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THE CAMBRIDGE
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IGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

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JULIA EPSTEIN

Marginality in Frances Burney's nove

The heroines of Frances Burney's four novels embody a set of contradic so paradigmatic of the later eighteenth century that they might be sai define the ideological tensions inhering in the period's complex dema tions of woman's social place. Burney's heroines are proper, decorous, a innocent, yet preternaturally aware of social danger; diffident yet fier self-protective; publicly self-effacing yet bent on independence of thou and action; ambiguously presented as to class yet adhering to upper-c ambitions; apparently unknowing about social mores and expectations, acutely observant of others and conscious of their own desires. Many rec feminist critics have analyzed these contradictions in Burney's fiction an her life.[1] The conflicts Burney's protagonists face energize the nove courtship in the later eighteenth century. Burney insists that the perio which a young woman becomes quintessentially identified as marriageab as single in several senses – forms a crucially liminal proving ground period during which fundamental social barriers are traversed.

The importance of Burney's novels for students of culture and society h largely resided in their astute critique of gender and class ideologies as th affected the daily lives of women in the later eighteenth century. In additi to their deployment of Burney's famous power of caustic satirical wit, he fiction explores a variety of themes and narrative techniques relatively ne to fiction in general and certainly new to fiction by women. Burney's nove skewer social hierarchies and class divisions in rare ways; only in th picaresque tradition of the wandering male hero had fiction investigat class mobility to the extent that Burney foregrounds this question. Burne was an accurate observer of the economic fissures in social categories as th new mercantile classes began to aspire to the status of the landed gentry Her heroines, with the possible exception of Camilla, traverse classes a they constantly face the need to invent and reinvent themselves for publi consumption. In addition, as Margaret Doody has shown in detail in he magisterial literary biography, Burney experimented importantly with nar-

ve style, moving smoothly from a sophisticated use of epistolary form in *lina* to the inauguration of a *style indirect libre* in the third-person rative voices of the last three novels.[3]

The eighteenth-century courtship novel focuses on the delaying actions t dot the road between a young woman's emergence from her father's tection and the subsumption of her identity into that of her husband. reafter heroines disappear into the domestic life of marriage. This rtship tradition is replete with dark moments. In the early part of the tury, heroines in difficulties sometimes turned courtesan, in a line that s, for example, from Aphra Behn's *Love Letters Between a Nobleman d His Sister* (1684–87), to Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* 724). The more sentimental tradition produced the tragedies of Richard- n's *Clarissa* (1747–48) and Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), with a ender reversal in the protagonist of Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* 1774). Burney has sometimes been treated as a "transition" figure in the istory of the novel, someone who moved the form's satirical techniques om their broad Smollettian outlines to the more pointed satire of Dickens, nd who moved the domestic focus on private life from the dense interiority f Richardson to the wry irony of Jane Austen. But while not disagreeing tirely with these chronological positionings of Burney's novelistic art, I ould argue that she also represents a writer whose work broke original round for the novel by exploring the new territory of social marginality pened up by class shifts during the eighteenth century.

Burney's version of the dark strain in the courtship novel dissects the esting of romantic heroines by heroes. Burney's isolated heroines seek, nd obtain, marriage in order to establish their own social respectability. nlike the "'I was born' first-person novels" that define the genre's focus n individual subjectivity with respect to male protagonists,[4] Burney's ctions produce a female subjectivity that questions its own merit at the ame time it asserts that merit. And while Evelina and Lady Juliet move beyond their novels' closure into an ambiguous but apparently satisfactory married life, Cecilia and Camilla do not achieve safety in marriage. As Kristina Straub has pointed out, "the relationship that ensures Evelina's self and security, renders Cecilia voiceless and powerless; ... she cries out that 'no one will save me now! I am married, and no one will listen to me!'"[5] And Camilla's prize is Burney's most rigid and least appealing hero, Edgar Mandlebert, of whom Mrs. Arlbery warns Camilla: "He is a watcher; and a watcher, restless and perturbed himself, infests all he pursues with uneasiness."[6]

There is a particular way in which Burney's highly virtuous young heroines ironically resemble their young male counterparts in narrative tradition: the picaresque hero of European fiction from the sixte century's Lazarillo de Tormes to the early eighteenth century's Gil Blas the mid-century's Tom Jones. The male picaro survives by his wits thro a series of often violent adventures and threats to his life, always remai a marginal figure who resides half inside and half outside society. concept of "liminality" that I am employing to discuss the courtship pe in a young woman's life in the eighteenth century may also be emplo with reference to the fictional mode of being of the picaro. The term co from anthropology, where its most cited theorist is Victor W. Tur Turner says of "threshold people," or liminal social beings, that they " neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assig and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial."[7] Turner ide fies three stages in social transition rites – separation, margin, and reag gation – of which liminality is the second. As these stages are useful thinking about the male picaresque career in literary convention, they wo as well for Burney's young women, who are sent into the world in a state orphanhood or other form of acute solitude, work their way through soci obstacles without benefit of a secure social position, and finally becom reintegrated into recognized social hierarchies when they marry into respe ability. Whether they also achieve personal happiness through this rein gration into society remains ambiguous.

Burney's female protagonists enter the world from the protection paternal or paternal–surrogate homes, and end the novels with anticipat marriages. With the exception of Camilla Tyrold, the heroine of *Camill* whose childhood serves as the backdrop for her attachment to the censorious hero Edgar Mandlebert, the early childhoods of Burney's eponymous women are recounted briefly and only in retrospect as histories of shelter and adult management. Later, this management becomes radically called into question: does her guardian, the Reverend Villars, teach Evelina adequately about social life, or does his protectiveness backfir when she has to fend for herself in London? Has Cecilia Beverley's egocentric uncle in Burney's second novel, *Cecilia*, cost his niece her happiness through the name clause that is a condition of her inheritance? Where is Camilla's mother (the only visible mother in the novels other than the problematic surrogates Mme Duval of *Evelina* and Mrs. Delvile of *Cecilia*) when her daughter needs her advice, and why doesn't Sir Hugh Tyrold have better sense than to take Eugenia to a fair when she has not been innoculated against smallpox? And finally, why do Cecilia and Lady Juliet Granville, the incognito heroine of *The Wanderer*, end up advertised in the newspapers as lost lunatics? How has the protection afforded to women of good family been eroded so thoroughly that they are forced to wander the streets in search of themselves and of a social category they might inhabit?

It is especially in the dark moments of Burney's narratives – Evelina arm-in-arm with prostitutes at a public pleasure garden; Cecilia chasing distractedly after Mortimer Delvile then languishing above a pawnshop; Camilla hallucinating in the bedroom of an inn; Juliet lost in the forest – that her heroines reside on the cusp of a boundary and fail momentarily to locate themselves within an acceptable social construction of female behavior. Victor Turner's cultural analysis of socially marginal positions and their instability is again instructive; liminality is by definition a state of ambiguous identity. It represents a holding pattern, a moment of delayed crossing from one social category to another. It is this conditional terrain of betwixt and between, the gap in a woman's social identity, that Burney mines for her novels.

The defining characteristic of social liminality for young women in Burney's novels is the simultaneity of their sexual awakening and their need to hold their sexuality in abeyance until all the appropriate economic and social negotiations that will produce a husband for them may occur. This hovering sense of precarious social status is the key to courtship in the later eighteenth-century novel. Jane Austen deployed her laserlike irony to depict courtship and the marriage marketplace for women whose economic status made them less than perfect matches, but Burney's representations of this critical period in a woman's life are less analytic than those of her celebrated near-contemporary. A conduct book published in 1789, the Reverend John Bennett's widely read *Letters to a Young Lady*, contains this portrait of the courtship period:

> If I was called upon to write the history of a *woman's* trials and sorrows, I would date it from the moment, when nature has pronounced her *marriageable*, and she feels that innocent desire of associating with the other sex, which needs not blush. If I had a girl of my own, at this *critical* age, I should be full of the keenest apprehensions for her safety; and, like the great poet, when the tempter was bent on seducing our first parents from their innocence and happiness, I should invoke the assistance of some *guardian* angel, to conduct her through the slippery and dangerous paths.[8]

It is this sense of danger that motivates Burney's fictions, danger that emerges from the fine line between "that innocent desire ... which needs not a blush" and the always slippery path of a female sexuality that demands to be policed and controlled before it has even been granted existence.

Burney does not address the question of female sexuality straightforwardly. Rather, her heroines dread what they understand as public exposure, an exposure akin to public nakedness. Some scenes from each of t four novels will illustrate the covert ways in which Burney confronts h heroines with sexual desire and its dangers. In each case, the heroine tested for fitness to marry. Indeed, one might argue that Burney's narrativ of female social liminality represent a test-marketing of her protagonis value as romantic heroines and, concomitantly, of their abilities to ma and rechannel their sexual desires.

In 1778, when she was twenty-six years old, Burney published her fi novel, *Evelina; or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, anonymous and to immediate acclaim. The young author's conflicted response t sudden fame had ironically been forecast in her novel by the conflic Evelina experiences when her youth and beauty attract public attentio Innocent of London's social mores and fashions, Evelina tries, with often disastrous consequences, to blend into the crowd. Her attempts themselves endanger her: she ends up trapped against her will in the libertine Willoughby's carriage, surrounded by a group of drunken men along one of the dark paths at Vauxhall and, in the most striking scene of dangerous public misapprehension, she takes the arms of two prostitutes when she finds herself alone and frightened after a fireworks display at Marylebone Gardens. Having earlier learned not to trust men to protect her when she is publicly alone, Evelina appeals to these "two ladies" without recognizin the import of their laughter at her request. Only when the sociall impeccable hero, Lord Orville, raises his eyebrows at her new acquaintance does Evelina realize who they are.

The prostitutes at Marylebone play a peculiar and crucial role in *Evelina*. Evelina describes her encounter with Lord Orville while arm-in-arm with these women as "the most painful of my life." In typical form, she remains mute and unable to express herself other than by looking at the ground, "curtseying in silence," while "with what expressive eyes did [Orville] regard me! Never were surprise and concern so strongly marked".[9] Margaret Doody has analyzed the complex ways in which Burney depicts embarrassment in her fiction; and in an insightful reading of this scene, Ruth Bernard Yeazell points out that the Marylebone adventure "emblematically stages the risk that every young lady runs who ventures 'out' into public spaces – the risk of being seen to be one who belongs in them, a woman of the town, as the idiom has it, or one who walks the streets."[10]

Evelina has great trouble identifying herself as an independent agent. She reads her identity, instead, in the gaze turned on her every move by Lord Orville, who along with Villars represents the novel's tribunal of social behavior. But the interesting contrast in the prostitute scene derives from the

very freedom of these women of the town who, unlike their young protégé, know precisely who they are and have no need of disguise. As I have argued elsewhere, they are among the novel's key portraits of autonomous women, and they are characterized by their ability to circulate freely, to choose their own company, and to define themselves for themselves.[11] Burney does not idealize this radical departure from social norms for women, but neither does she condemn it. Indeed, Orville's later admission that he had wanted to inquire into Evelina's connection with "those women" before he proposed marriage marks him as at odds with his creator in this instance (*Evelina*, 389).

The prostitutes, in fact, prove to be safer companions than either Willoughby or the drunks at Vauxhall; they conduct Evelina reliably to Lord Orville and her friends. They also represent quite wittily (especially in Evelina's grandmother's response to their finery) the precise constraints involved in young adulthood for unmarried women, and they serve to blast the social structures that make such companions Evelina's best means of social preservation. Prostitutes reside by legal decree in a liminal position on the margins of society, and they represent an uncomfortable merging of private and public self-presentation. Prostitutes are sexualized women, as Evelina cannot admit to being. Yet even in their open sexual display, prostitutes share Evelina's vulnerability. The law hounds them, and marriage offers them no protection from the law.[12] Their predicament embodies the worst fears for women in the eighteenth century, that the price of their independence will be an imprisonment in a kind of social purgatory, always outside looking in.

If the prostitutes in *Evelina* are unrelievedly and unashamedly themselves as sexualized women, naked and undisguised (in spite of their painted faces), the costumed revelers at the Harrels' masquerade in Burney's second novel, *Cecilia; or the Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782), embody hierarchies of social power in their costumes. Terry Castle has brilliantly analyzed the powerful masquerade in *Cecilia* as a locus simultaneously for social pleasure and moral disapproval.[13] Cecilia replays Evelina's outing with the public women in Marylebone by choosing to attend the masquerade in her own dress: that is, in a roomful of masks and elaborate disguises, she presents herself unadorned. As a consequence, her very ingenuousness, her public identification of herself as herself in a world of dissembling and mimicry, marks her paradoxically as different and draws unwanted attention to her. Cecilia's overexposure in this scene mimicks the larger theme of public selfhood in the novel represented by the unprecedented codicil to her uncle's will: she is to inherit his money only on the condition that when she marries, her husband is to give up his own family name and become Mr. Beverley.

Needless to say, Cecilia falls in love with the only scion of a proud b poor family who see the loss of their name as a disgrace. In the end obliged to relinquish her money and to become Mrs. Mortimer De sacrifice analogous to the necessity for young women to avoid conspicuousness.

Though Cecilia is disgusted and horrified at the Harrels' extrava and in most cases tries to avoid accompanying them to lavish p assemblies, she actually looks forward to the masquerade with ple anticipation. She enjoys the scene's "novelty" and relishes the carnival aspects of transgressive confusion that the masquerade hosts. Catego sex, race, and class intermingle and become meaningless through cacophony. The moral testing of social conventions thematized th costumes in this scene is echoed when the gadfly leveler Morrice lite "breaks up" the evening by pulling down the awning on the dessert Harrel has had constructed for the occasion. Glass, papier-mâché, la and oil rain down on the shrieking crowd, and the affair comes to an ab close.

The chaotic ending of the masquerade scene in *Cecilia* spares the hero further importuning from unwanted suitors in disguise, and it is import that it is here that she meets her future husband, Mortimer Delvile. Th courtship represents a prolonged jockeying for the upper hand of iden and the right to name each other. Framing this initial meeting scene is chase scene at the end of the novel in which Cecilia pursues Mortim through the streets of London trying to correct his misreading of her visit Belfield's private rooms. Unlike Orville, who gives Evelina the benefit of th doubt even while inquiring for an explanation, Mortimer and Camilla's suitor, Edgar Mandlebert, assume the worst when they encounter a soci arrangement whose appearance troubles them. So thwarted is Cecilia durin her pursuit of her husband, that she ultimately loses her sanity and begins babble incomprehensibly to passersby: "'He will be gone! he will be gone and I must follow him to Nice!'" she cries, adding "'No, no – I am no mad, – I am going to Nice – to my husband'" (896, 897). By this time, the panting Cecilia has rushed into a shop and collapsed on the floor, where she remains speechless. She is carried upstairs "alone and raving" (898), and an advertisement is placed for her in the *Daily Advertiser* as "a crazy young lady" (901).

The masquerade scene that introduces the novel's lovers and the pursuit and advertisement sequence that separates then reunites the by-then married couple match each other in the intensity of the disorder they depict. In both scenes Cecilia is forced to assert her identity, first by realizing that the best public protection is a blending in, a social disguise, and in the second

rough the much darker necessity to cry out the name "Delvile" in her lirium, the name for which she has given up her identity as the heiress of e work's title. In both cases, her status on the threshold, at a masquerade t uncostumed, covertly married but thought to be single and mad, tests r identity and her agency in her own life as that liminal status at the same me permits the hero to test her mettle as a mate. As occurs with Evelina, in very instance in which Cecilia navigates through the social world alone, e marks out her own social marginalization.

The testing of a heroine's fitness for marriage occurs most explicitly in urney's third novel, *Camilla; or, A Picture of Youth*, published in 1796. amilla Tyrold and her childhood admirer Edgar Mandlebert come to an morous understanding early in the novel, but Mandlebert's tutor March-mont sets his charge to questioning Camilla's worth. Marchmont's paranoid advice inaugurates one of the plot's complicated strains:

> Whatever she does, you must ask yourself this question: "Should I like such behaviour in my wife?" Whatever she says, you must make yourself the same demand. Nothing must escape you; you must view her as if you had never seen her before.
> (*Camilla*, 159)

Marchmont goes even further, and counsels Edgar to "become positively distrustful" (160). Camilla's female mentor, Mrs. Arlbery, evaluates Edgar's acceptance of Marchmont's advice in the previously cited passage in which she condemns him as "a watcher."

As Mortimer misreads Cecilia's motives and actions, so Edgar misunderstands the circumstances in which he finds Camilla, and his capacity to put the worst face on appearances seems virtually boundless. A telling scene after Camilla has incurred a series of debts foregrounds this dynamic of watching, testing, proving, and judgment. With a companion named Mrs. Mittin, Camilla strolls along the quay at Southampton looking in shop windows. Anxious to see the wares without spending any money, Mrs. Mittin hits on the idea of inquiring about local sights, and uses this ruse to enter one shop after another. Nobody would have attended to the nondescript Mrs. Mittin, "but Camilla, who, absent and absorbed, accompanied without heeding her, was of a figure and appearance not quite so well adapted for indulging with impunity such unbridled curiosity" (607). The shopkeepers, struck by the contrast between Camilla's beauty and fashion and her ordinary and older companion and by their progress from one shop to another, wonder about the women's motives: "Some supposed they were only seeking to attract notice; others thought they were deranged in mind; and others, again, imagined they were shoplifters, and hastened back to their counters, to examine what was missing of their goods" (608).

Ultimately, two townspeople place wagers on whether the women are thieves or simply mad, a wager reminiscent of the sequence at the close of *Evelina* in which the fashionable men in Bristol Hotwells place bets on a footrace they set up between two eighty-year-old women.[14]

The shopkeepers pursue the two women by repeating their progress from shop to shop. The loquacious Mrs. Mittin, answering copiously for Camilla's habitual silence, marks a contrast with "the pensive and absorbed look of Camilla" that strikes the onlookers "as too particular to be natural" (608). It is Mrs. Mittin, therefore, who perceives their danger. They escape this collective leering gaze and take refuge in a bathing room at the end of the quay. Enjoying the beach scenery, they continue to be pursued and to inspire wagers and scrutiny. There Camilla is spotted by Marchmont and Edgar, who finds her companion inadequately dignified to chaperone her. The locals inform these men of their wager while three gentlemen enter the women's hiding place and imprison them with gallantries until Edgar providentially, but quite belatedly, turns up to rescue her. But to be rescued by the hero in a Burney novel is also to be judged and found wanting. Edgar walks away with Camilla in silence as they are "mutually shocked by the recent adventure," and he waits for Mrs. Mittin to depart so that he can "point out the impropriety and insufficiency of such a guard" (616). In short, Edgar seems more frightened and in need of reassurance than the recently imprisoned Camilla.

The difficulty Camilla faces in this scene develops from the circumstances of her liminal social position. On the one hand, she needs youth and beauty to negotiate the marriage market and the social milieu to which she wishes to belong. On the other hand, these very attributes turn her into an object of the judgmental gaze and literally make a spectacle of her. And once again, Camilla resides in the no-win territory of the unmarried woman: if she pays too much attention, she is a coquette who transgresses propriety; if she remains heedless of her surroundings, she appears insane. Simply to walk down a street, albeit a bit absent-mindedly, positions Burney's third heroine as an anomalous character, a female with no clearly-defined social status about whose activities speculation is invited and enacted among a group of men ranging from working middle-class shopkeepers to gentlemen-aristocrats. The ultimate blow comes when the suspicions of strangers find an echo in the romantic hero's response to the heroine: Edgar too questions the propriety of Camilla's behavior. Young single women may not define themselves, but they also must guard against the usurpation of definitions imposed by others.

Burney's last heroine confronts the most profound problem of self-definition, self-presentation, and disguise. Lady Juliet Granville of *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (1814) is known through much of the novel simply as "Ellis." First appearing in blackface, she becomes the protean shape-changer, embodying in herself the whole scenario of the masquerade from *Cecilia*. Various characters speechify on this subject. Mrs. Ireton accuses Ellis of mystification: "You have been bruised and beaten; and dirty and clean; and ragged and whole; and wounded and healed; and a European and a Creole."[15] And Riley adds: "What a rare hand you are, Demoiselle … at hocus pocus work! … you metamorphose yourself about so, one does not know which way to look for you. Ovid was a mere fool to you" (739). By the time Burney composed *The Wanderer*, she had radicalized the problem of single female identity so profoundly that her last heroine becomes virtually a free-floating signifier of Woman, a symbol system of female virtues and accomplishments in search of a way to exist in the world.

One of the most drawn-out of the operations of Juliet's quest to stabilize her identity occurs in the second volume of this long novel, when she faces a proposal that she perform in a public concert. By this time the mystifications surrounding her identity have been revealed, if not resolved, and she is heavily in debt with no apparent means of acquiring money. Despite this, it is telling that she holds firm initially to "unsuperable" objections: "never, most certainly never, can I perform in public!" (267). Juliet recognizes the oppressive paradox that it is acceptable for her to offer harp lessons to proper young ladies, but not to display her musical talents on the stage. Nevertheless, she becomes embroiled in a subscription concert plan, despite her ambiguous concern that "those to whom I may yet belong, may blame – may resent any measures that may give publicity to my situation" (284).

At the first rehearsal Juliet panics, plays poorly, and sings inaudibly before recovering her composure. Bent on "self-dependence," she remains frustrated by the "cruel necessity! cruel, imperious necessity!" (311) of exposing herself in public in order to pay off her debts. The final blow in this impossible situation comes from Albert Harleigh's objections: "How … can I quietly submit," asks her eventual husband, "to see you enter into a career of public life, subversive – perhaps – to me, of even any eventual amelioration?" (316). Harleigh invokes the prejudices of his relations, who would be unable to approve an alliance with a public performer. He refers to the sullying of her reputation (in limbo as it is) and urges her not to "deviate[e], alone and unsupported as you appear, from the long-beaten track of female timidity" (322). Harleigh dogs her with his objections, but she resists his efforts to control her actions. On the day of the concert itself, he continues to follow and importune her. Greeted with thunderous applause when she arrives on stage, Juliet becomes transfixed by a cloaked and masked figure who turns out to be her protofeminist revolutionary alter ego, Elinor Joddrel. Glimpsing the shimmer of a steel blade, Juliet faints on the stage. The event abruptly ends when Elinor stabs herself, thus rescuing Juliet from humiliation just as Bertha Mason would later rescue Jane Eyre.

Given the extraordinary pressures on Ellis's identity and its politically charged, gendered, and plot-driven mystifications, it seems at first glance odd that most of one of the voluminous work's five volumes should be taken up with the anguish that leads to this public moment. And when the moment comes, what occurs – fainting, stabbing, and screaming – is construable as far more scandalous than the mere fact of public presence on a stage, since Ellis has all along participated in private theatricals and concerts. But Lady Juliet Granville acquires her aristocratic status and proper social place, along with a judgmental husband, only after hundreds of pages of residing in the margins. Lady Juliet's protean physical body, with its facial and fashion disguises, takes on symbolic meaning as the figure of Ellis metaphorically straddles the borders between class and race.

Albert Harleigh, like his predecessor heroes in delayed romance, Lord Orville, Mortimer Delvile, and Edgar Mandlebert, observes and tests the object of his love. And the mystery in *The Wanderer* is a real one: Juliet had been forcibly married in France, and must rebuff Harleigh's advances. Yet her "female difficulties" are presented as universal for women in the world of Burney's last novel. While Ellis's social anomalousness makes particular problems for her, it clearly represents for Burney a paradigmatic instance of single female liminality. Woman is fringe and perhaps fringe benefit, but "self-dependence" remains both the unattainable goal and the unexercisable threat.

Lady Juliet Granville battles and finally overcomes a series of political and institutional obstacles to her romance with Harleigh. Throughout the novel Burney's narrator repeats the subtitle reference "Female Difficulties" to a set of scalable but imposing restrictions on young women: "Her honour always in danger of being assailed, her delicacy of being offended, her strength of being exhausted, and her virtue of being calumniated!" (836) *The Wanderer* ends with this description and its ambiguously encouraging rejoinder: "Yet even DIFFICULTIES such as these are not insurmountable, where mental courage, operating through patience, prudence, and principle, supply physical force, combat disappointment, and keep the untamed spirits superior to failure, and ever alive to hope" (836). Paradoxically, it is precisely the judgmental loyalty and dogged watchfulness of Burney's heroes that keep her heroines buoyed in their impossible circumstances by a peculiar combination of romantic fantasy and self-doubt. Romance in a Burney novel is ever-vigilant. One wrong social move can bring down the

whole house of cards in which lodge the carefully orchestrated ideologies of gender expectations and propriety. Burney's complex plots marginalize her young women within the regulated liminal space of rites of passage that lead to an accepted status in the community. Her novels challenge the conventions of propriety in the test-marketing of their heroines for marriage with the romantic and socially impeccable hero. At the same time, the novels work finally to reintegrate their heroines into the conventional social structures of the upper-class institution of marriage.

The scenes I have examined in detail from Burney's novels each represent a moment in which the heroine stands symbolically naked before a judging public. The public discourse that takes place concerning the prostitutes in *Evelina* emphasizes their "finery" and the question of face paint. Cecilia, however, appears without a costume, in ordinary dress that functions as undress, in the masquerade scene of Burney's second novel. Camilla's presence in the local shops and on the quay at Southampton renders her vulnerable to the speculations of passersby. And the abortive stage debut of Lady Juliet Granville in *The Wanderer* occurs when Elinor rescues Juliet with her histrionics. It is as though Elinor's elaborately cross-dressed disguise, literally penetrated by her dagger, were intended to "cover" the plain white stage dress of Juliet's social discomfort.

Recent work on Burney's art and her place in literary history, much of it written by feminist scholars and critics, positions Burney's interest in the liminality of her heroines and the precariousness of their investments in romance in relation to social history. This new work began with the notion proposed by historians that the eighteenth century saw the birth of individualism and of the modern concept of the self. That idea has received its own challenges from social historians, and feminists have added questions about the constitution and origins of a specifically female subjectivity during the eighteenth century. In Frances Burney's novels, young women experience their entrance into the world as a gauntlet of male observation and judgment. In addition, they must apprentice themselves to trade in the kind of shape-shifting of which Ellis in *The Wanderer* is accused. In order to mold themselves into an identity that is acceptable to a social collectivity and at the same time that they can live with, Burney's women battle strictures on their appearance and dress, their movement, their social skills, and their economic abilities. Literally forced to make a living, they do the only thing respectable young women can do; they market themselves to the most genteel, to the most watchful, and to the highest bidders.

NOTES

1 See in particular, the work of Kristina Straub, Margaret Doody, Julia Epste Mary Poovey, and Ruth Bernard Yeazell.

2 Burney's plays should be included in this assessment, though it is unfortuna that her writings for the theatre have received only a little critical attention a virtually no performances. Her journals and diaries have received more, and a participate in the Burneyan satirical project.

3 Margaret Doody, *Frances Burney: the Life and Works* (New Brunswick, N Rutgers University Press, 1988), 124, 257. The most famous use of th complex interior style is perhaps in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, a no of the mid-nineteenth century. It is instructive to consider the ways Burney heroines anticipated the profound *anomie* that informs the search for sel knowledge in the figure of the tragic, and tragically deluded, Emma Bovary, with whom Flaubert himself ("Madame Bovary, c'est moi") so poignantly identified.

4 J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: the Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1990), 327.

5 Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 172–73.

6 *Camilla*, ed. Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom (London: Oxford University Pres 1983), 482. All subsequent references are to this volume.

7 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), 95.

8 John Bennett, *Letters to a Young Lady, on a Variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects, Calculated to Improve the Heart, to Form the Manners, and Enlighte the Understanding* (Warrington: the author, 2 vols., 1789), II:160; cited in Ruth Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 44.

9 *Evelina*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 23 All subsequent references are to this edition.

10 Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty*, 123.

11 Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 112–13.

12 Mary Poovey offers a helpful discussion of prostitution and social ideology for a later period in *Uneven Developments: the Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

13 Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 259–89.

14 For a discussion, see Earl R. Anderson, "Footnotes More Pedestrian than Sublime: a Historical Background for the Footraces in *Evelina* and *Humphry Clinker*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14 (1980): 56–68.

15 *The Wanderer*, ed. Margaret Drabble (London: Pandora Books, 1988), 37. All subsequent references are to this volume.

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