made to the Branghtons' reactions to her at the opera: "I would not suffer myself to think about it" (85).

Thus, Evelina's first sojourn in London is essentially a formative period, a time in which she experiences and experiments with various kinds of conduct. Her innocence causes her to stumble from time to time -- as when she suspects Orville of authoring the fraudulent letter -- but her fundamentally good intentions and
intelligent choice of Orville as a model bear her up well in the pursuit of success there. She is coming slowly to an understanding of prudent behavior, as this passage, in which she contrasts Orville and Willoughby, reveals:

Yet let me, in justice to Lord Orville, and in justice to the high opinion I have always entertained of his honour and delicacy -- let me observe the difference of his behaviour, when nearly in the same situation to that of Sir Clement Willoughby. He had at least equal cause to depreciate me in his opinion, and to mortify and sink me in my own; but far different was his conduct;--perplexed, indeed, he looked, and much surprised,--but it was benevolently, not with insolence. I am even inclined to think, that he could not see a young creature whom he had so lately known in a higher sphere, appear so suddenly, so strangely, so disgracefully altered in her situation, without some pity and concern. But, whatever might be his doubts and suspicions, far from suffering them to influence his behaviour, he spoke, he looked, with the same politeness and attention with which he had always honoured me when countenanced by Mrs. Mirvan.

(238)

She is learning to balance her desire to participate in London's freedom -- exemplified by the "gay and thoughtless" (105) air she had experienced at Ranelagh -- with her understanding of Villars' teachings and the model that Orville presents.

It is a better-educated Evelina who comes to London the second time. There are traces of her earlier innocence -- as, for example, when she follows Mr. Brown down a long, dark alley for no other reason that "quite by compulsion" (195) -- but overall she conducts
herself in a way that is more confident, assured, and likely to help her realize success. She learns to resist others' presumptions and place responsibility where it should lie. Her actions toward Willoughby and Smith illustrate this. Though she has softened her stance against Willoughby and thereby encouraged his advances, she charges that "your suspense, your doubts, your perplexities are of your creating" (198). A short time later, she remarks, "The trouble, Sir, was of your own choice, not mine" (201). She refuses Smith's invitation to the Hampstead Assembly because he already had bought tickets, to her an unacceptable form of presumptuousness. "If you were determined, Sir, in making me this offer, to allow me no choice of refusal or acceptance, I must think myself less obliged to your intention than I was willing" (219). Of course, she had no intention of accepting his offer, "having already declined going to the ball" (204), but Smith's "faux pas" demonstrates how she has learned to exercise her own defenses and use them to her advantage. She "becomes increasingly skillful at exerting what in this novel is a highly significant form of power -- the power of self-defense, a form of power as autonomy."32 When these techniques fail her, she can always fall back on fainting. Like Richardson's Pamela, she employs "unconsciousness ... precipitated by an onrush of emotion as her defense."33 Fainting used, for example, after rescuing Macartney from his suicide attempt, "dramatizes appealing female weakness and conceals purposefulness."34 Here is an Evelina quite a bit different from "the little rustic" of Berry Hill. This
Michael E. Adelstein has accurately summed up Evelina's conceptions at this stage of her education: she has learned to "refuse dance invitations tactfully. She has become vividly aware of the danger of accepting rides from libertines like Sir Clement. She now knows better than to stroll along 'the dark alleys' of Vauxhall. And she will not initiate a correspondence with a gentleman." But there is some truth to Adelstein's assertion that, in Burney's conception, Evelina has obtained solely "a social education" and "has merely exchanged snobbery for sweetness, and sympathy for indifference." She would condemn Lovel for addressing her "in terms so open and familiar" (224) at the Hampstead Assembly, but what she herself would do instead remains unclear, unless it be simply to withdraw, faint or criticize. She would praise Orville as "one whose elegance surpassed all description, whose sweetness of manners disgraced all comparisons" (226), but then fall short of his model herself. She complains that Madame Duval's use of her name to obtain Orville's coach "so cruelly ... tormented" (246) her; yet her own conduct torments others, even the object of her affections, Lord Orville. Seeing Orville on one occasion, she ducks behind Miss Branghton, "for I dreaded being seen by him again in a public walk with a party of which I was ashamed" (245); the "generous, noble (241) would not have done this himself, nor would he have expected it from others. She is too quick to condemn Tom Branghton's clumsy but well-intentioned mission to Orville. "You have done me an irreparable
injury," she cries (248), claiming "that for the rest of my life" Orville "would regard me as an object of utter contempt" (249). This sort of hyperbole is incorrect, of course, given Orville's discriminating character. But Evelina's judgments are hurried -- and expected -- at this stage. We cannot ask more of her than what Burney gives us, and what she gives us is a heroine in development, learning her way, picking and choosing as she works toward her goal. This conforms with Burney's intentions in writing Evelina. In her diaries, which she began with the publication of the novel, she wrote: 

All I can urge is, that I have only presumed to trace the accidents and adventures to which a 'young woman' is liable; I have not pretended to show the world what it actually is, but what it appears to a girl of seventeen; and so far as that, surely any girl who is past seventeen may safely do. The motto of my excuse shall be taken from Pope's 'Temple of Fame': "In every work, regard the writer's end; / None e'er can compass more than they intend."

Because her natural behavior does not work too well in the early stages of the narrative, she adopts more aggressive responses. Burney develops these gradually throughout the novel, using as her central metaphor Evelina's assumption of a kind of mask that, as one critic has written, demonstrates Burney's "preoccupation with appearances and with the truth behind them." Masks are appearances.

In its most obvious form, the mask is introduced into the narrative as personal appearance, especially that of the face; it is
simply the way Evelina looks that incurs this reaction from Lady Howard, in her third letter to Villars, as she writes with unknowing irony as Evelina's proposed trip to Howard Grove and London is being considered: "Her face and person answer my most refined ideas of complete beauty ... Had I not known from whom she received her education, I should at first sight of so perfect a face, have been in pain for her understanding; since it has been long and justly remarked, that folly has ever sought alliance with beauty" (21).

In Evelina's reaction to Garrick's performance -- "at once so graceful and so free! -- his voice is so clear, so melodious, yet so wonderfully various in its tones! -- such animation -- every look speaks!" (26) -- Burney could not have created a more fitting introduction for her heroine to life in London, where the use of appearances is part and parcel of sophisticated society. As yet unaware of the implications or perceptions her own mask generates, Evelina is unable to sense how it, too, "speaks" like that of the actor; the power that appearances exert in eliciting impressions and reactions has not occurred to "the little rustic" yet. But she will learn this lesson. It is her mask, for example, that encourages Willoughby's aggressive actions toward her at the first private ball. He believes, like Lady Howard, that Evelina's beauty implies innocence; this eggs him on, abetting his presumptions. Her beauty implies, to him, an obligingness that he thinks he can exploit. "Impossible! that elegant face can never be so vile a mask!" (35) he exclaims, after emerging as Evelina's champion against Lovel's accusation that she
is ill-bred. Her appearance in this context leads Willoughby to surmise she must also be of good breeding. Though he actually knows nothing of either her birth or meager circumstances, he quickly figures her to be a "country parson's daughter" (35), and her first assailant, Lovel, joins in: "He! He! very good, 'pon honour! ... well, so I could have sworn by her manners!" (36). Burney uses this rather rapid exchange to effect a transition from the idea of the mask as what Willoughby calls "that elegant face" to what Lovel labels "her manners." It is a skillful, clever shift.

Burney distinguishes between two opposite types of reactions to Evelina's attractive appearance and its implied grace and innocence, showing how both can work to her advantage as well as against it:

The ambiguities of innocence are Fanny Burney's central subject, although often she does not seem fully aware how divided the feelings of her virtuous heroines are. Evelina's innocence, as Lady Howard comments, makes her 'interesting.' It also allows her to involve herself in sexual danger -- alone in a carriage with a dissolute aristocrat, alone in a dark maze at Vauxhall, rescued from distress from two prostitutes -- without knowledge or responsibility.

Evelina discovers, as we learn from her reactions to other characters, principally Willoughby and Orville, that an attractive mien and its implied good breeding recommend her both to the good -- Lady Howard and Villars -- and to the bad: the clever men like Willoughby and the not-so-clever, like Tom Branghton, from whom it merely invites advances, often unwanted.
Evelina realizes this distinction and begins to apply it in purposeful behavior. Her conduct contrasts with her initial naivete and testifies to the increasing sophistication she is acquiring. She attempted an "artifice" (40) in her first rejection of Willoughby and admits he knew it. His response clearly implied intention on Evelina's part: "How conscious you must be, all beauty you are, that those charming airs seems only to heighten the bloom of your complexion" (44).

Orville and Willoughby, especially in the later stages of the narrative, see different Evelinas. The sharp distinction in how she presents herself to them implies obvious deliberation on her part. With the cultured Orville, she blushes, casts her eyes downward and speaks hesitantly, practically stammering; with the oafish Willoughby, her tone is self-assured, even strident. "Her education in society teaches her not to relinquish but to use her innocence and her fears," as Spacks has put it. Because Evelina lacks accomplishment in this attempt, her behavior draws jeers from some other characters and even ends up being parodied by the young men at Clifton and in Macartney's poem. She is given to perpetrating artifices to avoid Willoughby. He and Orville see two different masks, two different people. Willoughby repeated protests this duality: "My dearest life," cried he "is it possible you can be so cruel? Can your nature and your countenance be so totally opposite? Can the sweet bloom upon those charming cheeks, which appears as much the result of good humour as of beauty--" (86). And later: "Good God! That such
haughtiness and such sweetness can inhabit the same mansion!" (199) Even after allowing for the convention of declamatory rhetoric -- Coverley characteristically mocks it with the label "a touch of the heroics" (359) -- that comprises such verbal gesticulations, we can still perceive in their persistence and consistency the marked division in Evelina's character and the change that has occurred in it since she left Berry Hill.

Evelina relies increasingly on the implications of deportment, in contrast to her once natural behavior, as she refines her ability to distinguish between appearance and reality, discourage unwanted suitors and acquaintances, and encourage those who can help her toward success. She begins to understand that manners, at least the kind that can help her, do not necessarily flow naturally from personal virtue. She reports to Villars that, to fend off Smith at a dance, she "was obliged to assume no little haughtiness" (223) toward him. Naturally, this offends Smith, but it is not surprising that, at this point, Evelina uses this tactic. Her means suit her ends. Smith's is not one of the relationships she wants or needs to cultivate. Her rejection of him demonstrates a somewhat more active course of action -- more assertive, more confident -- than the passive "avoidance" that Spacks argues constitutes her prudence. 41 The contrast appears in a meeting a short time later with Villars, whose relationship she wishes to maintain. Evelina has returned to Berry Hill, following adventures in Bristol Hotwells and Clifton, and begins by resorting to the familiar withdrawal:
He paused a moment, and then replied, 
"Yes, my child -- a book that both afflicts and perplexes me."

He means me, thought I; and therefore I made no answer.

"What if we read it together?" continued he, "will you assist me to clear its obscurity?"

I knew not what to say; but I sighed involuntary from the bottom of my heart.

(263)

When Villars asks for the cause of her "sorrow," her "greatly alarmed" reply -- "What cause! I don't know -- I can't tell -- I --" (263) -- suggests the stammering, the excessive diffidence, the tears that have been reserved for Orville and him; it is the "appealing female weakness" to which Spacks refers and contrasts sharply with the tongue of fire that has become known to the libertines Willoughby, Brown and Lovel. Because she needs their assistance, Evelina does not show her assertive self to Villars or Orville. Lord Orville, as Judith Newton puts it, must protect her from the results of her own indiscretions toward Willoughby and Lovel. "These encounters with Lord Orville keep us in touch with the notion that, however charmingly satiric, Evelina still needs someone to protect her," 42 an assertion confirmed also by Burney's use of Villars' periodic replies.

Moreover, she has not become sophisticated enough to handle her relationship with Orville with any aplomb, though she remains well-intentioned throughout. She is given to misjudging her intended marital partner as when, early on, she unthinkingly attributes authorship of the fraudulent letter to him and, later,
accuses him of satirizing her -- "surely your Lordship is not so cruel as to mock me!" (351) -- although it is actually she who wrongly questions his intentions. Contemporary readers of *Evelina* sensed this difficulty. In a letter to Mrs. Susan Phillips, her sister, Fanny recalled this reaction by Lady Hawke: "I was vastly glad when she married Lord Orville. I was sadly afraid it would not have been." Her stumbling -- she nearly "bankrupts" herself in the marriage market, as Edward Copeland puts it -- allows Burney to re-invoke Villars' advice to keep his ward from undermining her relationship with Orville and, thus, falling short of one of the two principal goals for Evelina -- marriage to a gentleman. Because Villars understands the distance that has developed between his ward and him, he is compelled to take action. He knows that Evelina remains well-intentioned; she writes him:

> Yet so strong is the desire you have implanted in me to act with uprightness and propriety, that, however the weakness of my heart may distress and afflict me, it will never, I humbly trust, render me wilfully culpable. The wish of doing well governs every other, as far as concerns my conduct -- for am I not your child? -- the creature of your own forming! Yet, Oh, Sir, friend, parent, of my heart! -- my feelings are all at war with my duties! and while I most struggle to acquire self-approbation, my peace, my happiness, my hopes -- are lost!

(336)

Sensing this "blushing confusion," and his own inability, as Spacks puts it, "to understand the practical problems of a woman's
following the right line of conduct," Villars comprehends the necessity for direct guidance by someone at hand. Therefore, he calls in that "denizen of many London social seasons," Mrs. Selwyn, to prevent a disaster. This formidable woman, who also functions as the "principal agent for resolving the plot," like Fielding's Mrs. Western, plays the game skillfully and successfully. She first jars Evelina—"O rare coquetry! Surely it must be inherent, in our sex, or it could not have been imbibed at Berry Hill" (306), and then takes her through the paces that culminate in success for Evelina. Lady Selwyn is uniquely suited to this task for she is, as Spacks has pointed out, the only female character who is not motivated on "refrainings based on fear."

It is fitting that Evelina sums up her successes in marriage and money by asking Villars for his congratulations and returning to him immediately after taking her vows. Burney's heroine does not seek congratulations for "my" victory because it was only partially hers. She "proves her sagacity," as Spacks puts it, but realizes that, in Newton's words, "female power is not enough." Independent action grounded firmly in Villars' teaching leads her to succeed in a new, complex society filled with a range of characters unfamiliar to "the little rustic" from Berry Hill.
NOTES


5 Jonathan Deitz and Sidonie Smith, "From Pretext to Proper Social Action: Empirical Maturation in Fanny Burney's *Evelina*,"
Eighteenth-Century Life, 3 (March 1977), 85.

6 Emily A. Patterson, "Family and Pilgrimage Themes in Burney's Evelina," The New Rambler, 18 (1977), 42.


10 Edward M. Copeland, "Money in the Novels of Fanny Burney," Studies in the Novel, 8 (1976), 29. In addition to Evelina, financial considerations are substantial parts of Cecilia, Camilla, and The Wanderer, Burney's three other novels.

11 Patterson, p. 44f.

12 Patterson, p. 44.

13 Copeland, p. 33.

14 Copeland, p. 29.

15 Adelstein, p. 41.

16 Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom, introduction to Evelina (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), xxiv. This introduction is referred to hereafter as Bloom.

17 Bloom, xxvi.

18 Newton, p. 33.

19 Bloom, xx.
20 Deitz, p. 85.
21 Deitz, p. 85.
25 Spacks, *The Female Imagination*, p. 82.
27 Bloom, xxix.
28 Bloom, xxviii.
29 Deitz, p. 88.
30 Adelstein, p. 36.
31 Patterson, p. 46.
32 Newton, p. 42f.
34 Spacks, "The Dangerous Age," p. 433.
35 Adelstein, p. 38.
36 Adelstein, p. 38.
38 Eugene White, *Minor British Novelists*, ed. Charles Alva Hoyt


40 Spacks, Imagining A Self, p. 180.

41 Spacks, Imagining A Self, p. 180.

42 Newton, p. 46.


44 Copeland, p. 27.


46 Spacks, Imagining A Self, p. 178.

47 Patterson, p. 45.


49 Spacks, Imagining A Self, p. 179.

50 Spacks, Imagining A Self, p. 179.

51 Newton, p. 50.
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