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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

School of English

**Language Shibboleths, Conversational Code Breaking, and Moral Deviance:
Articulating Immorality in the Novels of Frances Burney**

by

Christina Amelia Davidson

Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2012

*Language Shibboleths, Conversational Code Breaking, and Moral Deviance:
Articulating Immorality in the Novels of Frances Burney*

To speak as others speak is one of those tacit obligations, annexed to the conditions of living in society, which we are bound in conscience to fulfil, though we have never ratified them by any express promise; because, if they were disregarded, society would be impossible, and human happiness at an end.

James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (1783) p. 169

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

Doctor of Philosophy

LANGUAGE SHIBBOLETHS, CONVERSATIONAL CODE BREAKING, AND MORAL
 DEVIANCE: ARTICULATING IMMORALITY IN THE NOVELS OF FRANCES BURNEY

by Christina Amelia Davidson

Burney's fictional speech has been recognized as idiosyncratic, subjective, sociolectic, and influential of later writers, but no focused study has been carried out to flesh out such features of her work. Further, Burney's use of dialogue as an index of morality has not been subject to detailed analytical attention. It is timely therefore to carry out such a study, and logical to draw on the methods of modern linguistics, the frameworks and vocabulary of which have proved very useful, though such hybrid approaches are still relatively unexplored in literary criticism. My thesis addresses such omissions.

This thesis examines decentralized voices in Burney's fiction, which articulate alternative moral values to those endorsed by the main narrators and central protagonists. Examination establishes that Burney drew on various literary and extraliterary genres, actively selecting and shaping the language and speech patterns of her characters to create rapid inferential access to their subjective space. In doing so she interacted with disparate debates carried out over various discursive fields, tapping into her readers' assumptions and knowledge of the real world, and inviting them to recover meanings from her represented speech. My study begins with two main sources of recuperation. One concerns contemporary debates about morality, carried out mainly in philosophical treatises, but disseminated in numerous texts, defining how to live a good life, and measuring potential effects of environment against innate qualities. Another source concerns language itself, which was a locus of contention during the eighteenth century, under pressure from various sources during the years when Burney published her novels: from those seeking to establish standard grammatical forms; from the challenges of shifting views on politeness and sensibility; from anxieties about class, gender, and nation; and from evolving concerns about affectation and deceit, as well as about any language which carried 'palpable designs'. Engaging closely with the novels themselves, this thesis explores Burney's use of dialogue as a platform, to engage with these kind of social, gender, and politeness issues. Further, this study reveals Burney's ability to use conservative ideas about language in order to disrupt reader expectations, and to raise questions about the ownership of language styles and even whole genres, while proclaiming her own professionalism, and right of involvement in a literary and ethical life.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Christina Amelia Davidson, [please print name]

declare that the thesis entitled:

Language Shibboleths, Conversational Code Breaking, and Moral Deviance: Articulating
Immorality in the Novels of Frances Burney

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- parts of this work have been published as: 'Conversations as Signifiers: Characters on the Margins of Morality in the First Three Novels of Frances Burney, *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 8.2 (2010), 277-304
-

Signed:

Date:.....

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Texts and Abbreviations

Details of Burney's life and work are recorded in manuscripts fragments and note books dispersed in various collections. Some of her journal letters have been published in different editions, with 'gaps' being filled by different biographers. The following editions with their abbreviations, will be used in this study, accompanied by number of specific volumes; full details are provided in my bibliography:

Abbreviation	Full Title and Details of Editions
<i>CLJ</i>	<i>The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney, 1787-1791</i> , ed. by Peter Sabor, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011-)
<i>Diary and Letters</i>	<i>Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay, Author of Evelina and Cecilia, Edited by her Niece</i> [Charlotte Barrett], 2 vols (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1842)
<i>EDL</i>	<i>Early Diary of Frances Burney, with a Selection of Letters from her Correspondence, and from the Journals of her Sisters Susan and Charlotte</i> , ed. by Annie Raine Ellis, 2 vols (London: G. Bell, 1889)
<i>EJL</i>	<i>The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (1768-1783)</i> , gen. ed. Lars E. Troide, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988-)
<i>JAL</i>	<i>The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay) 1791-1840</i> , gen. ed., Joyce Hemlow, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1972-1984)
<i>Fanny Burney, SLJ</i>	<i>Fanny Burney: Selected Letters and Journals</i> , ed. by Joyce Hemlow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
<i>Frances Burney, Journals</i> (2001)	<i>Frances Burney: Journals and Letters</i> , ed. by Peter Sabor and Lars E. Troide, with Stewart Cooke and Victoria Kotes-Papp (London: Penguin, 2001)
<i>Memoirs</i>	<i>Memoirs of Doctor Burney; Arranged from his own Manuscripts, from Family Papers, and from Personal Recollections by his Daughter Madame d'Arblay</i> , 3 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1832, reproduced in facsimile in the Cambridge Library Collection, 2010)

Introduction

1. Aims and Questions Raised by this Study

In *Memoirs of Doctor Burney* (1832), Frances Burney recalls an old friend and patron of her father, Lady Mary Duncan, who is distinguished by her ‘uncultivated, ungrammatical, and incoherent dialect’ as much as by her ‘generosity, spirit, and good humour’. Recording Lady Mary’s death, Burney later muses that her ‘solid worth and faithful friendship compensated for manners the most uncouth, and language the most unpolished’.¹ Burney’s association of Lady Mary’s language, manners, and intrinsic merit are key features of characterization technique in her fiction, her rapid evaluation of Lady Mary’s moral worth in the *Memoirs* also forming a crucial aspect of Burney’s self-presentation as an educative writer. What strikes the reader of Burney’s fiction, however, is the juxtaposition of positive character traits in the *Memoirs* sketch with negative suggestions about her conversation, allusions to her kindness and loyalty casting Lady Mary as social and moral, while the loaded word, ‘compensated’ derogates her non-standard linguistic choices and modes of delivery. In Burney’s fiction such a pairing would not have survived the author’s drafting processes.² Not afraid to orchestrate a wide variety of characters and offer a rich carnival of voices in her work, Burney nevertheless made conscious choices in what Andrew Elfenbein has termed stylization, the choices which authors make, based on shared linguistic knowledge with the reader.³ As this study will demonstrate, in Burney’s fiction the worthy are *not* ‘uncouth’ and ‘ungrammatical’; such features, with other negatively charged attributes, are invariably reserved for the unkind, the selfish and the vain, and are the means by which they can be identified. This conscious shoring up of speech and morality, of outward, concrete forms, and interior, hidden value reveals Burney’s tendency to offer dialogue as a means of inferential access to her characters’ moral worth, an access which is rarely mediated by intrusive authorial didacticism.⁴

Examination of Burney’s drafting process highlights the experience which she was preparing for her readers. Fragments of unpublished early drafts of *Camilla* in the Barrett Collection of the British Library contain a much-corrected, incomplete version of the author’s

¹ *Memoirs*, III, 37 and 341; Burney also describes Lady Mary Duncan in her own journals: ‘Then I went to Lady Mary Duncan, who was grotesquely comic, & superiorly vulgar, & zealously kind, & ludicrously sarcastic as usual’ (April, 1792); see *JAL*, I, 136.

² Unless otherwise stated, the editions used for this study are *Evelina; or, A Young Lady’s Entrance into the World*, 1778, ed. by Stewart J. Cooke (New York: Norton, 1998); *Cecilia; or, Memoirs of an Heiress*, 1782, ed. by Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody, with an introduction by Doody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, reiss. 2008); *Camilla; or, A Picture of Youth*, 1796, ed. by Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, reiss. 1999); and *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties*, 1814, ed. by Margaret Anne Doody, Robert L. Mack, and Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991, reiss. 2001); all titles will be abbreviated in my main text as *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*, and will be accompanied, where appropriate, by a page reference in parentheses.

³ Andrew Elfenbein, ‘Romantic English’, *Modern Philology*, 102.1 (2004), 56-89 (p. 87); George Justice makes a similar claim, arguing that writers have agency but respond to different pressures in the public sphere: see *The Manufacture of Literature: Writing and the Literary Marketplace in Eighteenth-Century England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), p. 19.

⁴ Jane Austen criticized the work of Mary Brunton because it was too didactic, though she admired Burney: Mary Waldron, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Her Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 85; Burney’s criticism of Hannah More’s work, and also Walter Scott’s, was based on this criterion: see below p. 23.

third novel, bound with fragments of unpublished journal-letters from Court, dated 1786-1790.⁵ As we know, the name of the eponymous heroine eventually chosen by Burney for the published version (1796) was Camilla. *Camilla* begins with chapters which delineate the childhood of the heroine, describing how Edgar Mandlebert transfers his love and esteem from the shallow Indiana Lynmere, to her cousin, the heroine. However, guided by the misogynist, Dr Marchmont, Mandlebert becomes a ‘watcher’ of Camilla, judging her suitability to be his wife. In early drafts, Burney often changed the names of her protagonists. In 1793, she recorded in her diary that her father was ‘extremely satisfied with the *ci-devant* Betulia’; and as late as 15th July 1795, she wrote to her brother Charles to say, ‘The Name of my Heroine is ARIELLA.’⁶ In the manuscript draft, nominations change frequently, Edgar being replaced by Grimston, and the name ‘Cleora’ being passed from one character to the next, and sometimes replaced by the name Clarilla. When reading this early draft, it is not immediately clear whether the reader is being presented with Edgar/Grimston’s early impressions of the character who will become the beautiful Indiana in the published version, or his impressions of the final version’s Camilla. Thus Burney’s manuscript fragments provide a tantalizing test-case for this thesis. Margaret Anne Doody assumes that Cleora is the heroine.⁷ Careful examination of the dialogue, however, establishes a different identity for Burney’s prototype character.

The fragment begins with an incomplete sentence which, nevertheless, captures Grimston’s delusions, and illustrates Burney’s association of dialogue with ‘discovery’; for narration describes Grimston’s awareness that ‘such complete charms in conversation’ had ‘prevented him, till now, from discovering all the deficiencies of Cleora’.⁸ The extract continues by describing how Grimston, who may be the hero, still ‘sought to disguise’ Cleora’s faults ‘from himself, under the veil of mere uncultivated innocence;’ and then how ‘a new scheme, with new delight, seized his easily inflated fancy.’ Free indirect discourse conveys his response, ‘If she were unformed, might he not form her? If she were uninstructed, what bliss to instruct her!’, the focalized narrative thus preserving our suspense. The reader is aware that Grimston’s good intentions are for the educative benefit of Cleora, who may or may not be a Burney heroine, a

⁵ London, British Library, MS Egerton 3696, fols 27^r-73^r: containing literary manuscripts of Frances Burney, Madame d’Arblay: drafts of *Camilla*, not printed in the first edition (1796), enclosed with unpublished fragments of the court journals dated 1786-1790; in preparing this dissertation I have also consulted the *Camilla* draft, and extracts from the journals and letters, in the British Library’s Barrett Collection; and in the Henry W. and A. Berg Collection of the New York Public Library: an autographed manuscript of *Evelina*, an incomplete draft of *Camilla*, and one third of the manuscript of *Cecilia*, the fragments from each of the five volumes representing the work in various stages before its publication; I have also consulted the interleaved copy of the first edition of *The Wanderer* which is in the Berg Collection: this copy includes Burney’s own annotations, started in 1817, for a potential future edition of her final novel; *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1814).

⁶ *JAL*, II, 153: Hemlow and Douglas’s footnote comments that ‘Albinia’ was also used at one point in the drafting process; Burney writes of her heroine as Ariella in *JAL*, III, 136; a packet labelled ‘Plots, Hints Dialogues for Camilla’ in the Berg Collection of Burney manuscripts contains a fragment on which is written a series of ideas for the future novel, beginning, ‘Ariella closed not her eyes the whole night’.

⁷ ‘Burney and Politics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. by Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 93-110 (p. 103); it is possible that Doody bases her judgement on other fragments – for example, ‘Plots, Hints Dialogues for Camilla’ (Berg Collection) contains an outline plot, or sub-plot: ‘The various and growing Evils that pursue an early contempt of appearances, & having the opinions of the world: first exciting hatred, then stress, then willful [sic] misrepresentations & then scandal, & lastly abuse. Then follows a haughty distance from the elder females, a timid shyness from the younger; &, in the end, the loss of every delicate woman acquaintance – soon succeeded by freedoms – then by slights, from the other sex’; ‘The varying growing evils’ could be those of the heroine; or those of a secondary female character (as in Elinor Joddrel of *The Wanderer*).

⁸ Fols 27^r-28^r of MS Egerton 3696.

supposition supported by the fact that all Burney heroines benefit from the mentoring skills of their friends and eventual husbands. The passage is worth quoting, with Burney's corrections, as they appear in the manuscript:⁹

[fol 27^r] Clarilla, though she knew not the drift, saw with pleasure the design of reading [...] but Cleora, lifting up every Book, ^ looking carefully & mechanically at its running title, threw every one again down, & seated herself [fol 27v] upon a chair near the door, whence she could catch the sound of some names and some voices.

Grimston, however, despaired not to catch her; &, to take what at once by its elegance is as alluring as by its pious morality it is enlightening, proposed reading a Sermon of Blair's.

Every body assented, & the disturbed mind of Auschin was composed nearly to serenity as she listened; Miss Anstin was always ready with praise, whether she listened or not; Cleora constantly echoed [sic] her words; but not once, not one moment, could Grimston catch her eye at any peculiar passage. ~~or draw from her by any emphasis, or change of tone, one separate panegyric, or independent remark.~~

“And what, cried he, my Cleora when it was finished, what think you of this charming discourse?”

“Discourse? It's a sermon, isn't it? O, I like it vastly.” She answered, rising with alertness, from joy that it was over. ~~& expedition to get rid of his questions.~~

[fol 28r] “But what part, my Cleora, most struck you?”

~~To hear a sermon read of a Sunday Evening, Indiana was well accustomed, but to have her opinion of it investigated was new to her. She could not tell how to answer.~~ She stared; & asked if it was not all alike?

“Come, come, cried he, endeavouring to laugh. I am sure you have given it no attention. Let me read you another.”

Her countenance fell. “Another?” She repeated; “Lord! Two sermons at once? Can't you read the other another time?”

The popular trope of a character's response to reading, provides some indication of where this passage is going. But what is significant for this study is the dialogue. One can accept that the 'unformed' heroine might underestimate the value of the volumes before her, especially in a novel where she will make so many errors of judgement; but Burney's heroines never utter such responses as, 'Oh I like it vastly', or the expletive, 'Lord!' Indeed, it is interesting to note Burney's annotations, the struck-through narrative leaving the dialogue to speak largely for itself. If we ignore the one reference indicating Burney's intention to rename the character 'Indiana', it is clear by the end of the spoken interchange that Cleora must be that stock element of eighteenth-century fiction, the paired 'other', the language and conversational delivery of the speaker insisting that this cannot be the heroine.

⁹ I do not include words which are overwritten by scribble and therefore illegible, nor reproduce multiple changes; for example, in some instances the name is struck through and 'Cleora' added; below it is corrected to 'Clarilla' then written over as 'Cleora' again; the manuscript uses double quotation marks to indicate speech; elsewhere in this thesis, single punctuation marks will be used around quotations of dialogue from the novels; where quotations include both narration and speech, single, followed by double quotation marks will be used; use of en dash and em dash will be represented as in my chosen editions, and manuscripts.

This thesis therefore proposes that in her novels Burney idealized dialogue, using dialogue emblematically to represent characters' core values. In particular, I shall investigate how Burney harnessed contemporary prescriptivism about language and conversation in order to develop her craft and advance her reputation as a writer. Recent discussion of Burney's work has focused on the way she regarded herself as an author. Burney's efforts to enter the literary establishment have been censured by some modern critics like Norma Clarke who notes Burney's failure to 'lay the wreath at the door of Jane Barker or Delarivier Manley', and by Betty Schellenberg who feels Burney's public admiration of male writers was a calculated and shrewd act of self-representation which contributed to the 'Great Forgetting' of women writers. Claire Brock refutes the view of Patricia Meyer Spacks that Burney was motivated by fear and shyness, arguing that even as a young writer Burney was aware of 'the mechanics of celebrity', later becoming obsessed with, though secure in, her own image, which she was keen to promote at any opportunity.¹⁰ My intervention in this debate reads Burney as a writer whose ambitions to penetrate the province of canonical literature was founded on a realistic understanding of a domain which, in spite of substantial inroads by women writers, was still defined by male-dominated values. Writing in a context where 'compliment [to] the appearance of a more than ordinary energy in the female mind' was called 'masculine', and where masculine values dominated the understanding of moral virtue, Wollstonecraft and other thinkers understood the dangers of women writers being marginalized.¹¹ Squaring up to a literary tradition already being canonised by the time she started writing, Burney's preface to *Evelina* indicates her keenness to align herself with such established male writers. Nevertheless, Burney was cautious about the way she engaged with the critics, and nervous about the way her fiction would be received by the public, her barely concealed glee in the early diaries, masking a sense of excitement and relief at the reception of *Evelina*, which gave way to admissions of weaknesses after the publication of *Cecilia*, and anxieties concerning the later novels.

My thesis might therefore be situated with recent studies, which see Burney as a purposefully professional writer. In some respects, my work builds on readings of Burney's fiction, which see it as working in ideological and genre boundaries, using modes of indirection

¹⁰ Norma Clarke, *The Rise and Fall of the Woman of Letters* (London: Pimlico, 2004), p. 7; Betty Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 160; Schellenberg is alluding to Clifford Siskin who discussed women writers in the context of the 'the Great Forgetting [...] that became [...] The Great Tradition' in *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 195; see also Schellenberg, 'From Propensity to Profession: Female authorship and the Early Career of Frances Burney', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 14.3 (2002), 345-370 (p. 348); Claire Brock, 'Inflating Frances Burney' in *The Feminization of Fame, 1750-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 109-36 (p. 111); for an argument which refutes these claims and reads *The Wanderer* as a vehicle for Burney to review, with some regret, her own professional life, see Christina Davidson, 'Frances Burney, Elinor Joddrel, and the "Defiance to All Forms" and "Antique Prescriptions"', *The Burney Journal*, 11 (2013) (forthcoming); Emma E. Pink employs Bourdieu's theory of the cultural field to argue that Burney accumulated cultural capital in her early career to enable her to publish *Camilla* by subscription, the material production of which she was very involved in: see 'Frances Burney's *Camilla*: "To Print My Grand Work...By Subscription"', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40.1, 2006, 51-68.

¹¹ Catharine Macaulay, Letter xxii, 'No Characteristic Difference in Sex', in *Letters on Education* (London: C. Dilly, 1790), pp. 203-9 (p. 204); Wollstonecraft posited that women had much to gain from scholarly engagement with men: see *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Carol H. Poston, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 165.

to raise provocative questions about class, genre and authorship.¹² In the letter prefacing *The Wanderer*, Burney writes that fiction employs ‘the eccentricities of human life’ as ‘an exterior’ to ‘enwrap illustrations of conduct’ (9). For Burney, language was such an exterior form which could reveal character and moral interiority, but also enwrap and conceal any interventions which might be traced to her own beliefs. For Burney was cautious too about being read as a political writer, eager to deny such interests, and proclaim herself as an educative and ethical writer, in the tradition of her admired forebears. Gauging how far a woman writer might go in engaging with public debates, Burney adapted the polyphonic novel form to suit her goals. As this study will demonstrate, the novels’ stigmatization of certain speech styles and interactions conformed to eighteenth-century notions of correctness, which authorized a central dialect while marginalizing others. Ostensibly, dialogue in Burney’s fiction proclaimed conservative values about language, but at the same time, it challenged established assumptions and values relating to diverse contemporary issues. My study therefore reads Burney’s stylizations as being consciously made, professionally expedient perhaps, but also professional in being appositely selected, crafted, and honed.

It is my intention to shift the focus of attention to the craftsmanship of Burney’s professionalism; to scrutinize her use of style at micro level; to analyse dialogue techniques developed by Burney, and consider *how* she achieved her stylistic as well as her political and educative purposes. Further, it is my intention to explore certain questions: if Burney aspired to a professional reputation as a writer of educative, moral, and satirical works, as suggested in her prefaces, how did her fiction define ‘morality’, and how did it shore up the tensions between the personal freedoms of the individual, as represented by her heroines, and the pressures to conform to social codes? How did Burney situate the evolving subjectivity of her protagonists in the context of other ways of seeing the world? Further, how did Burney’s work interact with other discourses, and make use of the novel form, and genre conventions, to highlight and mediate contemporary social and political debates? How did she reconcile such mediations with the pressures on her as a female writer, and in particular, a writer specializing in a form seen as potentially dangerous, without compromising stylistic integrity? This study explores such questions, concentrating on Burney’s employment of seemingly conventional ideas relating to

¹² Judith Lowder Newton discusses ‘subversion, indirection, and disguise’ in terms of omissions, and disjunctions of form, because of what is not said; she groups Burney with Austen, Brontë and Eliot in her argument that such authors ‘felt the pressure of ideologies’ requiring circumspection: see *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981; repr. New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 9, and her chapter, ‘*Evelina*’, pp. 23-54; Claudia Johnson argues that to write novels of social criticism, authors like Austen had to ‘develop strategies of subversion and indirection’; Johnson suggests that the figure of the female philosopher is such a device: see *Jane Austen. Women, Politics and the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), p. 19; Julia Epstein reads Burney as possessing ‘a narrative strategy based on indirection and displacement [...] derived from repressed rage’: see *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women’s Writing* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 83; Alan Richardson endorses the theory that strategies of indirection ‘facilitate the telling expression of social criticism from within an acceptable form’: see *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 170; Betty Rizzo argues that parody is one of Burney’s oblique techniques which has failed to be credited by critics who read her as a ‘cowardly conservative’ writer: see *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women*, paperback edn (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), p. 18; Barbara Zonitch describes Burney’s ‘contradictory ambivalence’ in the personal and public upheavals which the writer experienced: *Familiar Violence: Gender and Social Upheaval in the Novels of Frances Burney* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), p. 15.

language and conversation in order to open up debates on social identity and selfhood in relation to such distinctions as class and gender.

2. Methodology and Critical Approaches

In the last two decades, some studies of literature have employed the methodologies and research of historico and sociolinguistics to explore new ways of analysing dialogue in pre twentieth-century fiction.¹³ However, a detailed study of Burney's work has yet to be produced.¹⁴ This thesis aims to supply this omission in Burney scholarship, drawing on the analytical methods of linguistic approaches, as well as historiographical approaches, to provide a detailed investigation of the dialogue in the novels. Further, my thesis aims to provide a consideration of Burney's contributions to fictional techniques in a critical context dominated by studies which foreground the works of Jane Austen. In an essay published in 1986 arguing for the achievements of Austen in the context of the novels of the 1790s, Gary Kelly highlighted Austen's development of free indirect discourse, her 'use of characteristic speech, comic gesture, dominant obsessions' and 'the linguistic universe' at the centre of which is 'the style of the narrator' and protagonist. Kelly concludes

Thus, to an extent not seen in third-person narrative and certainly not in third-person anti-Jacobin narrative before her time, Austen constructs a linguistic universe which is embedded in characters as an ordered community of individuals each with his own idiolect, but all in relation to a clearly established 'standard' and ordering center.

Thus in assertions which echo Thomas Babington Macaulay's description of Burney's 'eccentric characters, each governed by his own peculiar whim, each talking his own peculiar jargon, and each bringing out by opposition the oddities of the rest', Kelly claims for Austen what Macaulay grudgingly recognized in the novels of Burney.¹⁵ A year later, Nancy Armstrong's influential work claimed Austen's work as a site where language 'acquires unprecedented stability', where a

¹³ Raymond Chapman, *Forms of Speech in Victorian Fiction* (London: Longman, 1994); Lynda Mugglestone, "Grammatical Fair Ones": Women, Men, and Attitudes to Language in the Novels of George Eliot', *The Review of English Studies*, n.s., 46., 181 (1995), 11-25; Patricia Howell Michaelson, *Speaking Volumes: Women, Reading, and Speech in the Age of Austen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Bharat Tandon, *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation* (London: Anthem, 2003); there is a brief discussion of politeness in the work of Austen and Dickens in Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), pp. 247-254; Patricia Poussa applies Milroy's social network theory to the dialect speakers in Yarmouth in *David Copperfield*: see 'Dickens as Sociolinguist: Dialect in *David Copperfield*' in *Writing in Nonstandard English*, ed. by Irma Taavitsainen, Gunnel Melchers, and Päivi Pahta, *Pragmatics and Beyond*, n.s., 67 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000), pp. 27-44; at a Cambridge symposium (27 May 2011) Victorina Gonzalez-Diaz examined the allocation of adjectives to Austen's speakers.

¹⁴ Laure Blanchemain has examined the speech of Mrs Iretton in *The Wanderer* in relation to what she describes as masculine speech styles of aggression: see 'Verbal Conflicts in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Burney's *The Wanderer*', *English Text Construction*, 2.1 (2009), 111-120.

¹⁵ Gary Kelly, 'Jane Austen and the English Novel of the 1790s', in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp. 285-306 (p. 299); 'Madame D'Arblay', *Edinburgh Review*, January 1843: see *Critical and Historical Essays, Contributed to the Edinburgh Review by Thomas Babington Macaulay*, new edn (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850), pp. 651-681 (p. 677).

central, polite style is confirmed, and where language is used to ‘point to qualities inherent in the individual rather than to accidents of fortune or birth’. Introducing a collection of essays on conversation in the eighteenth century, published in 2008, Katie Halsey and Jane Slinn direct attention to the moral indicators of fictional spoken interactions, but still settle on Austen as ‘the great chronicler of the leisured classes from 1790 to 1817’ who ‘recognized the centrality of both “conversation” as an ideal and “conversation” as practice in the lives she portrayed’. Halsey and Slinn place Austen ‘squarely’ in a tradition of Christian moralists which includes Eliza Haywood, but their introduction to the collection of essays does not mention Frances Burney. Without denying the qualities and achievements of Jane Austen’s work, this study aims to direct attention back to her literary forebear, exploring the achievements which Austen herself recognized when she wrote of Burney’s novels as containing ‘the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, [...] conveyed to the world in the best chosen language’.¹⁶

An investigation which identifies dialogue as an index to morality invites associations with a branch of philosophy which values the practical and contextual applications evident in literature which the abstractions of theory impede. Discussing some of the main responses in this field of philosophy, Alasdair MacIntyre, for example is interested in the way fictional narratives illuminate and support neo-Aristotelianism. In this respect, such theorization of literature echoes Charles Taylor’s influential view that one way individuals ‘make sense’ of life relates to the stories they articulate. This discussion draws on such writers as Martha Nussbaum, whose theorization of literature and ethics highlights Aristotelian notions, her argument that literature illustrates how to live a good life dovetailing neatly with dominant eighteenth and nineteenth-century notions on literature, education and morality, such as those developed by Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and his followers. Discussion also draws on writers in other fields, such as Lionel Trilling whose classic text on sincerity and authenticity remains relevant to a study of ideas relating to Romantic selfhood.¹⁷ My study is therefore also underpinned by principal works of moral philosophy, developed in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in response to a secularization of society following (though not exclusively originating in) the newly defined State and Church partnership in the aftermath of the Restoration. However, this is not a philosophical study, and philosophical theory is treated here as one influence among many, rather than as a superior or even as a uniform discourse.

¹⁶ Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 138; *The Concept and Practice of Conversation in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1688-1848*, ed. by Katie Halsey and Jane Slinn (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), p. xv and p. xvi; Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 1817, ed. by Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 31.

¹⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd edn (London: Duckworth, 1985); Charles Taylor *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, paperback edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 1992), p. 8; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Isabel Rivers describes Shaftesbury’s moral position as deriving largely from the classical stoics, and his aim ‘to restore the ancient meaning of philosophy as the art of learning to live well’: see, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England 1660-1780*, Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature, 37 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991-), Shaftesbury to Hume, II (2000), p. 87; Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

Specialist studies of Burney's work and more general assessments of her contributions to eighteenth-century literature have recognized but not yet explored her achievements in the moral and aesthetic uses of fictional dialogue. N. F. Blake's study of non-standard language in literature notes the movement towards 'naturalism' in Burney's novels as well as the 'development of a more rigid attitude to correctness in usage', to signal the author's disapproval of certain characters. However, Blake's brief discussion of Burney's use of linguistic solecisms locates such aberrations in historical developments in the English language, focusing on the circumstantial errors of social faux-pas rather than the engagement with ethical debates evident in such choices.¹⁸ In an essay on gender and speech in eighteenth-century novels, John Richetti highlights the 'moral immunity' and 'linguistic superiority' of Burney's first heroine, claiming that Evelina's 'reticence becomes a distinct voice not heard before in eighteenth-century fiction'. But Richetti's claims for Burney's originality are embedded in his wider discussion, and are somewhat weakened by his subsequent comments on Mrs Selwyn whose wit and originality, he argues, are a 'violation of female decorum' which is 'lumped with other sorts of female marginality' represented in the novel, a judgement which 'lumps' Burney's approach with earlier authors discussed in Richetti's essay. Patricia Meyer Spacks, too, recognizes Burney's 'sensitivity to manners as an index of morality', but does little to explain what she sees as Burney's 'disclaiming responsibility' for Mrs Selwyn, nor the fact that Selwyn's 'masculine' manners and aggression do not signify a vicious character. Gary Kelly notes in his discussion of Romantic fiction that 'novels of manners, sentiment, and emulation contain a linguistic universe centred by standard written English', in which protagonists speak and think; 'whereas merely social characters, of any class, speak in sociolect, dialect and idiolect'. Kelly links such decentralized speech styles with lack of subjectivity; however, while he credits Burney as the first writer to employ free-indirect speech to reflect the author's moral and intellectual 'master-consciousness', Kelly's interests lie in the social conflict 'internalised' in the subject.¹⁹

In specialist studies of Burney, focus on her use of dialogue supports a wide range of interest, but none has provided a *detailed* discussion of the dialogue in her prose fiction, in the context of how she saw herself as a moral writer. Addressing early criticism by Thomas Babington Macaulay, two essays written in the 1970s make passing links between Burney's use

¹⁸ N. F. Blake, *Non-Standard Language in English Literature* (London: Deutsch, 1981), p. 125; Norman Page recognizes Burney's 'excellent sense of contemporary speech', but like Blake he focuses mainly on her representation of social types: see *Speech in the English Novel*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 86; Carey McIntosh analyses spoken idioms in *Evelina*, but sees them mainly as a characterization tool highlighting social distinctions: see *Common and Courtly Language: The Stylistics of Social Class in 18th-Century English Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 114-118; and Elles Smallegoor discusses the portrayal of volubility in *Evelina* as a means of characterizing 'social encroachers': see 'Noisy Homes and Stubborn Ears: The Social Significance of Sound in Frances Burney's *Evelina*', *The Burney Journal*, 10 (2010), pp. 65-86 (p. 69).

¹⁹ John Richetti, 'Voice and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Haywood to Burney', *Studies in the Novel*, 19.3 (1987), 263-272 (p. 270 and p. 271); for discussion of the silencing of Burney's heroines, see Juliet McMaster, 'The Silent Angel: Impediments to Female Expression in Frances Burney's Novels', *Studies in the Novel*, 21.3 (1989), 235-252; Susan Fraiman examines the silences in *Evelina*, arguing that marriage to Orville is a form of death for Evelina, a silencing of the heroine which reinforces conduct strictures: see 'Getting Waylaid in *Evelina*' in *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development*, ed. by Susan Fraiman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 32-58, revised by Fraiman in the Norton critical edition of *Evelina*, pp. 454-474; Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 158-92, p. 158 and p. 177; Gary Kelly, 'Romantic Fiction' in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 196-215 (p. 200).

of conversation and moral worth: Susan Staves defends the grouping of what Macaulay called Burney's 'eccentric characters'; focusing on the issue of delicacy, Staves notes Evelina's lack of sexual vocabulary and inarticulacy contrasted to Willoughby's 'preservation of *savoir faire*', observing that the comic characters who constantly threaten Evelina's delicacy 'actually commit all the solecisms she is afraid of committing'. Staves posits that such characters are vulgar, immodest, ignorant of social decorum, and contemptuous; however Staves's focus does not linger on language. Similarly, Lillian and Edward Bloom address Macaulay's comment on the skill of 'mimicry', which contributes to Burney's creation of social stereotypes, and commend the first two novels as 'psychodramas' in which 'the moral vitality' of the heroines 'bests the "monsters" in their patch'. Over a decade later, writing on the perverse readings of Evelina by male protagonists as an allegory for the novel's potential reception, Gina Campbell explores conflicts in the text, noting the opposition between Willoughby's 'seductive rattle' and Evelina's conduct book 'female modesty' and 'language of virtue'. More recently, Claudia Thomas Kairoff focuses on women writers' approaches to political and social satire in the eighteenth century. Commenting on Burney's skill in capturing individual or group speech and manners, and that 'satirical types [...] emphasize principle themes', Kairoff merely gestures towards the ethical issues.²⁰ Such fleeting references to the significance of Burney's dialogue invite further attention. An in-depth study of the correlation of aestheticizing features of speech and ethical principles for satirical and characterization purposes in the novels is therefore timely. For, as this thesis proposes, Burney was not merely mimicking the speech of every day life, but crafted and shaped her fictional dialogue, incorporating the language of written discourses too.

²⁰ Susan Staves, "‘Evelina’, or, Females Difficulties", *Modern Philology*, 73.4 (1976), 368-381 (p. 371 and p. 368); Lillian D. Bloom and Edward A. Bloom, 'Fanny Burney's Novels: The Retreat from Wonder', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 12.3 (1979), 215-235 (p. 222 and p. 224); Gina Campbell, 'How to Read Like a Gentleman: Burney's Instructions to Her Critics in *Evelina*', *ELH*, 57. 3 (1990), 557-583 (p. 571 and p. 572); Claudia Thomas Kairoff, 'Gendering Satire, Behn to Burney', in *A Companion to Satire Ancient and Modern*, ed. by Ruben Quintero (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 276-292 (p. 288 and p. 289).

3. Burney's Novels and Contemporary Fiction

In 1985 the narratologist Ira Konigsburg observed that 'writers begin with the literary tradition they inherit, no matter what they do with it, and they write for an audience educated to respond in particular ways'.²¹ Central to my argument is the relationship between Burney's fiction and the work of her literary predecessors, as well as that of contemporary writers, for I contend that Burney exploited readers' assumptions, as well as their knowledge of her references, in order to effect speedy characterization and development of themes. The evidence for such a relationship might be seen as 'influence', or 'intertextuality', or what some scholars call dialogues. In this respect, my study of Burney's work occupies a place in a new phase of eighteenth-century scholarship, which approaches women's writing as part of a literary culture in which women and men did not occupy discrete spheres but interrelated, and were interested in 'big questions' that 'occupy humanity'.²² Critical assertions of Burney's fashioning of dialogue as the first or best in the genre go some way in reclaiming her contribution to the developments in the novel from accounts which have foregrounded the work of Austen. Such assertions, however, invite comparison with writers whom Burney herself read. But comparison is complicated by other factors. Genre category is a primary issue, highlighted by the diversity of critical evaluation of Burney's own fiction which has been variously discussed in terms of the courtship novel, the moral novel, the novel of manners, the Jacobin, the anti-Jacobin novel, the romance, the ironic counter-romance, and the novel of sensibility.²³ Such disparate ways of locating Burney's fiction reflect developments in criticism since the resurgence of interest following Hemlow's biography of Burney in the 1950s, as much as the developments in Burney's own writing over the long course of her literary career.²⁴

²¹ Ira Konigsburg, *Narrative Technique in the English Novel: Defoe to Austen* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1985), p. 1.

²² Jacqueline M. Labbe, 'Introduction: Defining "Women's Writing"; or, Writing "The History"', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750-1830*, ed. by Jacqueline M. Labbe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010-), pp. 1-6 (p. 2); Antoinette Marie Sol makes a strong case for a 'promiscuous' relationships between texts, drawing Burney into a French circle of influence with Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni and Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, in *Textual Promiscuities: Eighteenth-Century Critical Rewriting* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002).

²³ Margaret Anne Doody, 'Burney and Politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. by Sabor, p. 101 ('courtships novels'); John Richetti, *The English Novel in History* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 198 and p. 217 ('the moral novel'); Gary Kelly, 'Romantic Fiction', p. 200 (novels of manners); in her introduction to *Cecilia*, Doody describes the work as 'the first of the Jacobin novels', p. xxxvii; in *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Matthew Orville Grenby notes that Burney 'fills her novel [*The Wanderer*] with a distinctive kind of anti-Jacobin didacticism', though he also recognizes the more positive 'moral' uses she made of issues relating to the French Revolution, p. 61. Burney's novels are discussed as romances, by Martha G. Brown, 'Fanny Burney's "Feminism": Gender or Genre?' in *Fetter'd or Free?* ed. by Schofield and Macheski, pp. 29-39; and are referred to as 'ironic counter romances' by Miranda J. Burgess in *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. I; Joe Bray describes Burney as a novelist of sensibility: see *The Female Reader in the English Novel: From Burney to Austen*, Routledge Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature, 5 (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 21 (Bray develops this view in Chapter 1, '"The Easy Communication of Sentiment": Frances Burney, Charlotte Smith and the Complications of Sympathy', pp. 28-57).

²⁴ For an early bibliography of Burney's work see Joseph A. Grau, *Fanny Burney: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1981); critical approaches to Burney's work are periodically reviewed and updated: see Janice Farrar Thaddeus, *Frances Burney: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Betty Rizzo, 'Review Essay. Yes Miss Burney', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 22.1 (2003), 193-201; Lorna J. Clark, 'The Afterlife and Further Reading', in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. by Sabor, pp. 163-179; and periodical issues of *The Burney Journal*; in place of a literary review reproducing and adding to such work, references to critical works will be included where relevant throughout this thesis.

Discussion in the chapters which follow draws attention, where relevant, to possible links and dialogues between Burney's fiction and the work of other writers. In her diaries and letters Burney represents herself as repudiating books which 'could hurt' her.²⁵ Such potentially harmful books might be seen as those deemed by Burney to be morally dubious; for example she claims to be unfamiliar with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's work, or having heard of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's novel, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, the very name of which displeased her; she found Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* 'distaste[ful]', and determined never to read it again as it seemed to be written 'as a deliberate defence of suicide'.²⁶ However, moral import did not guarantee Burney's approval, her journals noting that she found Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, 'monotonously without interest of ANY kind' yet 'filled with Reflexions, Maxims, [and] Moral Lessons'. She records enjoying Charlotte Smith's *Celestina*, but preferred *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* and *Ethelinde; or, The Recluse of the Lake*. Her objections to some novels reflect her judgement of fictional style, especially the handling of dialogue. She found Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage*, 'dull & heavy', 'trite in Characters, wearisome in its dialogue'.²⁷ She read and admired Sir Walter Scott whom she alludes to as 'ingenious' and 'a Master'; but criticizes *The Black Dwarf* as a 'Fairy Tale' – which she deemed necessarily inferior to 'a Tale formed of natural Characters & of events recurring in general Life'; and although she enjoyed reading *Tales of My Landlord*, she felt that Scott seemed 'to feel it an imperious necessity not to omit the opportunity of saying *a good thing*', even 'if the Person [...] in whose mouth it would be fitting, is not by' so that it 'must be uttered, *coute qui coute*, by someone else' – a phrase she seems to lift, complete with mistakes, from Smollett; Burney felt, too, that the 'dialogues were too long and too frequent'. She also corresponded with Isaac Disraeli, and admired his autobiographical novel, *Contarini Fleming*. Burney's reading tastes throughout her life seem to have been eclectic if conservative, favouring what Jacqueline Pearson has called 'the genres generally recommended to women readers' and the works of 'the classic eighteenth-century *belles lettres*'.²⁸ In the preface to her first novel, *Evelina*, Burney specifically aligns herself with established writers in the republic of letters, naming Johnson,

²⁵ Journal letter to Susanna Phillips written in 1783: *Frances Burney, Journals* (2001) p. 196.

²⁶ Burney claims this in an account of a conversation about Voltaire and Rousseau in a journal letter to her father and sister, Susanna Phillips, dated December 1785: see *Frances Burney, Journals* (2001), p. 227 (however, Rousseau is one of the authors named in the comments prefacing *Evelina*); for Burney's displeasure at the title of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, see *Frances Burney, Journals* (2001), p. 196; for references to *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, see *Diary and Letters*, I, 612 (a letter written in 1787); in a journal letter written in 1785, Burney claimed she had only read part of the book and was determined never to try and read it again: *Diary and Letters*, I, 399.

²⁷ For Burney's reference to More's novel, see *JAL*, x, 537; for her comments on the work of Charlotte Smith see *JAL*, I, 26; and for her criticism of Edgeworth's novel see *JAL*, IX, 59 and 451-452.

²⁸ Burney lists her reading for 1817: see *JAL*, IX, 450 and 453, and reviews her reading in 1817, including *The Black Dwarf*, *JAL*, IX, 450, and a detailed response to *Tales of My Landlord*, in *JAL*, IX, 453; a footnote in *JAL*, XI, 162, notes that in the months leading up to July 1820, Burney read three or four of Scott's novels; Smollett uses the phrase *coute qui coute* when Random describes his decision to join the foot-guards '*coute qui coute*': Boucé notes that the 'correct French phrase' is 'coûte que coûte' – 'at whatever cost': see *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. by Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, reiss. 2008), p. 95 and p. 446 n. 2; Burney refers to Disraeli in *JAL*, XII, 123: a footnote describes how Disraeli wrote: 'The staunchest admirer I have in London, and the most discerning appreciation of *Contarini* is old Madame D'Arblay. I have a long letter which I will show you': the reference is to Disraeli, *Letters: 1815-1834*, ed. by John Matthews, J. A. W. Gunn and D. M. Schuman and Others, 6 vols (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1982), I, 207; Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 136; Pearson lists conduct and devotional works, history, letters and memoirs, travels, periodical essays as the genres 'generally recommended to women'; and Shakespeare, Swift, Pope, Johnson, *Don Quixote*, the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* as classic '*belles lettres*'.

Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and, Rousseau, stating that ‘no man may blush from starting at the same post’ (6).

The preface to *Evelina* praises the pathos of Samuel Richardson and the wit of Henry Fielding. Despite their formal differences, both writers intervene in their narratives in a way which Burney eschewed. As Bharat Tandon notes, Richardson policed ‘the interpretation of his texts by revisions and “editorial” interventions designed to forestall ambiguity’; Fielding’s novels, especially *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, are distinguished by a pronounced authorial presence which manages the narrative in a way that Claude Rawson links to Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and a reflexive mode of writing to be found in many modern novels.²⁹ In Burney’s narratives the authorial presence is less tangible. There is no doubt, however, that like Richardson, Burney aimed to be read ‘for sentiment’, and that the expressive nature of her dialogue, as well as her focus on the relationship between a woman’s intrinsic virtue and outer reputation, owes much to Richardson’s fiction. In her preface to *Evelina* Burney proclaims her young narrator to be the ‘off-spring of Nature [...] in her simplest attire’ (7), a judgement invoking Johnson’s description of Richardson, ten years earlier, claiming his ‘characters of Nature’ to be drawn from ‘the recesses of the human heart’.³⁰ However, in the letter to Burney’s father prefixed to *The Wanderer* (1814) it is Fielding’s view, that the novel should instruct and entertain, which Burney echoes when she writes that the novel should ‘make pleasant the path of propriety’ (9).³¹ Fielding’s influence is also evident in the plotting of Burney’s narratives which expose vice as an object of detestation, though it is rarely allowed to prevail, and which offer affectation as the chief source of the ridiculous.³² However, Burney’s divergence from the literary forebear whom she admired so greatly is evident in her handling of dialogue.

Examples from *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749) illustrate this claim. In *Joseph Andrews* Fielding creates characters whose speech indicates pretentiousness, the malapropisms of Mrs Slipslop, and the French words and fashionable oaths of Bellarmine indicating each character’s attempts to identify themselves with elevated levels of society through the use of what they perceived to be prestige forms of language. Such pretentiousness in Fielding and Burney’s hands is seen as worthy of comic treatment, both writers equating the willingness to cross social boundaries with a readiness to step over the margins of morality. For Burney, however, the figure of the uneducated woman striving but failing to express herself in a privileged language was not a source of ridicule. In a decade when other writers were still

²⁹ Tandon, p. 29; Henry Fielding, *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*, 1743, ed. by Hugh Amory and Claude Rawson, introduction by Claude Rawson, and notes by Linda Bree (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, reiss. 2008), p. xiii.

³⁰ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, L.L.D. Comprehending an Account of his Studies and Numerous Works, in Chronological Order*, 2 vols (London: Henry Baldwin and Charles Dilly, 1791), i, 299, section dated 1768.

³¹ Literary entertainment and instruction were dominant tenets of the period, derived from classical precepts developed by writers like Horace. Richardson begins his Preface to *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded*: ‘If to divert and entertain, and at the same time instruct and improve the minds of the YOUTH of both sexes’; but it is Fielding’s preface to *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* which positions the novel against romances, as does Burney, and which discusses the ‘pleasure’ afforded ‘the sensible reader’ by absurdity: see *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, ed. by Peter Sabor with an introduction by Margaret Anne Doody (London: Penguin, 1980, repr. 2003) p. 31; *Joseph Andrews Preceded by Shamela*, 1742 and 1741, ed. by A. R. Humphreys (London: Dent & Sons, 1973), pp. i and ii.

³² Fielding writes in his preface that ‘affectation appears to me the only true source of the Ridiculous’ and that although vice is the object of ‘detestation’ in his work, it is never allowed to ‘produce the intended evil’: see *Joseph Andrews Preceded by Shamela*, ed. by Humphreys, p. vi.

exploiting the type in drama and prose fiction, Burney conflates Slipslop and Bellarmine and reconfigures the character as Madame Duval, refocusing attention on her social and national aspirations, and underplaying her predatory sexuality as a target of hilarity.³³ Working under the pressures placed on women novelists to write in a ‘proper’ manner, that is, in keeping with contemporary notions of femininity, Burney would have felt obliged to repudiate such a sexually stigmatized figure as Mrs Slipslop. That she should also drop the use of malapropism, which would have afforded her instant access to established comic stereotypes, is significant and, as this study aims to show, is indicative of her approaches to the creation of her secondary and minor characters. A similar transformation can be seen in Burney’s approach to the character type represented by Fielding’s Squire Western in *Tom Jones*. Squire Western’s south-western rustic accent is used by Fielding to ground his character, presenting him as a robust, boorish John Bull figure. Although Western is threatening and controlling, the narrative treats with some tolerance his old-fashioned values and defence of a residual royalist land-owning class, so the reader is left with the impression that the squire is good-hearted. In Burney’s fiction interior worth and exterior speech are made compatible: such decentralized speech as Western’s west-country brogue is replaced by the nautical idiom of the abusive Captain Mirvan, in *Evelina*, by the elliptic, jargonized argot of the mean-spirited Mr Briggs in *Cecilia*, and by the colloquial, ‘ungenteel’ invective of vicious Mrs Ireton in *The Wanderer*.

Since Burney spent several of her apprentice years as a writer in the circle surrounding Samuel Johnson, it is of some relevance to consider her tributes and responses to Richardson and Fielding in the context of Johnsonian judgements. Johnson was famously resistant to Fielding and his work, positioning his work against that of Richardson, arguing that ‘there is all the difference in the world between characters of nature and characters of manners’, and that ‘characters of manners are very entertaining; but they are to be understood by a more superficial observer than characters of nature.’³⁴ Without endorsing Johnson’s judgement of Fielding’s characters, appropriation of his terminology can be useful for a description of Burney’s minor characters, who are invariably presented in terms of speech and ‘manners’, their aptronymic names flattening them further, and drawing attention to their descent from the medieval allegorical figure. Such repetition of major features and qualities, ‘or prompts’ has been credited in the work of Dickens as a technique to remind readers of characters who are not mentioned for hundreds of pages. Such prompts allocated to minor characters similarly facilitated Burney’s management of large casts in her novels, but were by no means the only narrative tools at her disposal, an aspect of her art which was seriously misunderstood by Macaulay’s generalization that ‘Madame D’Arblay has left us scarcely anything but humours’, or by Hazlitt’s criticism of

³³ Smollett’s Tabitha Bramble, in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) is based on this formula, her poor spelling and attempts to gain a husband presenting her as a figure of ridicule. Sheridan created a similar character, Mrs Malaprop, in *The Rivals* (1775); after a disastrous opening night, prompting revision, the play enjoyed great success. It is interesting to note that Burney was more willing to follow convention in her drama. In her plays, *The Wittlings* (1779) and *The Woman-Hater* (1780-81) Burney creates the character Lady Smatter, a wealthy woman whose wide reading does not equip her for life and who fails to quote or cite her sources with any degree of accuracy.

³⁴ For Johnson’s comments see Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, I, 299.

her use of ‘a single phrase or sentiment’ or ‘certain mottoes’ in her dialogue.³⁵ However, Burney also wanted her protagonists to be read as if drawn from ‘Nature’. In the creation of her secondary characters too, she displayed interest in their subjectivity, in some instances delving beneath the iterated features of their mannerisms to suggest depth.

In the context of such large casts of characters, Burney’s novels rarely feature representations of regional dialects. In contrast, Fielding’s *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* (1748) uses cant language and colloquial idiom in the protagonist’s dialogue to capture the criminal world and mind of the conflated hero/villain, who dies unrepentant. Of a different mettle is the eponymous hero of Smollett’s work, *Roderick Random* (1748). Roderick narrates the events of this picaresque novel, describing the adventures he encounters on his travels after leaving Scotland, and his account makes it clear that he and his companion Strap speak with a Scottish accent, drawing ridicule from others after they cross the border into England, and proving a potential bar to Roderick’s ambitions. Nevertheless, Roderick’s narration contains few instances of Scottish pronunciation or dialect, which N. F. Blake explains as being too ‘inconvenient’ for the author to achieve.³⁶ Given the prescriptive attitudes at the time the novel was published, however, it is more likely that Smollett felt that the use of Standard English invested his narrator with more authority and supported a more sympathetic reading of his escapades. A Scotsman himself, it is likely that he was subjected to, rather than shared, such judgemental attitudes; the representation of regional dialect in this novel bears this out, with Joey, who takes Roderick from Newcastle to London, represented as a decent man, though he speaks with a north-east dialect.³⁷ In general, Smollett’s use of dialogue in his fiction is to locate the region and class of his speakers rather than to suggest anything sinister about their values and motives. Although he uses speech for comic effect, there is no particular correlation between dialogue and morality. Burney also hailed from a provincial background, and the insecurities which her father displayed about his status and reputation placed pressure on his family to conform, strive, and succeed in the cosmopolitan London circles to which they were introduced

³⁵ Tandon draws attention to the ‘prompt’ technique in narrative, noting the repeated ‘quirks’ of character employed by Dickens (49); it is interesting to contrast the recognition of Dickens’s narrative skills with Macaulay’s censure of Burney’s approach; for Macaulay’s comments see, ‘Madame D’Arblay’, p. 677; Hazlitt, ‘On the English Novelists’, 1819, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London: Dent and Sons, 1930-1933), vi, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers and Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth* (1931), pp. 107-132 (p. 123).

³⁶ At one point in Smollett’s novel, Roderick is told he will be taught the ‘English tongue, without which [he] will be unfit for business’: see *Roderick Random*, ed. by Bouc  , p. 96; Blake, *Non-Standard Language*, p. 114; John Barrell argues that Roderick’s loss of regional accent in his own speech signifies his becoming a gentleman – the point when his account represents his own speech, because it can now do so, using standard language: see *English Literature in History, 1730-1780: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 198.

³⁷ Prejudice against the Scottish accent was rife: Boswell notes how the Scottish accent of Mr Dundas had detracted from his ‘powerful abilities’ in the English Parliament, in *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, II, 180 (dated 1770); Jeff Strabone has recently argued that even Johnson tried to ‘correct’ his own Midlands accent: see ‘Samuel Johnson, Standardizer of English Pronunciation’, *ELH*, 77.1 (2010), 237-265 (pp. 255-6); for other examples of embarrassments over accents (including Swift and R. B. Sheridan) see Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, ‘English at the Outset of the Normative Tradition’ in *The Oxford History of English*, ed. by Lynda Mugglestone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 240-273 (pp. 243-244); more than half a century later, Brunton dispenses with the Scottish accent in her overtly moral novel *Discipline*: having introduced the hero, Mr Maitland, as being Scottish, the narrator later mentions the ‘derision which his provincial accent excited’, and Maitland’s dialogue never evidences a Scottish accent, even though dialogue later represents Lowland and Highland Scots, as well as Gaelic, complete with English gloss: see Mary Brunton, *Discipline*, 1814, introduction by Fay Weldon (New York: Pandora Press, 1986), p. 196.

after their removal from Norfolk.³⁸ It is likely that Burney's awareness of the prejudices which gathered around provincial speech, and her own desire to distance herself from such discriminatory attitudes, led her largely to avoid the issue of regionalism in her novels, and to develop alternative ways of representing decentralized speech.³⁹

Early reviews of *Cecilia* identifying aspects of Johnson's prose style in Burney's work have generated later critical views debating the extent of his influence. However, as Jane Spencer has posited, 'Burney did not use Johnsonian style exclusively. Much of the novel [*Cecilia*] is in dialogue form, and her highly dramatic practice of defining many of her characters through their idiolects saves her from the fault critics found with Johnson in his fictional work, *Rasselas*, [1759], of making everyone speak in the same elevated manner'. While Spencer's discussion exonerates Burney from accusations of submissively striving after Johnsonian sentences, and argues that her work 'helped alter readers' perceptions of the gender of rational discourse' it does not go far enough in exploring Burney's inversion of Johnsonian practices regarding the function of dialogue.⁴⁰ Johnson's work presents the education of a prince in classical terms, through focused, rational dialogues between the prince and his teacher; although Burney's heroine (and all her heroines) benefit from their discussions with mentor figures, much of their moral education takes place through processes of reflection, and through encounters with characters presented as unworthy by the narrative. Further, Johnson's *Rasselas* is keen to show the deceptiveness of man's speech, the teacher's warning, 'Be not too hasty [...] to trust, or to admire, the teachers of morality: they discourse like angels, but they live like men', leading to the prince's conviction 'of the emptiness of rhetorical sound, and the inefficacy of polished periods and studied sentences'. There is no doubt that Burney factors in the deceptiveness of polite intercourse in her fictional narratives, but as this study will show, she uncovers pointers which expose the politeness as little more than surface polish. The majority of her characters are similarly exposed by their allocated idiolects, an exposure of interiority which goes further than superficial definition of type in the neo classical sense. Johnson's work supports the view that 'external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same', reflecting what later theorists noted as the slippage between the signified and the signifier. But Burney's fiction

³⁸ Burney's grandfather was Scottish, but the family name, MacBurney, was changed around the time Charles Burney was born; Burney's depiction of the depressed Scottish poet in *Evelina* is sympathetic and without condescension.

³⁹ An exception is the depiction of the travelling players in Book IV of *Camilla*, where Burney employs the familiar trope of rustics performing tragedy, their recycled costumes, poor direction and provincial accents turning a production of *Othello* into farce (317-324); although this is an exceptional scene, it is likely that Burney viewed the ambitions of the players as over-weaning and pretentious, and therefore ripe for satire – in keeping with the vanity of affectation discussed by Fielding in his preface to *Joseph Andrews*, p. iv; other potential exceptions are servants and the poor, examples of which are discussed in Chapter 5.

⁴⁰ *The Monthly Review* asserted that the style of *Cecilia* 'seems to have been formed on the best model of Dr Johnson's': see the *Monthly Review*, 67, December 1782, pp. 453-8 (p. 454); Macaulay wrote that Burney was 'one of Johnson's most submissive worshippers', and accused her of taking the *Rambler* style for her model: *Edinburgh Review*, January, 1843; for discussion of Burney's indebtedness to Johnson, see David Cecil, 'Fanny Burney's Novels' in *Essays on the Eighteenth Century Presented to David Nichol Smith in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), pp. 212-224; Joanne Cutting-Gray discusses masculine and feminine discourse styles and the evidence of Johnsonian sentences in Burney's work, arguing that Burney capitulated and suppressed her own feminine style: see, *Woman as 'Nobody' and the Novels of Fanny Burney* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), p. 47 and p. 52; Randy Bax has carried out a quantitative analysis of Burney's style, and concludes that there are traces of the *Rambler* prose style in her public work in the period after she met Johnson, explaining this phenomenon as an indication of Burney's admiration rather than slavish imitation: see 'Traces of Johnson in the Language of Fanny Burney', *International Journal of English Studies*, 5.1, 2005, 159-181; Jane Spencer, 'Evelina and *Cecilia*' in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. by Sabor, pp. 23-37 (p. 35).

asserts a more stable relationship between the signifiers of speech and the signified interiority, a narrational technique influencing such later writers as Maria Edgeworth, and articulated by a character at the moral centre of her novel, *Helen* (1834) when she expresses the view: 'If women would avail themselves of their daily, hourly opportunities of judging people by their words, they would get at their natural characters'.⁴¹

Although Burney seems to have returned to the reading of her earlier literary favourites in her later years, it is clear that her reading tastes continued to develop and are likely to have contributed to a continuous process of influence on her work. Burney's journal records her admiration of the work of Charlotte Lennox, and it is illuminating to consider Burney's indebtedness to a female author whose writing career also spanned four decades. In a recent edition of *Henrietta* (1758) Ruth Perry and Susan Carlile highlight Lennox's indebtedness to Fielding and Richardson, for Lennox, like Burney, was responding to issues in the earlier works of these canonical writers.⁴² Perry and Carlile's introduction also discusses *Henrietta* as a *bildungsroman*, drawing attention to similarities between Lennox's novel and Burney's *Evelina*. However, while connections are certainly to be made between these two novels, it is in Burney's final novel, *The Wanderer*, where Lennox's influence can most tangibly be felt. *The Wanderer* and *Henrietta* both open on a journey, introducing characters thrown together by travel: the former begins with an escape by boat from France during 'the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre' (11), the latter with a journey by coach to London 'about the middle of July' (7). In each novel, a party of passengers is arrested by an unknown young woman who begs to join the group, and in each, the passengers argue as they consider her request. Dialogue is therefore crucial for both authors to effect speedy characterization, especially as the female protagonist is befriended and helped by certain members of the groups.

Such similarities in the exposition of each novel invite comparison, and help highlight the technical and thematic uses which Burney makes of dialogue. Both writers have an opening paragraph establishing time and place, and introducing characters and action. Lennox begins:

[[About the middle of July, 17 ——, when the Windsor stage-coach with the accustomed number of passengers was proceeding on its way to London,] a young woman [genteely dressed, with a small parcel [tied up in a handkerchief,]] hastily bolted from the shelter of a large tree near the road; and [[calling to the coachman [to stop for a moment]], asked him, [if he could let her have a place?]]

Burney's novel commences:

[[During the reign of the terrific Robespierre, and in the dead of night, braving the cold, the darkness, and the damps of December,] some English passengers, in a small vessel, were

⁴¹ Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, 1759, ed. by J. P. Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, reiss. 1999), p. 47 and p. 48; Maria Edgeworth, *Helen* (1834), with an introduction by Anne Thackeray Ritchie (London: Macmillan, 1903), p. 155.

⁴² *Henrietta*, 1758, ed. by Ruth Perry and Susan Carlile (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

preparing [to glide silently from the coast of France, [when a voice of keen distress resounded from the shore, [imploring, in the French language, pity and admission.]]]

Both writers begin with an adverbial subordinate clause, then introduce the main clause, before completing their lengthy opening sentences with further clauses. Grammatically, therefore, there is a degree of parallelism here, as Burney's lengthy periodic sentence follows the pattern of the model.⁴³ Two features are intrinsically different, however. Firstly, Burney's main clause concerns 'some English passengers in a small vessel [who] were preparing', the narrative building up suspense, throwing the focus of interest onto the newcomer, who is then mysteriously depicted as 'a voice' in the darkness of the shoreline. Lennox's main clause concerns the protagonist, the omniscient narration providing such pointers as youthfulness and class to engage a contemporary reader's interest and sympathy, describing 'a young woman, genteely dressed, with a small parcel'; using what Konigsberg describes as visualisation techniques, Lennox offers the reader rapid access to concrete aspects of the protagonist's identity, making it clear from the outset where the narrative is going.⁴⁴ The second difference here relates to the speech of the protagonists. In Lennox's account the young woman's speech is reported, the indirection stitching the words closely to the fabric of the narrative: 'and calling to the coachman to stop for a moment, asked him, if he could let her have a place?' In contrast, Burney describes the manner of the speech itself 'imploring in the French language, pity and admission', her focus being on aural, pragmatic and motivational aspects of the speaker, the verb 'imploring' carrying more emotive impact than Lennox's verb, 'calling'. Burney follows this up with a new sentence, containing direct speech, ' "Oh hear me," cried the same voice, "for the love of Heaven hear me!" ' before shifting narrational focus immediately to the response of the pilot of the boat. When the two passages are considered together, the shift from visual to aural pointers in Burney's narrative is striking: freeing the narrative of descriptors which direct reader-response to age, class and gender, Burney uses vocal indicators only. The techniques evident in the first sentences of each novel represent subsequent narrational approaches as the scenes unfold. Lennox continues to guide the response of her readers by providing strong visual signals concerning character and identity, her narrative distinguishing 'a plump lady...[her] face doubly inflamed with rage', 'a tall lean woman', 'a grave man,' and 'the haughty lady'; their direct speech, however, is largely unitary, most of the utterances being represented as formal Standard English. Burney's opening scene offers more polyphonic interchanges and, as this study will show, it is the pragmatic, grammatical and heteroglot features of the dialogue which are loaded with signification.

It is likely that Burney's use of the novel's formal structures for moral purposes was founded in her desire to break free of older associations between the novel, women, and amatory themes. Ros Ballaster identifies the period in which Burney wrote as one in which writers tried to

⁴³ Square brackets are used to mark off subordinate clauses: see Geoffrey Leech, Margaret Deuchar and Robert Hoogenraad, *English Grammar for Today: A New Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1982).

⁴⁴ Ira Konigsberg, *Narrative Technique in the English Novel: Defoe to Austen* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1985), pp. 10-16. As Konigsberg develops her ideas, she makes it clear that figures of literary convention could also be employed in visualisation techniques.

refine and purge the novel ‘of its disreputable associations with female sexuality and the subversive power of female “wit” or artifice’. Burney seems to have been sensitive to such pressures, confessing her ‘dread’ of ‘censure’ when she writes in her diary that an ‘authoress must always be assumed to be flippant, assuming and loquacious’.⁴⁵ Such comments have contributed to readings of her fiction as cautious and even fearful.⁴⁶ Burney’s desire to shake off stereotypical readings of herself as a woman writer and to present her work as serious and educative is reflected in the prefatorial material of her novels. In *The Wanderer*, she seems to eschew flippancy when she promotes ‘the eccentricities of human life’ as ‘an exterior’ to ‘enwrap illustrations of conduct’, and to embrace even ‘sacred themes’, asserting that ‘fiction, when animating the design of recommending right has always been permitted and cultivated, not alone by the moral, but by the pious instructor’ (9). Such an attitude to her role was articulated three decades earlier in the preface to her first novel, *Evelina*, where she distances herself from ‘the fantastic regions of Romance, where Fiction is coloured by all the gay tints of luxurious Imagination, where Reason is an outcast, and where the sublimity of the Marvellous rejects all aid from sober Probability’ (7). Throughout her writing career, then, Burney positions herself by juxtaposition of sobriety with flippancy and luxuriousness, and probability with imagination. She thus renounces features associated with earlier forms of women’s fiction. Indeed, since these features were commonly gendered as female, Burney’s repudiation can be read as a bid to align herself with such male writers in the genre as she mentions in her preface to *Evelina*. But as this introduction has shown, Burney was not aiming for a sycophantic aping of the work of such writers; but, rather, she credited their achievements in the employment of novelistic forms for moral ends.

Burney’s representation of herself as a moral writer suggests that she also consciously identified herself with contemporary fiction by women. Many accounts of the development of the novel locate a moral turn in fiction writing dominated by women in the mid-eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Such a focus was not without male and female predecessors in the earlier decades of the century, and was in response to multiple and varied political and cultural factors, reflected in contemporary book reviews which largely derogated works by earlier writers.⁴⁸ In his historical study of the English novel, John Richetti traces female narratives’ attainment of ‘moral

⁴⁵ Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 3; Burney, Diary MSS, suppressed fragments, the Berg Collection, the New York Public Library, Box 2, quoted in Joyce Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1958, p. 63.

⁴⁶ Spacks, *Imagining a Self*: p. 158. Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women Writing Fiction, 1600-1800* (London: Virago, 1989); pp. 273-303; Katharine M. Rogers, ‘Fanny Burney: The Private Self and the Published Self’, *International Journal of Women’s Studies*, 7.2 (1984), 110-117; in *Equivocal Beings*, p. 144, Johnson writes that Burney’s role as a social critic has been ‘overstated’; more recently, Miranda J. Burgess suggests that a fearfulness ‘upheld by paternal and conjugal authority’ is inherent in Burney’s work//: see *British Fiction*, p. 89.

⁴⁷ The moral ‘turn’ of fiction in the mid-eighteenth century has been amply discussed elsewhere: see for example Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 75-77, which considers how women writers turned their attention from amatory fiction to the sentimental and domestic domain; in *The Sign of Angellica* (pp. 2-3), Janet Todd accepts the notion of a mid-century turn towards the moral, resulting in the assumption of moral authority by the end of the century, which she sees as separate to a perceived progress in technical skill; Catherine Gallagher argues that a new focus on ‘moral seriousness’ mid-century goes beyond chastity to counter the mercenary, the selfish, and the disorderly, associated with the previous generation: see ‘Nobody’s Credit: Fiction, Gender, and Authorial Property in the Career of Charlotte Lennox’, *Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Act of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1994), pp. 145-203 (p. 147).

⁴⁸ Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, pp. 197-198.

respectability' to the efforts of women writers in the 1720s and 1730s, but proposes that 'the heroines of the moral novel produced by women in mid-century and after are essentially ethereal and ascetic beings, rarely fleshly or material but rather collections of moral and sentimental attitudes'.⁴⁹ Distinguishing Burney from women writers, Richetti argues that she had 'absorbed the lessons of her male predecessors' (219) even when she wrote her first novel, and that in *Cecilia* she replaces the 'moralizing fluency' of narrator and 'various characters' by 'the sublime spectacle of female virtue in specifically physical and psychological distress' (239). In Chapter 1, I consider what Burney might have understood about 'moral respectability' and how she may have seen herself as a writer of a 'moral novel'; and this introduction has already highlighted Burney's possible influences. At this point therefore, I flag up Richetti's overview of Burney's work, to add that Burney maintains her ability to create such a spectacle of suffering in her later novels, even though she turns back to modes of narrative which *include* moral fluency, assigning several of her characters didactic dialogue which fulfils the novels' ethical and thematic purposes. In addition, Burney's reliance on dialogue to voice morality preserves her position as a 'proper lady', allowing her to avoid the stigma of appearing 'loquacious' and 'assuming'; the novel form allowed her to speak, as it were, in different tongues. Further, Burney was able to respond to the preferred standards of literary tastes influenced by the recently developing discourse of the literary review, by avoiding what was criticized in other novels as an overly didactic approach. In this way Burney was able to achieve her other aims and ambitions which, as this study will show, were social and political, as well as ethical and literary.

4. Extraliterary Voices in Burney's Work

As we have seen, according to earlier critics, Burney's narrativity relied largely on what has traditionally been known as mimetic effect, and on dialogic voices which were closely attuned with those of the central narrative. Set in opposition was a raft of decentralized 'voices' articulating alternative moralities. Northrop Frye writes that a writer's impulse to write comes from previous experience of literature; and in Frye's view, the writer will 'start by imitating *whatever* he's read' (my italics). The possible influence of novels, poetry and drama, and literary reviews on Burney's work will be considered, where relevant, during the main body of this thesis. What has emerged from a brief discussion of novelistic dialogue fashioned by some of the writers cited by Burney is that her responses and reactions to the formal and thematic features of their work were mediated by her engagement with such issues as gender, class and nationhood. Thus it is clear that Burney engaged with wider discourses and debates too, incorporating features into her dialogue which drew on both literary and what Bakhtin has described as 'extraliterary genres', the genres of everyday life and ideology. Citing Bakhtinian theory of

⁴⁹ Richetti, *The English Novel in History*, p. 198; Jane Spencer questions assertions that the majority of novels in the late eighteenth century was written by women: see 'Women Writers in the Eighteenth-Century Novel' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. by John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 212-235 (p. 212).

‘extraliterary’ strata, Michael Macovski has developed the view that ‘literary characters interact not only with individual voices but also with other discourses themselves – political, religious, and historical’. This is a useful supposition for my thesis which argues that Burney harnessed the language of literary and non-literary discourses, not merely to create highly individualized speaker idiolects indexing moral value, but to raise questions about the ownership and use of the discourses themselves.⁵⁰ One of Burney’s achievements was dialogue which was emblematised and stylized, yet at the same time highly natural and convincing, features which were commended by many contemporary reviews.⁵¹ In this respect, and on the levels discussed earlier, Burney’s use of novelistic form was indeed innovative, fulfilling her own stated intention in the preface to *Evelina* that ‘however zealous [.... her] veneration of the great writers [...] mentioned’, she did not presume ‘to attempt pursuing the same ground’ (7).

The methods she employed to accomplish this will be a primary focus in this study.

Monika Fludernik’s work on narratology is of interest here. Fludernik’s study of the representation of speech and thought in prose fiction has led her to revise the term ‘realism’ in literature, defining it as ‘a mimetic representation of individual experience’. In Fludernik’s theory, mimesis is no longer purely to be associated with notions of author representation or, as in Macaulay’s and even Bloom’s conception, mimicry. Mimesis is to be treated as the illusionary projection of signs, the meaning of which the reader ‘recuperates’, by employing knowledge gleaned from real-world experience; such knowledge also includes awareness of genres, and epistemic traditions.⁵² A main strand of my argument rests on the supposition that Burney used contemporary prescriptions about language and conversation, confident that her readers could recuperate their significance; but Burney used such semiotics with radical intent. Sharing a central tenet of Romantic thought, that moral integrity and ‘truths’ are not merely to be found in the socially privileged, Burney, like Wordsworth, centralized the dialects of her socially inferior characters in order to foreground their moral integrity. However, Burney went further, in that she emphasized the *decentralized* features of the speech of her more affluent characters to highlight their moral marginality. In this way, she was able to confront reader expectations even while she was making use of them.⁵³

Thus Burney supposed that her readers shared, or were aware of, certain assumptions – that they subscribed to a contractual ideology, and to some extent were part of a collective

⁵⁰ Northrop Frye, ‘The Singing School’, in *The Educated Imagination* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1964), pp. 35-58 (p. 40); Mikhail Bakhtin, ‘Epic and the Novel’ in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, repr. 2004), pp. 3-40 (p. 33); Michael Macovski, *Dialogue and Literature: Apostrophe, Auditors, and the Collapse of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 3-4.

⁵¹ See *Gentleman’s Magazine* 48, September 1778, p. 425 which notes the naturalness of Burney’s dialogue in *Evelina*, commending her knowledge of ‘such characters as occur in the world’; and the *British Critic* praises *Camilla* for its truthfulness and consistency of characters of the ‘higher stamp’, distinguishing them from mere caricatures: see 8 November 1796, pp. 527-536, p. 528; see also review of *Cecilia*, *New Annual Register* 3, 1782, p. 247; and review of *Camilla*, in *Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal*, 21, September 1796: pp. 157-162, p. 156 and p.163 (hereafter referred to as *Monthly Review*).

⁵² Monika Fludernik, *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 26. Fludernik’s earlier work on speech and thought is in *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction: The Linguistic Representation of Speech and Consciousness* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁵³ Andrew Elfenbein has discussed the disruptions of expected grammatical norms in relation to Jane Austen’s characterization in ‘Romantic English’; but Burney’s aligning standard and polite forms with moral integrity is more ranging than Austen’s characterization: Austen’s fiction, for example rarely features the direct speech of servants.

training about language and social communication. Occasionally, contemporary discourses on language resonate in the novels, as when *Evelina* rejects Sir Clement Willoughby's overtures with a judgement of his language, and Mr Villars issues a warning about him, based on his conversation.⁵⁴ In the main, however, they occupy an invisible space which we might describe as the reader's contractual (or constructed) mind. This has implications too for assumptions Burney may have had about the literary experiences of her readers. By the time Burney published her first novel, the form was well enough established for her to rely on the ability of her readers to decipher 'other textual signals that can be found in the narratives'.⁵⁵ Readers would have been familiar with more overtly didactic paradigms, or at least with such models of august or witty authorial presences as discussed earlier. Burney's tendency to withhold judgement may indicate her confidence that her readers could supply the judgements themselves. As Chapter 2 will demonstrate, Burney could base such assumptions on dominant contemporary attitudes to language, a major outcome of which was the formation of a notion of correctness linked to aesthetic and ethical judgements.⁵⁶

Indeed, Burney's foregrounding of spoken interactions for instructive purposes exploited eighteenth-century mainstream views about the powers of conversation as well as contemporary and traditional educational practices. The role of conversation in securing a civilized and moral society was a central tenet of prominent moral philosophers and has come under increasing scrutiny. For example Stefan Uhlig and Amanda Dickins have discussed the belief in the improving properties of conversation evident in the work of Locke and Hume, Uhlig tracing the dissemination of such ideas in eighteenth-century periodical essays. Such precepts were also rendered in less abstract terms in conduct works; Michael Curtin has linked conduct ideas to the principles of the Christian tradition and to Evangelism and, as Barbara Taylor has observed, the writings of Fordyce and Gregory, 'were a key route by which new moral-philosophical discourses reached general audiences'.⁵⁷ Some studies of conduct literature for men and women, have considered how these discourses were disseminated in literature. Kathryn Sutherland has argued that writers like Maria Edgeworth and Hannah More used conversational interchanges in their novels as 'well-scripted tutorials' so that readers, even children, can learn the 'interdependence of subjectivity and society'; and Michèle Cohen examines domestic, informal conversations as well as conversational models in educational books to explore how conversation came to be 'perceived as an educational mode'. Even grammar books published in the second half of the eighteenth century included question and answer sections, replicating conversations

⁵⁴ Mr Villars warns Evelina against Sir Clement Willoughby, 'whose conversation and boldness are extremely disgusting' (46); Evelina tells Willoughby 'I am both unused and averse to your language and manners' (34).

⁵⁵ Monika Fludernik, *Introduction to Narratology*, trans. by Patricia Häussler-Greenfield and Monika Fludernik (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 108, where Fludernik draws on the work of Ansgar Nünning.

⁵⁶ Scholars have discussed contemporary debates relating to language and mind: see Stephen K. Land, *The Philosophy of Language in Britain: Major Theories from Hobbes to Thomas Reid* (New York: AMS Press 1986); and to class and the qualities of mind: see Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

⁵⁷ Stefan H. Uhlig, 'Improving Talk? The Promises of Conversation', in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation*, ed. by Halsey and Slinn, pp. 1-19; and Amanda Dickins, 'An "Intercourse of Sentiments" and the Seductions of Virtue', *ibid.*, pp. 20-39; Michael Curtin, 'A Question of Manners: Status and Gender in Etiquette and Courtesy', *The Journal of Modern History*, 57. 3 (1985), 395-423 (p. 401 and p. 407); Barbara Taylor, 'Feminists versus Gallants: Sexual Matters and Morals in Enlightenment Britain', in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 30-52 (p. 32).

which the teacher might have with the pupil. Some philosophical works privileged women as especially fitted for conversation, their powers of sympathy being seen as ideal prerequisites for fostering civilized, sociocentric communities. Such recognition of women's aptitude for language and conversation sanctioned women's participation in instructive processes.⁵⁸ As this study will demonstrate, Burney's decision to write so much dialogue into her novels, and to shape it for morally instructive as well as fictionally functional purposes, reflects cultural developments which formed the background to her writing. As this study will demonstrate, Burney's engagement with the languages and forms of extraliterary discourses connected her to debates which included philosophical discussion on identity, selfhood, sincerity, and authenticity; sociopolitical commentaries on sensibility, politeness and emulation; and over-arching debates on class, gender, and civic virtue. Such areas of inter-connectedness will be explored in the chapters which follow, and will be revisited in my conclusion.

5. Categorization in this Study

In their introduction to the 2008 study of conversation mentioned earlier, Halsey and Slinn wrote that we still 'currently lack a satisfactory theory and vocabulary' to describe the inter-relatedness of 'conversational forms, concepts and practices'.⁵⁹ My thesis challenges this supposition. First, I propose that such vocabulary exists. Thus, drawing on a renewed 'linguistic turn' in approaches to literature, this study employs terms and makes use of research and methodologies from various fields in Linguistics. Where appropriate, I shall employ grammatical analysis based on the systems laid out by Geoffrey Leech, Margaret Deuchar and Robert Hoogenraad, or the frameworks used to deconstruct verbal interaction, as illustrated in the works of such modern linguists as Deborah Cameron. Second, I aim to fuse concepts from literary and linguistic theory for the close analysis of Burney's stylization techniques. An example of the appropriateness of this hybrid approach is evident in the insights yielded when modern politeness theories are combined with a discussion of Burney's narrativity. Modern models of politeness foreground the goals of the speaker in an interaction, but recognize that accommodations have to be made for the needs of the listener. This duality of purpose accords with Burney's narrational focus. The centre of consciousness in Burney's novels is the female protagonist. Although narration highlights the protagonist's reflections and her own awareness of self, it tilts the axis of reader attention, to invite a consideration of the other interlocutor; and this is often presented through the central consciousness of the narrative. So the narrative invites us to read with a double eye, taking in the

⁵⁸ Kathryn Sutherland, 'Conversable Fictions', in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. by Paula Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 399-418 (p. 410); Michèle Cohen, "'A Proper Exercise for the Mind': Conversation and Education in the Long Eighteenth Century", in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation*, ed. by Halsey and Slinn, pp. 103-127 (p. 105); for other discussions of conduct works and literature see Patricia Meyer Spacks, 'The Dangerous Age', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 11.4 (1978), 417-438; Richetti, 'Voice and Gender', pp. 263-272; and Lawrence E. Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere in Early Eighteenth-Century England', in *Textuality and Sexuality; Reading Theories and Practice*, ed. by Judith Still and Michael Worton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 100-115.

⁵⁹ *The Concept and Practice of Conversation*, ed. by Halsey and Slinn, p. x.

narrational pointers concerning the protagonist, but also the protagonist's awareness of the views of others. Through the filter of the central consciousness then, the reader becomes aware of the self-consciousness or 'face' of secondary and minor characters, and to experience the protagonist's need to accommodate their needs of politeness. Thus no matter how comic or reprehensible the character, the heroine must always behave with politeness.⁶⁰ This kind of fusion of linguistic and narrative theory approaches opens up illuminating ways of discussing what Fludernik has termed the 'experiential' nature of narratives; analysis of the experiential narratives of Burney's work leads to conclusions that her way of representing the interplay of multiple consciousnesses anticipated developing ideas about social interaction.⁶¹ Throughout my study, I draw on narrative theory as developed by different writers, the terminology employed being largely self-explanatory, unless needing footnoted clarification. The linguistic approaches outlined above are employed to analyse the novels' dialogue, revealing such heteroglot features as polyphonic tones, registers, and allusions to other discourses. In the main, I employ an eclectic mixture of linguistic approaches, with the intention of opening up new ways of reading and discussing Burney's fictionalized conversations, and of considering such narrational aspects of Burney's work as authorial presence, focalizations, and disjunctions between narrational voices and dialogue.

Chapter 1, therefore, highlights the relevance and usefulness of modern day linguistic theory and research. Without wishing to 'minimize crucial differences between ourselves and writers who suddenly seem relevant' to modern readers, Chapter 1 nevertheless draws together some current philosophical and sociolinguistic ideas and eighteenth-century theories of politeness, ethics and aesthetics, arguing that many modern propositions can be traced to earlier theories of modernity.⁶² Amanda Vickery has observed that 'only an antiquarian would limit analysis entirely to the historical actors' own conceptions of events, but historians must give these conceptions very serious consideration to avoid the most crass anachronism'.⁶³ In recognition of the validity of Vickery's timely warning, Chapter 1 focuses on dissimilarities too, reflecting on the different worldview of a woman writing at the end of the long eighteenth century, and considering how Burney's worldview may have informed her work. In particular, this chapter discusses eighteenth-century and modern-day approaches to identity and personality, as well as to the expression of identity and self through social interaction. Covering broad debates about politeness as a potential foil as well as an aid to social harmony, this chapter also explores theoretical ground especially relevant in the final two chapters of this study.

Four further chapters contain the body of discussion in this thesis. Each begins by considering contextual factors relevant to the chapter, followed by analysis of speech styles

⁶⁰ Evelina lacks this social knowledge and laughs in the face of Mr Lovel, learning afterwards the dangerous consequences of so impolite and unsympathetic an act.

⁶¹ Fludernik posits that psychological states are effected by techniques of narrative; states of mind or feeling are foregrounded above events; such techniques allow the reader to share the experience or consciousness depicted, as it is depicted: see *Introduction to Narratology*, p. 109; Fludernik makes experientiality central to her theory in *Towards A 'Natural' Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996): see especially pp. 15-18.

⁶² William Keach, 'Romanticism and Language' in *The Cambridge Guide to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 95-119 (p. 95).

⁶³ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, paperback edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 10.

represented by case study samples in the novels, briefly compared to other eighteenth-century writers as appropriate. In his discussion of attitudes to language in the eighteenth century, Jon Mee observes that language is ‘a crucial index of individual, social and national identity’. As identities are multi-faceted, categorization in my study is difficult.⁶⁴ It has to be accepted therefore that there will be a degree of overlap in the way Burney’s characterizations are considered, though no hierarchy is intended by the order of chapters within the whole study. At the centre of these four chapters are the novels’ deviant characters – characters presented as falling outside consensual codes of behaviour or belief systems. These characters have been selected because they offer clear examples of the schematization of dialogue at work in the novels, in that they help define the central speech varieties, and because they indicate Burney’s desire to put pressure on critical expectations that the novel be limited to models of virtuous behaviour, presenting hegemonic values.⁶⁵

Chapter 2 is a substantial chapter, which begins with the premise that in common with other periods, language was loaded with political freight during the long eighteenth century. The chapter will therefore begin with an overview of the process by which language varieties and conversational styles became stigmatized. This overview will highlight how a central dialect, based on a southern, educated variety, emerged as the preferred norm; how this process marginalized regional and colloquial varieties; and how it bifurcated language types along class lines. Class issues are therefore the main focus of the analysis in this chapter, which proposes that by making spoken language central to her characterization and moral purposes, Burney mediated prominent contemporary debates about social stratification developed across a range of discourses. Thus Burney’s conception of her role as an author was neither as apolitical nor as conservative as her public self-representations suggest. This chapter therefore proposes that Burney’s novels confront the abuse of power, and that they expose how power works through language, disseminating its values through the willing members of different ranks. Drawing on modern social network theories, this chapter selects characters from different networks in the novels, to examine how the dialogue of fashionable and pretentious figures is used to highlight similarities in moral values.

Chapter 3 explores how Burney’s novels mediate mainstream ideas relating to the speech and behaviour of men and women, and begins by exploring the nature and formation of prevailing norms during the latter part of the long eighteenth century. Examining the dialogue of a selection of characters, this chapter argues that the deviation from expected gender norms signals moral deviation of varying degrees, but that Burney’s handling of such potential transgressions is complex and, in some instances, sympathetic. I shall demonstrate the heteroglot forces at play in the dialogue of such characters, and in particular, how Burney’s characterization intervenes in contemporary gender debates. Further, as Burney’s act of authorship itself intervenes in such discourses, her aberrant characters might be read as the site of her own

⁶⁴ Jon Mee, ‘Language’, in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, reiss. 2009), pp. 369-378 (p. 369).

⁶⁵ See for example Johnson, *Rambler* 4, in *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, new edn, 12 vols (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1810), iv, 20-26.

perceptions of herself as a writer, and of her awareness of the professional and personal choices which she felt compelled to make.

Chapters 4 and 5 work together, and examine how Burney's novels intervene in dominant codes of politeness, questioning the extent to which politeness is self-regulating, and whether it can be taken as a reliable indicator of sociocentric engagement. In both chapters I shall argue that while promoting politeness as a preferred model of social interaction, Burney's novels reveal the flaws at the heart of some of its conceptualizations of communication, especially as they impact women. Nevertheless, these chapters argue, the novels present deviations from norms of politeness as crucial to the developing subjectivity of the heroine, and as such can be seen to contribute to contemporary debates concerning the autonomy and freedom of women. In Chapter 4, I shall examine how the novels question the equation of politeness, sympathy, and moral virtue with men of a particular rank. Further, I propose that by focusing on women's responses, the novels explore the extent to which women were free to share such proposed civic freedoms as liberty of speech. Focusing particularly on politeness as described in the influential work of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, as well as drawing on modern-day theories of politeness, impoliteness and co-operation, this chapter examines dialogue which violates such rules in pursuit of sincerity of feeling, and the pursuit of a sociability dominated by adherence to freedom of speech. Chapter 5 extends the discussion to Burney's depiction of borderlines of politeness which are difficult for social groups to define. Such speech may exploit courtesy rules in order to deceive, to be archetypally Chesterfieldian, overly formal, or too easy and familiar. In addition, this chapter returns to the way Burney's fiction engages with the issue of class, exploring the consequences when whole strata of society are excluded from systematized politeness – seen by some as contingent with education. This focus on the lower orders is also part of the novels' engagement with notions of innateness, allowing their depictions to explore whether moral predilections are inherent, or predicated on particular systems of behaviour instilled by education.

Chapter 1

‘Scaffolding and Architecture’: Self, Social Sympathy, and Speech

The pairing of moral and aesthetic taste, as it applies to conversation, is central to Burney’s technical and ethical purposes. This chapter explores Burney’s understanding of moral character, how character, in the novel, could be evaluated in terms of an authentic, deep self and performed social identity, and how far selfhood and identity were regarded as being formed in fictionalized social environments. These questions relate to the intellectual conditions of Burney’s work, and particularly to her fictional constructions of conversation. Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers focused on the individual, and concerned themselves with issues relating to personal autonomy, and morality, the nature of society, and the responsibility of the individual within it. Significant areas explored related to the egocentric or sociocentric nature of humankind, generated by classic interest concerning the nature of goodness, or how to live the good life – described by the modern philosopher, Charles Taylor, as concerning ‘what it is good to be’, and ‘moral intuitions which [...] are so deep we are tempted to think of them as rooted in instinct, in contrast to other moral reactions which seem very much the consequence of upbringing and education’.¹

To some extent later scholars have revisited and theorized concepts which eighteenth-century writers and thinkers also explored, earning some the criticism that their work is based on ‘truisms’, which ‘have been made available to us for ages by essayists and novelists’. Nevertheless, such criticism highlights the value of the work of modern theorists for the study of literature even while it tries to undermine them.² This chapter therefore outlines some relevant eighteenth-century debates and recent theory, correlating ideas where appropriate, and explaining terms of reference pertinent to this study. This commentary will be accompanied by discussion of how such ideas are manifest in Burney’s novels. Thus it is hoped that such a commentary might illuminate discussion in later chapters, without further copious explanations.

¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 1 and p. 5.

² This criticism was levelled at Erving Goffman’s work by Frank Cioffi, in his Royal Institute of Philosophy lecture of 1987, cited in a review of Goffman’s work: Tom Burns, *Erving Goffman* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 2.

1.1. Morality and Motivation: Questions of Innateness, Authentic Selfhood, and Identity

Like the work of some of her contemporaries, Burney's novels mediate eighteenth-century debates relating to morality, the formation of an authentic self, and the performed nature of social identity.³ Burney's private letters reveal her belief in the existence of authentic character: commanding the Paston letters to her sister, Burney praised the 'authenticity' of their 'unstudied communication'; later, Burney condemned the flirtations of an acquaintance, Miss Port, musing on the disjunctive nature of her character, of the art and disguise instilled in her since birth, resulting in a 'semblance so perfect, with an interior so full of flaws!—'⁴ However, elsewhere in her letters, as in her novels, Burney condemns those who express themselves freely, or fail to conform to socially created ideals of behaviour. As with her novels, Burney's letters offer numerous depictions of social interactions, exploring the conundrum created by pressures to accommodate cultural expectations while preserving integrity, and maintaining a sense of authentic personality.

The twentieth-century socioanthropologist, Erving Goffman, was also interested in the interplay of the requirements of social structures and the behaviour of the individual.⁵ In his early work, he displayed a belief in universal human qualities, in so far that he seemed to suggest that the individual is 'programmed' to be social, and as such, is predisposed to be constructed by society to perpetuate the needs of society. Goffman argues that people are everywhere the same, in spite of cultural differences, and that members of societies should be encouraged to be self-regulating participants in social encounters; through ritual and other means, the individual learns how to have feelings attached to a sense of self, a self expressed through face, and to possess consideration and tact.⁶ Thus Goffman posits that people are predisposed to receive social teachings which regulate the ego, or the self, in order to create a regulated society. But in this chicken and egg conundrum, Goffman does not resolve the issue of why individuals need to be

³ For example, Henry Mackenzie's novel, *The Man of Feeling* (1771) has been located 'explicitly within a mid-eighteenth-century tradition of fiction and philosophical writing which takes as its subject the state of human nature', *The Man of Feeling*, ed by Brian Vickers, with an introduction by Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave, new edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. x; published a year before Burney's first novel, Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné* (1777) resembles Rousseau's *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) in title and focus; published in the same year as *Camilla* (1796) Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* begins with an epigraph quoting Rousseau, guiding a reading of a work which also draws on the work of Claude Adrien Helvétius and William Godwin; in *Camilla* the story of Eugenia's classical education to prepare her as a wife for her cousin engages with Rousseau's ideas on the education of women; such a trope is employed much more specifically in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), where the story of Hervey's infatuation with Virginia St. Pierre is explained by his reading of Rousseau: 'charmed with the picture of Sophia', Hervey forms 'the romantic project of educating a wife for himself'; in the same work, Belinda's moral development is aided by her reading of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759); see *Belinda*, edited by Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, reiss. 1999), p. 362 and p. 228; for a discussion which links Burney's first two novels with David Hume and her final two novels with Adam Smith, see Joe Bray's first chapter, in *The Female Reader in the English Novel*, pp. 28-57.

⁴ Letters dated 9th February and 4th November 1787: see *CJL*, II, 74 and 273-274; I am very grateful to Stewart Cooke for drawing my attention to these references.

⁵ The main focus of much of Goffman's work was the 'microsociology' of social interaction, predominantly in American society from the 1950s to the 1970s: his methodology was ethnographic study and observation of social interactions; for an overview of the impact of Goffman's work on later scholars see the revised introduction in *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice*, ed. by Richard Watts, Sachiko Ide and Konrad Ehlich, 2nd rev. edn (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005), pp. xi-xlvii.

⁶ Erving Goffman, 'On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction', *Psychiatry: Journal of Interpersonal Relations*, 18.3 (1955), 213-231; repeated in *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour* (New York: Pantheon, 1967), 5-46 (p. 44); references will be to the 1967 edition.

taught to have consideration if they are innately sociocentric, nor how this innate sociability might fare, if the environment does not draw it out. Eighteenth-century philosophers grappled with similar questions, concerning the relationship between self and other, ‘self’, incorporating a sense of the selfishness of ego as well as the nature of identity, and ‘other’ relating to an awareness of alterity – an individual’s capacity and level of desire to identify and sympathize with another. Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and subsequent thinkers described as ‘the moral sense school’, whose work Burney read and admired, formulated many of their ideas in response to the arguments of Hobbes and Mandeville. The moral sense thinkers rejected the robust individualism supported by the work of Hobbes, and the notion that private vices are public benefit (Mandeville). In particular, Shaftesbury argued that morality could only exist in a social context, posing the question, how could one exercise one’s morality if alone?

The response of Shaftesbury to the views advocated by Hobbes concerning individualism and society, appealed to the notion of the moral sense. In the view of Hobbes, developed in *Leviathan*, man is brutal and motivated by self-interest, following consensual rules only to prevent mutual destruction. In *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, Shaftesbury emphasizes man’s capacity for selflessness, and his tendency to balance selfish impulses with sentiments of generosity towards others, in order to pursue the good life. Such sentiments, according to Shaftesbury, are innate, and guide an individual who is tempted by the impulse for self-preservation to preserve the higher unity – the community, or the species. Thus, Shaftesburean optimism proposed that the truly moral person was naturally in tune with, and able to commune with his or her neighbours. In addition, Shaftesbury posited that man is endowed by nature with a capacity for reflection, which allows him or her to recognise, admire and approve of the beautiful in other people’s thoughts, motives and actions; a reflectiveness which facilitates private contemplation of his or her own life. By studying what is right and beautiful, individuals can cultivate and refine their perceptions further.

Shaftesbury’s views on innateness were largely in response to Locke’s critiquing of such a concept when he claimed that there was no consensus about morality or even about the existence of God. Frederick Charles Copleston has argued that Shaftesbury’s ideas of innateness, based on Aristotelian theory, are not incompatible with Locke’s rejection of it, concluding, with respect to Shaftesbury, that moral ideas are ‘connatural’ rather than ‘innate’. However, according to Isabel Rivers, Shaftesbury’s objections were as much to Locke as to Hobbes, especially about revealed religion; and according to Daniel Carey, ‘The challenge facing Shaftesbury and Hutcheson was to undo the damage of Locke’s argument [...] and to restore unifying norms in the territory of ethics and religion’.⁷ For Shaftesbury then, man was possessed of an intrinsic

⁷ Copleston reads Shaftesbury as defining human nature as one where ‘ideas of moral values inevitably arise’, not because of innateness in the way which Locke understood it, ‘but because man is what he is, a social being with a moral end which is social in character’: see *A History of Philosophy*, 9 vols (London: Burns and Oates, 1947-1975), ‘Hobbes to Hume’, v (1959), p. 172; Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, pp. 89-91; Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond*, Ideas in Context Series, 74 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 2.

goodness expressed through a social system which helped him reflect on the goodness of others.⁸ This notion was taken up and debated by influential thinkers of the Enlightenment who, according to Robert E. Norton, focused on morality in order to ‘fulfill [sic] the practical dictates of the Enlightener’s role by helping to promote a greater level of virtuous conduct in society at large’.⁹ As we shall see, Burney’s novels engage with such questions about the role of the individual and society, and about ways of promoting ‘virtuous conduct at large’. In particular, her choice of young women as protagonists, draws attention to the role of women, thus intervening in the largely androcentric theorization of prominent thinkers such as Shaftesbury.

Francis Hutcheson shared the view that man has *natural* and disinterested feelings of benevolence which guide his acts, and an innate ‘moral sense’ which guides his moral judgements and promotes pleasure.¹⁰ However, although Hutcheson took up Shaftesbury’s ideas relating to the moral sense, he disassociated it from aesthetics and rationality, and associated it with the soul. Hutcheson’s influence on his pupils, Adam Smith and David Hume can be seen in their attempts to provide naturalistic explanations of morality. Both focused on sympathy. Hume saw sympathy as a propensity to share the feelings of others, arguing that ‘no quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and its consequences, than the propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclination and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own’.¹¹ He accepted that man is distinguished by a natural aptitude which allows him to recognize and approve of what is good. Further, Hume saw this aptitude (Hutcheson’s and Shaftesbury’s ‘moral sense’) as a product of reason *and* the senses, seeing reason and the sentiments ‘as necessary and complimentary correlates’.¹²

Elsewhere I have argued, in common with such critics as Betty Rizzo, that in the interaction of the heroines with their associates and lovers, Burney’s novels depict the recognition of the beautiful soul, known as the *cri de l’âme*.¹³ Springing from the aptitude for sympathy, and associated with a subject’s faculty for sentiment, the *cri de l’âme* allows the heroines to be recognized for their inner qualities, by characters who share their values, no matter their social status. Such communion of feeling reflects Smith’s ideas of sympathy, which relate to the imagination – the faculty which allows the moral individual to conceptualize the sensations of another.¹⁴ However, such identification is not total and leaves room for the thinking agent to retain autonomy; thus an individual can judge the appropriateness or propriety of someone’s

⁸ Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times*, ed. by Lawrence Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 167-172.

⁹ Robert E. Norton, *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 6.

¹⁰ Hutcheson develops his ideas throughout his work, but see, for example the observation, ‘When the *moral Sense* is thus assisted by a sound Understanding and Application, our own Actions may be a Consistent Source of our own Pleasure, along with the Pleasures of *Benevolence*’: *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, 1728, ed. by Aaron Garrett (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002), p. 78.

¹¹ David Hume, ‘Of the Love of Fame’, in Book II: ‘Of Pride and Humility’, in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1739-40, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 1888, 2nd rev. edn, by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 316-324 (p. 316).

¹² Norton, *The Beautiful Soul*, p. 52.

¹³ Davidson, *Language, Conversation, and Morality: Articulating Goodness in the First Three Novels of Frances Burney*, M. Res. dissertation, School of Humanities, University of Southampton, 2008; and Rizzo, ‘Burney and Society’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, pp. 131-146 especially p. 146.

¹⁴ Adam Smith, *The Theory Of Moral Sentiments*, 1759, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, repr. 2009), pp. 11-13.

responses by judging them against his sense of how he would react in similar circumstances. According to Smith, the individual is primarily a reflective agent who can judge himself; he has an inner prompt, a ‘spectator’, which acts like a conscience to monitor his own thoughts and actions. Like Shaftesbury, Smith perceived this facility as being social in nature, a capacity for reflectivity which relied on social intercourse in order to be activated. The moral faculty is therefore innate, relying on solitary reflection, but a reflection issuing, to a great extent, from social interaction. In many respects, then, this concept resembles the theorization of language developed in the mid-twentieth century by Noam Chomsky, who used the analogy of language acquisition to argue that human-beings everywhere are born with a capacity for both language and morality, their acquired language and moral codes varying, depending on the community into which they are born.¹⁵

During the decades in which he wrote *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), the empiricist Thomas Reid was very influential, and his ideas have particular significance for this study, not solely because his ideas relating to innateness correlate with established theories on language, but because he articulates a mainstream view of the Enlightenment that language reflects thought. As we shall see in the chapters which follow, implicit in Burney’s fiction are ideas in tune with Reid’s arguments. Reid believed that ethical knowledge in humankind is innately based, writing in his treatise that ‘the first principles’ of virtue ‘are written in [men’s] hearts, in characters so legible, that no man can pretend ignorance of them, or of his obligation to practise them [...] for nature has put this knowledge within the reach of all men’.¹⁶ In Essay VIII of his treatise, Reid wrote that we ascribe to a work that grandeur which ‘is properly inherent in the mind of the author’ (773) and when focusing on behaviour and manners, he argued that ‘the beauty of good breeding [...] is not originally in the external behaviour in which it consists, but is derived from the qualities of mind which it expresses’ (789). Thus moral qualities deriving from the states of mind which nurture them are given articulation through language, or agency through behaviour; this is a notion accepted in this thesis as underpinning Burney’s fictional dialogue, but is also the way she wished to be represented by her narrative style as a moral writer. Reid works with a concept of recognition and approbation of morality which resembles the notion of the moral sense developed by Hutcheson, and the sympathy model described by Hume and Smith, arguing that ‘innocence, gentleness, condescension, humanity, natural affection, public spirit [...] are amiable from their very nature, and on account of their intrinsic worth’ and that ‘as they are virtues, they draw the approbation of our moral faculty, as they are becoming or amiable, they affect our sense of beauty’ (792). This exploration of the sense of beauty draws on Shaftesbury’s ideas on aesthetic values: ‘We may therefore justly ascribe beauty to those qualities which are the natural objects of love and kind affection. Of this kind chiefly are some of the moral virtues, which in a peculiar manner constitute a lovely character’ (791). Formulated towards the end of the eighteenth century, Reid’s notions of ‘a lovely character’ suggest a stable

¹⁵ Noam Chomsky, *Language and Problems of Knowledge: The Managua Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 152-3.

¹⁶ Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, ed. by Baruch A. Brody (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), vii, 726; subsequent references will be provided in my main text, when possible.

character, a unitary or at least a core personality which can be recognised as possessing ‘intrinsic worth’ and unwavering beauty, worthy of approbation. As we shall see, this accords with the ‘emphasis on self’, a concept which many modern scholars see as presupposing an essential, ‘stable, unique centred self’ which negotiates the challenges of multifarious social contexts whilst accommodating the demands of an individual’s ‘collective grouping’.¹⁷ In addition, this sense of stability of character and core values accords with qualities endorsed by characterization in Burney’s novels, which centralize such qualities in the protagonists, while marginalizing and derogating the shifting or deceptive qualities of secondary figures.

In *The Making of the Modern Self* Dror Wahrman locates a new insistence on authenticity in what he describes as a crisis of identity emerging in the 1770s.¹⁸ However, belief in the authentic self was a dominant theme in various discourses throughout the eighteenth century, the insistence frequently being on the connection between speech and a variously defined interiority founded on Classical and Christian antecedents. In the mid-eighteenth century, the philosopher and linguist James Harris observed ‘that all Speech or Discourse is a publishing or exhibiting of some part of our soul’.¹⁹ As well as being loaded with Christian value denoting the essential man divinely formed, Harris’s use of the term ‘soul’ assumes the existence of a core or inner self, not necessarily fixed, which can be offered to the social world, the word ‘publishing’ connoting the revelation of a private, thinking entity. However, Harris’s use of the words ‘some parts’ puts pressure on the extent of such a revelation, suggesting that if speech only exhibits *some parts* (my italics) of the personality or essential man, other elements are left hidden.²⁰ Thus the ideas expressed by Harris offer teasing contradictions and questions, for if speech can expose and reveal, it can also conceal and deceive. As we shall see, Burney’s novels engage with such tensions, locating the heroines in a matrix of characters who both reveal and conceal their authentic personalities and inner motivations.

Many eighteenth-century thinkers formulated views in response to John Locke’s theory of the *tabula rasa*, developing ideas of self and identity in more secular terms, as constructed and many faceted. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) Locke distinguishes consciousness, ‘which always accompanies thinking’, as ‘that that makes everyone to be what he calls *self* [...] in this alone consists *personal identity*, i.e. the sameness of a rational being’. Thus

¹⁷ Recent cultural, historical and literary approaches to the eighteenth century have discussed the period as a site of the formation of a modern sense of self in relation to social identity: see for example, Dror Wahrman *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. xi, xii and p. xiii; analogies have been drawn between every-day performances and the stage or the masquerade, Wahrman seeing the final decades of the eighteenth century as the period when the modern sense of a stable self was established, Clare Brant arguing that self-representations in speech or letters provided no evidence of authenticity, but rather a self constructed of multiple identities, or ‘characters’, evolving and accommodating the needs of shifting social contexts; Andrea Henderson reminds us that the eighteenth century should not be approached as a monolithic culture, arguing that different theories of identity co-existed during the period she studies, a period which corresponds with Burney’s writing career: see Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Andrea Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity, 1774-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); see also Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Wahrman, p. xiii.

¹⁹ James Harris, ‘Concerning Morals’ in *Hermes; or, A Philosophical Enquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar* (London: J. Nourse and P. Vaillant, 1751), p. 140.

²⁰ Wordsworth addressed the issue of such hidden elements by offering the poet as the one who could see ‘into the depth of human souls’: see *The Prelude*, 1805, xii. 165: *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979).

Locke seems to equate self with identity, and proposes that remembering former states, the conscious mind, 'is the same *self* now as it was then'.²¹ In Locke's work, as in Hume's, continuity of identity is provided by the memory, though Hume went further when he wrote in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) that memory produces but also discovers identity. Memory acquaints a person with a bundle of perceptions whose relation makes up identity; perceptions change, but the memory draws attention to their continued relational value, and the causes and effects which constitute identity.²² Hume foregrounded the importance of reflection in processing memories; he also privileged feeling, seeing it as the foundation of all virtues, especially social virtues, which would facilitate the refinement of the moral individual. Feeling also became evidence of authenticity. Thus sensibility became invested with moral values, which validated feeling and, as developed by moral-sense philosophers, provided inferential access to the thoughts and emotions of another. As we have seen, Hume described this kind of sensitivity of consciousness as 'sympathy': 'the propensity we have to sympathize with others and to receive by communication their inclination and sentiments'.²³ The propensity described by Hume is an innate faculty which could be further refined. Modern discussions of sensibility recognize the primacy of consciousness and privacy which underpinned its exaltation of selfhood.²⁴ In addition, the sensible person could express his or her own selfhood whilst accessing that of another. Whereas such inferential access could be achieved by silent communion, the most effective vehicle for sympathetic communication was conversation. Leland Warren draws attention to the apparent paradoxes involved in the interdependency of sensibility and conversation in the eighteenth century, the former being private, 'more or less innate' and not possible to teach, the latter being a social act the arts of which could be a matter of instruction.²⁵ Philip Carter helps resolve such tensions by suggesting that the physical manifestations of sensibility could also be learnt and feigned, and that it is for this reason that sensibility, like politeness, came to be a victim of its own codes.²⁶ Incorporated into discourses on middle-class manners, by mid-century sensibility became a sign of class, and sensitivity, only to decline as it became clear how easy it was to fake such markers, which could no longer be trusted as representing an authentic self.

Writing at the end of the century, William Godwin, offered the radical view that 'in the course of a human life the character of the individual frequently undergoes two or three revolutions of its fundamental stamina'.²⁷ In Mary Wollstonecraft's formulation, in *A Vindication*

²¹ 'Of Identity and Diversity' in Book II, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Roger Woolhouse (London: Penguin, 1997 repr. 2004), pp. 296-314 (p. 302).

²² Hume discusses 'Personal Identity' in Book I: 'Of the Understanding', in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, pp. 251-263, especially p. 252, and pp. 259-262.

²³ Hume, 'Of the Love of Fame', in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 316.

²⁴ G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. xviii; Leland Warren, 'The Conscious Speakers: Sensibility and the Art of Conversation Considered', in *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics*, ed. by Syndy McMillen Conger (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), pp. 25-42 (p. 28); John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 16.

²⁵ Warren, 'The Conscious Speakers', p. 28 and p. 30.

²⁶ Philip Carter, 'Polite "Persons": Character, Biography and the Gentleman', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Ser. 12 (2002) 333-354 (p. 351).

²⁷ William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness*, 1793, 3rd edn, 1798, ed. by Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 104.

of the *Rights of Woman* (1792) the perpetually fluctuating individual is also gendered, a woman's early programming by associative ideas determining her to a life of 'imitation' and 'studied airs' in order to please men.²⁸ Wollstonecraft's discussion of the constructed nature of gender also exposes the performativity in social relations encouraged for both men and women by influential conduct writers such as the Earl of Chesterfield, James Fordyce and Dr John Gregory.

Wollstonecraft's repudiation of essentialism was compatible with notions of an evolving self as developed by contemporary Romantic theory: Wollstonecraft recognized that associated ideas, based on environmental factors, left their marks, but wanted both sexes to be empowered by an education to process experience by reflection grounded in reason. Nor was Wollstonecraft's focus on constructed performances incompatible with notions of a 'deep', authentic self. Indeed, we can see what Clifford Siskin has described as Romanticism's investment in the 'self-made mind, full of newly constructed depths' in Wollstonecraft's argument that educated reason privileges the subject with some agency in their response to experience, so that at any one point in a life-time, a relatively stable, autonomous self exists: 'for it is the right use of reason alone which makes us independent'.²⁹ Such ideas are reflected in the work of Thomas Reid. In the second essay of his treatise, Reid wrote that 'impressions are stamped upon the mind' as on wax or copper-plate (24), implying 'some change of purpose or will', a change he described in Essay VI as being activated by 'the moral sense, or conscience' (557). Echoing this view, and aligning herself with Humean ideas on utility, Burney associates such agency with feeling, and argues in the preface to *Camilla* that "'Tis on the bitterness of personal proof alone, in suffering and feeling, in erring and repeating, that experience comes home or impresses to any use' (8).

Wahrman may be wrong to particularize the 1770s as the moment when identity crisis emerged, for anxiety about identity and concern for authenticity existed before these years; however, there is no doubt that the revolutions of the final decades of the century would have exerted new pressures on such apprehensions. The point here is that while some late eighteenth-century thinkers were developing a view of identity being constructed and even many-faceted, others were still uncomfortable with the notion of hyper performativity, seeing duplicity as its logical correlate.

Diary entries indicate that for Burney, discovery of the inner character was vital to secure relationships. The letters recording the courtship of Monsieur d'Arblay display a similar desire to discover the authentic person in his conversations and letters, despite his faltering English; in a letter to her father, dated 16th-19th February 1793, Burney describes d'Arblay as 'one of the most singularly interesting Characters that can ever have been formed. He has *a sincerity, a frankness*, an ingenuous *openness of nature* that I had been unjust enough to think could not belong to a French Man' (my italics).³⁰ Burney's journal description of d'Arblay as one of the most 'interesting Characters that can ever have been formed' suggests that she subscribed, to some extent, to constructionist views being developed in various discourses at the end of the

²⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 67 and p. 69.

²⁹ Clifford Siskin, *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 13; Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 121.

³⁰ *JAL*, II, 19.

eighteenth century, especially when read in the context of the preface to *Camilla* (published only three years after the letter to her father). What Burney understood by the term ‘character’ is significant here. In her recent study of eighteenth-century letters Clare Brant proposes an equation between ‘character’ and social identity.³¹ However, Burney’s use of the word in her letters puts pressure on such an interpretation.

The formation of d’Arblay’s ‘character’ referred to in Burney’s February letter suggests that she used the term to describe his private self, impressed and ‘formed’ by his experiences. It is his ‘ingenuous, openness of nature’ which allows Burney to learn more about his implied interiority. It seems then that Burney is collapsing the concepts to convey her belief that in d’Arblay she has found a correlation between the outer and the inner man. Indeed, she goes further. Placing Burney’s ideas in a broader cultural context, it can be suggested that when she writes of d’Arblay’s ‘character’ and ‘nature’ she is inverting the meanings which modern studies such as Brant’s understood the terms to convey, writing of his ‘character’ to denote qualities of the essential self, impressed and affected by his life’s experiences, and of his ‘nature’ as if it is the exterior man, but an exterior divested of masks and performance, thus allowing easy access to his interiority. The vehicle for such access is his correspondence or, in this instance, his conversation. Stripped of such trappings of identity as his military role, his land, and even his language, d’Arblay must have presented an intriguing subject for a writer who had already explored such issues in her fiction. Burney’s readiness to believe in d’Arblay indicates her predisposition to the notion of an authentic, core self – whatever the terminology she chose to explain such a concept. Such a belief was not incompatible with the concept of socially performed identities, nor with the idea of a self constructed by processes of personal agency and external impressions. It was the access to an authentic self at the moment of meeting d’Arblay which interested Burney.

The premise for my thesis has been that in the *non-fictional* narratives of her journals and letters Burney does not necessarily equate speech styles with social and moral worth; and indeed, her references to d’Arblay’s ‘broken’ English, and her careful correction of his written ‘themes’ demonstrate her readiness to over-ride such features in her assessment of his personality and values. The references to d’Arblay’s sincerity and frankness must be interpreted as his willingness to impart information and opinions, but also suggest an air of honesty presented by his language, his facial expression, and by such suprasegmental features as volume, pitch and tone. Burney’s reading of d’Arblay’s ‘character’ through the pragmatics of his interaction is founded on her search for authenticity and her readiness to believe that she has experienced a communion with the fundamental man. It is possible, as Spacks’ analysis implies, that Burney idealized d’Arblay, believing that she had met a corporeal manifestation of her fictionalized reality.³² Such unity between outer and inner value is what Burney endeavoured to achieve artistically in her novels, a fictionalization of life alluded to in the letter prefixed to *The*

³¹ Brant, p. 24.

³² Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, p. 171.

Wanderer, where she writes of ‘human life’ in concrete terms, as an ‘exterior’ to ‘enwrap illustrations of conduct’ (9).

Burney’s novels offer a comfortable counter-point, and a schematized fictional experience which allows her readers speedy inferential access to her character’s interiority and moral core. Burney’s diaries, letters and novels indicate her own lasting interest in personal authenticity, a concept associated with Romantic notions of the ‘deep self’. The search for authenticity in Burney’s novels, highlighted by Doody, is seen by John Feather as ‘the hallmark of fiction throughout the century, whether in the quasi-reportage of Fielding or the letters which carried the plot and characters in the works of Richardson, Fanny Burney (1752-1840) and others’.³³ Gary Kelly sees this as a phenomenon particularly associated with the way women writers approached the form, positing that the novels of Frances Burney and others represented ‘the inward self as authentic and the external social world, controlled by aristocracy and gentry, as divided, relative, hostile to authentic selfhood’.³⁴ Such a binary – the hostile social world and the inward, authentic self – reflects a critical tendency to separate the private and public sphere which is now being revised. Burney certainly shared her contemporaries’ interest in the issue of private self and public identities, but understood the concepts represented by the terms as inter-related and complicated.

Implicit in Burney’s novels, then, is an acceptance of an innate faculty for morality open to the potential impact of experiences. Being receptive to reflection, fused with sensibility, seems to be key, and is often alluded to as a character’s ‘understanding’. Thus even in *Camilla*, the novel which fully registers contemporary concern about self-determination, the heroine and Lionel, born into the same family, with similar early experience and ethical guidance, each use their moral faculty differently, Camilla erring, self-reflecting and learning from her experiences, Lionel registering the impact of his behaviour but failing to develop sociocentric habits. So the moral faculty is seen as innate, but is not passively awaiting inscription; it is subject to individual agency as well as to external influences associated with social contact.

Also implicit in the novels is the notion of the developing self, similarly subject to receptivity and reflection; for example, when Cecilia is reunited with her childhood companion, Mrs Harrel, she finds her former friend, whose ‘understanding [was] naturally weak’ transformed by her marriage into a thoughtless socialite, ‘sucking in the air impregnated with luxury’ (33). Such implied notions relating to morality and self derive from classical ideas that people are ‘constituted by nature to receive [...] moral virtues’ the full development of which is due to habit; as we have seen, these ideas were reinterpreted by Shaftesbury, who developed the view that virtue was primarily social, by Hume and Smith, who developed the theory of social sympathy, and by Reid, who wrote that it was a person’s duty to perform moral acts, for ‘the first

³³ Frances Burney, *Evelina*, ed. by Margaret Doody (London: Penguin, 1994) pp. xix-xxiii; John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 120: Feather quotes Burney’s dates, but not those of the other writers, in this instance.

³⁴ Gary Kelly, ‘Romantic Fiction’, in *The Cambridge Guide to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran, pp. 196-215 (p. 200).

principles' of virtue 'are written in [men's] hearts'.³⁵ Linked to Shaftesbury's ideas also is the novels' tendency to present stable persons as preferred models, so that although such characters as Cecilia clearly reflect, learn and develop, there is an integrity about their developed, adult selves and the earlier personalities manifest in childhood.

In Burney's novels individuals who are reflective and sensitive to the qualities and emotions of others cannot fail but to develop social virtues and personal integrity; in those who fail to develop such qualities, egocentric propensities harden into fixed traits. Thus the fictional communities created by Burney are inhabited by characters with varying degrees of responsiveness to the ethical codes which the novels endorse. On the margins of morality are many minor characters, types whose public performances are completely self-serving, with little evidence of receptivity to ameliorating influences. Inside this centrifugalized circle of stereotypes are those who are 'pitifully plastic'. Indicating Burney's belief that the receptive personality could be 'impressed' by experience and suffering, characters like Sir Sedley Clarendel, who are touched by the loveliness of virtuous characters, nevertheless lack the psychological strength to reject the egocentric norms of their associates. At the moral centre of the novels are more stable individuals whose centralized speech styles symbolize their readiness to conform to the consensual codes of ethics and social mores. However, although Burney schematizes her use of dialogue, she complicates her accounts of the development of moral agency, exploring the negotiations and adjustments which her moral figures make, in their shoring-up of personal and social needs.

1.2. Personal Face and Social Performance

Dror Wahrman begins his chapter 'The Ancien Regime of Identity' with the epigraph, 'The World's All Face' quoted from a poem by Thomas Letchworth published in 1765.³⁶ Wahrman goes on to cite various eighteenth-century references to masquerade, visors, and character assumptions, to argue that in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, the individual was seen as possessing fluid identity which 'could be imagined as unfixed and potentially changeable', an 'absence [...] indicating a time that lacked a sense of a stable inner core of selfhood like that which will emerge at the turn of the eighteenth century'.³⁷ Quoting Sarah Knott, Wahrman argues that such an identity is a 'socially turned self', a protean self which accommodates selfish desires to the needs of context and circumstance. Such negotiations of identity can be seen to reflect the dichotomous needs which we have seen discussed in eighteenth-century philosophical treatises, which addressed the tensions at play between the needs of the individual and society, the ego and the other. Novels reflected and contributed to

³⁵ Aristotle, 'Moral Goodness', in *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J. A. K. Thompson, rev with notes by Hugh Tredennick, with an introduction by Jonathan Barnes (London: Penguin, 1955, 2004), pp. 31-49 (p. 31); Reid, *Essays*, Essay VII, p. 687.

³⁶ Thomas Letchworth, 'A Morning's Meditation; or, A Descant on the Times: A Poem', cited in *The Making of the Modern Self*, p. 67.

³⁷ *The Making of the Modern Self*, p. 168.

discussions concerning the deceptiveness of ‘the world’, articulated by Burney, for example, in the dialogue of Mrs Arlbery in *Camilla*, who anticipates Wahrman’s argument when she says ‘We are almost all [...] of a nature so pitifully plastic that we act from circumstance and are fashioned by situation’ (398). As subsequent chapters demonstrate, Burney’s novels engage closely with the notion of social plasticity, exploring the boundary between social adaptability, and shape-shifting propensities to deceive others, or for self-gain. Such mobility of self-presentation has been discussed at length in the work of Erving Goffman, whose theories are among those invoked in subsequent chapters of this study.

Goffman’s twentieth-century observations on the socially turned self relate to face and to dramaturgy. In his seminal essay ‘On Face-Work’ Goffman defined the ‘face’ in terms of an individual’s ‘image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes’.³⁸ The ‘face’ was also seen by Goffman as the site of an individual’s personal sense of dignity and autonomy, the locus of self-respect defined by a notion of the position of self in the greater matrix of society. Such concepts will be useful at certain points throughout this study for understanding the complex relationships portrayed in Burney’s novels. Goffman suggests that external events call upon an individual to maintain their own face; occasionally, events challenge one to produce a suitable face to cope with developing circumstances, an integral part of which is face-threatening behaviour. Thus the individual is a social actor, a concept Goffman develops in his later work on dramaturgy. But the social actor is part of a larger cast of players, whose individual ‘faces’ also have to be honoured and respected if social interaction is to be smooth and successful. Under normal circumstances, in an ordered society, individuals do not wish to disrupt the face of others. In ‘The Nature of Deference and Demeanour’ Goffman explores personal interaction in the context of social rules which differ from culture to culture, defined and refined by face-to-face interaction, which are, nevertheless, binding.³⁹ Such rules provide what Goffman terms ‘oughtness’ in social encounters, and, using a term of reference which echoes the language of eighteenth-century courtesy books, he describes ‘a rule of conduct’ which is to be followed, not because it is ‘pleasant, cheap, or effective, but because it is suitable or just’ (48). Goffman also attends to aberrant behaviour, broken rules of social intercourse which occur for various reasons, positing that ‘these alternatives merely add to the occasions in which rules constrain at least the surface of conduct’ (49). Further, Goffman’s description of the self-regarding speaker who has broken the rules and feels shame calls to mind Adam Smith’s notion of the spectator, a form of self-regulating ‘knowledge’ about the impact of one’s actions on others: ‘Only when his routines are blocked may he discover that his neutral little actions have all along been consonant with the proprieties of his group and that his failure to perform them can become a matter of shame and humiliation (12). Following conversational rules is a way a speaker expresses a self in a social context, a self which is largely willing to conform to consensual social norms and to underlying moral values.

³⁸ Goffman, ‘On Face-Work’, p. 5.

³⁹ Goffman also differentiated substantive rules, codified on ethical principles in laws, and ceremonial rules, encoded in etiquette: see ‘The Nature of Deference and Demeanour’, *American Anthropologist*, 58 (1956), 473-502; repr. in *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*, pp. 47-96 (p. 55).

Such articulation of common sense principles systematizes the assumptions on which moral novels of the late eighteenth century are based. The writers of such novels scrutinize social behaviour and explore the social, and frequently moral, predicaments faced by their protagonists. Locating characters in social encounters which demand that they preserve their own 'face' as well as the face of their audience, Burney went further than fictionalizing conduct strictures. It is true that she dramatized the decisions which have to be made when conforming and non conforming behaviours meet; but she used such interchanges to explore how far such behaviours represent deeper moral values, and indeed what happens when moral values collide. What makes these fictional representations especially interesting from the ethical point of view is their foregrounding of female protagonists. By positioning female speakers in problematic social and moral situations, Burney's novels heighten the difficulties of their social situations through the presentation of dialogue.

The harmony to be achieved between the needs of self and others, as recognised by some eighteenth-century philosophers, can be seen to underpin Goffman's ideas on face-work. His concept of face as constructed individually through social, verbal interaction recognises the multi-faceted nature of face-work, and indeed of face. Thus an individual's notion of self, his or her presentation and adapting of self in different social contexts, is in a constant state of readjustment, a fluidity of performance which correlates neatly with Wahrman's description of the notion of the protean self, as it was manifest in the first eight decades of the eighteenth century.

Preoccupation with speaker-identity may be seen in Goffman's influential text, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.⁴⁰ Goffman's epigraph draws attention to the surface nature of people's speech and behaviour, and represents his thesis:

Masks are arrested expressions and admirable echoes of feeling [...] some philosophers seem to be angry with images for not being things, and for words for not being feelings. Words and images are like shells, no less integral parts of nature than the substances they cover, but better addressed to the eye and more open to observation.

George Santayana, *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies* (1922)

Goffman is interested in the way speakers maintain the 'face' which they wish to present to the world, and how they interpret the face of others. Speakers 'read' what Goffman calls 'sign vehicles': conduct, appearance, and speech – especially about self; they also use 'frames': previous experience of situations and stereotypes to help them decipher the signs (13). As Brown and Levinson were to posit later, Goffman recognises the impact of context on the uses of face. Interested in intentionality, he also develops a metaphor of the stage to develop a theory relating to people's identity and to social interaction. Clothes and possessions are props; situational

⁴⁰ *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin repr. 1969, repr. 1990): this study rose out of Goffman's PhD research of the social structure and interactions of hotel life on a small Shetland island, and of the way the internal fabric of the group, and its external performance, influenced the development and behaviour of the individual; subsequent references will be provided in the main body of my text, where possible.

contexts are settings; speakers are actors who have cues and roles; there is a back-stage and a front-stage, the activity of the back-stage often being hidden and kept secret to make the front-stage performance appear effortless and slick.

Already then, it is clear how Goffman's dramaturgical approach to face theory can be useful to a study of the novel: writers like Burney create scripts and stage-manage the sets; their props function like *mises en scène* as sign vehicles for the reader; dialogue and behaviour are significant signifiers. Indeed, of especial interest to the reader can be the back-stage behaviour of characters, as novelists take us behind the scenes to see how characters behave when not on show. Studies of narratology have recognised that the mark of a heroine or hero is that she or he can be depicted alone, or can have access to spaces and therefore information denied to other characters; and the behaviour of the protagonists in these back-stage settings is invariably as good, if not better than when they are front-stage: Juliet, in *The Wanderer*, endures the indignities of life as a companion, and as a music teacher, with dignity and fortitude; and both Cecilia and Camilla experience episodes of isolation and madness, turning their emotional turmoil in on themselves, rather than outwards, on others. Other back-stage type scenarios can separate the potential heroes from the villains; Willoughby, overheard by Miss Mirvan, is disrespectful and predatory about Evelina, but Sir Sedley Clarendel, recuperating after a carriage accident, abandons the mask of the fop and is found reading 'serious' texts.

Like the novelist, Goffman is interested in intentionality, and is aware that although people expect others to play a role allocated them by society, they do not admire those who have exploitative aims. Nor do they rate those who are too conscious that their role is just a role, and their act just an act; in such instances we are apt to malign someone 'who has acted merely in order to give a particular impression, [...] a false impression' (17). So, those who do not believe in their own performances are singled out as lacking 'sincerity' by Goffman, who labels such an act as cynical 'masquerade' (29); others, who have their role allotted them by society, may nevertheless believe in it, and see it as part of their identities. The sincerity of the intent is key to how such a performance is received. The relevance of this to fictionalised characters may be seen in the responses to the publication of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740, the various parodic literary responses illustrating the feeling of some that the eponymous heroine was more calculating than the impression she created of herself in her letters. However, Goffman acknowledges that very complex pressures are at play; moving towards a constructionist view of the individual, he recognises that 'the tradition of [a person's] group or social status requires' a certain kind of expression of face, so that an individual may or may not be aware that they are behaving in a calculating way (18). As we shall see, this complicating of acts otherwise calculated to influence others intersects eighteenth-century theories relating to actors and also ideas which denigrated conscious and self-conscious behaviour in general.

The interest of Goffman and other linguists in speaker intentionality, is also evident in many eighteenth-century responses to the publication of Lord Chesterfield's letters.⁴¹

⁴¹ The edition of Chesterfield's letters used in this study is: Philip Stanhope, *Letters Written by the Late Right Honourable [sic] Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to his Son Philip Stanhope Esq., Late Envoy*

Chesterfield was criticized by many of his contemporaries for advocating (among other things) the fashioning of a self, *designed* to please others. It was the artful nature and designing motives which disturbed many readers, in a context which was increasingly encouraging natural, unartificial behaviour, uncomplicated by motives of self interest and self promotion. A central purpose of most late eighteenth-century moral novelists was to uncover and condemn pretence and calculating designs. Frequently they did so by locating their heroines in alien environments which provided ample opportunities for them to test their abilities to detect pretence. Such a need to detect pretence assumes a core reality, as discussed earlier. Frequently, the heroines are aided by others, most commonly the male protagonists who will be rewarded by their hands in marriage. The challenge for the male, mentor figures, who have to provide examples of 'polite' conduct, both in terms of eighteenth- and twentieth-century definitions, is to deal with or even uncover such deceptions without committing face-threatening acts themselves; thus heroes in such novels rarely become involved in duels. Of course the heroine must also perform such face negotiations in her own discoveries, her ability to do so being ranked higher than her actual powers of detection, since being naïve and trusting was seen as feminine. Other powerful figures therefore also appear in narratives to save both male and female protagonists from the tarnish of cynical suspiciousness or the task of revelation or punishment. Highly moral figures like Albany in *Cecilia* frequently disrupt social gatherings, and discredit the performances of the social elite. Mrs Selwyn in *Evelina* has a similar role, while Elinor Joddrel in *The Wanderer*, performs 'masquerades' herself whilst uncovering the 'acts' of others. Much of the time, such outings are effected with satirical and amusing results, as when Sir Sedley Clarendel draws attention to the socially-mobile Mr Dubster's 'bran new clothes'; or when Captain Mirvan, though morally aberrant himself, reveals the cowardly self-regard of Mr Lovel. Goffman draws attention to the function of such exposures as a 'catharsis for anxieties', and 'a sanction for inducing individuals to be modest in their claims'.⁴² When a novelist creates a character to provide such disruptions, they are performing this function, using a certain character as a sanction for one character or the condemnation of another.

As mentioned earlier, we are to judge the protagonists also as performers, gauging the sincerity of their acts in order to adjust our responses to the aberrant. The protagonists and their coterie provide relatively stable and insightful forces at the moral centres of the novels in this study, their language and behaviour acting as sign vehicles, or indices, of their moral worth. As observers, they often function as Goffman's audience, or as Adam Smith's spectator, guiding the reader in the decoding of the paraphernalia of characters' 'performances'. A complicating question, however, relates to *Evelina*, when one considers Goffman's observations on informers,

Extraordinary at the Court of Dresden: Together with Several other Pieces on Various Subjects, 4 vols, 2nd edn (London: J. Dodsley, 1774); I also refer to other publications which anthologized and adapted Chesterfield's letters: *Principles of Politeness and of Knowing the World; by the Late Lord Chesterfield, Methodised and Digested Under Distinct Heads, with Additions, by the Reverend Dr. John Trusler...* 2nd edn (London: J. Bell; York: C. Etherington, 1775); and *The Art of Pleasing; or, Instructions for Youth in the First Stage of Life, in a Series of Letters to the Present Earl of Chesterfield, by the Late Philip, Earl of Chesterfield. Now First Collected* (London: G. Kearsley, 1783): these letters are based on the 14 letters Chesterfield wrote to his nephew, published by the *Edinburgh Review* in 1774 under the title 'The Art of Pleasing'.

⁴² Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 24.

those who learn about the secrets of the team and then reveal all. Evelina is a performer, and an informer: she is allowed backstage with the Mirvans and the Branghtons, and she is the audience of their interactions; she is also frequently a silent or a seemingly acquiescing judge. Her letters to Mr Villars and to Miss Mirvan, however, tell a different story, one which criticizes Captain Mirvan as a boor, and the Branghtons as pretentious; even with Sir Clement Willoughby, she is polite and often passive, having to be told explicitly by Villars to articulate her opinion plainly, to his face. It is interesting therefore that *Evelina* did not receive the same questioning scrutiny as *Pamela*, relating to the sincerity or calculation of the heroine. Part of the explanation for this may lie in eighteenth-century snobbery. Evelina, is after all an heiress, and thus neatly sidesteps accusations of socially manoeuvring herself into Lord Orville's rank through marriage. Thus Burney could be confident that her readers shared her heroine's values and assumptions; her revelations to Villars are also revelations to the reader who has a vested interest in her as an informant. Goffman's theory provides a further explanation for the ease with which Burney passes off her heroine, for although Evelina has a moral sense and is discerning, she is also often unsuspecting, naïve and occasionally duped.

As with most of the protagonists in these moral novels, Evelina is an example of what Goffman calls 'idealization', the tendency in real life for people to present an idealized impression, 'moulded' to fit the expectations of society and to reaffirm the values of the community. In 1922, Charles H. Cooley argued that such idealization was not necessarily immoral, and Goffman quotes him in his own study, asking, 'If we never tried to seem a little better than we are, how could we improve or "train ourselves from the outside, inward?"' to argue that the idealizing of self is for the improvement of self as well as society. Noting this function in moral novels of the mid to late eighteenth century, Richetti observes that they 'are simply an intensification of the idealization of women that stretches back to the Restoration'.⁴³

In terms of presentations of conversation in fiction, we can expect such idealizations to conform to the prescriptions laid down in grammar and conduct books of the period. Such prescriptions depended largely on context, a notion which links to the modern day frame theory which posits that expectations for choice and use of language are seated in social and cultural norms. In the context of the eighteenth century the qualities which are 'performed' through this language are grounded in what Janet Todd has described as the 'sentimental construction of femininity, a state associated with modesty, passivity, chastity, moral elevation and suffering'.⁴⁴ Writers of eighteenth-century moral novels then idealized their heroines, and other characters at the moral centre of their narratives, in order to throw into better relief their deviant counterparts.

⁴³ Goffman cites Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribners, 1922), pp. 352-3; Cooley (1864-1929) was an American sociologist who developed the theory of the looking-glass self – the theory that the individual's sense of self is formed to a great extent from the processing of messages of oneself received from others; Richetti, *The English Novel in History*, p. 198.

⁴⁴ Todd, *The Sign of Angellica*, p. 4.

1.3. Modern Theorization of Politeness and Impoliteness, and Eighteenth-Century Concepts of Polite Conversation

Of particular relevance to the final chapters in this study are concepts of politeness. Eighteenth-century concepts of politeness shifted ground considerably during the century, becoming a highly contested site in its closing decades. Recent theories relating to politeness have emerged from the much broader understanding of and use of the term in the eighteenth century. Twentieth-century linguistic interest in conversational politeness is associated with the work of Robin Lakoff, Geoffrey Leech, Penelope Brown, and Stephen Levinson, whose empirical research in pragmatics searched for evidence of politeness in linguistic forms.⁴⁵ The research of these linguists has now been identified as ‘the classical approach’ to politeness, their common ground being the model developed by Erving Goffman, and the British linguist Paul Grice. The Gricean model views utterances as speech acts and gives priority to speaker intention, formulating a theory of co-operative interaction based around four maxims and the concept of implicature: the meaning suggested, if not overtly, expressed by an utterance.⁴⁶ The work of Grice, like that of Brown and Levinson, and indeed of Lakoff and Leech, was predominantly speaker-related. Developing the concept of ‘face’ from the work of Goffman, Brown and Levinson conceptualized politeness in terms of face-threat mitigation, formulating principles which were goal-directed and largely achieved through indirectness. Since the original publication of their work, however, Brown and Levinson have adapted their ideas in response to criticism, some of which expresses ‘a certain uneasiness about the rationalist, individual approach to politeness’ which may ‘account for ways in which politeness has been understood in the English-speaking world prior to the late twentieth century’.⁴⁷

Brown and Levinson have established what they hope to be accepted as universal features of polite interaction, the concepts of which will be useful when discussing eighteenth-century politeness as mediated by Burney’s depictions. These influential linguists conceptualize ‘face’ in terms of two specific kinds of desires, or ‘face-wants’ of interlocutors: ‘the desire to be unimpeded in one’s action, and not imposed upon (negative face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved (positive face). Thus they accept the ‘mutual vulnerability of face’ suggested by Goffman, and described above. In their 1987 review of their work, Brown and Levinson emphasize their derivation of three strategies of politeness, which they linked to face-needs: “positive politeness” (roughly the expression of solidarity) “negative politeness” (roughly

⁴⁵ Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics, 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, reiss. 1987); the work was reissued with a new introduction in 1987, hereafter referred to as *Politeness*, with page references supplied in the main text; Robin Lakoff, ‘The Logic of Politeness; or Minding your Ps and Qs’, *Papers from the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society* (Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1973), pp. 292-305; Geoffrey Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics* (London: Longman, 1983).

⁴⁶ Gudrun Held, ‘Politeness in Linguistic Research’, in *Politeness in Language*, ed. by Watts, Ide and Ehlich, pp. 131-153 (p. 131); Paul H. Grice, ‘Logic and Conversation’ in *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, ed. by P. Cole and J. Morgan (New York: Academic Press, 1975), pp. 41-58; see also *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 86-88, where Grice explains implicature.

⁴⁷ Researchers in various linguistic fields assert that universality is yet to be confirmed by further studies; some criticised the speaker-related focus of their work at the expense of social relationships; others criticised the goal-related focus of their theory: see *Politeness in Language*, ed. by Richard Watts, Sachiko and Ide, pp. xi-xii.

the expression of restraint) and “off-record politeness” (roughly the avoidance of unequivocal impositions)’ (2). According to Brown and Levinson, negative politeness is characterized by ‘self-effacement’, with attention to another’s desire not to be impeded (70). Eighteenth-century conduct works promoted the avoidance of negative aspects of communication by the use of such meta-linguistic features as explaining or apologizing for possible infringements, and the use of honorifics, hedges and politeness markers. Positive face is the aspect of self which wishes to be praised and valued: to have one’s interests, beliefs and possessions understood, ratified and admired. Interaction which offers praise, agreement, and positive feedback can be a way of securing positive politeness. Face-threatening acts ‘run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or the speaker’ and therefore threaten face (65). Such acts can threaten positive or negative face, and are depicted in Burney’s novels, reflecting contemporary sensitivity to the respect imbued in status labels; for example, speakers like Captain Mirvan in *Evelina*, who reject honorific nomination, impose on their audience’s self-determination as well as their understanding of their position in the social structure, and thus threaten their negative face.

Further, if the opinions of a character such as Mr Lovel are ridiculed or criticized, his positive face is threatened.

Brown and Levinson are explicit in their recognition of the demands of contexts, and note how in situations of danger or urgency, ‘normal’ strategies of politeness are waved, with no ill effects. Sociological variables affecting the interpretation of utterances include social distance between speaker and audience, and the relative power between them, based on the ranking of impositions in a given society or culture. Interaction therefore requires a ‘complex kind of reflexive reasoning about other agents’ desires’ which has to take into account relationship and context factors (1). Thus, Brown and Levinson allow for a certain amount of slippage in the effecting and interpreting of face needs, and in doing so, recognize the work of Paul Grice on conversational implicature, whereby intended ambiguities in conversation can arise to avoid offence, but offence may result from unintended ambiguities⁴⁸ Also relevant to Burney’s depictions of character interaction are the complexities intrinsic in Grice’s maxims, for as we shall see, the novels frequently present characters who speak too much, given the relationship or situational context, speak out of turn, unintentionally mislead, or intentionally withhold the truth.

Of further interest to this study, especially in the final chapters, which engage with the fictional utterances of speakers who are purposely not polite, is the recent linguistic theorization of impoliteness, defined by Derek Bousfield and Miriam A. Locher as ‘*face-aggravating in a particular context*’.⁴⁹ In the last ten years or so, there has been a steady proliferation of publications by linguists exploring the functions of face-threatening acts. Some accept Brown and Levinson’s premise relating to the mitigation of face-threatening acts being a normative

⁴⁸ In Grice’s theory of co-operation, the 4 maxims apply to truth, clarity, quantity, and relevance; he later conceded that intended ambiguity can sometimes be successful in order to save someone’s face or prevent hurt feelings – resulting in ‘conversational implicature’; Brown and Levinson’s original essay accepts that ‘Grice’s theory is correct, their model being one of ‘mutual awareness of “face” sensitivity’ together with the co-operative principle: p. 1 and pp. 5-6.

⁴⁹ *Impoliteness in Language: Studies on its Interplay with Power in Theory and Practice*, ed. by Derek Bousfield and Miriam A. Locher (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), p. 3; this may seem a truism, but it illustrates the way impoliteness studies are now moving away from the mitigation notions of Brown and Levinson’s earlier work, though still engaging with politeness principles.

feature of most speech communities; others examine speech communities (like army training corps or the speech of adolescents) in which such acts become a norm;⁵⁰ and some explore the use of conflict talk in every day circumstances, in relationships where it does not function as a face-threatening act, and therefore does not have to be mitigated. In addition, there is growing interest in the function of conflict talk in fictional texts.⁵¹ Impoliteness research distinguishes between first-order and second-order approaches. Second order approaches theorize politeness and impoliteness. First-order approaches are particularly relevant to the study of impoliteness, as they alert researchers to what the social actors themselves see as aggressive behaviour, and how such behaviour is then handled. In fiction texts, first-order indicators may be presented as being expressed by the characters themselves, especially those whom the author has invested with authority, as when Burney's Evelina tells Sir Clement 'I must insist on your leaving me; you are quite a stranger to me, and I am both unused, and averse to your language and your manners' (34). In addition, first order indicators may also be offered by the narration which, nevertheless, may be informed by other contemporary first and second-order approaches.

The nature of second order work in the context of the eighteenth century is more difficult to locate. Clare Brant has drawn attention to the disparate nature of the body of material concerned with conduct, and how difficult such texts are to classify.⁵² Nevertheless, many eighteenth-century writers consciously depicted their work as providing advice, key words being 'strictures', 'principles', 'the art', 'conduct' and 'manners'. Such works commonly aimed at the educated, and therefore the affluent or middle ranks, and largely separated the sexes as the recipients of discreet goals. Where modern linguists hypothesize universal principles of politeness, and describe rather than prescribe gendered or class-related features, eighteenth-century writers on conversation and manners tended to generalize humankind, often writing aphoristically about aspects of social life. Further, they tended to essentialize aspects of gender and class, and paradoxically, prescribed their rules accordingly. Thus works on the subject of politeness for men and women advocated different rules and principles, a feature noted by Mary Wollstonecraft in her excoriation of writers like James Fordyce in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In addition, their focus on the genteel interactions of the moneyed classes excluded a large part of the population. Conformity was therefore a key issue in works examining polite behaviour, with agreement over language and conversational styles being seen as a willingness to subscribe to a civilized and ordered society. Such a view is represented in the quotation on the title page of this study, which represents James Beattie's articulation of such assumptions: 'To speak as others speak, is one of those tacit obligations, annexed to the conditions of living in society, which we are bound in conscience to fulfil, though we have never ratified them by any express promise; because, if they were disregarded, society would be impossible, and human

⁵⁰ Jonathan Culpeper, 'Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25.3 (1996), pp. 349-367.

⁵¹ Culpeper, '(Im)politeness in Dramatic Dialogue', in *Exploring the Language of Drama: From Text to Context*, ed. by Peter Verdonk, Mick Short and Jonathan Culpeper (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 83-95; Deborah Tannen, 'Silence as Conflict in Fiction and Drama: Pinter's "Betrayal" and a Short Story, "Great Wits", in *Conflict Talk: Sociological Investigations of Arguments and Conversations*, ed. by Allen D. Grimshaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 260-279; Roger D. Sell, 'Literary Texts and Diachronic Aspects of Politeness', in *Politeness in Language*, ed. by Richard Watts and Others, pp. 109-129.

⁵² Brant, p. 61; the politeness debate is pursued in sermons, periodicals, newspapers, educational texts, and letters.

happiness at an end'.⁵³ Thus although this study recognizes that late eighteenth-century developments in politeness created nuanced responses, it accepts that consensual, normative codes existed during the years when Frances Burney wrote, that they may be identified, and used to judge the conversations presented in her novels.

Much of the eighteenth-century codifying discourse on politeness focuses on conversational interaction and is found in late eighteenth-century conduct manuals, many of which were presented for the readers to experience as a series of letters, or as theatrical scenes. Thus even in the first half of the eighteenth century, Swift's treatise on polite conversation was published as a three-act play script;⁵⁴ and many later texts followed earlier models which presented advice as a series of letters, commonly between a parent and a child. Such texts examine modes of spoken communication which continue to feature in modern-day social interactions, and which still feature as criteria to measure successful and unsuccessful conversations. For example, most eighteenth-century texts considering politeness stigmatize features seen by modern linguists as anti-social and dominating, such as floor-holding strategies, invasive questions, commands, and interruptions; further, modern descriptions of successful interaction encourage a sensitivity to the auditor in tune with eighteenth-century notions of sympathy. There are closer parallels too, as when Lord Chesterfield anticipates modern accommodation theory by advising his son to assume modes and manners to suit proper times and in proper places; and when Hester Chapone warns her readers not to push their advantage in an argument so far that their 'antagonist cannot retreat without honour', the word 'honour' mirrors the concept of negative face.⁵⁵ Specific examples of correlation between eighteenth- and twentieth-century principles of politeness are plentiful, and will be provided throughout this study. It is for these reasons that modern linguistic approaches to politeness and impoliteness, as outlined in my introduction, provide useful tools for the analysis of fictional dialogue.

* * * *

While not wishing to propose that Burney affiliated herself with any particular writer or discourse, this chapter has reviewed the multi-faceted and interconnected concepts which contributed to the intellectual and cultural climate in which she wrote. Peter de Bolla has defined a concept as providing 'something like a scaffolding or architecture which enables' a person 'to think of something else', and the scaffolding here has included some philosophical debates, discussions about language, and developments in attitudes to politeness as vehicles for living.⁵⁶

⁵³ James Beattie, 'The Theory of Language', in *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell; Edinburgh: W. Creech, 1783), pp. 233-502 (p. 269).

⁵⁴ Jonathan Swift, *A Compleat Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation, According to the Most Polite Mode and Method Now Used at Court, and in the Best Companies of England. In Three Dialogues*, by Simon Wagstaff, Esq (London: B. Motte and C. Bathurst 1738) published in a facsimile edition: *Swift's Polite Conversation. With an Introduction, Notes and Extensive Commentary by Eric Partridge* (London: Andre Deutch, 1963).

⁵⁵ Chesterfield, Letter CCXLV (30th April 1752), in *Letters III*, 295; Chapone, 'On Politeness and Accomplishments' in *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady*, 2 vols (London: H. Hughs and J. Walter, 1773), II, 93-147 (p. 99).

⁵⁶ Peter de Bolla, 'Portraiture as Conversation' in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation*, ed. by Halsey and Slinn, pp. 170-181 (p. 170).

Questions raised in the introduction to this chapter reflect De Bolla's descriptors, leading us to consider that 'something else' which contemporary concepts enabled Burney to think.

That 'something' will be fleshed out in the chapters which follow, but discussion here has offered consideration of some of the concepts which engaged Burney and underpinned her work. Burney's representation of selfhood can be understood in the context of contemporary discourses which suggested a core self, potentially stable and residual, but subject to change in response to experience. Such a core is balanced, potentially open to reflection, able to process experience, and judge propriety. Imbalance leads to evil or, to use a less religiously charged word, deviance. The self is also potentially responsive emotionally, responding to the feelings and experiences of others in a balanced way, without causing harm to self or others. Such potentially idealistic goals of selfhood are conducive to a harmonious society, for human beings are defined as social animals, whose moral qualities are generated by interaction. A human being also acquires an identity which is developed in response to his or her place in the social world. Ideally this is balanced too, so that the external trappings and labels which make up identity coalesce with internal qualities of mind. One of the manifestations of identity is language, and Burney had clearly engaged with contemporary ideas relating to central and decentralized dialects and registers; in addition, she mediated gendered ideas on politeness, and its potential for falsity and exclusivity as well as its conceptualized potential to support a civilized life.

Concepts of self and identity, of authenticity and sympathy, underscore ideas of moral qualities which are generated by interaction. Such ideas depict an innate moral faculty which has the potential to recognise what is beautiful, and what is not. Moral qualities therefore connect with qualities of mind, and the ability, or willingness to reflect. For Burney's protagonists such qualities are honed and developed during the course of the novels they inhabit, so that the internal and external action explores how 'a good life' is achieved. Charles Taylor, quoted at the start of this chapter, has described such a life as one in which the individual, seeking what it 'is good to be', demands 'the respect for the life, integrity, and well-being, even flourishing of others', demands which we 'infringe' when we harm.⁵⁷

The scaffolding of such concepts, then, allowed Burney to 'think of something else', that 'something' being the female subject and her social position, and female subjectivity developing in response to internal reflection and external action. And this action puts pressure on Burney's subjects, juxtaposing them with deviant 'alterities' which challenge their stability, and confront their values. Such oppositions enabled Burney to develop her craft as a moral writer, not purely in terms of her self-representation as an apolitical writer, but also as a writer who questions some aspects of hegemony, and even exposes them as corrupt. How Burney mediated the debates of her time while effecting characterization lauded by contemporary readers as 'natural' and convincing will be the focus of the next four chapters of this study: drawing on modern linguistic theories described earlier, these chapters analyse how Burney uses fictional speech for characterization purposes, but also to enter the dialogues discussed above.

⁵⁷ Taylor, *The Sources of the Self*, p. 3 and p. 4.

Chapter 2

Breaking Down the Barriers: Sociolects and Self-Fashioning

After the publication of Burney's third novel, *Camilla*, in 1796, she wrote to her father, reporting a conversation which she had had with the princesses, Mary and Sophia. In response to Princess Sophia's comment that 'the Writers are all turned Democrats', Burney explained that she '*all ways*' left '*Politics*' out of her work, adding, 'they were not a *feminine* subject for discussion'. This public denial of interest was to be repeated twenty years later in the dedicatory letter of *The Wanderer*, when Burney reiterated her avoidance of the 'stormy sea of politics', apparently nailing her colours to the conservative mast by repeating the notion that she 'held political topics to be [outside her] sphere' (5). In a private letter to her sister, however, Burney commented on the abuse of power, which prompted her to 'grow *Democrate* [sic] at once on these occasions!' and to confess, 'I feel always *democrate* where I think Power abused, – whether by the Great or the Little'.¹ This chapter proposes that Burney's private comments reflect the interventions she was making in her novels, and that her conception of her role as an author was neither as apolitical nor as conservative as her public self-representations suggest. Some critical approaches have recognized Burney's mediation of contemporary issues and sociopolitical debates.² This chapter reviews how language itself became a site of social and therefore political contention during the eighteenth century, and argues that by making spoken language central to her characterization and moral purposes, Burney mediated prominent contemporary debates developed across a range of discourses. In particular, this chapter proposes that Burney's novels confront the abuse of power which she derogated in her private letter, and that they expose how power works through language, disseminating its values insidiously through the willing members of different ranks.

Plotted around the adjustments made by the female protagonists to negotiate changes in their circumstances, Burney's novels reflect late eighteenth-century transformations in rural and urban societies, and engage with contemporary debates concerning what was perceived as destabilized former hierarchies. Historical studies agree that social class distinctions were pronounced in the eighteenth century, though processes of industrialization, education, and commercialization created new classes and more fluid boundaries between old class structures.³

¹ Burney's letter to Dr Burney: 6 July 1796, *JAL*, III, 186-187; private letter to her sister: November 1791: *JAL*, I, 89.

² For example, Epstein, 'Burney Criticism: Family Romance, Psychobiography, and Social History, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 3.4 (1991), 277-282, especially p. 280; Rizzo's chapter on Burney in *Companions Without Vows*, pp. 83-111, especially pp. 94-95 and p. 104; Doody, 'Burney and Politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. by Sabor, p. 106; Vivien Jones, 'Burney and Gender', *ibid.*, pp. 111-129 (p. 126).

³ Paul Langford sums up the destabilization of former certainties resulting from geographical mobility and social change in, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783*, The New Oxford History of England, 1 (London: Guild Publishing, by arrangement with Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 7; for a discussion of the view that the town was replacing the court as the meeting point of country and city, see J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 234-239, especially p. 237; Corfield notes that mid-century, Nelson described five classes: 'the Nobility, Gentry, Mercantile or Commercial People, Mechanics, and Peasantry'; see 'Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century England' in *Language, History and Class*, ed. by Penelope Corfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 101-130 (p. 101).

Urbanization transplanted people to locations where the potential for multi-group membership could be enhanced by newly fashioned identities promoted by changed circumstances. Exploring the tensions at play when the heroine enters new social circles, the novels present the heroines, and the readers, with introductions – situations where the heroine judges others, where her individuality is judged, and her autonomy challenged. Thus the novels test the mettle of the heroines by placing them in social milieux which are not only geographically removed, but also unfamiliar in terms of emotional, intellectual and moral values. The resulting sense of alienation is conveyed by the introduction of characters whose dialogue highlights their disjunction from the values represented by the heroine, values further endorsed by the main narrations. The disjunctive values examined here include those of a social elite founded on landed privilege but freed of local and military responsibility, whose younger members flocked to London or abroad in search of pleasure. Depicted as a faction whose original rights and motivating principles originate in older models of elitism (associated especially in literature with Restoration hegemony) these groups are exposed as undeserving of their positions of power, not least because they are incapable of developing enlightened virtues such as public-minded benevolence actuated by social sympathy. Further, Burney's novels explore the corrupting influence of this group, and how patterns of abusive behaviour infiltrate the newly empowered, by promising prestige and preferment. As with such writers as Hannah More, who called for a reformation in manners, Burney does not use her fiction to question authority in itself; for Burney valorizes empowered characters who perform their civic duties responsibly.⁴ Nevertheless, such presentation of different modes of authority puts pressure on automatic power, and highlights the dangers of irresponsible privilege as a model for imitation by emergent ranks.

This chapter explores how Burney's novels present colloquial speech styles in different social groups as an indicator of shared moral vacuity or even baseness, not merely in terms of content and manner, but in the grammatical structures and vocabulary choices assigned to each character. The work of such cultural commentators as Lawrence Klein and Norbert Elias, and of modern linguists like Susan Fitzmaurice and Richard Watts, foreground outcomes of calls for standardization, which made 'correction' and 'politeness' synonymous, so that central, sanctioned forms were not purely a matter of logic, analogy and precedence, but of elegance, restraint, appropriateness, and even moral delicacy. In England, such sanctioned forms were agreed over decades of public debate, and although standardization led to new exclusions and snobbery, the process itself was, in principle, democratic. As we shall see, Burney's fiction shows her to be in tune with debates surrounding standardization, and supporting democratic codifications, monitored by public consensus. Further, allocation of decentralized speech styles to characters presented as morally deviant exploits established eighteenth-century views relating

⁴ Anne K. Mellor highlights the criticism of decadent aristocratic values and the call for reform evident in much of More's work; nevertheless, as Mellor's examples show, More accepted the principle of a ruling order, providing they conformed to her notion of moral behaviour in order to provide suitable role models for those socially beneath them: see *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 18-20; in *The Culture of Sensibility*, Barker-Benfield discusses different waves of calls for reformation of male manners during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, noting that late seventeenth-century reactions to Restoration dissipation were aimed at lower ranking targets rather than confronting the authority of dissolute aristocrats: see 'The Reformation of Male Manners' pp. 37-103, especially p. 56.

non-standard varieties to unruly behaviour and loose moral codes.⁵ As recent studies by Harriet Guest and Stephen Bygrave highlight, a discursive context, which questioned former social hierarchies and demanded new criteria of stratification based on socially-turned moral value, was well established by the time Burney published her work.⁶ This chapter will argue that Burney's fiction employs ideas about language to present such newly formed hierarchies. Reconfiguring established links between language, class and morality, Burney's novels inscribe speech with moral rather than purely social signification. An aspect of Burney's work which I will return to later is its schematizing of speech which is unusual and levelling, since it promotes a view that speakers from higher social ranks are not necessarily users of aesthetically preferred varieties representing superior intellectual capacities and moral worth. Further, the schematized use of speech employed in the novels blurs the boundaries between traditional class binaries, and indicates that members of disparate groups used similar speech styles, a view which, as we shall see, was explored more radically by some late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century thinkers.

My analysis focuses on the represented speech of specific groups united by their social networks and their class. The modern linguist, Ronald Wardhaugh, observes the difficulties involved in distinguishing social classes in 'complex modern urban societies' which continue to change, noting that we are far removed from caste systems or rural societies 'favoured by dialect geographers'. The work of Lesley Milroy moves the sociolinguistic focus from social class to social networks, on the basis that networks exert the most influence on a speaker's linguistic choices, a theory currently being applied to eighteenth-century intellectual networks.⁷

⁵ Norbert Elias discusses linguistic preferences in France, developed purely because they were judged as elegant by a small social elite; Elias' study shows similar patterns of behaviour in England: see *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, 1939, trans. by Edmund Jephcott with notes and corrections by the author, ed. by Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell, rev. edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 95 and p. 428; Lawrence E. Klein, "‘Politeness’ as Linguistic Ideology in Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England", in *Towards a Standard English, 1600-1800* ed. by Dieter Stein and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (Tiel: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 31-50 (p. 43); Susan Fitzmaurice, 'The Commerce of Language in the Pursuit of Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England', *English Studies*, 79.4 (1998), 303-328, especially p. 315; and Richard Watts, 'From Polite Language to Educated Language: The Re-emergence of an Ideology', in *Alternative Histories of English*, ed. by Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill (London: Routledge, 2002), 155-172 (pp. 158-9).

⁶ In *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), Guest highlights the mid-century ideas of Lady Mary Montagu and Elizabeth Carter (p. 34 and p. 47); Lady Montagu writes in *The Nonsense of Common Sense*, No. 6, 24 January, 1738, of the private virtue and moral integrity of 'A Lady who has perform'd her Duty as a Daughter, a Wife, and a Mother' whom she venerates as much as Socrates and Xenophon'; Carter echoes the view, proposing that an old woman can be a greater ornament to human nature than a Caesar or Alexander (Carter to Talbot, 29 October 1747); Guest points out however that neither writer confronts the occupation of the different spheres evoked by such comparisons. In *Uses of Education: Readings in Enlightenment in England* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010) Bygrave shifts the focus to the second half of the eighteenth century, when he discusses how debates on education were mediated by ideas of utility, gender, and class (p. 100). Bygrave quotes Lord Kames (*Loose Hints Upon Education*, 1781) who advises tutors to instil into pupils that a man should be respected according to the good he does, that 'good' being usefulness, entitling an industrious peasant to more respect than a lord who indulges himself while his neighbours are indigent; Bygrave observes that such respect and superiority obtain so long as industrious performers do not believe they are socially superior to the aristocrat, a tenet supported by Burney's fiction, as we shall see in Chapter 5.

⁷ Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 147; Lesley Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, Language and Society, 2, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Tieken-Boon van Ostade has studied the influence of Johnson's language on his circle in 'Eighteenth-Century Letters and Journals as Evidence: Studying Society Through the Individual', in *Literature and the New Interdisciplinarity: Poetics, Linguistics, History*, ed. by Roger D. Sell and Peter Verdonk, *Studies in Literature*, 14 (Amsterdam: Rodopi: 1994), pp. 179-192; in a lecture at Southampton University, 'Reading, Writing and Print Publishing: the Elizabeth Montagu Circle in the Mid-Eighteenth Century' [4 November 2011] Markman Ellis used sociomapping techniques to illustrate Montagu's literary circle.

Sociolinguistic network theory is a useful starting-point for my study, because sociomapping of speech communities in the novels demonstrates character affiliations through real or coveted relationships, such as kinship, common interest, financial exchange, or emulation of prestige. Such networks also highlight represented zones of power in the novels, and how characters judge each other in terms of usefulness of influence rather than purely personal strengths and attributes. Thus, related characters make up the bulk of speakers under review, chosen because they constitute speech communities within the different novels, their individual versions of shared sociolects providing cohesive material for comparison. Further, as the example sociolinguistic map of characters in *Evelina* shows (figure 1) certain groups of characters in this particular novel are never actually brought together in the novel, though their displays of similarities of speech and outlook carry thematic significance.⁸

Burney's longevity as a writer places her work in a context of evolving debates about language which responded to rapidly changing political and social developments as the century drew to a close. Debates about language and conversation were also about such wider issues as social structures, thought, the individual in society and, as we shall see in later chapters, gender identities and politeness. Such debates, taking shape in Enlightenment discourses, were expanded and modified in Romantic arguments. This chapter therefore approaches Burney's novels in the context of cultural and intellectual trajectories no longer seen as discontinuous and purely reactionary.

Thus the first part of the chapter considers Burney's own views about language, and reviews the discursive context of her fiction: the controversies over colloquial but fashionable court language of the Restoration period, aspects of which persisted in spite of calls for correction allied to politeness; the ideology of standardization which attacked such colloquial forms;⁹ and the theorization of language, which allocated certain styles and features to specific social classes, but also to ways of thinking, and ways of developing moral faculties. Subsequent sections of this chapter analyse the methods employed by Burney to present colloquial speech styles. Section Two will analyse the dialogue of fashionable, elite characters, and will consider the significance of generic links with depictions of speech in Restoration drama. The third section considers characters who are presented as aspiring and pretentious, striving to convince the world of their social inclusiveness with higher ranks by emulating their behaviour and dress codes. The pretentiousness of such characters is depicted by speech styles associated with the fashionable rich rather than that of the heroines and their associates.

⁸ 'Sociolect' is a term coined by modern linguists to describe the speech characteristics of a social group. The group might be related by economic factors, or by age, race or other factors.

⁹ The term 'ideology of standardization' was coined by James Milroy and Lesley Milroy, *Authority in Language: Investigating Language Prescription and Standardisation* 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 36.

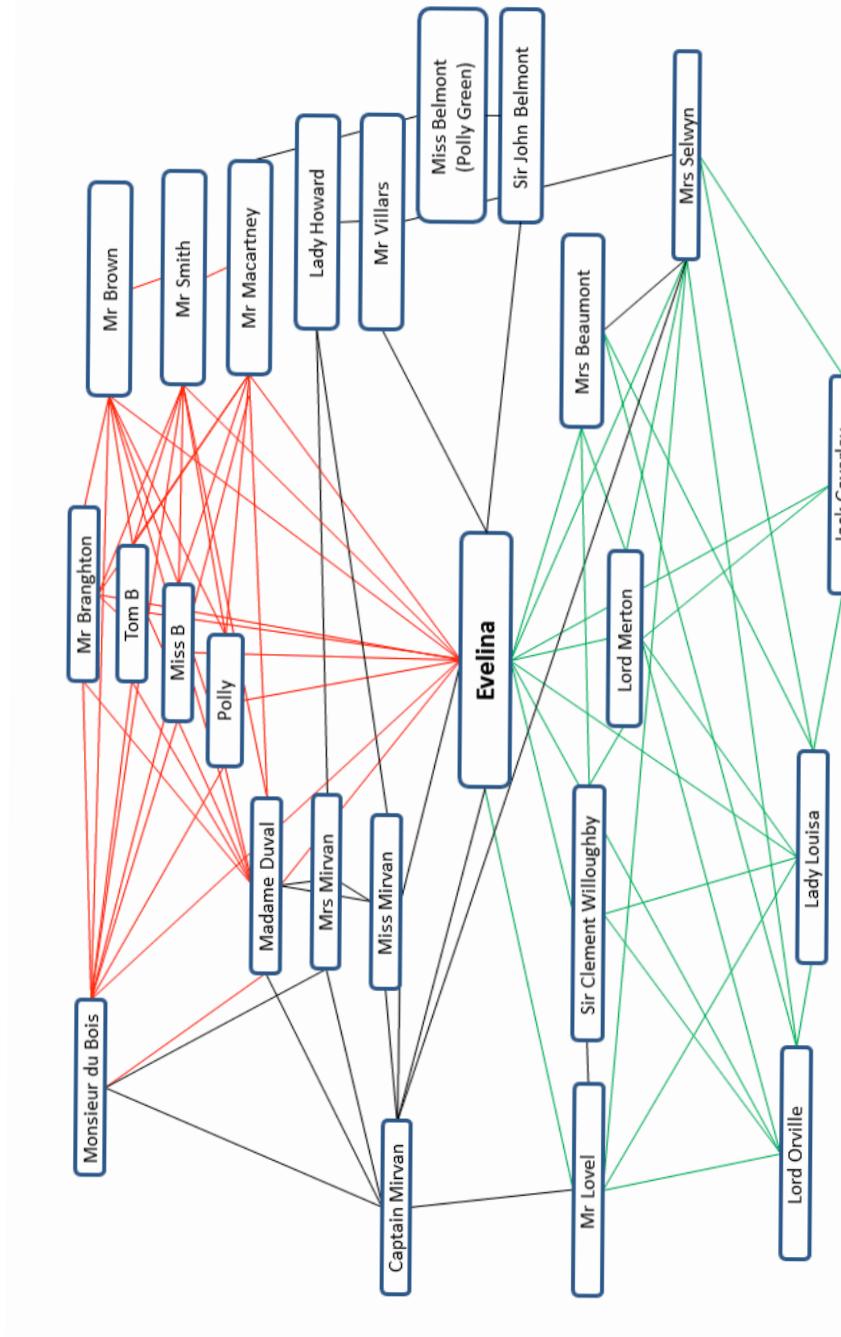


Figure 1. Sociogram of Characters in *Evelina*

2.1. Frances Burney's Fiction and the Context of Eighteenth-Century Linguistic Theories

In this section I discuss language which distinguished court style during the Restoration, and propose that the dialogue of fashionable characters in Burney's fiction displays similar features. Such a style of speech, imbued with the confident privilege of the past, is presented as uncooperative and therefore unsocial. I also propose that Burney's aspiring characters (located in the mercantile and commercial ranks) use similar language forms to those employed by the fashionable elite. Considering historical factors and literary conventions which might have influenced Burney's depictions, I suggest that linguistic choices were consciously made to develop political and ethical themes. Further, using the negative verb form 'a'n't' as a case study to illustrate colloquial language features, this section considers how such archaic forms were assigned to both aristocratic and aspiring characters. Thus this section will argue that Burney was one of the first fiction writers not to homogenize the speech of affluent, empowered characters, to foreground convergent features of speech in aspiring characters, and to highlight similarities in moral codes in order to confront the abusive models of power threatening the individual and society.

Throughout her diaries and letters, Burney records her own responses to people's language.¹⁰ Although she did not allow people's use of language to dominate her judgements of them, as she aged she acquired a reputation in her family for being strict about formalities and correct usage.¹¹ Discussing social varieties in the eighteenth century, the linguist Manfred Görlach notes that 'the correlation between social status ('rank') and speech in the 18th century came to be more closely connected with grammatical correctness and situational appropriateness than ever before'.¹² Burney herself adapted her language depending on context, and was anxious that her published work should be accurate. As indicated in the introduction to this study, Burney criticism has long recognized her skills in characterization through dialogue, highlighting her indebtedness to the style of influential figures like Dr Johnson, as well as the impact of his ideas on her notion of correct language. But Burney lived and worked in a climate of anxiety about language, in its spoken and written form.¹³ Thus her attitudes to language must be understood in terms of wider, discursive frameworks in which they were constituted, which incorporated but went beyond notions of correctness.

¹⁰ See *Frances Burney, Journals* (2001): Burney considers someone's conversation as 'so original and so comprehensive' (August 1778), p. 92; as 'precise' and 'rather posing' (24 December 1782), p. 194; or as worthy of ridicule (26 April 1780), p. 152; in a letter dated 11 January 1779, she reproduces and mocks Sheridan's Irish accent (pp. 108-110); Burney records conversations in play-like scripts, as in a letter dated 20 December 1778, p.103; she also judges written language, as in a letter dated 14 February 1793: see *JAL*, II, p. 47. p. 14;

¹¹ Sarah Harriet Burney employed a range of colloquial phrases, but changed her register when writing to her sister, and was keen for 'Sister d'Arblay' not to see the informal letters: see *The Letters of Sarah Harriet Burney*, ed. by Lorna J. Clark (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), p. 371.

¹² Manfred Görlach, *Eighteenth-Century English* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2001), p. 54-55.

¹³ See Cecil, 'Fanny Burney's Novels' in *Essays on the Eighteenth Century Presented to David Nichol*, pp. 212-224, and Bax, 'Traces of Johnson in the Language of Fanny Burney', 159-181; for a discussion of Burney and other women writers, as case studies for how women learnt correct forms see Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 'Eighteenth-Century Women and Their Norms of Correctness', in *Eighteenth-Century English: Ideology and Change*, ed. by Raymond Hickey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 59-72.

2.1.1. Language Varieties During the Restoration Period

The classic work of H. C. Wyld, *A History of Modern Colloquial English*, was one of the first to highlight permissible features of language distinguishing speech in Restoration texts, which would later be proscribed by eighteenth-century linguists. These features include oaths ('the Devil'), expletives ('O hang') exclamatory expressions ('Lord!'), slang ('Ay'), colloquialisms such as verb contractions (''tis, 'won't', 'don't'), plain syllabled verbs ('stink'), clichés ('I declare'), and exaggerated language ('That is so excessive', 'proud of the vast Honour' and 'I'm so everlastingly fatigued'). Wyld cites dramatic works from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and observes that many of the phrases were current in the period, supporting his view with many examples from letters of the period and earlier, allowing him to conclude: 'If many country gentlemen, even in their own homes, spoke what was in all essentials the language of the Court, so also there were many courtiers and gallants, who when they spoke the latter form of English, must have retained certain aspects of their native Regional dialect, and these passed muster as accepted and permissible variants in the speech of the gentleman'.¹⁴ As Wyld's study indicates, in the period before standardization, courtly, regional, and lower class dialects approximated each other. As we shall see in subsequent parts of this chapter, many of the phrases quoted by Wyld are employed by Burney in the dialogue of fashionable characters, and those aspiring to genteel status. At this point, however, it will be useful to illustrate the phenomenon by a brief review of the verb-form 'a'n't' (sometimes written as 'an't'), and its variants 'i'n't' or 'in't', verb forms not examined by Wyld, which in Burney's fiction is assigned almost exclusively, to fashionable and aspiring characters.¹⁵ Such a linguistic choice functions as a snapshot of older and, by the time she wrote, proscribed language features employed by Burney to signify unco-operative and unsocial characters in her novels, irrespective of rank.

The verb form 'a'n't', or 'an't', was permissible in the late seventeenth century but its usage was contested in eighteenth-century grammar books defining correct and standard forms. A common negative contraction of the verb 'to be', 'a'n't' was an abbreviation of 'am not I', first contracted to 'am'n't', and then used in constructions involving all subject personal pronouns; in

¹⁴ H. C. Wyld, *A History of Modern Colloquial English* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1920, repr. 1956), 'Colloquial Idiom', pp. 359-398: Wyld's examples quoted here are from Otway's *Friendship and Fashion* (1678), Congreve's *Double Dealer* (1693) and Vanbrugh's *The Provok'd Wife* (1697): see Wyld p. 370 and p. 392; for Wyld's comments on dramatic language incorporating actual contemporary expressions, see p. 389; and for Wyld's conclusions about country gentlemen see p. 167.

¹⁵ For example in *Evelina*, Madame Duval uses the 'i'n't' form (43) and both 'i'n't' and 'a'n't' in the same utterance (128); the verb form 'a'n't' is used by Miss Branghton (58), by Polly Branghton (71), and Tom Branghton (142); 'a'n't' is also employed by Lady Louisa 'I a'n't half well' (298); in *Cecilia*, 'a'n't' is uttered by Mr Harrel (50); Mrs Harrel (195); Miss Larolles uses 'i'n't' (63) and 'a'n't' (335); in *Camilla*, Mr Dubster uses the form (286). The form is flexible, however, and not confined to the character categories explored in this chapter: servants occasionally use the form as a verb (*Evelina* 118,) and Jacob (*Camilla*, 573), as does the carpenter's wife in *Cecilia* (73) and the forester, Dame Fairfield, in *The Wanderer* (712); the miserly Mr Briggs in *Cecilia* uses the verb frequently, with other abbreviations; Captain Mirvan's 'sailor talk' includes 'a'n't' and 'ben't' (73); the worthy but misguided Sir Hugh Tyrold in *Camilla* uses 'a'n't' and 'i'n't' as a verb form. Sir Hugh hails from Yorkshire and might be categorized as a 'huff-puff country squire', as described by Carey McIntosh, who generalizes such figures as ignorant and conservative; or as a member of the 'parish gentry', described by Stone and Stone as being different from the wealthy elite who are educated, travelled and polished: see Carey McIntosh, 'Prestige Norms in Stage Plays, 1600-1800', in *Towards a Standard English, 1600-1800*, ed. by Dieter Stein and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (Tiel: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 63-80 (p. 67); and Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England, 1540-1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 6-7.

the nineteenth century it also denoted the verb ‘have’. In his study of the social history of language, Dick Leith observes that the verb form ‘ain’t’ which is a variant of ‘a’n’t’, is regional, being a long-standing feature of south-east English dialect; Barbara M. H. Strang notes that this and other such verb contractions as ‘isn’t’, ‘don’t’ and ‘sha’n’t’ evolved around the year 1600; and Mario Pei claims that the form ‘a’n’t’ was made popular by Charles II.¹⁶ Such observations are consistent with the view that Restoration language accommodated regional, non-central forms. Writers like Swift continued to use the form ‘a’n’t’ in private letters. As late as 1907, Lady Agnes Groves defended the verb form, asserting that ‘if *ain’t I* is objected to, surely *aren’t I* is very much worse’.¹⁷ Contractions and other abbreviations were criticized throughout the eighteenth century and, as S. A. Leonard has noted, were frequently described as vulgar structures to be avoided by gentlemen.¹⁸ Later politeness and linguistic texts laid the blame of structures like ‘a’n’t’ at the door of the lower ranks. However, as we have seen, the form continued to be used privately by some members of the highest social ranks.¹⁹

One might speculate why educated, wealthy people continued to employ these verbs after they had been proscribed by standardization. It is possible that their refusal to abandon such forms reflected a nostalgic attachment to the past, or an affectation. It is possible too, that such people wished to distance themselves from what may have been perceived as the over-refined, clichéd talk of the middling sort. Indeed, the continued employment of such a form may have signalled old allegiances to aristocratic power threatened by Whig liberalism; in this respect, refusal to co-operate with consensual norms of language use may be seen as political.²⁰ Whatever the reason, many among the aristocratic and fashionable elite eschewed the educated and polite southern English which was being established as a standard, by the middle of the eighteenth century. As subsequent sections of this chapter will argue, the potential for such linguistic non-conformism was seen by Burney as an opportunity for characterization, a means of signalling an

¹⁶ Barbara M. H. Strang, *A History of English* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 151; Mario Pei, *The Story of Language* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1949; repr. London: Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 170; Dick Leith notes that ‘ain’t’ is a long-standing feature of south-east English dialect; see *A Social History of English*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 196.

¹⁷ Swift publicly named and scorned solecisms, but in private wrote colloquial, proscribed forms to Stella, including the verb form ‘a’n’t’, which appears mostly as ‘an’t’; for example: *Journal to Stella*, ed. by Harold Williams, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948) I, Letter XVI (10 February 1710-11), pp. 188-200, p. 194; Letter XXVIII (11 August 1711), pp. 330-344, p. 336; II, Letter XXXIII (23 October 1711), pp. 393-403, p. 397; and II, letter XLIV (22 March 1711-12), pp. 521-529, p. 526; for Lady Groves’s defence of the verb: see *The Social Fetich*, p. 38; quoted in K. C. Phillips, *Language and Class in Victorian England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 69.

¹⁸ S. A. Leonard reviews the abbreviations commonly criticized by eighteenth-century texts, with examples, in Chapter X, ‘The Struggle of Elites’, in *The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage, 1700-1800*, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, 25 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1929; repr. New York: Russell, 1962), pp. 169-180 (pp. 170-172); as Leonard notes (p. 176) Philip Withers was one of many grammarians who criticized elided verbs, judging that ‘An’t’ should be avoided, even when verb agreement occurs, but when used with the singular pronoun ‘it makes a disgraceful solecism’ (52); see *Aristarchus, or the Principles of Composition. Containing a Methodical Arrangement of the Improprieties Frequent in Writing and Conversation*, 1788, 2nd edn (London: J. Moore, 1789).

¹⁹ An essay in *Guardian*, 22 May, 1714 warned that ‘vile pamphlets [...] corrupt our taste, and infest the public’; an essay in *The Connoisseur*, 14 November, 1754, wrote that when wits ‘talk of Humbug etc., [they] seem to be jabbering in the uncouth dialect of the Huns, [...] or the strange cant said to be in use among housebreakers and highwaymen’, quoted in Görlich, *Eighteenth-Century English*, p. 59; Tieken-Boon van Ostade describes other non-standard examples in the private letters of the wealthy, such as those of Lady Mary Montagu, Lord Hertford, and Horace Walpole: see ‘English at the Outset of the Normative Tradition’ in *The Oxford History of English*, ed. by Mugglestone, p. 258.

²⁰ For the suggestion that Swift’s Proposal was meant to be read satirically, as an attack on his Whiggish rivals, Addison and Steele, see Watts, ‘From Polite Language’, p. 164; for a discussion of the non-uniform responses to politeness and a refutation of the association of politeness with Whiggism by J. G. A. Pocock and others, see Markku Peltonen, ‘Politeness and Whiggism, 1688-1732’, *The Historical Journal*, 48.2 (2005), 391-414.

unco-operative and unsocial personality, as well as a means of using the novel form to engage with contemporary debates about democratic sociability and attitudes to power.

As Strang notes, literary uses of ‘a’n’t’ occur later than 1600. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* cites two comedy dramas from the 1690s as the earliest examples of the verb being assigned to characters in literature: Miss Prue, described in the *dramatis personae* of Congreve’s *Love for Love* (1695) as daughter of Foresight, an awkward country girl; and the aptronymically named Lord Foppington in *The Relapse* (1696) by John Vanburgh. An example of ‘an’t’ occurs in George Etherege’s 1676 play *The Man of Mode*, and as a modern editor of the play notes, the phrase is probably used to imitate tradesman talk, ‘Ma-tri-mony, an’t like you’ (IV. 2. 153). However, in this instance, the phrase is used idiomatically, as a contraction of ‘and if it’, rather than as a contracted verb, as when a servant in the same play asks ‘Wither, an’t like your honour?’ (IV. 6. 6), a common expression characterizing servant-talk to be found in dramatic work as early as the plays of Shakespeare.²¹ In spite of polite reaction during the eighteenth century, Burney was familiar with such plays. Indeed, in *Evelina* there is specific reference to Congreve’s *Love for Love*, when Mr Lovel humiliates the heroine by connecting her with the character, Miss Prue (68).

A sample review of prose fiction indicates that some key publications before Burney’s avoided using ‘a’n’t’ and ‘an’t’, even in dialogue. ‘A’n’t’ does not appear at all in the third person narrative of Eliza Haywood’s hugely successful novel, *Love in Excess* (1719), which otherwise carries numerous abbreviations;²² nor is it used in mid-century representations of fashionable speech such as that in Charlotte Lennox’s *Henrietta*, Sarah Fielding’s *David Simple*, or such works by Sterne as *A Sentimental Journey*. However, some writers whom Burney admired, such as Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding, mostly use ‘an’t’ idiomatically in the dialogue of servants.²³ Smollett uses the expression sparingly in *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), a work otherwise rich in idiosyncratic and regional language. However, in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), letters from both masters and servants employ ‘a’n’t’ in its negative verb form. The reclusive valetudinarian, Matthew Bramble, clings to the expression,

²¹ Lord Foppington: ‘these shoes a’n’t ugly’: *The Relapse and Other Plays*, 1696, ed. by Brean Hammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), I. 3. 76; Miss Prue: ‘I a’n’t deaf’, *Love for Love: A Comedy Acted at the Theatre in Little-Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields, by His Majesty’s Servants*, 1695, 4th edn (London: Jacob Tonson), III. 7: references to these plays, but without the examples, are in *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary of English Usage* (Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1994), p. 60; George Etherege, *The Man of Mode*, 1676, ed. by John Barnard (London: Black; New York: Norton, 1988, repr. 2006), fn. 153, p. 112. The earliest dramatic work cited by *OED* is *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1598): ‘There, an’t shall please you’; the words are assigned to Costard, as part of a comic prose passage: see v. 2. 580; reference here and elsewhere is to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans, J. J. M. Tobin and Others, 2nd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

²² Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess; or, The Fatal Enquiry* (1719), ed. by David Oakleaf, 2nd edn (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2000): Oakleaf preserves many of the colloquial features of the first edition; for examples of the narrative’s numerous contractions see p. 56, p. 57, p. 58.

²³ See for example, Richardson, *Pamela*, Letter xxiii: Jonathan, a servant, says, ‘An’t please your Honour’; in the early editions this stands, but was omitted by Richardson’s later revisions: see *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded: In a Series of Familiar Letters from a Beautiful Young Damsel, to her Parents*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: C. Rivington, 1741), I. 59, and *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded*, ed. by Peter Sabor, introduction by Margaret A. Doody (London: Penguin, 1980, repr. 2003), p. 82, based on Richardson’s revised, posthumous edition, 1801; see also ‘an’t please your Worship [...] Honour [...] Majesty’, *Amelia. By Henry Fielding, Esq.*, 4 vols (London: A. Millar, 1752), IV, 179. In *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), characters from lowly ranks use the phrase as a verb: the first volume of the revised third edition has an instance when the schoolmaster’s wife abuses her husband for whoring, employing the servant’s phrase: ‘an’t please your honour’, but also the verb: ‘you an’t half the man’; later in the novel, Black George offers himself as Jones’s servant, observing ‘you ant the first gentleman who hath killed’ (no apostrophe in this instance): see *The History of Tom Jones*, ed. by R. P. C. Mutter (London: Penguin, 1966, repr. 1988), p. 105, p. 106, and p. 817.

which is also employed by his uneducated but very ambitious relative, Tabitha Bramble; the verb is also used by their servant, Winifred Jenkins, and the turnkey at Clerkenwell gaol.²⁴ Six years later, R. B. Sheridan's play *A Trip to Scarborough* (1777) offered a rewriting of Vanburgh's play *The Relapse* (1696). Preserving many features of the earlier play, Sheridan's play presents the lowly character, the nurse, uttering a phrase typical of earlier representations of servant talk, when she comments, 'An't please your honour' (v. 2. 29). Where Sheridan's work resembles Smollett's, however, is in the assigning of the phrase as a negative verb to the aspiring character Miss Hoyden, who exclaims, 'What, a'n't I to be a lady after all, only a plain Mrs' (v. 2. 301-302). Evidently, therefore, by the decade in which Burney published her first novel, *Evelina*, 'a'n't' as a negative verb form was recognized as an indicator of aspirations to higher ranks.²⁵

Although Burney was not the first to use this and other expressions to depict character, she did use such features prominently and consistently. Burney's novels assign both high and aspiring characters the verb formation 'a'n't', yoking types together by non-standard language to underline their recalcitrance, marking them not so much as unsociable, as unsocial in their represented refusal to comply with consensual forms. Further, in Burney's novels, such incorrect and impolite forms signal ego-driven propensities which are marks of moral deviance. Such a correlation of outward linguistic forms and inner qualities is frequently accredited to Jane Austen. Otto Jespersen was one of the first linguists to note such a connection, citing the language of Lucy Steele in *Sensibility and Sensibility*.²⁶ However, Jespersen overlooks the aspirational nature of Lucy Steele's character, which compels her to target the Ferrars brothers as possible husbands, resembling the beau-seeking Miss Branghton in Burney's *Evelina*. Similarly, Austen's novel, *Emma*, provides a clear link with *Evelina*, the showy superiority of Mrs Elton's tag, 'I am in a fine flow of spirits, an't I?', as she excludes Emma from knowledge shared with

²⁴ In *Roderick Random* the verb is used sparingly, but even less so in the first edition; for example in the first edition, Chapter IV, Bowling uses the tag: 'There's a righteous judge above, isn't there?', changed to 'a'n't there?' in the second edition: see *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, 1st edn, 2 vols (London: J. Osborn, 1748), I, 19; and *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: J. Osborn, 1748), I, 19; in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) there are six instances of 'an't' and one of 'a'n't': in Volume I, Bramwell writes to Dr Lewis: 'I an't married to Tabby [...] I an't in a condition to take care of myself' (15); Bramble's nephew, Melford reports Tabitha's speech: 'An't he game?' (62); Winifred Jenkins writes from Bath: 'they say as how the very teeth an't safe in your head' (82); Melford describes how, on meeting Clinker, Bramble exclaims, 'an't you the fellow...' (93); in Volume II, Melford, reports the turnkey's speech: 'if the fellow an't speedily removed by Habeus Corpus' (169); and in Volume III, Jenkins recounts her adventures, observing, 'how there a'n't a horseshoe nailed to the door' (290): all references are to Penguin, based on the 1772 4th edition of the novel, and have been checked as corresponding with the 1771 second edition; although the citations are verbs, they mostly carry the spelling 'an't': *Humphry Clinker*, ed. by Shaun Regan, introduction by Jeremy Lewis (London: Penguin, 2008), and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker by the Author of Roderick Random*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: W. Johnston and Salisbury: B. Collins, 1771).

²⁵ *A Trip to Scarborough*, in *The School for Scandal and Other Plays*, ed. by Michael Cordner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, reiss. 2008): the edition is based on the 1781 first edition (the play being first performed 1777); in *The Rivals*, 1775, ed. by Elizabeth Duthie (London: Black; New York: Norton, 1979, repr. 2000) Sheridan assigns the verb 'an't' to Acres' servant, David, III. 4. 12, and 'a'n't' to Sir Anthony Absolute, IV. 2. 135; this edition is based on the 1775 first edition, incorporating new readings from the third edition (1776); the different use of punctuation in the two examples is worthy of note, the verb assigned to Acres resembling the common 'and if it please you' abbreviation, 'an't'.

²⁶ Otto Jespersen, *Negation in English and Other Languages* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgard, 1917); in *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. by Edward Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): Lucy Steele: '— sure you an't well' (p. 273) cited in Jespersen, p. 119; Mrs Jennings in the same novel: 'I an't the least astonished' (p. 323) cited p. 120. Jennings' usage is the greater solecism as it lacks grammatical concord, substituting 'are' for 'am', and omitting the 'r' to represent pronunciation elision. Further examples in the dialogue of these speakers occur, and also in the dialogue of Miss Nancy Steele (p. 142) and Mrs John Dashwood (p. 268).

Jane Fairfax, evoking the cruel exclusions of Miss Branghton in her treatment of Mr Macartney.²⁷ Where Austen does not follow Burney is in allocating the ‘a’n’t verb form to fashionably elite characters, like Miss Bingley or the Bertram siblings. Burney’s allocations highlight her awareness of the disparate groups among the wealthy, and her ability to represent such factions through heterogeneous language styles.

Burney’s assigning similar language features to her middling and fashionable characters also signifies her awareness of contemporary debates about models of emulation. As already noted, many texts warned against the influence of ‘low’ people whose language might corrupt a gentleman’s communication. However, other texts similarly commented on the decaying styles of the upper classes, warning that such styles might be assimilated by lower ranks. Görzlach notes that ‘the fashionable jargon of “society” was an even greater danger since there was a temptation to imitate it by other members of the upper class – or by social climbers who wanted to belong’. Although it is likely that there was a degree of mutual influence, such ‘top-down’ models of language influence is consistent with modern theories of language, which describe how the language of the powerful dominates communications, and is more likely to proliferate, or even to subsume other forms, explaining the global effects of English on other languages, or Americanisms in English.²⁸ Indeed, such top-down models of emulation were described throughout the eighteenth century. In 1712, Swift’s *Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* looks to the ‘corrupted language’ and ‘infect[ed] morals’ following the accession of Charles II for blame, criticizing the plays and other ‘Works of Entertainment’ of ‘the past fifty Years’ for a ‘Secession of affected Phrases, and new, conceited Words, either borrowed from the current Style of the Court, or from those under the Character of Men of Wit and Pleasure’; the nobility, Swift argues, must now be educated to fit them as ‘Patterns of Politeness’ for others to follow. Half a century later, the anonymous author of *The Progress of the Female Mind* (1764) expressed similar concerns about fashionable values:

Opinions, as fashions, descend from the higher to the lower ranks of men.

Thus are not the politics of a nation, formed by the court? In religion, by the clergy? The particular sentiments of a family, or circle, perhaps are modelled by a single person in it. Inferiors copy after their superiors, in their mode of *thinking* as well as dress: interests and various attachments operate we know not how far.

Thus although standard forms were available, it was a certain kind of powerful fashionable patois which was often taken up by those hoping to aspire to the higher ranks. Dryden lauded the language of his own age as being freer, more robust and refined than former times, tracing such

²⁷ Jane Austen, *Emma*, ed. by Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 495.

²⁸ Görzlach, *Eighteenth-Century English*, p. 151; in *The Civilizing Process* (pp. 93-97), Elias discusses the ‘double movement’, or symbiotic process by which French bourgeois and court language and manners developed, but notes that such adaptations occurred in response to the models of influential circles: discussing English manners, Elias notes similar interpenetration, arguing that upper-class modes were adopted and modified by the middle classes; for a study of the political, military, and economic reasons for global language dominance see Andrew Dalby, *Language in Danger* (London: Penguin, 2002).

skills in writing to the superiority of contemporary conversation; but by the time Burney wrote, such prestige styles of communication were superseded by politeness and more sympathetic, restrained styles. The central figures of her novels employ such styles of interaction, which can therefore be seen as being supported by the narratives. Thus the novels imply that aspiring ranks need to choose carefully the kinds of language which they use or unthinkingly imitate – promoting the polite, correct forms of the main protagonists, rather than the stigmatized, if glamorous forms favoured by the fashionable. Linked to this, as we shall see in the next section, were issues of social morality, for if language were to be accepted as a signifier of mind and principles, contraventions in depicted speech take on thematic import. Highlighting the poor models of behaviour provided by certain elements of the rich is a way for Burney's novels to engage with such political issues as the nature of power, as articulated explicitly by the author of *The Progress of the Female Mind*. In particular, it provides a way to explore how abusive power operates, and is perpetuated by those newly elevated by wealth.²⁹

2.1.2. Post Seventeenth Century: The Ideology of Standardization, 'Vulgarity', and Class

Francis Grose's dictionary of slang (1785) draws attention to the broad range of colloquial dialects available to his contemporaries, as well as to the plurality of domains even within seemingly uniform ranks. Thus his definitions include references to 'court slang', and users who are 'gentlemen', 'ladies', and 'men of the town' practising 'gallantry', as well as 'gypsies', 'fisherwomen', 'country lasses', people in 'cock-pits' and 'criminals'.³⁰ In literature, efforts to polarize language as elegant and vulgar had long been represented in literature by characters speaking 'high' and 'low' dialects, the latter mostly allocated to comic, peripheral characters. However, the heterogeneous nature of the language employed by members of the highest ranks during the long eighteenth century, is central to the dialogue of Burney's fiction – as is the relationship of some of these styles, referred to in this chapter as 'fashionable', with the earlier seventeenth-century court-derived forms discussed in the previous section. Key to her fictional dialogue also are debates about the influence of such fashionable styles on aspirant classes, who may have favoured modish informalities and non-standard expressions over correct, polite forms. Burney was not alone in noting different kinds of upper class talk, nor the similarities in language between different sets or classes of speakers. However, Burney's interest in language qualifies her to *fictionalize* phenomena of actual, contemporary language, and to intervene in debates developed across a range of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses. In this respect, the

²⁹ Swift, *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, pp. 18-19; the quotation is from 'Hebrew Language', in *The Progress of the Female Mind, in Some Interesting Enquiries* (London: A. and C. Corbett, 1764), p. 87, quoted in Guest, *Small Change*, p. 139; Dryden's ideas are explored in *Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age*, cited in Klein, ' "Politeness" as Linguistic Ideology' in *Towards a Standard English 1600-1800*, ed. by Stein and Tieken-Boon van Ostade, p. 34; see also Wyld, pp. 154-155.

³⁰ Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (London: S. Hooper, 1785): for example 'Bargain' is described as 'court slang'.

nuanced way in which Burney employed linguistic characteristics in dialogue can be seen to contribute to her reputation as a pioneer in the form.

The early eighteenth-century call for standardization is now well documented, as is the explosion of publications on grammar, vocabulary, rhetoric, and pronunciation, which followed in its wake. Although modern commentators recognize that attitudes to language were not uniform, most agree that such publications established what Milroy and Milroy have termed an ‘ideology of standardization’ to which users like Burney subscribed.³¹ Grammar books published in the first six decades of the eighteenth century proscribed such features as double negatives and terminal prepositions, discouraged the use of the pronoun ‘one’ and contracted verbs; and prescribed ‘correct’ use of relative pronouns, as well as such verb forms as ‘you was’.³² Words too came under scrutiny. Joan Platt (74-6) has argued that discussion of the right and wrong use of words ‘took place a little later than grammatical development’ and that certain idioms illustrate a ‘process of degradation’ in four main areas of linguistic usage: words which have become restricted to rural dialect or the uneducated urban class; words which became restricted to ‘vulgar’ speech in general; words which became restricted to lower or middle class English; and words which became restricted to pretentious usage. It is clear then that the pragmatic implication of the choice of words and even the arrangement of words in a sentence became an area of heightened awareness about propriety, as indicated by the popularity of books of synonyms such as that published by Hester Lynch Piozzi in 1794, which judged the spoken and written contexts in which words could be used.³³

Nevertheless, many educated writers continued to employ colloquial expressions in their private documents, suggesting their continued use in spoken contexts, despite the sanctions of standardization. Burney herself included contracted verbs and such private language as ‘eke’ and

³¹ The work of Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable remains a classic text on the history of English, with a chapter discussing calls for a standard, and the prescriptivist nature of subsequent publications: ‘The Appeal to Authority, 1650-1800’, in *A History of the English Language*, 5th edn (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 253-295; Roger Lass reiterates that by the end of the eighteenth century, ‘there existed something more than ever before like an institutionalized standard’: *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, ed. by Roger Lass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), III, 1476-1776, p. 8; David Crystal’s work covers non-standard dialects and their relation to a central, authorized variety in *The Stories of English* (London: Allen Lane, 2004); see especially ‘Stabilizing Disorder’ pp. 365-387, and for a discussion of grammar, ‘Standard Rules’, pp. 392-414; for a discussion of the grammar books published in the 1760s and the new surge of publications in the 1790s, see Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, ‘The 1760s: Grammars, Grammarians and the Booksellers’, in *Grammar, Grammarians and Grammar-Writing in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. by Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 100-147; Milroy and Milroy express the commonly held view that eighteenth-century linguistics were ‘authoritarian’, arguing that ‘what the eighteenth century finally established was [...] the ideology of standardisation’, that is the belief in the superiority of some dialects over others: see *Authority in Language*, p. 7 and p. 36.

³² For example, grammars condemning double negation include James Greenwood, *An Essay Towards a Practical English Grammar, Describing the Genius and Nature of the English Tongue* (London: R. Tookey, 1711); Ann Fisher, *A New Grammar: Being the Most Easy Guide to Speaking and Writing the English Language Properly and Correctly: Containing Exercises of Bad English*, [1745], 2nd edn (Newcastle upon Tyne: I. Thompson, 1750); and Robert Lowth, *A Short Introduction to English Grammar: With Critical Notes* (London: J. Hughes, A. Millar and R. and J. Dodsley, 1762). According to Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Lowth was the first grammarian to criticize preposition at the end of clauses (Lowth, 1762, pp. 127-8); he also stigmatized adjectives used as adverbs (Lowth, 1762, pp. 125-6, n. 8): see ‘Lowth as an Icon of Prescriptivism’ in *Eighteenth-Century English*, ed. by Hickey, pp. 73-88 (p. 76, p. 79 and p. 85). Lowth was also the first to stigmatize ‘you was’ as a solecism: see Tieken-Boon van Ostade, ‘English at the Outset of the Normative Tradition’ in *The Oxford History of English*, ed. by Mugglestone, p. 260.

³³ Joan Platt, ‘The Development of English Colloquial Idiom During the Eighteenth Century’, *The Review of English Studies*, 2.5 (1926), 70-81 (pp. 74-76); Piozzi, *British Synonymy; or, An Attempt at Regulating the Choice of Words in Familiar Conversation*, 2 vols (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1794); Gertrude E. Noyes has reviewed different texts on synonyms, their approaches, and critical reception, in ‘The Beginnings of the Study of Synonyms in England’, *PMLA*, 66.6 (1951), 951-970 (p. 183).

'cleped' to her most intimate correspondents, especially in her early letters. Even Robert Lowth wrote colloquially to his wife, reserving his formal pronouncements for his correspondence with bishops.³⁴ But even in their private relationships, people felt some anxiety about their use of language. The letters of William Clift, who travelled from Bodwin to London to become conservator of the Hunter collection, reveal his anxious attempts to correct his sister's letters, his own hyper-corrections indicating his efforts to standardize his written English. The Duchess of Devonshire's letters show her concern that her own linguistic ability might not be sufficient to teach her five year old daughter the parts of speech. As a mother too, Burney was keen that she should choose the 'right' grammar book to prepare her son Alex for school.³⁵ Although Burney's letters and diaries indicate that she judged language, she experienced considerable anxiety about her own language in her published work. The research of Carol Percy indicates how much 'the climate of anxiety' over published work was generated by the literary reviews; but grammar books too had for several decades produced promiscuous exercises to test reader knowledge of 'bad' English; and Lowth showed a readiness to expose the style and structures of acclaimed authors, with the seventeenth-century works of Dryden coming under his particular critical scrutiny.³⁶

Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade has argued that such criticism helped create a uniform 'printer's English' to which writers like Burney subscribed.³⁷ Publications failing to comply with such standards were certainly not tolerated, as the works of Hester Piozzi illustrate. The publication of her anecdotes of Dr Johnson (1786) was criticized for its 'negligence of method and arrangement' and especially such 'vulgarisms' of style as the 'inelegant use of the particle *how* instead of *that*', and the overuse of what was described as 'the Gallicism *one*'; three years later the *Critical Review* described the style of *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany* (1789) as 'disgusting', and mocked its overuse of intensifiers and vagueness: 'Really, Madam, *one* cannot read ten lines without feeling

³⁴ Examples of Burney's contractions can be found in her diaries and letters, for example, *JAL*, II, 'she's' (p. 27), 'I'm' (p. 28), 'we'll' (p. 54) and 'you've' (p. 118). In 'Lowth as an Icon of Prescriptivism' Tieken-Boon van Ostade argues that Lowth's grammar is not as prescriptive as many commentators note, and cites examples of non-standard irregular structures in his letters to his wife, contrasted with more formal structures in his professional letters, to argue that Lowth employed code-switching and was aware of the leniency created by context; see especially p. 79.

³⁵ The Clift letters are discussed by Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 'English at the Outset of the Normative Tradition', p. 244, p. 256, and p. 263; the Duchess of Devonshire's letter, September 1788, is quoted in Karlijn Navest, 'Queeny Thrale and the Teaching of English Grammar' in *Eighteenth-Century English*, ed. by Hickey, pp. 89-105 (p. 91); in a letter dated 4 March 1801, to her nephew, Burney asked advice about the best grammar from which to teach her son: see *JAL*, IV, p. 475.

³⁶ The 'climate of anxiety' about grammar and other influences leading to a wide-spread demand for grammar books is examined by Carol Percy, 'Mid-Century Grammars and their Reception in the *Monthly Review*, and *Critical Review*' in *Grammar, Grammarians and Grammar-Writing in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 125-147 (p. 137); Percy has also examined the impact of reviewers' comments about authors' language in 'Periodical Reviews and the Rise of Prescriptivism: the *Monthly* (1749-1844) and *Critical Review* (1756-1817) in the Eighteenth Century', in *Current Issues in Late Modern English*, ed. by Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Wim van der Wurff, *Studies in Language and Communication*, 77 (Bern: Lang, 2009), pp. 117-150; recent work has shown that two hundred named authors were criticized in grammar books published in the second half of the eighteenth century: see Bertil Sundby, Anne Kari Bjorge and Kari E. Haugland, *A Dictionary of English Normative Grammar 1700-1800* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1991), pp. 35-7.

³⁷ The work of Tieken-Boon van Ostade has done much to highlight the differences between the language used in the private and printed documents of Burney, Lowth and other writers: see 'Eighteenth-Century Women and their Norms of Correctness' in *Eighteenth-Century English*, ed. by Hickey, pp. 59-72 (p. 62) and 'Eighteenth-Century English and the Norms of Correctness', in *The Handbook of the History of English*, ed. by Ans van Kemenade and Bettelou Los (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 539-557.

somehow such disgust *so: one* is tempted to lay down a work, where *one* meets with *so* many inelegancies, *such* colloquial barbarisms'. Even the language in Piozzi's book of synonyms was disparaged by her contemporaries, Burney herself criticizing the want of delicacy in the work's 'nuances.'³⁸ William McCarthy has argued that Piozzi deliberately chose a familiar and 'intimate' style for her publications, and Carol Percy has argued that such a style was meant to signal her intimacy with Samuel Johnson, and enhance her authority; if this is so, Piozzi's decisions conspicuously contravened dominant tastes, and drew mordant criticism from both critics and friends.³⁹ Such criticism was applied to spoken aspects of language too; further, although accents are not a main focus of this study, it is important to note that works on pronunciation became intolerant of regional and class accents from the middle of the eighteenth century.⁴⁰

As criticism of Piozzi indicates, the stigma of vulgarity was attached to many colloquialisms, carrying the further shame of social, intellectual and moral inadequacy.⁴¹ Olivia Smith's influential study in the 1980s has explored the socially marginalizing effects of such polarities during the long eighteenth century, on the speakers of non-standard varieties, and of associated moral stigma attaching to lower classes.⁴² As we have seen, however, polarization along class lines did not always succeed, and members of the educated, privileged class could prefer colloquial forms, sometimes running the risk of using such forms inappropriately in public or in published works. In her work on synonyms, Piozzi uses the word 'vulgar' twenty-three times to derivate words associated with overuse, or the lower orders. In view of the criticism which she herself invoked, it is ironic that Piozzi cites Cowley, writing of the 'great VULGAR and the small', 'ignorant persons' whose 'coarseness of manners and meanness of behaviour preclude them from admission into elegant and civil society' (II, 33). However, as we have seen, Piozzi was not alone in employing language which was generally excoriated, 'the great vulgar as

³⁸ Review of *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, During the Last Twenty Years of his Life*, in *Monthly Review*, 74, May 1786, pp. 373-385; review of *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany*, in *Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature*, 68, August 1789, pp.103-112 (p. 104), New York Public Library, available through Googlebooks [accessed 12 April 2011]; for Burney's comments, 22 March 1794, see *JAL*, III, 136.

³⁹ William McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi: Portrait of a Literary Woman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp.196-209; Carol Percy, 'The Social Symbolism of Contractions and Colloquialisms in Contemporary Accounts of Dr Samuel Johnson: Boozzy, Piozzi, and the Authority of Intimacy', *Historical Sociolinguistics and Sociohistorical Linguistics*, 2.1, 2002 <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/hsl_shl/boozzy_%20piozzi1.htm> [accessed 15 November 2009]; Piozzi's friend, Anna Seward wrote to Piozzi and complained that 'she should pollute, with vulgarisms of unpolished conversation, her animated pages!' Among the features damned by Seward are phrasal verbs, auxiliaries, and conjunctions: 'strange *dids*, and *does*, and *thoughts*, and *toos*, which produce jerking angles, and stop-short abruptness': see Letter LXXXV (21 December 1789), *Letters of Anna Seward Written between the Years 1784 and 1807*, ed. by A. Constable, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Others, 1811), II, 337.

⁴⁰ Lynda Mugglestone discusses the part played by dictionaries in developing a 'proper' way of speaking, naming Thomas Sheridan as the central figure in 'the drive to reform the teaching of the spoken language' whose own dictionary (1780) had 'explicitly normative aims': see 'Registering the Language: Dictionaries, Diction and the Art of Elocution', in *Eighteenth-Century English*, ed. by Hickey, pp. 309-338 (p. 331).

⁴¹ As Joan Beal notes, a key word was 'vulgar', the term being used 96 times in John Walker's *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expository of the English Language*, 2nd edn (London: G. G. J and J. Robinson and T. Cadell, 1791) – cited under the headword 'VULGAR' as: 'practised among the common people, mean, low, being of the common rate; publick, commonly bruited': see Beal, 'Prescriptivism and Suppression of Variation, in *Eighteenth-Century English*', ed. by Hickey, pp. 21-37 (p. 24). *OED* citations illustrate the moral value associated with the word: 'Vulgar: Having a common and offensively mean character [...] lacking in refinement or good taste', 1643, *OED* 13; 'Vulgar' linked with 'malice', 1678, *OED* 13b; 'vulgar' linked with 'the mind or spirit', 1764, Goldsmith, 'In wild excess the vulgar breast takes fire/Till, buried in debauch', *OED* 13c; 'vulgar' linked with language in a derogatory sense, 1716, Gay, 'Let not such vulgar tastes debase my mind' *OED* 13d.

⁴² *The Politics of Language*, p. 2.

well as the small' being very well documented by the time she wrote.⁴³

The phenomenon of resemblances between different ranks of society was noted by essayists during the long eighteenth century, including Henry Fielding and Burney's younger contemporary, William Hazlitt. In an essay in *The Covent-Garden Journal* (1752), Fielding sports with the etymology of the word, 'fashion' linking it to the word 'circle' to highlight the means employed by the rich to 'keep the Vulgar at a distance from them'. For Fielding, fashion is the only way to distinguish the vacuous rich from their vulgar neighbours. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hazlitt posits that 'whenever we pretend, on all occasions, a mighty contempt for anything, it is a pretty clear sign that we feel ourselves very nearly on a level with it'.⁴⁴ Exploring his distaste for people who see class differences as a site in which to enact their own superiority, Hazlitt echoes Fielding's criticism, when he writes of the 'vulgar aping the genteel, or the genteel constantly sneering at and endeavouring to distinguish themselves from the vulgar' (156-7).⁴⁵ For Hazlitt, the 'vulgar' and the 'genteel' were as the 'polite' and the 'rabble', each presenting two sides of the same coin, each with their 'hackneyed phrases, their fulsome, unmeaning jargon as well' (164). Hazlitt cites Burney's novels, noting the disparate sets of characters reacting against each other, and how 'the one half are trying not to be taken for themselves, and the other half not to be taken for the first' (157).

Evoking Cowley's observation on the 'Great VULGAR and the Small', Hazlitt notes that the 'vulgar' resemble the polite because both 'fall in with fashion' and affectation, 'the herd of pretenders' adhering 'to what they do not feel and what is not natural to them, whether in high or low life' (162). Thus, according to Hazlitt, trying to demonstrate superiority is vulgar, as is the use of slang, especially when used affectedly to denote exclusivity (162). In his essay 'On Familiar Style', Hazlitt develops the association of vulgarity with affectation.⁴⁶ He decries slang as an indicator of 'coarse, disagreeable and confined ideas'. But Hazlitt sees *all* affected language as vulgar, disapproving equally of 'cant' and 'unmeaning pomp', 'clownish dialect' and the indiscriminate oratory of Johnsonian flourishes. For Hazlitt, as for Burney, affectation is a form of pretence and pretentiousness, a harmful performance, in his account, aimed to deceive. Hazlitt's argument is therefore ethical, as by implication affectation is dishonest and deployed for egotistical ends. Affectation is therefore a great leveller, a performance to be found in the rich, and the aspiring.

It is important to note, however, that although features associated with 'vulgar' talk were widely criticized, they were not universally condemned. Attitudes to language were not monolithic. Recognizing that language was a political issue, John Horne Tooke challenged claims by such mid-century writers as James Harris and James Burnett, that abstract language

⁴³ Piozzi, *British Synonymy*, II, 33.

⁴⁴ Fielding, *The Covent-Garden Journal*, 37, 9 May 1752, in *The Covent-Garden Journal and A Plan of The Universal Register-Office*, ed. by Bertrand A. Goldgar (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1988) pp. 217-221 (p. 218); Hazlitt, 'On Vulgarity and Affectation', *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by Howe, VIII, *Table-Talk, or Original Essays* (1931), pp. 156-168 (p. 156): subsequent references to this essay will be provided in parentheses in the main text wherever possible.

⁴⁵ Fielding's essay carries the epigraph, from Claudian, 'Scilicet in Vulgus manent Exempla Regentum' which is treated ironically in its translation: 'THE CREATURES will endeavour to ape their Betters'

⁴⁶ 'On Familiar Style', *The Complete Works*, ed. by Howe, VIII, *Table Talk*, pp. 242-248: subsequent references to this essay will be provided in parentheses in the main text.

enabled intellectual forms of thought, while language distinguished by more concrete references was confining. Tooke saw the political and ethical implications of this privileging of a language type which would determine people's position in society. As Olivia Smith has observed, 'by disrupting the ideological construction of language's relation to the mind and "civilization", Tooke refuted the major philosophical justification of class division in the last half of the century, and the myriad ideas which depended on it.'⁴⁷ In his argument that abstraction in language derives from concrete terms by a process of abbreviation, Tooke also highlights what language styles have in common rather than emphasising their differences.

2.1.3. Language, Method, and the Mind

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's attention to language revealed his interest in its capacity to illuminate the processing potential of the mind, an individual potential transcending gender and class. An admirer of Tooke's ideas, Coleridge also questioned established theories about language and drew attention to common outcomes of speech styles which were seemingly very different in structures and vocabulary. Coleridge makes a distinction between two styles: that of the ignorant, unreflective man; and that of the thinking man of 'method' which, according to Coleridge, was the mark of a refined and intelligent understanding.⁴⁸ Such ideas can be located in discourses on moral development, claiming that through speech, the 'superior powers' of such a man will 'be impressed and felt' (448) through the 'habitual *arrangement* of his words', for no matter how 'irregular and desultory his talk, there is *method* in the fragments' (449). Coleridge explored the notion that the privileging of memory by the mind of an 'ignorant' man neglects his reflective and processing capacities so that the articulation of ideas merely follows the order of remembered events. Utterances are interrupted by pauses as the memory is searched, disjointed by self-rectifications, and are linked by co-ordinators highlighting sequence ('and then', 'and so') rather than cause and effect (449). Coleridge considers that the man who lacks understanding and therefore method focuses on concrete factors such as time, place and objects; in contrast, 'the mind which has been accustomed to contemplate not *things* only, or for their own sake alone' is able to analyse relational values (451).⁴⁹ Thus for Coleridge, an 'ignorant' 'class' of person, in literature or real life, is an 'unreflecting talker' who, overlooking 'all mental relations', displays 'sterility' of mind (454) such a mind receives merely 'passive impressions' and fails to categorise or generalize (453).

The influential work of James Harris and other universal grammarians of the mid-

⁴⁷ Olivia Smith, p. 130.

⁴⁸ Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 'Essays on the Principles of Method, Essay IV', 1818, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn, 14 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969-1990), IV, *The Friend*, ed. by Barbara E. Rooke, 2 vols, I (1969), 448-457; hereafter, page reference will be cited in my main text; Tooke's influence can be detected in Coleridge's use of the etymology of the word 'method' as part of his argument.

⁴⁹ Coleridge's ideas on a person's preoccupation with *things* alludes to the mechanistic principles criticized by William Wordsworth as laying waste the powers of man: see William Wordsworth, 'The World Is Too Much With Us' (ln 2), written 1802, published in *Poems in Two Volumes*, 1807, in *Romanticism. An Anthology*, ed. by Duncan Wu, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 534.

eighteenth century described the functions of the mind in terms of reflection and sensation. Harris privileged the function which performs acts of reasoning by the process of generalization over the function which processes sensations by focusing on particulars. Sensation needs to be stimulated by the concrete objects of '*Things external*'. Sense is receptive, 'As the Wax', but needs the retentive power of the imagination to commit objects to memory, and to convert them into ideas. For James Burnett, the sense was related to the body and its needs – a focus on the sensual perceptions which is to be differentiated from the intellect; the sense is 'merely passive, receiving like wax the impressions of external objects'; and is 'degraded and debased' by 'its necessary connection with flesh and blood'.⁵⁰ Such descriptors establish a hierarchy in which the intellect is privileged. As Coleridge develops his thesis, he shows that 'confusion and formality are but the opposite poles of the same null-point' (456). Citing examples from *Hamlet* and *Henry IV*, Coleridge reveals the confusion of Mistress Quickly's over-concatenation, but also argues that the Prince of Denmark's propensity to generalize and digress leads to an 'exuberance of mind' which 'interferes with the *forms of method*', so that his speech does not seem to connect with others (454); thus, Coleridge posits, even the most intelligent mind runs the risk of introspection, focusing on the relations of past events to truth and 'to the moods of his own Thought, [...] overlooking that other relation, in which they are likewise to be placed to the apprehension and sympathies of his hearers' (454). For Coleridge, then, balance and proportion of faculties are important in processing a 'leading Thought' so that through a union of the universal and the particular, 'a *progressive transition*' prevents sterility, 'dead arrangement' (457), as well as the confusion of 'mere passive memory' (456).

As with Tooke, Coleridge's discussion refutes established ideas about the partisan relationships between language and class, throwing the focus of attention on the mind of the individual speaker, and raising questions about individual intellectual and moral agency. In her fictional prose Burney uses the speech varieties of two distinct social classes to suggest that they are 'but the opposite poles of the same null-point', the null-point being egotistical obsession with social hierarchy and the absence of sociocentric benevolence. Allocating certain shared speech styles to these two disparate social groups, Burney highlights the self-satisfaction, prejudices, materialism and affectation which they also have in common. In this way, Burney is able to point her social satire at the rich as well as the aspirant. Like Coleridge and Tooke, Burney is able to show that refined language and powers of reasoning are not the automatic birthright of the former, and cannot be purchased by the latter. Depicting each group of speakers as self-conscious performers, Burney's narratives reveal how their social and material identities are inscribed in their speech and behaviour towards others, simultaneously uncovering deeper moral uncertainties.

Modern linguists John Laver and Peter Trudgill have observed that being a listener to speech 'is not unlike being a detective'. Burney applies this to her readers who have to 'construct from an assortment of clues, the affective state of the speaker [character] and a profile of his

⁵⁰ Harris, *Hermes*, pp. 355-356, and p. 159; [James Burnett, Lord Monboddo], *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: A. Kincaid & W. Creech; London: T. Cadell, 1773-1792), 1 (1773) 46-47.

identity'.⁵¹ In accordance with the ideas developed by Hazlitt and Coleridge, Burney's narratives feature protagonists whose conversations incorporate familiar language yet demonstrate 'method'. These characters at the moral centre of the novels also employ features of complex, elaborate speech codes, and are thus equipped to impress the reader, and each other, with their sympathetic understanding and refined moral reasoning skills. Burney's narratives also present a range of characters who are affected and self-serving, whose minds are ignorant, and whose speech is restricted, repetitive and 'vulgar'.⁵² However, Burney's characters deviate from the paradigm suggested by Hazlitt in that although the affluent and the pretentious are situated in separate social circles, each with its own sociolect, each set uses a similar speech style: a style incorporating features of Coleridge's unthinking, unreflective man. Thus Burney's rejection of class-related distinctions disrupts conventional expectations. Hazlitt was writing about real life speech and writing, and speech reflected in the written mode; but Burney's fictional purposes led her to highlight the similarities as well as the differences of the speech styles of some of her characters, bringing their styles into line so that the dialogue of the pretentious resemble that of the circles they emulate. Thus, in the schematized language hierarchies of her novels, the moral deficiencies of all are exposed.

⁵¹ J. Laver and P. Trudgill, 'Phonetic and Linguistic Markers in Speech' in *Social Markers in Speech*, ed. by K. R. Scherer and H. Giles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 1-32 (p. 28).

⁵² As with the other speakers discussed in the next section, Lady Louisa's conversations take place among friends, so a degree of informality can be assumed and understood; however, Burney creates individual idiolects within recognisable sociolect groupings; and she distinguishes her central characters – the heroine, her friends, her mentors, and the hero – even though some of them are the same sex and belong to a similar class; Orville, for example, is Louisa's brother, but his speech is central, formal and 'polite'.

2.2. Surprised by Unruly Talk: The Language of the Fashionable Elite in *Evelina*, *Cecilia* and *The Wanderer*

In this section, discussion will focus on characters identified as the fashionable elite, a group aptly described by Guest as representing indolent frivolity and dissipation.⁵³ Like many other eighteenth-century novels, Burney's fiction is critical of fashionable, elevated rank, her heroines illuminating by contrast the materialistic and ego-driven values of the social elite. Typically, members of this privileged group proclaim their social importance, communicating with ostentatious familiarity, and employing a form of fashionable colloquialism to signify group solidarity, in spite of divisions at individual level. In the three novels discussed in this section, the heroine's transplantation confronts her with new characters who form identifiable social groups. In *Evelina* the heroine is an inexperienced 'nobody', who is forced to reassess her assumptions about aristocratic behaviour and the values it represents. The heroine's account highlights contemporary prejudices which assume that affluent, educated speakers always employ standard, correct forms of language. Treating her own first person narrator ironically, Burney exposes the naiveté of her heroine's early expectations, inviting us to see the 'unruly' language of her fashionable figures as an indicator of vicious and abusive personality traits.⁵⁴ In *Cecilia*, Burney's depictions of fashionable characters shift from first to third person narration, the narrative supporting and undermining Cecilia's initial impressions. The heroine is an heiress, poised, well-read, and yearning for the intimacy of friendship – but she too is disabused of her 'first impressions' of fashionable coteries, opening up debates on female education and the mind. In both novels the exposure of the heroines' assumptions as wrong, places language and conversation at the heart of their development, endorsing eighteenth-century philosophical beliefs in the efficacy of communication for social and moral rectitude while making women the focus of interest. In *The Wanderer* Burney experiments with a new narrative technique, effacing the heroine's preconceptions in the first pages of the novel, so that all the characters are reduced to voices in the darkness. Such confrontations ultimately lead the heroines to reflect on their own values and actions, in a process which expands their understanding and sense of personal autonomy. But in *The Wanderer*, Burney also tests the reader's assumptions about language, social rank, and moral value; thus positioned by the experiential narration, we have to 'read' the 'sign vehicles' of the dialogue as emblems of moral as well as social value.⁵⁵

⁵³ Guest, *Small Change*, p. 23.

⁵⁴ Stigmatized language had long been described as an unruly, libertine force: for example, Swift associated corruptions in language with licentiousness: *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, p. 18; Johnson boasted that he had cleared the language of 'colloquial barbarisms [and] 'licentious idioms': *Rambler*, 208, March, 1752, *Works*, vi, pp. 391-396 (p. 394); on page 2 of the preface to his dictionary, Johnson wrote of the 'caprice' of English spelling, which 'has long wantoned without controul' [sic]: see *A Dictionary of the English Language: in Which the Words Are Deduced from their Originals, and Illustrated in their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: W. Strahan, J. and P. Knapton, T. Longman and Others, 1755-1756), i (1755); further references will be to *Dictionary*, accompanied by a volume number.

⁵⁵ 'Sign vehicle' as explained by Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 13; see also page 51 above.

2.2.1. Fashionable Barbarisms and Aristocratic Misrule in *Evelina*

Lord Merton, Jack Coverley and Lady Louisa form a close group in *Evelina*, a circle of established friends, whose dialogue represents what modern linguists commonly term an open social network within a specific class.⁵⁶ Writing to her guardian and Miss Mirvan, Evelina's narratives try to make sense of the behaviour of this group of people who disrupt her expectations of aristocratic behaviour, founded on traditional concepts of *noblesse oblige*. Their assessment of her, in return, positions her as an object of inferiority, to be used by one, or ignored by another, but to help define the social superiority of all. Thus the novel highlights the dereliction of duty as well as the elitism upon which aristocratic privilege is founded, and as Evelina develops her reflections in her letters, it becomes difficult to distinguish her criticisms from the author's. Lord Merton, as the most powerful male figure in the group, receives particular critical scrutiny, and invites a reading of his character as representing an older model of power based on feudal notions of honour and chivalry, now lapsed into indolent affluence and arrogant posturing.

On first meeting Lord Merton at the Pantheon, Evelina registers him simply as 'a gentleman' sitting at the table of Lord Orville. However, she interrupts her narrative to explain her choice of appellation, and to reflect on her judgement, adding, '— I call him so only because he *was* at the same table,' for 'almost from the moment I was seated, [he] fixed his eyes steadfastly on my face, and never once removed them to any other object during tea-time, notwithstanding my dislike of his staring' (89). Evelina associates such disregard for her need to be respected (what modern linguists call the 'negative face needs') with ungentlemanly behaviour, a code she assigns to elite ranks when she describes her surprise 'that a man, whose boldness was so offensive, could have gained admission into a party of which Lord Orville made one; for I naturally concluded him to be some low-bred, uneducated man' (89). Evelina's conclusion articulates common assumptions, reflected in Chesterfield's associations of anti-social behaviour and vulgar language with 'bad company', and 'low-bred men' of 'low education'.⁵⁷ The narrative therefore registers Evelina's surprise on discovering Merton's status: '*Lordship!* — how extraordinary! that a *nobleman*, accustomed, in all probability, to the first rank of company in the kingdom, from his earliest infancy, can possibly be deficient in *good manners*, however faulty in morals and principles!' Burney's use of italics here highlights traditional associations which equate nobility with good manners, juxtaposing such key concepts with the reality of Merton's behaviour. In his study of the origins of the novel, Michael McKeon identifies such expectations as aristocratic ideology, a world view which accepted inherited 'honour' as a given.⁵⁸ Burney's novel presents its narrator as having internalized such beliefs, and as being genuinely surprised to discover the status inconsistency of Merton and his associates. When Evelina meets Merton again in Bristol his character is 'confirmed' by Mr Ridgeway, the apothecary, to be that of a 'libertine', a nobleman who has already 'dissipated more than half his

⁵⁶ 'Open' because although a closely-knit group, they have social contact with others (see figure 1).

⁵⁷ Chesterfield, *Principles of Politeness and of Knowing the World*, p. 33 and p. 101.

⁵⁸ Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 131-133.

fortune: a professed admirer of beauty, but a man of most licentious character' (227). At this point in her narrative, Evelina is disappointed with Lord Orville, believing he has behaved with 'impertinent freedom' by sending her a 'cruel letter' (228). However, she is still very surprised 'that a man of so abandoned a character should be the choice of a sister of Lord Orville!' (229). Read in the context of her disillusionment with Orville, Evelina's response indicates her continuing assumptions about rank; since she believes Orville to have behaved profligately, she can hardly be objecting to a disparity of moral codes.

The main plot of the novel follows romance conventions by re-establishing the status consistency of those closest to Evelina: Mr Macartney's sensitivity and true worth are explained by his birth credentials as the son of Sir John Belmont; and Sir John himself is revealed to be a reformed rake, who has brought up another child in the belief it was his daughter, Evelina. Nevertheless, Merton and his associates are consistently depicted as dissolute, the novel's ultimate stance being one which questions aristocratic ideology, shifting focus to innate qualities, and to the role of education in nurturing or combating antisocial predilections.

Sensitive to the narrative cue concerning manners, Patricia L. Hamilton sees Merton chiefly as 'a throwback to the seventeenth-century rake whose manners need reforming'.⁵⁹ Hamilton leaves unexplored, however, the novel's commitment to the qualities of mind, rather than a polite education, as qualifying criteria for real superiority and therefore fitness to rule. Evelina's moral perceptions are basically sound, in spite of her social preconceptions which favour, and expect, social polish. Like Jane Austen's later heroine, Catherine Morland, Evelina is guilty of wrong-footed assumptions, but her moral instinct, or her moral sense, is equipped to detect snobbery and aggression. Of key significance in Evelina's narrative is her assumption that Merton is a 'low-bred, uneducated man' (89). Reflecting numerous discourses on the benefits of education to the thinking, social man, Evelina's expression of surprise opens up debates about systems of education and their association with different classes,⁶⁰ and articulates an idealized view of education, which in principle shapes moral virtue to the benefit of social concord – as exemplified by the hero, Lord Orville.⁶¹ In practice, however, education does not always succeed in this end, as illustrated by Lord Merton. Merton's language and interaction, then, are presented as those of an ignorant man, one whose reflective and conceptualizing capacities have not been activated, and subsequently one whose social affections and moral sympathies lie dormant.

The novel registers the paucity of Merton's mind and morals by dialogue dominated by references to objects and concrete facts, and littered with redundant words, like oaths. Even when speaking in his most standard and formal manner about potentially abstract topics, Merton's language is disjunctive, reflecting his debased values. On his first appearance in the novel, Lord Merton is depicted in discussion with Lord Orville and Sir Clement Willoughby, concerning the relative aesthetic merits of architectural splendour in relation to human beauty. Orville engages

⁵⁹ Patricia L. Hamilton, 'Monkey Business: Lord Orville and the Limits of Politeness in Frances Burney's *Evelina*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 19.4 (2007), 415-440 (p. 426).

⁶⁰ Willoughby's question to Evelina, 'why where could you be educated?' (37) reiterates this theme.

⁶¹ Bygrave discusses how textual dialogues between various eighteenth-century thinkers helped shape key educational issues, and highlights how such debates established limits on equality of access from within the Enlightenment project: see *Uses of Education*.

easily with current artistic debates about the function of the human form, man-made constructions, and the picturesque, presenting a view that the sympathetic soul is drawn to beauty of any kind, and that ‘the excellence of art’ is enhanced by ‘the perfection of nature’ (90); his rival, Willoughby, represents himself in contradistinction to Orville’s ‘unimpassioned philosophy’, suggesting that his own heart is ‘not so well guarded’, and is therefore unimpressed by all objects bar one (*Evelina*) (90). Thus the two men debate the merits of reason, sensibility, artistic taste and sympathy. It is Lord Merton, however, who introduces the notion that ‘living objects’ are to be preferred to ‘dead walls and statues’ (89), his incongruous use of the word ‘object’ aligning him with those who, according to James Beattie, use ‘mean words and mean circumstances [which], introduced in the description of what is great and elegant, [...] destroy the sublimity, and debase beauty’.⁶² Merton’s tendency to commodify women is taken up by Captain Mirvan, who wonders if there is ‘e’er a face among them that’s worth half a guinea for a sight’ (90). Merton’s response confirms his objectification of women and his reduction of beauty to a commodity which can be purchased, when he suggests that he would pay half of what he is worth for ‘a sight of only *one*’ woman, provided he could make his own choice, and asks ‘how can money be better employed than in the service of fine women?’ Merton’s allusion to ‘fine women’ echoes the phrase ‘fine wine’, describing them as a product to satisfy an appetite. An undercurrent of prostituted sexuality is also evident here, which the narrative foregrounds later when Evelina encounters prostitutes in the gardens of Vauxhall.

As already discussed, notions of incorrect language assimilated inappropriately colloquial or vulgar styles, so that impoliteness was deemed a matter of stylistic choice for context, as well as an issue of topic and manner. On Merton’s second appearance in the novel, he encounters Evelina in Bristol as she walks with Mrs Selwyn, his utterances marking him as a menacing force by their linguistic choices as well as their content and mode of delivery. In this episode, drawing on confrontations in Restoration drama, and real life abusive acts, the titled aristocrat and his associate perpetuate verbal aggression against women, a misogynistic violence which becomes more brutal and overt later, in their enthusiasm for an old women’s race.⁶³ Initially, Merton gives an early impression of courtesy: his observations are frequently accompanied by the courtly tag ‘by my soul’; and his first address to Evelina is hyper correct, asking a question in a way preferred by Dr Johnson and Burney herself, eschewing the auxiliary verb ‘do’ in favour of unelided inversion, when he asks ‘had not I the honour of seeing you once, at the Pantheon?’ (225). But Merton’s speech quickly slides into the fashionable style associated with Restoration aristocracy, as he exaggerates how he has been searching for Evelina ‘this age’ and freely employs words like ‘creature’ and ‘Pray’. As the conversation continues, Merton breaks gentlemanly codes by employing oaths, first to strengthen his compliment to Evelina (‘I shall wish the place at the devil when you go’, 225) but mostly in reference to Mrs Selwyn, including his misogynistic remark, when he comments, ‘I don’t know what the devil a woman

⁶² Beattie, ‘Illustrations on Sublimity’, in *Dissertations*, pp. 605-655 (p. 647).

⁶³ Barker-Benfield provides graphic examples of late seventeenth-century aristocratic violence against lower status women, including rolling old women in barrel races: see *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 40.

lives for after thirty: she is only in other folk's way' (226). Elsewhere depiction presents Merton as being happy to employ verb forms often associated with common or vulgar usage; for example his question 'shall you be at the assembly?' employs the stigmatized conjugational form 'shall' + 'you'; and his comment 'you are paler than you was' (227), contains a form stigmatized by Robert Lowth as 'an enormous solecism' in the first edition of his grammar, and which was still being criticized at the end of the century. In addition, Merton uses the phrase '*à propos*', an example of an imported French term stigmatized by the *Critical Review* because it was favoured by 'coxcombs of both sexes'.⁶⁴ Such vocabulary and phrases represent Merton as a man who embraces inherited fashionable phrases from a domain associated with prestige and uncontested power, but also a man who parrots such phrases with little thought about their communicative rudeness to others, and even less concern about the paucity of personal sympathy they convey.

Merton's preoccupations and syntax present him as an unmethodical thinker, lacking the reflective capacities, required by Coleridge's theorization, to process experience and achieve moral clarity. His 'rude questions' (226) resemble those of the Branghtons, intruding on Evelina's sense of privacy by focusing on the concrete arrangements of her time in Bristol, asking whether she will 'ride' or visit the 'pump-room', and for other specific details of her life. But significantly, when challenged by Selwyn, Merton's retort anticipates Coleridge's theories on the unmethodical mind focusing on such factors as time, place and objects: ' "As to *places*," returned he, unmoved, "I am so indifferent to them, that the devil take me which way I go! *objects*, indeed, I am not so easy about" ' (226). The syntax assigned to Lord Merton similarly suggests a mind habituated to uncomplicated, unreflective processes. Intellectually capable of longer sentences made up of a variety of subordinate clauses, Merton is depicted as preferring simple or compound sentences. His exchanges are also significant. When he is in the company of his fiancée, his laconic responses indicate his disengagement from her concerns (230):

'You have been, as you always are,' said he, twisting his whip with his fingers, 'all sweetness.'

'O fie, my Lord,' cried she, 'I know you don't think so; I know you think me very ill-natured; — don't you, my Lord?'

'No, upon my honour; — how can your Ladyship ask such a question? Pray how goes time? my watch stands.'

Here, as well as indicating his sadistic nature, the narrative's interrupting of Merton's reported dialogue by the description of his 'twisting his whip' conveys the impression that he pauses to

⁶⁴ Chesterfield's *Principles of Politeness* states that gentlemen never swear, and that such language belongs to people of 'low' education who are not welcome in 'good' company (p. 101); the word 'devilish' is singled out as an anathema (p. 33); Lowth, *A Short Introduction to English Grammar*, p. 48; Henry Hogg, *The New and Complete Universal Letter-Writer; or, Whole Art of Polite Correspondence* (London: Alex. Hogg, 1790) p. 12; review of *A Dictionary of Above Five Hundred Proverbs, or Expressions: For Learners of French and English, Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature*, 39, January 1775, pp.47-54, p. 49, Harvard University Depository, available through Googlebooks [accessed 12 May 2011]. Cindy McCreery points out that French was often used in eighteenth-century texts as a signifier of decadent morality, luxury, and frivolous artificiality: see 'Keeping up with the *Bon Ton*: the *Tête-à-Tête* Series in the *Town and Country Magazine*', in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* ed. Elaine Chalus and Hannah Barker (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 207-229 (p. 208).

think, searching his memory for a suitable compliment. His abrupt change of subject just as Lady Louisa invites a compliment contravenes rules of co-operative conversation as defined by both contemporary conduct book strictures and such later philosophers as Paul Grice, who attached maxims of relevance and truth to descriptions of successful conversation. This style of speaking thus draws on established stereotypes of poor conversationalists, criticized by William Cowper in the *Connoisseur* as 'the Wonderers, who are always *wondering* what o'clock it is'.⁶⁵ In addition, Merton's style anticipates Coleridge's condemnation of 'utterances [which] are interrupted by pauses as the memory is searched, [and] disjointed by self-rectifications' (449). Such expressions mark Merton as an unreflective man, lacking clarity of thought and moral insight.

The impending marriage of Lord Merton and Lady Louisa Larpent promises a prospect of aristocratic misrule, an alliance ungoverned by civic codes of benevolence and social concord. In this respect Merton and Louisa contrast with the companionate marriage of Evelina and Orville, their materialism and lack of mutual affection constantly highlighted by the main narrator, who develops her own understanding of marriage as a social as well as a personal contract, by her observation of others. Like Merton, Louisa illustrates aristocratic derogation of duty, characterized in her as a general uselessness as much as through her over-riding selfishness. For Lady Louisa is presented as being content to be a cipher, and as such, is treated with astute criticism by Evelina's narration, which invites the reader to read between the lines of the character portrayal, and to engage with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debates about the preparedness of such women for the public and private roles they will play.⁶⁶ The novel uses the word 'cipher' to describe Evelina herself, who is dissatisfied with her own imposed passivity, as 'disregarded, silent, and melancholy, she sat like a cipher, whom to nobody belonging, by nobody was noticed' (281). Such a reference might be linked to Mary Astell's treatise on education, which argued that '[n]either God nor Nature have excluded them [ladies] from being Ornaments to their Families and useful in their Generation; there is therefore no reason they should be content to be Cyphers in the World, useless at the best, and in a little time a burden and a nuisance to all about them'.⁶⁷ Thus the novel exposes the inability, or refusal, of fashionable women to benefit from their privileged education, raising questions about the very nature of that education itself.

Lady Louisa's stigmatized language emblematises her intellectual inferiority, her mind ill-equipped for reflection, or self-reflection – what Adam Smith delineated as the self-spectatorship crucial for developing the moral faculty. As such, her stigmatized language also emblematises her unfitness to occupy the position of power which her birthright guarantees. A main feature of her speech is the use of shibboleths, commonly defined as fashionable barbarisms and women's cant. Chesterfield and Cobbett criticized use of 'vulgar' words like 'vastly', which some sources labelled as women's cant; Johnson's dictionary derogated the 'cant' expression

⁶⁵ H. P. Grice *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Cowper, *Connoisseur*, 138, 16 September, 1756: see *Connoisseur By Mr. Town*, 4 vols., 2nd edn, IV (London: R. Balwin, 1757), pp. 252-259 (p. 252).

⁶⁶ Guest discusses the role of mid-century periodical essays in this debate in *Small Change*, pp. 24-30.

⁶⁷ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal To The Ladies, Parts I and II* (1694 and 1697), ed. by Patricia Springborg (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002), p. 59.

‘monstrous’ as an intensifier. Louisa’s conversation is littered with such phrases, as she describes events as ‘monstrous disagreeable’, actions as ‘so monstrous fast’, and passes judgement on friends: ‘I like him monstrously’ (230). Like her fiancé and his set, she unselectively employs the appellation, ‘creature’, which Henry Fielding glossed in *The Covent Garden Journal* as ‘A Quality Expression of low Contempt, properly confined only to the mouth of Ladies who are Right Honourable’; and she favours ‘vulgar’ language for which Piozzi was criticized: contracted auxiliaries dominate Louisa’s talk; she uses the pronoun ‘one’, as when she observes ‘how troublesome the dust is to one’s eyes!'; and employs such other colloquial expressions as, ‘I am quite sick of advice’. In common with other fashionable characters in Burney’s work Louisa overuses exclamations, favouring ‘Lord!’ and the archaic ‘O fie!’. Cant, vulgarity, and barbarism occupy the same censured linguistic space in many eighteenth-century discourses. In several essays in the *Rambler*, Johnson derides the ‘fashionable barbarism[s]’ of different seasons; writing three decades later, Beattie described barbarisms generally as phrases which ‘suggest the ideas of vulgar things, and illiterate persons. Meanness, blended with dignity, is one of those incongruities which provoke laughter’.⁶⁸ In the case of Lady Louisa, her fashionably exaggerated expressions, applied indiscriminately to all topics, are worthy of ridicule. And the incongruity of her social status and her vacuous talk surprises the naïve Evelina, even while it supplies subjects for her satire.

Lady Louisa’s unfitness to rule is further signified by her sociopathic nature, an unreflective egotism which is proclaimed by her preoccupation with concrete aspects of her own comfort.⁶⁹ Further, many of Louisa’s utterances are single-clause or elliptic, commonly relating to self. Others unfold in a chain of clauses from a main clause which is metalinguistic, her favourite phrases being ‘I declare’, and ‘I dare say’; often, subsequent clauses return to a focus on herself in the object noun clause, as when she proclaims:

[Nobody here knows ^C[what is the matter with me, [yet they all see
^O[how indifferent I am.]]]] (235)

Such self-preoccupations and snobbery lead to a pattern of interchanges in which Louisa fails to engage with others. More significantly, she rarely directs any of her utterances to Evelina herself.

⁶⁸ For Chesterfield’s comments on ‘vastly’ see letter CLXIII (27 September 1749), in *Letters*, II, 225; such phrases were often condemned as women’s language, as in *The World*, 6 May 1756: ‘And hence it is that [...] the ear is such a daily sufferer from an identity of phrase, whether it be *vastly, horridly, abominably, immensely, or excessively*, make up the whole scale or gamut of modern female conversation’; Cobbett wrote that such words as ‘*excessively or immensely or vastly or surprisingly or wonderfully or abundantly*’ offend the understanding and are chosen in error because ‘Strength must be found in the *thought*, or it will never be found in the *words*’: see *A Grammar of the English Language: in a Series of Letters Intended for the Use of Schools and Young Persons...* (London: Thomas Dolby, 1819), p. 220; Johnson, *Dictionary*, II: ‘monstrous’, *adv.*, ‘exceedingly’, ‘A cant term’ as in ‘a *monstrous* thick oil’; for Fielding’s gloss of ‘creature’ see ‘A Modern Glossary’, *The Covent-Garden Journal*, 4, 14 January 1752, in *The Covent-Garden Journal and a Plan of the Universal Register-Office*, ed. by Bertrand A. Goldgar (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 35-38 (p. 36); Johnson, *Rambler*, 194, 25 January 1752, *Works* VI, pp. 310-315 (p. 312); Beattie, ‘Illustrations on Sublimity’, in *Dissertations*, p. 652; letter-writing manuals also advised against cant and obsolete words, for example Hogg, *The New and Complete Universal Letter-Writer*, p. 12.

⁶⁹ Louisa comments indiscriminately on roads, dust, dress, phaetons, dinner, morsel and so on, and on parts of the body as she talks of ‘one’s eyes’ (230), ‘tanned’ skin (230), her ‘head’ and how she ‘could not breathe’ (231).

As Burney's fictional world reflects real, contemporary movements and cults, Lady Louisa is situated in a belief system where sensibility is a gauge of feeling in response to others, and therefore of moral aptitude. Since mid-century at least, a range of discourses, mediating medical interest in the nervous system, theorized sensibility as an indicator of moral worth, and literary works were at the forefront in disseminating such notions. Paul Goring observes that Richardson's reformist project relied heavily on promoting sensibility, especially to women; and John Mullan notes the importance of the physical display of emotional sensitivity on the feminine body, its vocabulary being that of illness, as well as 'sighs and tears'. Burney's heroine is characterized by recourse to such vocabulary, her body registering and articulating sincere feeling in response to others, as she blushes, shrinks and faints. As with politeness, which I shall return to in the final chapters of this study, Burney's novels support the phenomenon of sensibility in its original conception, but highlight its potential to be feigned, a nuanced approach described by Miranda J. Burgess as true and false sensibility.⁷⁰ In contrast to the heroine, Louisa is figured as being aware of the vocabulary of sensibility but unable to register it in her body. She compensates for this absence by simulation, which she largely achieves through her language.

To some extent then, the novel supports the notion that social roles are a kind of act, Evelina's own narrative highlighting the strangeness of her new London persona, and disclosing her growing awareness of how her behaviour will be read. But the novel also invests strongly in the notion of correlation – that external forms will, to a large extent, indicate a genuine interior state, predicated on an authentic self. As we shall see in Chapter 3 of this study, such correlations between outer and inner man were employed in acting theories supporting the 'natural' performance of actors not intending to exert their will over an audience. But it is evident from Evelina's narration that Louisa's simulation is an act of will, a conscious effort to perform an aristocratic sensibility and attendant moral virtue in order to distinguish her from those she deems inferior, a main target being Evelina herself.

In her discussion of true and false sensibility, Burgess argues that during the late eighteenth century the sentiment underpinning sensibility was a commodity making women more attractive in the marriage market. As with my argument, Burgess posits that Burney's final three novels 'deplore the consequences that follow when sentiment is falsified by those who would increase their market value without [...] the investment in moral labour'.⁷¹ However, the falsification of sentiment without 'moral labour' is explored in *Evelina* too, through the character of Lady Louisa. During the key conversation about phaeton racing Louisa seizes the conversational floor, displaying extreme emotion, enhanced by that paraphernalia of weakened womanhood, smelling-salts (237): ' "The very mention of such a scheme," said Lady Louisa, taking out her salts, "makes me tremble all over! Indeed, my Lord, you have frightened me to death! I sha'n't eat a morsel of dinner." ' During this whole scene, Louisa's body language and

⁷⁰ Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, repr. 2009) pp. 14-150; John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, p. 61; see Burgess' chapter, ' "Summoned into the Machine": Burney's Genres, Sheridan's Sentiment, and Conservative Critique' in *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order 1740-1830*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 73-112 (p. 90).

⁷¹ Burgess, *ibid.*, p. 89.

verbal choices demonstrate her familiarity with the rhetoric of sensibility. Her theatrical entrance evokes Lydia Languish (Sheridan's 1775 dramatic representation of the sentimental heroine), as she 'passed straight forward to her seat on the sofa, where, leaning her head on her hand, she cast her languishing eyes around the room' (235). Her utterances foreground her nerves, her headache, her lack of appetite, and her being 'half killed', 'sick to death' (234) and 'frightened [...] to death' (237). Discussing the issue of delicacy and sensibility, Susan Staves suggests that delicacy is a key concept' in *Evelina*, arising from responsiveness to the sensibilities and needs of others; Staves notes further that 'true delicacy is opposed to cruelty, impertinence, and boldness.'⁷² Burney's novel highlights the subversion of such values in the character of Lady Louisa, whose appropriation of the rhetoric of sensibility is ultimately for selfish ends: to secure the attention and admiration of Lord Merton. Her efforts fail, however, Merton reporting privately to Evelina his resentment at how she gives 'a charming foretaste of the pleasures of a wife!' adding, 'it won't last long.' The inference here is that it is the natural, unaffected sensibility of Evelina which contributes to her being the preferred model of womanhood.

Burney's first novel promotes the benefits of true sensibility as social, characterizing Louisa's appropriation of its principles as duplicitous and selfish. In addition, the novel supports the notion of decorum, raising questions about a woman's fitness to fulfil her private and public duties when she is happy to present herself as '*nerve* all over!' (235). Thus Burney's novel also engages with growing criticisms of sensibility. Shifting the focus from the personal consequences of genuine, but uncontrolled sensibility, explored by writers like Henry MacKenzie, to incorporate debates about performed false sensibility, carried out in a range of contemporary texts, Burney's novel invokes debates on education, and the preparedness of women of all ranks for the responsibilities of adult life.⁷³ Depicting Lady Louisa as incapable of the fine-wrought, genuine feeling described in the work of such writers as Hannah More, and represented by her own heroine, Evelina, Burney seems to inscribe conservative values in her characterizations.⁷⁴ However, such characterizations also prefigure Wollstonecraftian condemnation of 'sickly delicacy' by presenting Louisa as an unthinking figure, who embraces the infantilized role prepared for her by her education, never thinking how such a role is debasing, in spite of the

⁷² Staves, "Evelina;" or, *Female Difficulties*', pp. 371 and 372.

⁷³ Burney may have had Dr John Gregory's 1774 treatise in mind when she created the character of Lady Louisa: Gregory discouraged his daughters from affecting delicacy, but added 'it is better to run the risk of being thought ridiculous than disgusting'; Gregory also praised 'extreme sensibility' in women: see *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, 2nd edn (London: W. Strahan, T. Cadell; Edinburgh: J. Balfour and W. Creech. 1774), p. 36 and p. 27. In her treatise on education (1799), Hannah More considers affected behaviour, which contemporary education encouraged girls from the higher ranks to perfect, commenting how a young woman's 'merely ornamental' life 'resembles that of an actress; the morning is all rehearsal, and the evening is all performance': see 'Comparison of the Mode of Female Education in the Last Age with the Present', in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education: With a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent Among Women of Rank and Fortune*, 2nd edn, corrected, 2 vols (London: A. Strahan, T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1799), I, 105-118 (p. 115). Discussing the education of women below the highest ranks, in *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft attacks affectation and 'sickly delicacy' as performance (p. 29); whether feigned or not, sensibility is seen by Wollstonecraft to enslave women 'because it is by sensibility that they obtain their present power (p. 61), and to be associated with 'natural selfishness' which needs to be 'expanded by reflection' (p. 66).

⁷⁴ In her poem 'Sensibility' (1782), More writes that 'The fine wrought spirit feels acuter pains', and that 'She does not feel thy pow'r who boasts thy flame, | And rounds her every period with thy name; [...] | Nor she who melts when hapless Shore expires. | While real mis'ry unreliev'd retires!': see 'Sensibility', in *The Works of Hannah More: A New Edition in Eighteen Volumes, Including Several Pieces Never Before Published*, 19 vols (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1818-1821), *Poems*, I (1818), p. 171 and 180 (n. lns).

social privileges of her aristocratic rank. Thus Louisa's false consciousness can be seen to underpin the readiness with which she performs her role, and acts out the power conferred by rank, on others. Louisa inhabits the social sphere of the fashionable elite revealed by the narrative to be shallow, false and selfish. Nevertheless, her disdain for Evelina aligns her with Hazlitt's notion of gentility, being 'a more select and artificial kind of vulgarity' which 'judges of the worth of everything by name [and] fashion' and seeks for 'a foil in imperfection' in order to triumph.⁷⁵

2.2.2. Coterie Slang in *Cecilia*: Language and Morals Fallen into Decay

Burney's second novel explores further the extent to which fashionable women lay waste their powers, content to live shallow lives of unthinking selfishness. But through the relationships of her heroine with other female characters, Burney's novel sharpens the focus on late eighteenth-century debates about the roles and abilities of women to be active and virtuous in society. Thus the novel engages with prominent contemporary controversies about women's groups, and with texts concerning women's personal and social identities. Such areas of interest are linked to long-standing debates about education, and about privileged female sociability, conducted with renewed vigour in the 1770s, when discursive focus rested on the activities of the Ladies' Club, also known as the Coterie. Although founded by women and being known as the Ladies' Club, the Coterie was mixed sex, attracting such key Whig figures as Horace Walpole. However, as Gillian Russell has argued, the Coterie's appropriating models of male clubs to create opportunities for female sociability was represented in contemporary sources as a threat to homosocial gatherings.⁷⁶ Such sources derogated the Coterie by associating it with gambling, masquerades, and licentious behaviour, some offering alternative models of public virtue, more appropriate to the modesty required of women. As this section will demonstrate, this controversy is played out in *Cecilia*, with the coteries of certain female characters being juxtaposed with Cecilia's own domestic arrangements and charitable works. In this respect, the novel locates debates concerning women's rights to socialize publicly, in discussions about the primacy of privileged ranks, and the ability to practise, and maintain, civic virtue. The novel thematizes these interlocking areas of interest by dialogue distinguished by the fashionable style – that is, by dialogue signifying inadequate reflective powers in its penchant for concretization, in the patterns of its syntax, and its exaggerated expression of feeling.

The plotting of *Cecilia* immediately locates the heroine in a new social circle of established friends which, like the groups in *Evelina*, constitute an open social network within a specific class.⁷⁷ Thus Burney can employ broad brush-strokes to offer rapid access to interiority

⁷⁵ 'On Vulgarity and Affectation', p. 158 and p. 159.

⁷⁶ Gillian Russell, "'Dissipation's hydra reign', Almack's and the Coterie' in *Women, Sociability and the Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 63-87 (p. 69).

⁷⁷ Cecilia moves to London in Chapter 3, to live with one of her guardians, Mr Harrel, and his wife, Priscilla. The open network of the Harrels consists of fashionable friends who inter-relate with other networks – hence 'open'.

and moral worth, highlighting the alien values of the London elite, and dramatizing the dangers of power without common sympathy, and of authority without virtue or a sense of public responsibility. Such representations of social disengagement recognize contemporary ideas about fashionable women, and concerns that women's education should teach them to think, compensating for any potential intrinsic weaknesses, so that women might question 'things as they are', rather than being passively customized to be preoccupied with surface structures. Thus although Cecilia is an heiress, her powers of analysis and lack of materialism set her apart from her social circle, making it almost impossible for her to communicate at all with her new acquaintances, whose conversation is depicted as consisting of a language fallen into decay.

Mrs Harrel is described as 'amiable and obliging, and therefore sufficiently deserving affection' if not 'respect' and 'love' (21); however, as Anna Barbauld observed, she is trifling, vain and 'incapable of serious thought or strong feeling'.⁷⁸ As such she is gradually exposed as irresponsibly passive, content for her husband to get deeper into debt, and for Cecilia to be married off to a libertine. From the moment of her arrival, Mrs Harrel avoids confidential conversation, and is evasive when Cecilia tries to make her recognize her private and public duties. Miss Larolles, Mrs Harrel's 'VOLUBLE' friend (40), is a fashionable socialite who explains to Cecilia how the exclusive ticket system of the coterie system works.⁷⁹ Larolles's explanation explicitly invokes contemporary discussions of the Coterie, or Ladies' Club, and introduces Cecilia to the 'rituals of inclusion and exclusion' functioning to control patronage, which the club operated.⁸⁰ Larolles is seen by John Wiltshire as 'a comic fool' whom the novel treats 'with a mode of kindness', cheating the reader of contempt.⁸¹ Constituting a flatter version of her namesake in Burney's play, *The Witlings* (1779), and of such later manifestations of her type as Isabella Thorpe, in *Northanger Abbey* (1817), Miss Larolles is, however, a force to be reckoned with, whose disapproval Cecilia learns to fear. Thus Cecilia reassesses her first impressions of both women, her predisposition towards her old friend, and her wry appreciation of her new acquaintance, turning to censure and fear.

Larolles's preoccupation with material objects indicates her acquisitive selfishness, her nadir occurring in her recital of a bankruptcy, when she itemizes the personal effects to be auctioned and acquired by people like herself (31). Mrs Harrel also focuses on objects, her utterances littered with concrete nouns signifying her preoccupation with the paraphernalia of modish life. The narrative foregrounds such mechanical interests, the focalized commentary highlighting Cecilia's disappointment with the changes in her childhood friend (32), for 'she found her insensible to friendship, indifferent to her husband, and negligent of all social felicity. Dress, company, parties of pleasure, and public places, seemed not merely to occupy all her time, but to gratify all her wishes'. It is Mrs Harrel's obsession with things that leads her to the

⁷⁸ 'Miss Burney' in *The British Novelists; With an Essay and Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, 50 vols (London: F. C. and J. Rivington and Others, 1810), xxxviii, pp. i-xi (p. iv).

⁷⁹ Miss Leeson is in the same social set, though her personal 'coterie' is that of the 'SUPERCILIOUS' (40), meaning that she largely remains silent; caught 'backstage', as it were, by Cecilia later in the novel, her speech is reported very briefly, her stock exaggerations aligning her immediately with her fashionable friends (323).

⁸⁰ Russell, p. 63 and p. 69.

⁸¹ '“The Inimitable Miss Larolles”: Frances Burney and Jane Austen’, in *A Celebration of Frances Burney*, ed. by Lorna J. Clark (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 218-226 (p. 225).

extravagant refurbishment of the Harrels' London properties, her unbridled spending being as much to blame for their eventual bankruptcy as Mr Harrel's losses at gambling.⁸² The narrative makes it clear that the Harrels' sociability and desire to acquire the trappings of status are to be distinguished from 'social felicity', a phrase evoking the socially turned man of moral philosophy, the irony being that in spite of all their sociable interactions, the Harrels are not social at all. Such obsession with materiality and sensations is presented as an obstruction to conceptual thought which, as we have seen, was recognized by such prominent Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers as Burnett and Coleridge.

Syntax articulates these characters' lack of reflection, signalling minds limited to recall, and therefore minds ill equipped for improvement. Mrs Harrel's flawed thinking is reflected in her grammar; for her syntax slips out of control as easily as money.⁸³ When discussing her expenditure, for example, she exclaims,

MnCl ['Lord, I can't tell] — but MnCl[I know Sb Noun Cl [it is — Sb Adverbial Cl [because — I am very certain Sb Noun Cl [it is.']]]] (194)

Here, the adverbial clause of reason provides no reason, but merely reiterates her selfish compulsion to spend. Mrs Harrel also makes frequent use of coordinating clauses, linking her utterances in a chain of associated ideas, as when she discusses places to visit in London (66):

[‘I should have got you in for a subscriber:] but [Lord, I have done nothing for you yet,] and [you never put me in mind.] [There’s the ancient music, and Abel’s concert;] — [as to the opera, we may have a box between us;] — but [there’s the ladies’ concert [we must try for;]] and [there’s — O Lord, fifty other places [we must think of!’]]

Similarly, the grammar of Miss Larolles's utterances is dominated by clauses linked by such conjunctions as 'and' and 'but', as when she advises Cecilia,

[[‘Oh there’s nothing in that,’] returned she,] [‘for Mrs. Harrel can acquaint her [you are here]], and then, [you know,] [she’ll send you a ticket,] and [then you can go.’] (24)

As with Coleridge's views on lack of method in syntax, late eighteenth-century linguists saw 'over-concatenation' as a sign of inability to organize memories and reflect.⁸⁴ In an appendix to

⁸² In an essay which argues that Cecilia's benevolence is *not* a sign of agency, Cynthia Kleker positions Mrs Harrel in contradistinction to Cecilia's voice of reason; locating Mrs Harrel in conduct book prescriptions which make a wife responsible for regulating the financial capital brought to a marriage by the husband, Kleker argues that Mr Harrel 'rightly targets' Mrs Harrel as having ruined him by neglecting her wifely duties. While I have recognized that the novel presents Mrs Harrel as part responsible for the bankruptcy, I feel that the narrative explicitly describes her as 'innocent of heart', and evokes her childhood relationship with Cecilia, in order to exonerate her, to some extent, from her learnt dissipation through her marriage. In this way, the reader is presented with her potential to reform, though of course, a reformation is not forthcoming: see Cynthia Kleker, '“Her Gift Was Compelled”: Gender and the Failure of the “Gift” in *Cecilia*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 18.1 (2005), 107-126, especially pp. 124-5.

⁸³ Parts of this discussion are adapted from passages in Christina Davidson, 'Conversations as Signifiers: Characters on the Margins of Morality in the first Three Novels of Frances Burney', *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 8.2 (2010), 277-304 (pp. 290-291).

⁸⁴ 'Essays on the Principles of Method', p. 454; and see p. 77 above.

his grammar book (1795), James Murray offered ‘Rules and Observations for Promoting Perspicuity in Speaking and Writing’, arguing that, ‘Thought and expression act and re-act upon each other mutually. The understanding and language have here, as in many other cases, a strict connection; and those who are learning to arrange their sentences with accuracy and order, are learning, at the same time, to *think with accuracy and order*’. As Carey McIntosh notes, haphazard concatenation distinguished colloquial talk; such a feature of ‘vulgar’ language continued to be strongly stigmatized, with nineteenth-century, advice manuals on speaking and on letter-writing warning against such choices.⁸⁵ Although such syntactic features are associated by McIntosh with lower-class English, their significance goes beyond a sociolinguistic function to assume moral significance. For as we have seen, such thought-processes were perceived as being incapable of reflecting on and learning from experiences; in addition, they were construed as predisposed for appreciating materiality rather than connecting with another person’s mind.

Contrasts between the moral integrity of Cecilia and these women are registered through their capacities for feeling. Cecilia engages closely with the actions of others, her compassion activating her benevolence, even to the Harrels themselves. But Mrs Harrel and Miss Larolles lack the capacity for such social sympathy, the former failing to appreciate the depth of her own husband’s despair until it is too late to help him. Nevertheless, both women are depicted as performing a kind of debased sensibility, reduced to a series of mawkish expressions whose crystallization of a larger rhetoric traduces its original significance.

Expressions of feeling are typically attached to a broad range of Mrs Harrel’s statements and suggest her desire to perform an emotional life. Fashionable, modifiers intensifying meaning, such as ‘vastly’ (70) litter her speech; other favourite signifiers of emotional response include such empty exclamatory phrases as ‘lord’, ‘heavens!’ and the deeply emblematic ‘O!’⁸⁶ Such clichéd articulations of affect, however, are not borne out by Mrs Harrel’s actions, nor do they contribute to a sense that she is impressed and impelled by such feelings to reflect on her experiences. Prompted to remember her former ‘self’ by Cecilia, who contrasts the quieter pursuits of her youth with the bustle of her present life (29), Mrs Harrel merely replies, ‘but what in the world could I know of parties or company then?’ Associated with the sociolect of her tonnish friends, Mrs Harrel’s idiomatic phrases are presented as learned expressions, linguistic simulacra of an intensity of response which she does not actually feel.

Unlike Lady Louisa, Burney’s earlier fashionable female figure, the character of Mrs Harrel is revealed to have more depth. Used in the loan bargaining of her husband with Cecilia, she gradually becomes more involved in his anxieties over debt, and her fears over his growing instability seem genuine. When narration foregrounds Harrel’s violence towards his wife, her character invokes sympathy (297). But her responses are depicted as instinctively self-protective,

⁸⁵ Lindley Murray, *English Grammar Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners, with an Appendix Containing Rules and Observations for Promoting Perspicuity in Speaking and Writing* (York: Wilson, Spence and Mawman, 1795), pp. 179-222 (p. 222); McIntosh, *Common and Courtly Language*, p. 28; Hogg’s, *The New and Complete Universal Letter-Writer*, p. 12: ‘I hate particles where they are avoidable; be therefore sparing in your *fors*, your *but*s, and *ands*.’

⁸⁶ For example, ‘O, Heaven knows; I’ll show you my catalogue’ (32) and ‘O, [...] don’t think of wondering at that, for it happens continually. He dines at home, indeed, in general, but otherwise I should see nothing of him at all’ (30).

rather than engaging with the fate of others, and it is only when her husband kills himself that Mrs Harrel becomes sensible of his misery. At this point in the novel, description associates her with the heroine, as they both are shocked into silence, too horrified to help each other (415); and it is this association, through sensibility, that marks Mrs Harrel's potential for reformation – a potential turning-point.

Mrs Harrel therefore becomes a site of contention between the influences and affections of early childhood, and those of an adult, dissipated life; as such, she becomes a parallel test case with the heroine in the novel, which dramatizes how intrinsic qualities of mind confront or recoil from practical difficulties and moral challenges. After her husband's death Mrs Harrel submits to the insights of others, and seems genuinely appreciative of her friend and brother. Ultimately, however, she is presented as unable to benefit from the education which she shared with Cecilia, and incapable of altering her imitated habits. The narrative makes it clear that Mrs Harrel will not change; that she is Cecilia's inferior in 'understanding and intelligence' (713); that she lacks 'inherent resources' (792) and returns to a life of dissipation as soon as she can find a new husband (940). It is therefore the lack of intrinsic qualities which prevents Mrs Harrel from being reformed by her friend. In contrast, Cecilia withstands the tests of her life in London, and is determined to make Mrs Harrel the object of her disinterested benevolence. Having used her inheritance to buy a house, Cecilia invites Mrs Harrel and Miss Belfield to join her. Once installed, Cecilia facilitates cultural pursuits, and exercises her benevolence to her friends and others, both on her estate and in London. Situated between the contrasting sociability styles and attitudes to virtue represented by Cecilia and Miss Larolles, Mrs Harrel also becomes a site of contention between different modes of operation for female sociability and virtue.

Two letters published in *The Public Advertiser* in the summer of 1770 demonstrate the modes of female sociability and virtue, which are also explored in *Cecilia*.⁸⁷ A letter from AZ, or 'Historiographer of the Ladies Society' derogated the members of this club, by alleging and ridiculing their sexual licentiousness. In June, the magazine published 'A Plan for an Unexceptional Female Coterie', providing an alternative to the midnight 'conversations' presently occurring. This plan advocated that women should meet at the house of someone who would provide books, musical instruments and other means of educative expansion, and that discussion would centre on philosophy and morals 'for the good of society'. The 'Plan' blames men for the present state of women's associations, asserting that their 'sarcasms on female literature have driven away many a modest fair one from the arms of wisdom, into the bolder embraces of pleasure; as if men were safer with a wife bred at the card-table, than a writing-desk'. To some extent, the novel aligns itself with this view, offering a heroine who tries to create such a coterie, drawing on arguments represented by the 'Plan', to promote the role of literature, and education, in developing women's public virtues.

The promotion of such seeming retirement for women is, in fact, a *means* of them becoming equipped for active, public life, the boundaries between private and public thus being blurred in the novel. Volume I opens with a discussion of whether Cecilia will accommodate

⁸⁷ Gillian Russell has drawn attention to these letters: see pp. 76-78; quotations are from p. 78.

herself to received customs, and ‘pursue quietly the track that is already marked out’ (14). But as the action unfolds, in her own dealings with social and cultural pressures, and in her exhortations to Mrs Harrel not to be ‘blindly guided by other people’ (195), Cecilia proclaims her active private morality and the right of all women to confront established customs. Cecilia’s proclamation contravenes some contemporary views which figured *all* women as suited to retirement, such as views explored in *The Progress of the Female Mind*, in a passage which anticipates ideas later dramatized in Burney’s novel, suggesting that women ‘seem given implicitly to tread the path in which education happens to have introduced them, doomed never to cast a glance beyond it, nor ask whence it derives or where it leads. Supposed to see no further than the surface of things’.⁸⁸ Cecilia’s proclamation also articulates her right to intervene in the lives of others, a right she puts into practice later, when she proposes to redistribute her wealth. These charitable interventions with Mrs Harrel are only temporarily effective; but Cecilia’s other efforts are depicted as successful, and worthy uses of her power. Such strands in the novel’s plotting work through the writer’s ‘*democrate*’ reactions, to the use and abuse of power highlighted at the start of this chapter, indicating the political mediations of her work.

As with other fashionable characters in Burney’s fiction, Miss Larolles’s and Mrs Harrel’s speech is distinguished by many features proscribed by popular works on grammar.⁸⁹ These kinds of grammatical irregularities are more likely to occur in real-life spontaneous speech but, as Lennard J. Davis notes, the fictional representation of speech generally tidies up such slips, making represented conversations more accurate and lucid.⁹⁰ When writers include spoken irregularities, they do so for a reason, commonly to present class, racial or regional affiliations. Burney’s choices are on moral as well as social and gender grounds, her narratives highlighting such proscribed language structures as indicators of a propensity to moral deviance. Thus, although Mrs Harrel’s language is less florid, less repetitive, and slightly more varied than that of Miss Larolles, it is still to be categorized as fashionable, for it is characterized as affected, vulgar, and stigmatized. These nuances in the dialogue of the two characters are important for suspense, for they help the reader understand Cecilia’s belief in her friend, and hint at the possibility of reform. However, when judged against the dialogue of Cecilia, the represented speech of Mrs Harrel jars. As noted earlier, Edgeworth – who admired Burney greatly – assigned one of her own characters the observation that if women would judge people by their words, ‘they would get at their natural characters’.⁹¹ Systematizing speech in her own novels, Burney offered her readers the opportunity to be ahead of her heroine, and to know that if Cecilia had judged her friend by the same criteria as she judged Miss Larolles, she would have ‘got at’ her natural character straightaway.

⁸⁸ ‘A Letter to a Christian Divine’ in *The Progress of the Female Mind*, p. 71: in Guest, *Small Change*, p. 137.

⁸⁹ Mrs Harrel uses contractions at all times, favours phrasal verbs, and utters grammatical irregularities, as when she observes ‘there’s – O Lord, fifty other places we must think of’ (66); Miss Larolles also contracts verbs and uses forms which contravene contemporary regulations, as when she asks ‘you shall be there, sha’n’t you?’ (24) ‘I suppose she don’t like me?’ (63); Larolles also favours clichés: ‘Do you know’, ‘Don’t you know’, and ‘only conceive’; there are various examples of the first two expressions on pp. 24 and 25, to which one might add ‘Who should I meet but...’ and ‘what do you think...’, p. 45. ‘Examples of ‘only conceive’ can be found on pp. 24, 29, 31, 44 and 45.

⁹⁰ Lennard J. Davis, ‘Conversation and Dialogue’, *The Age of Johnson*, ed. by Paul Korshin, 20 vols (New York: AMS Press, 1987-), 1 (1987) 347-374 (p. 363 and pp. 357-8).

⁹¹ *Helen*, 1834, p. 155.

2.2.3. *The Wanderer*: Illuminating Speech in the Darkness

In her final novel, *The Wanderer*, Burney returns to her former interest in social rejection and alienation, the introductory paragraphs of the narrative withholding the usual signifiers of identity, of social and moral alignments, so that the reader has to work hard to identify and categorize the characters in order to predict who will emerge at the moral centre of the plot and who will be marginalized. The dialogue in the early paragraphs is therefore loaded with signification, testing the meanings attached by the reader to such emblems of personal and social value.

The opening of *The Wanderer*, exploits Burney's contemporaries' fears of deception and disguise, fears which predated the revolutionary decades but which intensified during the final years of the eighteenth century when political suspicion reached new heights.⁹² Adapting the well-worn trope of the coach journey as an opportunity to assume false identities in order to deceive, Burney presents a clandestine sea crossing, set against the reign of revolutionary terror.⁹³ Stripping the characters of the usual trappings of identity and presenting them in darkness, the narrative represents them as a collection of voices in the night, allowing their utterances to speak volumes about social standing, personality, and moral codes. The characters themselves are thrown into disorientation with the arrival of the Incognita, and there is a concerted effort by all to obtain from her signs of social signification. Denied such details as her name and family membership, the passengers debate her mother tongue, reading her clothing and even her skin in their efforts to locate her race, nationality and class. However, it is Harleigh (who will emerge as the hero) who is alert to the Incognita's refined and sympathetic speech style, answering accusations that she is a vagabond by asserting that 'neither her language nor her manners incline me to that opinion' (30). The language of the other passengers is of significance too, allowing the reader to make rapid early assessments of the roles they are about to play in the narrative. The content of their utterances goes some way in proclaiming the selfish bigotry of the majority of the group, but Burney underscores such antipathetic qualities by assigning them conversational and language features which jar with the styles of characters at the moral centre of the novel, and with the narrative style itself.

In spite of Burney's own concern that the speakers in this group are too similar, differences in their speech styles distinguish their utterances.⁹⁴ At the same time, their very similarity is emblematic of hegemonic power in the novel, and prefigures the way characters will close ranks against Juliet, in spite of differences at local level. Group solidarity is manifest in

⁹² Jack Lynch's statistical analysis of titles in the ESTC, containing the word 'authentic' supports the generalization, which prefaces his study of forgeries, that 'Eighteenth-Century Britons were convinced that theirs was an exceptional age of deception': *Deception and Detection in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 1; see also Maximilian E. Novak, *English Literature in the Age of Disguise* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

⁹³ An article in, *Adventurer*, 84, 25 August 1753, describes a coach journey; highlighting the awkward silences, and the showing off, the article concludes that the coach journey is a symbol of life where everyone 'takes the same advantage of the ignorance of his fellow travellers' and 'disguises himself in counterfeited merit': *Works*, III, 190-196 (p. 196); Lennox begins *Henrietta* (1758) with a coach journey where passengers take in an unknown young woman.

⁹⁴ In the interleaved first edition of *The Wanderer* now in the Henry W. and A. Berg Collection, Burney has written on a page in Chapter VI of Volume 1 that she thought Mrs Maple 'too like Mrs Irton': see the interleaved edition, p. 112, which corresponds with p. 56 of the Oxford edition; there is indication that Burney intended to foreground Irton's egotism: for example, see the interleaved edition p. 2, Oxford, p. 12.

speech styles which bind together the characters Mrs Ireton and her son, Mrs Maple, and Mr Riley, all main antagonists of the *Incognita*. The speech of Mrs Maple, Mrs Ireton and Mr Riley is characterized by sarcasm, all displaying a tendency to derogate the desolate heroine. In particular, Maple and Ireton emphasize the social distance between the newcomer and themselves, illustrating the notion articulated by Hazlitt that 'genteel' people are 'constantly sneering' and 'endeavouring to distinguish themselves from the vulgar'.⁹⁵ All repeatedly use the qualifiers, 'such' and 'so', words which were seen as limited, and which earned Piozzi much criticism; three of them pepper their utterances with colloquial phrases and idioms: Mrs Maple uses such feedback expressions as 'very pretty' (26) and the common boundary marker 'well'; Mr Ireton muses how he 'scampered' all over the continent but no one 'hit [his] fancy' (16); and Mr Riley talks of 'hodge-podged' conspiracies (15), the *Incognita*'s 'fisty-cuffs', and being 'in the wars' (20). Mrs Maple and Mr Riley both use the informal word 'crazy' to describe the boat; both favour contracted words, and use the auxiliary verb 'do' in a fashionable, non-standard construction, Mrs Maple when she asks, 'Why don't she tell us that?' (29), and Mr Riley when he announces that 'the demoiselle don't understand English' (19). Further, both characters litter their words with redundant fillers, Maple favouring the expression 'upon my word', and the politeness marker 'pray' which she uses on five occasions, Riley preferring the more self-orientated pointer of his own veracity by the use of the word 'faith', which he employs twelve times in the first two chapters.⁹⁶ McIntosh argues that 'novelists appropriated courtly-genteel phrases to give their characters a varnish of politeness'. Such phrases as 'faith' and 'upon my honour' certainly invoke a code of behaviour founded on social networks where conferring and receiving favour were based on loyalty and obligation. As such, they might be described as archaic, a linguistic feature seen by McIntosh as distinguishing lower-class speakers of the time. If this is so, then such fashionable expressions draw the speakers closer to the classes whose 'vulgarity' they seek to avoid.⁹⁷

That Burney made a conscious choice of a non-standard sociolect to indicate the sterility of mind and morality of her group of antagonists is evident from the function of abstract and concrete concepts in their dialogue. Coleridge's man of mean understanding focuses on concrete factors such as time, place and objects, a preoccupation with the external world which, as we have seen, earlier, mid-eighteenth-century linguists associated with primitive, degraded states. Mrs Ireton displays an acute sensitivity to the inappropriateness of certain physical properties, juxtaposing the presence of the 'vagabond', Juliet, with her own 'person' (29), and showing a disgust at the notion of the 'passage' or the 'kitchen' as a place of conference (27). Similar preoccupations with concrete objects are evident in the language of the other characters, especially in the way they respond to the *Incognita*: Mr Ireton focuses on her 'skin' and 'garb' (29), even calling her a 'grim thing' (27); Mr Riley comments on her 'eyes', 'nose' and skin, which only 'wants a little bleaching' (27); and he refers to her simply as 'a body' when

⁹⁵ Hazlitt, 'On Vulgarity and Affectation', pp. 156-7.

⁹⁶ Examples are on pp. 14, 17, 21, 23 and 31; Mr Riley uses the opener, 'pray' (19).

⁹⁷ McIntosh, *Common and Courtly Language*, p. 77.

imagining her death, ‘with never a friend to own her body if she drowned’ (21); Mrs Maple goes further, referring to the young woman as ‘that body’ (23), ‘this body’ (31) and ‘such a body’s mind’ (16). Such deconstruction of the Incognita reduces her to a series of anatomical parts, the group’s dissection, nonetheless failing to discover either her social markers or her deeper worth. Their language reduces her further as, failing to engage sympathetically with Juliet’s humanity, Mr Ireton describes her as ‘a black insect’ (27) and Mr Riley associates her with monkeys and cats (17).

Lack of refinement and limited moral judgement is reflected in the syntax of all four characters, which favours restricted code features, paralleling Coleridge’s notion of simple or merely sequential, unprocessed utterances. Such syntax features a large proportion of minor, ellipted and simple sentences. When co-ordinating conjunctions are used, they frequently begin an utterance; and if used to join clauses, they do not construct balanced clauses to enhance a reasoned argument or tone, but rather to highlight opposition.⁹⁸ There are a few exceptions to this pattern of syntax, but such exceptions are so scarce that when the Incognita does speak at length, her utterance strikes Harleigh, and the reader, by its complexity:

[[‘If he has the infinite goodness [to intend me any, Sir,]] permit, at least, [that he may be my only pecuniary creditor!] [I shall want no addition of that sort, [to remember, — gratefully and for ever! [to whom it is [I owe the deepest obligation of my life!]’]]]]

The narrative foregrounds Harleigh’s response to the social indicators of the utterance, as he doubts that she can be a housemaid (34). A reader alert to Burney’s use of linguistic features as touch stones of morality will respond to the complex, standard forms, as well as the morally loaded vocabulary of her utterances, and will recognize (even at this early stage of the novel) that these characters will be the Incognita’s morally inferior antagonists in the chapters to come.

The fashionable or merely wealthy characters in Burney’s novels are to be identified by social dialects made up of shibboleths documented in contemporary extraliterary sources. As such they form a readily identifiable group across the novels, though as this section demonstrates, they vary also from novel to novel. Individuals within the groups also stand out, with characterizations taking into account such variables as age and gender, as well as particular personalities. Writers before Burney also represented tightly knit group dynamics, especially of powerful characters who were antagonistic towards the protagonists, but few came close to Burney’s achievements in creating a sense of group identity while providing nuanced differences for each speaker. In *The Cry* (1754) Jane Collier and Sarah Fielding present a group of uniform speakers in juxtaposition to the heroine’s voice; and in *The Excursion* (1777) Frances Brooke offers a key scene where a fashionable coterie is represented as a united force, plotting the downfall of the heroine; thus

⁹⁸ For example, Mrs Maple announces ‘you may take the rest of the company round, wherever you chuse [sic], but as to me, I desire to be landed directly’ (21).

their language is unitary, and their dialogue is not even distinguished by speaker names. Of Burney's contemporaries, Charlotte Smith, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen were gifted in reproducing group and individual dialects. Each admired Burney's work greatly, and post-dated her in their fiction-writing careers. It is fair to assume, therefore, that these writers looked to Burney for inspiration, and built on the advancements she had already made in this area. Other writers admired, but were not so successful in reproducing group and individual speech. For example, Mrs Thicknesse, who acknowledges Burney in her prefatory dedication to *The School of Fashion* (1800), creates homogenized speakers whose introductions are accompanied by intrusive and lengthy authorial explanation of character. In *Walsingham* (1797) Mary Robinson produces a lengthy interchange between socially elite speakers, even echoing *Evelina*, when a young woman ridicules the ignorant hero with the question, 'Where in the name of Heaven were you born?'.⁹⁹ Although this speaker offers a rare example of a female character uttering oaths in prose fiction of the period, the dialogue of the characters in this interchange is generally uniform, with little to distinguish the characters from others in the novel. As the next section indicates too, Burney was skilled at suggesting similarities between high and low-born characters, their shared spoken characteristics indicating less tangible resemblances such as processes of mind and absence of social sympathy which, as we have seen, were presented in the novels as prerequisites of moral virtue.

⁹⁹ Frances Brooke, *The Excursion*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Hope D. Cotton (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), pp. 69-71; *The School for Fashion. In Two Volumes. By Mrs. Thicknesse*, 2 vols (London: H. Reynell, 1800), I, 9-13; *Walsingham*, p. 181.

2.3. Aspiration and Emulation in *Evelina* and *Camilla*

This section considers characters who are presented as aspiring and pretentious, and argues that it is not the false consciousness of such characters which Burney's novels condemn, so much as the harm they are prepared to do to others in order to achieve their goals. Critical of an elite class whose privileges were not underpinned by social values incorporating benevolence, nor living by codes regulated by sympathy, Burney's novels are equally condemning of those who aspire to elite life-styles while revelling in their self-perceived superiority and neglecting their fellow man. *Evelina* and *Camilla* present groups of characters who aspire to fashionable living. Hoping to enter elite circles, such characters parade their acquisitions in an elaborate display of class. Having newly acquired wealth, many of these characters perform what they believe is their new status through their clothes and conversation. The talk of these aspirants is shown not to resemble the standard, rational dialects of the narratives' protagonists, but the modish colloquialisms of the fashionable rich, whom they emulate.

Theories of social emulation engaging with social mobility in the eighteenth century have been criticized by social historians like Lorna Weatherill, who considers the role of consumer behaviour in the period before Burney wrote. However, as Harriet Guest has shown, cultural emulation was manifest in different ways, and such behaviour was very pervasive throughout the eighteenth century. In particular, writers of the period were aware of the ways ideas and value systems could be imbued and reproduced through different levels of social structure, and some articulated concerns about the pitfalls of such processes. As we have seen, the anonymous writer of *The Progress of the Female Mind* observed that opinions 'descend from the higher to the lower ranks', that 'inferiors copy after their superiors, in their mode of thinking as well as dress'. Like Burney, this writer was concerned with the ideas and values available for emulation, sounding a cautionary note about what kinds of models of behaviour are confirmed and lauded by being rewarded rather than challenged by power. A decade later, Fordyce articulated similar sentiments, when he warned against 'imitation of those professed libertines who having, among certain classes acquired a name in that way, are ambitiously copied by such as court the same kind of praise'.¹⁰⁰

Discussing the mnemonic effects of Dickens's characterization, Bharat Tandon suggests that certain gestures become recognizable textual signatures or character motifs.¹⁰¹ This certainly applies to Burney's characterization, where verbal motifs serve as ready prompts for her to manage numerous characters. But taken beyond the act of remembering a specific figure in lengthy novels, the mnemonic effects in Burney's fiction create more esoteric connections, highlighting relational aspects of mind and moral codes between characters who are never physically brought together in the novels. Further, the mnemonics work beyond the literary text,

¹⁰⁰ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 194-7; Guest, *Small Change*, p. 139; 'Hebrew Language', in *The Progress of the Female Mind*, p. 87, quoted by Guest, *Small Change*, p. 139; Fordyce, 'Discourse on the Character', pp. 1-32, in *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the Advantages to be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women...* (London: T. Cadell, 1776), p. 8.

¹⁰¹ Tandon, p. 49.

evoking extraliterary discourses in order to guide the reader's response to the values associated with particular characters. In her thesis on the morality of fiction, Martha Nussbaum emphasizes the role of fiction in developing the reader's perceptions and moral language, through connections made between a character's life and his or her own, a relation between life and reading also explored by Adam Smith, when discussing the human capacity for sympathy.¹⁰² But the point to be made here is also to do with discursive connections, and indeed dialogues, as the represented speech in Burney's novels tap into reader assumptions, and reader awareness of contemporary debates, as well as mediating those debates themselves. As we shall see, such debates were developed on political ground, incorporating discussions of class distinctions and mobility, attitudes to clothing, and distrust of imitation. As indicated at the start of this chapter, language was a political issue, and Burney's thematizing of language engaged with many public concerns.

In her study of the development of the concept of class, Penelope Corfield explores the shift from definitions which had classified social strata by such words as 'degree' and 'sort', to 'class'. Three classes emerged, power being 'resynthesized into active terms, of acquisition, production, and display, rather than of inheritance, formal title, and ancient lineage.' The characters discussed in this section articulate their new power in terms of acquisition and display, using such concrete signs as clothing and language to signal their wealth and status. However, although these aspiring characters adopt aspects of what they see as a prestige dialect, they fall short in many instances of complete accommodation, and the language gap signals their failure to be taken seriously as members of the class to which they seem to aspire. In her discussion of latent and manifest signs of character, Deidre Lynch refers to Hazlitt's belief in the 'monstrous pretensions to distinctions in dress' which, by the time he wrote his essay in 1818, had 'dwindled away by tacit consent'. Summing up the narrative which has prevailed since Hazlitt published his progressive account of the 'collapse of the classificatory system that formerly differentiated and separated man', Lynch highlights Hazlitt's implication that the new code of appearance no longer 'correlates ornament and rank' but 'sets up shop independent of these fetishistic extensions of the figure'. However, Lynch sees a problem with the narrative which links the decline of external signs of character with a new focus on the individual, positing that such 'avatars of a rising individualism' were 'the effects of social relations'. In terms of masculine dress, Lynch argues that 'the plain style' for men had been an option since the late seventeenth century, and that as this style came to dominate tastes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, focus turned to nuanced differences of design and finish – 'the little extras that distinguished [the]

¹⁰² For example in Chapter 5 of *Love's Knowledge* Nussbaum explores the view that the novel offers 'a paradigm of moral activity', offering concrete examples of moral action which can be lacking in philosophical texts: pp. 148-167 (p. 148 and p. 161); in an earlier study, Trilling claimed that the novel has been the most effective agent of the moral imagination for two centuries: see 'Manners, Morals, and the Novel' in *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951, repr. Mercury 1961), pp. 205-222, especially pp. 221-222; Adam Smith made similar claims in 'Of the Propriety of Action' in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, writing that 'we can sympathize with the distress which excessive hunger occasions when we read the description of it in the journal of a siege, or of a sea-voyage. We imagine ourselves in the situation of the sufferers', pp. 11-77 (p. 33).

dress' of a gentleman.¹⁰³ This part of Lynch's argument offers a useful analogy for the purposes of language discussed in this section. The networks of social relations plotted in the narratives reveal systems of influence in which one group is impacted by another, and in which one individual responds to or reacts to another's identity. Nuanced differences *and* similarities are therefore key at individual and group level in order to highlight how aspirants in Burney's narratives resemble but also differ from the fashionable elite whom they emulate.

2.3.1. The Branghton Circle: The Essence of Gentility

The Branghton circle, in *Evelina*, illustrates the abuse of power, at any level, which Burney abominated. Deriving their money from trade, the Branghtons try to establish a sense of their own superiority by demeaning figures like Mr Macartney, and by visiting public places frequented by the rich. The Branghtons are depicted as self-obsessed and insensitive, their conversations revealing their antipathy to reflection and sympathetic engagement. Also in their circle is Mr Smith. Presenting himself as a fashionable 'beau', Smith is the most successful of the group in accommodating the language of a higher social set, though his failure to sustain such idioms offers many comic disjunctions.¹⁰⁴ Branghton senior and Branghton junior both target Evelina for her potential inheritance, and their predatory plans are presented as equally contemptible as the lascivious designs of Lord Merton and Sir Clement Willoughby. Further, although they provide many of the comic highlights in the narrative, the Branghtons allow for complications of plot leading to the heroine's potential romance being jeopardized because of their self-centred manoeuvring. Thus the threat to Evelina's own autonomy is presented as very real, as Madame Duval isolates her from her former friends and allies, working with the Branghtons to bring about an alliance between her granddaughter and the younger son.

Transplanting Evelina from her habitual domain, they try to reconstitute her as a match suitable for Tom Branghton or even Mr Smith. In the same way, too, their language threatens to reconstitute her as a 'miss' of their own 'sort', a young woman preoccupied with clothes and beaux, lacking sympathy and powers of reflection. Judith Butler has argued 'the subject constituted through the address of Other becomes then a subject capable of addressing others'. But Evelina's refusal to respond to the interpellations of the showy Branghtons, and her tenacity in constituting *them* as 'other' in her letters to Mr Villars, confirms her stability, agency and maturing subjectivity in contradiction to potentially threatening figures.¹⁰⁵

A sense of the Branghton's otherness is largely achieved through the representation of their spoken language, which stands out from Evelina's narrative and from the central variety of her preferred associates. Thus her narrative represents the speech of the Branghton set as being a

¹⁰³ Corfield, 'Class by Name and Number', in *Language, History and Class*, ed. by Corfield p. 103 and p. 130; Hazlitt, 'On Fashion' in *The Complete Works*, ed. by Howe, XVII, *Uncollected Essays* (1933), pp. 51-56 (p. 54); Deidre Lynch, pp. 159-162.

¹⁰⁴ Mr Brown is the suitor of Miss Polly Branghton; he features in the narrative as a periphery comic device to underline the 'low' connections of the Branghtons, and will not be examined here.

¹⁰⁵ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 26.

hybrid dialect, incorporating features employed by the fashionable elite and other elements of spoken language which were proscribed as vulgar. Examples of low or vulgar language are evident in the Branghton men's speech. Abbreviations had been a major linguistic target since the days of Swift. Tom Branghton is the main speaker to abbreviate his speech, as when he calls his sister 'Poll' and 'Bid', shortens the word 'because' to "'cause' (144 and 184), and invites the family to 'talk o' somewhat else' (57). Although Tom is speaking in the familiar context of his own family, comparison with other family units indicates that only Captain Mirvan employs similar hypocorisms. Tom also uses archaic verb forms, identified by Carey McIntosh as marking common language: Tom makes a verb reflexive, and adds a prefix, 'I bethought myself' (207); he uses the '-ing' participle, whether in a finite or non-finite form by affixing the particle 'a', as when he describes Lord Orville 'a ordering a heap of things for that' (207); and he employs 'was' with singular 'you', stigmatized strongly by Lowth.¹⁰⁶

In *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (1783), James Beattie expresses a common view that 'where language is already formed, they who speak it must use words in their customary sense. By doing otherwise they incur the charge, either of affectation, if they mean only to be remarkable, or of falsehood, if they mean to deceive'. Such a view does little to accommodate the everyday colloquial phrases understood by urban and regional dialect speakers, but reflects Beattie's, and others', subscription to the ideology of standardization. In a later essay in the treatise Beattie explains that language has to be used so that meaning is clear to all, avoiding idiomatic phrases, which have figurative, and therefore obfuscated meaning, and which Beattie describes as 'vulgarities of the lowest order'.¹⁰⁷ Mr Branghton and his son both use such expressions, words like Mr Branghton's '*crinkum-crankum*' (77) and his son's 'skimper scamper' (162), 'so bit' (77), 'sheep's eye' (184), 'in a stew' (206) and '*upnish*' (210). These phrases therefore stand out from the linguistic tenor of the narrative and other characters, and are often isolated further by the use of italics (or by being underlined in the manuscripts), marking the Branghton men as speakers of what contemporary linguists stigmatized as low language.

As we have seen, such 'low' forms were commonly associated with basic ideas and even base morals. Such a correlation is reinforced by the Branghtons' syntax, and in particular Tom is characterized as an ignorant young man. Coleridge noted that memory alone furnishes the ignorant man with the means to narrate events 'in the same order' as they occurred, the actions of the clauses linked by 'and then', 'and so', the sequencing dominated by references to time and place. Evelina's narrative prefigures Coleridge's description of this style, reporting an account, drawn from memory, by Tom himself:

'So then they made way for me, and said his Lordship would see me directly; and there I was led through such a heap of servants, and so many rooms, that my heart quite misgave me; for I thought, thinks I, he'll be so proud he'll hardly let me speak; but he's no more proud than I am, and he was as civil as if I'd been a lord myself.' (207)

¹⁰⁶ Note also: 'a scolding' (183), 'a-going' and 'a thinking' (206); and 'a coming away' (207); 'you was' (162).

¹⁰⁷ Beattie, 'The Theory of Language' in *Dissertations*, p. 269; and 'Illustrations on Sublimity', in *Dissertations*, p. 651; Beattie's examples include 'half seas over' (drunk), 'plays booty' (plays to lose), and 'feathered his nest'.

Tom's chain of sequencing includes irrelevant details, demonstrating his failure to generalize, summarize and process the experience.¹⁰⁸

All the speakers in this group resemble fashionable speakers in their tendency to preface their utterances with metalinguistic phrases, which often allude to themselves. The speech of the Misses Branghton is characterized by the phrases 'to be sure' and 'I dare say', with occasional use of such other openers as 'for my part'. The phrase 'to be sure' is a less assertive expression of the fashionable 'I'm sure' noted earlier; taken literally the phrase 'I dare say' draws attention to the courage of the speaker, therefore suggesting a user who is aware of an inferior position but determined to speak. As repeated by Evelina's cousins, however, it becomes an empty catch phrase, an affected articulation of their hopes to appear genteel. Tom Branghton favours the introductory clauses 'I suppose' and 'I declare', though he does not use such phrases as frequently as the fashionable female characters discussed early in this chapter. Like many affluent speakers in *The Wanderer*, Mr Smith favours the expression 'as to that' as a latch-on opener when he takes a turn in conversation, and he particularly uses the phrase 'I assure you' when pressing his case with Evelina (187).

Like their fashionable counterparts, members of the Branghton circle employ such stigmatized forms discussed at the start of this chapter, as 'a'n't' and 'i'n't', as well as the consonant cluster 'mayn't'.¹⁰⁹ All except Polly begin their utterances with the courteous opener, 'pray', Mr Smith's usage increasing as his questions become less polite, as when he asks Evelina probing questions about Sir Clement Willoughby's background and income (172-3); and all freely use the exclamation, 'Lord!', frequently in connection with a vocative, or as an oath to introduce a joke.¹¹⁰ Mr Smith employs the rather archaic expression 'fie' when he wishes to draw attention to his own gentility in contrast to his young friend (183):

'there's nothing but quarrelling with the women: it's my belief they like it better than victuals and drink.'

'Fie, Tom', cried Mr. Smith, 'you never remember your manners before the ladies.'

Of significance here is Mr Smith's preference for the polite form, 'ladies' over Tom Branghton's use of 'women'. Tom's negative generalizations about women resemble those of Captain Mirvan and Lord Merton. On this occasion then, Tom is more in tune with the language and attitudes assigned to libertine and boorish characters in Burney's other novels. Later, Mr Smith reveals his own ability to display such affinities, using oaths to emphasize his courted status: 'No, hang it, Tom, no that's wrong,' (184); when Smith expresses his views on marriage being 'the devil' (187), his language and sentiments anticipate those of the fashionable libertine, Sir Robert Floyer

¹⁰⁸ Coleridge, 'Essays on the Principles of Method', pp. 448-457 (p. 449 and p. 451).

¹⁰⁹ Lowth accepted that standard contraction was acceptable in informal speech, but non-standard contractions were stigmatized: but Miss Branghton uses 'a'nt' when she has only just met Evelina (58); Tom Branghton employs 'i'n't' to Lord Orville (207); Tom and Miss Branghton also employ 'mayn't' (77, 184), stigmatized because of its clumsy consonant cluster.

¹¹⁰ Miss Branghton often uses the word to introduce a criticism, as when she expresses disappointment at the opera: 'Lord, [...] I thought it would have been quite a fine place' (77), or insults Evelina: 'Lord, Polly, only think! Miss never saw her papa!'; Polly's uses also express disapproval: 'Lord, how odd' (58), and 'Lord, Papa!' (59); Tom Branghton's uses are less negative: 'Lord! Well, I should like to go!' (183).

in *Cecilia*: 'O, hang it [...] Who the d —— I will fatigue himself with dancing attendance upon the women' (39-40). Characters presented in Burney's novels as being comfortable with their gentlemanly status tend to swear upon their honour. Mr Smith's reluctance to swear on his honour may indicate his aspirations to libertine values; but it is more likely that such reluctance indicates that in spite of all his affectations, he is aware that he is not qualified to do so. Such a diffidence about courtly language implies Mr Smith's consciousness of a performance which even he is not prepared to complete, a diffidence which is also evident in his diminishment in the presence of Sir Clement Willoughby, when 'he seemed to lose at once all his happy self-sufficiency and conceit' (168).

Similarities in vocabulary and preoccupations draw attention to the mercenary values which the Branghton and Merton circles share, the men in both groups setting a price on their pleasure, and the women they intend to marry. Branghton group speakers use the vague term 'fine' in relation to a variety of topics, evoking Merton's reference to 'fine women' who can be procured at a price.¹¹¹ The preoccupations of the Branghton set with money signify their social crassness, as eighteenth-century notions on decorum held it to be vulgar to discuss incomes and prices. The Brangthons amplify such social faux pas by discussing the cost of cultural pleasures. But they try to compensate for their lack of cultural capital by focusing on material wealth, a preoccupation with clothes being their primary way to invest in their social identities. *Evelina* was published at a time when opulent clothes were a way of distinguishing class; nevertheless, the 'little extras that distinguished dress' were highly significant in separating the truly fashionable and affluent from what Hazlitt called the 'monstrous pretensions to distinctions in dress'. On her introduction to the family, Evelina is struck by the way the Miss Brangthons 'freely' examine her dress, paraphrasing both sisters as one voice in the narrative: 'This apron's your own work, I suppose Miss? but these sprigs a'nt in fashion now. Pray, if it is not impertinent, what might you give a yard for this lutestring?' (58). Such focus on the details of clothing resembles Miss Larolles's obsession with the paraphernalia of fashion in *Cecilia*, and signals their similar inability to relate to qualities beyond the trappings of social status and feminine appeal. But the Miss Brangthons get it wrong in their clothing, just as they get it wrong with their language: when attending the opera they are unaware of the custom preventing ladies from wearing hats in the pit; and when attending Vauxhall their dress is ostentatious, a contributing factor perhaps to their being mistaken for prostitutes. Mr Smith also fancies himself to be a connoisseur of clothing. When analysing Sir Clement Willoughby's stylish appearance, he muses 'I'm sure that he did not get that suit of cloaths [sic] he had on under thirty or forty pounds; for I know the price of cloaths pretty well' (173). Mr Smith fails as miserably as the Miss Brangthons in his efforts to '*figur[e]*' as a gentleman, Evelina's narrative describing how

¹¹¹ Commenting on the trip to Vauxhall, Mr Branghton observes to Evelina, 'This must have been a fine treat for you' (162); his eldest daughter uses the same adjective when expressing how she had expected the opera to 'have been quite a fine place' (77); Miss Branghton also uses this vague term to describe Sir Clement as 'the finest gentleman', following up with a non-standard structure when she comments that he 'dresses so fine' (172); with unintentional comic understatement Tom describes Lord Orville's house as 'very fine' (206); he frames the word in a mercenary image when he compliments his friends as being 'all as fine as a five-pence' (183). Evelina mocks their use of the word when she writes of Smith's struggle 'against education, to put on the fine gentleman' (183). For Merton's reference to 'fine women' see p. 83 above.

he aimed to charm and astonish her with his appearance, 'dressed in a very showy manner, but without any taste' (183). In their speech and their clothing the Branghton set succeed the least when most consciously trying to be genteel.

The novel invests heavily in the idea of cultural capital, and language as a sign of sincerity of taste. As noted earlier, in this respect, Burney's novels articulate the notion that good and bad taste becomes a way of distinguishing class. However, as we have seen, Lord Merton is depicted as possessing neither natural nor cultivated sensibilities. His grand tour has done little for him, affording him little 'pleasure in looking at dead walls or statues' (89); and his education has not been able to prepare him for the social and moral responsibilities attendant on rank. In contrast, Evelina arrives from the country equipped with the capacity to appreciate such high culture, her evident pleasure and emotion at the opera articulating her natural sensibilities – her ability to appreciate art and to be moved by it. Evelina thus contrasts with her cousins who, like Merton, trawl cultural venues and sites with no real engagement. Evelina is shown to recognize this difference between herself and her relatives, and to embrace it as proof of her own superiority, in spite of her inferiority of wealth and birth.

Thus Evelina's letters reveal the incongruity between Miss Branghton's social aspirations and her failure to achieve the goals she sets herself, the latter's speech, as reported by Evelina's narrative, suggesting the 'second-hand airs of a lady's woman' derided by earlier fiction.¹¹² When discussing the opera, Miss Branghton comments, 'Miss will think us very vulgar, [...] to live in London, and never have been to an Opera; but it's no fault of mine I assure you, Miss, only Papa don't like to go' (59). In an utterance loaded with social signification. Miss Branghton tries to detach herself from the vulgarity of her father and assert her appreciation of high culture. Her chosen negative formation recalls its affected aristocratic usage; however, as Tieken-Boon van Ostade notes, this was a difficult form for social aspirants to negotiate, and was stigmatized at the time.¹¹³ Miss Branghton's vocabulary also draws attention to her class; Mr Smith moderates up when he addresses Evelina as 'Ma'am' (172), but Miss Branghton's use of 'Miss' signifies her mercantile roots.¹¹⁴ On one occasion, Miss Branghton commits the cardinal error of drawing attention to her own class by claiming knowledge of Sir Clement Willoughby's. Discussing Willoughby's 'business', she speculates that it is something 'very genteel, I dare say [...] because he dresses so fine' (172). Her use of the word 'genteel' undermines her pretensions, for it exploits reader assumptions, voiced in Hazlitt's essay 'On Vulgarity and Affectation', that 'the spirit of gentility is the mere essence [...] of affected delight in its own *would-be*

¹¹² Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. by Boucé, p. 50; the phrase applies to the 'ridiculously affected' Mrs Weazel, the spouse of Captain Weazel.

¹¹³ Johnson, Burney and others preferred to form negatives without the auxiliary verb, 'do'; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 'English at the Outset of the Normative Tradition', in *The Oxford History of English*, ed. by Mugglestone, p. 260.

¹¹⁴ In Charlotte Lennox's romance, *Henrietta* (1758), the son of the heroine's merchant guardian uses this address frequently; Charlotte Smith's ironic narrative voice spells out the vulgarity of the word in *Emmeline: The Orphan of the Castle* (1789), describing how the 'assured and forward' steward writes to Lord Montreville, 'desiring directions about *Miss*, as he elegantly termed *Emmeline*': see *Emmeline: The Orphan of the Castle* (1789), ed. by Anne Henry Ehrenpreis (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 11; and in 1768 the *London Magazine* mocked boarding schools 'where *Miss*, whose *Mamma* sells oysters, tells *Miss* whose *Father* deals in small-coals, that her *Governess* shall hear of it': see *London Magazine*, XXXVII, 1768, p. 651, quoted in Susie I. Tucker, *Protean Shape: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Vocabulary and Usage* (London: The Athlone Press, 1967), p. 159; Tucker notes that 'Miss' was 'the subject of enquiry and comment' but is undecided whether when used alone as in *Evelina*, or with a name.

qualifications' (158). Mr Smith articulates a similar disparity between his 'would-be' status and his actual qualifications when he addresses Evelina on the subject of marriage. Referring to the reputation which he has to preserve among 'us gentlemen', he explains his former reluctance to marry. But the so-called gentlemanly code which Smith alludes to is one of ribaldry and 'smartness', one which elevates bachelor freedom, and looks upon the married state as something 'to let yourself down' to, in order not to lose face. He then progresses to the subject of Miss Biddy, whom he 'should have scorned to mention [...] if her brother had not blab'd', before asserting that there is no one so likely to 'catch' him as Evelina herself (187). Mr Smith's vocabulary and sentiments deny the gentlemanly code he had earlier invoked, a code assimilated and developed by middle-class concepts of public and private virtue, confirming his own exclusion from such a class but, more significantly, affirming his affiliations with libertine values.

The otherness of the Branghton set both confronts and alleviates contemporary fears concerning class mobility and change. Their brashness and potential power over Evelina contravene values of decorum and decency supported by the novel, and their ego-driven materialism confronts the sympathetic qualities represented by the heroine and her guardian. In many respects, then, the Branghtons flesh out anxieties about thrusting mercantile values unrestrained by middle-class respectability or old-style courtesy. But through the allocation of speech styles, the novel associates them with fashionable, titled figures, and links both sets of characters with discourses on language, mind, and morality. Such an association suggests that both classes are equally culpable and unstable, their trappings of wealth and affectations facilitating their abuse of power. The association of these very disparate groups also draws attention to the influence and values of prestige classes, and how such influence disseminates through lower ranks, an issue which, as we shall see in the next section, Burney returns to in her later work. Ultimately, however, her first novel alleviates contemporary fears relating to class, for it presents spoken language as an indicator of moral value, whatever the social station of the speaker. And its conventional romantic ending elevates and rewards the heroine, removing her from those whose ideology has been presented as inferior.

2.3.2. Instruments of Power in *Camilla*

Burney's third novel demonstrates her continued interest in the consequences when those with newly acquired power through wealth emulate figures who are financially enriched but morally bankrupt. In *Camilla*, such consequences are largely played out at individual level, the focus returning to the embarrassments of a heroine brought into contact with such *arrivistes*. In this novel, however, the power of such characters is more insistent, their influence more tangibly felt: at one point in the novel, Camilla and Eugenia become physically stranded in Mr Dubster's gardens, vulnerable to the abuse of passing rustics; and Camilla herself falls prey to Mrs Mittin's sartorial ambitions, accumulating a debt for which her father is eventually imprisoned. These characters assimilate tastes and values critiqued throughout Burney's novels, but here, their characterizations are complicated by the context of the post-revolutionary anxieties in which the novel was written. Some of these anxieties focused on issues of identity; wrestling with what Paul Langford has described as eight decades of change, many highborn, freeborn Englishmen experienced a degree of uncertainty 'about who exactly they were'.¹¹⁵ As this section will argue, in *Camilla* emulation of the fashionable is represented as dangerous and even sinister, the characterization of Mr Dubster and Mrs Mittin pushing the boundaries of caricature, to present them in terms of mannequins or marionettes, self-constructed perhaps, but nonetheless offering themselves willingly as instruments through which power and materialism speak. This draws attention to Burney's political agenda in the novel, raising questions about its level of conservatism: for the characters might be read as a warning of unrestrained vulgar ambition learning from the rich how to advance their own power; or of a warning of how power operates – how hegemonic values are articulated through diverse channels.

Mr Dubster and Mrs Mittin are presented as self-made people, using their new wealth to access gatherings frequented by the gentry and even the aristocracy. But their access to higher social levels is not secure, both needing recommendations, contacts and money to further their interests. Thus, as Kristina Straub has noted, they occupy an ambiguous space between different classes in the novel; both target Camilla for her potential to consolidate their constructed positions, Mr Dubster in the role of 'a sort of Prince Charming manqué' who believes he is dancing with an heiress, and Mrs Mittin in the role of a kind of self-appointed life coach, shopping by proxy and encouraging Camilla to rely on her judgements and advice. Straub describes the 'class-related sartorial conventions' in *Camilla* as facilitating Dubster's and Mittin's cultural transformations, a use of dress which, she argues, is presented as a 'sometimes dangerous, sometimes liberating slippage in class and gender roles'.¹¹⁶ But as noted earlier, the nature of that danger is more difficult to locate. The narrative foregrounds Dubster's social pretensions as a target of ridicule because they fail so spectacularly, but what makes his pretensions worthy of Burney's educative satire is not so much the conceit and vanity intrinsic to

¹¹⁵ *A Polite and Commercial People*, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Kristina Straub *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), p. 196, p. 200 and p. 202.

such posturing as the cruelty and inhumanity which characterize his ambitions. In this respect his actions resemble more highborn cruelties, in particular those of Bellamy who will manipulate Eugenia into marrying him, and as such, Dubster's actions point to a reading which recognizes Burney's political agenda. For as Dubster's motivations unfurl, the reader learns of his conceited designs on Eugenia: first he believes that 'that ugly little body's a great fortune', expressing surprise, however, that she should 'hobble' to a dance (77); later he confesses how his friend, Tom Hicks, tempted him to think of Eugenia, musing that she would be no trouble to a man, for 'she would not be much in my way [...] not follow[ing] a body much about, because of that hitch in her gait' (85). Juxtaposing such offensive comments with descriptions of Camilla's 'unpleasant surprise' (85), or displeasure because her 'sister was deservedly dear to her' (77), the narrative exposes Dubster's willingness to promote his own stature and importance by derogating another, a tendency which resembles the efforts of the Branghton and Merton circles in *Evelina*, and confirming Hazlitt's notions of strategies of affectation common to different classes.

Mrs Mittin is less honest than Mr Dubster in achieving her goals. Her driving force is her need to save and acquire money, her annuity from her former employer not being sufficient to support her lifestyle indefinitely. Thus she needs to tap into the resources of the rich, targeting young women like Camilla, and encouraging them into debt. The danger of deception and disguise was a prominent theme in eighteenth-century discourses, and will be discussed at greater length in later chapters. Several of Dr Johnson's mid-century essays in the *Rambler*, carried stories of identity transformations, facilitated by new social and geographical mobility. An essay in the *Rambler* in 1750 warned readers of hypocrites 'who concealed under fair appearances bad qualities, which, whenever they thought themselves out of the reach of censure, broke out from their restraint, like winds imprisoned in their caverns'.¹¹⁷ In a private conversation with Mr Dubster, Mrs Mittin illustrates Johnson's account when she reveals the conversational secrets of her success, advising him 'to talk to great people about their own affairs' to try and please them, and find ways to serve them, if he would 'be treated genteelly by them' (436-7). This correlates with Goffman's concept of a backstage performance, exposing the motives beneath her social identities. The linguist Margaret Deuchar has argued that the workings of power are evident in the way one speaker adjusts to another, and there is a general consensus among modern linguists that in asymmetrical discourse the 'subordinates' will adapt their speech to the 'superior' speaker.¹¹⁸ Strategic adjustments are evident at topic level in Mrs Mittin's speech, and in the fact that her language is slightly more standard when conversing with the wealthy than it is when speaking to Mr Dubster. In *Camilla*, such accommodations are portrayed as conscious manipulations of speech, working in tandem with Mittin's clothing adaptations, to stage-manage relationships with others.

¹¹⁷ *Rambler* 68, 10 November 1750, *Works*, IV, pp. 429-434 (pp.431-432); see also the story of Flavia, whose practised hypocrisy deceived many by her easy civility: *Rambler* 84, 5 November 1750, *Works*, V, pp. 77-83; and the story of the young nobleman who masters all the postures of politeness by a fortnight's practice: *Rambler*, 194, 25 January 1752, *Works*, VI, pp. 310-315 (pp. 310-311).

¹¹⁸ Cited in Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Longman, 1993), p. 85.

Both Dubster's and Mittin's utterances feature language traits used by the ranks they admire. Dubster's frequent use of such contracted verbs as 'can't', 'don't', 'shan't' and 'a'n't' (70 and 71) brings his speech style close to such fashionable characters as discussed earlier, and of Sir Sedley Clarendel in the same novel, who affects negligence and informality. Dubster also favours the genteel term of address, 'Ma'am', over the more workaday 'Miss', resembling Mr Smith in such attempts to accommodate his language to Camilla. Elsewhere, however, he employs some non-standard grammatical structures which resemble formations employed by the Branghton men, as when he announces that he has been 'waiting all this while for a boy as has promised to get me a pair [of gloves]' (72). Other stigmatized grammatical structures include his use of 'we was' (432), his use of prepositions in such constructions as 'I happened of the misfortune', and his use of the double negative when he muses how apprentices 'can't never' take a little pleasure if not at night (72). Colloquial phrases also pepper Mr Dubster's speech,¹¹⁹ though not as densely as the speech of Tom Branghton. There is a sense of Mr Dubster's bringing together language from different registers and domains, rather like the eclectic features of his house; at times, for example, his syntax is basically standard, but the topic and its attendant vocabulary ludicrously banal:

'I have looked high and low for my glove, but I am no nearer.
I dare say somebody has picked it up, out of a joke, and put it in their pocket.
And as to Tom Hicks, where he can be hid, I can't tell, unless he has
hanged himself; for I can't find him no more than my glove.' (71)

These lengthier utterances anticipate the experimental speech of Miss Doolittle during her first venture into genteel society in Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, the example quoted above calling to mind her discussion of her aunt's influenza, her use of standard grammar clashing with her quotidian vocabulary, and her preoccupation with 'what become of her [aunt's] new straw hat'.¹²⁰

Like Mr Dubster's speech, Mrs Mittin's speech is similarly a mixture of standard and non-standard forms, her sliding scale of colloquialisms depending on her company, and to some extent, her role. She first appears, in Book VI, Volume III. Meeting Camilla's group of friends as they return home one evening, Mrs Mittin falls in with the company and offers encouraging words as they travel home. In contrast to the extravagant observations of the foolish Miss Dennel, Mrs Mittin's utterances seem calming and friendly, especially as they are softened by such vocatives as 'my dear' (423). However, when compared with the less familiar speech of such characters as Miss Belfield in *Cecilia*, it becomes clear that such marks of familiarity are meant to be censured. Mrs Mittin's social status is made evident by her frequent use of such contracted verbs as 'ha'n't', the marked colloquial phrase, 't'other', and her use of double negatives (423),

¹¹⁹ For example, Mr Dubster uses various colloquial phrases for a dance, referring to it as a 'skip' (70), a 'jig' (72), and a 'hop' (432); in *Evelina* an impudent young man asks if she would like '*hopping a dance*' with him, the words italicized in the text to highlight their colloquial nature (186).

¹²⁰ George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, 1912 (London: Longman, 1957, repr. 1975), III (no scene). p. 59.

as well as her reference to 'very genteel company' (424). Her intellectual capacity is revealed by her syntax, as she yokes her ideas together in a seemingly innocuous chain of ideas:

'for I keep a large bonnet, and cloak, and a checked apron, and a pair of clogs, or pattens, always at this friend's; and then when I have put them on, people take me for a mere common person, and I walk on, ever so late, and nobody speaks to me; and so by that means I get my pleasure, and save my money; and yet always appear as a gentlewoman when I'm known.' (424)

Of significance here are Mittin's subordinate clauses, the more complex elements of the syntax alerting us to her capability for more sophisticated plotting, '[when I have put them on], people take me for a mere common person]', a feature which is paralleled at phrase level, revealing her egocentric motivations, '[(so), (by that means) (I) (get) (my pleasure)]'. References to the props of her performance come first in these utterances, reflecting at grammar level the outer trappings of the identity which she presents to the world.

Mrs Mittin shares with Mr Dubster a preoccupation with *things*, especially items of clothing. Having trained with a milliner and then become a lady's companion, she sees herself as qualified to pronounce on all matters of dress. Now occupying the 'gentle' levels of society herself, Mittin, like Dubster, uses dress to help her perform her new status. However, both characters have to verbalise their status, their statements claiming a performative function in order to make their aspirations a reality. In spite of Dubster's 'bran new clothes' he has to announce his status when challenged, 'Who am I, sir? I am a gentleman, if you must needs know' (431). Mittin, too, has to prove her gentle rank, proclaiming, 'I'm a gentlewoman', as she lifts her apron to reveal a hidden muslin one to prove it (424). Her self-transformations are more complex than Dubster's, as she slips in and out of her roles to suit her different needs, and manipulates different layers of dress to effect her performances, the checked apron hiding the muslin, which in turn disguises her lowly birth. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace has argued that Mittin turns the social construction of woman as commodity to her own advantage. However, Mittin's tripartite identity structure fails to convince, as indicated by her being compelled to define herself. Thus, the inclusion of the characters' self-defining protestations challenges the possibility that clothes can effect complete changes of identity. Straub observes that Mittin and Dubster's 'deliberate use of dress' is to manipulate 'culturally constructed roles' rather than 'redefine social roles'. In this respect their clothes are deceptive *and* revealing, an aspect of eighteenth-century dress explored in detail by Jennie Batchelor.¹²¹ Burney limits the possibilities of self-fashioning by suggesting that intrinsic qualities will lead to the wrong choices of outer trappings: Dubster's new clothes are old-fashioned and too tight, Mittin's ensemble is eccentric and too striking. Like their clothing, Dubster's and Mittin's language is both deceptive and revealing. Dubster wants to be taken for a gentleman, possessing all the qualities which such a label evokes; and Mittin hopes to be accepted as a good-humoured old gentlewoman. In contrast they are revealed as egotistical,

¹²¹ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 97; Straub, p. 195; Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

grasping and uncaring, especially of the young and the weak, and as such, their speech is revealing, for it is artificial, yet still jarring and discordant. Both characters are depicted as failing to transform their speech styles sufficiently to be convincing in their chosen roles, these external markers being too closely bound to their interior selves to operate freely as independent signs.

As we have seen, the artificiality and dissonance of Dubster's and Mittin's speech is revealed in part by its *pastiche* qualities, which bring together disparate sociolects, at times announcing their affiliation with such mercantile characters as the Branghtons, and therefore also invoking the language of the fashionable elite. As with the Branghtons, such *bricolage* marks them as social aspirants, indicating their agency in adapting their idiolects to suit their chosen cultural or social identities. But if the newly chosen sociolect already exists as a marker of fashion and prestige, then to some extent it is the sociolect which is empowered, and which calls anyone who seeks a badge of social elevation. Thus, to some extent also, power speaks through this acquired language of the lowborn or middling sort, who think they recognize themselves in its interpellation. The analogy with clothing is consistent with this reading, for the garments of Dubster and Mittin are like theatrical costumes already designed for the parts they wish to play, but wear clumsily, like awkward mannequins.

The introduction of these characters draws attention to this artificiality. Mrs Mittin appears from nowhere, the lack of narrative pointers reflecting her displaced social position as she joins Camilla's party after a visit to the theatre: 'she approached them, and in a good-humoured voice said, "What! poor dear!"' (423). The narrative phrasing is significant here, since it presents the voice as a chosen thing, selected from a repertoire, rather than as expressing Mittin's nature.¹²² Mr Dubster is also introduced suddenly. Through the dialogue of another character, he pops up in the narrative like a fashion dummy, Sir Sedley Clarendel suddenly observing, 'it's most extremely worth your while to take a glance at that inimitably good figure. Is it not exquisite?' (66), and then again later exclaiming, 'if there's not that delightful creature again, with his bran-new clothes? and they sit upon him so tight, he can't turn round his vastly droll figure, except like a puppet with one jerk for the whole body' (69). Clarendel's satiric commentary presents Dubster as not human, a marionette, animated to move and speak as if from some other source. Thus, subliminally, Clarendel highlights the otherness of Dubster, raising questions about the power structures which dress him, animate, and speak through him when he derogates Eugenia and demeans the heroine.

Recent studies have explored the figure of the female automaton in Burney's fiction in terms of the author's crafting of literary character, or as an emblem of her entrance into the literary marketplace, but have neglected the images of puppetry inherent in some character depictions.¹²³ It is likely that a novel which employs the image of an automaton to describe a main character, *Indiana Lynmere* (191), also draws on controversies concerning ventriloquism in the characterization of Dubster and Mittin. Ventriloquism was subject to changing attitudes

¹²² An alternative would be: 'She said, good-humouredly.'

¹²³ Deidre Lynch, pp. 192-198; Julia Park, 'Pains and Pleasures of the Automaton: Frances Burney's Mechanics of Coming Out', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40.1 (2006), 23-49.

during the period when Burney wrote. Stephen Connor argues that at the start of the eighteenth century ventriloquism was viewed with some suspicion and even fear, evoking the demonic and the supernatural, but as the century progressed, rationalist arguments against superstitions dispersed such fears;¹²⁴ and, from the nineteenth century onwards, ventriloquism was associated with the ‘tawdry and the ridiculous’ (307). However, the power to simulate was still distrusted (101). Conceived at the end of the eighteenth century, characterization in *Camilla* invokes and unites such ideas, for Dubster and Mittin are figures of fun, worthy of ridicule not least for their pursuit of self-regarding pleasure, but also predatory social misfits whose machinations have potentially sinister consequences for the heroine. In addition, if they are to be read as having ventriloquial qualities, which evoke non-materiality and greater powers, then the voices which speak them, or through them, are hegemonic and therefore patriarchal, the voices of the fashionable rich.

Thus Burney’s work goes beyond the focus of many contemporary and earlier texts, which tended to be preoccupied with the materiality of imitation.¹²⁵ Focusing on the appropriation of dress and activities, but also language, Burney exposes the hidden values of emulation, which could corrupt and do further harm. Such values were not just dangerous to the middling sort such as Dubster and Mittin, but also to those whom they met and influenced, such as the heroine and her associates. Creating images of marionettes and ventriloquism, Burney’s depictions reveal other forces at work, raising questions about the ultimate manipulators, above even the most egotistical, calculating figures.¹²⁶

* * * *

As we have seen, language itself was deeply embroiled in issues relating to rank, gender, region, and nation, and as a standard developed, it carried an authority infused with class and ethical signification, so that language became a site of division and a means of control. In the context of such moves towards a standard, reinforced by literary reviews judging authorial skills, Burney had little choice but to employ Standard English as the language of the central narratives in her novels. Burney’s fiction invests in the concept of correct forms further by locating the heroines and their associates at the ethical and linguistic centres of the novels. Thus, at linguistic level, the novels can be seen as conservative, reinforcing values which promoted an educated, polite elite as being fit to rule. However, as this chapter has shown, Burney’s fiction puts pressure on such notions, and is not simplistic in its approaches to rank. Characterization therefore destabilizes expectations of social dialects, deviating from earlier novels which tended to homogenize speakers along class or regional lines, allocating similarly colloquial forms to characters from

¹²⁴ Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 59; subsequent page references are provided in my main text.

¹²⁵ Many works lamented or warned against material emulation: in the *The Covent-Garden Journal*, 37 (9 May 1752), Fielding described emulation as a battle, with the highest ranks constantly in retreat against aspiring forces, constantly changing their fashions in order to distinguish themselves and keep ahead; *The London Evening Post*, 12 November 1761, carried a piece warning against imitation, of those ‘dressing out of Character’, and of tradesmen who should stay behind their counters.

¹²⁶ Manipulator: the term of the person controlling a marionette.

different ranks. Tapping into contemporary linguistic phenomena, Burney's novels exploit overlaps of sociolects in order to highlight similarities in moral values, and ways of seeing the world, similarities which are more to do with innate powers of the mind, and reflection, than with determiners of social origins. In this respect, the novels might be located in a trajectory of ideas, of which Section 1 of this chapter provided a sample: Tooke and Coleridge both refuted ideas about the partisan relationship between language and class, drawing attention to the mind, and on individual intellect and moral agency. Fielding, like Hazlitt, was sensitive to similarities of behaviour and motivation, of speakers occupying opposite ends of the same null-point. Engaging with and harnessing such ideas, Burney's fiction levels the dialogue of key figures without homogenizing or flattening characterization, a feature of her method which makes her a pioneer in fiction in this period.

Ridicule of fashionable circles was played out in a range of genres throughout the eighteenth century, and novelists whom Burney publicly admired, like Henry Fielding, as well as such contemporary writers as Charlotte Smith and Maria Edgeworth, who admired Burney, satirized the fashionable world; Frances Brooke even alluded to the Coterie, and their meeting-place at Almack's.¹²⁷ Dramatizing fashionable interactions with such close attention to real-life speech, and such thinly veiled depictions of contemporary clubs and controversies, contributed to the success of Burney's novels but was also courageous. Such allusions and incisiveness in her play, *The Witlings*, prompted her father and Mr Crisp, to persuade Burney to withdraw it from performance, lest it offend the circles it satirized. In her novels, however, Burney grapples with such issues as the abuse of power, and engages with debates about fitness to rule, exploring the repercussions of dissipation and egotism at high levels on members of lower social strata, who are presented not merely as sentimentalized victims of misrule, but as perpetrators of ideologies shaping such power. Thus the novels dramatize emulation debates, the arguments of which incorporated ethical concerns which could strengthen or weaken society. Using dialogue as a device to examine the nature of power, and how it operates and speaks through different agents, Burney's fiction anticipates later theories which explore the way hegemonic control operates through a language pre-existing the agents who use it.

The novels' exposure of old values, recognisably associated with an ancien régime but secured in generic conventions of literary types, might be located in contemporary calls for reform in the wake of emergent classes and new values; and of discussions of what makes a good

¹²⁷ Swift's satire, *A Compleat Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation* (1738), continued to be anthologized or printed in different forms throughout the century; various other satirical sketches targeted fashionable groups in eighteenth-century magazines and newspapers: for example, *The Idler*, 53, 21 April 1759, *Works*, vii, 210-214 contains a letter about the problems of a wife who 'keeps good company', purporting to be from a gentleman; similar letters appeared in *Bingley's Journal or the Universal Gazette*, 1, 9 June 1770: see for example Letter x, p.7. In *Joseph Andrews* Book II, Chapter XIII, Fielding includes 'A Dissertation Concerning High People and Low People' or 'people of fashion [...] and no fashion', pp. 117-119 (p. 117); verse sketches are also plentiful, for example *The Woman of Fashion: A Poem. In a Letter from Lady Maria Modish to Lady Belinda Artless* (London: J. Brew, 1778), containing a dedication to the 'Ladies of the Bon Ton'; Ann Thicknesse published her novel *The School for Fashion* in 1800, and T. Surr's *A Winter in London; or, Sketches of Fashion* (1806) proved immensely popular; Smith's works contain numerous satirical sketches, the most memorable including the Molyneaux in *Celestina* (1791); Edgeworth groups many titles under the publication title, *Tales of Fashionable Life*, 1803-5 and 1812; and in *The Absentee* (1812) presents the dominance of the English fashionable world as a national issue – Lady Clonbrony being ridiculed by her English fashionable acquaintances, in spite (and because) of her efforts to Anglicize her accent; for references to the Coterie and Almack's; see also Brooke, *The Excursion*, p. 86 and p. 87.

citizen in a society no longer predominately structured around ancient land ties and military codes of honour. As such, the novels might be seen to support movements for reform of manners which valorized politeness, and supported its dissemination across the ranks. However, as Chapters 4 and 5 of this study will demonstrate, politeness also comes under scrutiny in the novels, which expose its codification as equally accommodating of abusive behaviour, and therefore potentially threatening to women.

Emerging from this chapter is a greater understanding of how Burney saw herself as a moral writer, and the way she developed her craft in response to political as well as literary impulses. The action of the novels indicates that part of Burney's '*democrate*' reaction to the abuse of power was the way women were limited in the practice of civic virtue. Like other novels, Burney's fiction shows that novels have a civic function, for they are vehicles which both carry and shake up conventions, making readers examine and even rethink their social and ethical assumptions. Novels are therefore vehicles through which women writers can perform their civic virtue, and contribute towards the formation of a good society, an aspect of women's contributions which is now recognized in revisionist approaches to Habermasian theory.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, as this chapter has also indicated, women writers worked under constrictions imposed by their gender, as well as those of genre conventions. The next chapter examines how Burney's fiction shows her awareness of, and negotiated such issues. Engaging with contemporary debates which helped form normative values about gender identities, which were also – as we have seen in this chapter – mediated by assumptions about rank, Burney's fiction explores the conventions of gender language, and raises questions about how such gendered forms can exclude women from literary as well as personal expression.

¹²⁸ An excellent overview of studies which revise Habermasian theory is supplied in the introduction to a collection of essays, many of which contribute to such scholarship: see *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. by Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchoir, and Penny Warburton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1-24; see also Labbe's introduction, and the essays, in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750-1830*, ed. by Labbe.

Chapter 3

When ‘peculiar and characteristic Manners are confounded and lost’: Masculine Women and Foppish Men

Harriet Guest has observed that gender difference was ‘a fundamental category of eighteenth-century forms of thought, shaping and shaped by the complex network of discursive differentiations and convergences that make up the cultural texture of the period’. Further, as Guest and other commentators recognize, ideas relating to gender in this period were extremely complex, mediated by other aspects of social identity such as class, nationality, age, and religion.¹

This chapter considers Frances Burney’s fictional representation of speech in relation to gender distinctions. Burney’s fiction certainly provides various models of male and female behaviour, the gender identity of which is measured against idealized speech. However, as Sara Salih has commented, in Burney’s fiction gender ‘disintegration’ also occurs, ‘reflecting contemporary anxieties about the impossibilities of interpersonal knowledge in a society where social and moral protocols govern every aspect of conduct and desire’.² In this chapter I shall argue that Burney sought to calm such ‘anxieties’, offering gendered performances as a marker of moral worth: as with language, gender performances can indicate the extent of a character’s readiness, or refusal, to conform to wider, consensual social and ethical codes. Building on Salih’s notion of gender disintegrations, however, I suggest that gender disruptions also occur in these novels, marking characters whose gender occupies a site somewhere between perceived binaries of masculinity and femininity, and whose morality ranges from the repellent to the merely troubling. Such a distinction between gender disintegration and gender disruption will allow me to explore what kind of gender nuances are evident in the work of Burney, and to consider the uses she made of contemporary discussions of gender in her engagement with other debates, such as those engaging with satire, with acting, or with the nature of the authentic self, as well as with those pertaining to the role of women in public life, especially the authority of women as writers and reformers.

I begin by discussing the dominant tastes which combined to form prevailing norms in the latter part of the eighteenth century, relating to men and women’s speech. Subsequent sections explore how some of Burney’s characters are depicted as contravening such norms. Section 2 considers female speakers whose primary ‘performative’ characteristics are, in varying

¹ Harriet Guest, ‘Eighteenth-Century Femininity: “A Supposed Sexual Character”’, in *Women and Literature In Britain, 1700-1800*, ed. by Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 46-68 (p. 47); Karen Harvey offers a detailed historiographical review of recent studies, which consider the significance of the long eighteenth century in gender history: Karen Harvey, ‘The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), 899-916; for the view that gender became essentialized during the decades following the war between Britain and America, see Wahrman.

² Sarah Salih, ‘*Camilla and The Wanderer*’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. by Sabor, pp. 39-53 (p. 39).

degrees, presented as masculine.³ Examination of the dialogue of such characters suggests heteroglot forces at play here, revealing how Burney invoked literary and real life masculine speech styles and discourses through the represented spoken word. Further, as Burney's act of authorship itself intervenes in such discourses, her masculine women characters can be read as the site of her own anxieties about the shoring-up of her reputation as a modest woman, and as a writer. Nevertheless, as discussion will demonstrate, Burney's novels use the figure of the masculine woman to expose discursive limitations on the contributions which intelligent women, such as Burney herself, might wish to make. Section 3 examines the figure of the fop in Burney's fiction, as a literary type, but also in the context of debates on masculinity, and proposes that the novels' depictions represent powerful men whose effeminate identity does not detract from their ultimate authority, or even from their potential to be dangerous to women. By examining the way effeminacy and power are represented through dialogue, this section considers how Burney's fiction exposes different aspects of patriarchy, while promoting feminized rather than effeminate masculine ideals. The final part of this section picks up a thread from the discussion of masculine women, and argues that by highlighting the freedom of the fop to construct, perform, and experiment with identity, Burney's novels draw attention to the limited opportunities available to their female characters, and by extension, to real women like herself.

³ I use the term 'performative' here, in the sense that Judith Butler describes, in her 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999, repr. 2008), pp. vii-xxviii, especially p. xv: Butler describes gender identity as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and also as the result of repeated rituals, especially stylized acts by the body which act as cultural signs, conforming to and confirming subjective gender ideals; though offering no apology for the ideas explored in the 1991 edition of her work, Butler's preface considers the consequences of her theory for the concept of interiority; Goffman explores social acts and interactions in everyday life as performances establishing identities, in *The Presentation of Self*, especially Chapter 1.

3.1. Gendering Speech in the Late Eighteenth Century

As we have seen, speech establishes various identity categories, such as gender, nationality and class. Elaine Showalter observes that there is no significant difference between women's dialect, as a genderlect, and their mother tongue. However, Showalter has argued that women's speech reflects their marginalized position in society and that 'denied the full resources of language [women] are forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution', so that when they do speak, they are conscious that they have been granted temporary conversational space.⁴ Eighteenth-century debates about gender, class and nation intersected, and have received considerable consideration in recent years, with current attention being given to further nuances within such categories.⁵ However, many modern commentators agree that a process resulting in the conversational effacement of women occurred during the course of the eighteenth century, a process which was also manifest in their exclusion from certain discourses. John Richetti has applied this view to eighteenth-century fiction, arguing that female characters are frequently rendered inarticulate, rarely use speech for self-promotion or self-definition, and if they are loquacious, their 'volubility [...] signals "unnatural" sexual aggression and moral unsoundness'. Patricia Howell Michaelson follows Michèle Cohen and Janet Sorensen in seeing the idealized styles of speaking, towards the end of the eighteenth century especially, as being gendered, the British national character being increasingly defined in male terms. Women, like the heroines in fiction noted by Richetti, were valorized in numerous sources as silent, or encouraged to speak only to please men. The valorization of men depicted their speech as stable, plain and rational – the plain sincerity of Cicero. According to Michaelson's argument, by the time Godwin was formulating his views on language, 'sincerity became gendered male, and civility female'.⁶ Michaelson echoes Linda Colley's view that 'eighteenth-century Britons regularly defined themselves in opposition to what they saw as French characteristics and manners'. Employing Colley's point for her own discussion of speech and gender, Michaelson notes further dichotomies in class distinctions, observing that aristocratic masculine polite forms were

⁴ Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', *Critical Inquiry*, 8.2 (1981), 179-205 (p. 192); the term 'genderlect' is used by linguists who believe that masculine and feminine speech styles are best viewed as distinct cultural dialects.

⁵ Studies focusing on different aspects of conduct literature include Nancy Armstrong, 'The Rise of the Domestic Novel' in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality* ed. by Nancy Armstrong and L. Tennenhouse (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 96-141 (a version of which is also in Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, pp. 59-95); and Kathryn Sutherland, 'Writing on Education and Conduct: Arguments for Female Improvement', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1700-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 25-45; Vivien Jones considers how conduct works were read, as well as the nature of gendered authority in 'The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), pp. 108-132; Helen Plant examines women's testimonials for evidence of the tension in the relationship between gender and the religious authority invested in women by the Society of Friends: see "Subjective Testimonies": Women Quaker Ministers and Spiritual Authority in England, 1750-1825', *Gender and History*, 15.2 (2003), 296-318; Erin Mackie examines the blurring of boundaries between traditionally binaried masculinities, which set the authorized gentleman against the rake and the highwayman, and argues that such 'illicit' or 'unauthorized' masculine identities were, nonetheless, invested with authority: see *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), especially p. 5.

⁶ Richetti, 'Voice and Gender', p. 268; Michaelson, p. 31 and p. 56; Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996); Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

increasingly stigmatized as French and effeminate; but for women, salon conversation and even wit still had a place.⁷

Although Michaelson recognizes the plurality of the gendered communicative experience, she, like other commentators, generally dichotomizes gendered speech styles. Such a view glosses over several pertinent issues, which I would like to highlight. Firstly, the eighteenth-century belief in the ameliorating influence of women's conversation on men is now well recognized, and needs to be kept in view. This belief was theorized in many early and mid-eighteenth-century sources whose influences held sway until the early nineteenth century. In particular, it was a belief which informed dominant views at the end of the eighteenth century relating to the role of women in the family, especially in educating boys.⁸ A second important issue to be considered relates to the evolution of a British national 'character'. Sorensen's study traces the formulation, during the final decades of the eighteenth century, of a British stereotype characterized by reserve.⁹ Referring to such characters as the Knightley brothers, in Austen's *Emma*, Sorensen argues that this stereotype endured, and indeed forms the basis of the British citizen in current times. I suggest, therefore, that although giving greater agency to men, the attributes idealized for women were also extended to men, and that by the final decades of the eighteenth century, preferred conversational norms discouraged loquacity in men as well as women. However, as loquacity had been long associated with women, verbose men could be marked as effeminate. A third area of significance is the impact on masculine idealization by the theorization of sensibility, whose progress experienced an uneven trajectory as the eighteenth century drew to a close.¹⁰ What I wish to highlight in this chapter, then, is that male *and* female language users had to negotiate the demands of different ideological factors in their everyday interactions, each experiencing internal pressures from the gendered speech styles available to them. To paraphrase Goffman, speakers had to effect the presentation of their own identity in everyday encounters while negotiating the consensual codes of society.¹¹ Further, each sex was

⁷ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation: 1701-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 250; see also Stella Cottrel, 'The Devil on Two Sticks: Franco-Phobia in 1803', in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, ed. by Raphael Samuel, 3 vols (London: Routledge, 1989), I, 259-74; Michaelson, p. 59.

⁸ The ameliorating influence of women's conversation on men, as articulated in the early eighteenth century, is explored by Klein, a development which, he argues, 'endorsed the female voice': see 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere' in *Textuality and Sexuality*, ed. by Still and Worton, pp. 100-115 (p. 104); Adam Potkay discusses the contributions of thinkers like David Hume, in the middle of the century, in *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 74-85; probably in response to the ambiguous advice of Chesterfield (1774) on the advantages to young men of conversing with women, James Fordyce was one of many who published works on this subject towards the end of the century: see *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex*, especially Part I, 'Discourse on the Character', pp. 1-32 (pp. 6-8); for discussion of conversation and the educative role of women in the family, see Alan Richardson, pp. 167-170; and Michèle Cohen, "'A Proper Exercise for the Mind': Conversation and Education in the Long Eighteenth Century", in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation*, ed. by Halsey and Slinn, pp. 103-127.

⁹ This view is supported by the work of Michael Curtin, which traces the changing values associated with British masculinity during the eighteenth century, and notes how the end of the century saw a rejection of earlier, European-influenced models of courtliness: 'A Question of Manners', pp. 399-402.

¹⁰ Barker-Benfield follows Pocock, in viewing the reformation of manners as driven and facilitated by new proximities of classes through mutual commercial interests, in which courtesy facilitated transactions; Barker-Benfield locates such phenomena in the general softening of manners described by Earle's thesis: see *The Culture of Sensibility*, pp. 85-88; Tony Crowley has traced Habermas and Eagleton's proposal that the teaching of English grammar was linked to the forging of cultural identity by the rising bourgeoisie: *Language in History: Theories and Texts* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 73-4.

¹¹ Goffman, 'The Nature of Deference and Demeanour', p. 48.

expected to be careful about which language and conversational style they absorbed from the other.

Prescriptions on genderlects were developed across a range of discursive fields. Modern linguists, Bousfield and Locher, have discussed 'first-order' concepts of spoken interaction in terms of judgements made by social actors themselves, in situations where speakers pass judgement on each other and each other's utterances; 'second-order' approaches use these concepts at a theoretical level.¹² Conduct works in the eighteenth century might be seen as constituting a third order of concepts, in that they were produced by lay users of language who drew on their own experiences of interactions, and who were very judgemental; at the same time, such texts attempted to theorize conversation, though they tended to prescribe and proscribe, rather than describe and methodize. Conduct works are therefore a useful source of information about conversation in this period, since they presented themselves as representing gender norms as the discourse practices reached by the consensual agreement of a literate community, even while they attempted to consolidate, or even shape, such norms. Novelists, too, had shared knowledge of conversational practices, and aimed to represent conversations which would be read as 'natural' or realistic. Novelists like Burney experimented with requirements of form and genre. Her diaries indicate that in her own interactions she often felt the pressure to conform and support contemporary mores. Nevertheless, the gendered approaches of conduct prescriptions do not go unmediated in her fiction. Major works of conduct by writers whose publications ran to multiple editions include works by Hester Chapple, whom Burney admired, Hannah More, John Gregory, and James Fordyce, as well as the letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son and nephew, which Burney criticized but which were widely read and republished in various forms. As we shall see, these particular works are also useful in assessing concepts of gender language since their maxims are more precise than many contemporary works which generalized civility without providing specific advice on how it might be achieved.¹³

The nature and function of wit and loquaciousness are of particular interest for this chapter, since they implied sociability, but were also distrusted for their power to offend. Many third-order texts advise both sexes to avoid mimicry, destructive wit, and sarcasm, as a means of gaining attention or derogating others.¹⁴ Women, especially, are warned against behaving in this manner: Thomas Gisborne blames women's wit for leading 'coxcombical' men to expose their foolishness; for Fordyce, wit is to be dreaded as 'a weapon', turning women into impudent satirists, and driving their pitiable husbands to the tavern; Hannah More finds wit fearful, in the hands of women; and Gregory writes of women's wit as 'the most dangerous talent' which must

¹² 'Introduction' in *Impoliteness in Language*, ed. by Bousfield and Locher, pp. 1-16 (p. 5).

¹³ For example, Mrs Mary Pilkington discusses such abstract notions as negligence, perfidy, openness, sincerity, and ease without dealing with precise conversational features: *A Mirror for the Female Sex. Historical Beauties for Young Ladies* (London: Verner and Hood, 1798).

¹⁴ In her chapter 'Politeness and Accomplishments', Chapple warns 'young persons' against ridicule and mimicry: *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, II, 107; in Letter IX of *Art of Pleasing*, Chesterfield writes of the mimic as an 'absurd fellow' whose ridicule of natural defects renders him disagreeable and shocking: p. 64, a topic he returns to in *Principles of Politeness and of Knowing the World*, p. 102, and pp. 49-50; Hume warns that if a man wants to be good company, he should employ wit only to bestow enjoyment: see 'Of Qualities Immediately Agreeable to Others', in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (London: A. Millar, 1751), pp. 161-170 (p. 163); that wit should be used without malevolence is posited by Gisborne to women: *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, 2nd corrected edn (London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1797), p. 110.

be guarded.¹⁵ Novelists also made sarcastic wit a target in their work; Charlotte Lennox uses paratext in *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752), to describe a chapter as ‘contain[ing] some excellent Rules for Raillery’, and opening the chapter itself with a warning about the impossibility of using sarcastic wit without being hated and feared.¹⁶ Dominating conversation is also generally derogated¹⁷ though silence is particularly recommended for women; Fordyce warns women, ‘How terrible it appears to a male ear [...] endless prattling, and loud discourse, [...] noisy, empty, trivial chatter of everlasting folly’. More, also, encouraged women to be silent, and to rely on a ‘sparkling [...] and illuminated countenance’ to ‘prove [they] understand’.¹⁸ As explored in other chapters of this study, affectation and deceit were derogated in men and women, though there is artifice implied in Chesterfield’s recommendation that men should be attentive to ladies, to ‘their little wants and whims, their likes and dislikes’; and there is similar deception implied in the many stipulations for women to hide their learning, especially from men.¹⁹

In summation, it is apparent that qualities for both sexes were anchored firmly in ethical frameworks promoting social concord and respect for others. Further, there was some degree of overlap in the goals being formulated, in that each sex was encouraged to appropriate what were seen as the best qualities of the other. Nevertheless, such notions of reciprocal gain were based on assumptions of gendered differences. Men and women were advised that they could each benefit from conversation with the other, women expanding their knowledge and understanding, men improving their ability to talk of light matters and ‘pleasantries’. Delicacy and modesty were qualities especially required of women, no matter their age; and these qualities were defined as not standing out – in use of language, conversational mannerisms, or actions. Women’s modesty was also defined by education policies, which denied women the opportunities open to men. In return for the preservation of their ‘delicacy’, women could expect men to be gallant and protective. Men could hone their social skills by conversing with ‘virtuous’ women and were encouraged to develop a masculine sensibility, though control of excessive sensibility was advised for both sexes, especially as the century drew to its final decades. These decades also saw a preference for men to exercise plain speaking which, duly moderated by politeness, would

¹⁵ Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, p. 108; Fordyce, ‘On Female Virtue, Friendship, and Conversation’, in *Sermons to Young Women*, 2 vols (London: A. Millar, T. Cadell and Others, 1766), I, 161-204 (pp. 193-4); More, *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies* (London: J. Wilkie and T. Cadell, 1777), p. 44; Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy*, p. 30.

¹⁶ See Book VII, Chapter 5 of *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*, 1752, ed. by Margaret Dalziel, with chronology and appendix by Duncan Isles (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

¹⁷ Hume observes that ‘most Men [...] regard with a very evil Eye that *Loquacity* which deprives them of a Right’ to share conversation, and warns against dominating conversation by telling lengthy stories: ‘Of Qualities Immediately Agreeable in Others’, p. 164; Chesterfield warns against telling stories unless ‘very apt’ and ‘very short’, opining that ‘frequent narration betrays great want of imagination’: Letter CXXXIV (19 October 1748), *Letters*, II, 86; Chapone warns her readers not to engross talk, though they must not let it flag: see *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, II, 99.

¹⁸ Fordyce, ‘On Female Virtue, Friendship, and Conversation’ in *Sermons to Young Women*, I, 161-204 (p. 197); More, *Essays on Various Subjects*, pp. 39-40; Chapone also advocates silence, when appropriate, distinguishing modesty from bashfulness: *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, II, 103; Gregory essentializes a woman’s modesty, which will ‘naturally keep them silent in company’: *A Father’s Legacy*, p. 28.

¹⁹ Chesterfield, *Principles of Politeness and of Knowing the World*, p. 14; many of Chesterfield’s maxims were judged as encouraging insincerity and even deceit.

promote openness and concord.²⁰ Such gendered conversational features was believed to further social harmony, a notion articulated in a novel by the educational reformist and novelist, Maria Edgeworth, whose character Mr Percival argues, 'Fortunately for society, the same conduct in ladies which best secures their happiness most increases ours' (*Belinda*, 230). The benefits of men and women meeting in social spaces were therefore conceptualized in terms of overlaps, symbiosis, and even blending of characteristics, providing that key gendered characteristics were preserved. For coexisting with views on the enhancement of social harmony by complementary qualities was a fear that such key distinctions would disappear, and that social harmony would actually be threatened if the impact of each sex on the other were not controlled, and limited to the 'best' influences. Thus by mid-century, popular (and enduring) texts like that by John Brown warned that the 'peculiar and characteristic Manners [of the Sexes] are confounded and lost: The one Sex having advanced into *Boldness*, as the other have sunk into *Effeminacy*'.²¹

3.2. 'Masculine Understanding', 'Noble Spirit' and Female Expression, in *Evelina* and *The Wanderer*

Burney's first and final novels present a female character who desires agency, who eschews gendered advice for women, and who is described as 'masculine' by others: Evelina's account highlights Mrs Selwyn's masculine understanding but bemoans her mode of speaking; and in *The Wanderer*, Harleigh recognizes the noble spirit of Elinor Joddrel, but hopes that she will reform. However, as discussion of Burney's 'masculine' female characters will demonstrate, other accounts of these characters emerge from the narratives to complicate our readings, indicating that although Burney was cautious in her employment of prevailing prejudices against 'masculine understanding' in women, she used such stereotypes to engage with gender debates, and to explore the boundaries of language, particularly as they applied to women. Thus I propose that the novels draw attention to the ownership of linguistic styles, literary modes, and whole discourses, drawing notice to the fact that such ownership can exclude women from personal expression of desire (as with Elinor) or from public exercise of authority, as with Mrs Selwyn, allowing Burney to comment on her own position as a writer.

²⁰ See for example 'An Essay on Politeness' in *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine*, March 1773, p. 264: 'among the French it [politeness] is too often disguised by affectation and insincerity; and that simplicity of manners which the English affect so much and which is amiable, is equally apt, under the name of bluntness and sincerity, to degenerate into rusticity and barbarism': cited in Amelia Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked: Irony, Authenticity, and Individualism in Eighteenth-Century English Prints* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), p. 59; at the end of the decade, writing on epistolary styles, Gisborne advised young women to emulate the simple, unartificial style of men, and not allow their desire to please to lead them to write in a 'florid' and 'refined' parade of language: see *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, pp. 111-112.

²¹ [John Brown], *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times. By the Author of Essays on the Characteristics, &c.*, 2nd edn (London: L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1757), p. 51; where appropriate, future page references to this work will be provided, in parentheses, in my main text.

3.2.1. Mrs Selwyn and the Authority of Female Satirists

Mrs Selwyn is an example of a singular woman who does not conform to the rules of society. Thus she helps the heroine, and Burney's contemporary readers, to formulate their understanding of proper, feminine behaviour, by her example of an 'other', proscribed form. Ostensibly then, Selwyn's aberrations are educative warnings to Burney's contemporary readers. But Selwyn's function in the novel is not solely to highlight different models of female conduct, for her function as a satirical voice provides a powerful direction in the final volume of the novel, when various plotlines are brought together. Thus characterization also alerts the sensitive reader to the gendered nature of power, and of power rooted in language, which her dialogue represents. Ultimately, the social censure voiced by Mrs Selwyn is in line with the novel's disapproval of the reckless rich, and especially of irresponsible men, as discussed in other chapters of this study. For, like many late eighteenth-century women writers, Selwyn is shown to employ her appropriated ethos, or authority, to articulate social commentary and moral judgement. However, the novel places pressure on the precise nature of Selwyn's satire, questioning its effectiveness in terms of the reformation of other characters. Thus the novel also mediates contemporary debates on developing genres, questioning the very nature of traditions of satire.

Two models of satire, dominant when Burney wrote, were the Horatian and the Juvenalian, the former associated with merriment and ridicule, the latter with ruthless invective. Both kinds were meant to expose and reform, though the *sauve indignatio* of Juvenalian satire was perceived as more punitive than curative. As this chapter will demonstrate, Mrs Selwyn's satire is defined by its severity by Evelina, a descriptor chosen by Beattie to describe Juvenal.²² As a satirical mouthpiece in the novel, Selwyn's style can be judged in the context of such models, but although her mockery exposes, it does not reform other fictional characters, the outcome of the novel showing that it is the heroine's sentiment and appearance which move her estranged father to tears, drawing on his sensibility in a way which Selwyn's admonishments fail. In this respect, Burney's novel can be located in what Claude Rawson has described as a movement from satire to sentiment during the course of the eighteenth century, and can be seen as Burney's conscious contribution to the genre as a feminized development, raising questions, as it does, about the modes of satire open to women, but also judging those very modes themselves. In this way, the novel engages with earlier feminization debates which, E. J. Clery has argued, benefited women, but locked them into new modes of restriction. Further, although the novel offers a kind of progressivism in that the very act of female authorship performs and exemplifies what women had to bring to satire, it anticipates, to use a phrase employed by Clery, the 'republican' feminism of the 1790s in its exposure of the limited range of discursive

²² Selwyn's severity of satire surprises Evelina, p. 226, and is beyond the understanding of Jack Coverley, p. 297; Beattie, 'An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition', in *Essays. On Poetry and Music, As They Affect the Mind. On Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition. On the Utility of Classical Learning* (Edinburgh: William Creech; London: E. & C. Dilly, 1776), pp. 318-486 (p. 428).

opportunities permitted to clever, satirical women.²³ That Burney created a female satirist therefore carries great significance, for it draws attention to the models of satire available to women, but also to the authority of that satire, once applied by women. Thus, as we shall see, Burney's first novel intervenes in debates about the ownership of potentially reforming discourses, as well as their accessibility to women, like Burney herself – an area of professional interest which is explored further, in her final novel.

The characterization of Mrs Selwyn draws attention to the difficulties faced by women desiring influence in the social arena, and of finding suitable models of behaviour to imbue them with authority. Burney was one of the first novelists to introduce older female guardians as potential models (or anti-models) for the heroine, but she drew from a stock of generic types in her fashioning of the out-spoken Mrs Selwyn: the virago, the female rake, the widow, and the blue stocking.²⁴ Burney also drew on masculine stereotypes of the wit, as well as an Augustan model of the male satirist: rational, witty, insightful and ironic. Burney's primary narrator, Evelina, foregrounds Selwyn's strengths when she describes her as 'extremely clever; her understanding, indeed, may be called *masculine*' (224); the positive tone turns, however, when Evelina continues, 'but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet; for, in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own'. For Burney's narrator then, it is not the content so much as the manner of Selwyn's conversation which deserves censure. And implicit in this condemnation is an assumption that male manners generally lack softness, leading to a reading of the commentary as a censure of certain types of masculine behaviour, rather than of Selwyn's masculine understanding in itself. Such a reading is supported by Evelina's commendation of Lord Orville's feminized manners, which she associates with his sympathetic engagement with others, and his sensitivity to the needs of the vulnerable. A prominent issue which Burney explores in the novel, and one discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, is the extent to which a public identity can be fashioned by drawing on other models. In this instance, the novel endorses the notion that women can gain much by developing their intelligence in line with that of men; and it supports the use of such intelligence for social commentary and correction. However, it puts under scrutiny the combative methods employed for such correction, inviting readers to assess the implications for women who enter such a field, emulating such models of authority.

Selwyn's combative strength is foregrounded early, when she is labelled by Lord Merton as Amazonian. Dror Wahrman has traced the process of pejoration which the word 'Amazon' underwent during the last two decades of the eighteenth century, leading to a primary meaning

²³ Claude Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment, 1660-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); E. J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England. Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 12.

²⁴ The claim is made for Frances Brooke that, in her novel *The Excursion* (1777), she was one of the first novelists 'to create a wise, admirable, older woman character who contributes the role of model, friend, and confidante: Lady Sophia, the foil to Mrs Merrick and Lady Hardy'; no one character in Burney's trio of older women fulfils this role, though Selwyn comes the nearest in terms of wisdom, and such admirable qualities as courage and loyalty to Evelina: see Brooke, *The Excursion*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Hope D. Cotton, p. xxiii. Fairly common in fiction at the time Burney wrote were female characters who dressed and behaved like men: in Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1800), for example, the predatory Mrs Freke dresses as a rake and pursues the heroine; moving freely in the society described by the novel, Freke uses a masculine speech variety and involves herself in such traditionally masculine concerns as politics and duelling. Burney does not draw attention to Selwyn's appearance, nor depict her in masculine dress.

springing from one of Dr Johnson's definitions of an Amazon as 'a warlike woman: a virago'.²⁵ When Merton calls Selwyn Amazonian, then, he is using the word negatively, his objection being that Selwyn has appropriated masculine qualities and uses them to combat predators like himself. The plotting of the novel needed the character of Selwyn, and by choosing a female character, Burney highlighted the qualities needed for a woman to perform active virtue. But Merton's label aligns itself with contemporary criticism of 'unsex'd women', and makes it easy to overlook the narrative's distinguishing Selwyn's masculine understanding from her manners. Later readers have absorbed the ambiguity of her make-up, leading Anna Letitia Barbauld, in 1810, to dismiss Mrs Selwyn as 'an oddity'.²⁶ A similar ambivalence to Selwyn can be found in the responses of later feminist readings of *Evelina*. In an article which focuses on the relationship of the novel to the death of theatre, Emily Allen writes 'Madame Duval [...] is replaced in her role as virago by Mrs Selwyn', Allen's own vocabulary suggesting that she has internalized views voiced in the novel; Susan Fraiman has drawn attention to Selwyn's impersonation of men and her role as an eighteenth-century satirist, but criticises Selwyn for her harshness to women. Accepting that Selwyn is a knowing satirist, Audrey Bilger argues that Burney, like Austen and Edgeworth, was 'killing the angel figure'.²⁷ What Burney does with Selwyn, however, is to reconfigure her as a type of guardian angel, and at times an avenging angel, less terrifying but practically more effective than the self-appointed custodian Madame Duval. Equipped with knowledge and the power of language, Selwyn's weapon is speech, and it is through this that Burney explores the extent of female authority compared with that of male satirists.

The nature of Mrs Selwyn's satire is debated in the novel. Sir Clement Willoughby judges her harshly when he criticizes 'the unbounded licence of her tongue' (283). Such a judgement suggests loquacious and gossiping qualities, traditionally assigned to female characters who are judged against a perceived masculine norm, and reflect Burney's own fears of perceptions of female writers.²⁸ Willoughby's concern with the 'licence' of Selwyn may also be read as a resentment of the freedom and authority which she assumes. But Evelina's commentary moves the focus from the quantity and authority of Selwyn's talk to the nature and object of her conversation, raising questions about the kind of satire most suited for social improvement. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that, although Evelina is grateful for Mrs Selwyn's protection against her fashionable antagonists, and concurs with her outing of their flaws, she objects to the cruelty of her exposures, and fears for the reputation of the woman who has performed them. Locating this representation of satire in the context of Burney's own reading, it is likely that Selwyn's severity was meant to be judged against the urbane irony and genial satire of periodical essays such as those in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* – essays which were still

²⁵ Wahrman, pp. 15-29; Johnson's *Dictionary*, II (1756), defines 'virago' as 'a female warriour: a woman with the qualities of a man'.

²⁶ 'Miss Burney', *The British Women Novelists*, XXXVIII, p. iii.

²⁷ Emily Allen, 'Staging Identity: Frances Burney's Allegory of Genre' *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 31.4 (1998), 433-451 (p. 449, fn. 34); Susan Fraiman, 'Getting Waylaid in *Evelina*', p. 471; Bilger examines what she sees as Burney's subversive comedy in relation to patriarchy, in *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1998), p. 98.

²⁸ For a brief review of literary sources reinforcing silence for women and criticizing their loquacity contrasted with the authorization of men's speech, see Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language*, pp. 33-37; for Burney's concerns about perceptions of female authors being loquacious, see p. 30 above.

popular and to be found in various publications at the time she wrote her first novel. Swift, whose work continued to be collected and anthologized during the nineteenth century, lamented the demise of English wit, which in his view had descended into ridicule, exposing a man's defects 'to get the laugh'.²⁹ Read in the context of such approaches, it is likely that Burney's incisive Mrs Selwyn was aimed to reprove cruel lampooning, and to promote congenial satire, harnessed for edification *and* entertainment, a sub-genre Burney herself was drawing on as she explored the potentiality of the novel form. In this respect, Selwyn's utterances are to be read not merely as contraventions of conduct advice against wit, sarcasm, mockery, and contradiction, but as part of a dialogue about the nature of satire itself.

Selwyn's dialogue locates her in a masculine tradition in its employment of wit for satirical intent. She is also depicted as enjoying the conversation of men, which allows her to unleash her wit. The ladies in Bristol provide fertile ground for her attacks, but it is the men who provide more willing targets, and who cope with fighting spirit. Writing at the end of the seventeenth century, Locke associates wit with the ability of the fancy to correlate an 'assemblage' of ideas 'with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity'. Locke links 'allusion and metaphor' to wit, and concedes that its entertainment value makes it pleasant to everyone, because 'there is required no labour of thought, to examine what truth or reason there is in it'. But if wit is ornamental, creating figurative connections, like the eloquence of rhetoric it also has the potential to deceive, persuade or mislead. Such potential for slippage is for Locke a form of untruth, and a person who 'uses words without any clear and steady meaning leads 'himself and others into errors.' Writing in 1711, Addison develops Locke's notion of 'entertainment and pleasantry' by distinguishing true and false wit. False wit, according to Addison, deals with words, not ideas; true wit concerns unusual juxtapositions that 'give Delight and Surprise'. Hume was also interested in the effect of wit on the mind which received it, positioning the 'sensation of pleasure from true wit' against the 'uneasiness from false'; further, for Hume, true wit allies with our faculties of sympathy and approbation.³⁰

By mid-century, Dr Johnson's definition of 'wit' imbues it with distinctly masculine values, his fourth and fifth citations referring to 'a man of fancy' and 'a man of genius'. These, and Johnson's other definitions carry positive connotations and refer to both the imagination and the intellect: wit is primarily 'the powers of the mind: the mental faculties: the intellect' and 'sense or judgement', but also 'the imagination: quickness of fancy'. There is some tension, however, in Johnson's definitions. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the 'fancy' was being represented as a potentially unruly and dangerous faculty, needing the governance of reason; and by the end of the century, novelists portrayed the imaginative power of the fancy as a

²⁹ Swift, 'Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation', in *The Works of Jonathan Swift, D.D. Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin; Containing Additional Letters, Tracts, and Poems, not Hitherto Published; with Notes, and a Life of the Author, by Walter Scott Esq.*, 12 vols (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable; London: White, Cochrane and Others; Dublin: John Cumming, 1814), IX, 377-388 (p. 382).

³⁰ Locke, *Essay on Human Understanding*, ed. by Woolhouse: 'Of Discerning, and Other Operations of the Mind', pp. 152-159 (p. 153), and 'Of the Remedies of the Foregoing Imperfections and Abuses', pp. 453-465 (p. 454); Addison, *Spectator*, 1711, 9, 10 and 11 May in *The Papers of Joseph Addison, Esq. in the Tatler, Spectator, Guardian, and Freeholder. Together with his Treatise on the Christian Religion. To which are Prefixed Tickell's Life of the Author, and Extracts from Dr Johnson's Remarks*, 4 vols (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1790), II, 1-16 (p. 10); Hume, 'Of Pride and Humility', Book II, 'Of the Passions', in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 297.

misleading influence, especially in matters of love.³¹ Occupying a place in both judgement and sense, and imagination and fancy, Johnson's definitions represent an ambivalent attitude to wit. Of further interest, is the fact that the entries make no mention of humour or entertainment. Such ambivalence reflects a debate concerning the values, and value, of wit, the echoes of which affect Burney's attitude to the characteristics she assigned to Selwyn.

For the reader, Selwyn's wit is courageous, insightful, truthful and therefore pleasurable in Humean terms. It concerns ideas rather than words, as she frequently juxtaposes disparate ideas in order to highlight a point, and such dressing of her observations is both entertaining and enlightening for the reader. But for the narrator, the young Evelina, Selwyn's wit is embarrassing and debilitating. Described as 'torture' which she cannot always endure, Selwyn's raillery resembles that criticized by Swift as 'singling out a weak adversary', 'to get the laugh'.³² And her wit can be severe. Within the context of the novel, such outcomes contravene ideas about the reforming ends of satire, since even 'getting the laugh' does not guarantee curing vices and follies. As noted earlier, conduct books are explicit in their warnings against the ill effects of wit, especially when articulated by women, though the focus here is not so much on reform as the presentation of self and the social discomfort of another. Evelina's discomfort reflects such conduct book preoccupations, for her embarrassment seems to emanate from her expectations of feminine behaviour, which are not fulfilled by Mrs Selwyn and which affect her own self-presentations. In Goffman's terms of the idealization of the self, Selwyn's constant teasing of Evelina regarding Lord Orville, sullies Evelina's sense of her own performance as a modest young woman. Unselfconscious in her meetings with Orville in the garden of Mrs Beaumont's house in Bristol, Evelina is made conscious of her behaviour by Selwyn's allusions to 'rural shades' and pastoral delights. Her raillery is constant, its reiterative nature having a performative effect, casting Evelina's unplanned encounters as calculated courtship moves, and becoming offensive to Evelina. For the young narrator, then, respect for a person's sense of identity (or 'face') is more important than pointing out the truth or getting the laugh. Burney returns to this conflict of truth and politeness in *Cecilia*, with the character of Albany, and in *The Wanderer*, with her depiction of Sir Giles Arbe. In *Evelina* the complexity is achieved through the double vision created by the readers' approbation of Selwyn's satire, and their sympathy with the embarrassed Evelina. Such dichotomies might be seen to reflect the problems Burney herself was experiencing, as she defined herself as a satirist, seeking to locate herself in a tradition she perceived as masculine, and trying to make her mark in that tradition, but without causing offence, or being accused of 'masculine' ambition or self-promotion.

³¹ *Dictionary*, II; for a discussion of the perceived dangers of 'ardent imagination, pulsating fancy', and sexual passion in the work of later eighteenth-century writers like Johnson, Burney, and Thrale see Patricia Meyer Spacks, 'Ev'ry Woman is at Heart a Rake', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 8.1 (1974), 27-46 (pp. 40-42).

³² 'Hints Towards An Essay on Conversation', p. 382; Thomas Sheridan also considered the amount of offence intended by wit, and how best to soften or increase its effect, in *A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language. Calculated Solely for the Purposes of Teaching Propriety of Pronunciation and Justness of Delivery* (Dublin: for Price, Whitestone and Others, 1781), p. 181: 'Raillery, in sport, without real animosity, puts on an aspect of *chearfulness*. The tone of voice is *sprightly*. With contempt, or disgust, it casts a look *asquint* [...] The upper lip is *drawn up* with an air of disdain'.

The difficulty of a woman entering the public arena of wit and satire is resolved in the novel by the depiction of Selwyn's masculine talk, which gradually gains her admittance into the circles she attacks. For the most part, the male recipients of Selwyn's wit do not share Evelina's discomfort but reciprocate in kind, or enjoy the joke at each other's expense. At times, insults are levelled at Mrs Selwyn by Lord Merton and his coterie, and some are grossly unkind. More often, however, the men revel in baiting each other as well as Selwyn, performing what modern linguists have defined as 'insult rounds', typical of male friendship groups, especially the young, in which insults are exchanged in a form of bonding ritual.³³ In many ways one can see Selwyn, with her masculine understanding, as being part of this exchange, and not a victim of it, and there are occasions when she expresses pleasure at being uncivil to 'fools and coxcombs' or of 'cutting them up' (242). Indeed she often initiates such exchanges, setting the men up for her planned abuse, as when she uses the idea of the timekeeper as a precursor of verbal attack. The male recipients of her wit deflect it on others, using her exchanges as a spectator sport in which they laugh at their friends: 'O pray, Ma'am, [...] stick to Jack Coverley — he's your only man; for my part I have a mortal aversion to argument' (298). At the end of the novel, she joins forces with Merton, Coverley and Mirvan to abuse and deride Lovel, a sure indicator of her belonging to the group which she has struggled to dominate. Selwyn's struggles and victories might be read as an emblem of Burney's own ambitions to make an impact in the androcentric republic of letters described in her preface, as she shaped her first satirical work for publication.

As we have seen, writers on conduct for women deemed sarcasm and irony to be unfeminine. It is significant therefore that sarcasm and irony are favoured devices employed by Selwyn and constitute some of her most challenging examples of impoliteness. Writing on grammar in 1771, Daniel Fenning discussed both devices. Irony, according to Fenning 'is laughing at a man under disguise by appearing to praise or speak well of him when really we mean the contrary'; sarcasm 'is of a trope nearly of the same nature. It consists in properly insulting a dying or a dead person with taunts and scoffs'.³⁴ Irony and sarcasm then are a matter of degree, the latter associated with kicking a man when he is down. In his study of eighteenth-century English, Görzlach observes 'that the dissembling character of ironic speech makes it a prototypical category for pragmatic interpretation of the expectations and shared knowledge of speaker and hearer to explain its functioning'.³⁵

Much of Selwyn's irony relies upon the shared assumptions of her listeners, as her primary fictional audience, and Burney's readers as a secondary audience, in order for her real meaning to be obvious.³⁶ A cultural norm in which high-born gentlemen are educated in the classics, attend Oxford or Cambridge university, lead a leisured lifestyle, and attend one of the

³³ For a study of the appropriateness, or not, of insults in different social contexts, see William Labov, 'Rules for Ritual Insults' (1972) in *Sociolinguistics: A Reader and Course Book*, ed. by Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 472-86.

³⁴ Daniel Fenning, *A New Grammar of the English Language; or, An Essay into the Art of Speaking and Writing English with Propriety and Correctness: the Whole Laid Down in the Most Plain and Familiar Manner, and Calculated for the Use, not Only of Schools, but of Private Gentlemen* (London: S. Crowder, 1771), p. 187.

³⁵ Görzlach, *Eighteenth-Century English*, p. 134.

³⁶ Burney's readers might be assessed in the first instance from the subscription list prefixed to the first edition of *Camilla*, which contains many titles names, as well as the family of private gentlemen, such as 'Miss Austen'.

Houses of Parliament, forms the basis of her comments. In addition, she reveals assumptions relating to the idealization of social and moral codes of such men, which included concepts of 'gentlemanly' behaviour relating to benevolence and chivalric attitudes to those considered weaker than themselves. Selwyn uses these cultural assumptions to frame seeming compliments while revealing the actual failings of her masculine audience. Attacking the vacuous lifestyle of men like Merton and Coverley, Selwyn gilds her social commentary with compliments and markers of hyper-politeness, as when she comments on the men's plans for a race: 'These enterprises, [...] are very proper for men of rank, since t'is a million to one but both parties will be incapacitated for any better employment' (236). The disjunction between the implied reality and the surface compliment is highly entertaining, creating the pleasure to the reader which thinkers like Hume addressed. In this respect too, Selwyn can be seen to accommodate Horatian satire, generalizing her targets to make her social satire less personal. Indeed, Selwyn affirms the value of her ironic challenges by actually echoing writers like Addison, and referring to Horace:

'As I doubt not but you are both excellent classics, suppose, for the good of your own memories, and the entertainment and surprise of the company, the thousand pounds should fall to the share of him who can repeat by heart the longest ode of Horace?' (239)

Later, Selwyn's comments reflect Juvenalian severity, carrying the weight of insult which Fenning saw as a prerequisite of sarcasm, as when she counters Merton's assertion that women of sense are 'unnatural', with the observation that 'no man ought to be connected with a woman whose understanding is superior to his own', adding 'that to accommodate all this good company, according to such a rule, would be utterly impracticable, unless we should chuse subjects from Swift's hospital of idiots' (299). Derek Bousfield describes such use of sarcasm as 'insincere politeness' and therefore 'off record impoliteness' which functions, according to Bousfield, as 'a power-activating device to reprimand assumptive behaviour and to clarify just precisely what [is] what'.³⁷ In the examples quoted by Bousfield, the sarcasm is delivered by speakers in power, like a sergeant in the army to his recruits. The application of this linguistic principle to Burney's novel leads to some interesting insights relating to Selwyn's speech and status. In the context of the novel, Selwyn has just employed her wit to deride the wasted parliamentary powers of the young men around her: 'But for this observation, and the confession of Lord Merton, I protest I should have supposed that a peer of the realm, and an able logician, were synonymous terms' (298). In retaliation, Merton implies that Selwyn is an Amazon, and the others join in to challenge the power which Selwyn has hitherto wielded by her wit. But Selwyn's sarcastic riposte silences the more powerful of the trio of misogynists, 'Lord Merton [...] only whistled; Mr Coverley sang'; and Mr Lovel is left biting his lips, reduced to quips about Selwyn's gender, stuttering, 'that lady — if she was *not* a lady, — I should be half tempted to observe — that there is something, — in such severity, — that is rather, I must say, — rather, —

³⁷ 'Impoliteness in the Struggle for Power', in *Impoliteness in Language*, ed. by Bousfield and Locher, pp. 127-153 (p. 148): Bousfield posits that in contexts such as army training, impoliteness is the norm, and a way of demonstrating power.

oddish' (299). Like the sergeant in Bousfield's example, therefore, Selwyn reprimands the young men around her and re-establishes her power.

Bousfield and other linguists argue that in certain contexts defined by power relationships impoliteness is a dominant style of discourse and an effective way of implanting and maintaining status control. Selwyn challenges contemporary assumptions that women should speak less, speak quietly, and speak using supportive, social utterances to further 'pleasant' conversation. Instead she appropriates the right to speak, and uses points of reference traditionally associated with male language users to add clout to her utterances. Thus she is a confident user of classical allusions (as in her reference to the odes of Horace) and of aphoristic statements. Although Evelina is portrayed as not supporting Mrs Selwyn, frequently allying herself with the view that she is 'too severe', the narrative refrains from including descriptions of her which would cast her as a stereotypical harridan. Selwyn is not described as shrill or emotional: her comments are invariably measured, both in terms of her grammar and her tone. Indeed, at moments of high emotion Selwyn preserves a brooding taciturnity: when Evelina and she first encounter Merton and Coverley, she faces them 'with silent contempt' (226); when she returns in anger from her unsuccessful meeting with Sir John Belmont, 'It was some time' before she could give an account of the visit (301). Silence, especially in the speech of women, has been examined by writers in many different fields, but as Michaelson demonstrates, modern linguists are moving away from the established ideas of the speech and silence binary, where speech is seen as a signifier of empowerment and silence seen as passive acceptance of effacement, to an understanding of the many different functions of silence which can vary from context to context. Indeed, much current research posits that in some contexts, silence can be a sign of power, as when male speakers withhold feedback. In Selwyn's case then it is possible to read her silences, accompanied as they are with feelings of contempt or anger, as traditionally masculine attributes of reasoned restraint or self control.³⁸

The authority vested in Selwyn's speech lies also in her mode of delivery, fulfilling what Adam Smith described as an 'English' politeness, distinguished by 'a calm, composed, unpassionate serenity, noways ruffled by passion'.³⁹ Most of the instances of her conversation are offered using the verb 'said', though many stand alone, as in a play script. Exclamation marks, however, are rarely employed in her utterances, giving them more impact when they are, as when she rebukes Sir John Belmont (307). The em dash also is used sparingly in Selwyn's speech, never to signal aposiopesis, the truncated grammar of high emotion, but rather to denote the rapid delivery of quick-fire thoughts and comments.⁴⁰

³⁸ Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*; Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere', in *Textuality and Sexuality*, ed. by Still and Worton, pp.100-115; Coates *Women Men and Language*, pp. 34-6; Michaelson, pp. 4-6; for a discussion of the withholding of feedback, see Victoria Leto DeFrancisco, 'The Sounds of Silence: How Men Silence Women in Marital Relations', in *Language and Gender: A Reader*, ed. by Jennifer Coates (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, repr. 2004), pp. 176-184.

³⁹ *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. by J. C. Bryce, The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, gen. ed. A. S. Skinner, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), IV, 198.

⁴⁰ Occasionally, Burney employs the verb 'cried', mostly to convey Selwyn's glee when teasing Evelina or others, and sometimes to portray Selwyn's manful efforts in defending Evelina from unwanted attention, as on p. 227: "Has not your lordship too much gallantry," cried Mrs Selwyn, "to discover a young lady's illness by her looks?" .

Thus, Selwyn uses the strategies of impoliteness described by Bousfield, within a larger frame of politeness, for Burney ensures that her character's aggression is controlled. Further, it is used for sociocentric purposes. Placed in a context which is confrontational from the outset, Selwyn *has* to defend Evelina from the predatory behaviour of Merton. Because dominant ideology unequivocally defined women as polite, modest, and delicate, the strategies which Selwyn employs are drawn from masculine domains, domains which equip her with the means to meet fire with fire. Indeed, Selwyn comes out broadly in the masculine camp towards the end of the novel during the monkey episode. Not only is she the only female not to scream in fear at the creature, but she joins the captain, Merton and Coverley in laughing heartily at Lovel's discomfort, an unholy alliance which confirms her status as one of the boys. Selwyn believes in the masculine performances she effects, and her motives are not hidden in a 'cynical masquerade'.⁴¹ Even when she teases Evelina, the narrative makes her playful intentions perfectly clear. As discussed earlier, much of Selwyn's humour locates her in the androcentric tradition of a particular kind of Augustan satire. In addition, Selwyn is depicted as appropriating masculine styles and modes of interaction because such appropriation is the only way that she can achieve her desired agency. And in this respect she might be read as reflecting the consciousness of Frances Burney about her own professional status, and her role as a satirist, in the wider context of debates about female authorship, and authority.

3.2.2. Elinor Joddrel: Defying 'all forms' and 'antique prescriptions'

Burney's final novel further explores the behavioural paradigms available to and appropriated by women desiring greater agency. Elinor Joddrel is an individualist and, to some extent, an egotist, who steps out of the conventional boundaries of femininity in terms of physical space, beliefs, interests, speech and behaviour, a transgression which is represented as self-damaging, socially destructive and therefore immoral. Thus gender becomes a site of moral transgressions: transgressive genders are presented as morally deviant in their own right, but are also symbolic of wider ethical aberrations. Burney, then, appropriates the criticism of writers like Richard Polwhele, and moves the debate on into a wider ethical arena. Ultimately, however, the narrative confronts the reader with the fate of such women, highlighting the paucity of models available to those wishing to participate in fields dominated by men, and the character is treated sympathetically. In many ways then, as with the earlier character, Mrs Selwyn, the troubled figure of Elinor Joddrel can be read emblematically as a site of Burney's own anxieties about her position as a female novelist, intensified perhaps at a time when male writers were gaining fresh ascendancy in the form.

Elinor Joddrel is presented as the secondary female protagonist or anti-heroine in the novel, and is offered as a contrast to the more mainstream, acceptable face of womanhood represented by Juliet: Elinor disguises herself as a man, involves herself in what eighteenth-

⁴¹ Goffman discusses sincerity of social performance and 'cynical masquerade' in *The Presentation of Self*, p. 29.

century thinkers defined as masculine domains, and uses various gendered masculine speech styles, in order to achieve greater agency in her life; in addition, she experiences a form of ‘madness’. A primary model for the character is the historical and literary figure of the female philosopher. Burney drafted *The Wanderer* during the highly sensitive and reactionary years of the late 1790s, and in the context of war with France and the war of ideas over women’s rights and duties, her decision to use such a model can be viewed as self-protective. In a letter to Miss Berry and her sister (20th December 1790) Horace Walpole denigrates the ‘Amazonian allies headed by Kate Macaulay and the virago Barbauld, whom Mr Burke calls our *poissardes*’ (465); and at the end of the decade, Richard Polwhele’s poem, *The Unsex’d Females* (1798) targeted Mary Wollstonecraft and her associates, railing against ‘a female band despising NATURE’S law’ whose propensities made the writer ‘shudder’. Burney’s lack of hurry to publish her final novel might be read as a move to maintain a reputation which had remained intact during her long writing career. Julia Epstein suggests that had it been published in the 1790s *The Wanderer* might have been appreciated ‘for its web of politics and the imagination’.⁴² However, Burney’s use of the novel as a vehicle through which to revisit and mediate controversial debates was perilous. Further, to use it to reflect on her own art in light of revolutionary ideas could be seen as an immodest act, lacking feminine delicacy, as well as an act of self-justification contravening codes of gendered literary etiquette. In a novel where disguise is a prominent motif, Burney’s casting Elinor Joddrel as a female philosopher can thus be read as a literary feint, deflecting attention from aspects of herself embedded in her creation.

To some extent Burney was successful, and literary reviewers failed to detect the ambiguity underpinning Elinor’s characterization; one contemporary reviewer dubbed Elinor an ‘ill-fated [...] dupe of an enthusiastic mind’ and another condemned her as a ‘monster’. Some modern readings have seen her as an ‘anti-heroine’, ‘outlandish, if not actually grotesque’ and ‘a feminist grotesque figure’ reduced ‘to a figure of farce’.⁴³ More commonly, modern critics have interpreted Burney’s presentation of Elinor as sympathetic. However, although there has been a recent attempt to break down the Elinor and Juliet binary, most critical approaches persist in seeing Juliet as the figure who represents the values which Burney supported, seeing Elinor as a troubling Wollstonecraftian figure.⁴⁴ Claudia Johnson has described Elinor in terms of a formal element, functioning as a mouthpiece through which Burney provides ‘running commentaries on

⁴² *Letters of Horace Walpole*, IV, p. 465; [Richard Polwhele], *The Unsex’d Females: A Poem Addressed to the Author of Pursuits of Literature* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1798), [12 and 15]; Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, p. 176.

⁴³ Review of *The Wanderer*, *La Belle Assemblée*, April 1814, n.s. 9, pp. 184-189, p. 185, <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk>> [accessed 18 June 2010]; [Croker], review of *The Wanderer*, *Quarterly Review* 11 April, 1814, pp. 123-130 (p. 125); for the view that Joddrel is an ‘anti-heroine’, see Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 21; Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, p. 176, and Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*, rev. edn (London: Penguin, 1974, 1992), p. 307; that she is ‘outlandish, if not actually grotesque’, see Moreland Perkins, *Reshaping the Sexes in Sense and Sensibility* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), p. 10; and that she is ‘a feminist grotesque figure’ reduced ‘to a figure of farce’, see Bilger, *Laughing Feminism*, p. 217.

⁴⁴ For discussion of the Elinor and Juliet binary see Catherine Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), pp. 123-162, especially pp. 129-36 and p. 160; Epstein reads Elinor as ‘Juliet’s mirror-image and alter ego’: *The Iron Pen*, p. 186; Deborah Ross calls Elinor a ‘Wollstonecraft figure’, in *The Excellence of Falsehood: Romance, Realism, and Women’s Contribution to the Novel* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), p. 120; in *Laughing Feminism*, Bilger notes the characters’ similarities, positing that Elinor, ‘like Juliet, must accept a diminished position as a result of social conventions’, but argues that Elinor also plays a double role, which should render her tragi-comic, p. 217.

the humiliation and injustice suffered [...] by the heroine'.⁴⁵ Elinor is undoubtedly a formal device, but is a more complex and ambiguous composition than even Johnson's account indicates. Although Elinor articulates the 'injustices suffered by the heroine', she contributes to Juliet's humiliations herself, to some extent enacting the inequalities of patriarchy for her own selfish ends. Elinor contravenes prevailing tastes for female modesty, delicacy and sexual decorum because she is confident, politicized and sexually expressive. Thus, Burney's exploitation of a historical type, the stigmatized figure of the female philosopher, taps into contemporary fears concerning the education and empowerment of real women – fear of the misuse of power, fear of the desexualization of women in terms of loss of stereotypically feminine qualities, and fear of the destabilizing force of such women in society.

By 1814 the literary type of the female philosopher was well-established, and crossed partisan boundaries: for example, in *Adeline Mowbray* (1805), Amelia Opie provides a sympathetic depiction of a heroine who is 'tall, even to a masculine degree' and whose education leads her to eschew marriage, to live with the Godwin figure, Glenmurray; however, Elizabeth Hamilton lampoons such a free-thinking female in the anti-Jacobin *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800). Charlotte Lennox's novel *Henrietta* (1758) can be seen to have inspired *The Wanderer* and contains an early example of a 'female free-thinker' who proudly announces her deism. In a parody of Pope's verse later to be used by Maria Edgeworth, in *Belinda* (1801), for her own free-thinking figure, Harriet Freke, Lennox's outspoken character asserts 'whatever is, is right' (171).⁴⁶ Also resembling Mrs Freke in her masculinization, independent spirit and charismatic dominance, is Elinor Joddrel, who initially takes Juliet under her wing, providing her with clothes and even a name. Elinor returns from France inspired by revolutionary ideas. Repudiating her fiancé in favour of his brother, Albert Harleigh, she exercises what she sees as her right to love whom she pleases, and to express that love freely.⁴⁷

Elinor's speech marks her as a woman who is prepared to enter conversational provinces usually assigned to men. She debates public issues relating to politics, faith, and personal freedom, and is equally comfortable taking part in personal camaraderie, enjoying a private joke about women with a male companion. In the opening pages of the novel, we are introduced to Elinor and Juliet as anonymous female speakers, conversing with a man (Harleigh). Shrouded in darkness, the speech of Elinor provides clues for a reading of her character which both confirms and disrupts our expectations. That she is of high social standing is clear from her Standard English and confident delivery. However, that Elinor's speech belongs to a female is perhaps only obvious from narrational pointers describing her as 'a young lady' (12). For Elinor

⁴⁵ Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, p. 21.

⁴⁶ Amelia Opie, *Adeline Mowbray; or, The Mother and Daughter: A Tale* (1805), ed. by Anne McWhir (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2010), p. 57; *Henrietta*, p. 172; in *Belinda*, Mrs Freke proclaims 'whatever is, is wrong' (p. 230) exploiting the slippage which Pope satirizes in *Essay on Man*, Epistle IV, 394: see *A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴⁷ Burney's choice of the name Harleigh and her decision to foreground this secondary plot of unrequited love also consciously evokes Mary Hays's 1796 novel, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, and Henry McKenzie's earlier work, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), both featuring a hero named Harley; literary representation and historical events overlapped, since Hays's novel was based on her own admiration of William Frend; the secondary plot also evokes the events of Wollstonecraft's life as revealed in the *Memoirs* (1798): Wollstonecraft's pursuit of Imlay from France to England and her suicide attempts can be recognized in Elinor's refusal to relinquish Harleigh, and her attempts to take her own life.

appropriates traditional masculine allusions and viewpoints when talking about women. She has a tendency to use extravagant metaphors in a bid to entertain and impress, as when she suggests that Juliet offers 'the vivifying food of conjecture' (12-13), exploiting an established poetic conceit to express women's so-called mystique. There is a sense of solidarity also in the way she teases Harleigh about his rescue of Juliet, spoken in a low voice, as fictional males often do when they are being indelicate, or intimate (or both): 'I have no doubt but your tattered dulcinea has secured your protection' (13). Elinor's allotting of ownership, in the term 'your dulcinea', and the loaded suggestiveness of 'protection', shows her willingness to subscribe to gender stereotypes which disempower women. Such a revealing 'aside' is typical of Goffman's theory of dramaturgy; when Elinor thinks she cannot be heard, like Burney's villains, she shows her willingness to subscribe to gender stereotypes which disempower women.

Elinor's appropriation of masculine dialects can be explained by the sociolinguistic phenomenon of covert prestige, whereby speakers take on certain speech features of those whom they see as powerful.⁴⁸ Thus it can be argued that Elinor's beliefs in equality have led her to eschew conduct advice regarding women's conversation and modesty, and to embrace some of the language varieties of men. However, as this discussion shows, Elinor is shown as failing to recognize that men too have their own codes of conduct, their own restrictive rules which distinguish the polite gentleman from the rest. In this instance, her language converges more with the language of the predatory Willoughby, who inhabits the margins of morality in Burney's earlier novel, than with Orville who is placed firmly at its ethical centre. Such indicators of moral worth, or even of simple propriety, would have been obvious to Burney's first audiences, who would have been sensitive to the different models of masculinity invoked in the novel.

Indeed, later, when Elinor announces her love of 'ranging without a guide' (68) the metaphor articulates her readiness to redefine moral and gender boundaries, bringing her closer to literary deviant masculinities. In libertine fashion, Elinor objectifies and sexualises Juliet on numerous occasions, identifying closely with men in her assessment of Juliet's charm. Speaking to Juliet of Harleigh, she inverts the positive evaluation inherent in most compliments, commenting, 'you are a most provoking little devil' (52), later observing, 'the poor boy is bewitched with you: but you delicate sentimentalists are never yourselves to suspect any danger, till the men are so crazy 'twould be murder to resist them' (110). Such utterances absorb courtly refrains which plea for pity on the (male) lover by the 'bewitching' female. In addition, such utterances place Juliet in a difficult position for, in the frameworks established by modern linguists, she must either agree to the compliment and 'thereby violate the maxim of modesty' or disagree and 'violate the maxim of agreement'.⁴⁹ The conflation of gallantry and libertinism evident in Elinor's is accompanied by a resemblance to the idiolect of such male ne'er-do-wells as Lionel in *Camilla*, giving a racy and rebellious edge to her language, especially in the early

⁴⁸ For a review of William Labov's work in this area see James Milroy, *Linguistic Variation and Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) pp. 172-175.

⁴⁹ Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker "Methinks you seem more beautiful than ever": Compliments and Gender in the History of English' in *Speech Acts and the History of English*, ed. by Andreas H. Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen, *Pragmatics and Beyond*, n.s., 176 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2008), 195-222 (p. 195).

chapters.⁵⁰ Elinor's beliefs in equality are expressed by her rejecting conduct advice regarding women's conversational modesty. Further, as we have seen, she is depicted as embracing a range of language varieties usually associated with different kinds of male speakers.

Yet Burney's approach is more complex than the mere creation of a 'wicked' or 'wrong-headed' character. In spite of all of Elinor's aberrations and faults, she is depicted, at times, as heroic. Elinor's insanity might be seen as a conflation of literary types of madwoman: Ophelia, and Crazy Jane, both losing their sanity and their loves.⁵¹ Like Lady Macbeth, too, Elinor 'unsexes' herself, donating her feminine attire to Juliet, dressing as a man, and rejecting feminine qualities in the manner and content of her talk. But Burney drew on elevating masculine models too, employing her intimate knowledge of Shakespeare to imbue her character with the traits of tragedy. Elinor's obsessive love and jealousy can be traced to *Othello*; and there are echoes of Antony in her bungled suicide attempts. However, Elinor's obsessions and language indicate that Hamlet was Burney's main model. With an inter-textual reference to the tragedy, Elinor admits her intention 'to spur [her] almost blunted purpose' (372).⁵² She refers to suicide frequently, and develops an intense interest in the soul, eventually undergoing a kind of conversion by Harleigh into a belief in the afterlife. She displays a Hamlet-like self-consciousness that she might be perceived as insane, musing, 'There are fools, I know, in the world, who suppose me mad' (586). Similarly, Elinor's search for the truth associates her with the universalizing preoccupations of Hamlet or even the visionary clarity of King Lear.⁵³ Elinor's raving search for 'truth', as well as her articulation of it, therefore places her in a masculine tradition of madness, making her like both Hamlet and Lear in her self-destructive outspokenness and quest.

In many ways Elinor is a 'solitary walker', an epithet which evokes Wollstonecraft and Rousseau but which also conjures the generic Shakespearean tragic hero, the man outside of and 'above the element he lives in'.⁵⁴ Her political ideas certainly set her apart from the society she inhabits, a society whose values are largely revealed by the narrative to be grasping and mechanical, so that Elinor's ideology, though radical, has to be weighed and judged against a background of bourgeois principles fallen into decay. If Elinor's function is a foil to the heroine's more conventional qualities, she parallels Juliet in her isolation. But as Juliet is eventually brought into the fold of an English circle, Elinor becomes more estranged, her separateness completed at the end of the novel when she leaves for 'the end of the world' (797).

Formalistically her dialogue separates her also. Elinor's utterances are littered with metaphors, a feature which becomes a constant in her different speech varieties. However,

⁵⁰ Elinor peppers her comments with words like 'dingy' and 'dowdy' (50); she embraces such proscribed choices as 'quiz' and 'phiz' (53); and neologisms, like 'nothingly' and 'fogrum' (53 and 70).

⁵¹ For a discussion of these types see Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago Press, 1987, repr. 1988), pp. 11-17; Francesca Saggini discusses intertextual dramatic allusions in *The Wanderer*, and offers a view of the novel as 'theatricalizing [...] Elinor's folly': see 'Miss Ellis and the Actress: For a Theatrical Reading of *The Wanderer*', in *A Celebration of Frances Burney*, ed. by Clark, pp. 141-155 (p. 151).

⁵² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. 4. 111; for the view that Burney's model was *The Tempest*, see Thaddeus, p. 166.

⁵³ Showalter notes that Hamlet's is a more universalized, metaphysical distress: *The Female Malady*, p. 10; Jane Ussher notes that madness in male characters often represents 'access to truth': see *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 87.

⁵⁴ Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2. 88-90: 'His delights | Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above | The element they liv'd in'.

metaphors are not the only devices used by Elinor in her armory of rhetoric, and she is allocated several lengthy speeches which demonstrate both her powers of persuasiveness and her revolutionary fervour. At a high point in the novel, Elinor confronts Harleigh and Juliet on Salisbury Plain in order to discuss religion and suicide. She begins by a series of rhetorical questions, which she presents anaphorically, but balances with imperatives:

‘Can you feign, Harleigh? Can you endure to act a part, in defiance of your nobler nature, merely to prolong my detested life? Do you join in the popular cry against suicide, merely to arrest my impatient hand? If not, initiate me.’ (781)

Tricolon and alliteration are employed to enhance persuasiveness, as when she orders Harleigh to initiate her ‘in the series of pretended reasoning, by which honour, honesty and understanding such as yours, have been duped into bigotry.’ There is figurative density when she solicits Harleigh to convince her, and questions his need to prevent her suicide, asking ‘why thus try to bewilder a poor, forlorn traveller, who is dropping with fatigue upon the road’, ‘why do you knit your brow?’; and why ‘make misery linger, till malady or old age dissolve the worn out fabric’ (782). As she proceeds, her language takes on a strange parodic quality, visionary yet anti-visionary in the traditional sense, in that it inverts Christian doctrine, employing imagery drawn from classical myth and English folklore to justify suicide: ‘lopping off, at a blow, that hydra-headed monster of evil upon evil, called time; bounding over the imps of superstition; dancing upon the pangs of disease’ (783). Elinor’s eloquence therefore disrupts the reader’s gender expectations of novelistic (and real-life) conventions. But her dialogue also places her in a dramatic tradition, specifically Shakespearean, so that her rhetoric is familiar yet disjunctive; it imbues her utterances with the authority and insight of male tragic heroes, yet issuing from the mouth of a novelistic sentimental female character, the grandiosity can seem overwhelming, as if it hangs ‘loose about her, like a giant’s robe.’⁵⁵

Nevertheless, there are points in the novel when Elinor’s rhetoric is powerful and moving. In Chapter XVIII, for example, Elinor explains to Harleigh why she has the right to love him, and to articulate that love. Many of her comments allude to Wollstonecraftian principles; indeed she refers overtly to ‘the Rights of woman’ and asserts her right as a human being to give her ‘personal vindication’ (175). Preparing her explanation, rarely interrupted by other interlocutors in the scene, Elinor describes the tyranny of custom which makes slaves of women, commenting ‘how it clings to our practice! how it embarrasses our conduct! how it awes our very nature itself, and bewilders and confounds even our free will!’ (174). In a similar scene in Edgeworth’s *Belinda*, the character Mrs Freke issues only platitudes which allude to but pervert Wollstonecraft’s views, positing that virtue and politeness are ‘hypocrisy’ and that female delicacy is enslaving. But Mrs Freke’s arguments are not developed, and the discussion ends with her laughing immoderately. Edgeworth constantly intersperses Mrs Freke’s utterances by opposing speaker-views, and narrative which undermines the authority and sincerity of her

⁵⁵ Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, v. 2. 20-21: ‘Now does he feel his title | Hang loose about him, like a giant’s robe’.

opinions (228-231). In contrast, narrative commentary in *The Wanderer* promotes Elinor's conversation as serious, affecting and earnest, drawing attention to the emotive impact of her utterances on her listeners and herself. Elinor echoes Mrs Freke when she exclaims, 'We are slaves to [custom's] laws and its follies', but her rhetorical questioning and faltering delivery infuse *her* speech with solemnity and sincerity:

'Who should have told me, only five minutes ago, that, at an instant such as this; an instant of liberation from all shackles, of defiance to all forms; its antique prescriptions should still retain their power to confuse and torment me? Who should have told me, that, at an instant such as this, I should blush to pronounce the attachment in which I ought to glory? and hardly know how to articulate [...] That I should love you, Harleigh, can surprise no one but yourself!' (174)

Elinor's rejection of the laws of custom contravenes the general thrust of Burney's work which promotes behaviour conforming to societal conventions. In *Cecilia*, however, Burney presents a possible caveat to this principle when she assigns to the idealistic Mr Belfield the view that 'general conformity extirpates genius, and murders originality' (15). Burney's narrative invites us to acknowledge the originality of the ideas expressed by Elinor Joddrel and to respond to the emotive impact of her language even while it rejects this model of feminine behaviour, which it represents as troublesome and unworkable.

Although Elinor's theatrical dialogue seems out of tune with typical registers of prose fiction, there is a sincerity in her rhetoric to which the reader responds, so that as we read Elinor's utterances, we are swept (as Burney was with Burke) into the vortex of her eloquence.⁵⁶ However, at such elevated moments, Elinor's complex make-up is revealed through her language, which shows her struggling to express her new desire for agency in a man-made language, the vocabulary and syntax of which subjugate her. Thus during what should be read as her decisive move to assert her equality by honestly declaring love for Harleigh, she falls back on language and notions of customs which she has previously spurned:

[^{Vocative}(dearest Harleigh!) ^S(You) ^V(are) ^C(master) ^A(of my soul!)]
 [^S (you) ^V (are) ^C (sovereign) ^A (of my esteem, my admiration, my every feeling of tenderness, and every idea of perfection!)] (175)

Here, the chosen vocabulary belies her stated belief in equality, drenched as it is in the language of monarchical and patriarchal rights and power. As the annotation illustrates, even her grammar structures locate Harleigh as the 'masterful' subject as well as the complement of her clauses, relegating references to herself to optional adverbial elements.⁵⁷ There seems, therefore, an inconsistency here. For having gloried in 'revolutionary ideas' which have 'ennobled' her and raised her as 'an equal member of the community', and championed the 'Rights of woman' as

⁵⁶ Burney described how 'the whirlwind' of Burke's 'eloquence nearly drew [her] into its vortex' (16 February 1788); quoted in *Frances Burney, Journals* (2001), p. 264.

⁵⁷ If the adverbials are interpreted as post-modifiers within the complement element, they still represent an optional and subordinate position in the structure of the clauses: ^{Voc}(Dearest Harleigh!) [^S(You) ^V(are) ^C(master _{pp}(of my soul))].

‘the rights of human nature’, she is, in fact, regurgitating the imagery of patriarchal imperialism. Burney thus seems to undermine her character’s beliefs by revealing her lack of real agency. Constructing a figure who is a compound of much that is shown to be wrong by contemporary discourses, Burney presents a freakish female whose propensities act as a foil for the delicacy, gentleness and balanced sensibilities of her heroine. However, Elinor is no straightforward ‘Mrs Freke’, and although Burney seems to be condemning the appropriation of masculine values and qualities by women, she is more concerned with the appropriation of ‘wrong’ masculine values, those which are self-promoting and destructive.⁵⁸

In addition, drawing on a dramatic tradition and imbuing her fictional character with theatrical presence, Burney’s mingling of Shakespearean paradigms indicates her wish to configure Elinor as elevated and pitiable, as well as ‘unfeminine’ and deviant, accounting for, and explaining, her ambiguous complexity. At the heart of this complexity is Elinor’s desire for agency, and her search for a way of articulating such agency through speech styles which are androcentric and disjunctive to contemporary notions of femininity. As subsequent discussion in this section will show, although Elinor dresses up as a man, and has ‘manly’ attributes, she does not want *to be* a man. Elinor wants masculine power to express her womanly love, as well as other ‘rights of woman’. But Burney’s novel suggests that in its turn-of-the century workings, such power rests on the subjugation of women, a structure which Elinor herself perpetuates.

The novel places Harleigh, a main figure of morality, in judgement of Elinor’s theatricality in the real-life action of the novel. Expressing his recognition of her ‘noble’ and ‘masculine spirit’, nevertheless he hopes that she will rediscover her feminine place in the community and ‘return to the habits of society and common life’ (862, 863). This highlights two main areas of interest in the novel: one, to which I return later, is articulated by Harleigh’s belief that individuality has to operate within larger networks of community, and that although both men and women must accommodate family and social mores, such accommodation is, in fact, mediated by gender, which has to conform; another is that Harleigh senses that the emerging states of Elinor’s personality are, in fact, personae, ‘strange and improbable’ parts which she has acted (863).

Outside the confines of the theatre, some of these roles are convincing. In a significant performative act she donates her clothes to Juliet, whom she has already named. Thus it is Elinor who provides Juliet with signifiers of class and femininity. Articulating Wollstonecraftian ideas on the construction of gender and the subjugation of women, Elinor understands the significance of her acts. Her donation of feminine garments therefore ritualizes her rejection of the workings of patriarchy.⁵⁹ However, by clothing Juliet in finery, she is imposing these subjugating signifiers upon her, foreshadowing the patriarchal patronage and repression which she will enact on Juliet later. So, the donation of clothes not only signifies the transference of her own femininity, but is

⁵⁸ Wollstonecraft writes ‘for those of the superior class, by catching, at least, a smattering of literature, and conversing more with men, on general topics, acquire more knowledge than the women who ape their fashions and faults without sharing their advantages’: see *Vindication*, p. 76.

⁵⁹ At one point Juliet refers to such garments as ‘trumpery’, echoing Wollstonecraft’s view in *Vindication* (p. 75) that women’s preoccupation with ‘frippery’ to please men is a kind of degradation which ‘weakens the mind’.

also an indication of Elinor's power over Juliet. Thus, when Elinor returns from abroad 'grotesquely' disguised as a foreign man, she demonstrates the phallocentric nature of the mind set which underpins her beliefs in equality. Elinor derogates feminine delicacy as 'affectation and hypocrisy' (396), failing to see that by donning male clothing and employing masculine dialects, she is performing another constructed gender, an imitative act seen by some of Burney's contemporaries as signifying a lack of 'original genius'.⁶⁰ In addition, her chosen masculine role is French which, in the post-revolutionary years during which the novel was written, was viewed with distrust by many of Burney's contemporaries, who saw revolutionary treachery and brutal tendencies in the figure she assumes.

As we have seen, there is indeed an element of performance about Elinor, as she tries on different roles and speech styles to see how they fit. Anticipating later theorization of gender as reiterative performance, Burney's final novel draws on eighteenth-century acting theory to explore the gender transgressions of Elinor's actions. Further, widening the area of interest to mediate debates on identity and self, the novel explores the complexity of individual identities, even while it supports prevailing notions of a natural, authentic self. Burney was involved in contemporary theatre, and she knew and admired Garrick. It is evident from the depiction of private theatricals in Volume I of *The Wanderer*, that Burney was also familiar with ideas involved in the theorization of acting; this is made clear from the depiction of the audience's response to Juliet, who discuss 'whether this excellence were the result of practice and instruction, or a sudden emanation of general genius' (95). This key narrational pointer opens up debates about the authentic self and performed identity, for as this thesis argues, Burney's novels advocate a notion of correlation between outer and inner value. The episode involving amateur theatricals demonstrates the belief in such a correlation. In addition, the episode endorses preferences for natural, sincere behaviour, both on and off the stage. Thus it is possible to read the theatricals episode metonymically, as a narrative which casts light on the problem of gender performativity, performativity in general, and the authentic self.

As Paul Scott Gordon explains, John Hill's acting treatises aimed 'to reform the mid-century stage by matching actors or actresses with parts in which they could conceivably succeed'. For Hill, there had to be something of a part already in an actor, something which he could call upon to create the role. Juliet's educated, privileged background fits her for the part of the aristocratic Lady Townley, announcing habits 'formed in the superior classes of society' (92). Further, Juliet's discomfort at being forced to act heightens her sensitivity to the feelings of her role, allowing her to produce a moving performance. Garrick and his circle preferred the notion that the actor was a passive receiver of emotions which 'occurred to him or *on* him'.⁶¹ Like

⁶⁰ In *Helen* (1834), Edgeworth explores degrees of imitation, how some choose their originals well, 'but here all is Birmingham counterfeit' (p. 99); Burney's novel suggests that Elinor has not chosen her masculine original well.

⁶¹ Paul Scott Gordon, *The Power of the Passive Self in English Literature, 1640-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 162 and p. 165; Gordon quotes Garrick (p. 178) who wrote in *Ideas of Acting*, that 'The greatest strokes of Genius have been unknown to the Actor himself 'till Circumstances, and the warmth of the Scene has sprung the Mine as it were, as much to his own Surprise as that of the Audience'. Gordon notes that the image of the 'surprised actor, suddenly aware of his own performance, implies that he watches his passions from a position as detached as the audience's'; if this is so, it accords with the concept of the spectator, described by Adam Smith, and links the actor with the notion of the sympathetic mind.

Garrick himself, Juliet is surprised at the emotions manifest in her performance and, for Burney's readers, the theory of passivity exonerated her from shame. Similarly, Juliet's unpreparedness for the role of Townley protects her from contemporary distrust of theatrical 'arts' striving 'to be displayed' (95), which turned the body into a rhetorical device with the dangerous power of influencing others.⁶²

Ill equipped to act the part of Lady Townley, Elinor retains the part of the significantly named Lady Wronghead. However, Elinor's background both informs her performance, and undermines it. Her 'burlesque manner of acting' is telling, as 'she piqued herself upon producing new effects, and had the triumph, by her cleverness and eccentricities, her grotesque attitudes and attire' 'to bring the part into a consequence of which it had never appeared susceptible' (99). Defined by Dr Johnson as '*adj:* jocular; tending to raise laughter by unnatural or unsuitable language or images', the word 'burlesque' aptly describes some of Elinor's styles of speaking and behaving, outside her acting role, which have been discussed in this chapter so far.⁶³ But Elinor's appropriation of masculine speech styles and viewpoints may be seen as poor qualifications for her part as Lady Wronghead. In terms of Hill's theory of acting, it equips her with little that she can draw on to play a woman's part, leading her to rely on more calculating 'effects' which, as we have seen, were criticized by many of Burney's contemporaries.

Elinor's acting off-stage is also to be read in the context of these theories, and is to be read as a signifier of egocentric desires. The notion of spoken language as a reflection of thought was long established in western ideas before eighteenth-century linguistic interest provided new impetus to related debates. Prevalent also, in the eighteenth century, was the idea of the face reflecting the mind, or in some accounts, the soul.⁶⁴ During Elinor's most convincing performance, she hides her face in order to reconfigure herself as a foreign man, stealing into Juliet's public musical performance with the intention of killing herself in front of her rival and Harleigh. All but the figure's 'large nose' is concealed behind a slouching hat and muffling cravat, and the narrative description supports the disguise, describing the event from Juliet's limited viewpoint: 'Her alarm augmented: was he watching her from mere curiosity?' (357). The face was also viewed as a register of a person's moral worth; unable to 'read' the face, the focalized narration instead reads the body: 'his air had something in it that was wild and uncouth; and his head was continually in motion'. Burney's readers would have recognized the lack of humanity as well as duplicity in Elinor's hidden face and ungainly mannerisms. Further, a reading informed by aesthetic notions equating ugliness with corruption or malice would identify the moral deviance implicit in the physical rhetoric. The novel's depictions of Elinor's masculinized language as unsuitable, ungainly, or ridiculous, and of her masculine disguise as wild and uncouth, judges her through the filter of aesthetics, and condemns her as a perversion,

⁶² This was what Diderot described as the calculating actor who could imitate different emotions. Discussions of Garrick's range, in England, suggest that many preferred to believe he was not a calculating actor – hence his own description of himself as a 'surprised actor': see Gordon, pp. 173-5.

⁶³ Johnson, *Dictionary*, I; *OED* 1 and 2 note that the word denotes 'derisive imitation; ironically bombastic, mock-heroic'.

⁶⁴ William Hogarth, 'Chapter XV: of the Face': 'With regard to character and expression; we have daily many instances which confirm the common opinion, the face is the index of the mind': see *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753), ed. by Ronald Paulson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 94-100 (p. 98).

or as something deformed. But as we have seen, the novel also sympathizes with Elinor, confronting some of the paradigms of power available to her for imitation, and questioning why more heroic and worthy models were not available to all.

The novel brings together seemingly disparate ideas concerning the roles and duties of women in the character of Elinor, whose involvement in domains not sanctioned for women is closely associated by the plotting of the narrative with a decline in her communicative competence and her mental capacities. Elinor's radicalization in France figures in the novel to account for her interest in areas of public life long denied to women in Britain, such as politics and religion. The articulation of Elinor's love for Harleigh, therefore, is closely associated with the awakening of her political philosophy. However, Harleigh sees her radicalized sexual values as spelling the death of her reason and morality, as 'perversion' and anarchy, – a 'chaos of false principles, exaggerated feelings and imaginary advancement in new doctrines' (190). Harleigh objects to the highly individual nature of Elinor's views and feelings which mark her out from mainstream ideologies enacted and articulated by conventional representatives of her sex and class. To some extent also, Harleigh can be said to be recoiling from the subjectivity evident in her expressiveness, a subjectivity whose autonomy is the more shocking because its reveals the interiority of a woman. Thus the novel reveals how objections such as Harleigh's constrain women's freedom to express themselves, even within the permitted boundaries of the private sphere, for not only does Harleigh react against Elinor's political convictions, but against her belief in her right to express her own desires.

Burney was familiar with texts which brought together female intellectuality and sexuality, and discourses linking both to madness. Tracing the gendering of madness during the course of the eighteenth century, Elaine Showalter notes that by the early nineteenth century nervous problems in women were seen to occur 'when women defied their nature', competing with, rather than serving men. Elinor defies the role allotted her by society; happy to take on the role of lover, she is unremitting in her pursuit of Harleigh. Although Elinor's metaphorical language locates her, in part, in literary models of female madness, her paranoia, her rapid, manic delivery of speech, her desire for self-mutilation and independence were all symptoms which were becoming formalized in the categorization of hysteria in medical discourses by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Hysteria was linked to excessive sensibility, but as Showalter demonstrates, by the mid-nineteenth century, hysterical girls were also described in terms traditionally loaded with masculine value: energetic, passionate, fearless of danger, experiencing 'unprovoked quarrelsomeness', symptoms all manifest by Elinor. Harleigh mainly views such outpourings as the 'exaggerated feelings' of a mind deranged by uncontrolled excesses. The Scottish physician and philosopher, John Abercrombie (1780-1844) wrote that the imagination, if controlled by reason and virtue, could 'ennoble the mind' and strengthen the moral sense, but if not properly exercised, the harmony of the faculty for sensibility could be disrupted. Hysterics were therefore increasingly defined as egotists, supremely self-conscious and selfish in their pursuit of 'dominant ideas', with 'exaggerated self-consciousness'; 'the

'hysteric' according to a nineteenth-century treatise, 'is pre-eminently an *individualist*, an unsocial unit' (my italics).⁶⁵

It is Elinor's emphasis on the rights of the individual, regardless of sex, which the novel portrays as unsympathetic, and therefore immoral. Burney's novel demonstrates the negotiations which the individual has to make in order to survive in the community (be it familiar, social or intellectual), and although it champions the cause of the gifted individual who survives multiple difficulties, it demonstrates that the individual still must operate within wider, consensual codes. As with Burney herself, who negotiated the problems of authorship, Elinor's difficulties are presented as endemic to all social women, especially those venturing into public domains, which included discourse domains, long dominated by men. Thus we are meant to read Elinor as morally sound, but as someone who wanders from common female trajectories.⁶⁶ Ultimately, she is presented with enlightened tolerance by Burney, even while she is using her as a receptacle for many of the anathemas of the age. Such a view is supported by Burney's own annotations in the little known interleaved copy of *The Wanderer* in the New York Public Library. Opposite a page containing episodes in Elinor's story, Burney wrote, 'Elinor too bad'; elsewhere she notes Elinor's 'sympathizism'.⁶⁷ Such comments indicate Burney's intended changes for a revised edition of the novel which never appeared, and confirms the writer's engagement with a character vilified by contemporary critics.

It is therefore easy to read Elinor as encapsulating many of the misgivings Burney herself experienced as an author working under pressures to conform to expectations of proper lady novelists. It is possible that Burney felt increasingly disempowered, or anticipated the critical reactions which her final novel would attract, departing, as it does, from her previously published works. Thus it is likely that her sympathetic presentation of Elinor reflects her identification with 'the female difficulties' encountered by all women desiring agency. Indeed, read as a reflection of Burney herself, Elinor's words, quoted earlier, may signal Burney's regret that she had not been more courageous during her writing career, to write 'in defiance to all forms', and her shame that such 'antique prescriptions should retain their power to confuse and torment [her]'. Burney may be articulating, indirectly, her affinities with ideas in which she 'ought to glory' but hardly knows 'how to articulate' (174). Since the start of her writing career, Burney was aware of the risks women took when entering public domains, when daring to satirize social codes, including manifestations of a multifaceted patriarchy.⁶⁸ Mrs Selwyn, also, can therefore be read as a site of Burney's own anxieties, including her awareness that an 'authoress' was perceived as

⁶⁵ For a discussion of hysteria and excessive sensibility, see Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, p. 216; in *The Female Malady* Showalter discusses the gendering of madness (p. 123), and hysterical girls (p. 133); Abercrombie is discussed by Michael J. Clark, 'Morbid Introspection, Unsoundness of Mind, and British Psychological Medicine, c.1830-1900', in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, ed. by W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd, 3 vols (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985-8), III, 71-102 (p. 76); Clark also discusses the view of Horatio Bryan Donkin (1845-1927) that the hysterical is an individualist (p. 82).

⁶⁶ Elinor, herself, criticizes the 'beaten road' of the 'common [female] herd': *The Wanderer* (873).

⁶⁷ At the end of Volume I, Chapter IV Burney has written 'Elinor too bad' (p. 46, opposite p. 74 of the interleaved edition); Elinor's 'sympathizism' is noted (p. 186, opposite p. 427 in vol I of the interleaved version).

⁶⁸ Burney met Frances Brooke in 1774, and by 1778 they were friends; *The Excursion* (1777) provided an unflattering depiction of Garrick which brought upon Brooke the condemnation of many critics, including an excoriating review written anonymously by Garrick himself: see Backscheider and Cotton's introduction to *The Excursion*, pp. xxix-xxxii.

flippant, assuming and loquacious', or as masculine and Amazonian.⁶⁹ Mrs Selwyn and Elinor Joddrel may even be Burney's madwomen in the attic, used to explore the conundrum of how women engage with discourses and employ language traditionally defined as masculine without appearing ridiculous, aggressive, perverted, or even monstrous.

3.3. The Figure of the Fop: The Benign Comic Hero and the Site of Wider Anxieties

Current interest in the ways masculinities are formed or evolve provides relevant insights when considering literary depictions of the figure of the fop in eighteenth-century fiction, highlighting the varied models of masculinity available at the time, as well as the multifarious functions of such models. R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt have recently defended the theory of hegemonic masculinity but concede that a more complex model of gender hierarchy is needed, one which recognizes local and global influences as well as internal contradictions in the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity. Matthew McCormick highlights the gendered nature of power seated in an independence supporting political involvement, arguing that concepts of independence shifted the focus from rank and wealth, so that by the end of the eighteenth century independence became 'equated with maleness' itself.⁷⁰ Such recognition of the power inherent in variously described masculinity, or masculinities, is significant for this section, which reads the depictions of foppish characters in Burney's fiction as indicative of her own awareness of the authority vested in male figures, regardless of their interpretation of their gender identity.

Philip Carter recognizes that there were different ways of achieving a sense of manhood during the period, and explores interest and anxieties emerging from perceived competition between politeness and manliness. Carter focuses on masculinities in relation to other 'male' forms of gender identity as opposed to female forms, and his discussion of the figure of the fop is particularly useful to this study. Carter argues that the fop was primarily a literary figure whose popularity endured because it functioned in diverse ways. Identifying two broad historiographical approaches to the figure of the fop, Carter posits that commentators either view depictions of the fop as the 'benign comic hero or the sensitive man', or as representing national anxieties and crises in gender debates.⁷¹ Although Carter feels that the issues underpinning various depictions are very complex, he concludes that in spite of changing contexts 'a striking feature of the type remains the unchanging nature of its salient personality traits', which Carter lists (somewhat disparagingly) as 'vanity, posturing and pursuit of things trivial' to which he adds the 'enduring association with effeminacy which derived in part from their abandonment of traditional male

⁶⁹ Burney expressed her ideas on the loquacity of female authors in the Diary MSS fragments in the New York Public Library, Box 2, as quoted in Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney*, p. 63.

⁷⁰ R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society*, 19.6, 2005, 829-859; Matthew McCormick, *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 208.

⁷¹ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society: Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow: Longman Pearson, 2001); for Carter's discussion of historiographical approaches see p. 138 and p. 139; Susan Staves argues that the fop was 'a real social phenomenon', and that some literary fops were based on real men. Carter does not deny the link to historical phenomena but feels the figure is *primarily* literary: see 'A Few Kind words for the Fop', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 22. 3 (1982), 413-428 (p. 148 and p. 149).

attributes such as moderation and reason, but also, and more topically, from their irresponsible and inadequate pursuit of refinement'.⁷² Nevertheless, Carter's examination of the fop will provide a useful starting point for discussion in this section. His identification of approaches which describe the fop as a benign comic hero or sensitive man, or as a representative of eighteenth-century anxieties, provides an illuminating foundation for the characters to be considered. Carter's recognition of a fop's effeminate qualities corresponds with other studies of the type, and may be illuminated further by Felicity Nussbaum's extensive study of the term 'effeminacy'.⁷³ As we shall see, such studies highlight the complex interplay of literary conventions and extraliterary factors mediated by Burney's characterizations.

The ambivalence evident in the presentation of Mrs Selwyn and Elinor Joddrel similarly informs the characterization of Sir Sedley Clarendel in *Camilla*, whose depiction draws attention to the performance-based foundation of foppery; for Clarendel is a self-conscious performer. As such, the narration reveals a hidden personality, less superficial, and less 'effeminate', but more capable of appreciating the moral worth of the heroine. Thus, Clarendel illustrates the sensitive and comic type of the fop identified by Carter's review of historiographical accounts. Indeed, such revelations highlight the type of masculinity supported by the novel, a type contiguous with foppery, but carrying what Carter has described as long-recognized attributes of manliness such as physical courage and self-control.⁷⁴ In contrast, there is no ambiguity about the presentation of the other figure of the fop in the novel, Clermont Lynmere, nor of the earlier fop, Mr Lovel, who each illustrate a different historiographical approach, drawing on contemporary national and gender anxieties. Both men are repellent and potentially dangerous to women, though as we shall see, Clermont Lynmere is presented by the third person narration with more overt disapproval. Such figures allow the novels to explore the workings of patriarchy in a range of guises, for although the characters are figures to be laughed at, their ridiculous posturing does not detract from the power invested in their sex by society, nor their freedom to use that power destructively. It is evident too that facets of these characters reflect aspects of Burney's perceptions of the limitations on herself as a writer, their ability to redefine their identity contrasting starkly with her own attempts, or desires, to experiment with her chosen genres.⁷⁵

⁷² Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 155.

⁷³ Felicity Nussbaum, 'Effeminacy and Femininity: Domestic Prose Satire and *David Simple*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 11.4 (1999), 421-444.

⁷⁴ Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 102 and pp. 108-11.

⁷⁵ For a discussion of Burney's failure to have her plays performed to her satisfaction, and of her perception of the restrictions imposed on her as a novelist, see Christina Davidson, 'Frances Burney, Elinor Joddrel, and the "defiance to all forms" and "antique prescriptions"' (forthcoming).

3.3.1. Eighteenth-Century Representations of Foppery

Modern commentators on the figure of the fop support Carter's view that effeminacy was an enduring trait in the varying manifestations of the type, a trait which incorporates other contested concepts such as luxury, egotism, and continental influence. Tracing the connotations of the word 'effeminacy' Felicity Nussbaum has shown that by the middle of the eighteenth century the word had gathered a variety of associative meanings which, as we shall see, permeate Burney's characterizations: these include, imitating women's manners or speech patterns, which were perceived as exaggerative and effusive; failing to achieve stability of nature, or exercise self-restraint – favouring decadence or luxury; failing to cultivate patriotic principles; not achieving classic republican virtue, nor being capable of physical or military heroism. In short, effeminacy was posited as a deviation from normative masculinities – be they aristocratic, bourgeois, or professional. As E. J. Clery's discussion of dichotomous masculinities argues, normative masculinities gave rise to an alternative ideal of masculinity, according to which 'modern' qualities, gendered feminine, were valorized; the effeminate counterpart to this ideal was often represented as degraded, and unfit for a 'manly civic role'.⁷⁶

Such an argument recognizes that concepts of effeminacy were closely linked to those of unmanliness, though they were not synonymous: unmanly behaviour towards women, children, servants, and animals was aggression, constituting an abuse of power over the vulnerable; a person could be rendered unmanly by excessive alcohol; and unmanly language could be railing, or enthusiastic praise.⁷⁷ These qualities are therefore equated with sociopathic tendencies located in an inability to control personal preoccupations; and such tendencies transmute into an unfitness for public life founded on immoral as well as social inadequacies. In contrast, as John Tosh has shown, manliness denoted moral as well as physical strength; and Stephen H. Gregg has explored how such equations were exploited by religious sermons in the early decades of the period, encouraging control of the passions, the appetites, and beliefs. Eighteenth-century texts frequently equated 'manliness' with qualities which in Habermasian terms qualified a person to engage in public life. Carol Percy has examined collocations involving the word in literary reviews, and concludes that 'manly' was more likely to describe non-fiction genres (and sometimes their writers), and to be associated with perspicuity, judgement, freedom, liberality, rationality and lack of affectation. In addition, and highly significant for this argument, Percy's

⁷⁶ For a review of the use of the word 'fop' and 'coxcomb', and their associated meanings in Restoration plays, see Robert B. Heilman, 'Fops and Some Versions of Foppery', *English Literary History*, 49.2 (1982), 363-395 (pp. 363-5); Barker-Benfield discusses prominent eighteenth-century views on 'The Question of Effeminacy' in *The Culture of Sensibility*, pp. 104-153; in *Fashioning Masculinity*, pp. 5-10, Cohen reviews modern critical interpretations of the concept, and contemporary associations with the French and luxury; Nussbaum, 'Effeminacy and Femininity', pp. 432-3; Clery, *The Feminization Debate*, p. 10.

⁷⁷ A drunkard was accused of 'renouncing manhood' and 'unmanning himself' by Richard Peers, in *A Companion for Youth: Consisting of Meditations, Devotions, and Proper Instructions* (London: T. Astley, 1738) p. 99 and p. 100; Catherine Macaulay castigated Chesterfield for his 'unmanly railing at all womankind' in *Letters on Education. With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (London: C. Dilly, 1790), p. 209; Elizabeth Montagu criticized Johnson's ostentatious praise and style as 'wonderfully dress'd & finical', positioning it against the 'manly style': 'noble, strong, & fit for free people' in a letter to Elizabeth Carter, quoted by Nussbaum, 'Effeminacy and Femininity', p. 424; Hazlitt writes of unmanly triumph over people with disabilities in 'On Vulgarly and Affectation', *Works*, VIII, 158.

linguistic study finds that during the decades following the publication of Lowth's grammar, 'manly' writing also had to be 'correct', indicating that moral and linguistic rectitude were closely bound.⁷⁸

Such prerequisites for public life, and their antitheses, are considered in detail in a text which is cited by modern scholars as articulating concerns about masculinity, privilege, and duty at the outset of the Seven Years War. Running to multiple editions, Brown's work, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757) drew attention to competing propensities, arguing that 'our present effeminate Manners and Defects of Principle' are the effect of 'exorbitant Trade and Wealth left without check' which, Brown argued, left the nation weakened from within and unfit for military combat (109). Indeed, it is evident from Burney's depictions of foppery that she had engaged closely with this text. Although a character in *Camilla* paraphrases Brown's references to effeminate interests which chain the man of fashion to town, it is in *Evelina* where the narrative draws most explicitly from Brown's thesis on the effeminate man, and his fitness, or not, for a virtuous life.⁷⁹ Aware of this text (or texts which replicated such views), and literary or pictorial representations of the figure of the fop, Burney employs this long-established trope of masculinity, drawing on her readers' ideological assumptions, allowing ready access to her depictions of gender, ethical deviance, and other contested areas. In doing so, Burney's fiction draws attention to the breadth of identities available to men but denied to women, and highlights that beneath such disparate performances lies the developing but unshakeable authority of patriarchy.

The stereotype of the fop appeared in drama throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was aired as late as 1777, when R. B. Sheridan's *A Trip to Scarborough* reworked John Vanburgh's play, *The Relapse* (1696). Sheridan's play was timely, coinciding with the controversy, during that decade, surrounding young men who returned from the grand tour who were dubbed 'macaronis'. Referred to by Horace Walpole in 1764 as 'travelled young men who wear long curls and spying glasses' and defined by Giuseppe Baretti in 1775 as men who were 'fond of pompous and affected dress', macaronis quickly provoked mixed responses from their contemporaries.⁸⁰ Charles James Fox helped to popularize their fashion in London clubs; but many were contemptuous of their affectations. Some associated macaronis with homosexuality, but most seem to have simply equated them with feminine values of dress and manner, an association which linked them, implicitly, to effeminate stereotypes of the fop. Pictorial

⁷⁸ John Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750-1850,' in *English Masculinities 1660-1800*, ed. by Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 217-238 (p. 231); Stephen H. Gregg, "'A Truly Christian Hero': Religion, Effeminacy, and the Nation in the Writings of the Societies for Reformation of Manners", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 25.1 (2001), 17-28; Carol Percy, 'Liberty, Sincerity, (In)accuracy: Prescriptions for Manly English in 18th-Century Reviews and Later', in *Perspectives on Prescriptivism*, ed. by Joan C. Beal, Carmela Cocera, and Massimo Sturiale, *Linguistic Insights*, V.73 (Bern: Lang, 2008), pp. 113-145 (pp. 121-24, p. 127, and p. 135).

⁷⁹ Brown writes of 'Rage of Pleasure, Dress, Equipage, and Dissipation, which in Winter had chained him [the fop] to the Town, now drives him to the Country', p. 50; *Camilla*, 'A fop [...] wears no chains but his own', p. 75.

⁸⁰ For a review of the fop type in Restoration drama see Heilman, 'Fops and Some Versions of Foppery'; Staves includes discussion of eighteenth-century examples, and links to sensitive male characters in novels, in 'A Few Kind words for the Fop'; Walpole: letter to the Earl of Hertford: <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macaroni_\(fashion\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macaroni_(fashion))> [accessed 6 August 2008]; Giuseppe Baretti, *Easy Phraseology*, 1775, from Rictor Norton, *The Macaroni Club. Homosexual Scandals in 1772*: <<http://www.infopt.demon.co.uk/macaroni.htm>> [accessed 1 August 2008].

caricatures (figure 2) like that of P. Dawe's *Pantheon Macaroni* (1773) are pertinent to discussion of Burney's fops, for they satirized self-fashioned macaronis, exaggerating their trademark hair, ornate clothes and tiny, tricorn hats. Depicting as he does a masquerade costume, Dawe picks out salient details for satire. His macaroni appears in a dressing-room, with lace-trimmed dressing-table, and he is thus immediately located in a traditionally feminine environment.⁸¹ The pose of his macaroni is also feminine, with a delicately pointed, flower-adorned foot, the coy tilt of the head, the famous foppish smile, and mountainously coiffed hair, topped with a diminutive cap, seen by some as an inversion of the usual masculine beaver. The whole arrangement of the piece is theatrical, the direct yet sideways glance of the eyes suggesting the staged self-awareness of such men.⁸²

That masquerader and caricaturist chose to mock macaronis suggests a rejection of the values which they represented; however, despite the indicators highlighted above, the values so rejected may not have been purely feminine. Before the 1770s men wore ornate clothing. But as we have seen in Chapter 2, men from the lower classes adapted these fashions, creating some unease that such men could infiltrate the gentry.⁸³ Except at court, therefore, there was a movement away from finery, as affluent men asserted their taste and class by more discrete attire. Simultaneously, concerns arose over so-called 'continental influences' with the end of the Seven Years' War. Macaroni finery was perceived by many to have originated in France and Italy, and so was rejected by English gentlemen wishing to confirm their patriotism by more subdued dress and homespun fabrics.⁸⁴ Conventional, mainstream, masculine identity was clearly founded on notions of class, nationhood, and a rejecting of the perceived effeminacy which historians like Michèle Cohen have argued were related to the English construction of the French as 'Other' and to the complex anxiety regarding the threat and seductiveness of France.

Read contextually as a figure of subversion, the fop therefore supports Carter's view that alternative masculinities represented unacceptable values to eighteenth-century society, not through homosexuality, but through defying the masculine 'norm'. The difficulties of defining that norm are explored in Carter's work on masculinity and politeness, where he notes 'the fine

⁸¹ 'The country is over-run with Catamites, with monsters of Captain Jones's taste, or, to speak in a language which all understand, with MACCARONES': letter to the *Public Ledger* by 'A MAN', 5 August 1772, cited in Rictor Norton: <<http://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/jones7.htm>> [accessed 12 September, 2011]; the effeminacy of the Macaroni is portrayed in a report on the Vauxhall Affray, celebrating the victory over a 'little effeminate being [...] dressed a [sic] la Macaroni': *The Vauxhall Affray; or, Macaronis Defeated. Being a Compilation of Letters, Squibs, &c on Both Sides of the Dispute with an Introductory Dedication to the Hon. Tho. Lyttleton Esq* (London: J. Williams, 1773), p. 13; for discussion of the meanings associated with the dressing room see Tita Chico, *Designing Women: The Dressing Room in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Culture* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005).

⁸² Carter comments that in Boyer's portrait the beau 'laughs aloud and often, not to shew his satisfaction, but his Teeth' (sic): see 'Men about town: representations of foppery and masculinity in early eighteenth-century urban society', in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (New York: Longman, 1997), 31-57 (p. 32); 'His hat...is very little, and he wears it in direct opposition to the manly beaver of our ancient heroes', cited from the periodical literature of the 1770s: <<http://www.thebookofday.com/months/july/7.htm>> [accessed 11 August 2008]; the theatricality may link with the 'dressing-room trope's seventeenth century antecedent, the tiring-room'; see Chico, p. 222.

⁸³ Staves, provides an effective overview of changing tastes when she discusses how satire of fops was affected by the 'changing realities of class' in 'A Few Kind Words for the Fop', pp. 425-6.

⁸⁴ For example, Goldsmith's first rejected epilogue for his play, contains the lines, 'Ye Travelled tribe, ye, macaroni train | Of French *friseurs*, and nosegays, justly vain, | Who take a trip to Paris once a year | To dress, and look like awkward Frenchmen here' (lins. 35-39); see *She Stoops To Conquer* (1773), ed. by Tom Davis (London: Black; New York: Norton, 1979, repr. 1998), p. 99; by 1780 the 'English' country style was established, as men favoured plain dark coats and trousers in buff coloured fabric: see Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789*, rev. edn (New Haven: Yale, 2002), p. 212.

line between foppery and refined elegance', and highlights the tensions between traditional notions of manliness and modern manners, a tension also examined by Amelia Rauser in her discussion of the way 'the ornamental' qualities of the macaronis ran into 'extremes'.⁸⁵

In tune with these ideas, Burney's novels exploit literary, artistic and social stereotypes to consolidate her depictions of foppish men who are supremely egotistical. In *Evelina*, Burney employs the word 'fop' and its related forms, twelve times, mostly associated with Lovel; on one occasion it is used to underline the non-foppishness of Lord Orville, to emphasize the difference between the 'feminine' values later assigned to the hero, and the effeminate qualities of Lovel.⁸⁶ In *Camilla*, the word occurs sixteen times, though the word 'effeminacy' only occurs twice. As we shall see, foppish qualities are often depicted through the rhetoric of the body and clothing, as well as speech, and are associated with anti-social character traits which are antipathetic to politeness. Frequently premodified by 'egregious' and occurring in doublets, like 'foppery and impertinence' and 'insolence and foppery', the base lexeme, 'fop', denotes trouble in Burney's fiction. Indeed, Burney frequently substitutes the word 'fop' or its near synonym 'coxcomb' for a character's name, so that the appellation functions metonymically, conjuring up a wealth of allusions. Men who are so described, or who are associated with foppery, are depicted as possessing qualities which are essentialized as feminine in eighteenth-century discourses, qualities like loquaciousness, luxuriousness, vanity, love of fashion, and lack of intellectual capacity and of courage. These qualities, which women are commonly urged to control or address in conduct literature, are commonly depicted as insalubrious, and are associated with lack of agency. Since these qualities are depicted as essential to women's natures, a man possessing such qualities is figured as *unnatural*; or as artificial, simply pretending to possess them. As with the character Elinor Joddrel, then, the foppish characters illustrate the dangers of each sex taking on unsanctioned qualities of the other. Nevertheless, as the next section will demonstrate, although Burney's foppish characters are depicted as weak, or as risible, ultimately they are shown to retain their independence and power, their masculine authority trumping their effeminate characters.

⁸⁵ Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*; Carter, 'Men About Town', p. 55; Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 195; Rauser, p. 58.

⁸⁶ In *Evelina* the one occasion the word is not applied to Lovel is when Evelina describes how Orville was 'gaily but not foppishly dressed' (26); later, Evelina notes: 'So steady did I think his [Orville's] honour, so *feminine*, his delicacy, so amiable his nature!' (218).



Figure. 2. P. Dawe, *The Pantheon Macaroni*, © Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

3.3.2. *Evelina*: Mr Lovel

In *Evelina*, the character of Mr Lovel presents a masculinity whose effeminate mannerisms and appearance contrast with the boorish aggression of Captain Mirvan, and highlights the balanced ideal: Lord Orville. As we shall see in Chapter 4, Mirvan is a dominating presence in the novel; and Orville is dynamic and instrumental: in contrast, Lovel seems passive and lacking agency. Indeed, Evelina's initial description draws attention to the fact that he enjoys being stared at, of being the object of the gaze. His chief characteristics could have been drawn from the *Pantheon Macaroni*: 'a young man, who had for some time looked at us with a kind of negligent impertinence, advanced on tiptoe, towards me; he had a set smile on his face and his dress was so foppish' (23). The narrator picks out details of his behaviour, his swinging gait and waving hand, bringing to mind the mannered pose and expressive hands of Dawe's caricature. Lovel's dress certainly marks him as an exhibitionist; his finery signifies his effeminacy, and his effeminacy can be read as the vanity of a foolish man emasculated by fashion. His misbehaviour is evident in his vindictiveness towards Evelina. However, it might also be defined as his subversion of masculine norms, most clearly manifest in his mannerisms and speech.

A main characteristic of Lovel's speech is its disjointedness, signified by Burney's ample use of the em dash:

After a short and silly pause, he said, 'Madam — may I presume?' — and stopt, offering to take my hand. I drew it back, but could scarce forbear laughing. 'Allow me, Madam,' (continued he, affectedly breaking off every half moment) 'the honour and happiness — if I am not so unhappy as to address you too late — to have the happiness and honour — '(23)

Later, Lovel makes free use of what Goffman describes as 'sign vehicles', his sartorial affluence linking him to the wealth 'without check' bemoaned in John Brown's work (209), and providing further opportunities for Lovel to fracture his speech with unnatural pauses, taking snuff, or 'fixing his eyes on a diamond ring on his little finger' (67). Such behaviour allows him to affect an ennui, or a distraction, which signifies to Evelina that she is below his notice. Such anti-gallantry is only reserved for her, however, for when Lovel reappears at the end of the novel, in Bristol, his compliments to the wealthy Lady Louisa surpass everyone's. On his earlier meeting with Evelina, the rehearsed nature of Lovel's speech is evident in the empty repetition of his vocabulary and the contradictory messages provided by his face and his words, as he utters 'some ridiculous speeches of sorrow and disappointment, though his face still wore the same invariable smile' (23). Lovel is all affectation and self-regard. Confessing later that he only goes to the theatre to see and be seen by his friends, he is rapidly presented as a shallow and egocentric presence. As such, he is marked early on in the novel as a figure of little moral import. A common feature of texts depicting effeminate men located them in theatrical settings; indeed, the draped frame of the *Pantheon Macaroni* suggests the staged setting of his enterprise. Texts describing real life examples of perceived effeminacy pinpointed the theatre as a typical favourite

haunt for self-display, where stage-side seats fulfilled such a man's desire to be the object of spectatorship. John Brown's text notes the 'unmanly' winter pursuits of those who do not know the difference between *King Lear*, an opera or a pantomime' (49), an observation paraphrased in *Evelina* when Mirvan scoffs that Lovel does not know whether he was attending 'a tragedy or a comedy or a concert of fiddlers' (324). But Burney goes further, and shows the potentially dangerous force to women of such an ego.

Slighted by her refusal to dance with him, Lovel's seething resentment leads him to attack Evelina in 'studied' reprisals (66), often gilded with faux politeness. At the theatre, Lovel buries his contempt of Evelina beneath an observation about a character in the play, asserting that he 'was most struck with the country young lady, Miss Prue' (69); but the insult is not lost on the libertine, Sir Clement Willoughby, and even he thinks the character is beneath Evelina's notice. Such evasive insults typify Brown's dismay that even 'obscenity itself is grown effeminate' with 'false delicacy' burying such matters in euphemism or 'double entendres' (45). Asserting his authority and social superiority by his use of French, Lovel derogates Evelina's rusticity in an inversion of contemporary values which more typically valued rural innocence and simplicity. It is significant that Lovel's reference to 'les etiquettes de nous autres', draws attention to his own 'otherness', for his mode of insulting Evelina is alien to main-stream privileged masculinity on two levels. First, insulting a woman was anathema to gentlemanly conduct, locating Lovel's approach in 'unmanly' behaviour derogated by conduct literature; second, his indirection and his 'peevishness' are commonly associated in these novels with female speakers, speakers whose sex disempowers them, gagging their expressiveness, so that anger unarticulated becomes irritability, and if articulated, in an indirect manner.⁸⁷ Using politeness to screen his malice, and deemed too risible to merit serious consideration, Lovel slips under the radar of the inexperienced Evelina and her guardians. Indeed, it is only when Lovel draws the disapproval of Captain Mirvan on other grounds, that the latter devotes his attention to humiliating and disempowering him. It is as if Mirvan accepts Lovel's lordly authority over women, only balking at his behaviour when his own sense of personhood is threatened.

Thus it is Lovel's so-called French affectation which is seen by Mirvan as a threat to 'English' honour and its concomitant masculinity. Even before Mirvan meets Lovel, he voices traditional prejudices equating Frenchness with a type of foppishness, when he taunts Monsieur Du Bois, 'your person of taste must be either a coxcomb, or a Frenchman; though, for the matter of that, 'tis the same thing'; and he defines his own masculinity by reference to the robust culinary tastes of his nation, 'd'ye see, I'm no Frenchman, and should relish something more substantial' (64), a reference which alludes to luxurious French dishes and associated by Brown with effeminate preferences.⁸⁸ Although Mirvan is offended by Lovel's opinions on drama, it is the latter's use of French and his sneering allusions to Mr Ben as a marker of Mirvan's social

⁸⁷ For example, when Evelina cannot repel Willoughby, she cries 'peevishly' (36).

⁸⁸ Brown, p. 37; the equation of the use of French idioms, and the preference for French food, with foppery was a well-established motif in drama: William Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing Master* (1673) features a foppish character who speaks in Frenchified English and wants to be known as Monsieur de Paris; George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676) has the central character Sir Fopling, who travels with a French entourage to serve him, and admires those who employ French phrases.

inferiority which trigger Mirvan's contempt. Contact with Lovel subsequently brings out a hyper-masculine and Anglo-centric side to Mirvan, who speaks loudly and with more recourse to colloquial English.

The convergence of Lovel's unmanliness, effeminacy, foppery, and Frenchness climaxes in the scene depicting Lovel's nemesis, which comes in the form of a monkey dressed as a Frenchman, supposedly mistaken by Mirvan for Lovel's brother. This comic high point of the novel brings together the motifs of the Frenchman, the macaroni and the monkey, which were popular in satirical prints during the 1770s and which confirm Burney's awareness of contemporary social and political tensions.⁸⁹ The scene also highlights the cultural sanction of figures like Mirvan to reprimand socially deviant behaviour. The novel's depiction of Mirvan's overstepping the boundaries of correction clearly engages with texts such as those by Brown, and later by James Fordyce, supporting the notion of strong leadership, and of a military masculinity not emasculated by enervating influences represented by figures like Lovel. However, as we shall see in Chapter 4, the novel's engagement does not leave Brown's ideas wholly uncontested.

The climactic confrontation between the masculinities represented by Mirvan and Lovel, indicates the novel's support of the robust but feminized hero.⁹⁰ In the third volume of the novel, the characters gather in Clifton and during a day's excursion, they meet the Mirvans. Orville immediately invites the troublesome captain to join him in his phaeton, showing his readiness to cope with Mirvan. In contrast, on meeting Mirvan again for the first time since spring, Lovel stammers nervously (324). His subsequent use of such expressions as 'I protest' mirror hedges uttered by some of Burney's women speakers, typically those lacking authority, sense, or status. When Mirvan's mind turns to his old sparring partner, Duval, wishing to 'swing her round this here pond' Orville counters with sarcasm, using humour to deflate Mirvan's fantasy; and Mirvan takes it in kind, admitting in a 'man to man' confession, 'Why, to let you know, [...] she hit my fancy mightily; I never took so much to an old tabby before' (325).⁹¹ Mirvan's attention then turns to Lovel, wagering how he might fare if he whisked him into the water, but Lovel 'moves abruptly from the window' and laughs, the narrator's reporting his 'he he', trivialising and undermining his attempt at humour compared to Orville's. When Mirvan's aggression threatens to erupt into physical action, Lovel expresses his horror at 'such a barbarous action', by appealing to civilized codes of behaviour, codes traditionally invoked to protect women, crying that he has 'never heard anything so shocking' (327). Lovel's choice of the word, 'shocking' is telling, for it is a word often dismissed as women's language in the eighteenth century, and in this novel distinguishes the language of Lady Louisa and Madame Duval. The tendency to gossip also

⁸⁹ The monkey is named Monsieur Grinagain and Monsieur Longtail, the former a reference to the trademark smile of the fop, the latter a reference to the signature long pig-tail of the macaroni: for a discussion of prints featuring these motifs see John Hart, 'Frances Burney's *Evelina*, Mirvan and Mezzotint', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 7.1 (1994), 51-70 (pp. 57-59).

⁹⁰ Hazlitt was very familiar with Burney's work, and may have had in mind the conflicting masculinities portrayed in her novel, when he observed, 'Opposed to the effeminate in disposition and manners are the coarse and brutal', who are attracted to 'whatever is vulgar and violent, harsh and repulsive in tone, in modes of speech [...] and behaviour' and who 'catch the uncouth dialect' with an appetite for 'violating decorum': see 'On Effeminacy of Character', *Works*, VIII, 254.

⁹¹ Orville's sarcasm is evident in his rejoinder, 'She [Duval] would be very much obliged to you, [...] for so extraordinary a mark of your favour' (325).

associates Lovel with traditional stereotypes of women, a feature noted by Mirvan, who comments on Lovel's news, 'I'd as lieve blab it to the whole sex at once, as to go for to tell it to such a thing as you' (328-9). Mirvan's merging of traditional gender differences here echoes Brown's opinion, that the 'peculiar characteristic Manners [of the Sexes] are confounded and lost', one having 'sunk into *Effeminacy*' (51). In addition, Lovel's gossip reflects Brown's belief that modern conversation is insipid which, in his view, indicates that men lack the solid knowledge to equip them for public life (74); even the clerics, Brown notes, lack the 'manly and rational Regard to the Welfare of Mankind' (85), and the 'manly Spirit of Defence' is poorly served by passive modern honour, 'rouzed' only by an '*Affront*', to die in a duel (90). Lovel's involvement in public life is guaranteed by his membership of the lower House, though he is shown to be incompetent by Selwyn's comments; and though quietly invited to a duel by Orville in defence of Evelina's honour, Lovel is not 'roused' by the challenge. The novel's depiction of Lovel therefore supports Brown's view that such men are ill fitted for public life, though as we shall see later in this study, Mirvan's credentials too, are scrutinized and rejected.

Lovel's private virtue is also called into question during the comic dénouement. Women's virtue was often represented as being dependent on their sexual purity, their modesty, and their familial relationships. But although Lovel is defined by his effeminacy, he is judged by traditional masculine values, which expected courage, confidence, and self-control. However, when challenged, Lovel's usual loquacity fails him, and meta descriptive statements relating to the manner of his interactions link him with the disempowered language often associated with women, indicating that in the context of the hierarchy of power created by Mirvan, and endorsed by works like Brown's, Lovel is weak. When he feels defeated, he grows quiet, walks away, looks 'extremely sullen', or 'sulky', and colours. Moved to anger, he is described as 'mad with vexation', his loss of control going further than unmanliness, to suggest the stereotyped hysteria of women. This connotation is strengthened by his reaction to the monkey incident, when he is described as 'poor Mr. Lovel, almost fainting with terror'. Sinking 'upon the floor', he utters the words, 'Oh I shall die, I shall die!' (333), echoing Lady Louisa's 'take him away, or I shall die!' (332). It is Orville who shows compassion towards Lovel and who reasons with Mirvan on behalf of the ladies whilst the other men present (and Selwyn) enjoy the spectacle. Lovel has greater agency than the female characters in the novel, simply because he is a man, but compared to other male characters, he has very little. Burney draws attention to this again and again, assigning her speakers dialogue which is meant to goad Lovel into action, on this occasion pointing out his need to defend his honour against such humiliating treatment. But Lovel is 'too much intimidated to stand his ground' (332) and uttering the words, 'I'm sure my carriage must be waiting' (334), he flees.

The episode with the monkey disrupts Lovel's Goffmanian performance, only to reveal deeper qualities frequently associated with female behaviour and speech. If there is a core self here, it seems to have internalized a certain type of feminine value, a value which accounts for the lack of agency disadvantaging Lovel, in the male hierarchies represented in the novel. But Burney uses Lovel to demonstrate perceived aspects of female behaviour discouraged by conduct

books, for Lovel is a composite of luxurious vanity, self-centred foolishness, and vindictiveness. Her novel dramatizes how such qualities are unsympathetic and lacking in moral worth, and also reveals how certain qualities can be enervating in men as well as women, reinforcing her overall message that men and women need to be cautious about which qualities they allow to dominate their personalities, or assimilate from each other. In particular, this means that if women follow advice, and hope to gain from their contact with men, they should think very carefully about which men they emulate, for not all deserve the title of 'the noble sex'.

Ultimately, however, Lovel is humiliated but not disempowered, the workings of the plot indicating that he will not change, or reform, or experience self-spectatorship; but nonetheless he will continue to exercise his political and social authority over women, in spite of his moral, intellectual, and personal failings. In addition, the novel reveals the bullying aspects of Lovel's nature – his tendency to persecute the heroine, but to recoil from the reprimands of other élite men; in this respect Lovel is close to Mirvan, who delights in exerting his authority over those he perceives as weak. The novel therefore also engages with the arguments developed in the work of John Brown and other writers, on gender and national identity, offering a cautionary note about military might, about masculine figures of leadership, and the power invested in such figures to create hierarchies of power, at the bottom of which lie women.

3.3.3. *Camilla: Clermont Lynmere and Sir Sedley Clarendel*

It is possible to see the character Clermont Lynmere as the monstrous descendant of Mr Lovel and Captain Mirvan, a complex conflation of menacing English barbarity, and effete, French delicacy. As such, Lynmere articulates the loathing inherent in patriarchal views which vilify clever women like Mrs Selwyn, or older women, like Madame Duval, his metonomizing of Eugenia as 'that wizen little stump' (569) offensively expressing his own egocentric sense of superiority. Lynmere is the nephew of Sir Hugh Tyrold, educated at Eton and abroad at great expense, and the intended husband of Eugenia, Camilla's youngest sister. Lynmere's presence therefore hangs over much of the novel, as Eugenia is educated to suit his supposed scholarly needs. His arrival is constantly imminent – and delayed, the structured deferrals building up an anticipation which is turned into anti-climax. Thus it is clear that the novel engages with the controversy surrounding Rousseau's ideas about the education of women to please their future husbands, a pressure on Eugenia which even Sir Hugh recognizes as burdensome (593). Burney, who chose her own husband to the chagrin of her father, highlights the repression of women constructed to please others, an aspect of real life castigated by other writers such as Edgeworth, in her novel *Belinda* (1801).⁹² But in *Camilla* the inhumanity of the enterprise is emphasized by Eugenia's disability, presenting her as a self-effacing, sacrificial lamb offered to assuage Sir

⁹² Thomas Day, an intimate friend of the Edgeworth family brought two girls from France with a view to educating them, so that one might be chosen as his future wife; in *Belinda*, Clarence Harvey brings a young country girl to London with the intention of educating her for his wife.

Hugh's guilt about her accident, and Lynmere's disappointment over his inheritance; in addition, Lynmere is fashioned as a particularly repulsive character, whose inhumanity is disturbing. Not created to make the reader smile, Lynmere is nevertheless cast as a foppish character, whose personal habits and interactions are, in addition, offensive. The novel thus aestheticizes his morality, tapping into contemporary prejudices about effeminate and unmanly men, and making his behaviour and language ugly, in order to convey his repellent principles. It is this exterior manifestation of Lynmere's interior values which forces Sir Hugh to recognize that he cannot 'palliate the wilful disrespect of his language', leading him to snap, 'Really, nephew, I can't but say, I think you've got rather a particular odd way of speaking to persons' (601).

The conflation of types in the character of Lynmere is evident from his first appearance in the novel, when he strides through Cleveland Park with a 'foreign air' (561), the narrative picking out Lynmere's boots and whip, 'sign vehicles' which create tension and an element of menace. Indeed, in later depictions, Lynmere's aggressive tendencies are constantly highlighted, as he bursts into 'violent fits of laughter' (568), 'violently' rings the bell (583), and finally raises his whip to a cherished servant (588). His language too is aggressive rather than stereotypically effeminate. As we have seen, he is offensive about Eugenia, and insults his uncle; this, and his abrupt imperatives to servants, his view that they should be hanged (583) or have their bones broken (588) convey his dangerous propensities to women, old men, and the lower ranks. Lynmere's language, then, is more unmanly than effeminate, a feature of his characterization which, with his use of servants to search the countryside for culinary delights, resembles John Crowne's boorish fop, Sir Courtly Nice, who thinks fine language belongs to pedants, and distrusts 'filthy' London meat and salt.⁹³ In the eighteenth century such bold on record impoliteness constituted unmanly behaviour, and marks Lynmere as a man not equipped with republican virtue, a 'lack' also equated with effeminate men.

More effeminate than unmanly, however, are Lynmere's unpatriotic values and love of luxurious food. Mealtimes rapidly become battlegrounds, as Lynmere calls for French delicacies, guaranteed to provoke his uncle; and food becomes a ground of national discord, Sir Hugh supporting English fare against 'outlandish countries' with 'true John Bullism', which Lynmere counters with unpatriotic abuse: 'A confounded country this! A villainous country!' (588). Much of this betrayal of 'old England' and the gentlemanly conduct she represents is accounted for in the novel by Lynmere's time abroad. To some extent, however, this betrayal is a performance, part of Lynmere's plan 'to indulge, in full, both the natural presumption and acquired luxuriance of his character' (583) so that his uncle might release him, with a handsome pay-off, from the engagement with Eugenia.

Other aspects of Lynmere's character are presented as essential to his nature. His 'natural presumption' is illustrated during his introduction to the novel, when he is depicted as examining Eugenia with a 'supercilious air [...] holding his head high and back [...] while every line round his mouth marked that ridicule was but suppressed by contempt' (565). Further, the narrative

⁹³ John Crowne, *Sir Courtly Nice; or, It Cannot Be: A Comedy. As It Is Acted by His Majesty's Servants...* (London: H. H. Jun and R. Bently, 1685), III, [2] 'Scene, a Chamber – Sir Courtly Nice dressing', [no lines].

offers an insightful ‘back-stage’ view of Lynmere, when his ‘natural’ propensities are revealed in full. Left alone with his sister, his effeminate values are foregrounded. Like the *Pantheon Macaroni*, he advances ‘on tiptoe’ towards the door, theatrically putting his ear to the keyhole to make sure that they are alone (567). He ‘stroam[s] to a large looking-glass’, turns ‘carelessly, yet in an elegant position’, pauses ‘in an easy and most assured attitude’ (568), the iconography of the fop at the mirror marking his luxuriating in his own appearance. But Lynmere’s mood swiftly changes, his outburst of laughter being swiftly followed by ‘a storm of rage’ (569). Such luxuriousness and failure to exercise self-restraint evoke qualities frequently associated with women, qualities which effeminate men were commonly depicted as assimilating. It is significant, then, that the novel includes such marks of effeminacy at a point when Lynmere is unobserved by the family.

In a work which discusses the origin and function of satire, Dryden notes how easy it is ‘to call Rogue and Villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a Man appear a Fool, a Blockhead, or a Knave, without using any of those opprobrious Terms’.⁹⁴ Burney’s novels draw attention to distinguishing characteristics, and frequently use such popular terms as fop and coxcomb. As we have seen, the word ‘effeminacy’ occurs only twice in her fiction, both instances occurring in *Camilla*. In the first instance, the word is employed by Captain Macdersey, who boasts that a soldier should rise above ‘delicate effeminacy’ (26). The second instance is in the narration, explicitly foregrounding the effeminacy of Lynmere’s appearance, which ‘so entirely resembled his sister in person, that now, in his first flush of youth, he might almost have been taken for her, even without a change of dress’. ‘But’, omniscient narration continues,

what in her was beauty in highest delicacy, in him seemed effeminacy in its lowest degradation. The brilliant fairness of his forehead, the transparent pink of his cheeks, the pouting vermillion of his lips, the liquid lustre of his languishing blue eyes, the minute form of his almost infantile mouth, and the snowy whiteness of his small hands and taper fingers [...] made him considered by his own sex as an unmanly fop, and by the women, as too conceited to admire any thing but himself (569)

Taken in isolation, the details of Lynmere’s appearance could denote feminine beauty, or the prettiness of boyish youth. All is fluid softness, and Lynmere’s beauty has the passive, visual, doll-like quality frequently associated with women seen through the male gaze. However, the enclosing of the description with the words ‘lowest degradation’ and ‘unmanly fop’, makes it evident that the narration disapproves of this kind of beauty in men, and therefore of the qualities it encases.

The question of Lynmere’s sexuality is certainly highlighted by the description, for if women consider him to be only interested in himself, what might ‘his own sex’ consider to be the

⁹⁴ Satire is discussed in the prefixed material, dedicated to the Earl of Dorset (dated by the author, 1692), in *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis And of Aulus Persius Flaccus. Translated into English Verse by Mr. Dryden, and several other Eminent Hands. To which is Prefix'd a Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satir*, 4th edn (London: Jacob Tonson, 1711), p. 70.

sexual interests of such an ‘unmanly fop’? Jacob, Sir Hugh’s retainer, seems to ponder the issue when he muses, ‘Why he seems to be an odd sort of fish, sir; I can’t much make him out’ (585). Lynmere’s overtly physical attributes go far beyond the finery of Lovel; indeed Lynmere does not need such gendering signifiers to signal *his* effeminacy. The foppish, or ‘effeminate’ qualities of Lynmere, therefore, are depicted as innate, part of his biological make-up, rather than gendered elements which he assumes as part of his social character. Nor are they the feminized qualities which mark the hero as being sensitive, attentive and kind.⁹⁵ Uncomfortable with this aspect of such a make-up, the narrative viewpoint becomes detached, taking on the didactic tones of an observant, rational moralist. The tone avoids savage indignation, but there is no merriment here either.

Elsewhere, certain utterances assigned to Lynmere could be read as statements of homosexual preferences. For example, when rejecting Eugenia he vows, ‘I’d as soon as marry the old doctor himself! [...] Why, I’d as soon tie myself to a rod!’, Lynmere’s stated preference for Dr Okeborne suggests that it is not solely Eugenia’s lack of beauty and classical knowledge which repulses him (for the doctor is a physical oddity and classically educated); it is possibly her sex. Discussing Randolph Trumbach’s equation of effeminacy with homosexuality, Philip Carter cites references in the 1770s to the ‘crime which modesty forbids’, and concedes that there could be some instances when the fop was collapsed into the molly type, though in general he refutes Trumbach’s thesis.⁹⁶ It is possible, then, that Burney drew on such a model to intensify the portrayal of Lynmere’s deviance, for in language, conversation, behaviour, appearance and possibly his sexual preferences he does not conform to the prevailing models of masculinity of his time.

It is possible also, that Burney exaggerated the qualities of this fop, in order to make her second fop in *Camilla* more appealing, if no less complex. Lynmere gets what he wants by bullying and manipulation. He is educated, but not intelligent, well travelled, but not fit to occupy the position of authority guaranteed by his birth and sex. Described as a brutal character with an angel face, Lynmere is too vicious and dangerous to contribute comedy to the novel. In contrast, Sir Sedley Clarendel’s victims are the novel’s satirical targets, and his scenes are highly comedic. For Clarendel, foppery is a façade behind which he hides, and when he fails in his hopes to marry Camilla, he resumes his mask and leaves the country. In this respect, Clarendel is an example of the historiographical approach described by Carter as viewing depictions of the fop as benign, sensitive, and approximating a comic hero.

Through the character of Sir Sedley Clarendel, Burney’s novel engaged with debates on masculinity and social morality, which occupied contemporary thinkers, and which continues to interest modern cultural historians of the eighteenth century. In particular, the novel explores whether foppery can coexist with traditional masculine virtues of heroism and self-control, and with evolving ‘public’ virtues of social sympathy seated in sensibility. For Clarendel is a worthy

⁹⁵ Ann Mellor argues that the feminization of social values led to the valorization of such qualities as sensitivity and consideration for others, leading to an ethic of care in the public sphere; see *Mothers of the Nation. Women’s Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), especially, pp. 11-12.

⁹⁶ Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 144-5.

man, appreciative of social absurdity, capable of benevolent action, and able to admire the merits of the heroine. And yet Clarendel is presented as a fop, and his speech bears all the hallmarks associated with vicious characters examined in this study, in that it is heteroglot and slippery, colloquial yet archaic, and both courteous and impolite. The character therefore puts pressure on my thesis, since ostensibly at least his speech does not correlate with his interior worth.

Clarendel's foppery is all show, however, a chosen persona hiding a deeper, virtuous self. Nevertheless, as we have seen in Chapter 2, such pretence is not endorsed by the novel. And the chosen persona of a fop invites further censure since, in the fiction of Burney and other writers it is a figure of ridicule and contempt. Thus although Sir Sedley is revealed to possess traditional masculine virtues, and (at some points in the novel) to be seeking to live 'a good life', his theatricality marks him as unstable, and ultimately he is written out of the plot. This is consistent with the novel's presentation of the power of patriarchy, which presents its main players as behaving as they like, even taking on potentially self-damaging personas, without such experiments really detracting from their authority. In contrast, the heroine is constantly watched by a lover anxious to see faults in her private character and public reputation, lest she prove unworthy to be his wife. Sensitive to this theme in *Camilla*, but interpreting it as a flaw, Anna Letitia Barbauld felt that the heroine was degraded by the situations she was placed in, situations involving Mr Dubster and Mrs Mittin. Generalizing her point, Barbauld observes that 'the mind might recover from distress, but not from disgrace'. As this discussion will argue, however, although the novel cautions female readers to guard their reputations carefully, its less conservative undertow reveals the disparity on this issue between the sexes: for the action of the novel presents a view that men might recover, when women cannot. It is possible too that Burney was using this aspect of social restrictions on gender behaviour to reflect on the restrictions on herself as a writer, compared to male writers, like Laurence Sterne, whom she admired greatly. For example, many aspects of Clarendel's changed identity might be linked to Sterne's transformation when he wrote *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), probably in response to public reviews which commended him more as a pathetic writer than a humorist.⁹⁷ Although Burney's presentation of Clarendel guards her own reputation as a moral writer, his sympathetic characterization suggests her own secret disposition to perform her art with greater freedom.

Sir Sedley Clarendel possesses some attributes of the stereotypical fop, commonly perceived as effeminate: his dress 'more than' borders 'on foppery' (64); he is a close associate of a woman, Mrs Arlbery; and he affects to be feeble, self-centred and vain.⁹⁸ Unlike Lovel, however, Clarendel is his own man, refusing to come when Arlbery calls (75), and eschewing the sycophantic flattery of his female coterie. Moreover, Clarendel is witty, his affectations

⁹⁷ Barbauld, 'Miss Burney', p. ix; Burney's admiration for Sterne is well documented, for example she recorded in her diary that she was going to 'charm' herself by reading *A Sentimental Journey* for the third time: see *EDL*, 1, p. 45; *The Critical Review* wrote of the death of Le Fever in *Tristram Shandy* that it was 'beautifully pathetic'; the *Monthly Review* commented that Sterne's 'excellence lay not so much in the humorous as the pathetic'; Sterne alluded to his new frame of mind in his private letters when discussing his new project, *A Sentimental Journey*: 'I have long been a sentimental being – whatever your lordship might think to the contrary – The world has imagined, because I wrote *Tristram Shandy*, that I was myself more Shandean than I really was' ('To the Earl of —', 28 November 1767): reviews and letters quoted in Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* by Mr. Yorick, ed. by Paul Goring (London: Penguin, 2001, repr. 2005), p. xxiv and p. xxvi.

⁹⁸ Parts of the discussion of Clarendel are based on paragraphs in Davidson, 'Conversation as Signifiers', pp. 294-297.

disguising a sensitive and intuitive intellect. Introducing Clarendel, the narrative explicitly suggests that ‘there was an archness in his eye that promised [...] a secret disposition to deride the very follies he was practising’ (64). This secret disposition is gradually unfolded, as the novel reveals ‘back-stage’ glimpses of Clarendel reading, presents his instinctive heroism, and develops his evolving appreciation of the heroine’s worth, ennobling qualities denied Burney’s other fops.

Clarendel’s speech mirrors his ambiguous nature. As we shall see, his more private and natural idiolect is courteous and correct. His assumed, *public* dialect is made up of a rich tapestry of idioms and literary allusions, an intriguing mixture of colloquial shibboleths and classical references, which, to some extent, places him beyond effeminacy by articulating his classical, and therefore masculine education. When Camilla first meets Clarendel at an assembly, his expressions echo lines in Pope’s *Dunciad* when he blames the waiters for their lack of attention, calling them ‘Ganymedes’, ‘Barbarians’, ‘Goths’, and ‘Vandals’, adding, ‘whatever please thine ear’ (65).⁹⁹ He then switches to Early Modern English ‘Art thou deaf? Why dost thou not bring this lady a chair?’ (65), an utterance liberally sprinkled with monosyllabled, ‘common’ words, bemoaned by eighteenth-century commentators on language. Indeed there seems to be a self-conscious engagement here with such issues, or with Pope’s engagement with earlier manifestations of such controversies, as Clarendel’s language flits between, and exemplifies, the stigmatized notions highlighted in *The Essay on Criticism*, which warns: ‘In words as fashions the same rule will hold; | Alike fantastic, if too new, or old’, and which also ridicules how ‘low words’ ‘oft creep in one dull line’. As Pope’s *Essay* also contends, ‘different styles with different subjects sort’; Clarendel’s ‘high’ cultural references are bizarrely at odds with the banal content of his conversation, his language being a mixture of Latinate, polysyllabic vocabulary, and informal elisions, and such idioms as ‘shocking’, ‘abominable’ ‘vastly, and ‘amazing’, which locate his utterances in fashionable feminine language, the language distinguishing effeminate talk.¹⁰⁰ The overall effect is highly comic, yet the self-ironizing allusions are somewhat endearing. However, Clarendel’s biting wit oversteps the mark of conduct book courtesy, and his over-familiar invitation to Camilla to join his fun violates social rules. Further, he frequently breaks conversational expectations. When Camilla meets him for the first time, his initial utterance is neutral enough, ‘What a vastly bad room this is for dancing!’ (65), but his throwing himself into a seat and pouring cologne on his handkerchief recasts his utterance as self-preoccupied. His wit is pure mockery ‘to get the laugh’, though the laugh seems also directed at himself. Sir Sedley Clarendel, then, does not seem really to take his social persona too seriously, but possesses a degree of reflexivity, compelling him to draw attention to his own performance, even while he performs.

Thus narration does not condemn Clarendel. Indeed, although Clarendel employs his wit in destructive ways, his targets are invariably those whom the narrative has already established as ripe for satire, as when he goads Miss Margland, or abuses the pretentious and misogynistic Mr

⁹⁹ ‘Whatever title please thine ear, | Dean, Draper, Bickerstff, or Gulliver!’, *The Dunciad*, I. 19-20; *An Essay on Criticism*, I, 333-334; 347; and 323.

¹⁰⁰ ‘The ear is such a daily sufferer from an identity of phrase, whether it be *vastly, abominably, immensely*, or *excessively*, make up the whole gamut of female conversation’: *The World*, 6 May, 1756.

Dubster (69). And although Clarendel breaks the rules of conduct and grammar, it is difficult not to credit the insight and the accuracy of his judgements, and difficult not to admire his ability to make sport for his neighbours, and to laugh at them in return, especially as those he laughs at are shown by the novel to deserve it.¹⁰¹ In addition, Clarendel achieves a satirical end without labelling his victims openly; Dubster is drubbed as a ‘creature’, ‘a puppet’, and ‘a poker’ (69), but it is Miss Margland who dubs him ‘vulgar’ (73). Thus Clarendel fulfils Dryden’s ideas, referred to earlier in this chapter, of a skilled satirist as someone who can expose folly without actually naming it.

These dialogic tensions in Clarendel’s speech can be read metonymically as indicators of his self-fashioned character, for as the novel progresses, Burney fulfils the promise of Clarendel’s ‘secret disposition’. Transformed gradually into a figure with heroic potential, by his rescuing of Camilla from a carriage accident, Clarendel grows in stature: first he aligns himself with Camilla’s moral sympathy by rescuing the abused birds from their cruel owner – an act mirroring Yorick’s personal journey towards moral sentiment; then Clarendel acts benevolently, when he rescues Lionel from financial straits.¹⁰² This movement in the narrative which reveals Clarendel’s humaneness is reflected in his speech style and manners, described in the middle chapters of the novel as ‘unaffected’, ‘pleasantly natural’ (406), and ‘all that was attentive, obliging and pleasing’ (429). When he is confident that Camilla esteems him, his conversation with her is courteous and respectful; he casts his generosity to Lionel as ‘an honour to his name’ and a ‘worthy’ use for his wealth. When pressing his own suit with Camilla, he empowers her, even at his most urgent, turning his imperatives into supplications: ‘“Do not go,” cried he, gently detaining her, “incomparable Camilla. I have a thousand things to say. Will you not hear them? [...] when may I see you again?”’. Clarendel’s hesitations when he stops, ‘as if irresolute how to finish his phrase’ (513-514) might be read as his awareness of Camilla’s negative face, her desire not to be offended. Thus it can be seen that the earlier version of his self-fashioned character demonstrates what Goffman describes as negative idealization, a deliberate underperformance, which Adam Smith ascribes to people being ‘ashamed of unfashionable virtues which they sometime practice [sic] in secret, and for which they have secretly some degree of real veneration’.¹⁰³

Murray Cohen notes how during the eighteenth century there was a shift of focus from language and logical meaning to language and feeling: in particular, ‘new literary values included sympathy and sentiment, tone and taste’ – that is, taste ‘as a capacity for response.’ Such a ‘taste’ corresponds with ideas relating to sympathy, and the moral sense, in philosophy, and to the cultural phenomenon of sensibility, the civilizing influences of which were recognized by many late eighteenth-century thinkers. Clarendel’s capacity to feel and his ability to recognize

¹⁰¹ On occasions Clarendel uses non-standard grammar as when he observes that Dubster’s clothes ‘sit upon him so tight’ (69); a paraphrase of Mr Bennet’s dictum, in Chapter 15 of Volume III: *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 403.

¹⁰² Yorick is moved by the caged starling which laments, ‘I can’t get out’, eventually inscribing its image on his crest, as a symbol of freedom: see *A Sentimental Journey*, 69-73 (p. 69).

¹⁰³ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, p. 49 and p. 51; Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 75.

Camilla's 'beautiful soul' distinguish him from other male speakers discussed in this study.¹⁰⁴

The revelation of his 'finer' qualities is prepared for by the author's assigning him decentralized, but false, linguistic choices as part of a disguise which masks his inner worth. However, such disguise is censured by the novel which, like many eighteenth-century works, supports honesty, naturalness and ease of social intercourse. The novel presents Clarendel sympathetically, but ultimately rejects his instability – of character and speech, which is, as we have seen, also character *in speech* – for the rock solid, monologic hero, Edgar Mandlebert.

Burney's intention that Clarendel should be read sympathetically is confirmed by manuscript drafts of *Camilla*, which contain passages not included in the published novel. Such extracts include lengthy conversations between Camilla and her sister, Lavinia, the sister who stays in the family home, and gains most from the rational education of her parents.¹⁰⁵ The extracts have been omitted from the chapter in Volume IV, Book VII, in which Camilla realises that Clarendel loves her. The published version shows Camilla consulting with her sisters, but only Eugenia's views are reported (522). The omitted manuscript version shows Lavinia pleading Clarendel's case, arguing for a sympathetic interiority which makes Clarendel worthy of love, asking Camilla if she could believe 'that a mind so generous could be wanting in sensibility?' It is the rational Lavinia, in this version, who warns Camilla not to make Clarendel unhappy. In the same chapter there is another omitted passage, crossed out in the manuscript but mostly legible. This passage makes it clear that Lavinia herself is drawn to Clarendel's worth, and the consciousness of her own feelings deters her from advising her sister: 'Now first conscious of the too strong sense she entertained of the perfections she attributed to Sir Sedley, she feared her judgement might be partial.' What follows next is a focalized account of Lavinia's opinions of Clarendel's 'perfections', which Camilla fails to recognize as intrinsic. It is evident from these omitted extracts, that Burney fashioned Clarendel as a 'good' man who only acts the part of a shallow egotist. Thus although these passages were not included, traces of the draft version are evident in Clarendel's completed sympathetic characterization.

In keeping with other novelistic plot lines, it is likely that Burney originally planned a marriage between Lavinia and Clarendel, the symmetry enhancing the neatness of the ending while rewarding the male character for his newfound sincerity and 'natural' behaviour.¹⁰⁶ Burney

¹⁰⁴ Murray Cohen, *Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England, 1640-1785* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 80; Robert E. Norton, *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 6-99 (p. 6): Norton has traced ideas relating to innate goodness which have contributed to the development of an aesthetically based morality, arguing that innate moral beauty, or inner beauty, came to be conceived as 'the beautiful soul'.

¹⁰⁵ The Berg Collection, the New York Public Library: the packet is labelled 'Camilla Vol IV' in pencil; the extracts are in sheets headed 'VOLUME IV BOOK VII CHAPTER I *The Right Style of Arguing*.'

¹⁰⁶ The motif of multiple marriages is common in novels of the period when *Camilla* was published: in Holcroft's novel, *Hugh Trevor* (1794-1797), Trevor marries his childhood love, Olivia, and his friend Wakefield marries Lydia; in Robinson's *Walsingham* (1797), the hero marries his cousin, who has been brought up as a man; Miss Woodford, whose love for Walsingham leads her to seduction, marries his uncle, Colonel Aubrey; and the childhood love of Walsingham marries Lord Kenkarth – an unconvincing match noted by the *Monthly Review*, n.s. 26 (August 1798), 441-44: see *Walsingham; or, The Pupil of Nature*, ed. by Julie Shaffer (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003), p. 498; in Sarah Harriet Burney's novel *Clarentine* (1796) the dénouement is even more unconvincing: Clarentine is loved by the rakish Mr Eltham who settles for her cousin, Sophia; gloomy, flawed Edgar, who also loves Clarentine, marries a local heiress, Lady Julia; and Clarentine herself marries her cousin, Harrington; in a letter to Cassandra dated 1807, Austen criticized this book as full of 'unnatural conduct and forced difficulties' – cited in Mary Waldron, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Her Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 84.

pulled back from such an ending, however, allotting Lavinia to the more stable and predictable Henry Westwyn, and banishing Clarendel to the Hebrides. Such a decision passes judgement on the character, imposing repercussions on his behaviour. However, Clarendel's isolation is self-imposed, and there is a sense that such a man will return, suffering no lasting effects in terms of public character. And his resuming his foppish persona before he leaves illustrates the novel's conviction that 'the noble sex' can push against the boundaries of mainstream behaviour expectations without incurring societal alienation.

Such a message is ambiguous: it may be read as reinforcing the need for women to recognize the burden on them to conform to societal expectations, or pay a heavy price; or it may be read as a protest at the inequalities in society which allow one sex the liberty to experiment with identity while denying such freedoms to the other. More explicit is the conservative message relating to innateness, underscored by Clarendel's foppish act. Clarendel is one of several characters who are basically morally sound, and his aberrations are therefore tolerated in the presentation of his character. In the concluding chapter, the omniscient narration spells out a message of innateness which was gaining credence by the 1790s, commenting on the 'radical worth' of Lavinia, and comparing Henry Westwyn and Clermont Lynmere: 'Brought up under the same tutor, the same masters, and at the same university, with equal care, equal expence [sic], equal opportunities of every kind, Clermont turned out conceited, voluptuous, and shallow; Henry modest, full of feeling, and stored with intelligence' (909).¹⁰⁷ Anne Mellor argues that the same message was dramatized in Joanna Baillie's *A Series of Plays in Which It Is Attempted to Delineate the Stronger Passions of the Mind*. In the introduction to the plays (1798), Baillie claims that the individual's development is governed by feelings which must be controlled by reason, if they are not to become self-destructive. Mellor argues that Baillie's assertion about human character developing from an inherent 'propensity' or seed, 'anticipates William Wordsworth's influential assertion that 'fair seed-time had my soul'. At the same time, Mellor highlights how Baillie's work dramatizes 'this growing seed', taking 'its final shape from its interactions with its environment'.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Burney's novels dramatize the interaction of intrinsic worth and social environments, exploring the processing abilities of different minds, to gain from, or shape life experiences.

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¹⁰⁷ In his study of depictions of sisters, Michael Cohen reads this passage differently, arguing that it is the 'early moral education' that 'creates "radical worth" in Burney's system'; however, Burney's use of the word 'radical' should be read as 'of a quality, attribute or feature: inherent in the nature or essence of a person or thing' (*OED.*, A1b), supporting the view developed here, that 'inherent' qualities might be developed by subsequent social and ideational contacts; Cohen posits that in Burney's novel, experience does not touch indoctrinated radical worth; however this overlooks Lionel, who enjoyed the same early training by his parents before he was sent away to school, yet grew up to be selfish and dissipated: see 'First Sisters in Ferrier, Austen and Scott', in *Sisters: Relation and Rescue in Nineteenth-Century British Novels and Paintings* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 103-124 (pp. 106-107).

¹⁰⁸ Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation*, p. 41.

In common with many works of the period then, Burney's novel explores the formation of self, the nature of social identities, the influence of society on the individual, and the impact of individualism on society. The main narrative seems to support the existence of essential character traits, and native virtues or vices; and to laud the primacy of established custom in defining and governing such personal characteristics. Such prominent narrative endorsement, here and in her other novels, has led some modern commentators to label Burney's work as conservative, or fearful, and may account for her contemporary reception, as well as the longevity of her work.¹⁰⁹ But as we have seen, Burney puts pressure on masculine identities traditionally seen as risible, or harmless, lifting the mask of foppery to reveal manifestations of traditional masculine power. Such power, her novels reveal, can be harmful or even dangerous to women. In addition, the novels reveal the asymmetry at work here, for women step out of the roles assigned them by society at their own peril. In her letters to her father, Burney explored such asymmetry more openly, hoping that her father would commend her efforts in different genres, that he would recognize his own example in her range of writing, and ask himself, 'Why, then, after all, should I lock her up in one paddock [...] while *I* find all the Earth unequal to my ambition & mount the skies to content it?'¹¹⁰ Such personal limitations are reflected in Burney's fiction, which explores how various questions relating to the individual in society are mediated and skewed by gender. Foregrounding spoken language as a means to disrupt or conform to gender expectations, the novels highlight the contrasts between the freedoms of the sexes to express their natures, to experiment with their social identities, and to pursue their ambitions, or their desires. This chapter has argued that through her 'masculine' female characters Burney articulates her awareness of the censure awaiting intelligent, outspoken women who challenge inequalities, even while she uses such characters to engage professionally with literary, social, and ethical debates. These characterizations, as well as those of her effeminate and unmanly figures, suggest that Burney drew contrasts between herself and her male peers. Although she was aware of gender restrictions which prevented her from being even more ambitious with her art, she had some regrets that she had not been more courageous in her handling of ideological and genre prescriptions.

¹⁰⁹ For example, Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, p. 158; Katharine M. Rogers reads Burney as a conservative writer in, *Frances Burney: The World of Female Difficulties* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990); in *Equivocal Beings*, Johnson observes that Burney's role as a social critic is 'overstated', p. 144.

¹¹⁰ *JAL*, IV, Letter to Dr Burney (11 February 1800), p. 395.

Chapter 4

Violating Codes of Politeness: Aggression and Raillery

In previous chapters I have highlighted Burney's awareness of the cultural restraints experienced by writers of prose fiction, but underlined her use of the flexibility of the novel form to confront hierarchical and gender values of society, to engage with debates about female authorship, and about women's rights of access to a broad range of discourses and rhetorical styles. As my final two chapters will show, Burney's mediations in her novels extend to politeness. These chapters work together, to explore how the novels question the extent to which politeness is self-regulating, and whether it can be taken as a reliable indicator of sociocentric engagement. In Chapter 5 I explore the novels' depictions of the boundaries of politeness, and the consequences, especially for the heroine, of behaviour which tips from gentlemanly ease to libertine familiarity, or from civil self-restraint to coldness or deceit; further, I consider the novels' depictions of the lower orders in relation to the class-based exclusiveness of politeness. In the present chapter I explore how Burney's fiction subverts and supports Shaftesburean arguments, by its scrutiny of 'gentlemanly' conduct, by its application of theory to the social roles of women, and by its embracing of empiricism. Examining the equation of politeness, sympathy, and moral virtue with particular ranks, I propose that the novels explore the extent to which women were free to share such civic freedoms as liberty of speech. I argue that while promoting politeness as a preferred model of social interaction, Burney's novels reveal the flaws at the heart of its conceptualizations of communication, especially as they affect women. Nevertheless, as these final chapters will demonstrate, Burney's fiction promotes the view that women, like men, can develop in terms of moral authority and a sense of selfhood, by social interaction, whatever its nature, and the view that even aggression and raillery can have value to the developing subject.

Politeness literature largely neglected situations where conversations break down, where impoliteness occurs, and where offence is intended or merely perceived.¹ Confronting this omission, Burney's fiction highlights her heroines' negotiations of situations where levels of politeness sink as feelings run high, and where the guardians of the young fail to uphold the social and moral standards supported by the novels. The subsequent dilemmas of the heroines, as they are compelled to rely on their own judgements, underline courtesy book failure to address the challenges facing participants in complicated social contexts. Joyce Hemlow's seminal study has demonstrated that Burney read and admired conduct literature.² However, Burney's reading

¹ Exceptions include satirical texts like Collier's *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753), and Edgeworth's *Letters For Literary Ladies. To Which is Added an Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification* (1795).

² Hemlow, 'Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books', *PMLA*, 65.5 (1950), 732-761: Hemlow recognizes Burney's understanding of the practical application of morals, highlighting Burney's focus on 'morals in action' (p. 753); Hemlow traces positive references to Burney's reading of conduct works in her journals, as when she 'commended Mrs Chapone' (p. 237), preferred Hugh Blair's essay 'On Gentleness' to his other sermons (p. 748), and advises her son to read Edgeworth's *Practical Education* (p. 749); Hemlow also notes how contemporary conduct strictures found their way into Burney's novels (pp. 758-759); this view is reflected in more recent studies: for example, in 'Getting Waylaid in *Evelina*' Fraiman argues that marriage to Orville silences the heroine and reinforces conduct strictures.

was more active than her journal self-representations imply, and more questioning than even Hemlow's study proposes.

This chapter begins with an exploration of the possible omissions and flaws in codes of politeness, to which Burney took exception. In particular, I focus on the extent to which politeness accommodated the feelings, examine emotional responses which were stigmatized, and highlight the gendered nature of censorship. In subsequent sections, I examine key confrontational scenes in the novels, which dramatize how freedom of speech can be closely associated with liberty of 'emotional' expression. These scenes also portray the impact of free expression on the developing subjectivity of the heroines. Dramatizing such negotiations through the central consciousness of the heroines, Burney's novels draw attention to epistemic traditions which assigned women passive roles in society, placing her own work in egalitarian arguments propounding the importance of education and social involvement for the activating of women's moral faculties as well as men's. Discussion will focus on socially powerful characters who are depicted as failures in terms of self-regulation, and who are thus presented as unsettling forces in the fictional worlds of the novels. Three such aberrant characters are Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval in *Evelina*, and Mrs Delvile in *Cecilia*. The actions of Captain Mirvan provide clear examples of the abuses to which politeness was vulnerable, and which it tolerated. The two female characters are portrayed as having assimilated, to varying degrees, belief in freedom of speech; but both are presented as failing in self-regulation. To some extent therefore, they can be read as having internalized the abuses of codes of politeness illustrated by Captain Mirvan. Madame Duval is an ambiguous figure who is both a victim and a perpetrator of uncontrolled behaviour. Mrs Delvile is somewhat of an anomaly, since her unnatural affections and extremes of feeling are presented as facilitating her own enlightenment and reform.

Helpful to the analysis here, and in Chapter 5, will be the frameworks and terminology of modern interactive discourse analysis, which underpins modern politeness theories, as developed in the study of linguistic pragmatics. Also referring to eighteenth-century principles of politeness, this chapter will examine how the speech of a selection of Burney's characters is configured to be impolite, anti-social or even threatening.

4.1. Politeness, and the Impoliteness of Stigmatized Affections and Passions

The culture of politeness has been examined in many scholarly studies, and does not need to be rehearsed in detail here.³ The discussion which follows recognizes that the evolution of politeness was influenced by responses to shifting attitudes to such cultural trends as sensibility, to developing views on gender, and to such political factors as war and revolution.⁴ In his study of the politeness to be found in textual interaction with readers, Roger D. Sell has observed that ‘at the zenith of its lofty meaning, “politeness” embraces intellectual enlightenment and civilization as prized by the Augustans, and particularly by metropolitan aristocracy which disdained rural life and cultural provinciality’. More recently, Patricia L. Hamilton has observed that ‘new standards of politeness came to dominate not only the upper classes of society but also the middle classes, who were pursuing upward mobility’ by imitation.⁵ Thus, the economic and social dimensions of politeness, being class-based, offered consensual codes to those who wished to distinguish themselves from behaviour and speech styles perceived as ‘vulgar’ and associated with less ‘genteel’, less wealthy social strata. In a social climate where linguistic and behavioural correctness went hand in hand, the violation of politeness codes was loaded with as much class stigma as the breaking of prescribed language rules. A further complicating aspect of politeness debates related to the potentially learnt nature of polished behaviour and its capacity to deceive, an aspect which will be discussed in my final chapter.

My starting-point is therefore ideas developed in the work of the leading enlightenment thinker Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose optimism is summarized by Lawrence E. Klein’s classic analysis, as confidence in a discursive liberty, leading to a self-regulating politeness which would ‘eliminate the excessive and the false’ through ‘unlimited personal interaction’. Shaftesbury’s ideas on the formation of taste indicate his belief in human nature as benevolent, motivated by instinctive sociocentric impulses which, if

³ General discussions of the cultural context of politeness can be found in Paul Langford, ‘The Progress of Politeness’, in *A Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 59-121; Langford, ‘The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 311-331; Lawrence E. Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), 869-898; and Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), *passim*. Politeness is one of the many aspects of language and interaction to be considered in Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1993). A particular focus on communication, politeness and the eighteenth century is to be found in Susan Fitzmaurice, ‘The Commerce of Language in the Pursuit of Politeness’; and in studies with a linguistic approach: Carey McIntosh, *Common and Courtly Language*; Klein, ‘Politeness as Linguistic Ideology’, in *Towards a Standard English 1600-1800*, ed. by Stein and Tieken-Boon van Ostade, pp. 31-50; Fitzmaurice, ‘Changes in the Meanings of Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Discourse Analysis and Historical Evidence’, in *Historical (Im)politeness*, ed. by Jonathan Culpeper and Dániel Z. Kádár (Bern: Lang, 2009), pp. 87-115; and Richard J. Watts, ‘Language and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Pragmatics*, 9.1 (1999) 5-20.

⁴ The impact of sensibility on politeness has been discussed by John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*; Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen 1986); Leland Warren, ‘The Conscious Speakers. Sensibility and the Art of Conversation Considered’, in *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics*, ed. by Syndy McMillen Conger (Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), pp. 25-42; and Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender, and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel*, paperback edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). A focus on gender, especially masculinity, can be found in: Klein, ‘Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere’, in *Textuality and Sexuality*, ed. by Still and Worton, pp. 100-115; and in Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 55-76; and ‘Polite “Persons”: Character, Biography and the Gentleman’, 333-354.

⁵ Roger D. Sell, ‘The Politeness of Literary Texts’, in *Literary Pragmatics*, ed. by Roger D. Sell (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 208-224 (p. 208); Hamilton, ‘Monkey Business’, p. 418.

nurtured and cultivated, can produce a refined and polished nation.⁶ Burney subscribed to views that polite interactions could indeed provide a foundation of civil communities. But she shared with some of her contemporaries an unease with the class-based and gendered assumptions underpinning such theories. Ideals of politeness, incorporating notions of a conversable and consensual society, can be traced to classical writers. Mediated by Shaftesbury, and other influential thinkers, such ideals were disseminated in eighteenth-century periodicals, conduct books, and other carriers of cultural values. Shaftesbury aestheticized virtue and linked it to conversation and behaviour, arguing, in his essay 'Sensus Communis' that a polite society is the natural outcome of freedom of speech, a liberty which allows people to 'polish one another, and rub off [their] Corners and rough Sides, by a sort of amicable Collision'.⁷ Such politeness was founded on a 'latitude of interaction', where 'natural affections' (like love), and social affections (like sympathy), would dominate self-love (egoistic affections), proliferate, and be channeled for the good of society; while such 'unnatural affections' as rage, cruelty and hatred would be corrected and banished. However, these 'unnatural affections' underpin key scenes of disruption and violence, which have been seen by many as distinguishing Burney's novels. Doody has noted that the novels are 'disturbing' with 'scenes of real violence', which Barbara Zonitch has read as a reflection of Burney's own fears about shifts in status and ways of defining class; in contrast, Epstein has argued that Burney's work is infused by anger against social constraints on women. As with Epstein's thesis, which posits that Burney was not afraid to represent violence, this chapter argues that Burney's novels grapple with hostility and even brutality in order to represent hegemonic and patriarchal power expressed as violence, against which ethical self-regulation (from either gender) had little sway.⁸

Burney's fiction confronts Shaftesburean masculinist optimism which located liberty of discourse, and sympathy, in urbane, homosocial circles, the occupiers of which were typically represented as regulating and exporting politeness.⁹ As the work of Paul Langford on homosociality has shown, such views accommodated gentlemanly eccentrics and even boorishness, but excluded women from serious discussions. These kind of exclusionary principles

⁶ Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 197 and p. 198; 'An Enquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit' in *Characteristics*, pp. 163-230; the phrase I use here invokes that of William Blackstone (1723-1780), taken as the title of Langford's classic work, *A Polite and Commercial People. England 1727-1783*.

⁷ Shaftesbury, 'Sensus Communis, An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour in a Letter to a Friend' (1709), in *Characteristics*, pp. 29-69 (p. 31); for the view that many of Shaftesbury's ideas correlate with ideas developed in Christian writings see Jack Prostko, ' "Natural Conversation Set in View": Shaftesbury and Moral Speech', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23.1 (1989), 42-61.

⁸ Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Work* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1988), p. 2 and p. 48; Zonitch, *Familiar Violence*, pp. 113-115; Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, *passim*, but see p. 4; a contrasting view is that of Katherine Anne Ackley who proposes that the violence in Burney's novels is not as extreme as that in Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811): see 'Violence against Women in the Novels of Early Eighteenth-Century British Women Writers' in *Living by the Pen: Early British Women Writers*, ed. by Dale Spender (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), pp. 212-224.

⁹ Concern for the right or the ability of gentlemen to regulate themselves and society is explored in Mary Hays's 1798 essay, which considers how men maintain authority 'by the same law by which the strong oppress the weak, and the rich the poor; and by which the great and powerful, crush the friendless': *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (London: J. Johnson and J. Bell, 1798), p. 28; novels from throughout the century engaged with the issue; for example, Richardson, *Clarissa* (1742), Frances Sheridan, *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman*, (1798) and Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799).

characterized philosophical discussions throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁰ Later thinkers like David Hume and Adam Smith also largely neglected women in debates about the extent to which innate impulses like the moral sense and the ‘affections’ could be considered benevolent and self-regulatory. Hume considered the contributions of ‘the fair sex’ to the maintenance of polite conversations. But Hume’s notions rest on assumptions that women preserve high standards of civil (and not civic) interaction; and his arguments make it clear that women’s value lies chiefly in their ability to entertain men, or to restrain them by passively appealing to gentlemanly behaviour: ‘What better school for manners’ asks Hume, assuming a male audience, ‘than the company of virtuous women; where the mutual endeavour to please must insensibly polish the mind, where the example of the female softness and modesty must communicate itself to their admirers, and where the delicacy of that sex puts everyone on his guard, lest he give offence by any breach of decency?’. However, as we shall see, arguments propounding the inferior, or even ridiculous, nature of women’s speech, which tapped into long-standing misogynistic views, were represented in a wide range of literature published throughout the long eighteenth century, and formed a strong counterpoint to Hume’s observations. Women then, were to rely on men’s good nature, on their gentlemanly instincts to employ codes of politeness in order to promote civil discourse, especially in mixed sex situations; conversely, women were seen as unruly and loquacious, uninformed and unformed speakers who needed to be regulated by masculine guidance.¹¹ Thus, by sanctioning freedom of speech, and by foregrounding the positive impact of gentlemanly politeness, writers like Shaftesbury and Hume glossed over potentially negative outcomes, outcomes where freedom of speech transmutes to liberties taken, where conversations are *not* self-restraining, because ‘amicable Collisions’ are replaced by abusive clashes.

The role of feeling in sociability was similarly sanctioned, with such prominent figures as Shaftesbury and Hume promoting impulsive expression, while accepting that man’s reasoning faculties would guarantee control of self, as well as regulation of others, so that natural and unnatural affections, as well as the passions, would be circumscribed by consensual notions of decorum. In practice, of course, this was not always played out. Further, although such thinkers valorized the feeling man, they failed to address the issue of women’s responses, or to extend to women, entering the newly accessible spheres of public space, the right to share the civic

¹⁰ Paul Langford, ‘Manners and the Eighteenth-Century State: The Case of the Unsociable Gentleman’, in *Rethinking Leviathan: The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany*, ed. by John Brewer and Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 281–316 (p. 300); Robert Markley discusses class-based exclusions in Shaftesbury’s work, though Markley’s essay largely overlooks gender exclusions: see ‘Sentimentality as Performance: Shaftesbury, Sterne, and the Theories of Virtue’, in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. by Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 210–230.

¹¹ Hume, ‘The Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences’, 1742, in *Selected Essays*, ed. by Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, reiss. 1998), pp. 56–76 (p. 74): in a footnote to this point, Hume admits that he prefers the rational discourse of a few chosen companions with whom he can speak freely, but as this is not to be found easily, he welcomes the gaiety and politeness of mixed company with the fair sex; Swift’s *A Letter to a Young Lady on her Marriage* (1723) is an example of the many texts denigrating women and urging their improvement by conversation with men: ‘I cannot conceive you to be human Creatures, but a Sort of Species hardly a Degree above a Monkey [...] If you are in Company with Men of Learning [...] you will gather more Advantage by list’ning to them, than to all the Nonsense and Frippery of your own Sex’; extracts from this tract continued to be published throughout the eighteenth century; for example in the *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, 14 July 1762, p. 3; at the end of the century Wollstonecraft considered how the improving conversation of men is available to women ‘of quality’ but not to those ‘of the middle rank’ ‘who ape their fashions and faults without sharing their advantages’: see *Vindication*, p. 76 (both Swift and Wollstonecraft target topics rather than style of conversation).

freedoms of liberty of speech and expression of feeling without incurring social censure or, as G. J. Barker-Benfield has suggested, without exposing them 'to the violence with which men had traditionally threatened them'.¹²

Such freedom of affective response, even for men, did not go uncontested. Modern scholars have highlighted the complexity of such debates: Barbara Benedict has underlined the contradictions evident even in the works of individual thinkers who advocated impulsive displays of feeling while promoting the need for reflection to curb such demonstrations; more recently, Thomas Dixon's revisionist work has emphasized the plurality of views prevalent in the long eighteenth-century, as well as the anachronism of generalist terms like 'emotion' when applied in discussions of the period.¹³ Views certainly differed during the period, but in the first eight decades of the eighteenth century at least, there was a general agreement that certain responses which we now might call 'emotions'¹⁴ were natural and instinctive, and that they could promote private virtue, sympathy with others, and therefore public good. As we have seen, such 'emotions' were described as the 'natural' and 'social' affections by Shaftesbury, who felt that even egotistical affections were important for social concord, providing they were balanced. In Adam Smith's view, such positive emotions were benevolent affections, which could contribute to personal and political well-being. The moderation of such sentiments was debated throughout the eighteenth century, leading, in the final decades, to a reaction to sensibility in its more extreme forms. At the same time, categories of feeling described as 'unnatural' affections by Shaftesbury were incorporated in descriptions of the appetites or the passions, and were presented as unruly impulses which needed to be restrained.¹⁵

Self-restraint was advocated in a range of texts covering a variety of contexts. Smith devotes a whole section to 'self-command' in Part VI of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, invoking 'ancient moralists' in order to categorize such 'passions' as 'fear and anger', and 'love of ease, of pleasure, of applause, and many other selfish gratifications'. Commanding such

¹² Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, p. 219.

¹³ Barbara Benedict, *Framing Feeling: Sentiment and Style in English Prose Fiction, 1745-1800* (New York: AMS Press, 1994): Benedict outlines this view in her introduction (see especially pp. 2-3), and in the chapters which follow she explores how sentimental fiction represents this and other philosophical dialectics; Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): Dixon's reformist argument confronts dichotomising approaches which characterize the eighteenth century as an age of reason; central to his argument is the view that the modern concept of the emotions as 'a psychological category' did not emerge until the early nineteenth century (p. 2).

¹⁴ In accordance with the approach of Thomas Dixon, who thinks in terms of 'networks of words' (5), and with a methodology applied elsewhere in this study, consultation of Johnson's dictionary provides examples of contemporary meanings associated with key terms: the words 'emotion' and 'passion' experienced some slippage of usage during the course of the eighteenth century; usage was often a matter of degree, 'passion' being seen as more violent; and both types of response were seen as reactive to external forces or factors; in some kinds of fiction the default meaning of 'passion' was sexual desire. Johnson's *Dictionary*, I, defines 'emotion' as 'Disturbance of the mind, vehemence of passion, pleasing or painful'; the meanings of 'passion' are listed as 'any effect caused by external agency', 'Violent commotions of the mind' (Johnson lists anger, zeal, love), 'the last suffering of the redeemer of the world' and 'To be extremely agitated, to express great commotion of mind'. In his treatise, *Elements of Criticism*, Lord Kames writes that certain feelings are 'too faint to be termed *passions* or even *emotions*', that 'these branches are so interwoven that they cannot be handled separately', and continues 'It is a fact universally admitted, that no emotion nor passion ever starts up in the mind, without a known cause': see 'Emotions and Passions', Part I, in *Elements of Criticism, with Additions and Improvements*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: A. Millar; Edinburgh: A Kincaid and J. Bell 1765), I, 31-94 (p. 31 and pp. 33-4).

¹⁵ Dixon notes that such calls for restraint were part of an eighteenth-century view that the passions were autonomous and active; Dixon locates the autonomy of the passions in Hobbesian thought, and cites literary sources illustrating the need for the restraint of such active impulses, including Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711), and Haywood's *Life's Progress Through the Passions* (1748).

emotional responses was a way of developing virtuous impulses which, in Smith's account, are presented as preferable: those of fortitude, manhood, strength of mind, temperance, decency, modesty and moderation. In his conclusion to the sixth part of his treatise, Smith argues that 'without restraint [...] every passion would, upon most occasions, rush headlong, if I may say so, to its own gratification'; and he concludes, 'Respect for [...] the sentiments of other people, is the sole principle which, upon most occasions, overawes all those mutinous and turbulent passions'.¹⁶ For Smith then, lack of control of the passions was antipathetic to private virtue and public good, his reference to gratification and mutiny creating dystopic images of luxurious decadence and civil unrest.

Smith's political image draws attention to the fact that calls for affective restraint found their way into various discursive fields, one of which was nationalism. In her discussion of the positioning of English politeness against 'showy' French style, Sorensen cites Austen's novel, *Emma* (1814), in which the narrative describes Mr Knightley as speaking in 'plain, unaffected gentleman-like English', and the Knightley brothers greeting each other in 'the true English style, burying under a calmness that seemed all but indifference, the real attachment which would have led either of them, if requisite, to do every thing for the good of the other'.¹⁷ In the year before the publication of *Evelina*, James Beattie expressed an argument against emotive rhetoric in national terms, positing that the exclamations of Cicero would carry little weight in a British parliament. But Beattie's work also invokes long-standing antipathy to enthusiasm in religion, harnessing the image of French sermonising which, it argues, would be ineffectual in an orthodox British pulpit: 'To see one of our preachers, [...] break out into a sudden apostrophe to the immortal powers, or to the walls of the church, tends to force a smile, rather than a tear, from those among us who reflect, that there is nothing in the subject, and should be nothing in the orator, to warrant such wanderings of fancy, or vehemence of emotion'.¹⁸ Such evaluations as Beattie's, positioning emotional responses defined as British, or English, against those credited as French, were part of a discursive interest in national identity which gathered pace as the eighteenth century drew to a close, and which appropriated self-command and 'coolness' of temper as the preferred model of English politeness.

Attempts to define the national 'character' in terms of English masculine reserve and female modesty were mediated by discussions of gender and class. As we have seen in Chapters 2 and 3, such discussions debated the extent to which restraint of passion, or the foregrounding of social affections, endorsed by the culture of sensibility, infantilized women or emasculated men of a certain rank. Writing his treatise for young gentlemen in 1777, James Fordyce concluded that good nature cannot coexist with passion, since calmness of mind after a violent outburst is no recompense to the hurt done to others. Hugh Blair, whose 'Essay on Gentleness' (1777) Burney

¹⁶ 'Of Self-Command', pp. 279-309 (p. 280 and p. 310).

¹⁷ Sorensen's reference is to *Emma*, III, Chapter 15, when Mr Knightley proposes to Emma, and I, Chapter 12, when the Knightley brothers reunite; see *Emma*, p. 489 and p. 107: for Sorensen's comments, see *The Grammar of Empire*, p. 200. Todd discusses the impact of the preference for such restrained feeling and expression on women, and the role of fiction in disseminating such cultural codes in her chapter on Burney in *The Sign of Angellica*, pp. 273-286, especially p. 274 and p. 286.

¹⁸ 'An Essay on Poetry and Music As They Affect the Mind', in *Essays*, pp. 1-317 (p. 281).

particularly admired, named gentleness as both a Christian virtue and a polish, to be distinguished from cowardly tameness of spirit, and artificial courtesy – an aspect of conduct writing which I return to in Chapter 5. In a later sermon (1794), Blair returned to the issue of gentleness as a polish, evoking the views of Shaftesbury, in ‘Sensus Communis’, when he wrote that ‘when men come closest together, if, instead of meeting in smooth contact, they rub and grate on one another’, then the feelings they generate are ‘offensive’. Women also were warned to control vehemence of feeling, especially anger. Fordyce paraphrases a Biblical passage, to help him express his ‘horror at those female furies that, lost to decency and every mild feeling of their sex, can abandon themselves to “all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour”’.¹⁹ For Fordyce, however, outrage at injustice and cruelty is permitted in men, since it is through such reactions that men can be moved to protect the weak, or defend social and political values. Blair also emphasizes the manliness of gentleness, which allows a person to regulate his own speech and behaviour, but also to oppose ‘severity, arrogance’, and ‘violence and oppression’.²⁰ It is evident then that it was acceptable to demonstrate some affective responses more than others. Compassion, sorrow and joy were acceptable if activated by others; but anger, and love of applause were not. In addition, for writers like Fordyce and Blair, possible exceptions applied to men, leaving the way open for them to engage in ‘collisions’ in order to exercise their civic and moral duties.

Nevertheless, conduct writing of the period advised both sexes to avoid disputation at all costs, and disputes became a locus of attention where writers could debate social and antisocial predilections. Conduct writers whose works Burney admired, warned against offence which could lead to argument.²¹ Hester Chappone warned her readers not to ‘push [...] advantages in argument’ for ‘it is a universal duty in society to consider others more than yourself’; and Hannah More posited that ‘not to offend is the first steps towards pleasing’, adding that to ‘give pain [...] is sinful because it is unpolite’; Fordyce advocated sedateness for both sexes and all ages, describing ‘dispute’ as the ‘Acid of Speech’. Other popular writers like Anne Murry echoed such sentiments, affirming that ‘points are rarely worth contention’. Of particular significance to this study is the fact that social stigmatization of disputes was even driven home in the promiscuous exercises in grammar books, their writers slipping in advice on politeness under the guise of teaching ‘correct’ English; James Buchanan’s popular work warned: ‘Avoid Disputes as much as possible. In order to appear easy and well-bred in Conversation, you *mayest* assure yourself it *require* more Wit, as well as more good Humour, to improve, than to contradict the Notions of another; but if you are at any Time obliged to enter on an Argument, give your Reasons with the utmost Coolness and Modesty.’ Chesterfield associated disputes with a lack of the social education which he saw as a hallmark of class, since it defined gentlemanly training,

¹⁹ Fordyce, ‘On a Manly Spirit, as Opposed to Cowardice’, in *Addresses to Young Men*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1777), II, 185-248 (p. 192 and p. 207); for Fordyce’s discussion of opposite qualities, see p. 206; Blair, ‘On Gentleness’ in *Sermons*, 5 vols (Edinburgh: William Creech; London: William Strahan and T. Cadell, 1777-1794) I (1777), 144-171 (p. 145, p. 146, and p. 148); and Blair, ‘On Tranquillity of Mind’ in *Sermons*, IV (1794), 272-292 (p. 284); Fordyce, ‘On Female Meekness’, in *Sermons to Young Women*, II, 259-332 (p. 293).

²⁰ Blair, ‘Essay on Gentleness’, p. 147 and p. 148.

²¹ For a discussion of the conduct literature mentioned or evaluated in Burney’s diary, see Hemlow, ‘Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books’, 732-761: for a summary, see note 2.

arguing that the ‘original cause of discord’ in families is to be found where there is a ‘want of good-breeding and gentleness of manners’.²² The avoidance of dispute and the easy negotiation of contentious situations was thus allied to class values, an association which endured through subsequent decades; indeed as recently as 1956, the linguist Alan Ross, discussing ‘u’ and ‘non u’ language, touched on ‘u’ and ‘non u’ emotion when he wrote that ‘when drunk, gentlemen often become amorous or maudlin or vomit in public, but they never become truculent’.²³

The role of humour in causing or dissipating disputes was also an area of intense interest, with philosophical treatises and conduct literature warning against its power to insult. Drawing on the classical distinctions between raillery and buffoonery, such texts associated the latter with inferior forms of comedy, commonly relegating it to the lower orders and labelling it ‘vulgar’.²⁴ Swift went so far as to associate it with Oliver Cromwell’s preference for the ‘scum of the people’, his tendency to ‘turn all things upside down’ associating buffoons with radical, libertine threats to social order.²⁵ Thus amusing conversation, like language, topics, and modes of interaction, was classified in a hierarchy which associated gentle raillery with gentility, but dismissed buffoonery as base and offensive – the ‘non u’ of humorous discourse.

However, complications arising from the context of emotional responses meant that their evaluation was subject to relativist approaches. Complicating factors included the object, source and extent of the feelings experienced.²⁶ The difficult question of appropriateness of object engaged writers who were interested in the value to society of feeling compassion for such morally deviant agents as murderers or rapists. The intensity of emotional response was also an area of keen debate, founded on classical precedents. Aristotle had explored the appropriate level of anger towards a friend in a given situation, advocating a mean level of response between excessive and defective feeling. For Horace, as translated by Beattie, such responses were natural, ‘for nature *first* makes the emotions of our mind correspond with our circumstances, infusing real joy, sorrow, or resentment, according to the occasion’. Many eighteenth-century thinkers were similarly cautious about any emotional response felt intensely, or not felt at all.

²² Chapone, ‘On Politeness and Accomplishments’ in *Letters On the Improvement of the Mind*, II, 99; Hannah More, ‘On Conversation’, in *Essays on Various Subjects*, pp. 37-62 (p. 48); later, More went so far as to say that a girl’s education should accustom her ‘to expect and endure opposition’, in *Strictures*, I, 142; James Fordyce, ‘On Female Virtue, Friendship, and Conversation’, in *Sermons to Young Women*, I, 161-204 (p. 198); Ann Murry, *Mentoria; or, The Young Ladies’ Instructor*, in *Familiar Conversations on Moral and Entertaining Subjects: Calculated to Improve Young Minds, in the Essential as well as the Ornamental Parts of Female Education*, corrected and enlarged, 2nd edn (London: Charles Dilly, 1780), p. 217; James Buchanan, *The British Grammar; or, An Essay, in Four Parts, towards Speaking and Writing the English Language Grammatically, and Inditing Elegantly. For the Use of the Schools of Great Britain and Ireland, and of Private Young Gentlemen and Ladies* (London: A. Millar, 1762), p. 203. Chesterfield, Letter CCXXV (6 June 1751), *Letters*, III, 197.

²³ Alan S. C. Ross, ‘U and Non-U: An Essay in Sociological Linguistics’ in *Noblesse Oblige: An Enquiry into the Identifiable Characteristics of the English Aristocracy*, ed. by Nancy Mitford (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956), pp. 11-36 (p. 13).

²⁴ Chapone wrote how ‘shocking an outrage’ it was ‘against society, to talk of, or laugh at any person in his own presence, that one would think it could only be committed by the vulgar’; see, ‘On Politeness and Accomplishments’ in *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, II, 106. In *Principles of Politeness and of Knowing the World* (p. 102), Chesterfield describes mimicry as ‘the favourite amusement of little minds’, warning that it is ‘the most illiberal of all buffoonery’, and ‘an insult’ seldom to be forgiven. In Letter IX of *The Art of Pleasing* (p. 64) he associates the mimic with the amusement of ‘the lowest rabble of mankind’, p. 64.

²⁵ ‘Hints Towards An Essay on Conversation’, p. 384.

²⁶ Justin Oakley explains that in terms of practical morality a ‘*phronimos*’ is a ‘wise person’ whose emotional responses to situations are appropriate and therefore paradigmatic of ‘moral’ behaviour; in contrast, the response of the ‘*kakos*’ is inappropriate; it may be excessive, or deficient; or it may be incompatible with the good of the social world of his or her context: see, *Morality and the Emotions* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 82-84.

Such engagement with this aspect of ethics extended to discussions of the theatre and *belles lettres*, Beattie warning of novels which, like plays, represent ‘ardours and agonies [...] rais[ing] emotions and sympathies unfriendly to innocence’.²⁷ Novelists were called upon to monitor their depictions of feeling, so that by sympathetic engagement with the narrative, the reader’s experience was morally edifying rather than corrupting.

In creating narratives which were suitably edifying, Burney plotted incidents which presented opportunities for the evaluation of affective responses. Readers thus witness the responses of morally deviant characters, as well as the reactions of the developing heroine to such secondary characters; further, readers can also test their own response. In the context of calls for novelists to instruct as well as entertain, the narrative voices employed by Burney foreground qualities in the characters meant to be seen as estimable or worthy of criticism. As expounded throughout this study, one of the techniques employed is the aligning of the dialect of the narrative voice with the speech of the characters who occupy the moral centres of the novels, throwing into relief the speech of morally flawed or aberrant characters.

²⁷ Aristotle, ‘Moral Goodness’, p. 48; Beattie, ‘An Essay on Poetry and Music, As They Affect the Mind’, in *Essays*, p. 56, and p. 205.

4.2. Captain Mirvan: Masculine Authority and Acts of Aggression

In *Evelina*, the comic pairing of Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval allows the novel to explore the consequences when relatively powerful figures fail to regulate their own affections and passions. The impact of their collisions is finely drawn by Evelina's narrative which carefully notes the inability of others to moderate the confrontations of the duo, describing in graphic detail the social disruptions attending their frequent conflicts. In this respect, Burney's portrait of Captain Mirvan engages with debates dating back to Socrates, and allows her to explore the extent to which freedom of expression sanctions the freedom to offend. Mirvan's passionate responses, the intensity of which are completely out of proportion to situation and context, mark him as totally antipathetic to the patterns of behaviour favoured by magazine essays, conduct books, sermons, and other carriers of ideological preferences. Thus, to some extent, the novel recognizes the need for some consensual notions of behaviour to produce a 'polite' society where vulnerable citizens feel safe and respected. On the other hand, the narrative registers the individualized responses of the heroine to such violent disruptions, and charts the negotiations which she has to effect between her natural revulsion, and her awareness of her duty as a granddaughter and a guest. For Evelina's moral sense appears in place at the start of the novel, her instinctive rejection of Mirvan's behaviour, and questioning of Duval's conduct proclaiming her capacity to recognize and condemn sociopathic tendencies.²⁸ Such collisions are therefore shown to help develop the confidence and autonomy of Evelina, so that eventually she dares speak out against inhumane acts. In this way, the developing subjectivity of Evelina, is linked by the quasi-autobiographical epistolary narrative, to the clashes of Mirvan and Duval, an association which both supports and subverts Shaftesburean ideas.

In creating Captain Mirvan, Burney adapted the figure of the sea captain from various sources, primarily looking back to the writers she admired. Her own ambivalence to the type can be seen in her diaries, where she lauds the 'unpolished' naval manners of her brother James as 'honest, generous, sensible, [...] full of good humour, mirth & jollity'. Years later, however, she confesses that the more she sees of sea captains, the more she is convinced that they all have 'a propensity to wanton mischief, — to roasting beaus, and detesting old women'.²⁹ Such ambivalence is evident in *The Wanderer*, in which the pilot and the sea-officer, in the opening chapter, display very different qualities through their responses to Juliet. In *Evelina*, as we shall see, Burney's characterization blended such aspects sufficiently for her to use Mirvan as a vehicle for satire, to expose the artifices and pretensions of other characters in the novel, while at the same time exposing *him* as a target of censure.

²⁸ On meeting Mirvan, Evelina condemns him, because he 'seems to be surly, vulgar, and disagreeable', and adds that had Captain Mirvan 'spent his whole life abroad [...] she] should have supposed they [the family] might rather have been thankful than sorrowful' (31); in Letter XIV, Evelina describes her first meeting with Madame Duval, her comment, 'to discover so near a relation in a woman who had thus introduced herself!' indicating how she recoils from the personality revealed by her grandmother's conversation with Mirvan (43).

²⁹ A letter dated 17 September 1769: *EJL*, I, 94; Burney defends her character, Mirvan, in a letter dated May, 1780: *Diary and Letters*, I, 175.

For later writers who admired and drew on Burney's novels, the sea captain was a Romantic and chivalrous figure, a man of feeling worthy to be the hero in their novels.³⁰ Charlotte Smith's novel, *Emmeline: The Orphan of the Castle* (1788) features the upright figure of Captain Godolphin, whose equanimity is severely tested when his friend seduces his sister. Reflecting descriptions of manly spirit voiced, as discussed earlier, by writers like Blair and Fordyce, Smith's narrative highlights how Godolphin is not without spirit, the point being that he has learned to control it: 'Tho' Godolphin had one of the best tempers in the world — a temper which the roughness of those among whom he lived had only served to soften and humanize [...] yet he had in great excess all those keen feelings which fill a heart of extreme sensibility; added to a courage [...] undaunted'. Such men of honour and humanity can be found in the records of criminal cases from the latter decades of the eighteenth century, when naval officers were frequently called upon to support the men under their command in cases at the Old Bailey, a feature of trials represented by Edgeworth in *Manoeuvring*, when Captain Walsingham's 'just and generous' testimony in the trial of his former captain results in his release.³¹ Indeed, Burney's later naval character, Admiral Powel in *The Wanderer*, is humane, and protective of Juliet, even before he discovers her to be English, and his niece; fiercely patriotic and anti-French, Powel judges each man on his merits, regardless of nationality, as when he compliments Amboise, though 'an outlandish man' (832). However, Burney's Captain Mirvan is of a different ilk entirely, complicated by his origins in various discursive sources. First, he is the inverse of a polite English gentleman, whose self-control and courtesy are described and defined by a variety of contemporary texts. At the same time, however, he represents anti-social aspects of the English gentleman which were tolerated, or even lauded; as noted earlier, modern commentators like Langford have demonstrated how 'original' character, taciturnity, and even misogyny were accommodated by late eighteenth-century notions of the English gentleman, especially if accompanied by humour.

Mirvan is a character type adapted from literary and historical sources. In the decade in which Burney published *Evelina*, cases at the Old Bailey featured sea captains charged with brutalising both sailors and civilians. In 1771, one Captain Broad stood accused of striking his first mate with a blunderbuss on the head and chest, leaving him on deck for two days, to die. A year later, a Captain Jones was convicted of raping a thirteen-year-old boy who had delivered

³⁰ Sarah Harriet Burney's novel, *Clarentine* (1796) is highly derivative of her sister's work, except in casting the hero as a sailor: Captain Somerset says he speaks with 'uncouthly plainness' and refers to himself as a 'blunt, unpolished sailor': see *Clarentine: A Novel*, 3 vols (London: G. G. and J. Robinson 1796), II, 170-1; in Austen's *Persuasion* (1817) Captain Wentworth is a man whose courage and intelligence gain him rapid promotion; but he is also a man of feeling, who proves his mettle by his enduring attachment to Anne Elliot; in poetry, the sea captain can figure as Romantic and sensitive – as Wordsworth explains in his notes to 'The Thorn', where he imagines his narrator to be of a superstitious nature but capable of 'deep feeling' and 'passion': see *Romanticism*, ed. by Wu, pp. 507-509 (p. 508).

³¹ In Smith, *Emmeline*, pp. 274-5, it is the 'excess' of Godolphin's feelings which prompts him to challenge his sister's seducer, making his decision not to do so more of a victory of his reason; Edgeworth provides lengthy accounts of naval leadership in her tale of fashionable life, *Manoeuvring* (1809): Captain Walsingham, the hero, meets a Captain Jemmison, whom he describes in Chapter X, as a man 'of undaunted courage' though a 'coxcomb', whose character is delineated by explicit contrast with Burney's character: 'abhorring the rough, brutal, swearing, grog-drinking, tobacco-chewing, race of sea-officers, the Bens and the Mirvans of former times, Captain Jemmison, [...] went into the contrary extreme of refinement and effeminacy': see *Manoeuvring: Vivian: The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, gen. ed. Marilyn Butler and Mitzi Myers, 12 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999-2003), IV, ed. by Claire Connolly and Marilyn Butler (1999), pp. 67-68, and p. 72.

goods to his lodgings.³² Mezzotints printed in the decade when Burney published *Evelina*, satirized the figure of the violent ‘tar’ for propaganda purposes against the French. As John Hart has observed, such prints ‘illustrate the climate of rough humour within which [Mirvan] performs his brutal pranks’.³³ The type of the cruel sea captain endured beyond the decade of Burney’s *Evelina*, but also figured prominently in fiction by writers admired by Burney. Joseph Bartolomeo has described Mirvan as ‘the most obvious Smollettian character in the novel’.³⁴ Burney’s debt to Smollett’s ‘grim commander’ in *Roderick Random* (1748) is certainly evident from Mirvan’s many outbursts; and Mirvan’s punishments might also be seen to resemble the rough justice of Roderick’s uncle, Tom Bowling, who strips Roderick’s teacher of his breeches, and beats him.³⁵ But Burney moderates the physical brutality as well as the language of her captain, exchanging physical beatings for duckings, and replacing such oaths as ‘son of a w—e’ with such milder taboo forms as ‘the devil’. Nevertheless, Burney’s characterization retains the rough humour, plain-speaking and fierce patriotism of earlier models, a complicating of the figure of the sea-captain which drew a variety of very different responses from contemporary readers: the *Monthly Review* responded favourably to the novel but objected to the ‘son of Neptune, whose manners are rather those of a rough, uneducated country squire, than those of a genuine sea-captain’; but the response of the *Critical Review* reflected the tolerance of gentlemanly flaws described by Langford, reading Mirvan as ‘an honest English sailor’, a character ‘finely drawn, and in a great measure original’.³⁶

Mirvan’s social status has been of interest to critical commentators, who see his plain language and proclivity for ‘low’ humour and violent pranks as indicators of lowly origins.³⁷ In *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1755), Henry Fielding also associates such unfeeling derision with a class-based lack of cultivation, which leads men to mistake ‘licentiousness for liberty’. Describing how sailors jeered at his disease-ridden state, Fielding notes: ‘It was a lively picture of that cruelty and inhumanity, in the nature of men’ which ‘never shews itself in men who are

³² John Cummings accused of perjuring himself in the trial of Captain Richard Broad, 10 April 1771 (t17771041-64); and Captain Jones accused of the rape of Francis Henry Hay, at his lodging, 15 July 1772 (t17720715-22). <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/search>> [accessed 23 July 2010].

³³ ‘Frances Burney’s *Evelina*: Mirvan and Mezzotint’, p. 59.

³⁴ Wollstonecraft writes in *Vindication* (p. 17) of sailors and ‘naval gentlemen’ whose ‘vices assume a different and grosser cast’ than those of army officers because they are ‘more confined to the society of men’; the tyrannical father in *The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) – is a retired sea captain; see Wollstonecraft, *Mary and the Wrongs of Woman*, 1788 and 1798, ed. by Gary Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, rev. 2007, reiss. 2009); Joseph F. Bartolomeo, *Matched Pairs: Gender and Intertextual Dialogue in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), p. 131.

³⁵ The incident occurs in Chapter 5, p. 18, where the use of rope, stripped clothes, and a third party spectator (the usher) resemble Mirvan’s humiliations of Duval (see below, Chapter 4); in Chapter 3, Bowling’s pride and indignation earn him the epithet, ‘the honest tar’ by Roderick’s narration.

³⁶ *Monthly Review* 58, April 1778, p. 316; *Critical Review; or Annals of Literature*, 46, September 1778, pp. 202-4, Harvard University Depository, available through Googlebooks [accessed 17 July 2010]; this kind of predisposition to the ‘honest tar’ was articulated three decades later by Leigh Hunt who lauded the ‘hearts of oak’ of patriotic seamen in his polemic essay, ‘Distressed Seamen and the Distress of the Poor in General’, 1818: see *Selected Writings*, ed. by David Jesson Dibley (Manchester: Fyfield Books, 2003), pp. 133-137 (p. 133); some modern scholars also respond favourably to Mirvan: in ‘*Evelina; or Female Difficulties*’ Staves writes that Mirvan is a ‘good-hearted’ character who exposes deceit, p. 378; Leanne Maunu argues that although Mirvan’s violence is unsettling, the reader is cued to sympathize with him and applaud his besting of Duval as a representative of the French: see ‘Quelling the French Threat in Frances Burney’s *Evelina*’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 31 (2002) 99-125 (p. 119).

³⁷ Ronald Paulson reads Mirvan as ‘a coarse lout’: see *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 285; more recently, Mirvan has been described as a ‘social buccaneer’ who ‘has married into’ the Howard family, but still enjoys his ‘loutish’ and ‘thuggish brutality’: see Mackie, pp. 156 and 158.

polish'd and refin'd'.³⁸ In keeping with such class-ridden generalizations, Carey McIntosh's study of 'common' and courtly language allocates Mirvan a lowly social position on the basis of his speech which, he posits in a circular argument, displays many features of 'vulgar' talk.

However, it is unlikely that Burney envisaged that a character of Mrs Mirvan's sense and pedigree would have married such a man from the lower orders, no matter his prospects.³⁹ It is more likely, therefore that Mirvan is meant to be read as a gentleman and, in keeping with other characters discussed in this study, that Burney assigned him decentralized speech, in order to underline his moral marginality, and to question the automatic authority invested in him by his gentlemanly status.

Mirvan's roots in fiction are evident in his jargon, a feature of eighteenth-century speech which was stigmatized in extraliterary texts extolling clarity and politeness.⁴⁰ Such language displays generic features of fictional sailors' speech. An example of this is the archaic idiom, such as Mirvan's openers, 'Hark you' or Hark'ee' which he uses aggressively in his response to 'Mrs. Frog' (43) and to the 'spark', Lovel (329). Nautical imagery is a common feature of fictional sailor talk. Smollett's kindly rear-admiral Balderick meets Matthew Bramble again after many years, acknowledging his old friend warmly with the greeting, 'I know the looming of the vessel, though she has been hard strained since we parted: but I can't heave up the name [...] Ha! Matt, my old fellow cruiser, still afloat!'.⁴¹ Modern linguistic studies in both England and America have highlighted the tendency of speakers in closed masculine speech communities, defined by their occupation, to preserve distinct language varieties, often distinguished by idioms laced with occupational jargon. These kinds of speech communities employ such sociolects to display their group identities and to exclude 'outsiders', a feature of anti-language which Helen Berry has identified as being employed by the eighteenth-century criminal underworld.⁴² Balderick's greeting demonstrates how his memory places, and therefore accepts Bramble, as part of his naval past, even though it cannot locate his name; and his follow-up vocative of 'fellow-cruiser' marks the moment of recognition, establishing the bond of fellowship between the two. In contrast, Captain Mirvan typically employs nautical language to enhance the impact

³⁸ Fielding's entry for 26 June, 1754: *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon by the Late Henry Fielding Esq* (London: A. Millar, 1755), pp. 47-48.

³⁹ Judith Newton argues that Mirvan represents the potential for violence in the patriarchal order: see *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 52; Alexander H. Pitofsky cites the Mirvans' initial rejoicing at Mirvan's return as evidence that they were expecting 'an affectionate husband and father'; Pitofsky argues that Mirvan is suffering from a post-combat personality disorder which transforms him into a 'crude, obnoxious, and virtually demented tyrant': see 'Captain Mirvan and the Politics of Manners in *Evelina*', *The Burney Journal*, 7 (2004), 4-12 (p. 8).

⁴⁰ In 'Illustrations on Sublimity', in *Dissertations*, p. 419, Beattie criticizes 'idioms of cant' which form the unintelligible jargon of ignorant and affected people; Beattie names seamen as particular culprits who use unintelligible cant (p. 651); James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, warns against the use of 'a professional dialect' when in company; Burnett was concerned with the tone and manner of the professional man, which he deemed 'not at all beautiful': see *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, 1773-1792, 6 vols (Edinburgh: J. Bell and London: T. Cadell 1787) IV, 300.

⁴¹ *Humphry Clinker*, pp. 64-5; in Smollett's *Roderick Random*, 'Harkée' is a favourite opener of Tom Bowling; see for example, 'Harkée Mr Syntax' (p. 18).

⁴² Solidarity features of language in close-knit linguistic communities is now well documented, following the work of William Labov in the 1960s and 1970s; Labov studied social factors influencing linguistic change in Martha's Vineyard, and found that fishermen reverted to older forms of pronunciation in a conservative bid to mark their group identity against the influence of summer tourists' talk; for a discussion of Labov's work see Wardhaugh, *Sociolinguistics*, pp. 193-4; Helen Berry, 'Rethinking Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Moll King's Coffee House and the Significance of "flash talk"', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 11 (2001), 65-81.

of his speech when the desired effect is menace, contempt or lewdness, therefore more likely to create social barriers than to forge social bonds. An early example occurs in Volume I, Letter XVI, when Mirvan arrives to find Evelina, cornered by Sir Clement Willoughby. Mirvan's apparently jovial remark 'O ho, [...] you have got a good warm birth [sic] here' (53) carries suggestive overtones, the ship's 'birth' connoting a bed, as well as a cabin. In this instance, too, Mirvan tells Evelina that he and his family will 'beat up [her] quarters', inviting his wife and daughter to 'come to the fire, and dry [their] trumpery'. Here Mirvan's language juxtaposes expressions of jargonised, masculine habitat with phrases which trivialise and derogate feminine attire. Mirvan's language is therefore used to establish a hierarchy of gendered interests in which the feminine figures as inferior.

The same letter shows Mirvan employing nautical images menacingly when he refuses Madame Duval a seat in his carriage, with the dismissive remark, 'O never mind the old Beldame [...] she's weather-proof, I'll answer for her' (52). Mirvan's depiction of Duval as an old ship which has withstood the trial of many a storm, dehumanises her, and represents her as an object to be used at his will. Such dehumanization of Duval is evident later, when Mirvan's plans to test her further are described as a naval adventure: 'I am now upon a hazardous expedition, having undertaken to convoy a crazy vessel to the shore of Mortification' (114). The 'crazy vessel' is Duval, and the mission has been agreed with Sir Clement Willoughby. Thus Mirvan subverts commissions more usually associated with courage and even heroism, for his own pleasurable ends, a violation of interpersonal laws of feeling which, Colin McGinn has argued, defines 'pure evil [...] malice for its own sake [...], cases in which the other's pain is prized for its own sake [...] since no benefit to the agent accrues from the other's pain, aside from the pleasure afforded by it.'⁴³ In this instance too, Mirvan reveals his despotic nature, exploiting the power of command which seems habitual to him, to govern his own family, and deny any moral autonomy which would lead to their objections: 'I expect obedience and submission to orders [...] if any of you, that are of my chosen crew, capitulate, or enter into treaty with the enemy, — I shall look upon you as mutinying' (114). Read in the context of Mirvan's hatred of 'Madame French', his 'thousand sea-terms' (115) figure her as a foreign vessel, needing to be overpowered and conquered by the imperious power of the British navy. Mirvan's misogyny and xenophobia are conflated in his response to Madame Duval, leading him to generalize her in numerous ageist and sexist insults which contravene conduct book accounts of gentlemanly behaviour, and prompting him to enact upon her his hatred of the French – a prejudiced response eschewed by more worthy fictional sea captains like Edgeworth's Captain Walsingham who, in spite of his abuse at the hands of a French commander, would not allow anyone to damn the French, because it 'was only the fault of an individual'.⁴⁴

⁴³ Colin McGinn, *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, 1999), pp. 61-91.

⁴⁴ In 'Quelling the French Threat', Maunu also reads Mirvan in the context of contemporary xenophobia, specifically through the lens of Linda Colley's study of war between Britain and France; Edgeworth, *Manoeuvring*, 1809, p. 64.

Outbursts of feeling contravene polite notions of manly, and gentlemanly, behaviour.

Nonetheless, such outbursts between Mirvan and Duval dominate Volume I.⁴⁵ Indeed, Mirvan revels in his right to express anger, asserting in Letter XXI that he will suffer no one to be in a passion in his house, except himself. The first instance of Mirvan's conversation directly reported in detail (Letter XIV) sets the pattern for many acts of aggression, and exemplifies how his calculated insults slide into uncontrolled passion. The incident is prepared for with apparent disingenuousness by Evelina's account, which notes Mirvan's sullen reluctance to help Duval, a form of positive impoliteness;⁴⁶ but within a few lines we are told that 'he seemed absolutely bent upon quarrelling with her'. Mirvan's confrontations commonly begin with an apparently open question which is, nevertheless, a 'known answer' question, devised to open up opportunities for him to be abusive. Here he asks Duval why she went to a public place without an Englishman (41), his reference to English manhood revealing his gendered, nationalistic preoccupations.

Madame Duval's reply is innocuous, " "Ma Foi, Sir," answered she, "because none of my acquaintance is in town" ', but Mirvan follows up with bald on record impoliteness when he retorts 'I'll tell you what; your best way is to go out of it yourself' (42), intending face-damage in an unambiguous way.⁴⁷ Thus Mirvan's intended impoliteness is successful, for Duval perceives his intent and responds accordingly with an insult of her own, 'and so I shall; for, I promise you, I think the English a parcel of brutes'. From here, Mirvan's insults become more overt, as he calls Duval 'Madame French', and suggests she is a pickpocket. After a change in topic, Mirvan begins again, with an opener which allows him to state his class affiliations, and derogate what he understands to be Duval's, by referring to his imminent journey to Howard Grove, to visit 'quality' people whom Duval cannot possibly know. Once again, Mirvan's impoliteness strategies are successful, in that Duval responds aggressively. Especially successful in terms of Mirvan's provocations is the way Duval picks up on his cues: in the first interchange he wants to insult the French, so he feeds her a cue, and it is Duval who makes the first overt insult about the brutishness of the English; in the second instance his cues are 'Howard Grove' and 'quality', and Duval responds with accusations that Mirvan is merely a steward in Lady Howard's employ.

It is clear from this interchange that Mirvan is particularly adept at goading others, dismantling what Goffman calls the 'sign vehicles' of people's public face, exposing back-stage details in order to undermine their public identities. Later, Mirvan's need to expose Duval's authentic self will take more sinister and physical steps, when his sousing of her in the pond destroys her finery and wig. In her later novel, *Belinda*, 1801, Edgeworth's brutal Mrs Freke is similarly driven to expose characteristics which are hidden or disguised beneath public personae.

⁴⁵ The 'increasing passion' of Mirvan and Duval terrifies the ladies on their first meeting in Letter XIV; they have 'violent' quarrels in Letters XXV and XIX; 'battle with great violence' in Letter XXVI, and are 'violent antagonists' in Letter XVI. In the same letter, Mirvan shakes Duval by the shoulders, and is likely to be the one to have given Monsieur du Bois a 'violent push' as reported in Letter XIX.

⁴⁶ According to Bousfield, positive impoliteness occurs when there is damage to positive face wants, for example a speaker ignores, snubs, or shows lack of interesting another.

⁴⁷ 'On record' politeness strategies commit a face-threatening act but include some recognition of another's face needs ('Lend me five pounds, old boy'); bald on record politeness omits softening features ('Lend me five pounds'), but may not intend to offend; bald on record impoliteness intends offence and includes no softening strategies: examples are based on Brown and Levinson's politeness model, and Bousfield's work on impoliteness, the former examples provided by Sell, 'The Politeness of Literary Texts', in *Literary Pragmatics*, ed. by Sell, pp. 208-224 (p. 211).

As with Mirvan, she expresses her compulsion by using informal, slangy language, as when she boasts that she delights ‘in hauling good people’s opinions out of their musty drawers, and seeing how they look when they’re all pulled to pieces before their faces’, adding ‘to punish [Lady Anne] for *shirking* me, by the Lord, I’d have every rag she has in the world in the middle of the floor.’⁴⁸ Using colloquial language performatively, Mrs Freke’s utterance, like Mirvan’s insults, becomes rebarbative, deflating the dignity as well as belittling the values of others. In *Evelina*, however, it is Mirvan who is also exposed. In his first confrontation with Duval, he loses control of the conversation and of his temper, resorting to ‘swearing terribly’ and responding ‘with great fury’, as the interchange becomes a series of rapid two-part exchanges of insults. Some modern linguists have argued that impoliteness is a kind of aggression, and it is significant here that what begins as impoliteness dissolves into verbal aggression, which leads to physical violence, as Mirvan, seizing Duval’s wrists, threatens to throw her out of the window (43).⁴⁹ Extreme anger characterizes Mirvan’s interactions with Duval throughout the novel, and as stigmatized responses, foreground his lack of fitness for civilian, and civil life.

Burney complicates the figure of her sea captain, however, by assigning him an out-spokenness and a candour which Barker-Benfield highlights as among the values repeatedly sounded by sentimental novels, influenced by the culture of sensibility’s adherence to the ‘notions of utter sincerity and the immediate legibility of gesture and expression’ (222). Such candour was also inscribed in the protagonists of radical novels of the 1790s, with Robinson, Bage, Inchabald, and Holcroft all using outspoken male characters to highlight social injustices.⁵⁰ Burney herself creates such a character in *Cecilia*, where the obsessive, evangelical Albany is presented as the scourge of the rich and the selfish. In *Evelina*, Mirvan is also depicted as a man who exploits his outsider status; but marginalization for Mirvan opens up opportunities for ridicule and humiliation of others, as well as justification of self. Thus, with subtle, self-ironizing frankness, he wriggles out of censure, exploiting polite techniques to excuse himself, as when he explains his reluctance to help Duval as a wish not to offend her sensibilities by the offer of ‘English’ help; the truth is, Duval *has* expressed disgust at the English, and on other occasions eschews the offer of aid. Mirvan represents himself here as naively taking her at her word, though there is private pleasure in his out-maneuvring of Duval.

Mirvan’s candour also accords with developing views which welcomed the representation of English manhood as honest and plain-speaking, robust but somewhat awkward in the expression of softer emotions. James Fordyce’s address, ‘On a Manly Spirit as Opposed to Cowardice’ (1777) emphasizes that military men can be the ‘guardians of society’ (200), and that the man who is truly brave is the man who can feel (226); however, such a man must guard

⁴⁸ *Belinda*, p. 231. In this scene Mrs Freke’s comments also feature naval terms: she observes that she has ‘trimmed Percival this morning’ and that his wife was afraid of her ‘demolishing and unrigging her’ (231); Freke resembles Mirvan in her love of buffoonery, her physical cruelty, especially of women, and her loud, uncontrollable laughter.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Culpeper, ‘(Im)politeness in Dramatic Dialogue’, in *Exploring the Language of Drama: From Text to Context*, ed. by Jonathan Culpeper, Mick Short and Peter Verdonk (London, Routledge, 1998) pp. 83-95 (p. 86).

⁵⁰ Robinson’s hero in *Walsingham* (1796) is compelled by nature to be outspoken, as is the hero in Holcroft’s *Hugh Trevor* (1794-1797), and Godwin’s *Things As They Are; or, The Adventures Of Caleb Williams* (1794). In *Hermsprong, or Man as He Is Not* (1796) and *Nature and Art* (1796) Bage and Inchbald went further, creating a background for their heroes among American Indians and Africa, their detachment from European values allowing them to expose unfairness and hypocrisy.

against the ‘soft insinuations of effeminacy’ which might deter him from speaking out against what disgusts him in the world (237). Such conservative representations appeal to what Linda Colley has termed the image of the English bear as a counterpoint to French frivolity, valorizing the masculine guardian of society who kept his family in control, and who was watchful of ‘dangers’ which might ensue ‘when women were allowed to stray outside their proper sphere.’ Such representations sat comfortably with the anti-sentimentality backlash, which was gathering momentum at the end of the decade.⁵¹ Nevertheless, other views of masculinity promoted a model of guardianship which was sympathetic to the feelings of others, and did not ride rough-shod over conversational face-needs in a bid to expose failings. Thinkers like David Hume posited that ‘the male sex, among a polite people, discover their authority [...] by civility, by respect by complaisance, and, in a word, by gallantry’, a model which was applied to military masculinity by James Fordyce himself, who praised the ‘manly virtues’ of ‘sobriety’ and ‘gravity’, and commended the ‘many persons who belonged to the navy’ who took ‘strict care to maintain good order among their inferiors’, by ‘rational conversation’ and the ‘pleasures of reflection’.⁵² Pointing to figures of unregulated naval leadership common in earlier and contemporary factual and fictional sources, Mirvan proffers an example of ineffective forms of reformation, and an approach which is more likely to exacerbate than ameliorate the follies it seeks to expose.

The novel also focuses on the role of humour in the ‘amicable collisions’ envisioned by early formulations of a polite society, and embraced by many conduct writers in their representations of the gregarious English gentleman. Nevertheless, throughout the period, writers on politeness discouraged the use of humour levelled at others, stigmatizing the humorist’s desire for acclaim, as much as the humiliation of another.⁵³ Engaging with the difficulty of regulating the role of humour in effecting social concord, characterization of Mirvan presents him as fun-loving and acutely satirical. Thus, although he is depicted as driven by anger, he is frequently moved by immoderate mirth: when Madame Duval spits in his face, ‘the joy of the Captain was converted into resentment’ and fury (55), a pendulum of feeling which describes the two emotional planes of his existence. As we shall see, Mirvan’s main strategies for humour are sarcasm, objectification or deflation, and the creation of spectacle. Thus Mirvan’s humour is verbally and physically abusive, an ego-driven humour resembling the cruel derision of the sailors who featured in Fielding’s *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*.

Among the most frequent objects of Mirvan’s sarcasm are the French. Such scornful comments tend to concern French customs and tastes. More frequently, however, Mirvan’s

⁵¹ Colley, p. 69; Barker-Benfield has discussed the mixed reactions to sensibility, especially in the final fifteen years of the eighteenth century, in his chapter, ‘Wollstonecraft and the Crisis over Sensibility in the 1790s’, pp. 351-395;

⁵² Hume, ‘Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences’, *Selected Essays*, ed. by Copley, p. 74; Fordyce, ‘On a Manly Spirit, as Opposed to Cowardice’, p. 225.

⁵³ For Hugh Blair, ‘moderation in pleasure’ and ‘command of passion’ go hand in hand, and are a sign of high birth, since they ‘show that [people] possess a mind worthy of [their] fortune’; hoping to influence young minds, his sermon ‘On the Duties of the Young’ (1777) encourages ‘Moderation, vigilance, and self-government’ to ‘correct every appearance of harshness’ in order to ‘render’ oneself ‘amiable in society’ *Sermons*, 1, p. 67, p. 253, and p. 262); Chesterfield warns against ridiculing another by mimicry, and advocates good humoured response to jokes against oneself as ‘extreme politeness’, as oppose to the alternative – recourse to the sword: *Principles of Politeness and of Knowing the World*, p. 102, and pp. 49-50; for Chesterfield’s advice relating to the mastery of temper, see p. 48.

sarcasm is directed at French manhood, which he represents as effeminate, as when he demands ‘But *what, what* do they do, these famous *Monseers*? [...] do they game? — or drink? — or fiddle? — or are they jockeys?’, and as uxorious, shown when he follows up this remark with the question ‘— or do they spend all their time in flummerring old women?’ (50).⁵⁴ Thus when Mirvan utters sarcasms on his other favourite target, women, he does so in a bid to keep uxoriousness at bay, and with it the invidious influence of French culture. He silences the women in his own family, and objects when others pay compliments to his daughter and Evelina, commenting that ‘the women are vain enough already’ (67);⁵⁵ later such misogyny turns to misandry, as Mirvan laments what he sees as a deterioration of British manhood: ‘I’m almost as much ashamed of my countrymen as if I was a Frenchman, and I believe in my heart there i’n’t a pin to chuse between them and, before long, we shall hear the very sailors talking that lingo, and see never a swabber without a bag and a sword.’ (94-5). Such a graphic depiction of ‘a swabber’ with a ‘bag and a sword’ displays Mirvan’s objection to gentrification as much as his hostility to emasculation, allowing him to voice his subscription to beliefs that aristocratic, courtly values had deteriorated into over-refined ways, associated with France. Langford observes that such fears of lack of distinction between nations were prevalent at the end of the century, but they are assimilated here in Mirvan’s general malaise.⁵⁶ His constant ‘sneering’ at the French, and women, and men he associates with French or feminine values, conveys his belief in the superiority of a model of British manhood which he figures as robust, and founded on personal industry, merit and the exertion of patriarchal authority.

Levelling language characterizes Mirvan’s second strategy for humour, which is objectifying and deflating. Like many of Burney’s fashionable and pretentious characters, Mirvan helps protect the superiority of his position by derogating others, frequently using nomenclature to mark people as socially or personally ‘ordinary’, or even ridiculous.⁵⁷ An example of this is the way he addresses his own family, refusing to dignify them with their full titles, but preferring the diminutive, ‘Moll’ for his daughter, and referring to his wife as ‘Lucy’ in the company of a relative stranger, Willoughby (53). More extreme are his aptronymic coinages, chosen to both represent and determine his opponents. Thus Madame Duval is ‘old Madame French’ (53) and Monsieur Du Bois is ‘her *French beau*’ (54), ‘*Monseer*’ or, after he has fallen in the mud,

⁵⁴ Targetting French taste, Mirvan asks, ‘I suppose you’d have me learn to cut capers? — and dress like a monkey? — and palaver in French gibberish?’ (50), and he sneers at the artefacts at Cox’s museum, ‘I suppose this may be in your French taste? it’s like enough, for it’s all *kickshaw work*’ (64); *OED*, ‘*flummer*’, v, 2: ‘To deceive by flattery, to humbug’; *OED* cites *Evelina* as the second earliest examples of usage, the first being 1764.

⁵⁵ Mrs Mirvan pretends ignorance of her husband’s schemes, frequently says nothing or, when she does try to intervene, is silenced, as when Mirvan rounds on her and commands ‘None of your clack!’ (99).

⁵⁶ Langford cites John Millar, who feared that commerce would end distinction between nations, as typical of the defensive views at that time: *An Historical View of the English Government* (1803) iv, p. 249, in Langford, ‘Manners and the Eighteenth-Century State’, p. 281.

⁵⁷ A person’s title was a matter of respect: in his letters, Horace Walpole signified his disrespect by the use of uninvited informalities, referring to Catherine Macaulay as Kate Macaulay (Letter 363, to the Miss Berries, 1790), and to Anna Letitia Barbauld as Deborah (Letter 386 to the Miss Berries, 1791); by contrast, in Letter 393 to Miss Hannah More, 1791, Walpole wrote of the honours due to ‘Miss Burney’: *The Letters of Horace Walpole, the Earl of Orford: Including Numerous Letters Now Published from the Original Manuscripts*, 4 vols (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1842), iv, 465, 386, and 523: <<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4919/pg4919.txt>> [accessed 20 June 2010]; Austen wrote in *Persuasion*: how ‘“poor Richard”, had been nothing better than a thick-headed, unfeeling, unprofitable Dick Musgrave, who had never done anything to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name, living or dead’, pp. 76-77.

‘*Monseer Slippery*’ (73); Mr Lovel’s attempts at wit earn him the appellation ‘Mr. Wiseacre’ (329); and even Lovel’s ‘à la mode doppelganger’, the monkey, is ‘*Monsieur Grinagain*’ (332) and ‘*Monseer Longtail*’ (333). Mirvan’s appellations drag people down from social elevations, a speech act resembling Cromwell’s tendency to ‘turn all things upside down’, as described by Swift.⁵⁸

Swift’s representation of Cromwell relates such reversals to his taste for buffoonery and ‘low’ humour, a predilection evident in Mirvan’s own taste for physical humour and spectacle. Mirvan delights in dismantling outer layers of identities. Thus, there is something Swiftian also in Mirvan’s exhibitions, his exposing of Madame Duval to be old and feeble beneath her cosmetics and clothing, evoking Swift’s verse revealing Corinna’s disrobing, or that ‘Celia shits’.⁵⁹ Mirvan therefore can be seen to share Swift’s conservatively minded distrust of disguise as a portent for disruption, especially in women. Swift stigmatized the language of footmen and scribblers, and criticized colloquial or modern language, yet used such forms himself, in his letters to Stella. Similarly, Burney’s sea captain embraces proscribed forms. Thus Burney’s characterization reveals the common ground occupied by each: Mirvan shares with Swift’s poems an assumed patriarchal elitism founded on people knowing, and keeping, their place and role in the social order. If they fail to do so, Mirvan takes a sadistic pleasure in ridicule which is also Swiftian in its voyeuristic satire. Though Burney’s contemporary readers could not have been aware of Swift’s private language, her yoking of the poems of an Anglo-Irish, Tory man of the cloth – and of letters – with a sadistic tar distinguished by extreme patriotism and misogyny, must have highlighted the common fate of women in the hands of such guardians, regardless of the latters’ political or professional backgrounds.

There is a form of voyeurism, too, in Mirvan’s love of spectacle, evident in the way he revels in the anticipation of his planned humiliations, in his unrestrained pleasure as they are executed, and in his lurid depictions after the events. After Madame Duval’s first accident in the mud, Mirvan bursts ‘into a loud laugh’, laughs ‘more heartily’ when he sees Monsieur Du Bois, but is actually put ‘into extacy’ [sic] and ‘shout[s] with pleasure’ at the subsequent recital of the incident (54). Treating Duval like a ghastly exhibit, he holds a candle to her face ‘that he might have a more complete view of her disaster’ (54). Later, Mirvan plans another escapade in which Madame Duval is degraded. This incident demonstrates Mirvan’s antipathy to the gallantry and benevolence expected of him by patriarchal principles, and illustrates his willingness to break the social contract investing him with power but also with responsibility to use that power sympathetically. Mirvan’s malicious scheme is successful, and Madame Duval is literally brought low in a scene which is voyeuristically depicted, overlooked by the grinning footman. The detail of the grinning footman is sufficiently significant to be picked out in an illustration included in a new edition of *Evelina*, published in 1784 (see figure 3).

⁵⁸ The phrase ‘à la mode doppelganger’ is coined by Allen, in ‘Staging Identity’, p. 442; Swift, ‘Hints Towards An Essay on Conversation’, p. 384.

⁵⁹ ‘A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed’ (1734) and ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’ (1732), in Jonathan Swift, *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Pat Rogers (London: Penguin, 1983), pp. 453-55, and pp. 448-52.



Figure 3. Frontispiece (dated 1779) of Volume II of *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, new edn, 3 vols (London: T. and W. Lowndes, 1784). The scene features the footman in the background, laughing, as Evelina helps her grandmother to step out of the mud.
The copy of this edition is my own.

For a lavish 1822 edition of the novel, the illustrator chooses this scene again, but moves away from the iconography of the 1784 edition, whilst retaining the peeping footman (figure 4). The illustrator seems to have been aware of the potential for sexual aggression in the scene, which Evelina describes graphically: ‘the poor lady [was] seated upright in a ditch [...] She was sobbing [...] I then saw, that her feet were tied together with strong rope, which was fastened to the upper branch of a tree,’ (121-2). In this depiction, Madame Duval is recumbent in the ditch. Mirvan stands over her, grinning, holding the rope which binds her ankles, and a whip. Such illustrations, and to some extent, Evelina’s description, invite readers to become voyeurs of Mirvan’s actions, and test the thresholds of their own revulsion. Placing Mirvan in classical and Augustan traditions, where he presents ‘*a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own; which is the chief reason [...] so very few are offended with it*’, Burney assigns him easy, popular targets to censure and punish in the figures of the older, vocal, painted woman, Frenchified beaux and fops, and a fashionable world gravitating to London.⁶⁰

Using Mirvan as a vehicle, Burney can seemingly reproduce common comic motifs while discretely maintaining her proper lady-author role, a technique which she achieves with the character of Mrs Selwyn. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Burney’s novel raises questions about types and functions of comedy, seeming to advocate a less offensive, but no less instructive form, which might be located in wider feminization debates. In this respect, the novel’s presentation of Mirvan’s robust unveiling of affectation runs the risk of deconstructing itself as a successful comedic strategy. Measured against some literary values which demanded appropriate relationships between subject and mode, and others which required satire ‘softened’ by sentiment, and instruction, it could be difficult to see what is to be gained by Mirvan’s antics, since neither Duval nor Lovel, the chief objects of his ‘sport’, are portrayed as modifying their behaviour.⁶¹ Were it not for its effect on the heroine, who is repulsed by Mirvan and moved by his abuse to engage more sympathetically with her grandmother, Mirvan’s rough humour would constitute nothing more than a futile abuse of power for egotistic pleasure.

In tune with Shaftesbury’s theories, therefore, Burney’s depictions give an optimistic spin to buffoonery, and even to violence, guiding the reader to find value in this kind of satire, even while it exposes its flaws. Such depictions allow the novel to question that an elite group of men can be relied upon to lead by example, and guard established values. Also in tune with Fordyce’s ideas on authority, Burney’s novel seems to represent a ‘declining age’ of degenerating manners and principles.⁶² But casting her principle narrator as a young woman, she moves the focus away from Christian men, to consider the effects of debased behaviour on women, when corrupted patriarchal values fail to preserve social concord and the well-being of the less powerful.

⁶⁰ Preface to ‘The Battle of the Books’ (1704) in *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, ed. by Angus Ross and David Woolley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, reiss. 2008), pp. 104-125 (p. 104).

⁶¹ In ‘An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition’ (written in 1764), Beattie criticizes contemporary tastes, and defends the severity of Juvenalian satire for its effectiveness in exposing crime, and Horatian satire for its exposure of social folly; for Beattie, appropriateness is key (p. 428).

⁶² Fordyce, ‘On a Manly Spirit, as Opposed to Cowardice’, p. 190.



Figure 4. The illustration faces p. 179 in the edition: *Evelina or, Female Life in London: Being the History of a Young Lady's Introduction to Fashionable Life, and the Gay Scenes of the Metropolis...* (London: Jones, 1822). Though dated 1822, the illustration also appears in a 'new edition' of the novel, published by Edward Mason, in 1821.

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4.3. Women Characters and Boundaries of Feeling

Critiquing the judgements which were passed on *Clarissa*, Sarah Fielding observed that ‘Love is the only Passion I should wish to be harboured in the gentle Bosom of a good Woman’.

Fielding’s comment reflects mainstream eighteenth-century views about women, and how their ‘softer’ passions should be to promote the ‘peace and harmony’ of familial relations which are not tainted by ‘Discord and ‘Perturbation’ of ‘Grudge or Envy’.⁶³ Such a definition of the feelings permitted to women accounts for the acceptance of novelistic depictions of their heroines’ awakening romantic affections, the love they feel for their family and friends, and the conflicts generated by such separate plains of feeling. Central to the educative purposes of many novels, especially after what Richetti and others have identified as a mid-century turn towards ‘the moral novel’, is an interest in developing boundaries of feeling experienced by female characters, and a recognition that crucial to the development of their subjectivity was an understanding of which feelings were to be permitted, but controlled.⁶⁴

Alluding to such boundaries in the title, *Framing Feeling*, Barbara Benedict’s work considers how ‘Sentimental fiction adheres to a dialectal structure that endorses yet edits the feelings’.⁶⁵ Although Benedict does not particularly focus on Burney’s fiction, such dichotomous attitudes to women, and feeling, partly explain why characters like Madame Duval in *Evelina* are criticized so overtly by the narratives, which figure them as antipathetic to all the heroines stand for. Such attitudes also explain why the passions of Mrs Delvile, in *Cecilia*, are depicted with greater sympathy, since she tries to control the violent feelings, which are mitigated further by their origin in her love of her family. To some extent, these characters also transgress traditionally feminine values by internalizing, and performing, a kind of patriarchal authority over the heroines. As discussion will demonstrate, however, Burney’s characterizations are more nuanced than such transgressions imply, testing the limits of the reader’s own sensitivity. First, the depiction of Madame Duval confronts sentimentalized assumptions which essentialized women as peace-weaving denizens of loving circles: Duval is portrayed as lacking the reasoning self-regulation, as well as the decorum of feeling, seen by many as informing family life.⁶⁶ However, Burney’s use of form is consequential, since it contributes to the sympathetic portrayal of Duval. Second, the depiction of Mrs Delvile in *Cecilia* presents the character as the site where violent affections compete, but portrays such affections as crucial to Mrs Delvile’s understanding of her son, and of herself. Thus the collisions of these characters with the heroines reveal the damaging effects of unregulated feelings, whilst contributing to the developing social affections of the heroines themselves.

⁶³ Fielding, *Remarks on Clarissa, Addressed to the Author: Occasioned by Some Critical Conversations on the Character and Conduct of that Work* (1749): <<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4919/pg4919.txt>>, [accessed 29 October 2010].

⁶⁴ Richetti, *The English Novel in History*, p. 198; see also: Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*, pp.75-77; Todd, *The Sign of Angellica*, pp.2-3; and Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story*, p. 147.

⁶⁵ Benedict, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Woman as peace-weaver is an ancient trope, evident in Old English verse, where the kenning ‘freoðu-webbe’ highlights the pacific function of women in marriage settlements, and also their conciliatory roles in warrior societies.

4.3.1. Madame Duval: ‘almost bursting with passion’

Madame Duval has not been viewed tolerantly by many of Burney’s readers and critics.⁶⁷ Even the early attacks on Burney’s novels cast her work in Duvalian terms. Devoney Looser has highlighted the rhetoric of old age in early criticism of *The Wanderer*, but overlooks the explicit evocation of Duval in the attacks. John Wilson Croker asserts that *The Wanderer* is ‘Evelina grown old’; but it is the image of Duval which Croker invokes to best convey his horror: ‘We have completed the portrait of an old coquette author who endeavours, by the wild tawdriness and laborious gaiety of her attire, to compensate for the loss of the natural charms of freshness, novelty, and youth’. Other critics also conjured images of Burney’s earlier character, when they condemned the author for her residence in France, or for forgetting ‘the common elegance of her native tongue’.⁶⁸ If Burney meant to ridicule Frenchified old age in her first novel, her creation certainly came back to haunt her. However, as my subsequent discussion will show, there are two levels of ‘text’ operating in the novel: one which invites the reader to view Duval through the lens of Mirvan’s xenophobic misogyny; and one which reflects the author’s more sympathetic position. Both levels are assimilated in Evelina’s narration, her own views becoming more explicitly aligned with the ethical perspective of the author, as she reflects on her grandmother’s emotional responses, in her letters.

The unruly figure of Captain Mirvan demonstrates that there is little difference between the kind of authority he embodies and some earlier, representatives of power, in that neither can be relied upon to preserve order, nor to generate conditions in which the vulnerable feel safe. The characterization of Madame Duval figures her as being potentially similarly empowered: Duval occupies a secure social position and has, by her move to France, allied herself with a prestigious culture. Returning to her homeland after several years, she takes the reins of leadership in her family, demanding their obedience to her will. But although Duval creates a new identity for herself by the trappings of wealth, her return is not triumphant. In the context of the easy, inherited affluence of the London *ton*, Madame Duval appears showy and vain. Further, Duval’s language and lack of propriety mark her as a woman who has not been assimilated into higher social ranks, the strange hybrid of her non-standard English and French presenting a strong barrier to her acceptance by the social elite. In the linguistic conditions of Burney’s novel also, Duval’s stigmatized manner and mode of speaking proclaim her moral deficiencies, deficiencies

⁶⁷ Martha G. Brown labels Duval ‘Evelina’s wicked “stepmother”’: see ‘Fanny Burney’s “Feminism”: Gender or Genre?’ in *Fetter’d or Free?* ed. by Schofield and Macheski, pp. 29-39 (p. 33); in *Designing Women* (p. 213), Chico argues that Duval embodies the antidressing-room, whose ‘violent transformations render her comic’; commenting on the function of Mirvan in the novel, Staves suggests that those who are punished, deserve to be: ‘*Evelina*; or Female Difficulties’, p. 378; Thaddeus reads Duval as a character who ‘does not fear sexual assault’ (46), who does not ‘elicit sympathy’, and whose accident is presented as farce (45); in ‘Quelling the French Threat’, Maunu aligns herself with Doody in arguing that the jokes against Duval go too far, but sees Duval as a ‘bawdy old woman’ who is ‘the most frightening force in the novel’ (101): Maunu’s comments that Duval is figured as ‘foul’ and ‘almost monstrous’ (102) are in the context of her argument that the character represents Burney’s own fear of France. My argument concedes that Duval represents *contemporary* fears of France – not necessarily Burney’s; after all, in the same novel, Burney presents Monsieur Du Bois sympathetically.

⁶⁸ [John Wilson Croker], a review of *The Wanderer*, *Quarterly Review*, 11, April 1814, 123-130 (pp. 125-126); unsigned review, ‘*The Wanderer* by Frances Burney’ in *British Critic* n.s., 1 (1814), p. 353; cited in Devoney Looser, ‘Women, Old Age, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel’, in *Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. by Paula Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia, pp. 299-320 (p. 307 and p. 308).

which are not so much credited to her confidence, vanity and Francophilia, as to her insensitivity, her selfishness and her anti-social propensities.

There is therefore some discrepancy between the characteristics which are satirized and punished by Mirvan, and explored and criticized by the narrative, and this contributes to the ambiguity in the presentation of Duval. This ambiguity is developed further because Duval is a 'tyrant' and a victim, empowered but not really powerful beyond her family circle, deceiving but not convincing, comic and pathetic. Ultimately, she tests the limits of the reader's sensitivity, and contributes to the developing social affections of the heroine, whose pity and remorse at her own collusion in the captain's 'sport' are a measure of her acquiring a practical morality, which equips her with rigorous critical insights into her own and other's actions. There is no doubt that most instances of Duval's impoliteness arise from her failure to keep her own feelings in check. However, Madame Duval tends to be reactive rather than proactive in her violent mood swings, forming a contrast to Captain Mirvan and his provocative jests. Further, Madame Duval has a sociability, and a capacity to enjoy the entertainments of London which the antisocial Captain lacks. Unlike Captain Mirvan, Madame Duval wields her power for the material gain of her family, her wider purpose being to see the marriage of Evelina to Branghton junior, in order to unite their silversmith wealth with Evelina's newly acquired fortune. Such characterization details allow Burney to engage with contemporary philosophical debates concerning the objects of sympathy, resulting in Madame Duval emerging as a figure who deserves Evelina's (and the reader's) sympathy, while Captain Mirvan does not.

Evelina is structured so that we are introduced to Madame Duval through the letters exchanged between Lady Howard and Mr Villars. Lady Howard's letter condemns Duval for being 'vulgar and illiterate' (isolating her speech by italics), and for her 'most unnatural behaviour' (8), using such ethically loaded modifiers as 'wickedly', to charge such judgements with Christian signification. In Letter II we read Mr Villars' endorsement of Lady Howard's depictions, his own comments on Madame Duval's tyranny and rage, and her strange fits of remorse which effect no redemption, preparing us for a character of violent passions and unpredictable responses (11). Such exchanges function as an unequivocal condemnation of Duval, which is echoed less explicitly by Evelina when first meeting her grandmother: 'O, Sir, to discover so near a relation in a woman who had thus introduced herself!' (43). These initial letters, then, draw attention to correlations of morals, language, and emotion, existing in the cultural context in which Burney wrote.

Lady Howard's responses to language accord with Evelina's, whose rather snobbish paraphrases and comments accommodate ideas on language appropriated by the author. We therefore often view Duval's language through the lens of Evelina's author-sanctioned narration, which reproduces Duval's 'vulgar', and therefore impolite speech. This speech is out of tune with the polite discourse of Evelina's preferred circle. In Jacob L. Mey's study of what makes fictional voices seem real, he emphasizes 'the way characters and voices match up, both with each other and with the *conditions of existence* that the author had laid down in the narrative universe of his or her creation'. The conditions of existence in Burney's novel presuppose a standard speech

variety; thus the very choices of Duval's speech produce what Mey (paraphrasing Michael Toolan) calls a 'clashing voice', which marginalizes her in the world of the novel.⁶⁹ This is largely achieved by her use of French terms and grammar constructions, as when she exclaims on numerous occasions '*Ma foi!*' or uses the double negative. However, many instances of her non-standard grammar formations cannot be explained by the influence of French. For example, her use of superlative adjectives is sometimes clumsy, as when she says 'it's the tiresomest thing in the world' (49) and 'this is the most provokingest part of all' (175); or when she fails to employ concord in her use of verbs, as when she muses, 'Well, the worse pickle we was in' (62). To some extent, Duval's non-standard grammar could be seen as highlighting her lowly class origins and poor education, and this certainly seems to have been what Burney originally foregrounded when drafting the novel. Evident from a manuscript version of the novel is the focus on Duval's social background, as Evelina observes

To be sure, nothing can sound so extraordinary than to hear anyone extolling
politeness, & inveighing against ill-breeding in such language as poor Madame
Duval makes use of. Her long residence in France seems to have made the speaking
English a difficulty to her for she is often at a loss for words & stammers terribly;
[...] I fancy her acquaintance abroad cannot be in very high life, for farther
improvement might have been aimed at by her moving to Paris.⁷⁰

The manuscript version offers some explanation for Duval's weak language skills – weak by French standards too, because of her class and her provincial existence; further, the description of her as 'poor Madame Duval' conveys pity for the apparent disadvantages of her life. However, the explanation is omitted from the first and subsequent editions of the novel, bringing to the fore the lack of politeness in Duval's discourse, without reference to mitigating circumstances. What is left at the end of the printed paragraph is the comment 'But nothing can be more strangely absurd, than to hear politeness recommended in language so repugnant to it as that of Madame Duval' (55-56). Without the class-based explanation, we are left with the implication that Duval's moral and linguistic deviances are essential rather than circumstantial.

Much of Madame Duval's impoliteness arises because she is abrasive and emotional, but also because she speaks so much, aspects of her conversation which conflict with the heroine's own preferred behaviour for women. Duval dominates most of the scenes in which she appears, and thereby clashes with the egocentricity of the Captain. Conduct advice stipulating modest reserve for ladies was commonly aimed at the young. However, older women also were expected to control their contributions to conversations, and those who ignored such social expectations in order to shine were treated with distrust. In the world created by the novel, Lady Howard, Mrs

⁶⁹ Jacob L. Mey, *When Voices Clash: A Study of Literary Pragmatics*, Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 115, general ed. Werner Winter (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter 1999), p. vii; Mey paraphrases Michael J. Toolan in *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction* (London: Routledge 1988; reiss. 1994) who coined the phrase 'voice clash' (p. 129) which Mey describes 'as a synonym to "dialogism"' (vii); Mey develops the idea of clashing voices as a 'universe of narration, [...] a fictitious "reality"' which has to be realistic (in non theoretical terms): 'the characters must be consistent, both with themselves throughout the story and with each other in their respective dealings', p. 189.

⁷⁰ Berg Collection, the New York Public Library, a box marked E1; this page is marked '13'.

Beaumont, and Evelina's adored Mrs Mirvan measure their utterances carefully, allowing others to share conversational space. Madame Duval, like Mrs Selwyn, refuses to let anyone dominate, and enjoys talking herself. Thus it can be seen that simply by talking so much, Madame Duval was considered to be breaking the rules of politeness, as they applied to women.

In this respect, the textual levels mentioned earlier might be seen as merging, Evelina's notions of female behaviour corresponding with Mirvan's. Such a blurring of textual levels has led some critics to suggest that Evelina takes up the male gaze in the novel.⁷¹ However, key to Evelina's view is the concept of decorum. She herself hates being excluded from conversation as much as she dislikes being thrust into the foreground, the shared space of conversational floor being presented as the ideal mean of social intercourse. In contrast, Mirvan seems to object to women being given any conversational space at all. This intratextual dialogue, or 'collision' on the subject of women's speech is also intertextual, Mirvan's perspective being discursively well-represented at the time Burney created his character.

Stephen H. Brown has argued that many eighteenth-century works, written in a tradition of misogynistic satire, conditioned their audiences and habituated responses, so that readers accepted that women deserved to be punished if talking too much.⁷² Read in the context of Brown's study, Madame Duval's sousing and symbolic scalping can be seen as an attenuated form of the tongue mutilations performed on talkative women, and recorded in earlier texts. Brown's reference to Juvenal's *Sixth Satire* reflects the long line of textual references to the disruptive loquacity of women's speech, evoking by classical association the myth of Philomela whose tongue was cut out after she was raped. In Burney's novel, there is no physical rape, and there is no silencing of Madame Duval, who rises from the waters after her immersion, demanding justice and revenge. Nevertheless, in the creation of Madame Duval, Burney drew on a long tradition of misogyny which figured older women as vocal, vain, and ignorant, and these qualities in Duval become Mirvan's chief targets.

Fielding's Mrs Slipslop in *Joseph Andrews* (1742), Smollett's Tabitha Bramble in *Humphry Clinker* (1771), and R. B. Sheridan's Mrs Malaprop in *The Rivals* (1775) are all women of a certain age, distinguished by their poor elocutionary skills and desperation to find a husband. Presented as ridiculous on both accounts, these characters are held up for further scorn because of the authority and power which they exert in their households, especially over the freedom of the younger generation to live, and love, how they please. In addition, Burney's working of this character type exploits contemporary attitudes to the French aristocracy, which credited its women with intelligence, wit, and therefore authorized loquacity – an informed sociability which David Hume, writing in the middle of the century, wished to see transposed to British soil. But attitudes to such models of femininity were mixed, especially after the impact of the Seven Years

⁷¹ Chico, p. 213.

⁷² Stephen H. Brown, 'Satirizing Women's Speech in Eighteenth-Century England', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 22.3 (1992), 22-29, p. 20; Brown provides some examples: 'Different Classes of Female Orators' in *Spectator*, 247 (1711) alludes to the work of Ovid as a moral story, telling how a woman's tongue was cut out but continued to murmur on the ground where it was discarded (p.3); the *Plain Dealer*, n.s., 7 (1756) includes a story of a gagged boy who learned to express himself with his eyes, the narrative voice advising women to learn to do the same, becoming dumb; and a story in the *Oxford Magazine* told of an experiment going wrong, when a woman's tongue was slit, her consequent talkativeness ruining the life of her husband; see Brown, pp. 23-24.

War with France.⁷³ By the next decade, such high-profile, vocal women would be blamed by writers of various political persuasions for the conditions giving rise to the Revolution in France: even Burke, writing in 1790, associated former despotism with 'painted and gilded tyranny'; and as Hannah Arendt has argued, 'revolutionary ideologies tended to see the *ancien régime* as theatrical, a pantomime of overdressed luxury and of moral and political duplicity'.⁷⁴ Madame Duval's embrace of French culture, and her lauding of French *politesse*, aligns her with cultural values which were questioned as false, despotic and corrupt by the time Burney drafted her first novel. What opens Duval to further criticism, is the class pretentiousness underpinning her national choices. Of a lowly English background herself, Duval has materially improved herself by her marriages. Such social transformations align her with pretentious characters discussed in Chapter 2. Like these characters also, Duval has remained grasping and egotistical, though her newfound wealth has also made her volatile and dictatorial. In addition, Duval's outspokenness and authoritarian approach equip her with what we have seen to be unregulated masculine propensities, a gendered aspect of her characterization evident in the 1779 illustration (figure 3), which represents the figure of Duval with a man's head. These qualities might be seen to contribute to Duval's combative way of life in which she fails to exercise her newly established authority with benevolence and responsibility.

Nevertheless, Evelina's letters record how she learns to see the individual beneath cultural stereotypes, and beneath the comic stereotype of 'the old belle-dame' established by Mirvan. And Mirvan's efforts to reduce Duval to a clownish spectacle are undercut by a growing sympathy in Evelina, a mark of her developing an active morality. Evelina begins to refer to her grandmother as 'poor Madame Duval' in Letter XVI of Volume I, when the latter has endured a troublesome coach journey with Captain Mirvan, and is avoided by everyone except Evelina (48). Mirvan's subsequent schemes make Evelina uneasy, though she does not foil the Captain's plans. Nevertheless, the climax of Mirvan's cruelty sees an increase in Evelina's sympathy for her grandmother, her account foregrounding her feelings, but also giving much narrative space to a compassionate depiction of Madame Duval's accident. The incident begins in the second letter of Volume II, the sympathetic presentation highlighting Duval's fear for the fate of Monsieur Du Bois, and her determination to rescue him from the county gaol (115). The enormity of the conspiracy against Duval is made clear by Evelina's suspicion that Lady Howard knows all, but by some 'tacit agreement between her and the Captain' does nothing in order to preserve her own dignity (117). Evelina is 'quite ashamed of being engaged in so ridiculous an affair' (118), the word 'ridiculous' registering the fact that she is, at this point, not fully aware of the violence which has been planned. As the plan unfolds and the coach loses its way, Madame Duval's 'uneasiness' gives Evelina 'much concern', and it is 'with the utmost difficulty' that she forebears revealing all (119). After the attack, Evelina writes 'I could not forgive myself for

⁷³ Burney's own portrayal of English female conversationalists in her play, *The Witlings* (begun in 1779) was sufficiently ambivalent for Mr Crisp to fear for its reception.

⁷⁴ Cited in Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment*, p. 158 and p. 84.

having passively suffered the deception' and even forgives her grandmother when she slaps her, 'her extreme agitation, and real suffering, soon dispelled my anger' (122).

Evelina's account of Duval's sufferings does not draw a veil over her physical humiliation, an indication that Burney also wanted to exploit its comic potential. At this point in the account we see Duval through the rather detached filter of Evelina's viewpoint, as she notes the roped ankles, the torn clothes, and filth. This may be read as a comic spectacle; after all, it appears that it is only Duval's outfit which is damaged: 'Her head-dress had fallen off; her linen was torn; her negligee had not a pin left in it; her petticoats she was obliged to hold on [...] her face was really horrible, for the pomatum and powder from her head, and the dust from the road, were quite *pasted* on her skin by her tears, which with her *rouge*, made so frightful a mixture, that she hardly looked human' (122). Contributing to the spectacle further is the violence of Duval's response, her 'almost bursting with passion' and 'actually beat[ing] the ground with her hands' (121). At this stage then, the account seems to suggest that Duval's reactions and appearance dehumanize her, and as such she draws little sympathy from the narrator, the implication being that a woman forfeits compassion when she gives in to rage. However, the passage may also be read as a reflection of Evelina's innocence, accounting for her failure to perceive signs of more serious aggression in her grandmother's ravaged appearance; read against the grain of Evelina's naïve account, the torn linen, ripped pins, and loosened petticoats could signify a rape.

However, when Madame Duval calms down, the account gives her space to reveal what happened – authorial reward perhaps for the control she regains over her emotions, but also a mark of the heroine's evolving sympathy. As Duval tells her own story of the attack, it becomes clear that a rape did not take place. Nevertheless, her account is lengthy and moving, her disjointed English conveying a sincerity in the telling and underlining her vulnerability:

'I verily thought he'd have murdered me. He was as strong as a lion; I was no more in his hands than a child. But I believe never nobody was so abused before, for he dragged me down the road, pulling and hawling [sic] me all the way, as if I'd no more feeling than a horse.' (123)

At the same time there is a hint of double entendre in the description:

'So, when I told him I had no money, he fell to jerking me again, just as if he had but that moment begun! And, after that, he got me close by a tree, and out of his pocket he pulls a great cord! — It's a wonder I did not swoon away!' (124)

The suggestiveness of Duval's unwitting phrases call to mind Tabitha Bramble's injudicious spellings. For many readers, however, the brutality with which Duval is treated is more disturbing than comic, the ambiguity being evident in Evelina's coda, which distances her from Mirvan's vocabulary: 'Though this narrative almost compelled me to laugh, yet I was really irritated with the Captain, for carrying his love of tormenting — *sport* he calls it, — to such

barbarous and unjustifiable extremes' (124). Crucially, as she *reflects* on the incident at the end of her letter, she resolves that should Mirvan 'make any new efforts to molest [Madame Duval], [she] can by no means consent to be passive'.

Using incidents such as this, Burney explores how the reflecting subject can learn from the unnatural affections and violent responses of others. Moving the point of learning from the arena of amicable collisions which polish off rough sides, to what Wollstonecraft would describe as 'rough toils and useful struggles' to 'dignify the mind', Burney demonstrates how the moral faculties of her heroine are developed by her *not* being protected and guarded from disturbing situations, or even from incidents of 'real violence'.⁷⁵ In many ways, also, Burney's handling of the Mirvan and Duval episodes tests the reader's capacity for sympathy, our laughter or our horror proclaiming the level of our social affections.

4.3.2. Mrs Delvile: harnessing 'primeval brilliancy'

Feeling is treated differently in *Cecilia*, the novel's representation of suppressed affections as damaging, and of expressed 'emotions' as cathartic and enlightening, reflecting aspects of both moral sense and Romantic philosophy. In *Cecilia*, intensity of feeling is rarely represented as inappropriately displayed personal responses, as social embarrassments, or as prompts to make the reader smile. More commonly, strongly felt emotions such as rage are presented as terrifying and momentous, as responses which have the potential to disrupt social concord and create havoc, but which also have crucial repercussions for the characters involved. In *Evelina*, the characters of Mirvan and Duval are fixed in a pattern of behaviour, and we are left with the impression at the close of the novel that neither character has changed since the opening letters. In Burney's second novel, disruptive emotional responses are shown to play a significant part in the developing subjectivity of the protagonists, but also of figures who are close to them.

Cecilia is the only Burney novel where the hero and heroine struggle to contain their romantic passion, Delvile persuading Cecilia to enter a secret marriage.⁷⁶ Indeed, in *Cecilia* feelings run high in the novel at all levels of society. Cecilia's guardians cannot get the level of their emotions right: Mr Briggs is introduced 'in a furious passion' (93); Mr Harrel cannot control his despair, blowing out his brains in a ghoulish gesture, against the backdrop of gaiety at Vauxhall Gardens. Hot-headed young men like Sir Robert Foyer and Mr Belfield, vie for Cecilia's attention, the latter being gravely wounded in a duel ignited by a physical collision at the theatre. Even the idealized Mrs Hill, who begs Cecilia for help in settling Harrel's bills, sobs 'out her thanks with a violence of emotion that frightened Cecilia almost as much as it melted her' (87). As I shall discuss in Chapter 5, such extremes of feeling are contrasted with excessive

⁷⁵ *Vindication*, 'Observations on the Extent to which Women are Reduced', p. 53 (Wollstonecraft's fn); and 'On Unfair Distinctions in Society', p. 149; for Doody's reference to violence see *Frances Burney, the Life in the Work*, p. 48.

⁷⁶ Some later novelists allowed their heroines to have greater control over their feelings, avoiding the ignominy of secret agreements: the heroine in Brunton's *Self Control* (1810) resists the importunities of her insistent suitor; and in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) it is Lucy Steele, not Elinor Dashwood, who enters a secret engagement with Edward Ferrars.

control of emotions, hidden calculations which the narrative condemns as self-serving artifices.

Thus the narrative of *Cecilia* highlights the benefits to be gained from emotions by certain individuals, distinguishing those who reflect on their affective experience from those, like Mirvan and Duval in *Evelina*, who do not. An example of the former is Mrs Delvile, the wife of one of Cecilia's guardians, and the mother of the man whom Cecilia will marry. Burney defended her character against Samuel Crisp's criticism, asserting that her intention was 'to shew how the greatest virtues & excellencies may be totally obscured by the indulgence of violent passion'. Nevertheless, Mrs Delvile emerges sympathetically in the novel, which presents her extreme affective responses as enabling, and not divorced from her reason.⁷⁷

Mrs Delvile is an ambiguous figure whose appearance in the novel is relatively late. She is judged by Cecilia's friend, Mrs Harrel, as being even 'more proud and haughty' than her husband (148). However Burney's characterization makes it rapidly clear that Mrs Delvile is a 'progenitrix of social affections'.⁷⁸ Mindful of polite forms, and the propriety of affective engagement, Mrs Delvile greets Cecilia cordially when she visits for tea, a friendly gesture which immediately distinguishes Mrs Delvile from her husband's formality. Cecilia's subsequent impressions are favourable, and physiognomic indications bode well: Mrs Delvile is a faded beauty whose 'carriage is lofty and commanding'; her eyes evince a 'primeval brilliancy', the word 'primeval' suggesting an instinctive natural force (155). The abstract concept 'brilliancy' is more difficult to locate, perhaps connoting the spark of her innate passions, or the illumination of her enlightened mind; the ambiguity is significant, suggesting some internal contradiction, or even tension, and accounts for the different critical responses which the character has provoked.⁷⁹ However, the narrative passes over possible ambivalences to describe how 'each saw in the other, an immediate prepossession in her favour; and from the moment that they met, they seemed instinctively impelled to admire' (155). Thus, in spite of the suffocating restraint of the Delvile household, each woman recognizes a kindred spirit in the other, responding with their own moral sense, with an intuitive accord which never changes.⁸⁰

As the introduction of Mrs Delvile comes to a close, Cecilia tries to 'read' her conversation as an indicator of her character and worth, finding her 'high spirited, gifted by

⁷⁷ For Burney's letter to Samuel Crisp, 15 March, 1782, see *Diary and Letters*, I, 272; Burney's description of Madame de Poix, 22-24 April, 1802, reflects her engagement with her fictional character, as she describes de Poix as having 'bright piercing Eyes & the most pleasing remains of beauty; her manner is vivacious, striking & highly agreeable; her speech has a rapidity that does not seem the mere effect of female volubility & love of prate, but of quick ideas, which demand immediate vent, because others are crowding upon them, which insist on making way. Her civility was of the most distinguished & elegant sort [...]. She soon slipped the discourse to *Cecilia*; but with an adroitness of turning every way but towards me, that prevented it's being oppressive – I was not, I own, much surprised to find, by what I observed of her, that the character with which she seemed most deeply impressed was that of Mrs Delvile.' Burney likes de Poix immensely, and the link to Mrs Delvile is a compliment: see *JAL*, v, 266.

⁷⁸ For discussion of the type of the mother, or female guardian of the household, see Barker-Benfield, pp. 217-218; parts of the following discussion are based on analysis in my M. Res. dissertation, though much of the argument and some secondary material here are new.

⁷⁹ In her introduction to *Cecilia*, Doody describes Mrs Delvile as 'seething with the discontent of many years' and 'repressed', p. xxvii; in *The Iron Pen*, Epstein describes her as an overwhelming mother-figure' (170) who is 'imperious' (188) but 'blighted by muteness' (145), the violence to her body the result of 'emotional violation' (90); Cutting classes Delvile as a rebel, along with Lady Honoria and others: see 'Defiant Women', p. 521; Jill Campbell sees her as an authentic voice positioned in the novel to contrast with the meaningless 'rattle' of Lady Honoria: see 'Domestic Intelligence: Newspaper Advertising and the Eighteenth-Century Novel', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15.2 (2002), 251-291 (p. 277).

⁸⁰ Even during the difficult discussions concerning Cecilia and Mortimer's relationship, Mrs Delvile calls Cecilia, 'daughter of my mind' (636).

nature with superior talents, and polished by education and study with all the elegant embellishments of cultivation' (160). The combination of natural, spirited talents, and elegant embellishments cultured by education, reflects Shaftesbury's ideas of politeness, developed at the start of the century. Thus Mrs Delvile is rapidly characterized as someone who negotiates the contrasting demands of her husband's traditional beliefs and formalities, her own high spirits, and her predilection for her son's more enlightened views. We can therefore see that Mrs Delvile's apparent ambiguity is the result of her being located at the intersection of conflicting codes or value systems. Her alliance with her husband's views mark her as untouched by ideas relating to women's intellectual and moral autonomy; nevertheless, her adherence to his principles makes her remote and terrifying. Her high-spirited gifts of nature are kept in check by her polish and cultivation. These dichotomous duties, beliefs and impulses are played out in Mrs Delvile's personality, and are demonstrated in her changing conversational styles which switch speech codes and register her emotions. The speech style which will eventually emerge, however, after she is silenced by her illness, will confirm her status in the novel as one who, but for 'her vehemence', 'has every great quality to dignify human nature' (820).

The conversations dramatizing the internal tensions of Mrs Delvile's mind also develop external conflicts between herself, Cecilia, Mortimer Delvile, and her husband. During the first of these interchanges, when Mrs Delvile tries to influence Cecilia against Mortimer's regard, she expresses a desire to hold her authority in check, and to speak with sincerity (635). However, the different registers and structures of her language suggest that Mrs Delvile is controlling her own responses, and subjugating her instinctive knowledge to the principles of her husband. Some of her utterances are hyper correct, formally authoritative and even uttered with 'coldest politeness' (634). At some points her grammatical structures project the balance of a reasonable mind, 'Not therefore to your name are we averse, but simply to our own more partial' (640). Yet her discourse is also infused with emotion: when she describes her relationship with the young people, she speaks 'with eagerness', and occasionally exclaims; her tenderness for her son is evidently powerful (636), and her maternal warmth overflows to Cecilia ('Heaven bless you, my love!'), as she becomes confident of Cecilia's 'innate sense of right' (637).

However, the shift in register to greater informality and personal warmth when expressing her own feelings is offset by a drift to rhetoric as Mrs Delvile names herself as the representative of her husband, speaking now with 'the common voice, common opinion and common address' of her family (638). Loaded with traditional associations of artifice and egocentric motivation, Mrs Delvile's rhetoric marks her desire to exert her will over her audience.⁸¹ Such a reading of Mrs Delvile's speech at this point in the novel is supported by her use of a lexicon usually associated with Mr Delvile, defining honour and duty as the 'blood', 'ancestry' and generations of 'our house', the switch from 'my' to 'our' signifying the shift in her position. The words chosen to signify the principal values of the Delvile common voice are given the figurative impact of prosopopoeia,

⁸¹ Rhetorical persuasiveness was seen by some as an act of egotism, to assert the needs of self over another, and therefore to be distrusted: see McGinn, pp. 77-78.

‘There are yet other demands to which we must attend, demands which ancestry and blood call upon us aloud to ratify! Such claimants are not to be neglected with impunity; they assert their rights with the authority of prescription, they forbid us alike either to bend to inclination, or stoop to interest, and from generation to generation their injuries will call out for redress.’ (639-640)

These ‘demands’, which call out through the speech of Mrs Delvile, have suppressed her own moral sense. Having recognized the affinity of feeling between herself and Cecilia, she seeks to superimpose her own dutiful values on the younger woman.⁸² With the confidence of age and rank, she assumes that her values are superior, naming Cecilia’s moral sense ‘right and good’ only when it accords with her own convictions. At this stage, then, Mrs Delvile thinks that she is speaking with a sincerity which will lead to a greater good; but it is a sincerity founded as much on a misreading of Cecilia as on a neglect of her own intuitive insights.

Further misreadings are evident in the confrontation between Mrs Delvile and her son, Mortimer. This interaction offers an intimate view of a family row, where speakers fight for conversational space, and are acutely aware of what should or should not be said in front of a third party, Cecilia.⁸³ As such, it conveys a sense of Goffman’s ‘backstage’ authenticity, where the sign vehicles of everyday life are disposed of, and speakers interact with more concern for a personal than a social performance. Thus, during the conflict, the inconsistency at the heart of Mrs Delvile’s beliefs is reflected in her changing speech patterns. She delivers her judgement with the finality of a verdict, ‘Forget not that what I have told you is irrevocable’, and she maintains a calm detachment in response to Mortimer’s ‘more violent’ outbursts (671). However, Mortimer’s refusal to comply with his mother’s wishes drives away the formalities of her chairmanship of the meeting, and she is forced to admonish him for his violation of conversational rules, demanding why he ‘interrupt[s] Miss Beverley in the only speech [he] ought to hear from her’ (672). Mrs Delvile recoils from the manner as well as the content of Mortimer’s words, equating his values and feelings with a kind of madness. She devalues Mortimer and Cecilia’s love, over-writing it as short-lived lust, ‘a passion built on such a defalcation of principle’ as will ‘render’ Mortimer unworthy (673). Paradoxically, her language to Cecilia is extremely complimentary: she is an ‘angel’, and ‘an excellent young creature’ who exercises virtue (674). Mortimer notes the inconsistency, pointing out his mother’s acknowledgement of Cecilia’s ‘perfections’, and the ‘greatness of mind’ which is like her own (674); but he does not realise that his mother is failing to shore up her own instinctive appreciation of Cecilia’s goodness with her dutiful vocalization of her husband’s values. Indeed, as the conflict escalates, she promotes, like some *idée fixe*, the idea of lineage and blood, reviving her earlier metaphor to invoke the power of ancestry, when she demands, ‘How will the blood of your wronged ancestors rise into your guilty cheeks, and how will your heart throb with

⁸² Mrs Delvile uses Cecilia’s compliance as a model of womanly virtue: ‘See how greatly a woman can act, when stimulated by generosity and a just sense of duty!’ (660)

⁸³ At one point Cecilia ‘is confounded’ at the intimate language which Delvile uses in the presence of his mother (672).

secret shame and reproach, when wished joy upon your marriage by name of *Mr. Beverley*' (677). Her series of rhetorical questions, and accusatory use of the pronoun 'you', isolate Mortimer from the solidarity of 'we' used earlier, so that he is 'stung to the soul' and silenced. As Mortimer rallies and defends his code of honour as love for Cecilia, Mrs Delvile also registers the clash of values in 'the encreasing disturbance of her soul' which, manifesting itself in grief and 'horror next to frenzy', sets her brain 'on fire'. Before her dramatic collapse, her final words, 'the security of the honour of my family', indicate that she is still harking on blood and lineage, and it is significant that her mouth is literally filled with blood shortly after this utterance (680).

This event has been read by some as the violent and passionate consequence of a will that refuses to be pliant; a psychoanalytical reading might see it as the outcome of repressed passions, an approach which accords with Jill Campbell's account of the 'truth of the suffering body', the blood registering 'the depths of Mrs Delvile's passions'. However, the reading here locates Mrs Delvile's illness in eighteenth-century moral philosophy and scientific theories which overlapped in their discussion of sensibility.⁸⁴ Having registered the compelling truth of Cecilia's goodness, and the rightness of Mortimer's love, in the 'disturbance of her soul', Mrs Delvile registers it also in her body and language, literally choking on the blood which has subjugated her own understanding, so that she can no longer be the mouth-piece of her husband's codes. Such a reading promotes the view that Burney was conscious of hegemonic and patriarchal power speaking through individuals in various ranks. In *Cecilia* the identification of hegemony with patriarchy is made clear by subsequent events; Mrs Delvile defends Cecilia to Mr Delvile with 'all the confidence of similar virtue' (815), and then agrees a 'separate consent' (819).

Recognizing the 'blindness of vanity' of her previous arguments, she uses words which echo Mortimer's earlier valuation of her strictures as 'worthless vanity', a semantic echo which suggests that she has been impressed by his principles. Further, she accepts that her imposition of the Delvile values on her son was an act of egotism which was wrong: 'I will no longer play the tyrant that, weighing good and evil by my own feelings and opinions, insist upon his acting by the notions I have formed' (817). This admission suggests that her benevolence is liberated by her separation from her husband and that her own moral sense now allows her to view the goodness of Cecilia and Mortimer without the complications created by Mr Delvile's values.

In Mrs Delvile, the novel offers an anomaly, a flawed figure whose values are adjusted during the course of the narrative. In addition, she is the only authority figure who learns from the young people she sets out to guide and influence. The novel presents as a mark of her worth, a capacity to recognize her errors and use her newly acquired self-knowledge to help others, her ultimate act of benevolence being her 'separate consent'. The violence of the character's emotional responses is neither condemned nor ridiculed by descriptive effects, and the plotting of the narrative makes it clear that extremity of feeling leading to her convulsive attack is a cathartic

⁸⁴ Cutting, 'Defiant Women', p. 521; Doody, *Frances Burney: the Life in the Work*, p. 139; Jill Campbell, p. 277; George Cheyne, *The English Malady; or, A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of all Kinds, as Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Spirits, Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Distempers &c* (London: George Risk, George Ewing and William Smith, 1733); for a discussion of this and other scientific tracts which drew on moral philosophy, see Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, p. 19.

experience, a blood letting which is to be seen as a cleansing, leading to new insights and personal freedoms. Thus, the scene in which Mrs Delvile breaks away from the restrictions of polite codes, especially as they apply to women, and casts off authoritarian patrilineality, is also the scene where repressed emotions are released, and the relationship between mother and son is cleansed. In this respect, the novel's sympathetic presentation of extreme affections is closer to Blakean ways of seeing social relations through the lens of feeling, than views associated with earlier, Augustan decorum.

Mrs Delvile's convulsive attack raises some interesting questions for this study. If, as I argue, Burney's novels represent prominent eighteenth-century views that words are signifiers of the mind, what does Mrs Delvile's blood-soaked silence signify? It invites inference. Thus her silence might be read as a vacuum, a space, giving her time to think, to process the views of her son, so that when she speaks again, she can articulate new responses to his proposed marriage. Mrs Delvile's collapse is not the 'sickly sensibility' of a Dr Primrose, rendering her unable to act in a crisis purely because of repression of instinct; rather her collapse is the climax of her acting too much, interfering in a business which should have been left to the autonomy of the young people.⁸⁵ This has implications for her own autonomy and stability; for if she exchanges her husband's views for her son's, how can this be seen as exercising autonomy? Burney herself seems to have been aware of this conundrum. Reluctant to have her character passively exchange one set of male-formulated views for another, she assigns to Mortimer Delvile an attempted explanation, as he muses that his mother has always maintained 'an independent mind, always judged for herself, and refused all other arbitration'; when Mrs Delvile left in anger, her husband's 'will happened to be her's, [sic] and thence their concurrence'. Mortimer describes his father as 'immoveable and stern'; but his mother, 'generous as fiery, and noble as proud, is open to conviction' (819-820). Reluctant perhaps to assign Mortimer the view developed here, that his father's will spoke through Mrs Delvile, Burney nevertheless depicts Delvile senior as the willing receptacle of invasive prejudices which sit comfortably with his own ossified views on lineage. In contrast, Mrs Delvile's mind is 'open' and active. Equipped with a stable moral sense which is receptive to other ideas, and a reflecting mind, able to process those ideas, Mrs Delvile exercises her sympathy, activated by her feelings, as well as her intellect, in order to develop her responses. Such a Humean pairing maintains Shaftesburean goals of social interaction, but tilts the axis of discourse towards the affections and the passions, an angle not incompatible with Romantic perspectives.

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⁸⁵ John A. Dussinger discusses the debilitating effects of sensibility in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, arguing that Primrose's 'sickly sensibility' and repression of instincts weakens his body and his mind so that at crisis points he cannot act. Dussinger links Primrose's fainting fits to contemporary nerve theory, concluding that he is 'an authority figure in the Establishment, without real authority'. This offers an alternative view to the one developed here, which argues that Mrs Delvile proclaims her authority, and is strengthened to do so by her collapse: see *The Discourse of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p. 151 and p. 152.

The dramatization of social interactions in Burney's fiction allowed her to support the Shaftesburean view that social contact was crucial for the activation of the moral faculties. At the same time, her novels undercut his optimism by their refusal to shy away from discomforting scenes: scenes of inappropriate emotional display, of verbal sparring, and even physical violence – where the 'unnatural affections' criticized by Shaftesbury are *not* regulated, but run riot and offend. But such scenes demonstrate Burney's own optimism that *all* experience, no matter its nature, can contribute to the moral intelligence of the reflecting subject. Further, Burney's fiction reconfigures moral agency to include women as well as men, allotting women a participating role in civic order in a way which did not seem to have occurred to, and may even have been resisted by Shaftesbury. It is true that at the end of the novels, the heroines are all assigned a domestic life, in the country; but this is after their adventures in the world. The point of the plotting is that their encounters have helped educate, and broaden them, allowing them to make an informed choice. Further, it is not to be assumed that their removal to the country is a form of retreat. The reader might just as easily imagine them exercising their virtue among their rural neighbours as prolonging their urban encounters – an issue Austen flagged up in *Pride and Prejudice* when she has Mrs Bennet defend the country to Mr Darcy. Thus, the principles of behaviour and feeling (and their signified moral codes) defined by Shaftesbury and other thinkers as the hallmark of an enlightened society, are shown to be not the birthright of any particular class or gender. Burney's fiction democratizes the moral, social and political qualities associated with politeness. In tune with late eighteenth-century egalitarian notions that 'every individual is a world in itself', Burney's fiction suggests that anyone might be gifted with capacities for reflection, and therefore with the potential for benevolence, and refinement of feeling, responding, and conversing.⁸⁶

Characters prone to extremes of feeling make it possible for Burney to explore which feelings were sanctioned, and allowed to operate within polite codes, and which were relegated, gendered, or relativized by context. Foregrounding the ethical significance of the emotions, Burney's novels nevertheless promote the role of memory, reflection, and rational conversation as ways of evaluating, controlling and processing the lessons provided by affective responses. Such a movement establishes Burney's Romantic sympathies, and highlights the continuities of such sympathies with aspects of earlier moral sense thought. In common with works of other novelists, Burney's fiction stirs emotions in the reader too. Modern philosophers like Martha Nussbaum recognize the affective value of fiction; but by controlling responses, the emotion stirred in the reader can only be a simulacrum, or an imagining of the emotion one might feel in real life, should the literary situations be replicated. Such ideas were explored in the work of Adam Smith, who argued that sympathy can only be an *imagining* of what others feel, vital though that is to social concord. Creating feeling in her novels, Burney engages with such debates, working into her plots the education of the heroines, but also grasping the novel's potential to educate the reader beyond the mere dramatization of conduct book theory. Such affects, and effects, underline Burney's professionalism as a writer.

⁸⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, p. 53.

This professionalism is a leitmotif of this study. In common with other writers, Burney had to manage her public image and private character, engaging in political debates while protecting her reputation. The characters examined here and elsewhere in this study allow her to do so, holding up the satirical mirror to their ‘original’ flaws, in order to make wider points about society at large; using some as vehicles for argument; and adapting form, to provide different levels of text, creating ambiguities and complexities. What is clear in the analysis here, as in other chapters, is the dexterity with which Burney’s novels engage with different discursive fields to support such various textual readings, illustrating a slipperiness about her use of form, and genre, which has led to disparate readings.⁸⁷ This allows the novels to support politeness while revealing its omissions and flaws; to expose the dangers of excessive feeling, while exploring its usefulness; and to explore the impact of such ideas on the thinking, private female subject, while developing that subject as fit for public life.

⁸⁷ As discussed earlier: see for example: p. 16, n.10; p. 17, n.12; p. 22, n.23; p. 30, n.46; p. 61, n.2; and p. 162, n.109 above.

Chapter 5

The Boundaries of Politeness: Formality and Familiarity

In Chapter 4, I discussed depictions of vehement, unnatural affections and passions in Burney's fiction, which, I argued, challenge politeness theory as originally conceived by early eighteenth-century thinkers like the Earl of Shaftesbury. Tackling questions about the extent to which the individual's integrity should be preserved at all costs, characterizations include examples of violent, but sincere emotions, whose uncontrolled outbursts are destructive of social order and often detrimental to self. According to this reading, such depictions raise questions about the boundaries and extent of 'emotions' in a society where freedom of expression is cherished. The present chapter discusses boundaries of feeling in terms of the dangers of deceit inherent in codes of politeness, for Burney's characterizations also include examples of polished formalities or supreme self-control. This chapter therefore considers later reaction to politeness, which objected to the artificiality implied by Chesterfieldian civility, seen by many as antipathetic to the sincerity and openness defined by earlier politeness thinkers. Further, the letters' apparent sanction of *sangfroid* and shrewd observations of others for self-gain was identified with aristocratic, and exploitative principles, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, were depicted by the novels as inadequate for either public or private good. In addition, a main dissatisfaction centred on the impact on women of Chesterfieldian sanction of gallantries, renewing interest in the difficulties of distinguishing 'ease' and openness, from familiarity and disrespect. Burney's fiction engages with these nebulous boundaries of politeness, dramatizing the consequences, especially for the heroine, of conversations which slide from civil self-restraint to coldness or deceit, or from gentlemanly ease to libertine familiarity. From such dichotomies the novels promote decorum, allied to the notion of Aristotle's mean, where expediency is sometimes tolerated and even preferable, but where the onus is on people to behave with honesty and moderation, tempered with good will.

In the previous chapter I examined the novels' exposure of the exclusionary nature of politeness, of inequalities of freedom of expression for women, and of consequences for women when violent feelings are given free rein. Such exposure pronounces the class-based, and patriarchal nature of politeness, as well as the failures of its guardians to police its codes. In the present chapter, I return to the way Burney's fiction engages with the issue of class, exploring the consequences when whole strata of society, like the rural poor, or domestic servants, are excluded from systematized politeness – seen by some as contingent with an education denied to the lower ranks. This focus on the lower orders is also part of the novels' engagement with notions of innateness, allowing their depictions to question whether moral predilections cohere only with behaviour instilled by an education system predicated on rank.

5.1.1. Artificial Civility, Formality, and Deceit

Distinguishing the friend from the foe, or the sincere from the deceitful, is a dominant theme in Western discourses since ancient times. As we have seen, modern studies of politeness have continued to theorize how such boundaries of behaviour, and of social face and private self, are negotiated, with Erving Goffman's seminal work on the presentation of the self seeing everyday interactions as performances which have to protect the 'face' or self-respect of all parties, and later theorists such as Paul Grice and Geoffrey Leech exploring how far one can actually be truthful, while preserving positive and negative politeness. Congruent with such dilemmas is the question – how far can one preserve politeness at the same time as one's own integrity? The notion of social interaction as a performance, and therefore potentially some kind of mask or disguise, occupied the French moralists of the seventeenth century, and continued to interest a range of European artists and thinkers in the eighteenth century. Particularly relevant to the decades and domains in which Burney wrote are literary engagements with the need to penetrate such social masks. Elizabeth Carter's 'Ode to Wisdom' (1762) is an apposite example, describing the insight to which so many fictional heroines aspired, as an ability to see 'through ev'ry fair disguise', and positing 'that all, but Virtue's solid joys, | Is vanity and woe'. Indeed, so pertinent was Carter's articulation of the desire for evidence of some kind of 'solid' authentic self, that Richardson appropriated the verses to illustrate the lessons learnt by his eponymous heroine in *Clarissa* (1748).¹ Cervantes, whose influential work most eighteenth-century writers of fiction revered and engaged with, unsettled heroic certainties; for as Lionel Trilling asserts, Cervantes set for the novel the problem of appearance and reality, and this problem was replicated in real cultural conditions favouring social mobility, where class-related anxieties could prove unsettling.² As it developed, the novel form – with its shifting narrative voices and multiple speakers – leant itself to the exploration of the slippery nature of identity and disguise, and its potentially more stable, but less knowable counterpart, the authentic self.³ In tune with contemporary debates about the very nature of language, and its ability to convey or embody truth, the novel could explore various ways of crediting, or questioning the location of authenticity in language: in the middle of the eighteenth century, Jane Collier and Sarah Fielding's *The Cry* (1754) dramatized how meaning might be extrinsic to words, revealing how it might be imposed on utterances to create different versions of the 'truth'; and in the early nineteenth century, the narrative voice in Austen's *Emma* still observed 'Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised' (1815).⁴

¹ Carter's poem was circulated in manuscript form, and eventually published in *Poems on Several Occasions* 1762; for a discussion of the lessons learnt by Clarissa, in the context of Richardson's Neo-Platonism, see Derek Taylor, 'Clarissa Harlowe, Mary Astell, and Elizabeth Carter: John Norris of Bemerton's Female "Descendants"', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 12.1 (1999), 19-38.

² Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, p. 209.

³ Wayne C. Booth, among others, associates the notion of a 'true' self to be found by 'probing within', with post Enlightenment thinking: see *The Company We Keep: an Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 237.

⁴ Austen, *Emma*, p. 470.

In other discourses also there was much debate about the extent to which behaviour and language could embody the truth. William Keach has examined ideational continuities in the various, and changing, views of writers in the Romantic period responding to earlier theories of language. Keach describes the response to language of Wordsworth and Coleridge as an anxious awareness that it could be ‘the shadow not the substance’ but argues that they yearned for it to be more than arbitrary signs. Spoken interactions, also, came under fresh scrutiny in the final decades of the eighteenth century, with politeness becoming the site of controversy concerning sincerity and authenticity. In many respects, mainstream notions on politeness came full circle: Bharat Tandon has delineated how the focus of writers on polite behaviour shifted from ‘openness of Behaviour’ combating ‘outward Forms and Ceremonies’ to a view, voiced by Chesterfield and others which preferred ‘general exterior decency, fitness, and propriety of conduct in the common conduct of life’. This shift in social taste foregrounded ‘exterior decency’ and ‘propriety’ in order to preserve the status quo, an exteriority which was eventually questioned as hypocrisy. Jenny Davidson’s ample study of hypocrisy and politeness explores the various ways in which eighteenth-century arguments supported ‘hypocrisy as a moral and political virtue in its own right’.⁵ However, by the time Chesterfield’s widow published his letters in 1774, the condemnation privately expressed by Frances Burney in her journal reflected prevailing public distaste for what was seen as calculated performances in the interest of self. By the end of the century, then, a dominant social taste refocused on unperformed naturalness, and the expression of authentic beliefs rather than mere ‘outward Forms’.

As a case study for the shift in public preferences regarding the functions of politeness, changing attitudes to the concepts evoked by the word ‘candour’ are very illuminating. As Christopher Reid has shown, the word experienced semantic instability during the eighteenth century, with a process of pejoration throwing its meaning, in a parliamentary context, from disinterested diplomacy and receptive frankness, to non-commitment, expediency, and self-interested duplicity. Although Jenny Davidson traces a trajectory from Swift to Hume and Burke regarding propriety of behaviour to the extent of hypocrisy, Reid points out that Burke rejected political candour as ‘a distinctly slippery form of behaviour, a kind of interested compliance or superficial show of courteous attentiveness and amiability that masks baser designs’. Thus, Burke ‘scorned’ candour as a form of hypocrisy. Further, dismissing candour as lacking political rigour and partisanship, Burke placed it ‘outside the province of virtue’.⁶ Burney herself might have been referring to such a debate when she conceived the discussion about the strength of tea, in *Camilla*, assigning one of her characters the observation: ‘There is nothing upon the face of the earth so insipid as a medium. Give me love or hate!’ (251).

It is clear then, that in the latter part of the eighteenth century spoken communication became an increasingly contested site of anxiety about the interface of self-interest and

⁵ Keach, ‘Romanticism and Language,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Curran, pp. 95-119 (pp. 109-110); Addison, *Spectator*, 119, and Chesterfield, in *The World*, 12 August 1756: quoted in Tandon, p. 12 and p. 16; Jenny Davidson, p. 2.

⁶ Christopher Reid, ‘Speaking Candidly: Rhetoric, Politics, and the Meanings of Candour in the Later Eighteenth Century’, *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28.1 (2005), 67-82 (p. 73); Reid’s discussions relate to the period of Lord North’s premiership, 1770-1782.

sociocentricity, and about whether the social needs of the individual, and society, can best be served by consistent sincerity and revelation of the self, or by a social image, conforming to normative tastes of politeness and language. The former paradigm was an enduring focus of interest in fiction, the isolating authenticity of the eccentric Quixote providing a prototype of heroism, weakened by obsessive integrity.

For many novelists exploring such questions, the educative function of the form dictated that moral import should trump social idealizations, so that the characters ultimately promoted by main strands of text should have a kind of integrity, founded on authenticity. Discussing the moral impetus of western literature through time, Trilling posits that a shift of focus occurs after the Early Modern period, where interest in sincerity transfers to (though is not replaced by) a search for authenticity. In Trilling's argument, authenticity is a more vigorous moral experience than sincerity, a more demanding concept of the self, in some part, less social. Trilling notes that sincerity can pertain to 'the unmediated exhibition of the self', exploring the notion of role-play, or performance, contingent with such a demonstration; thus, with reference to Goffman's work on the presentation of the self in society, Trilling posits that authenticity is to be linked to a state of 'being', rather than a way of 'presenting' the core individual. Commenting that it is not pertinent to ask if Wordsworth's character, Michael is sincere, Trilling argues that some of Wordsworth's lowly figures confront earlier (and even contemporary) aesthetic judgements, privileging the rough-hewn authentic man whose correlating characteristics proclaim a deeper self.⁷ As we have seen, Burney's private letters reveal her desire to locate authentic character. This search for authenticity is evident in Burney's fiction also, and may account for the reaction of some of her readers and critics to the violence in her work, indicating that her novels stand at a moment of transition, pointing towards a new kind of authenticity, but also incorporating aspects of earlier, violent satire. In this respect, continuities in thought coalesce in Burney's fiction. But the novels' interest in authenticity is also evident in character depictions revealing lack of integrity, in which the outward forms do not seem to match the inner man, because the outward forms are polite. This is especially evident in the novels' exposure of politeness as performance, as something socially learnt and sometimes pleasing, but morally wrong because it can disguise anti-social traits. Minding such a gap between speech and inner person, Burney's narratives operate different strategies: as we shall see, they expose by narrative irony or by overt omniscient commentary; and they employ focalization to reveal how polite features employed by deceitful characters actually fail; and that they are, in fact, impolite.

⁷ Trilling discusses 'Michael', in which the man is defined by his grief, and also Coleridge's reaction to 'The Idiot Boy'; but Trilling argues that as with the sublime, such figures educate and inspire; see *Sincerity and Authenticity*, p. 9, p. 11, and pp. 92-5.

5.1.2. Formality and Deceit in *Cecilia*

In her final two novels, Burney explores the issue of deception with increasing attention to the uses of politeness as a mask for self-protecting, as well as self-serving purposes. In her third novel, *Camilla* (1796), it is the heroine herself who is suspected and constantly watched by the hero for signs which might disqualify her from being his wife. It is as if Burney has taken a plot line from Sarah Fielding's *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744) where the eponymous hero 'lived in continual Fear, lest she [Camilla] might not turn out as he wished her', and explored the repercussions of such fearful spectatorship on the psychology of a woman, even changing the name of her heroine to Camilla, perhaps as an allusion to Fielding's earlier work.⁸ In so far as polite behaviour applied to women, Burney's heroine fulfils most of the criteria; although she errs in judging others, she herself behaves with modesty, conversational delicacy, and attentiveness, as stipulated by most conduct manuals of the period. Mandlebert's distrustfulness, then, must be read in the context of wider anxieties about women's moral worth and social identities, stirred up by debates on women's education and status. Burney's final work, *The Wanderer*, takes such fearfulness a step further, with the nameless heroine presented as an enigma for much of the novel. Immediately pronounced as above the level of the lower orders and deserving help by the man who will eventually marry her, Juliet is nevertheless distrusted as a potentially destabilizing force by other characters in the novel. In the aftermath of the paranoia engendered by 'the Terror', Juliet's lack of such identity-markers as name and status is deeply unsettling to those around her. Although the narrative suggests that Juliet's modest and polite behaviour should be trusted as indicators of moral as well as social value, the action shows that in the fictionalized period setting of the novel, politeness was not enough to validate such indicators of worth. These final two novels, then, seem to support cautionary agendas relating to women, indicating to their readers that women's behaviour will be scrutinized for evidence of intrinsic worth, and that modesty, benignity, and even accomplishments, will not guarantee their acceptance in the 'polite' world. Thus Burney's final two novels reveal politeness as a necessary but unstable façade, the most careful keepers of which are still vulnerable to accusation and distrust.

It is *Cecilia*, written during Burney's semi-enforced stay with 'Daddy Crisp' at Chessington during the early 1780s, which fully explores both the dangers and the attractions of politeness, placing it at the centre of the thematic interests of the novel. In Burney's second novel, masquerade provides one of the most memorable episodes, subverting this common opportunity for sanctioned disguise to expose the 'true' natures of the characters. Such revelations are predicated on assumptions that the novel's characters are indeed 'characters' – social personae, performed in public, masks through which the heroine has to penetrate. In this way, masquerade takes on emblematic significance, showing how the most polished enactments

⁸ Sarah Fielding, *The Adventures of David Simple: Containing an Account of his Travels through the Cities of London and Westminster in the Search of a Real Friend*, ed. by Malcolm Kelsall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, reiss. 1987), p. 133; manuscript drafts of *Camilla* in the British Library and the New York Public Library indicate how Burney experimented with names for the heroine of this novel: see p.14 of my introduction.

of civility deceive. Thus, in a development of Shaftesburean theory, the novel presents Cecilia's penetration of such deceptions as morally edifying, in conjunction with the social and intellectual education to be gained from the polished conversations themselves.

Early chapters in *Cecilia* are devoted to the heroine's relationships with potential mentors, putting pressure on conversations as the carriers of knowledge about character. The reliance on 'character' to proclaim one's authority and right to be listened to might be linked to the Aristotelian notion of *ethos*, which Michaelson has described as 'that portion of persuasion that derives from the respect accorded to the speaker as his character is revealed in speech'. As Michaelson notes, *ethos* was a central part of eighteenth-century rhetorical theory, with key figures in the elocution movement, like Thomas Sheridan and Hugh Blair extolling the impact of spoken qualities on an audience. But Blair's lectures also emphasized virtue, implying a level of disinterest in the 'proper sentiments' such as 'love of justice' and, significantly here, 'love of honesty and truth'. Of central concern in Burney's novel, is the appropriation of polite features to construct an *ethos*, and to exert self-interest to the detriment of others. Michaelson's examination of the role of *ethos* in the work of Burney's admirer, Austen, posits that the novels of the later writer support the eighteenth-century view that a 'proper woman of her period "should" yield to authority', and that on-going conversations in established relationships are as important for distinguishing such authority as the single occasions of Aristotelian formulation.⁹ In *Cecilia* both types of encounter are employed to demonstrate the developing discernment of the heroine in her search for a mentor whom she can trust.

Michaelson's notion of *ethos* as distinguished in the on-going conversations of established friends is illustrated in the character of Mr Monckton. An impecunious member of parliament who married an elderly heiress, Monckton is an associate of Cecilia's late uncle, whose apparently disinterested help masks his sexual and financial ambitions, as he waits for his aged wife to die. He undertakes to advise Cecilia through her early adult years, and it is through these conversations that Monckton's deeper personhood, as well as his *ethos*, is distinguished. Monckton is a familiar character type, often associated in romance or novels of sentiment with the figure of the married, reformed rake.¹⁰ In Burney's inscription, however, Monckton does not reform. Michaelson's recognition of *ethos* as revealed in a single occasion of speech is illustrated by the scene in which Cecilia meets her third guardian, Mr Delvile. Disillusioned with her other two guardians, Cecilia places her hopes for support in Mr Delvile, whose ancient family and established 'character' encourage her to expect protection. Conduct literature for men and women advised young people to seek out such mentor figures, whose age and experience could benefit them in their dealings in what was commonly called 'the world'. Conduct works for women

⁹ For Michaelson's discussion of the effectiveness of persuasion, and Austen's depiction of the yielding of women to authority, see pp. 183-184; Blair, 'Means of Improving in Eloquence', p. xvi, quoted in Michaelson, p. 185.

¹⁰ In *Love in Excess; or, The Fatal Enquiry* (1719-20) Haywood creates such a triangle, a key scene describing d'Elmont who, having married a woman of fortune, hides his ardour for Melliora, by his 'countenance and manner of address, so as to give no suspicion of the truth' (93); Smith's *Emmeline* features the character Fitz-Edward, who 'concealed, under the appearance of candour and non-chalance, the libertinism of his character' and 'contrived by a sort of sentimental hypocrisy' to prevent his 'fashionable vices' from being known (28): Fitz-Edward seduces his friend's wife, but is remorseful and reforms, offering to marry her when she is widowed; the type also featured in art, opera, and drama.

typically recommended older women as suitable guides, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, Cecilia is eventually drawn to Mrs Delvile.¹¹ In the first instance, however, she introduces herself to her designated guardian, Mr Delvile, and continues to place her trust in Mr Monckton. The novel depicts both men as having acquired ethos, or ‘character’ through polite intercourse and other dealings with the world.

Depiction complicates characterizations by invoking debates on sociability. Delvile’s home is emblematic of his formality, and of his pride in his ancestry. When Cecilia meets him (Book II Chapter 2), the narrative informs us that his house is grand and spacious, decorated in ‘the magnificence of former times’, and run by veteran servants who are ‘profoundly respectful in their manners’ (97). Nevertheless, the gloomy ‘air of state’ and ‘repressed pleasure’, which the house generates, prepares us for Delvile’s violation of eighteenth-century expectations of sociability, suggesting the oppression of fiefal ceremonies. In contrast, Monckton’s estate is introduced in the first chapter of the novel, when Cecilia breaks her journey to London by joining a party given by Monckton and his wife, Lady Margaret. Monckton is thus introduced in terms of sociability and talents. He is the ‘richest and most powerful man’ in his neighbourhood (7), but he is also ‘a man of parts’, who is described by such rare (in *Cecilia*) sententious narrative statements as, ‘Pleasure given in society, like money lent in usury, returns with interest to those who dispense it’ (9). Where Delvile represses pleasure, Monckton’s sociability creates enjoyment. Monckton’s house is barely depicted, except that it is filled with people, a focus which has the potential to prepossess the reader in his favour.

The narrative undermines this potential, however, by providing a lengthy exposé of Monckton’s ‘character’ and motives, constantly undercutting positive values, with explicit and ironic suggestions of deception. An example of this technique is the association of Monckton with ‘the world’, which underlines his advisory credentials as one whose conversation can enlarge Cecilia’s ideas. In each instance of its employment, however, the noun ‘world’ is further qualified by references to duplicity. At first, we read that ‘to great native strength of mind, he [Monckton] added a penetrating knowledge of the world, and to faculties the most skilful of investigating the character of every other, a dissimulation the most profound in concealing his own’ (7); then we learn that Cecilia’s uncle was not aware of Monckton’s polished performances, ‘for as he preserved to the world the same appearance of decency he supported to his wife, he was everywhere well received, and being but partially known, was extremely respected: the world, with its wonted facility, repaying his circumspect attention to its laws, by silencing the voice of censure, guarding his character from impeachment, and his name from reproach’ (8).

¹¹ For example, Chesterfield advises his son that the only reliable guide is he ‘who has often gone the road which you want to go’: see Letter C (24 November 1747), *Letters*, I, 294; in the year of Burney’s birth the popular translation of the Abbé d’Ancourt’s conduct work was already in its fourth edition, advising young ladies to respect and gain advantage from the conversation of ‘Persons more advanced in Years, and experienced in the World’; Hester Chapone advised her readers to ‘choose a person of riper years and judgement, whose good-nature and worthy principles may assure you of her readiness to do you service’, and to choose a person some ten years older, ‘of good sense and good principles [...] to advise and to improve you’; Hannah More also encouraged her readers to seek out those with ‘long experience and thorough knowledge of the world’: see *The Lady’s Preceptor; or, A Letter to a Young Lady of Distinction upon Politeness, Taken from the French of Abbé D’Ancourt and Adapted to the Religion, Customs and Manners of the English Nation. By a Gentleman of Cambridge*, 1743, 4th edn (London: J. Watts, 1752), p. 23; Chapone, ‘On the Regulation of the Heart and the Affections’, in *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, I, 104-200 (p. 139, and pp. 140-141); and More, *Essays on Various Subjects*, p. 114.

Burney here presents 'the world' as Monckton's powerful paramour whom he has courted, known, and penetrated, and who, in return, colludes with the 'dissimulation' which allows him the 'appearance of decency'. Monckton manages the world as easily as his septuagenarian wife, and as he hopes to control Cecilia, whom he marks 'as his future property' (9).

In Goffman's terms, Monckton is depicted as an assured social performer and, as the plot develops, his performance rarely slips; even his 'back-stage' performances with his wife are wholly consistent with a polite and polished man. Nevertheless, early narration is authorial and overt, introducing Monckton by explicitly exposing his deep self and disclosing information hidden to the protagonist. Densely loaded descriptors draw attention to the 'venal rapacity' (9) beneath his sociability. At the same time, the narrative assumes shared values with the reader, so that we read Monckton's subsequent conversations through the filter of this preliminary exposé. Mr Delvile is also introduced heterodiegetically, authorial comments offering access to his mind, as when we read that he is 'too much occupied with the care of his own importance to penetrate into the feelings of another' (97). However, where the narrative continues to share information about Monckton which is denied to the heroine, in the introduction of Delvile the narrative rapidly shores up the knowledge of the heroine and the reader, as Cecilia immediately assesses her guardian to be self-obsessed, and judges her visit to be 'fruitless' (98). Such introductions and consequent developments in the heroine's awareness highlight the nuances in Burney's characterization, as each potential mentor uses politeness as a performance for a different end, and with distinct effects.

Delvile's speech – overly formal, boastful, and patronizing to Cecilia – is to be read as proclaiming his authority and preserving aloofness. The formality is achieved by his actions, language, and delivery. Delvile only half-rises to receive Cecilia, immediately signalling that the interaction is to be founded on traditional ceremonies, which employ spoken and physical rhetoric to maintain hierarchical distance. This is accompanied by his use of formal appellations, his detached vocatives clashing with the narrative choice of 'Cecilia', as when he opens with 'I am very happy, Miss Beverley, that you have found me alone' (97). In speaking of his friend, Cecilia's uncle, Delvile insists on official titles, his repetition of 'the Dean' indicating a relish for status-laden labels, reflecting his satisfaction with such a high level connection. Such a relish is also evident in Delvile's vocabulary, which is littered with words evoking a 'kingdom' where feudal relationships were built on 'favour' (97), 'appeal[s]' (98) and 'right[s]' (99). Formality is inherent too in his grammar, as he takes pains to order his clauses with care, and employ syntactic structures associated with highly formal registers, as when he phrases a tag question: 'They are a decent sort of people; are they not?'. The measured rhetoric of individual phrases further reflects the ritualised nature of his interaction style, the narrative providing privileged information in order to draw attention to his ego: 'Here he stopt, as if to receive some compliment' and 'here again he paused; not in expectation of an answer from Cecilia, but merely to give her time to marvel in what manner he had at last been melted' (98). Catching the tenor of his utterances, Cecilia accommodates his language, replying, 'You do me honour, sir', though she refuses to flatter, and is 'extremely wearied by his graciousness' (99). Delvile's utterances

are loaded with ideological indicators of power which, as discussed in the sociolinguistic work of Norman Fairclough, determine the way interactions develop. Constrained by the social conventions, which she accepts, Cecilia can only concede to Delvile's authority and accept her subordinate role in the interchange.¹²

The structure of this first meeting with Delvile establishes an asymmetric power-relationship from the start, with Delvile's lengthy utterances dominating the scene and giving Cecilia little time to respond. In addition, as the conversation progresses, it becomes more interview-like, with Delvile firing questions at Cecilia about her affairs. We are alerted to this shift in discourse style after Cecilia tries to leave, and Delvile orders her to 'pray sit still' (99); the lack of comma after 'pray' draws attention to the rapid-fire delivery, and to the fact that the politeness softener 'pray' is merely a formality. This is a man of authority who is used to being obeyed. Thereafter the interview is distinguished by a series of shorter questions and answers, before Delvile rings the bell and delivers Cecilia to his servants. As we have seen, in Humean theory, 'the male sex among polite people, discover their authority [...] by civility, by respect, and in a word, by gallantry'.¹³ Of relevance here, is the way the novel's depiction puts pressure on assumptions about 'civility', revealing how easy it is for polite rituals to fall prey to personal interest, and how formality can be used as a mark of social distance and disrespect.

In a work concerned with the workings of patriarchy and the effects of paternalism, this is a key scene. In particular, the novel explores the various ways in which patriarchy and patronage impact the life of the heroine, who tries to perform the role of benevolent patron, establishing a domestic space for study, accomplishments, and good works with her friend Miss Belfield, but ultimately having to abandon her fortune, her home, and her name, in order to marry Delvile's son. Ultimately, therefore, Cecilia surrenders her liberty at the end of the novel, which fulfils genre expectations of a marriage. But 'the cheerful resignation' (941) with which she does so unsettled contemporary readers who no doubt picked up on the doom-laden title of the final chapter, 'A Termination', as an indicator of Burney's own ambivalence about the ending. Discussing resignation in the context of the role of religious piety in Sarah Scott's *A Description of Millennium Hall* (1762), Gary Kelly observes that 'resignation to Providence offers consolation for lack of agency and power'. Burney's novel does not offer religious piety as a frame of consolation for its heroine. It does, however, use resignation as a signal for her lack of agency, and her ultimate defeat by the power structures which determine her life.¹⁴

This resignation to unstoppable power is evident in this first scene with Mr Delvile. The scene is highly satirical in that it allows Burney to expose what she saw as the ridiculous formalities of polite behaviour which, when taken to extremes, become impolite by preventing

¹² Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Longman, 2001); Fairclough discusses how people are constrained by social conventions but also derive their social identities from them, some manipulating such conventions, while others merely following them: see 'Introduction: Critical Language Study', pp. 1-14, especially p. 7; subsequent chapters illustrate the theory with examples of interviews.

¹³ Hume, 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences', p. 74.

¹⁴ Edmund Burke wrote that he 'wished for a conclusion either more happy or more miserable': *Diary and Letters*, II, 159, cited by Doody in her introduction to *Cecilia*, xxxviii, where Doody notes that the desire of reviewers for a more tidy ending 'could not meet Burney's aesthetic and moral "plan"', indicated in Burney's letter to Daddy Crisp: 'if I am made to give up this point, my whole plan is rendered abortive'; Sarah Scott, *A History of Millennium Hall*, ed. by Gary Kelly (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1995, repr. 1999), p. 33.

people from feeling comfortable, or from developing companionable relationships. And the darker, instructive message of the end of the novel is evident too, anticipated in the disjunction between Cecilia's hopeful expectations and the reality of her role and relationship to Delvile, as played out in this preliminary humiliating, if comic interchange. It is this disjunction, violating positive and negative politeness principles, and eighteenth-century politeness strictures, which underscores the offence. Delvile also uses politeness techniques to act out his power and deny Cecilia the relationship which she craves; but he also uses such techniques to perform the role of a courteous gentleman – which such formalities simultaneously negate. Anticipating modern linguistic frame theory, and theories of accommodation, Chesterfield warned his son that conversations have 'local propriety'; and that each context demands that 'a well-bred man' 'of the world' adapt his behaviour in order to please the speaker – what modern linguists call the receiver's positive face.¹⁵ What Delvile fails to do on every level is to adapt his conversation to his young ward; Cecilia goes to him in search of a friend, a mentor, a surrogate relative, but he treats her like a supplicant in search of patronage. The irony results from Delvile's pride in his own experience and performance being completely undercut by the narrative, which highlights Cecilia's disappointment and disillusionment.

The problems associated with the demands for sincerity and authenticity in conflict with the need not to offend or hurt people's feelings occupied Burney throughout her writing career. Chesterfield also was aware of these tensions, especially as they pertained to such a public life as Mr Delvile's. Writing to his son in the mid-eighteenth century, Chesterfield advises him on polite and politic qualities which will fit him for future service:

Patience to hear frivolous, impertinent, and unreasonable applications; with address enough to refuse, without offending: or, by your manner of granting, to double the obligation; Dexterity enough to conceal a truth, without telling a lie: Sagacity enough to read other people's countenances: and Serenity enough not to let them discover anything by yours; a seeming frankness, with real reserve. These are the rudiments of a Politician; the World must be your grammar.¹⁶

Burney's depiction of Mr Delvile invokes Chesterfield's advice for 'a Politician', but shows how such advice can be used to control, deceive, and serve self-interest. However, the point to be made here concerns Delvile's failures: Delvile applies polite language but affronts Cecilia; his assertions of benevolence are insincere; and his performance of sincerity is offensive. The ethos of his speech is therefore not convincing. For deception to work it must be a compelling performance, overwhelming the perceptions of its audience. But Cecilia is shown to see through and be repulsed by Delvile's ostentatious 'display of importance' (97) after his very first utterance, and her opinion is confirmed on each subsequent meeting.

In *Cecilia*, however, Burney capitulates to conservative tastes, and the heroine's victory in seeing through Delvile's insincerity is pyrrhic, for unlike her counterparts in the fiction of

¹⁵ Letter XCVII (16 October 1747), *Letters*, I, 283; Letter C (24 December 1747), *Letters*, I, 296.

¹⁶ Letter CV (15 January 1748), *Letters*, I, 308.

Burney's admirers, Cecilia is eventually forced to yield to his demands, and sacrifice such public signifiers of identity as name and fortune in order to marry the man of her choice. To have written complete defeat of Delvile into the plot would perhaps have provided a more moral dénouement, but such a female victory would also have been overtly political. Burney's abandoned preface to *Cecilia* records her diffidence and insecurities about the success of her second publishing venture, and it is likely that she provided a conventional ending in order to guarantee such success. Thus although the novel is unflinching in its scrutiny of Delvile's smooth façade of politeness, it does not unseat his power.¹⁷

If Delvile uses politeness insincerely, as a partial mask, Monckton's use – for deception – is more complete. Crucial to the 'character' the novel depicts Monckton as presenting is Chesterfield's advice on the rudiments of a politician. Burney's sketch of Monckton in Chapter I paraphrases Chesterfield's advice to develop '[s]agacity enough to read other people's countenances: and Serenity enough not to let them discover anything by yours', describing Monckton as 'most skilful' in 'investigating the character of every other', and as employing a 'dissimulation the most profound in concealing his own' (7). Although Delvile is the ultimate victor in terms of exerting his patriarchal will over his family and Cecilia, Monckton succeeds for the majority of the novel's action, in simulating an image of a polite, disinterested friend. In the context of the whole novel then, Monckton lies by withholding the truth about his own ambitions, and in this respect his conversations constitute a violation of Grice's maxim of quality. During individual episodes, however, his conversation is inoffensive, even truthful, and at times protective of Cecilia's interests, even if they are part of his own. Monckton is partially successful in two other closely related ways. His views are part of a debate in the novel concerning the freedom of the individual in society, and about how far societal rules should be followed for the good of the whole, or for personal reward; Cecilia learns that, in accordance with Monckton's view, she has to pursue 'the track that is already marked out' by custom (14), and bow down to its patriarchal strictures. Further, his cynical and suspicious mind influences Cecilia's assessment of others, and of herself, making her self-conscious and anxious, and eventually contributing to her temporary insanity. Ultimately, however, he is a failure: he fails to acquire the fortune of Cecilia and, since his deception is uncovered, he loses her esteem; in addition, he fails to

¹⁷ The scenario is reproduced variously in other novels: Charlotte Smith, who admired Burney's work, drew from *Cecilia*, in her novel *Celestina* (1791), where Lord Castlenorth is described as having the same genealogical obsessions as Mr Delvile, but wants his nephew to marry his daughter and change his name to Fitz-Hayman, in order to inherit the Castlenorth title; in *Emmeline* (1789) Lady Montreville bullies Emmeline into not marrying her son, in a scene where the former almost chokes to death with passion: both novels have generically romantic endings, with the protagonists compromising little in order to marry; in Bage's novel, *Hermsprong* (1796), there is a different spin to the motif: proud of her lineage and detesting her married name, Henrietta Chestrum is happy for her son to take a new name in marriage. Austen explored the issue of family pride in most of her novels: in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) the ambitions of Lady Catherine that Mr Darcy should marry her daughter provide an obvious link; the pride and egocentric hauteur of Sir Walter Eliot in *Persuasion* (1817) might be seen as a clear homage to Mr Delvile; but General Tilney's courting of, and then cruel rejection of Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* (1817) are most obviously indebted to Burney's characterization and plot: all three of these novels resolve the difficulties without financial or romantic sacrifices being made. According to Marilyn Butler, Austen started drafting *Pride and Prejudice* in 1796, and owned a copy of *Hermsprong*; Butler credits Bage's influence on Austen; like Austen, Bage employs the phrase, and theme, of 'pride and prejudice' – but the phrase is lifted from the final pages of *Cecilia*, and is also a major theme throughout: see Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 86-87.

influence her with his ego-driven philosophy, since Cecilia chooses love of another over personal affluence and individual ambition.

Monckton's simulation of a polite and disinterested gentleman is dramatized mostly through his reactions to Cecilia's potential suitors. In the second chapter of the novel, he is described as 'disguising his displeasure' at the monopoly of Cecilia's attention by the insistent Mr Morris (13). On meeting Mr Arnott in London, Monckton 'stifled his emotions', and 'suffered no word nor look to escape him beyond what was authorized by friendly civility' (57). There is strength of feeling implied, however, by the narrator, drawing attention to how 'he dreaded the effect of intimacy' with Mr Arnott, and was impatient 'to examine into the state of her [Cecilia's] mind' to assess the outcome of his 'long concerted scheme' (58). The nature of the feeling is invoked by the choice of the word 'scheme', implying ardour in ambition rather than love. Later, Monckton manages to 'penetrate into the mind' of Cecilia and, seeing her regard for Mortimer Delvile, he recognizes his real rival, and that 'the long earned good opinion which he had hoped would have ripened into affection, might now be wholly undermined' (330). Such a realisation robs Monckton of all presence of mind, 'the jealousy rising in his breast' forcing him to retire so that he can watch 'her motions at a distance' (331). What he sees is the growing freedom and intimacy of Sir Robert Foyer, whose relationship with Mr Harrel, one of Cecilia's guardians, guarantees him access to his house.

These potential rivals become the targets of Monckton's schemes to keep Cecilia for himself until he is free to propose to her. Thus, in guiding her from their attentions, he is ultimately guarding his own interests. First Monckton directs Cecilia away from the acquisitive attentions of Sir Robert. Monckton accosts Cecilia at an opportune moment, and he does so with 'a look of haste and earnestness'. His approach is a mixture of urgency and delicacy, as he opens, 'I will not ask whither you are going so early, or upon what errand, for I must beg a moment's audience,' (368). Monckton softens the insistence of what he 'must do' by the courtly idiom, 'I must beg'. And although he affects lack of interest in her visit, he never takes his eye off the action, returning to the subject three pages later in a lengthy topic loop: 'You were going, you said, when I came, — and whither?' (371). In this way he elicits the information that she is going to the home of Mortimer Delvile, with the intention of living with his father, her guardian. Then, in a master stroke of effective communication, Monckton observes, 'coolly', 'nor should I have supposed he had any chance with you, had I not hitherto observed that your convenience has always been sacrificed to your sense of propriety' ((371)). Immediately affected by 'praise so full of censure', Cecilia changes her plans, allowing Monckton the satisfaction of removing her from the environs of young Delvile. In modern linguistic terms, Monckton's utterance is a mitigated face-threatening act, discussed by Brown and Levinson as one of the strategies commonly employed to soften the impingement upon an interlocutor's honour or self-respect. Monckton's softener in this instance is a compliment to Cecilia's recognition of social codes, the word 'propriety' here also connoting a woman's sexual virtue. The sting is contained in the choice of the past tense, which suggests that there may be a shift in Cecilia's behaviour (and sexual mores) from this point. The suggestion is strengthened by the adverbial, 'hitherto', and by pragmatic

signifiers, the narrational descriptor, ‘coolly’, drawing attention to the shift in Monckton’s response to Cecilia, from the warmth and admiration, to a suggested disapproval. These kind of strategies depict Monckton as maintaining his image as a protective friend who is loath to hurt Cecilia’s feelings, but who is mindful of what is ‘right’.

At his most bold, when condemning Cecilia’s friends, Monckton’s strongest warning is couched in the heightened language of religious extremism, urging, ‘you must fly this house directly! It is the region of disorder and licentiousness, and unfit to contain you’ (369). Further, he sidesteps the problem of directly attacking her friends, by insulting Harrel’s *house* as a region of sin. Later, when he warns Cecilia of Harrel’s gambling addiction and his need to plunder her fortune, he mitigates the communicative threat to Harrel’s honour by generalization, when he observes that the character of a gamester ‘depends solely upon his luck; his disposition varies with every throw of the dice’ (369). Such self-protecting, and self-serving use of polite skills, disarms Cecilia, allowing Monckton’s ideas to gain influence over her decisions. The complicating factor is the element of truth in Monckton’s admonitions. Harrel is indeed using Cecilia as barter to secure loans from his various associates, as well as tapping into her fortune himself. Although Monckton’s overall motivation is self-directed, its short-term effect is to warn Cecilia of her danger.

An outcome of this and other conversations is that Monckton’s bleak vision of the world penetrates Cecilia’s mind. She notes and is suspicious of Harrel’s lightened mood, and ponders its cause – ‘what that might be it was not possible for her to divine, but the lessons she had received from Mr Monckton led her to suspicions of the darkest kind’ (384). Such darkness within Cecilia’s mind infiltrates the narrative, as focalized description reveals how Harrel’s encouragement of Mr Morris forces Cecilia to announce her departure:

Mr. Harrel looked aghast: while his new young friend cast upon him a glance of reproach and resentment, which convinced Cecilia he imagined he had procured himself a title to an easiness of intercourse and frequency of meeting which this intelligence destroyed. (385)

Here the focus shifts as the clauses progress, from Harrel, to Morris, and then to Cecilia. It is thus her view which is captured from the middle of the sentence, the imagery of procurement and easy intercourse suggesting the actions of a pimp, and conveying Cecilia’s full realisation of her vulnerability. Such suggestive language risks breaking the pragmatic politeness of the text – what Roger D. Sell has described in the context of eighteenth-century works, as the ‘harmonious’ qualities fashioned to please the reader.¹⁸ It is evident that Burney was willing to run the risk of such ‘impoliteness’ at textual level, in order to fulfil her thematic purposes. For, as we have seen in Chapter 4, such potentially discomforting scenes demonstrate Burney’s optimism that *all* experience, no matter its nature, can contribute to the moral intelligence of the reflecting subject.

¹⁸ Sell, ‘The Politeness of Literary Texts’, in *Literary Pragmatics*, ed. by Sell, pp. 208-224 (p. 208).

In the action of *Cecilia* the heroine negotiates the pressures of social and cultural expectations, in tension with her own ambitions of individual freedom and benevolence; the debate is also articulated by lengthy conversations between Mr Monckton and Mr Belfield, the impoverished and idealistic scholar. Introduced at the start of the novel in a chapter entitled 'An Argument', the discussion about the individual and society takes the form of rational debate favoured by such writers of educative fiction as Maria Edgeworth. The topic is introduced by Monckton who, in tortuous syntax, opines, 'to neglect old friends, and to court new acquaintance [...] is [...] so universally recommended by example, that those who act differently, incur general censure for affecting singularity' (14). Belfield shows faith in Cecilia's autonomous moral intelligence, which will allow her, 'in defiance of these maxims of the world, to be guided by the light' of her 'own understanding'. Monckton generalizes again, with a subtle put-down of Belfield, positing that when the 'closet reasoner' mixes with the world, he will have to conform, 'pursuing quietly the track that is already marked out'. Belfield counters with a maxim of his own, championing the spirited 'man of parts' who will eschew such a path, paraphrasing Swift to illustrate the incompatibility of a 'noble mind' and 'common rules' (14).¹⁹ Resorting to aphorism again, Monckton proclaims: 'Experience shews that the opposition of an individual to a community is always dangerous in the operation, and seldom successful in the event' (15). Drawing on the authority of Johnsonian phrases and clauses, Monckton's statements carry the weight of universal truths.

By the end of the chapter, however, Monckton expresses a different view. Stopping Cecilia as she leaves, he issues a series of warnings:

'Be upon your guard,' he cried, 'with all new acquaintance; judge nobody from appearances; form no friendship rashly; take time to look about you, and remember you can make no alteration in your way of life, without greater probability of faring worse, than chance of faring better. Keep therefore as you are.' (18)

Common in a range of literary representations of courtiers, such worldly warnings reflect Chesterfieldian wary, courtly expediency. In *Cecilia*, however, Monckton's views are unstable, an inconsistency pointed out immediately by Belfield. But Monckton justifies his slippery values by confessing that he 'spoke of the world in general, not of this lady in particular'; and his unctuous compliment that all who see Cecilia must hope that 'she might continue in every respect exactly and unalterably as she is at present' strongly evokes the figure of the courtier. Equally significant, is the evocation of Rousseau in Monckton's views, his possessive warning for Cecilia to be upon her guard, and his wish that she might continue unchanged. Although Cecilia must go out into the world, Monckton hopes to preserve her person, and safeguard her fortune, for himself.

Monckton and Belfield return to the discussion in Volume V of the novel. Belfield's experience has taught him that long-established customs and habits 'assume an empire despotic,

¹⁹ A footnote (p. 959) calls this a misquotation from Swift's *Cadenus and Vanessa* (1726), II, 612-13.

though their power is but prescriptive' (734); he sees the forms of politeness as mere ceremonies, not chains, and argues that the individual will can break free and act with benevolence and justice while paying lip-service to such a 'pantomimical parade' (735). Belfield himself feels that he can achieve such a compromise in his own life, his images of freedom and munificence contrasting starkly with those of imperialism and subjugation. In the context of the novel, such privileging of the moral over the political elevates feminized values over the masculine, and states a claim for democratic sociability through active engagement, suggestive of egalitarian rather than hierarchical rule. This principle of equality is articulated more explicitly by Belfield himself, who observes that the bow and fear of offending 'ought to extend to all mankind' (735). Monckton believes that breaking the chain of community would destroy the individual and the community of which he is part, and dismisses Belfield's views as 'a mere idle dream of romance and enthusiasm', the product of a 'bewitched imagination' (734). Essentially, Monckton's views have not changed since such ideas were discussed in Chapter 2 of the first volume; but Belfield has honed his ideas, and shows evidence of his reflective powers as he converses with Monckton in this later scene. Such rational collisions, idealized by Shaftesbury and early exponents of politeness, do little for Monckton, whose values and opinions are already fixed. Although he penetrates the minds of others, he does not allow his own to be infiltrated by their perceptions or ideas. If Monckton seems to shift his ground, it is more a shrewd performance. Of the two, Belfield is the authentic character: more committed to his philosophy, though experience leads him to try and accommodate 'the world' without losing his integrity. In this respect, Belfield's reflections, and conversations, are truly 'social', and thus in tune with Shaftesburean ideals. On the other hand, Monckton's failure to rub off his rusty edges by amicable collision challenges those ideals, and questions society's ability to police them.

If Monckton is to be read as representing Chesterfieldian principles of courtly expediency, such principles do not emerge with credit. Indeed, the conversations in Burney's novel draw attention to the role of the individual agent, valorizing an agency which is not merely social in terms of the art of pleasing, but *morally* social, and therefore political. In addition, the novel retrieves Shaftesburean notions of authenticity, promoting ideas of ardour and social responsibility like those felt, and expressed, by Belfield, in contrast to insincere characters like Delvile and deceiving characters like Monckton. Lawrence Klein has highlighted how the ideal of sociability originally ascribed to politeness by writers like Shaftesbury was endangered when its forms 'declined into mere formality or ceremoniousness'. By the closing decades of the century, censure of 'mere formality' extended condemnation of unsociable behaviour to denunciation of formality as a means of personal concealment, and therefore disrespectful to others and a bar to sociability. At some point in the early 1790s, Burney wrote on a scrap of paper: 'A man of high breeding is a man whose character is most difficult to be judged and whose opinions are hardest to discern'. Burney's generalized portrait recorded on the fragment reflects the anxieties of many of her contemporaries, of all political persuasions, relating to the excesses of politeness stifling authenticity and generating distrust. In *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Godwin echoed Burney's sentiments when he described social formality as such

a constricting force: 'There is at present in the world a cold reserve that keeps man at a distance from man. There is an art in the practice of which individuals communicate for ever, without anyone telling his neighbour what estimate he forms of his attainments and character.' For Godwin, traditional forms of politeness, in their end of the century forms, prevent social improvement; they stifle individual freedom and encourage duplicity, a response not unlike the view assigned to Burney's character, Mr Belfield.²⁰ By the time Burney wrote *Camilla*, the stifling of her personal freedoms during her employment at court had driven her to physical illness and near breakdown. Yearning for friendship and familiar communication herself, Burney's manuscript note about men of high breeding reflected her personal experience as much as her professional planning for her third novel. However, as the next section will demonstrate, Burney was also aware of the dangers of familiarity, especially between the sexes, and although her novels reveal the repelling coldness of formal civility and its attendant deception, they also explore the other extreme: the impact of familiarity on young women newly introduced to public places.

5.2. Familiar Talk and the Register of Disrespect

The interface of eagerness and enthusiasm, of ease and easiness, and of friendliness and familiarity, was of great interest to writers on politeness during the eighteenth century, who shared with modern linguists an awareness of the difficulties of getting the balance right.

Addressing the tricky nature of politeness in a letter to his son, Chesterfield wrote that 'the art of pleasing [...] can hardly be reduced to rules; and your own good sense and observation will teach you more of it than I can', a caveat which reflects modern day linguists' awareness of the importance of context in determining appropriate conversational styles.²¹ Such linguists think in terms of 'frames' or 'schemas', where interaction structures, and even vocabulary and grammar, are selected on the basis of experienced models, and depend strongly on the emotional and power relationships between individuals, on the nature of the topics discussed, and on the situational context of specific interactions.²² Burney's diaries indicate that she too was acutely aware of the niceties inherent in such communicative factors, recording her own intense embarrassment when people were overly familiar, or the distress caused by the introduction of what she deemed 'delicate' topics. However, as we shall see, Burney's presentation of inappropriate familiarity goes beyond social embarrassment, to reveal how eighteenth-century principles of politeness can serve gallantry and effect dominance, dressing abusive motives in silken words. In addition, the

²⁰ Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, p. 4; many character 'types' and generalizations are written on unnumbered fragments now stored with the *Camilla* manuscript in the Berg Collection, in the New York Public Library; Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, p. 288.

²¹ Letter xcvi (16 October, 1747), in *Letters*, I, 281; Fordyce, 'On Female Reserve', in *Sermons to Young Women*, I, 85-120 (p. 113); Fordyce writes that 'the best breeding' is 'learnt by living among the best bred people'.

²² Goffman developed the idea of frames of reference upon which people draw to help them negotiate interactions; more recently, Tannen's work discusses schemas – 'knowledge structures' and expectations based on experience of such factors as events and settings: see Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, new edn, with a forward by Bennett Berger (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1987); Deborah Tannen, 'Frames and Schemas in Interaction', *Quaderni di semantica*, 6.2 (1985), 326-335 (p. 328).

novels' engagement with the class-based foundation of politeness questions assumptions about its exclusiveness, leading inevitably to questions on the innateness of the moral faculty.

A brief synchronic review of eighteenth-century references to familiarity highlights the negative as well as the positive values associated with the concept. Johnson's *Dictionary* draws attention to the conceptualization of binaries relating to a preferred style of spoken interaction. All three of his definitions of the adverb 'familiarly' connote the social, the primary sense being described as 'Unceremoniously; with freedom like that of long acquaintance'; the primary sense of 'familiarity' also relates to inter-communication: 'easiness in conversation; omission of ceremony; affability'; and the second and third meanings of 'familiar' refer again to 'affable', 'not formal' conversation, which is 'unceremonious, [and] free, as of persons long acquainted'. The positive evaluation of familiar talk is thus associated with long-standing relationships where the conversational dress of thought can afford to be looser and freer, without fear of offending the addressee with its informal liberties. Letter-writing manuals of the period reinforce Johnson's favourable response to familiar talk among friends, with informal forms of address and style being accepted as appropriate among friends and family.²³ However, Johnson's dictionary definitions register a counter-note to the praise of affability and familiar talk by their condemnation of vocabulary deemed 'familiar'. Descriptions of such language, especially in Volume I of the dictionary, often contain derogating evaluations which label words 'barbarous', 'corrupt', and 'low'. Mistakes in usage were anathema in Johnson's view, as indicated by the numerous words whose definitions are modified by the explicit, and somewhat dismissive reference to context: 'only used in familiar language'.²⁴ As we shall see, Burney's familiar speakers often draw on the words and grammar of 'low' language, offending or amusing other characters in the novels, as well as the implied reader, with their unrefined language.²⁵

Inter-relatedness is an undercurrent of many of Johnson's periodical essays, several telling salutary stories about the dangers of rapid familiarity with strangers.²⁶ Such situational contexts are central to wider representations of familiarity, including fiction, though there are inconsistencies among the views expressed by writers, especially where that advice is mediated

²³ One example of the many publications on familiar letters states that elegance is not required in such correspondence, and that ease and clarity 'are the only beauties to study': see *The Complete Letter-Writer: Containing Familiar Letters on the Most Common Occasions in Life* (Edinburgh: P. Anderson, 1780), p. 39; on the appropriation of simple styles to convey a character of the English gentleman, see Brant, p. 37.

²⁴ Examples in *Dictionary* I include: 'To Bang. To beat; to thump; to cudgel: a low familiar word'; and in II: 'Man. A word of familiarity bordering on contempt'; Johnson's confident descriptions of such words as 'familiar' and 'low' assume a readership drawn from the middle and upper ranks, or from the social strata aspiring to enter these ranks; other words described as 'familiar' include, 'A' (he), 'accostable', 'bee' ('an industrious person'), 'to bounce' (boast), 'chicane', 'chops' ('the mouth of anything') and 'coz' ('a cant or familiar word'). 'lad', 'liquor', 'matter' (in a business sense), 'mother' ('an old woman' or 'a man dedicated to religious austerities'), 'nag', and 'Pri'thee'.

²⁵ In his article on language in the Romantic age, Mee recognizes the plurality of attitudes towards language during the eighteenth century, but argues that in this period language was taken as 'a crucial index of individual, social, and national identity' and that the age was distinguished by the drive to conform: 'Not to use language in certain ways was to threaten the imagined community of the nation and to court exclusion from the public sphere of polite society' (369-370); see 'Language' in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*, ed. by McCalman and Others, pp. 369-378.

²⁶ In *Adventurer*, 112, 1 December, 1753 an article warns against familiar conversation with strangers on journeys; general warnings against familiar talk appeared in essay form at the start of the eighteenth century: see Steele's essay in the *Tatler*, 16 September 1710, in *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from the Tatler and the Spectator*, ed. by Erin Mackie, Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), pp. 342-344; in the early nineteenth century also, Hazlitt recommends solitary journeys, though his focus is to promote opportunities for reflection: see 'On Going on a Journey' *Works*, VIII, 181-189 (p. 182).

by gender.²⁷ Writing on the ‘dignity of manners’, in 1749, Chesterfield lists horse-play, romping, frequent and loud fits of laughter, jokes and ‘waggery’ as ‘indiscriminate familiarity’ to be avoided. As with Johnson’s comments on lexical choices, Chesterfield’s ideas on familiarity are associated with class issues, as indicated by his warning that ‘indiscriminate familiarity either offends your superiors, or else dubs you their dependent’, giving ‘your inferiors just, but troublesome and improper claims of equality’. However, Chesterfield’s use of the word ‘indiscriminate’ is pertinent, suggesting that in some cases, familiarity is *not* stigmatized. Indeed, in a letter written a year earlier, Chesterfield opines that ‘the characteristic of a well bred man is to converse with his inferiors without insolence, and with his superiors with respect and ease. He talks to kings, without concern; he trifles with women of the first condition, with familiarity, gaiety, but respect; and converses with his equals, whether he is acquainted with them or not, upon general topics, that are not, however, quite frivolous’.²⁸ Implied in Chesterfield’s advice is that only women of ‘the first condition’ need be treated with a familiarity tempered with respect, a blending of registers inherent in contemporary references to gallantry. As noted earlier, Hume sees gallantry and respect as harmonious emblems of men’s authority. Some advice manuals for women elide familiarity and gallantry, though not respect. In the letters ostensibly written for his daughters, and published in the same year as Chesterfield’s letters to his son, Gregory accepted that ‘a kind of unmeaning gallantry much practised by some men’ is ‘really harmless’; the familiarity which such men are apt to assume, according to Gregory, is ‘easily’ checked by ‘a proper dignity’ in a woman’s behaviour. A few pages earlier in the same volume, however, Gregory warns: ‘Never allow any person, under the pretended sanction of friendship to be so familiar with you as to lose a proper respect for you.’ It is clear from Gregory’s admonition that there is a fine line between acceptable familiarity and disrespect.²⁹

Introductions and early acquaintances provide the focus for many conduct manuals aiming to disseminate ceremonies of politeness. Such texts appeared in the previous century, and continued to be popular throughout the eighteenth century as readers sought to polish the skills required when making introductions in public spaces. *A New Academy of Compliments; or, The Lover’s Secretary* was first published in 1669, but reached its seventeenth edition by 1784.³⁰ Although many of the instructions in this particular manual relate to written correspondence, the early sections address face-to-face meetings. The ceremonial formula is very similar when addressing men and women in various contexts, as shown by examples from ‘Instructions how to become acquainted upon accidentally meeting a Person’ and ‘To court a Gentlewoman upon honourable Terms’:

²⁷ Charlotte Lennox, a friend and associate of Johnson, begins her novel *Henrietta* (1756), with the easy familiarity of a young woman, met by the heroine during a coach journey, and as with Johnson’s story, the protagonist soon rues the rapid development of a relationship facilitated by familiar talk; familiar disclosures leading to troublesome relationships continued to form significant plot-lines, some of the most famous being in Austen’s novels: for example Elizabeth Bennet and George Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*; and Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland, in *Northanger Abbey*.

²⁸ Letter CLVIII (10 August 1749), *Letters*, II, 195; Letter CXIX (17 May 1748), *Letters*, II, 2.

²⁹ Hume, ‘Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences’, *Selected Essays*, ed. by Copley p. 74; Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy*, p. 77 and p. 72.

³⁰ *A New Academy of Compliments; or, The Lover’s Secretary*, 17th edn (London: Brew, 1784), p. 10 and p. 14.

Sir, when I first had the honour to be acquainted with you,
 your courtesy did so far engage me that I am not sufficiently able to
 acknowledge it.

Madam, I account this to be the happiest day I ever had in all the
 course of my life wherein I have the Honour of being acquainted with you.

Both openers begin with an honorific address, followed by a self-orientated, expressive statement, communicating the personal pleasure afforded to the speaker by the meeting. As such, the utterances fulfil a commonly recognized belief that ‘the art of pleasing in conversation consists in making the company pleased with themselves’. However, as Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker have pointed out, eighteenth-century politeness ‘was very directly linked’ to an ideology of dominance as well as to an ideology of Standard English, and the ritualised exchange of compliments was to preserve social distance as much as to mark social concord.³¹ Getting the register and the rituals wrong was therefore central to narrative episodes depicting the dangers of rapid familiarity between characters of socially unequal backgrounds, dangers which indicated the potential for class ‘upnishness’ underlying social faux pas. Indeed, class snobbery is endemic in such depictions, as the reader is implicitly invited to laugh at, and disapprove of, characters whose lexical, grammatical, or interactive features overstep the boundary of ‘dignified manners’.

Burney’s introduction of transgressive characters to her novels engages with the presentation of rituals in contemporary conduct literature, the word ‘familiar’ being commonly employed to make her readers anticipate the subversion of the ceremonious language and behaviour of such rituals. The very word ‘familiarity’ therefore becomes a touchstone of characters barred from the moral orbit of the heroines, regardless of their social sphere. In *Evelina* the heroine’s cousins meet her ‘with great familiarity’ (70), and Mr Smith’s ‘unwelcome familiarity’ shames her (167). Thus the familiar behaviour of the titled Lord Merton and Sir Clement Willoughby associates them with the novel’s comic, ‘vulgar cits’ as well as the sexual aggression of the rakes who surround Evelina in Vauxhall Gardens, and who, ‘with great familiarity desired to run with [her] in a race’ (163).³² In *Cecilia*, the heroine receives coolly the ‘warmth of civility’ of the fashionable Miss Larolles (28) and is equally repelled by the familiar talk of the mercantile Mrs Belfield; Cecilia’s suitors, Mr Morris and Sir Robert Floyer, each occupy a very different social level but are united by their familiar, transgressive behaviour. In *Camilla* too, the heroine meets those who turn familiarity into an elaborate performance, with disarranged, mismatched, or even filthy clothes carefully chosen as a rhetoric of unceremoniousness. Further, when Camilla is mistaken for a servant in a shop, she receives very disrespectful service, demonstrating the links between register and social levels at the time the

³¹ For the advice to make company pleased with themselves, see Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy*, pp. 32-33; Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker, ‘Expressive Speech Acts and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century English’, in *Eighteenth-Century English*, ed. by Hickey, pp. 159-181 (p. 164).

³² In her essay, ‘Miss Burney’, Barbauld calls Sir Clement Willoughby a ‘gay insolent baronet’, and the Branghtons and Mr Smith ‘a group of vulgar cits’: see *The British Novelists*, XXXVIII, p. iii.

novel was drafted, and perhaps filling in the gap in Chesterfield's rule about only speaking with respect to women of the 'first condition'. *The Wanderer* also provides examples of Juliet having to accommodate different registers, whether her false identities introduce her to people from affluent or lowly backgrounds.

Burney's casts of familiar characters are too numerous to discuss in total, and many have been considered already in this study, in terms of their sociolects and genderlects. Analysis of a selected few will therefore explore how familiarity is achieved in Burney's dialogue, and how such represented interactions allow the novels to develop a dialectic from which emerges an ideal model of speech as a mark of respect *and* of sincerity. The next two sections will therefore return to my earlier brief synchronic review of the meaning of familiarity in its eighteenth-century context, which highlights the class tensions associated with the concept, gathering associations of urbane, affable talk between long-standing friends, but also connotations of 'barbarous' language, belonging to 'low' usage. Discussion will therefore focus on groups of characters, representing very different social strata. The next section will select a character whose gender, rank, and affluence secure him authority in the social circle of the heroine. In the creation of such a character, Burney will have relied upon her readers' expectations, which would credit them with an understanding of when conversation should be familiar. Focusing on the conversations of Sir Clement Willoughby in *Evelina*, I will argue that the sociability accepted by codes of politeness allows such characters easy access to the heroines; further, I will argue that the licensing of familiarity to women by politeness allows such characters to hide their aggressive motives. In effect the familiar conversations of Willoughby are emblematic of his predatory intentions, making him morally inferior to the protagonists. Turning then to characters whom readers might associate with the 'low' registers of familiar talk, I examine how Burney's fiction represents the poor and the mercantile ranks. In this final section I will consider how such representations shore up the need to depict lowly characters realistically, with Burney's tendency to use dialogue emblematically; how they depict people who are denied access to education, and knowledge of prevailing manners; and in the case of the poor, how such representations invite us to judge the behaviour of the disempowered, in the context of the 'gentle' expectations of the heroines; further, I will consider how such conversational collisions contribute to the moral as well as the social development of the protagonists.

5.2.1. Disrespectful and Familiar: Sir Clement Willoughby, *Evelina*

One of Burney's claims in her preface to *Evelina* was that the novel's characterization would be drawn from nature, and that it would 'mark the manners of the time'. Although Burney denied basing her characters on specific people, her journals make it clear that when drafting her novels, she drew from real life, as well as from non-fictional discourses discussed elsewhere in this study.³³ Thus Burney assumes that her readers had extraliterary knowledge too, knowledge of the prejudices gathering around certain styles of language, and of the expectations associated with different conversational contexts. Much of the novel's autodiegetic narration is covert, relying on such readerly understanding of 'appropriate' speech styles, and of the fine line between familiarity and respect over which Sir Clement Willoughby steps.³⁴ This kind of blending of literary styles of dialogue and the language of real life characterizes many of Willoughby's interchanges, his heteroglot utterances establishing him as a speaker who tries out various speech genres for different effects, to insinuate himself into Evelina's circle in order to seduce her. Willoughby's familiarity can thus be read as signifying his intentions for 'familiar conversations' of a different kind.

The general sociability and specific gallantry to women, advocated by strictures on politeness throughout the eighteenth century, characterize the behaviour of Lord Orville, the hero seen by many modern critics as Burney's model of gentlemanly civility in the novel.³⁵ Through her depiction of Lord Orville, Burney indicates her admiration of polite principles applied with a sincere desire to please. But in the characterization of Sir Clement Willoughby she demonstrates the difficulties arising when such principles are applied in excess, and employed for egocentric pleasure or personal gain. Willoughby is indeed sociable and amusing; but his confident charm quickly tips into disrespectful and familiar talk, not only damaging Evelina's sense of face, but also threatening to infiltrate her own idiolect and speech style.³⁶ Such encounters therefore teach the heroine how to deal with disrespectful and familiar talk, but also the dangers of indulging in such talk herself, not merely in terms of social consequences, but preserving her own personal

³³ Burney kept a notebook in her pocket, and recorded conversations; in the manuscript fragments in the Berg Collection are scraps of paper containing conversational interchanges between unidentified people or characters.

³⁴ As the conversation progresses, Evelina loads her narration with epithets of disapproval: 'I turned away from this nonsense with real disgust', 'this impetuous man', 'that confident man'.

³⁵ In *Women, Power and Subversion* (p. 41), Newton describes Orville as a 'Prince Charming' whose 'extraordinary virtues' are 'too good to be true'; McIntosh, *Common and Courtly Language* (p. 5), sees Orville as 'the superbly genteel hero of the book'; in 'Monkey Business' (p. 416) Hamilton describes Orville as 'Burney's paragon of masculine behaviour', who is used to endorse and critique 'the system of polite behaviour'; Epstein sees Orville and Villars as 'the novel's tribunal of social behaviour': see Epstein, 'Marginality in Frances Burney's Novels', *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. by Richetti, pp. 198-211 (p. 202); referring to d'Arblay as a moral paragon, Spacks alludes to Burney's letter which describes d'Arblay consciously evoking Orville – 'his Honour, Truth, integrity — with so much of softness, delicacy, & tender humanity', to which Burney adds 'I have never seen such a man in the world, though I have drawn such a man in my imagination' (letter to Burney's sister Susan, April 1793); see *Imagining a Self*, p. 171.

³⁶ John Carter's grammar employs the phrase 'disrespectful and familiar', advising that contractions were inappropriate in formal letters; as noted earlier in this study, advice for the written mode influenced attitudes to spoken language, and was accommodated in the written representation of speech in fiction: see Carter, *A Practical English Grammar, with Exercises of Bad Spelling and Writing in English: or, A Plain and Easy Guide to Speaking and Writing the English Language with Accuracy and Correctness* (Leeds: John Binns, 1773), p. 137 and p. 140; the phrase is used as a starting-point for Tieken-Boon van Ostade's study of abbreviations and contractions in Lowth's letters: "Disrespectful and Too Familiar"? Abbreviations as an Index of Politeness in 18th-Century Letters', in *Syntax, Style and Grammatical Norms: English from 1500-2000*, ed. by Christianne Dalton-Puffer and Others, *Linguistic Insights*, 39 (Bern: Lang, 2006), pp. 229-247.

autonomy and identity. Typical of many readings of Orville is the view that he is the lover-mentor figure in the novel.³⁷ However, as we shall see, although Willoughby's conversations are unsettling and even dangerous, they are vital to the social, personal, and moral development of the heroine. Thus Burney's novel engages with ethical and conduct literature, inviting readers to contemplate the problems inherent in Shaftesbury's notions of politeness, especially those endemic in their attenuated forms as expressed by Chesterfield and later eighteenth-century writers. Indeed, Burney's insistence on the contribution of encounters with vicious characters to the development of the subjectivity of her heroine invokes contemporary debates about the education of women and their role in society, representing in fictional form the ultimate benefits to a young woman when she is no longer infantilized by protected isolation.

Willoughby is one of many fashionable and affluent young male characters who feature in the fiction of Burney and her contemporaries. Described variously by modern commentators as a 'wit', a 'libertine persecutor' and a 'criminal rake', the figure of Willoughby is based on a model of masculinity long popular in literature, art and music. A hundred years before Burney published *Evelina*, Etherege's play, *The Man of Mode* (1676), glamorized its rakish hero, Dorimant, rewarding him with marriage to a beautiful heiress with no promise of reform. In the first decade of the eighteenth century, Richard Steele wrote with similar indulgence of the rake, as 'a Man always to be pitied' who, 'if he lives, is one Day certainly reclaim'd; for his Faults proceed not from Choice or Inclination but from strong Passions and Appetites'. Amatory fiction published in the first half of the eighteenth century showed similar lenience to rakish heroes, their Hobbesian values and dynamic energy often translated into compelling sexual attractions. But by mid-century other narratives were emerging, which questioned such use of masculine authority, and foregrounded its impact on the lives of powerless women. Prose fiction depicted the role of virtuous women in the reformation of rakish characters, giving women agency, and making them central to moral themes; at the same time, virtuous heroines could be depicted as pitiable, and even tragic, defeated by their libertine antagonists.³⁸

Burney's contemporary readers would have recognized the potential for such outcomes when reading the scene introducing Sir Clement Willoughby in Letter XIII. Drawing on such generic types, Burney assigns her villain an opening statement which suggests his libertine status,

³⁷ For studies which include discussion of Orville as the lover/mentor figure see 'Evelina' in *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English*, ed. by Lorna Sage, Germaine Greer and Elaine Showalter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 226; Margaret Anne Doody, 'Beyond *Evelina*: The Individual Novel and the Community of Literature', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 3.4 (1991), 359-372 (p. 366); Julie Park, 'Pains and Pleasures of the Automaton: Frances Burney's Mechanics of Coming Out', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40.1 (2006), 23-99; Helen Cooper, 'Persuasion and Power: The Significance of the Mentor in Three Novels by Frances Burney', in *A Celebration of Frances Burney*, ed. by Clark, pp. 112-125 (p. 113); and Hye-Soo Lee, 'Women, Comedy, and *A Simple Story*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 20.2, 2008, 197-217 (p. 211).

³⁸ These descriptions of Willoughby are to be found in: Straub, *Divided Fictions*, p. 157; Epstein, *The Iron Pen*, p. 97; and Mackie, p. 152; for Steele's reference to the rake see *Tatler* 27; the fiction of Samuel Richardson presents the reformed and unreformed rake; Burney's novels feature several rakish figures: in *Evelina*, Sir John Belmont is the heroine's remorseful father whose youthful rakish activities resulted in Evelina's birth and her mother's demise, and Sir Clement Willoughby, Lord Merton, and his associates are unreformed rakes; in *Camilla*, the heroine's brother Lionel, has an illegitimate son with a woman he has no intention of marrying; and in *The Wanderer*, the heroine is propositioned by her own half-brother (who does not know they are related) and tries to rescue a young seamstress, Flora Pierson, from the advances of the rakish Sir Lyell Sycamore, whom Epstein has described as 'a direct descendant of Sir Clement Willoughby' in *The Iron Pen*, p. 183; rakish heroes, and rakish characters presented ambivalently, can be found in the work of Charlotte Smith and Mary Brunton.

when he asks, 'Is it really possible that a man whom you have honoured with your acceptance, can fail to be at hand to profit from your goodness?' (33). Here the focus on masculine 'profit' from a woman's 'goodness' calls to mind earlier romances, in which the commercialization of language in sexual relations converted feeling into exchanges of value beyond the purely romantic.³⁹ The clash of languages of the amatory rake and the virtuous heroine creates tension, but also would have raised questions regarding the 'new' direction which Burney claimed for her novel in her preface.⁴⁰ To some extent, Burney draws on her literary forebears, exposing the dangers of politeness by revealing the ease with which sociability and seeming protectiveness can slide into the territorial intimacy of seduction. Further, Willoughby's 'free' and confident interaction style can be read as an indication of the power invested in him by society, allowing him to dominate those below him in rank, and speak familiarly to women, as with children and servants. Willoughby has already established that Evelina is a 'nobody' from the country, and may be using his power over her, as a woman *not* of the first condition, to treat her disrespectfully. Such an approach reflects Chesterfield's concept of politeness as a code not to be applied universally. Inherent in Willoughby's approach too, is the view articulated by Chesterfield that women 'are only children of a larger growth', lacking in 'solid reasoning' and 'good sense'; it is therefore a man's right to indulge their 'tattle', but also his responsibility to set them right.⁴¹ Thus Willoughby might be described as exercising his authority responsibly, his rigid pursuit of the truth contributing to Evelina's learning experience as she comes to understand the consequences of lying. However, Burney uncovers the gendered and class-based nature of the power relations at work here, offering a different hierarchy of values which places the moral autonomy of the doubly-disadvantaged individual before the rights of patriarchy, as represented by Willoughby. In this respect Burney's work can be placed in a trajectory of novels ranging from the conservative fiction of Samuel Richardson, to the radical works of Mary Robinson and Robert Bage, novels which dislodge moral worth from the confines of aristocratic rank. In addition, mediating wider, philosophical debates on the relationship of social identity to the core self (as considered by such writers as Godwin), Burney's presentation of Willoughby as a polyphonic speaker offers implicit condemnation of the slippery nature of his 'character', his shifting personae contrasting markedly with the solid, social features corresponding with Lord Orville's stable self.

Letter XIII foregrounds Willoughby's sociability, containing an account of an assembly in London. Described as a 'very fashionable, gay-looking man of about 30 years of age' (33), Willoughby addresses Evelina directly, asking her to dance. Caught in the conundrum of not daring to refuse, yet not daring to accept the offer of a man to whom she has not been formally

³⁹ In sentimental fiction, charitable acts in response to sympathetic engagement with the plight of others can be read as literal, commercial transactions, the arousal of emotion in the benefactor paid for by cash; for a discussion of such a reading, see Bending and Bygrave's introduction to Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*, pp. xix-xxi; the introduction also draws attention to the way language and 'scenes' in Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, exploit 'the possibility of double entendre in the discourse' (p. xix).

⁴⁰ As outlined in my Introduction; the claim referred to is that Burney will disappoint those readers expecting to be transported to 'the fantastic regions of Romance' where 'Reason is an outcast', because her heroine is 'the offspring of Nature'; nor does she intend to imitate 'the great writers' by 'pursuing the same ground' (7).

⁴¹ Letter CXXIC (5 September 1748), *Letters*, II, 56.

introduced, Evelina pretends that she is already engaged. But instead of withdrawing, Willoughby stays by her side, and insists on knowing where her partner is. Narration establishes Willoughby's familiar conversational style from the outset, reflecting definitions of familiarity found in Johnson's dictionary: Evelina recalls her polite stratagem in refusing Willoughby, but notes how 'instead of being satisfied with my answer, and leaving me, according to my expectation, he walked at my side, and, with the greatest ease imaginable, began a conversation in the free style which only belongs to old and intimate acquaintance' (33). Evelina's letter gives some indication of what this 'free style' might be, by observing that Willoughby (in contrast to Orville) asks her 'a thousand questions concerning *the partner to whom I was engaged*', the italicized words quoting Willoughby, but their changed typography conveying an idiosyncratic tone, and capturing something of Willoughby's insistent probing.⁴²

Willoughby's sociability is presented through his interest in Evelina's plight. However, such seeming protectiveness rapidly tips into familiarity, as he engages with her situation in a way only expected of family or old friends. Modern politeness theory highlights expression of solidarity as a way of attending to positive face, a principle reflected in eighteenth-century maxims, advising accommodation to the present company. But Willoughby's vehemence is inappropriate for his relationship status with Evelina, whom he has only just met, his invective against the absent partner, threatening to insult Evelina for accepting such a 'despicable' man. The use of em dash and exclamation marks conveys the fits and starts of Willoughby's apparent passion. In addition, he interrupts Evelina on several occasions, a disregard for ceremony rarely assigned to more worthy characters, even at moments of high tension, and emphasized in the first edition, and the manuscript, by double em dash punctuation.⁴³ Willoughby's language and speech acts are also misjudged for the context, his insults of the absent partner being a comical mixture of theatrical flounces ('I could bastinado him!') and 'low' slurs, dismissing Evelina's partner as a 'fool', a 'booby' and a 'careless fellow' (35 and 33).⁴⁴ Such quotidian phrases disrupt expectations of genteel language, especially at such a venue; Burney's manuscript version of the novel assigns the insult 'shabby rascal' to Willoughby too, an epithet changed in the first edition to 'shabby dog' and in the second edition to 'shabby wretch' (34).⁴⁵ Such changes indicate that Burney went to some trouble to establish the right register and tone in this episode.⁴⁶

In spite of such inflated commitment to Evelina's cause, Willoughby's language is not, at first, violent or abusive. Indeed, the early interchanges resemble the feminized talk of two

⁴² Joe Bray notes that some of Richardson's changes give Pamela a harder, contemptuous edge; it is possible that Burney's use of italics in this instance is to convey Evelina's detachment from Willoughby, but it is more likely that the italics capture Willoughby's contempt for her lie: see "Attending to the Minute": Richardson's Revisions of Italics in *Pamela*, in *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page*, ed. by Joe Bray, Miriam Handley and Anne C. Henry (Burlington: Ashgate 2000), pp. 105-119 (p.116).

⁴³ Fair copy of *Evelina*, Berg Collection, fol 111; *Evelina; or, A Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, 1st edn, 3 vols (London: T. Lowndes, 1778), 1, pp. 62-3: Mrs Mirvan is interrupted, '— you never mentioned —' by Willoughby's 'O Madam!'; other examples of double em dash draw attention to Willoughby's interruptions (p. 62 and p. 63).

⁴⁴ As Willoughby seemingly becomes more enraged, his epithets grow more abusive: he calls the absent partner an 'ingrate', 'Ungrateful puppy' (35), and 'a sneaking, shame-faced despicable puppy!' (37).

⁴⁵ Fair copy of *Evelina*, Berg Collection, fol 111; *Evelina*, 1st edn, 1, p. 58; 3rd edition changes (based on the 2nd edition) are quoted from the Norton edition.

⁴⁶ A further example is when Willoughby exclaims 'Ungrateful puppy! — I could bastinado him!' (p. 35), preserved from the first edition, p. 61; 'Insensible dog!' appears in the Berg MS, fol 111.

established confidantes, as Willoughby implies his love of dancing when he comments ‘why, Madam, you are missing the most delightful dance in the world!’ and sympathizes, ‘I don’t wonder that you are disconcerted, Madam, it is really very provoking. The best part of the evening will be absolutely lost. He deserves not that you should wait for him’ (33).⁴⁷ Indeed, his engagement with Evelina’s affairs is expressed through his interest in the personal appearance of the absent partner, as he asks ‘what coat has he on?'; and through his gossipy opinion: ‘What! did he address you in a coat not worth looking at?’ (34). Such appropriating of conversational styles usually associated with women presents Willoughby’s dialogue as ‘drag’ dialogue, a comic technique borrowed by Austen in *Northanger Abbey*, in Henry Tilney’s parodic talk of dresses and fabrics to Catherine Morland and Mrs Allen.⁴⁸ As in this instance, the protagonists laugh, the incongruity of non-foppish male identity and feminized discourse creating comic disjunction in both novels. In Burney’s novel, Lord Orville is described as feminized, the message being that he is non-threatening and in tune with the gentleness of the heroine’s own gendered identity, while still retaining his masculine potency. In this particular incident, Evelina is disarmed by Willoughby’s efforts to bond through gossip, ‘How ridiculous! I really could not help laughing.’⁴⁹ However, it is from this point that Willoughby’s discourse switches into a different mode.

Assuming the rights of gallantry, Willoughby’s language privileges seduction as a chief characteristic of this code.⁵⁰ Reading Evelina’s laughter as approval of his forwardness, Willoughby interlards his comments on the absent partner with insults and compliments of Evelina herself. Modern theorists of politeness agree with their eighteenth-century forebears on the function of compliments as approval of interlocutors’ sense of self worth. But the success of compliments depends very strongly on various contextual factors, which, if mismanaged, can result in compliments transforming into face-threatening effects. Chesterfield wrote of the power of compliments in a way which licensed their particular use to women, advising that women should be flattered, and that in particular, a beautiful woman knows flattery is her due.⁵¹ Willoughby’s flattery of Evelina is depicted as rapidly switching from compliments of her moral worth – of her ‘goodness’ and ‘patience’ – to comments on her physical attractions, as when he observes that she is ‘most lovely of mortals’ or that ‘Softness itself is painted in [her] eyes’ (34). However, Willoughby’s reference to painting assigns artfulness to Evelina, an allegation which undermines the positive aspects of his utterance. Such an accusation underpins his later

⁴⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2 informal and familiar conversation between women who have only just met was also considered inappropriate; Willoughby’s talk resembles that of a long-standing female friend here.

⁴⁸ *Northanger Abbey*, p. 21: ‘“How can you,” said Catherine, laughing, “be so —” she had almost said, strange.’

⁴⁹ Approaches to gossip have traditionally discussed it as decentralized and non-productive, however, following the work of anthropologist Max Gluckman, the function of gossip is increasingly seen as a stabilizing force, reinforcing social norms, and defining and binding distinct groups within speech communities: see Gluckman, ‘Gossip and Scandal’, *Current Anthropology*, 4.3 (1963), 307-316; building on the work of Gluckman, Spacks applies such theories to literature, arguing that gossip sustains potentially subversive female groups within communities; seeing gossip as a function of intimacy which demands a process of relatedness: see Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 5 and p. 261. It is likely too that Robert Paine’s ideas of gossip are relevant to Willoughby; refuting Gluckman, Pain argues that the individual privileges himself above the interests of the group when taking part in gossip: see ‘What is Gossip About? An Alternative Hypothesis’, *Man*, 2.2 (1967), 278-85 (p. 281). I am grateful to a personal communication by Markman Ellis for drawing my attention to anthropological studies.

⁵⁰ In several letters, Chesterfield links gallantry with flirtation or seduction; for example in a letter dated 16 November 1750, he writes that French women of fashion have gallantries – but not with English men: see *Letters*, III, 33.

⁵¹ Letter XCVII (16 October 1747), in *Letters*, I, 285.

compliment also, 'How conscious you must be, all beautiful that you are, that those charming airs serve only to heighten the bloom of your complexion!' (37), ascribing to Evelina a readiness to capitalize on her physical appeal in order to ensnare men. These compliments therefore fail on various levels. Firstly, in terms of Chesterfield's assertions that beautiful women think compliments their due, the recipient in this instance seems not aware of her powers, and is therefore little gratified by such flattery. Secondly, such insinuations of artifice suggest the familiar stereotype of an experienced flirt, and can do little to validate the image Evelina has of herself, or indeed an image she wishes to display. We are to deduce that either Willoughby has made a huge error of judgement in the kind of compliments this woman would wish to hear, or he intends to provoke her, his clichéd images of beauty consciously selected to insult. Gina Campbell has noted how Willoughby twists Evelina's language, and that 'by using the language of courtly love and responding to Evelina as if she too were using it, Willoughby seeks to pervert Evelina's own moral language'. In Campbell's argument, Willoughby's 'rhetoric depends upon a discontinuity between polite form and wicked intent'.⁵² However, Campbell's foregrounding of Willoughby's perversion of Evelina's moral language, assumes that Burney accepted the 'polite' forms which she assigned him, without questioning.

In Willoughby's dialogue, politeness to women is defined by gallantry, and is a form of transaction – not merely an exchange of utterances, but of flattery given in exchange for tangible reward. In this instance the reward is to dance with Evelina, but Willoughby's ultimate aim, as stated earlier, is seduction, supporting a reading of Willoughby's compliments as 'amorous intercourse' which goes beyond 'courtliness or devotion to the ladies'.⁵³ Having complimented her on her charm, her sweetness, and the loveliness of her eyes, Willoughby follows up with accusations of cruelty. Sensitive to the image of the suffering lover, Campbell is right to note the courtly elements of Willoughby's dialogue. She overlooks, however, the language of the rake embedded in the same exchange, language which goes further than assigning courtly language to Evelina, but rather casts her in the role of a provocative tease: 'You could not, surely, have the barbarity so wantonly to trifle with my misery' (34). In *The Man of Mode*, Etherege's rakish character, Medley, uses similar language when describing Harriet's 'wanton eyes' (I.121-2), and in his introduction to the play, John Barnard's glossing of the word 'wanton' draws attention to the 'libertine values' which 'set the wide range of the word's senses in tension'.⁵⁴ Barnard notes that at 'primary level, Harriet's eyes are sexually alive and playful', but that 'the context inverts the morally condemnatory sense of lascivious, unchaste, and remembers other meanings – free, unrestrained (poet.); capricious, giddy; reckless of decorum'. Evelina's laughter invites a reading of her response as 'reckless of decorum'; nonetheless Willoughby's primary meaning is that Evelina is sexually alive, and ripe for seduction. Thus Willoughby *overwrites* Evelina's language with his rakish talk, using conversational space as a palimpsest to erase the individuality of Evelina's words, thereby denying her subjectivity.

⁵² Gina Campbell, 'How to Read Like a Gentleman', p. 573.

⁵³ Gallantry: *OED* 5: 'courtliness or devotion to the ladies'; *OED* 6: 'a polite speech or courtesy'; *OED* 8: 'amorous intercourse'.

⁵⁴ *The Man of Mode*, p. 15.

Indeed, the question posed to Evelina reveals the rhetoric supporting Willoughby's persuasiveness, locating any artifice firmly in his own utterances. His raising a question simply to answer it, '— (hesitating and looking earnestly at me,) unless, indeed, — it is a partner of your own *creating*? [...] But No!' (34), and his denial of what is in fact his main reading of Evelina, 'you could not, surely, have the barbarity so wantonly to trifle with my misery', reveals his willingness to employ classic features of rhetoric, his use of hypophora and apophysis indicating a familiarity with public speaking, as well as a tendency to address, rather than converse with the people in his company. This performance-based approach is evident too in the theatricality of Willoughby's apparent solidarity, as when 'he suddenly stamped his foot, and cried out in a passion, 'Fool! ideot! [sic] booby!' (34). In his study of language through literature, Paul Simpson asks what theatre audiences should make of violations of politeness and implicatures – what are a speaker's communicative goals.⁵⁵ Evelina's musings imply that she asks herself the same question, as she confesses, 'I began to apprehend he was a madman, and stared at him with the utmost astonishment.' Willoughby's use of politeness to be impolite is beyond her ken; having told a white lie herself, a mitigated face-threatening act to soften her refusal of his invitation to dance, Evelina cannot conceive why *he* should behave in such a way towards a stranger. It is only when she discovers that he has already acquainted himself with her social and educational background that she reflects (as a coda in this same letter) that 'I suppose, he concluded he might talk as much nonsense as he pleased to me' (40). Evelina's reflection confirms that she was right to distrust Willoughby's polite gallantry, a code which in its conception was meant to defend 'the vulnerable and proverbially beautiful sex', but which was becoming morally and politically contested during the period in which Burney wrote. Evelina's coda also shows her sensitivity to class-based prejudices involved in the application of politeness to women. But as earlier discussion of Chesterfield's advice has shown, prejudices relating to rank and cultural background were inextricably related to gender, and preconceptions about gender roles inform much of Willoughby's interaction.⁵⁶

For her contemporary readers, Willoughby's disruptions of the ceremonies associated with introductions in public places would have provided a compelling indication of his disrespectful approach to women, the freedoms of his language suggesting, for some, libertine propensities in his sexual mores. Such disregard for the other's sense of self-respect is also a feature of asymmetric power relationships, and read in the context of Chesterfield's comment licensing familiar talk to women, and disrespect of women *not* of 'good condition', Willoughby's comments can be seen to reflect his image of his own authority over Evelina, both because of her social status and because she is a woman. However, Evelina's account recognizes that her laughter encourages Willoughby's familiarity, and that her lies (easily penetrated) depict her in a

⁵⁵ Paul Simpson, *Language Through Literature: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 168.

⁵⁶ Laura Runge discusses original conceptions of gallantry, and argues that 'female writers of the eighteenth century voice considerable dissent from the general opinion' in 'Beauty and Gallantry: A Model of Polite Conversation Revisited', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 25.1 (2001), 43-63 (p. 43); Barbara Taylor discusses the war of ideas over gallantry, in 'Feminist Versus Gallants: Sexual Matters and Morals in Enlightenment Britain' in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, pp. 30-52; Taylor discusses Burke's politicization of gallantry and Wollstonecraft's response, pp. 32-33; Judith Butler notes that 'it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained': see *Gender Trouble*, p. 6.

very bad light. Indeed, her frank efforts to check Willoughby's overtures reveal her lack of polish, as well as her inexperience, eliciting from him the mocking question: 'My dear creature [...] why where could you be educated?' (37). Such a question rests on Chesterfieldian assumptions that women are children of larger growth, whose 'tattle' may be treated with condescension. Further, this focus on Evelina's education, or lack of education, is key to the power relationships at play here, for in many respects, although Willoughby's obsessive questions about her partner violate notions of politeness, they resemble those in a teacher-pupil interchange, where a mentor is trying to gain information from a child. It is as if Evelina's lie has changed the frame here, reinforcing Willoughby's right to exert a pedagogic authority, and justifying Evelina's subordinate role in the interchange. On some level also Evelina senses the ludic function of Willoughby's discourse – this is a role-play to which they both subscribe – so that she laughs at him, and of the image of the absent partner which he presents to her, as much as she condemns him. The interaction therefore moves through different stages, from light-hearted school-mastery, to the more serious humiliation of Evelina before Orville and her friends.

The question and answer approach, when educating the young, has long distinguished pedagogic texts, and is to be found in various eighteenth-century publications for scholastic and domestic use. Such texts produce and reproduce class-room models, but some advocate applying the model to any situation, never missing an opportunity to ask questions, in order to exercise a child's reasoning faculties and activate his or her memory. Maria Edgeworth consciously invokes this structure of interaction, as well as such scenarios, in her fiction, producing scenes developing the faculties of children, though in Edgeworth's inscription, the children are also encouraged to ask questions. In creating the scene where Evelina meets Sir Clement Willoughby, Burney seems to have a pedagogic model in mind in which the tutor leads and the child responds, and this becomes especially evident if the scene is analysed using modern linguistic tools which focus on spoken, not written, interactions.⁵⁷ John Sinclair and Malcolm Coulthard's pedagogic model of classroom discourse therefore provides illuminating insights into the asymmetric power relations involved in the introductory interchange between Evelina and Willoughby, and draws attention to the educative function of their exchanges. The model offers a structure of interaction in teacher-led lessons. Such lessons are made up of a series of transactions (topics within the whole lesson). The transactions consist of exchanges between teacher and pupil, and the exchanges contain

⁵⁷ The popular work of Ann Fisher provides lists of question and answer interchanges which anticipate what pupils might ask: see Ann Fisher, *A New Grammar, with Exercises of Bad English; or, An Easy Guide to Speaking and Writing the English Language Properly and Correctly*, 3rd edn (London: for the Author, 1753), p. 60; others followed this approach, for example Ellen Devis, whose work ran to eighteen editions: *The Accidence; or, First Rudiments of English Grammar Designed for the Use of Young Ladies, with an appendix containing an Example of Grammatical Construction; Maxims and Reflections, by Way of Exercises for Learners; and some Occasional Remarks and References, by a Lady* (London: for the Author, 1775); Lady Ellenor Fenn, whose work ran to several editions, and who also wrote under the names Mrs Teachwell and Mrs Lovechild, asserts that she writes 'for *real mothers*', and advises: 'You walk into the garden; the caterpillars are devouring the stocks; a butterfly is fluttering about; a bee is at work; all these little incidents furnish subjects of *rational amusement*' see *Rational Sports in Dialogues Passing Among the Children of a Family. Designed as a Hint to Mothers How They May Inform the Minds of their Little People Respecting the Objects with Which They Are Surrounded*, 1783, 3rd edn (London: John Marshall, 1785), pp. xii-xiii; for a discussion of the role of domestic and social conversation in educating the young, linked specifically to Hume's ideas, see Michèle Cohen, "'A Proper Exercise for the Mind': Conversation and Education in the Long Eighteenth Century", in *The Concept and Practice of Conversation*, ed. by Halsey and Slinn, pp. 103-127; in Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) there are numerous examples of the Percivals conversing with children and adults.

different 'moves': the teacher initiates (I) and the pupil responds (R); often the teacher then gives feedback to the pupil (F). Sinclair and Coulthard later adapted the IRF model to recognize that Response could also include another initiating statement.⁵⁸ The introductory conversation between Evelina and Willoughby conforms to this pattern, signifying his instructive role in the interchange.

The conversation consists of ten transactions, which include recurring topic loops, as Willoughby asks Evelina to dance with him, and persistently asks about her absent partner. The transactions are made up of exchanges extending over several pages; other characters are occasionally involved, but most of the exchanges are between Willoughby and Evelina, the former assuming a role usually taken by a teacher. Almost all are two-part exchanges, with Willoughby initiating and Evelina responding. The use of vocatives underscores Willoughby's dominant role, for Evelina addresses him as 'Sir' fifteen times, her most frequent use being when she is most weary, but also when she is most blunt, 'No, Sir — It is your absence, and that alone, can set everything right' (39). In contrast, Willoughby addresses Evelina as 'Madam' only seven times, the most frequent usages occurring when he is warning Evelina 'gravely' and with mock 'solemnity' not to dance with strangers; thus Willoughby uses the respectful address satirically, whereas Evelina uses it to mitigate negative politeness, when she is defending herself.

Evelina's subservient role is evident in her brief responses, her silence, laughter, or body language, as she turns away from Willoughby, or stares at him expressively. There is only one occasion, during the eleventh exchange of the second transaction when she uses her response in acknowledgement ('Indeed, Sir'), but then uses the turn to initiate her own directive act, commanding Willoughby to leave (34):

R/I: 'Indeed, Sir,' said I very seriously, 'I must insist upon your leaving me; you are quite a stranger to me, and I am both unused, and averse to your language and your manners.'

R: This seemed to have some effect on him. He made me a low bow, begged my pardon, and vowed he would not for the world offend me.

Indeed, Evelina follows this up by her only initiator comment in the whole conversation:

I: 'Then, Sir, you must leave me,' cried I.

R: 'I am gone, Madam, I am gone!' with a most tragical air; and he marched away.⁵⁹

But Willoughby's seeming concession is immediately negated in the next exchange, when he returns, asking 'could you really let me go, and not be sorry?'

⁵⁸ The IRF moves can be described in terms of 'acts' which are functional: three major acts in the initiator move are information, direction and elicitation acts; common responses include acknowledgement; and feedback includes evaluation; John Sinclair and Malcolm Coulthard adapted the model in *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), and 'Towards an Analysis of Discourse', in *Advances in Spoken Discourse Analysis*, ed. by M. Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-34; later theorists have modified the model, but the basic IR/I F structure still stands as characterising this pedagogic style of interaction.

⁵⁹ The dramatic nature of the dialogue is evident in the elliptic, 'with a most tragical air', the phrase evoking stage directions, to emphasize the performance based nature of Willoughby's responses.

Browbeaten by Willoughby's incessant questioning, Evelina is forced to admit that she cannot provide the name and appearance of her partner, which leads Willoughby to deliver his lesson: 'Never dance in public with a stranger, — with one whose name you are unacquainted with, — who may be a mere adventurer, — a man of no character, — consider to what impertinence you may expose yourself' (38). Willoughby is, of course, describing himself, and Evelina's laughter indicates that she has learnt a lesson about her failure to manage such a situation. When tackling Willoughby's future assaults, she will be more assertive. Willoughby's admonishment draws attention to his mentor role, indicating that Burney intended that her heroine should learn as much from her libertine figure, as from her more conventionally worthy preceptors.⁶⁰ However, the nature of Evelina's lesson here suggests that it is as much to do with her own powers of reflections and intellect, as Willoughby's ability to instruct. As we shall see, Willoughby's teacherly catechism leads Evelina deeper into trouble, until she is driven to tears. It is only when she processes the experience by writing her letter, that she expands her social understanding, and also her knowledge of herself.⁶¹ Thus the scene supports Shaftesburean notions of the usefulness of social collision, and reflection, to the development of a stable self, even while it dramatizes the difficulties of women's involvement in such developmental opportunities. Further, the scene simultaneously explores the importance of respectful, social behaviour, and exposes the flaws and corruptions of the codes governing such behaviour.

Here and elsewhere in the novel, Willoughby's interchanges indicate that his disrespectful and familiar conversation style is particularly reserved for women. Eventually drawn into the discussion about the dance, Mrs Mirvan puts up more of a fight for the conversational floor, but she too has to concede to Willoughby's ardent interruptions, as he persuades her to countenance him:

'I will even treat you with your own plainness [...] I must therefore tell you, once for all ——'

'O pardon me Madam!' interrupted he, eagerly, 'you must not proceed with those words, *once for all*; no, if *I* have been too *plain*, and though a *man*, deserve a rebuke, remember, dear ladies, that if you *copy*, you ought in justice to *excuse* me.' (35)

Willoughby tries to mitigate his rudeness by reminding Mrs Mirvan and Evelina that his manhood gives him a right to be plain. Such assertions of masculine rights are emphasized in the manuscript copy, where Mrs Mirvan's phrase '*once for all*' and '*plainness*' are also emphasized, highlighting Willoughby's repetition in his reply; Mrs Mirvan's emphasis is dropped in the published versions, the effect being to draw attention to Willoughby's focus on his masculine rights, rather than his mimicry.⁶² However, changes in the wording, from '*excuse it*' to '*excuse*

⁶⁰ In 'Persuasion and Power' (113), Cooper observes that Burney favoured the word 'monitor' in her novels and journals, a word associated in dictionaries with 'admonishment'; Cooper's discussion does not include Willoughby.

⁶¹ Isabel Rivers discusses the contempt evident in 'Soliloquy', I and III, of Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks*, for the catechistic teaching associated with religion, which discourages later, adult self-questioning and reflection crucial to 'keeping' people 'the self-same persons', and 'comprehensible' to themselves: *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, p. 117.

⁶² The Berg Collection, The New York Public Library: fair copy of *Evelina*, fol 111.

me' emphasize the personal nature of Willoughby's preceptor role. But Willoughby's interpretation of plain speaking goes beyond preferred notions of eighteenth-century English masculinity, to a bullying of both women to assert his own will.⁶³ Such impolite behaviour contravenes contemporary mores, which recognized the superior social and political power of gentlemen but stipulated that they used this power benevolently and courteously. Bullish behaviour to women, servants, children and even animals was seen as an abuse of the authority invested in men from genteel and aristocratic ranks, a mark of their lack of humanity as well as a mere lack of polish. Thus, in the hierarchy of discourses on the subject of behaviour to others, Willoughby fails. This predilection for disrespectful and familiar ways of speaking to women approximates the discourse style preferred by Captain Mirvan, who prides himself on the 'rough savage bluntness of John Bull' – which many eighteenth-century commentators eschewed.⁶⁴

Willoughby's disrespectful and familiar discourse style when speaking to women contrasts to his way of speaking to men. At a point in the discussion when Captain Mirvan inquires what is happening, Willoughby asks him and Mrs Mirvan for help. To Mirvan, he makes 'a low bow' before saying, 'Only, Sir, a slight objection which this young lady makes to dancing with me, and which I am endeavouring to obviate. I shall think myself greatly honoured, if you will intercede for me' (35). The Captain showing no inclination to help, Willoughby then turns to his lady: ' "You, Madam," said the man (who looked delighted, to Mrs. Mirvan,) "you, I hope, will have the goodness to speak for me." ' Both utterances begin with honorific modes of address, but the syntax supports very different levels of respect. Willoughby's address to Mirvan is prefixed by clauses highlighting the honour conferred on the recipient; the subordinate clause 'if you will intercede for me' empowers Mirvan, the word 'intercede' connoting the superior authority of saints and angels. Further, Willoughby employs high-level vocabulary here, many of his polysyllabic words deriving from Latin or French. In contrast, his address to Mrs Mirvan is articulated in plain-syllabled words deriving from Old English. Further, his approach is more direct – 'You, Madam [...] you, I hope', throwing the onus on Mrs Mirvan's personal ethical code, rather than highlighting his own obligation. Later, Willoughby addresses Lord Orville, and the same switch, or heightening in discourse level is evident in lexical and syntactic choices. Willoughby draws attention to his 'usurpation' of Evelina, the 'philosophical coldness' of Orville, and his own 'endeavours to entertain the lady', adding, 'and your lordship will not be a little flattered, if acquainted with the difficulty which attended my procuring the honour of only one dance'. This kind of code-switching may reflect what modern linguists celebrate as accommodation features, the ability of speakers to converge their talk in order to close personal, social or cultural gaps between interlocutors. Such accommodation was also encouraged by

⁶³ For a discussion of the juxtaposition of 'Frenchified effeminacy' and the 'native plain' manners by which many Englishmen wished to distinguish themselves, see Michèle Cohen, ' "Manners" Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830', *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), 312-329 (pp. 322-3); for a discussion of the preferred plain style and its significance for national character, class and individual worth, see Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire*, pp. 200-203.

⁶⁴ 'Sincerity is but another term for bluntness of which the natives of this land are frequently accused by foreigners. Politeness must be suffered to soften the harshness, the rigour of it, and to administer it in a manner that it may be taken without offence; but the rough savage bluntness of John Bull upon some occasions shews him to be uncivilized and uncultivated': article entitled 'Sincerity not always a Virtue' dated April 1792, in *The Carlton House Magazine or Annals of Taste, Fashion, and Politeness*, 5 vols (London: W. and J. Stratford, 1792-1796), 1 (1792), 164-5 (p. 165).

Chesterfield's polite precepts to 'take the tone' of whatever company one is in. But such precepts, formulated mid-century, were out of tune with cultural preferences by the time they were published in the 1770s. Dror Wahrman has argued that this decade saw a shift in tastes and beliefs from notions which celebrated plurality of identities, to ideas promoting core qualities, and the notion of a more stable self. Willoughby's tendency to change his language and manner when speaking to women highlights his gendered disrespect, and also his lack of understanding of the intelligence and sensitivity of the minds he engages. Further, in the context of the decade in which the novel was written, the slippery nature of his speech would have indicated his selfish, unstable principles, evoking contemporary debates about Chesterfield's letters teaching the morals of a whore.⁶⁵

The danger of Sir Clement Willoughby's influence is evident in its impact on Evelina's behaviour during this introductory scene, since her language and interaction style converge with his, indicating a power he exerts over her mind. It is only in the reflective, narrational comments, which Evelina inserts later as she records the incident for her guardian, that she realises how she was drawn into the current of Willoughby's rhetoric. But even these interpolations echo something of Willoughby's own language – as when Evelina observes, 'Fool! To involve myself in such difficulties!' (37), resembling Willoughby's own passionate outburst at the absent partner earlier, 'Fool! Ideot! Booby!' During the introductory conversation itself, Evelina's language becomes more and more impolite and emotional, mirroring the utterances of Willoughby himself. At first her responses are short and conciliatory, but when Willoughby becomes more inflamed at her absent partner, she takes a firm but polite stance, insisting that Willoughby leave her. At this stage she can confidently emphasize the difference in their conversational style, 'I am both unused, and averse to your language and your manners' (34). During the second stage of Willoughby's persecution, when he has danced with Evelina and she walks up the dance with him, his questions become more intrusive as he drives home his victory, demanding 'whence that anxiety? — Why are those lovely eyes perpetually averted?' (36). Having lied about her partner, Evelina chooses this moment to tell the truth, but her language is brutal as she tells Willoughby that he has 'destroyed' all her happiness for the evening, and 'tormented' her 'to death' by intruding himself upon her 'for a partner'. The similarity of her utterances to his own are not lost on Willoughby, who notes 'we ought to be better friends, since there seems to be something of sympathy in the frankness of our dispositions' (36). Evelina's narrative recognizes the effect Willoughby has on her, drawing out an aspect of her nature which she has, until this moment, kept within bounds. At one point she refers to him as her 'evil genius' (39), the word genius suggesting her recognition of Willoughby's superior intellect which has outwitted her efforts to lie her way out of committing a social faux pas by dancing with a stranger. But the phrase 'evil genius' also connotes Evelina's darker nature, which is drawn out by contact with Willoughby,

⁶⁵ Letter xcvii (16 October 1747), in *Letters*, 1, 282; Wahrman, *passim*; for Johnson's judgement on the nature of the morality in Chesterfield's letters see Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1, 144.

and her own fear that further intercourse could threaten the stability of her own values, and make her behave unlike her usual self.⁶⁶

Willoughby's shifting registers and discourse styles prefigure the shape-shifting qualities which he exhibits throughout, qualities which allow him to ingratiate himself with Captain Mirvan and socialise with rakes in pursuit of prostitutes in Vauxhall Gardens, but which also gain him access to Mrs Beamont's circle in Bristol, and allow him to impersonate Lord Orville in a letter. In contrast, Orville's stability is lauded by Evelina's narration, which notes the consistency of his attention and respect for her, regardless of her status (25). In the incident with Willoughby, it is Orville whose 'politeness' relieves Evelina, just as his earlier actions protected her from Lovel, associating him with the chivalrous code of conduct admired by Burke. Such understated courtliness, described as a little old-fashioned in the novel by Mrs Selwyn, distinguishes Orville from his contemporaries, and brings him closer to the perfect, if passive, model of goodness, Mr Villars. Further, his desire to value his worth by his ability to promote the happiness of others indicates Burney's use of the sympathy model of moral philosophy to inform her reported dialogue and promote Orville as a compassionate man.⁶⁷ The consistency of behaviour characterizing Orville has invited criticism by some modern scholars, who read him as 'bland and boring', or note the 'courtesy book manners', which make him 'too good to be true'.⁶⁸ However, the hero is characterized in contradistinction to Willoughby, the democratic benevolence and respect of the former according with the views expressed by Mr Belfield, in *Cecilia*, that the bow, attention, and fear of offending 'ought to extend to all mankind' (735).

Burney's novel fulfils genre expectations by providing a companionate marriage for the heroine, with a character whom many critics have seen as an idealized figure of masculinity. Nevertheless, troubling distrust of the power invested in such hegemonic figures emerges, through the dialogue, as a counterpoint to such romantic and conservative values. The characterization of Willoughby explores how such power is abused; and how sociability and politeness, though civil and civilizing in principle, can be self-serving and dangerous in practice. In particular, as Wollstonecraft will do over a decade later, Burney's novel exposes the threat of licensed, familiar gallantry to the autonomy of women, inviting her readers to ask whether such 'manly assurance' as Willoughby's can 'be termed respect for the sex', and warning how such asymmetric power relationships might habituate the disempowered to abuse.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ The first meaning accords with the primary definition in Johnson's dictionary, which describes 'genius' as 'the ruling power of men' and cites *Macbeth*, 'There's none but he | Whose being do I fear: and under him | My genius is rebuk'd'; the fourth meaning provided by the dictionary is 'disposition of nature'.

⁶⁷ Adam Smith saw sympathy as 'the amiable virtue of humanity'; in popular literature, an article in *The Universal Magazine*, 1778, wrote, 'The character of delicacy of sentiment [...] teaches men to feel for others as for themselves; it disposes us to rejoice with the happy, and by partaking, to increase their pleasure': see Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*, p. 14 and p. 5.

⁶⁸ Richetti, *The English Novel in History*, p. 224; Judith Newton, "'Evelina': Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the Marriage Market", *Modern Language Studies*, 6 (Spring, 1976), 48-56 (p. 53).

⁶⁹ Quoted from Wollstonecraft's chapter on modesty, in which she considers the impact of gallantry on women: see *Vindication*, pp. 121-131 (p. 125).

5.2.2. The Rural Poor, Urban Merchants, Tradespeople, and Servants

Burney's novels involve a broad spectrum of characters from various social ranks and regions, whose personalities and ways of living affect the developing ideas of the heroines. Such figures are not merely included for comic relief, but because they allow the novels to comment on aspiration, emulation, or corruption. Characters from the lower ranks are not sentimentalized by their portrayals, for the depictions of exploitative or cruel personalities show them to occupy places beside corrupt aristocrats in the moral hierarchies of the novels. In some instances, however, characters from the lower ranks are elevated in such hierarchies, their untaught, innate moral value qualifying them for inclusion in the heroines' circle of approved friends or acquaintances.

In Volume IV of *The Wanderer*, the narrative removes Juliet from London, shifting the action to rural Hampshire as she tries to escape mounting difficulties. Thus begins a kind of narrative digression, which describes in detail her excursion, and the people she meets. The journey is integral to the development of the heroine, however, in that it widens her experience of society and contributes to her understanding of the common pressures exerted on the oppressed; it therefore contributes to her awareness of 'female difficulties', the subtitle of the novel, drawing from her the lyrical outburst, 'is it only under the domestic roof, — that roof to me denied! — that woman can know safety, respect, and honour?' (666). The respect denied to Juliet comes in the form of conversations with some of the rural people in these chapters. Such interactions reveal how Burney negotiated the difficulty of representing their language. The presentation of rural dialect and accent was important if she wished to achieve the 'natural' characterization for which she had secured praise from critics; but resorting to such non-standard speech could, according to the thesis developed in this study, assign such characters to the moral margins, homogenizing them as ethical and social villains. Modern studies of literary dialect have credited Walter Scott as the 'pioneer of serious use of dialect "for purposes no longer exclusively comic or eccentric, but heroic or even tragic"'⁷⁰. But Burney's refusal to homogenize her 'ordinary' characters as 'comic or eccentric' is testimony to her engagement with the disempowered, as well as her ability to use conservative attitudes to language in a way more in tune with Romantic views which validated the speech varieties of the common man. Thus, although her equation of non-standard speech and irregular conversations with moral deviance harks back to earlier eighteenth-century linguistic prescriptions, her sensitivity to linguistic variation reveals a use of literary dialects which predates that of Walter Scott by some decades.⁷¹

⁷⁰ For example, in her study of the use of literary dialects in *David Copperfield*, Patricia Poussa quotes Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel* (London: Longman, 1973), p. 56; however, in her own discussion of Dickens, Poussa does not question Page's earlier foregrounding of Scott as a pioneer of the use of literary dialogue: see Poussa, p. 28.

⁷¹ A cluster of novels published in the 1790s represents accent and dialect: for example, Robinson's *Walsingham* (1796), features the regional speech of a radicalized turnkey (p. 249), a chambermaid (p. 350), a Scottish servant (p. 408), a Welsh servant (p. 444), and an Irishman (p. 198); the narrative voice in Charlotte Smith's *Celestina* (1791) mocks the regional, but aspiring speech of 'the lady of the band-boxes', reproducing her pronunciation of 'lilac' as 'laycock', and the accent of her brother, 'the country tradesman', in direct speech: see *Celestina*, ed. by Lorraine Fletcher (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2004), p. 106; such characters tend to be peripheral, their speech providing narrative information and local colour, rather than incident relevant to the development of the hero or heroine.

In these Hampshire chapters of the novel which Burney drafted in the late 1790s, she allocates regional and colloquial language choices to her lowly rural speakers. Thus she follows one of Johnson's criteria of familiarity being distinguished by non-standard, 'low' or corrupted forms. However, as with much of Wordsworth's verse, the speech of poor, but worthy characters is generally tidied up, with the sporadic use of non-standard grammar, or a colloquial turn of phrase, used in rapid, short strokes to add local colour and signify their rural roots. An example of this is 'the good mother' whose children Juliet saves from the river; when the mother appears on the scene, she calls to her children 'here I be, my loveys! here comes mammy!' (658). In the context of her maternal instincts then, this character is presented as commendable, and her worth is reinforced by her 'tidied' speech. In contrast, when she reappears later in the volume, in the context of the New Forest poaching gang, the decentralized aspects of her dialect are emphasized: 'La be good unto me! what been ye come for here, at such an untoward time o' night as this be?' (707). For readers attuned to the significations of these non-standard utterances, such an outburst maintains suspense as we wait to see the ultimate moral worth of this character.

More frequently, the speech of characters who are benevolent towards Juliet is represented by indirection, which draws them closer to the narrative voice. An extended example of this is the conversation of the 'good old dame' who offers Juliet a lodging at her house in Romsey (669). When Juliet meets her, she is surrounded by her grandchildren, reciting 'an antique ballad', calling on their sensibility and moving them to tears. Such sympathetic engagement with others is evident from the grandmother's own reception of Juliet; at first irritated at the interruption of her tale, the woman's expression changes to one of 'benevolence' as she notes Juliet's 'weak state'. When the children do not understand why the old lady has given up her chair to the visitor, she teaches them sympathy (770). This lesson is reported indirectly, though the question and answer format is reproduced:

And what, she asked, would they do themselves, should they be obliged to walk a great way off, till they were tired to death, and as dry as dust, if nobody would give them a little drink, nor a seat to sit down?

But they would never walk a great way off, they answered; never as long as they lived! They would always stay at home with dad and mam and grandam.

The catechism extends for several lines, but does not include direct speech. Discussing such indirection, the narratologist Monika Fludernik observes how 'utterances represented are referentially aligned and tenses shifted in accordance with the surrounding narrative discourse'. Further, the language of the indirection fuses the standard, and at times highly formal grammar of the main narratorial style, with the colloquial lexis of the unsophisticated grandmother: 'But dad and mam, she resumed, were often obliged to walk a great way [...] and would not they be glad of such good luck to dad and mam?' (670). But the general effect is dignified, the plainness and

sincerity of the language reflecting Wordsworth's ideas on the forceful communications of rural men.⁷²

In contrast, the speech of rural characters who are not benevolent towards Juliet tends to be represented directly, and is generally faithful to their regional brogue. The Hampshire accent and dialect are therefore represented by orthographical changes, as well as by grammatical and lexical choices. The carter who mistakes Juliet for a local woman, calls out to her, 'Why you be up betimes my lovey! come and Ize give you a cast', adding, when rebuffed, 'Why a be plaguy shy, the sudden, Mistress Debby!' (666). The verb form, 'you be', and the ellipsis, 'the sudden', as well as the colloquial expressions 'plaguy' and 'betimes' seem like generic, regional idioms. What appears more idiosyncratic is the tense implied by the elision 'Ize' and the use of 'a' for 'you'; Johnson's dictionary describes 'A' as a word to be found 'sometimes in familiar writings, put by a barbarous corruption for *he*'. Its use here may suggest Burney's intimacy with the Hampshire accent, the shortening of 'you', to 'ya' and then to 'a' being a logical elision. The use of 'Ize' corresponds with generic representation of southern rural accents. Such transpositions are also evident later in the Hampshire chapters, when Juliet fears she may be raped by a group of youths, who argue over her:

'Dash a vound something, zure!' [...]
 'Why t'be a girl!'
 'Be it?' answered the other; 'why then I'll have a kiss.'
 'Not a fore me, mon!' cried his companion, 'vor I did zee her virzt!' (688)

Sensitive to the /v/ for /w/ consonant exchange in some regional pronunciations, Burney may have been alert to /f/ and /v/ exchanges in the Hampshire accent.⁷³ Elsewhere in these chapters, a distinguishing feature of the Hampshire accent is represented in words containing the Standard English diphthong /aɪ/ (as in 'kind') spelt as 'oi', to represent local pronunciation /ɔɪ/. An example of this occurs during Juliet's stay with the 'good old dame' in Romsey. Narration tells us that the son-in-law is 'passive', and happy to trust the grandmother's judgement in allowing Juliet to sleep in their house. However, having listened to Romsey gossip, he shifts his position concerning Juliet, becoming hostile. Thus although he seems a 'good sort' of person, he is unstable, potentially joining the ranks of Juliet's adversaries. Burney reserves direct speech until this point, the disjunction of his speech with the narrative being intensified further by markers of pronunciation: 'you'll be fit to hong yourself, mother! for as to her being so koind to the children, that be no sign: for the bad ones be oftentimes the koindest' (673).⁷⁴ Such features of non-

⁷² Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, p. 67; Wordsworth, Preface (1800 and 1802), p. 245.

⁷³ In 'Dickens as Sociolinguist', p. 34, Poussa discusses the v/w interchange as a feature of north Norfolk and Cockney accents; in *Humphry Clinker* Smollett assigns the feature to the phonetic spellings in the letters of Winifred Jenkins: see for example Jenkins' use of 'ving' for 'wing', p. 81, and 'vitch' for 'which', p. 290; in *Tom Jones*, Squire Western's speech occasionally substitutes /v/ for /f/, and /z/ for /s/, represented by spelling, as in Book XVI, Chapter 4: 'vetched', p. 750, and 'zeeing', p. 752.

⁷⁴ There is inconsistency also within the same utterance: the words 'sign' and 'oftentimes' should also be changed: 'soigns' and 'oftentoims', in line with the Hampshire accent.

standard dialect and accent are employed solely to highlight ethical issues, in this instance using the son-in-law's idiolect as an emblem of his irregular principles.

In addition to vocabulary and expressions, many of the instances of familiar talk encountered by Juliet break rules of communication which stipulate that such conversations should be reserved for old-established relationships. They occur because she is mistaken for others, as when the carter thinks she is Mistress Debby; or when she is dressed as a countrywoman, as when the good woman at the river 'frankly demanded her assistance' because 'there was nothing to respect in her rank' (658). Such deviations from formalities reinforce the class-based nature of politeness, but indicate that some members of the poorer classes were aware that they should moderate their usual addresses when conversing with members of the higher ranks. However, the majority of instances of Juliet being addressed with familiarity occur when she comes into contact with men, as in the 'familiar invitation to partake of a cup of cyder' or the offer of a glass of water 'in exchange of a kiss' (668). Such invitations reflect the licensed familiarity of Chesterfield's advice to young men when talking to women, and illustrate his allocation of respect only to women of 'the first condition'. These familiar invitations also suggest that licensed disrespect of women below 'the first condition' was endemic among the lower ranks themselves, and that the women of these ranks could expect to be spoken to with familiar disrespect by men of their own social level as well as by men of Chesterfield's rank.

That the lower or middle ranks were represented as accommodating politeness in some kind of trickle-down effect from above is indicated by various plot-strands in all of Burney's novels. Elsewhere I have explored the assimilation of polite features, especially those representing sympathetic attitudes and respect for the face of other speakers, in the speech of humble and poor characters. The speech of such characters illustrates Burney's skill in blending language which reflects socioeconomic background in a natural way, with standard linguistic forms, and high level conversational skills, reflecting a character's sensitivity to others, as well as a degree of self-spectatorship. The speech of Miss Belfield, for example, reflects her place in the commercial ranks, and her limited education, but shows that she is 'delicate', sensitive and intelligent enough to be chosen as Cecilia's companion.⁷⁵ In contrast, Mrs Belfield, the mother who raised her, is represented through her conversation as 'coarse' (314), familiar, and egocentric. When Charlotte Smith provided such a mixture of humble education and background for her heroine in *Emmeline*, she was criticized by Anna Seward who judged the novel to be 'a weak and servile imitation of *Cecilia*', observing, 'No intuitive strength of understanding, no possible degree of native sensibility, could have enabled her [Emmeline] to acquire the "do me honour" language of high-life, and all the punctilious etiquette of its proprieties with which she receives the old and young lord at the castle.'⁷⁶

Mrs Belfield's coarseness is contrasted by the narrative with her daughter's 'softness and natural delicacy', and is dramatized through the familiar way in which she introduces herself to

⁷⁵ Christina Davidson, *Language, Conversation, and Morality*, M. Res. dissertation; Thaddeus describes Henrietta Belfield as 'working class', but the lucrative family business has allowed Mr Belfield senior to educate his son at Oxford: see Thaddeus, p. 74.

⁷⁶ Letter LX, to Mrs Hayley (11 January 1789), *Letters of Anna Seward*, II, 212 and 214.

Cecilia, beginning ‘without waiting for any ceremony, or requiring any solicitation, abruptly to talk of her affairs’ (314). Such lack of ceremony accords with Johnson’s view of familiar talk, but in this context it contravenes the boundaries of politeness, both because Cecilia and Mrs Belfield have only just met, and because of their class differences. Elsewhere, this freedom and ease, to which Johnson referred as distinguishing the conversations of old acquaintances, is presented as out of joint and overwhelming, Mrs Belfield’s ‘freedom’ with Cecilia sometimes making her own daughter ‘colour with shame’ (340). Mrs Belfield forces herself upon Cecilia, appropriating the power of whom to choose as an acquaintance, and when to initiate conversations, in social coups which undermine the right of patronage associated with higher rank. Such moves articulate Mrs Belfield’s demands for equality, a personal ambition which underpins her aspirations for her son. However, Mrs Belfield’s insistent familiarity also articulates her inequality, since it contravenes the requirements of polite codes founded on upper-class values. In contrast, Cecilia is trapped by those very codes, since she is too polite to rebuff Mrs Belfield, or to vocalize the revulsion for her vulgarity which she really feels.

Burney’s undermining of such characters as Mrs Belfield suggests a conservative agenda upholding a class system distinguished by linguistic division. Further, the discomfort of the heroine in the face of such ‘freedoms’ may be read metonymically as late eighteenth-century anxiety over social mobility. Such shifting of power between ranks is demonstrated in another scene of the novel, when Mr Harrel is accosted by a tradesman who needs paying. The narration introduces the tradesman with negative descriptors as ‘a fat, sleek, vulgar-looking man’ (400). The man, Mr Hobson, shows confidence in his ‘right’ to address Mr Harrel, but bows to the group and greets him with a respectful, ‘Sir your humble servant.’ It is Harrel who fails to be polite, walking away, ‘without touching his hat’ after a scornful ‘Sir yours’. Undeterred, Mr Hobson pursues Mr Harrel, softening his ‘bold’ approaches with the language of courtly servitude: ‘Sir, I must make bold to beg the favour of exchanging a few words with you’, which elicits from Harrel the order ‘come to me tomorrow and you shall exchange as many as you please’. Further, it is Harrel who finally behaves with familiarity, using ‘low’ language when he accuses Hobson of ‘dunning’ him, a phrase adapted from the proverbial use of ‘dun’, described in Grose’s dictionary of slang as signifying the demands of a persistent creditor.⁷⁷ Time, place and manner seem to offend Harrel’s dignity. But it is clear that Harrel is also affronted that Hobson has approached him at all, seeing the conversation, even in its early stages, as a familiar, and threatening act. What is significant, however, is that narrational sympathies are with Harrel on this occasion, indicating a disapproval of, and anxiety about, social freedoms which disturbed many during the decades when Burney wrote.

A much earlier episode in the novel suggests that the issue is complicated by contemporary notions of sympathy and sensibility, as well as by the sophisticated workings of

⁷⁷ ‘Mr Harrel, with a violent execration, asked what he meant by dunning him at such a place as Vauxhall?’ (401); Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*: ‘An importunate creditor. Dunny, in the provincial dialect of several counties, signifies DEAF; to dun, then, perhaps may mean to deafen with importunate demands: some derive it from the word DONNEZ, which signifies GIVE. But the true original meaning of the word, owes its birth to one Joe Dun, a famous bailiff of the town of Lincoln, so extremely active, and so dexterous in his business, that it became a proverb, when a man refused to pay, Why do not you DUN him? [...] Hence it became a cant word’.

politeness in asymmetric power relationships. In an earlier scene a poor woman, Mrs Hill, comes to the Harrels' house to request payment for work completed by her husband, the carpenter, who is now ill. Initial authorial depiction draws attention to the physical rhetoric of 'an elderly woman who [...] joined her hands in an act of supplication' (71). The 'poor woman's' body language denotes disempowered servility; and her first words are expressive and respectful, ' "Oh madam," she cried, "that you would but hear me!" ' (71). As noted earlier, power relationships are evident in the way speakers adjust to each other, and in asymmetrical discourse the 'subordinates' will adapt their speech to the 'superior' speaker. It is significant, therefore, that whereas Mr Hobson dares to use courtly language to soften his 'bold' address, Mrs Hill is afraid to articulate her request. Speakers in positions of power expect and attain politeness from their subordinates, and this is certainly evident here. Mrs Hill softens all she says with terms of respect, 'Madam'; and Cecilia's response of 'good woman' creates an asymmetric nomination.⁷⁸ It is evident, then, that in the case of Mrs Hill, the sympathetic treatment of the narrative springs from the character's subservience; she accepts her status and is no threat to established power relationships in Cecilia's circle. Although united by their desire to be paid by Mr Harrel, Mr Hobson and Mrs Hill are differentiated by their deployment of politeness, the latter showing every indication of moderating her language without over-reaching her station and becoming 'bold'.

These characters are also separated by their ability to connect with the ideas and feelings of others, a true mark of politeness as originally conceived by Shaftesbury and other thinkers. Mrs Hill's ability to connect sympathetically and respond with sensibility marks her as a sociocentric character, worthy of admiration. Mrs Hill has the 'understanding' (a key word in *Cecilia*) to recognize that Mr Harrel cannot empathize with her situation because he 'has been afflicted with none himself' (72). The magnanimity of this response impresses Cecilia, so that even in her thoughts she repeats it: 'struck with the words *he little thinks of our distress because he has been afflicted with none himself*'. Burney's italics indicate Cecilia's internalisation of Mrs Hill's sentiments and mark the impact of her moral code on Cecilia's growing social awareness. Later in the conversation, Mrs Hill's impact on Cecilia's education is more explicit, as her association of Cecilia with the Harrels spurs Cecilia to confront her guardian. Ultimately, Cecilia supports the family herself, an act of benevolence and a refusal to run with the crowd 'of gentlefolk' which confirms Mr Belfield's early confidence that Cecilia's sound understanding will be untainted by urban ways.

In *The Wanderer* Juliet's conversations make similar impressions on her developing ideas. After her encounters with the worthy poor, narrational commentary represents her moralizing reflections. Such reflections tend to be in homiletic mode, as when Juliet watches Dame Fairfield prepare a room, and is aware that 'the consoling picture thus presented to her view' is one 'of untaught benevolence and generosity' (661); or they elevate the characters of rural Hampshire, transforming them into pastoral mortals, or gods, 'And if her drink had seemed

⁷⁸ See Coates, *Women, Men, and Language*, p. 132; for a discussion of the expectation of politeness from subordinates see Spender, *Man Made Language*, pp. 36-7.

nectar, what was more substantial appeared to her to be ambrosia! and her little waiters became Hebes and Ganymedes (671). Such imaginative transformations indicate Juliet's musings on mankind, and her ability to locate the actions of the poor in wider patterns of human nature and belief systems. Juliet's more threatening encounters lead her to muse on the condition of woman, as when she reflects how 'she had severely experienced how little fitted to the female character, to female safety, and female propriety, was this hazardous plan of lonely wondering' (671).

Juliet also reflects on her own preconceptions, repositioning her expectations of clean little cottages and secluded idylls. Towards the end of her sojourn in the New Forest, she renounces her former Romantic dreams of living in innocent rusticity. This release of her former ideas is expressed as an apostrophe, as she articulates her new, anti-pastoral vision:

Juliet [...] sighed at her mistake, in having considered shepherds and peasants as objects of envy. O ye, she cried, who view them through your imaginations! Were ye to toil with them but one week! [...] Like mine, then, your eyes would open. (701)

She notes too that the beauty of the countryside affords little compensation for 'the poor labourer', who is a 'sufferer' not a 'partaker' of the 'the joy that is excited by the view of the twilight'; the twilight for the labourer is merely the herald of the end of toil, sending him 'home to the mat of straw, that rests, for the night, his spent and weary limbs' (701). At the same time, however, Juliet judges the labourers harshly, noting that rural innocence, though worthy, lacks charm without manners; that goodness in its 'untaught' form benefits from refinement; and that honesty can be of little value to mankind without elevation (699). Such reflections appear to support the benefits of politeness, which is presented as a way of enhancing human nature and encouraging rational 'interchange' for the 'expansion' of the 'soul' (700). Engaging directly with ideas explored by Wordsworth in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, free direct thought derides authors who judge 'solely by theory', who laud the peasant's state as superior, observing, 'they reflect not that, to make it such, the peasant must be so much more philosophic than the rest of mankind, as to see and feel only his advantages, while he is blind and insensible to his hardships. Then, indeed, the lot of the peasant might merit envy!' (700).⁷⁹

Such narrational sympathy and respect for deserving members of the lower orders is also evident in *Camilla*. Published in 1796, *Camilla* shares with other contemporary fiction an interest in the interface of lives of people from different ranks, and the effects of such contact, for good or bad, on all concerned. The novel does not sentimentalize the poor, including conventional

⁷⁹ I judge the passage beginning 'Those who are born and bred in a capital' to be free direct thought because it is not introduced by a subordinating conjunction, it switches to present tense, and uses adverbial deictics like 'next' rather than 'then'; the free direction is more obvious in the opening of the paragraph which follows this passage: 'But who is it that gives it celebrity? Does he write of his own joys?': criteria are discussed in Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences. Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 25-27; Wordsworth explains why he focuses on the experiences of men in 'rustic life': 'because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action [influence] of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly such a language arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men': see Wordsworth, Preface, *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 245-246, reproduced from the 1800 edition, with 1802 changes marked here in square brackets.

depictions of over-wheening actors whose aspirations to high tragedy are undermined by poor acting, inappropriate props, and lines delivered in country accents. But a key figure in the plot, is the Yorkshire servant Jacob Mord, who, in spite of his familiarity and lowly roots, is not a purely comic figure, nor merely a figure to be pitied – though the character functions on both these levels too. Mord, as we shall see, transcends his humble origins, and demonstrates innate sympathy, emerging as a figure with educative potential for the heroine and the reader.

Mord is the greatly valued, long-standing family retainer whom Sir Hugh Tyrold brings with him from his Yorkshire estate, when he relocates to Hampshire to be near his brother, Camilla's father. Introduced in Volume II of the novel, Jacob is immediately established as performing a vital communication role within the family, and reporting gossip from outsiders, as well as commenting on various household activities. This licence to speak frankly is enhanced by Jacob's Yorkshire background, his provenance locating him in a literary tradition which was increasingly depicting English northerners and other regional Britons as plain-speaking and honest.⁸⁰ Privileging the role of such socially marginalized speakers as deliverers of the truth, Maria Edgeworth wrote in her preface to *Castle Rackrent* (1800) that the 'plain unvarnished tale' makes it 'preferable to the most highly ornamented narrative'; for Edgeworth, the authenticity of Thady's story 'would have been exposed to doubt if it were not told' in the 'vernacular idiom' of 'his own characteristic manner'.⁸¹ Edgeworth's work is loyal to the cadences, syntactic idiosyncrasies, and occasionally the vocabulary of Thady's idiolect, but her glossary largely provides information about Irish customs rather than language, and is hardly necessary, even for a modern English reader to understand Thady's narrative. Edgeworth tidied up Thady's language, infusing it with the Anglo-Irish vernacular but bringing it into line with the central, English variety. In addition, Edgeworth rarely used orthography and punctuation to represent Thady's accent. Burney, too, modified her character's speech; further, although the representation of Jacob's speech gestures at his Yorkshire dialect, his stories need no glossary.

That Edgeworth chose to centralize Thady's speech is understandable, as the whole narrative is delivered in his voice, and has to fulfil the imagined frame of being dictated to an educated editor. Burney's centralization of Jacob's speech experienced no such expectations of form, Jacob being a relatively occasional speaker in her novel. Her decision to do so is therefore significant. In the hands of other writers, Jacob's social status and function in the novel would qualify him for more pronounced regional dialogue. Burney's contemporary, Mary Robinson, presented a servant as an 'honest north-Briton', attempting to represent his speech without modification or narrative mediation: 'The lad's abraw lad, an I wad be laith to do an ill turn by sic a faire spoken gentleman.' And Burney's admired forebear, Tobias Smollett, provided a

⁸⁰ In a novel which Robinson published a year after the publication of Burney's novel, *Camilla*, a plain-speaking Welsh servant observes: 'Troth, and that he is; as ted as a stone, poor coot man. He has left my master plenty of riches, and, Cot knows, he deserves it; for he has pin very sad and sick of late, and, in coot troth, I was afeard he would die, and go to Cot a-mighty'; and it is a loyal Scottish servant who speaks out and clears the hero's name of criminal accusations: see *Walsingham*, p. 444 and p. 408. Published seven years after Burney's death, Tennyson's poem, 'The Princess: A Medley' (1847) calls for the swallow to proclaim that 'dark and true and tender is the north': first published as 'The Princess: A Medley' (London: E. Moxon, 1847), later in Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Works* (London: MacMillan, 1891): <<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/html/1807/4350/poem2180.html>> [accessed 20 May 2011].

⁸¹ *Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, ed. by Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 62 and p. 63.

precedent for Yorkshire dialect in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, in which Matthew Bramble's Yorkshire cousin, Squire Burdock, is described as employing the 'you' and 'thou' pronouns appropriately, addressing his closer family members as 'thou': 'I tell thee what, Dick (said he), a man's skull is not to be bored every time his head is broken; and I'll convince thee and thy mother.' Further, she wrote during a period of increasing interest in regional varieties, which saw numerous publications include glossaries of Yorkshire idioms, some going into great detail about the differences in accent and dialect within what was the largest county in Britain. Such texts and anecdotes would have been available to Burney, but she chose not to use them. Instead, she centralized Jacob's speech to a great extent, bringing it into line with the thematic purpose of her dialogue in order to shore up exterior and interior qualities.⁸²

Thus when Jacob is introduced, certain linguistic features mark him as a speaker from the lower ranks without making his contributions particularly disjunctive to the narrative: ' "I am sure, your honour," said Jacob, following him [Sir Hugh], "I got in with no ill intention; but what it was as come across the Doctor I don't know; but just as I was a going to shut the door, without saying never a word, out he pops, and runs upstairs again; so I only got in to see if something had hurt him; but I can't find nothing of no sort" ' (186). Here the archaic way of forming the progressive tense, prefixed by 'a', the multiple negatives, and the substitution of 'as' for the relative pronoun 'that', are common features of non-standard varieties, and are used by Burney to represent typically, but not exclusively, lower-class language. For the most part, Jacob's language here and elsewhere consists of standard grammar, and conforms to standard informal speech. Such a balance enabled Burney to achieve the verisimilitude of social distinctions for which some reviewers praised her, while codifying her dialogue as an index of moral integrity.⁸³

As we have seen, such modifications are consistent with Burney's approach elsewhere in her novels, in cases where she wants to indicate a character's moral positives; where characters are socially disadvantaged and morally deviant, Burney invests their dialogue with more clashing 'vulgarisms', compounded by a familiarity which, in the social hierarchies depicted in the novels is presented as offensive and grossly impolite.⁸⁴ In contrast Jacob's constant use of the honorific 'your honour' to Sir Hugh – which he withdraws when addressing the brutal nephew, Clermont Lynmere – proclaims him as a supporter of the novel's social and moral hierarchy, and marks him as a model servant. Written in the 1790s, in a climate of anxieties about the mobility and activities of the lower orders, narration in *Camilla* depicts Mord as a character who upholds the

⁸² Robinson, *Walsingham*, p. 408. Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, p. 186; a Yorkshire glossary is supplied in, *The Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, by Mr. Marshall, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1788), II, 293-358.

⁸³ Punctuation representing elisions in Jacob's speech also appears in the speech of a range of characters, including the upper classes, throughout Burney's work; for example, his use of 'em' (202) 'o'top' and 't'other' (187); his elision 'i'n't' differs from the more common choice of 'a'n't' in the novels; nevertheless, 'i'n't' is used in this novel by the pretentious Mr Dubster (436 and 602), the hoyden Miss Dennel (416) and Sir Hugh's worthy Yorkshire friend, Mr Westwyn (904); 'i'n't' also occurs in the dialogue of Captain Mirvan (*Evelina*) and of Miss Larolles (*Cecilia*); Jacob uses standard informalities when eliding verbs ('that's', 'he'll', 'they're', 187); and uses general colloquialisms, such as 'plaguey mad' and 'takings' (200); see *The English Dialect Dictionary: Being the Complete Vocabulary of all Dialect Words Still in Use, or Known to Have Been in Use during the Last Two Hundred Years*, ed. by Joseph Wright, 6 vols (London: Henry Frowde, 1898-1905), VI (1905).

⁸⁴ For example, the young boy who abuses Eugenia asserts 'I cod, I hope I'm as good as you, any day in the year!'; the speech of his party includes the dialect phrases 'fegs' and 'Hobb's pound', the Norfolk expression 'fackens' (although the interchange takes place in Hampshire), and such non-standard pronunciations as 'sarve' and 'cloaths', p. 286 and p. 287.

status quo. However, the narrative also goes to some length to support notions of innateness. Jacob's natural, 'untaught' goodness is underlined at various points, and although he is treated with gentle humour on occasions, he is generally treated with respect.⁸⁵

Jacob's untaught goodness is underscored by Burney's inclusion of his letter to Camilla. The letter appears in the final book of the novel, and asks her to repay him the loan of twenty pounds so that he might buy victuals for his master, in prison. At first, the letter seems to be reported and paraphrased, capturing Camilla's viewpoint as she reads Jacob's description of his master's plight; but when the letter proper begins, Burney chooses to represent Jacob's misspellings in full:

Now I' says Jacob, 'being, by his gud honnur's genrosty, the ritchist ammung us, fur my kalling, wants to do the most, after nixt to the buttlur and huskippir, so, der Miss, awl I've gut beng in the funs, witch I cant sil out withoutt los, if you can lit me have the munny fur the hurs, withoutt ullconvenince, til Miss Geny that was can pay it, I shall be mutch obbleggd, poor Miss Geny nut havving of a fardin, witch wil be a gret fevur to, Madm,

Yur humbbel survent til deth

Jaccub Mord. (847)

Jacob's letter accurately reproduces many common words, and some of his spellings represent logical errors of homophones, like the confusion between 'witch' and 'which', and of doubled consonants, like 'havving' and 'buttlur'. There are some phonetic spellings which continue to be common to standard pronunciation speakers, such as 'ritchist' and 'mutch', and some non-standard phonetically spelled forms which fiction writers employed to represent various non-central varieties long after the decade in which Burney wrote.⁸⁶ Yorkshire pronunciation is occasionally indicated, as in the spelling of 'among' (əmʌŋ) as 'ammung', 'money' (/mʌni/) as 'munny', and Jacob's own name (/dʒeɪkəb/) as 'Jaccub' where the substitution of the letter 'u' in the spelling represents an accent which pronounces the phoneme /ʊ/ rather than using the Standard English /ʌ/ or schwa, /ə/.⁸⁷ It is also possible that the use of the letter 'u' before the letter 'r' in words like 'fur', 'hurs' and 'survent' suggests the rhotic 'r' pronunciation to be found in the far west of what used to be the West Riding of Yorkshire. Burney's narrative could have paraphrased the whole letter for the reader. Instead this clash of voices is used to flag up Jacob's

⁸⁵ For example Jacob breaks Gricean maxims of quantity in his lengthy accounts of gossip or events; on such occasions the impatience, or forced indulgence of his audience creates comic tension without ridiculing Jacob.

⁸⁶ Common words used by Jacob include: 'by', 'his', 'us', 'my', 'wants', 'most', 'and', 'so', 'can' and 'poor'; Jacob omits the 'g' from words ending in 'ing', such as farthing, spelt 'fardin', the negative connotations of which are discussed by Mugglestone, who notes the increasing attention to regional pronunciation in the second half of the eighteenth century, when efforts at 'correction' derogated regional varieties in order to promote standard forms: see Chapter 4, '/h/ and Other Symbols of the Social Divide', in Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper: The Rise and Fall of Accent as a Social Symbol*, 2nd paperback edn (Oxford: University Press, 2007), pp 95-134 (pp. 128-130).

⁸⁷/ʊ/ as in SE 'put'; /ə/ as in SE about (/əbəʊt/); /ʌ/ as in 'cup': see Dennis Freeborn and Others, *Varieties of English*, 2nd edn, 1993, p. 67; phonetic symbol /ʊ/ and /ə/ are sourced from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Near-close_central_rounded_vowel; and phonetic symbol /ʌ/ from:

<http://www.oxfordadvancedlearnersdictionary.com/dictionary/cup_1>; consonants /ŋ/ and /ʒ/ from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consonant> [accessed 14 May 2011].

unschooled simplicity and goodness of heart. Further, the respect usually afforded by the narrative for Jacob is maintained in the coda, which describes how Camilla is moved to tears.

Jacob Mord is therefore somewhat of a hybrid character. His lengthy stories, though endearing, can create comic relief at tense points in the action, and his language, especially in the written mode, gestures towards stereotypical servants in other works. Burney certainly centralizes his spoken language more than her contemporary, Mary Robinson, and this is in keeping with Jacob's more prominent function in terms of plot and theme. But Burney goes further than some contemporaries, by flagging up his Yorkshire brogue in his letter and pushing the boundaries of his familiarity. In *Nature and Art*, published the same year as *Camilla*, Inchbald includes the story of poor Hannah Primrose, the innocent daughter of lowly peasants, who is seduced by Henry's wealthy cousin William. Hannah's speech is represented as simple and sensitive, but standard. Like Jacob, she writes a letter, but the language of her letter is standard, even eloquent, as she begs pity for her 'wicked' past, and for her illegitimate child. Similarly, Holcroft's *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1794-7) features Clarke, a carpenter whom Trevor fights, but who forgives the provocation and takes him into his home. Clarke is constantly fearful 'of being too familiar'; further, Clarke is 'an untaught orator' employing largely standard forms, to persuade Trevor of his right to be his friend and companion.⁸⁸ These radical novels support the view that experience forms character, and that virtue is not dependent on privileged rank. Burney's novels also detach virtue from rank, and elevate lowly characters to prominent educative positions. But as the case of Jacob Mord indicates, Burney experimented with characterization, testing how far depictions of a regional speaker might go, without detriment to his stature.

In Burney's first novel, *Evelina*, the speech of lowly characters is under-represented. Servants are allocated brief utterances, often for comic effect; and the old women in the race are not given a voice. The speech of Evelina's merchant cousins and their 'vulgar' associates is presented comically, while that of the impoverished Scottish poet, Mr Macartney, is represented as educated Standard English, to elevate the gravity of his fate and make him worthy to be the heroine's half brother. In this respect, Burney's early work can be said to reflect the influence of writers whom she recognized in her preface, Fielding and Smollett, for whom, such non-standard dialects are recognized as being 'symptomatic of lack of cultivation, if not downright boorishness'.⁸⁹ From the publication of her second novel onwards, however, Burney uses the speech of such characters for serious as well as comic effect, blending social realism with moral import in order to produce dialogue which was not only natural and varied, but in lexical and syntactic forms, and pragmatic structures, an effective sign vehicle of 'morals, put in action'.⁹⁰

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⁸⁸ Inchbald, *Nature and Art*, 1796, ed. by Shawn Lisa Maurer (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005), pp. 141-142; *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1794-7), ed. by Seamus Deane (London: Oxford University Press, 1973): an exception in Clark's speech is 'you was', which the text italicizes (p. 281); for Clark's 'untaught' eloquence, see p. 281; for his fear of being familiar, see p. 279.

⁸⁹ Page, *Speech in English Fiction*, p. 54.

⁹⁰ Journal Letter to Dr Burney (18 June 1795), *JAL*, III, 117 (Burney's italics).

This chapter has explored the way the novels, after *Evelina*, engaged with the implications of the exclusiveness of politeness for lower ranks, especially the indigent poor. Discussion has highlighted the way the novels foreground the fate of women, depicting them as victims of distorted politeness, no matter their class. However, as discussion has shown, focus on the socially marginalized allows the novels to engage with ideas relating to innateness, depicting individual members of different classes as possessing a moral faculty, making them capable of untaught, simple goodness. Thus the novels separate politeness, even in its original conception, from education and privileged rank.

The impact of the distortions of politeness on the heroines has been a major focus of this chapter, which has highlighted the ways the novels expose the dangers of a code open to abuse and not subject to the self-policing civic scrutiny envisaged by its original formulators. Nevertheless, as this chapter has argued, the formal and familiar confrontations are educative for the heroines, whose perceptions and reflections are shown to develop their wider virtues. Such virtues are not depicted as purely sexual, or passive, but civic and active, the heroines' confrontations with vicious codes of behaviour allowing them to hone their own judgements, and equipping them to participate in society in a way which contravenes the infantilizing principles of Chesterfieldian practices. In addition, the heroines' confrontations dramatize and explore the difficulties of negotiating slippery boundaries of politeness, and the challenge of detecting and confronting deceptions while avoiding contamination or disillusionment themselves. Discussing *Clarissa*, R. F. Brissenden sees the dilemma of the person of good will constantly in danger of having his or her trust abused, as part of a general uncertainty about moral knowledge, arguing, 'The lesson *Clarissa* seems to teach is that nothing, except perhaps the inner voice of conscience, is ever what it seems [...] "middle class morality" is a mask which society assumes to disguise the real nature of the beast. Ultimately, the individual is alone'.⁹¹ Though clearly engaging with the sentimental tradition, and influenced by Richardson, Burney's novels offer a more optimistic view. Her heroines are inscribed with sentimental ideals in that, according to Brissenden's definition, 'they believe in men's innate benevolence and the right of the individual to follow the promptings of his own heart' (161). However, the novels target the notion of morality predicated on politeness, and expose how politeness can be corrupted by Machiavellian principles. Burney's novels are not tragic, and her heroines are not isolated. Although they are removed from their native environments, they find like-minded friends and mentors, figures of authentic character, who are drawn to them by a *cri de l'âme* to form a central model of virtue in the novels.⁹² The virtue of the heroines is rewarded; but virtue in its wider sense – of a social, benevolent, active individuality. In this respect Burney heroines are different to the traditional sentimental type, described by Brissenden as figures who feel and suffer, but do not act (119).

⁹¹ *Virtue in Distress. Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 176.

⁹² Rizzo discusses Burney's life and relationships in the context of contemporary social strata, suggesting that Burney's own responses to hegemonic structures are reflected in the *cri de l'âme* which distinguishes introductions to the 'worthy suitors'; while this is so, I suggest that such spiritual and mental evocations are also evident in the introductions of the heroines to other characters, for example that of Mrs Delvile; see 'Burney and Society' in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. by Sabor, especially p. 131 and p. 146.

The heroines' experiences of detecting insincerity and being undeceived provides the novels with a way of confronting reality, and in this respect Burney engages with a Cervantian vector of the form, which promotes the view that nothing is what it seems. On the other hand, committed to the sentimental genre, and to educative aims, which have to find room for conventional romantic endings, Burney's novels accommodate other ways of seeing the world by their vast cast of polyphonic characters. Further, the novels shore up the dialogue consistently, providing integrity of speech and core values, so that the reader is invariably aware of the deceptions and manipulations which are being practised. Ultimately this provides a stable account of the reality at the heart of the novels' depictions.

Conclusion

My thesis was conceived as a micro study of the dialogue in Frances Burney's novels. Burney's fictional speech has been credited as being emblematic, but also influential in the development of naturalistic ways of presenting speech, yet no detailed study has been carried out on this aspect of her work. It was logical therefore to draw on modern linguistic approaches, to help uncover what psychological and pragmatic meanings her contemporary audiences might have understood. Attention to stylization has been central to my approach. Andrew Elfenbein's observations are pertinent here for, as alluded to in my introduction, the purposes and effects of stylization presume 'authors and readers who know the rules of the grammarians'. Authors, as Elfenbein notes, are not neutral producers of grammars, but skilful 'manipulator[s] of linguistic details for thematic ends'; and readers 'emerge as skilled interpreters of grammatical subtleties'.¹ It was logical therefore also to locate Burney's created dialogue in the context of historical developments of the English language at the end of the eighteenth century, and in the context of such cultural phenomena as politeness and gendered conduct debates. Such main threads of cultural interest unravelled in various directions, situating Burney's work in a matrix of interconnected texts, genres, and discourses. In keeping with many single author studies, therefore, my approach has been to analyse Burney's fictional dialogue against the background of cultural movements. At the same time, however, the main focus has remained on literature, a prominent strand of discussion throughout being the work of Burney's literary predecessors and contemporaries, how she responded to form and genre conventions, and how she may have influenced others. This study recognizes that women writers like Burney made their linguistic choices with an eye on their own professional standing – observing the demands of a critical public, while monitoring their evolving reputations. That Burney was recognized by so many of her literary peers is a reflection of her contributions in these areas. Thus, my starting point was to confirm that Burney was doing something interesting and unusual with dialogue, and my aim was to investigate how this was achieved.

¹ Elfenbein, 'Romantic English', p. 77.

1. Burney's Use of Form and Genre Conventions

Late eighteenth-century reviews and privately recorded comments indicate that literary dialogue was increasingly called upon to be 'natural' and true to life, while working within the boundaries of politeness at textual level. Such textual politeness, in its late eighteenth-century context, has therefore had to be defined. As this study has demonstrated, writers like Burney lived and worked in a period which experienced unprecedented public interest in the English language, a democratized discursive field which produced and authorized a central, standard variety. Operating in mainstream tastes, policed by the critical reviews, Burney, like most of her contemporary writers of fiction, chose this standard for her main narratives, relegating non-standard varieties to dialogue. Read through the lens of some modern critics, Burney's decision might be seen as proof that she was fearful, longing for social inclusion, or negotiating the pressures of being a 'proper' lady as well as a woman writer;² thus her decisions to promote Standard English might be seen as an act of modesty – of not wishing 'to be marked';³ or as an act of stylistically moderating up in order to be accepted; or simply as co-operating with evolving literary tastes in which standard, correct and polite forms figured prominently. Such factors no doubt contributed to the artistic decisions which Burney made. However, as I have established, Burney's fiction is not monologic, and examination of the dialogue leads to complicated conclusions, which highlight relationships at textual and thematic level in the novels.

Central to the thesis developed here, is the integrity of certain modes of speech, as represented in dialogue, and moral value in Burney's fiction. Thus the alignment of heroines, their major allies, and the main narratives in the novels can be seen to reflect the author's striving for artistic integrity. Firstly, such an approach can be read as the author's own sociocentricity, as a demonstration of her readiness to comply with mainstream consensus about language. Working in a genre which explores and approves individual experience, while supporting the notion of adapting individuality to accommodate and support socially developed norms, Burney's choices can thus be seen as matching form to content. To some extent too, this is an act of accommodation and even sympathy, since narrative voices ally themselves with main protagonists. Sympathy, as we have seen, is presented as a fundamental tenet of social morality in Burney's novels. The author's act of sympathy is therefore also a feature of the artistic integrity of the novels. Thirdly, Burney's fiction explores the notion of authenticity, of outer features matching interior values – of dialogue being an index of moral worth. In contemporary reviews, assumptions about such correlations were implicit in critical judgements, which often used terms loaded with ethical and aesthetic value to describe the style of fiction. Thus sketches

² In *Imagining a Self*, Spacks argues that Burney was motivated by fear of doing wrong; Rizzo sees Burney as occupying the same ambiguous position as her heroines, longing for social recognition: see 'Burney and Society', in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. by Sabor, p. 146; Burney wrote (7 January 1779), 'I would a thousand times forfeit my character as a Writer than risk ridicule or censure as a *Female*': see *EJL*, III, 212; for discussion of the negotiations made by women writers like Burney, and norms of femininity, see Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1984).

³ In her later years, Burney reflected on her career, and observed that 'never yet had the moment arrived in which to be marked had not been embarrassing and disconcerting to me' *JAL*, vi, 112: Spacks quotes this same passage to support her argument, *Imagining a Self*, p. 165.

of scenery (rather than the scenery itself) are ‘beautiful’, or, conversely, ‘crude’; style can be ‘disgusting’; modes of character introductions can be ‘nauseating’ or ‘detestable’; or a whole work is lacking in decorum, ‘disseminating poison’. By extension too, the writers themselves are perceived as ‘superior’, and ‘beautiful and accomplished’, or as ‘immature’, their ‘levity of comparison’ deemed ‘unpardonable’. Burney herself was described in a review of *Cecilia* as possessing purity of heart.⁴ For Burney, who saw herself as a moral writer, a standard, and therefore a correct and polite style for narration and central speakers was the most effective way of achieving a kind of authenticity in the writing, where the central forms promoted by the text accorded with themes, and even with the image the author wished to present of herself. That Burney was effecting stylistic sincerity, authenticity, and integrity on different levels is a mark of her personal achievements in her use of form. As I shall highlight later in this conclusion, it is also a mark of her confidence as a writer that she felt she could contribute, with authority, to prominent ideas about language, society, and morality.

Such integrity, founded on a standard language variety articulated by narrative voice and central protagonists, is enhanced by the inclusion of contrasting voices. What Burney’s novels do with non-standard dialects, has been the central focus of this study, exploring the raft of ‘languages’, registers, and discourses, harnessed by the novels for ethical and sociopolitical as well as characterization purposes. These purposes will be reviewed below. At this point, however, it is important to note the success of Burney’s strategy of incorporating polyphonic dialogue. In her recent work on the mid-century novel, Jennie Batchelor draws attention to the dilemma faced by authors who had to satisfy genre conventions in order to satisfy the tastes of readers, without compromising their artistic integrity.⁵ As Batchelor notes, this created problems for writers working with a form which was meant to be aesthetically pleasing as well as instructive; and ‘pleasing’, as we have seen, could relate to integrity of style. A novel’s potential to please was also contingent on its instructive purposes, Dr Johnson famously privileging the moral function of fiction to the extent that depictions of viciousness and scenes of violence should be expurgated.⁶ Eschewing such notions, Burney’s novels include scenes of cruelty and vice, and voices which were deemed ugly, vulgar, or deceitful by her contemporaries.

This preference for dialogue which divided characters on moral and linguistic grounds might be seen as a residual feature of romance fiction’s tendency to simplify moral fact.⁷ But by making such discordant voices accord with vicious or flawed interiorities, the novels maintain

⁴ For ‘beautiful’ sketches, see the review of *Alla Giornata; or, To The Day* (1826) by Lady Charlotte Bury in *La Belle Assemblée*, 3rd ser., 4 August 1826, p. 84; for ‘crude’ sketches, see the review of *Marriage* (1818) by Susan Ferrier in *Monthly Review*, 2nd ser., 88, March 1819, pp. 328-9 (p. 328); style is described as ‘disgusting’ in a review of *The Daughters of Isenberg* (1810) by Alicia Tyndale Palmer, in *The Critical Review*, 3rd ser. 21, October 1810, pp.153-60; ‘nauseating’ and ‘detestable’ character introductions are criticized in a review of *Fleetwood* (1805) by William Godwin, in *Critical Review*, 3rd ser. 4, April 1805, 383-391; the work which is described as ‘disseminating poison’ is the anonymous, *Barbara Markham*, reviewed in *Critical Review*, 3rd ser. 2, May 1804, pp. 113-114 (p. 114); Burney’s purity of heart is described in *Monthly Review*, 67, December 1782, pp.453-8 (p. 453): for these and other reviews see <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/>> [accessed 12 September 2011]

⁵ Batchelor, “[T]o strike a little out of a road already so much beaten”: Gender, Genre, and the Mid-Century Novel’, in *The History of British Women’s Writing, 1750-1830*, ed. by Labbe, pp. 84-101 (p. 95).

⁶ *Rambler* 4, 31 March 1750, *Works*, IV, 20-26 (p. 23).

⁷ Northrop Frye, ‘The Context of Romance’ in *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 33-62 (p. 50).

their authenticity, and produce a kind of truth, which Johnson's essay affirmed. Further, by positioning such voices as contrapuntal registers to those of her heroines, and to the narratives, the author distances herself from any qualities which might be associated with such styles of speech. Batchelor notes that Sarah Scott tackles the 'thorny dilemma' of manipulating conventional aesthetics by metafictional devices, drawing attention to the constraints to which she must adhere.⁸ In like vein, the relative flatness of many of Burney's secondary and minor figures, characterized by unchanging features of speech and iterative expression, might be seen as metafictional. Contrasting with the dialogue range, and the developing subjectivity and reflectiveness of the central protagonists, such characters draw attention to their own fictiveness. Critics (such as Macaulay), who condemned these types of characters as monotonous and uninteresting, failed to grasp how they were meant to function as allusions to fictionality, but also to genre constrictions, which discouraged the intimate representation of the 'evil' or deviant mind.

Batchelor's argument flags up the ending of *A Journey Through Every Stage of Life* as a grudging gesture towards conventional narrative closure. Elsewhere in this study, I have observed something similar about the dénouement of *Cecilia*. Working in tandem with the novel's secondary speakers, the ending barely disguises dissatisfaction with romantic closure. Further metafictional devices have been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study, which examine the clashing voices of some characters in terms of debates about satire, or about the novel's potential to mediate politics. Writing in 1786 about the pressures on women writers to conform to expectations of delicate restraint in their use of language, the dramatist, Hannah Cowley observed that she was allowed to 'draw strong character, but it must be without speaking its language'.⁹ Cowley felt she could 'give vulgar or low bred persons, but they must converse in a stile of elegance'. For Cowley, the pressure did not emanate from the expectations of a genteel audience about her *dramatis personae*, so much as from their expectations of genteel language from her pen – 'whether Mrs. Cowley ought to have so expressed herself'. Burney's own plays were not as successful as her fiction, and it may be that her polyphonic dialogue in dramatic form was not acceptable from a woman's hand. In fiction, however, a narrator contributes another voice, or voices, detaching herself from the 'vulgar or low-bred' by her own 'stile of elegance'. For Burney then, as for other women writers of fiction, politeness at textual level carried an extra level of gender constraint. But Burney's fiction negotiated such constraints, allowing it to present the languages of 'strong', deviant characters while 'recommending right'.

⁸ Batchelor, p. 95.

⁹ Cowley, 'An Address', in *A School for Greybeards, The Plays of Hannah Cowley*, 1786, ed. by Frederick M. Link, 2 vols (New York: Garland, 1789), II, v-vi; quoted in the introduction to *The Excursion*, p. xi.

2. Burney's Fiction and 'the design of recommending right'

In her prefatory letter to *The Wanderer*, Burney asserts that when the design of fiction is the recommendation of 'right', it has 'always been permitted and cultivated, not alone by the moral, but by the pious instructor' (9). What Burney understood by 'the moral', and how her understanding might be discerned in her plots and characterizations, are questions this study has raised.

The model of virtue promoted by Burney's novels emphasizes individual benevolence, acts of sympathy, and inclusive sociability. Such aspects of life are shown to be available to women, especially those like Cecilia who are gifted with independent fortunes. Nevertheless, women at every level are depicted as capable of contributing to such values, as illustrated by incidents in *The Wanderer*, when Juliet is aided by lowly foresters, or when she herself supports impecunious friends. Indeed, building on contemporary thought which promoted women's especial fitness for acts of compassion, Burney's novels present heroines whose fitness to contribute in social arenas contrasts with the incompetence of more powerful and privileged figures. Thus Burney's novels can be seen to be engaging with debates on the definition of the good citizen, and on his, or her, ability to intervene in civic life for the greater good of society. In this respect, Burney's novels can be located in debates about society itself, and might be seen as foregrounding the feminizing influences of such aspects of moral philosophy as social sympathy and the expression of sentiment.

As this study has demonstrated, the focus on emotion was intrinsic to the phenomenon of sensibility which transformed ideas of 'good conversation' in the second half of the eighteenth century, when feeling, as developed by moral-sense philosophers, became evidence of authenticity. But as we have seen, sensibility, like politeness, became a victim of its own codes. These codes are illustrated in conduct books whose publication reflected a sustained interest in issues of conversational behaviour throughout the eighteenth century and which provide evidence of a growing concern with naturalness and expressiveness.¹⁰ Conduct books teaching how readers could appear natural and expressive failed to articulate the contradiction inherent in such precepts, though the ambivalence with which politeness and sensibility were viewed by some eighteenth-century writers indicates that the potential hypocrisy was not lost on all readers. In Burney's fiction, the staging of conversation in the specific context of delicate social situations actually identifies weaknesses in the 'suits-all' nature of the prescriptions of conduct literature. Burney's fictional dialogue, then, highlights complicating factors within the potential binaries of correct and incorrect speech, drawing attention to contexts, relationships, topics and feeling. Drawing on a progressivist ideology which, by the last three decades of the eighteenth century

¹⁰ Publications like those of Chesterfield (1774) and Fordyce (1777) ran to several editions and were popular well into the nineteenth century, though they differed in many of their strictures; the second half of the eighteenth century saw an accelerated production of courtesy books specifically for women, with Fordyce's successful *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) followed by the influential works of Chapone (1773), More (1777), and Gregory (1774); in 'Polite "Persons": Character, Biography and the Gentleman', Carter comments how the publication of Chesterfield's letters, many written decades earlier, coincided with the high point of interest in sensibility (p. 336); this timing helps to account for the generally adverse reception of the letters, though Carter suggests that the letters would have provoked controversy had they been published when first written (p. 349).

was redefining politeness, Burney explored the problems of appropriateness as a key feature of social concord, nudging her readers to revisit commonly held beliefs. Further, although she accepted sincerity as a central tenet of civilizing principles, Burney's dramatic narratives invite readers to consider the negotiations which are involved in the accommodations between sincerity and sympathy, truth and tact.

Thus the novels do not over simplify the potential of sympathy and sentiment to cement social bonds. As with Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* (1771) Burney's heroines can suffer through excessive engagement with others: for example, it is likely that Cecilia's inability to refuse charity would have led to her own bankruptcy, if her marriage had not disinherited her first; and Camilla's own sentiment led her to borrow money in order to give charitably; significantly, both heroines experience bouts of madness when their engagement with others' ways of seeing the world rocks their beliefs in their own perceptions. Although such extremes of feeling are not ridiculed, they are shown to be personally damaging, and not always socially ameliorating. On the other hand, insincere claims to such feeling are presented for mockery. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the pretensions of such characters as Lady Louisa Larpent and Miss Laroilles for 'excessively' refined sensibility are held up for ridicule, but also condemned as demeaning to women and debilitating to a class from which society expected active virtue. Without the right kind and amount of social feeling, the novels suggest, power becomes corrupt and even abusive. Other kinds of feeling also come under scrutiny in the novels, which condemn such extremes of responses as coldness and formality, and openness in expressing anger or hilarity. Ultimately, drawing on sentimental conventions, Burney's novels base notions of virtue on feeling and sympathy, surrounding the heroines with characters who cannot govern their powerful, unnatural affections, and whose egocentric motivations carve out solitary and destructive paths. However, the heroines do not stand alone, and as we have seen, they are aided by like-minded characters who stand firm against such antagonists.

Accommodations between personal sincerity and socially-turned sympathy indicate Burney's involvement with contemporary debates about self and identity, a discussion of which is complicated by the shifting values of the terms used to denote such concepts in dominant discourses during the long eighteenth century. As outlined earlier in this study, consideration of Burney's dialogue with these debates is further complicated by Burney's own views. The quotation from the *Memoirs* which opened this study is significant, because it draws attention to Burney's recognition of an inner 'character; or authentic self, co-existing, though not always corresponding with such outer manifestations of identity as language and manners.¹¹

As we have seen, however, a sense of a deep and stable self is central to Burney's characterization. Slippery surface characteristics are presented as shifting identities to be distrusted as self-serving, deceitful, and ego-driven; and politeness is seen as a code which can

¹¹ Other diary entries support this, as when she writes that her acquaintance Mrs Percy 'is very uncultivated, & ordinary in manners & conversation, but a good creature'; or that Miss Kitty's unfailing 'good humour, & almost unequalled friendliness & love of obliging [...] cannot but win good will & desire to please in return — & in her thoroughly unrivalled Dialect, there is a queerness, an originality, a ridiculous yet meaning oddity, that would make me laugh were I expiring': see Burney, *Journal Letter*, 20 August 1792, and May 1793: see *JAL*, 1, 52 and 121.

polish a person so completely that its gloss is impenetrable to deeper reading. However, there is a degree of relativism in Burney's presentation of such ideas. In *The Wanderer*, Juliet adopts a disguise to save her life; Cecilia agrees to a secret engagement because of love; Camilla deceives her parents about the extent of her debt, and colludes, by her silence, with her brother Lionel's philandering and extortion of his uncle. Even Evelina learns to polish her behaviour in public, reserving the outpouring of her mockery and snobbery for her letters to her guardian. Trying to pin down what Burney understood by 'morality' in the context of such shifting thematic ground is difficult. However, what most of these examples have in common is an other-centric motivation: Juliet is fearful of the repercussions for her guardian's life if she is identified as a runaway wife; Cecilia is swayed by Mortimer Delvile, and overcome by her affections for him; Camilla wants to protect her parents and her uncle, lapsing into anguished madness when she realises that her actions have led to her father's imprisonment. Only Evelina's acquired social polish can be seen to be self-protective rather than sociocentric, her newly found restraint when meeting Lovel spurred by fear rather than consideration for his feelings.

Some kind of capitulation seems to be evident then, in the way Burney's heroines learn to interact with others, the novels demonstrating that preservation of self, or merely one's social face, is sometimes necessary and desirable. What the novels dramatize is the heroines comprehending when to concede, learning which battles to fight, and when integrity for personal values or subscription to a belief system is worth standing up for, or worth breaking through the socially created boundaries of politeness or female modesty. Thus Evelina eventually stands up for her grandmother, speaks out against the old woman's race, and refuses to share (even with Orville) the secret entrusted to her by Macartney. Personal integrity and capitulation to social custom are a main theme of *Cecilia*, and have been discussed at some length in this study. As noted earlier, the dénouement of this novel left many dissatisfied, as if they could detect a half-heartedness in Burney's own capitulation to dominant tastes in her romantic final chapters. As Godwin's revised endings to his own novel, *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) indicate, such capitulation to the needs of society, for the sake of the greater good, was a focus which cut across partisan interests, and was not confined to women's lot.¹² In this respect, Burney's novel of the 1780s was already exploring how social customs, ratified by such political institutions as the law, impacted the individual and narrowed their choices.

Indicative of such apparent relativism in the novels are characters whose addiction to or search for the truth is itself disruptive of social concord promoted by the narratives. In some cases, this is a matter of integrity and authenticity taken to extremes, as when Mr Briggs in *Cecilia* speaks his mind at all costs, or when the innocent Sir Hugh, in *Camilla*, offers running commentaries of his anxieties and motivations. More complex than such socially embarrassing characters are figures like Albany in *Cecilia*, or Sir Giles Arbe in *Camilla*. Both Quixotic figures, these characters' adherence to truth causes major problems for the heroines and others, but functions in the novels as serious social commentary; Albany delivers harsh indictments of

¹² William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: University Press, 2009); this edition provides appended revised endings to the novel.

corruption and inequality; and Arbe asks innocent questions which draw attention to cruelty and injustice. Arbe's articulations might be traced to didactic fiction's tendency to assign to servants or children the simple language of truth; but similar articulations also figure in such Jacobin novels as Inchbald's *Nature and Art*, where the hero, marginalized by his unsophisticated education in Africa, asks pertinent questions revealing social and moral decay at the heart of hegemonic British values. Jacobin novels also feature Albany type figures, scourges of the aristocracy whose outspoken condemnations create trouble for themselves and for others, though highlighting political and social injustices. In Burney's 1780s conception, such a figure is evangelized, his dialogue littered with fire and brimstone rhetoric to activate Cecilia's compassion. Burney's decision to marginalize such a character by association with religious rhetoric is consistent with the largely secular morality developed in her novels, and also reflects the ambiguity of characters discussed elsewhere in this study. Such characters as Albany are outside the scope of this thesis, but offer rich sources of future discussion in the context of the study of dialogue as moral indices in Burney's fiction. Indeed, characters already discussed might yield further insights if examined through the lens of compulsive truthfulness. Mrs Selwyn, Madame Duval, Elinor Joddrel, and Mr Delvile mostly always tell the truth, as they see it, though the novels encourage the readers to respond differently in each case.

3. Politics, Society, and the Individual

In her essay for the *Cambridge Companion* volume on Frances Burney, Rizzo asserts that 'an analysis of Burney's experience of social hegemony as expressed in her works would require a volume'. This study goes some way to contributing to this area. In spite of Burney's claims that her work was not political, the use she made of dialogue belies such assertions.

First, as observed in Chapter 2, language itself was a site of political controversy, with the drive for standard forms marginalizing the majority of speakers and associating them with vulgar and even vicious predilections. Any author choosing to represent different ways of speaking in dialogue, was potentially reinforcing such notions and perpetuating social and moral prejudices. Yet, Burney's destabilization of the connection between class, language, and morality allows her to disrupt assumptions about rank, elevating members of the lower orders, and exposing representatives of the socially elite as both morally deficient and undeserving of their empowered positions. Such themes of course are Richardsonian, but also locate Burney work in a line of thinking leading to radical works of fiction of the late 1780s and 1790s. Breaking down the boundaries between classes of people, the novels rearrange groups along lines gauged by linguistic and moral evaluations. In addition, Burney's diversity of voices includes depictions of the speech of the lower orders, in ways similar to Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads*, reflecting also Coleridge's belief in the egalitarian powers of the reflective mind.

Second, the novels' dramatization of the ruling class's unfitness to rule exposes aspects of the ancien régime as decayed and inadequate for modernity. Such dramatizations draw

together disparate classes, and expose the infiltration of lower orders by elitist values. Using dialogue for characterization but also as a device to examine how power speaks through willing agents, Burney's fiction anticipates later theorization of language as a carrier of repressive and abusive ideologies, exploring such notions even before they drew the attention of Godwin.¹³ Drawing attention to the values of civic humanism, and contemporary campaigns to reform manners as an alternative for virtuous, civic life, Burney's novels nevertheless raise questions about the place allocated to women by such a republican model of virtue, and confront its masculinist assumptions which exclude women from active participation in what was essentially a new, if different kind of social elitism. In this respect, the novels are in tune with the later wave of calls to reform, and the ideas of thinkers like Wollstonecraft on inclusiveness.

Third, despite Burney's commitment to politeness, her novels do not support its codes completely: they reveal its perpetuation of gallantry as a means of subjugating women, and expose its adherence to freedom and ease as a licence for power and conflict; additionally, they explore the facility with which the language of politeness can be learnt and implemented to deceive. Nevertheless, the novels do not advocate retreat for women, but demonstrate how the moral faculties of the educated and rational female subject can be engaged and activated by experience of even violent confrontations. Although the heroines invariably return to provincial locations at the end of the novels, they do so after prolonged and varying encounters with urban and rural life. Thus the main focus of the novels, whether epistolary or narrated in the third person, is the developing subjectivity of the heroine in response to conflict and incident. Adapting Richardsonian approaches, Burney novels develop an experiential technique, allowing the reader to enjoy the perceptions of the heroine, rejecting or condoning the modes of behaviour she encounters.

There is something to be said here too about Burney's fictionalization of female experience, and its place in a line of thinking over which subsequent accounts saw Romanticism as dominating. The theory of the evolving self, facilitated by experience but also by powers of reflection, supported and found expression in the novel, a literary form capable of presenting external and internal action, and of highlighting the inter-relatedness of two such planes of existence. The diversity of Burney's voices emphasizes, by contrast, the stature of her heroines, validating their presentations as foci of interest, but also their representations as figures of potential authority. In contrast, women characters who transgress the boundaries of what might be seen as feminine styles of speaking often fail to acquire the longed-for authority and respect associated with masculine domains. In this way, the novels expose the way certain styles of speaking are denied to women, excluding them from areas of power underpinning such modes. However, such characters are presented ambivalently, inviting my reading of them as vehicles for Burney's interventions of discussions about the rights of access for women, to genres and styles of speaking and writing traditionally preserved for, and owned by men.

¹³ In her introduction to *Caleb Williams* (p. xxiv), Clemit discusses how Falkland adopts the language of the novel's despotic characters.

4. Burney and Authorship

The act of authorship provided the opportunity for Burney to demonstrate her commitment to the principle of inclusiveness in civic virtue. Fiction such as hers was not a passive receiver and reproducer of dominant ideas or prominent codes, but rather interventionist and even revisionist. Thus although Burney's novels reveal the need for polite behaviour, they expose the flaws in contemporary applications of politeness, and explore how such codes might be reconciled with the needs of a modern, harmonious and safe society. In addition, the novels support the concept of polite English being Standard English, the act of female authorship performing women's right and ability to help establish a national variety. By depicting characters from the lower or middling ranks who employed such standard, polite forms, Burney's novels demonstrate the inclusiveness of such a speaking community. In many respects, therefore, the novels dramatize what thinkers like Cobbett were advocating in the prefaces to their grammars, urging the workingman to proclaim his involvement in social and political life by his mastery of the national idiom. Examples such as Mr Monckton, Mr and Mrs Delvile, Mrs Selwyn, and Elinor Joddrel, demonstrate how Burney's novels depict Standard English, not as monologic and monotonous, but nuanced, gendered, rich in different tones and temperatures, capable of different registers and levels of complexities, incorporating 'U' and 'non U' choices, and carrying a wealth of references to various domains, and other languages. The potential of this centralized dialect is enhanced by its contrast with marginalized varieties, all of which are used for rapid recognition of identity, but also for access to a deeper, moral self. Here, Burney's willingness to take on the polyphonic dialogue of the work of her literary forebears was the first step in effecting her own schematic, moral design. At this point in my conclusion, it is illuminating to return to some of the claims for Jane Austen as outlined in my introduction, particularly as represented by the argument of Nancy Armstrong. Armstrong credited Austen as an innovator in the polite style, a writer whose prose is 'capable of producing endless individual variants within polite spoken English [...] distinguishing one member of the speech community from another', so that 'language itself acquires *unprecedented* stability as Austen uses it, to point to *qualities inherent in the individual rather than to accidents of fortune or birth*' (my italics).¹⁴ Austen's novels, according to Armstrong, 'equate the formation of the ideal community with the formation of a new polite Standard English'. This thesis, it is hoped, lays the ghost of such assertions. In addition, it has demonstrated how Burney created such a central, heterogeneous community of Standard English speakers, while depicting beyond it, a wide range of alternative speech varieties, or 'other' voices, as contrapuntal markers.

Burney's act of authorship also establishes her position in an intellectual community which predates her published work. The extant letters and diaries have long been recognized as evidence of Burney's place in intellectual, social and political networks of the decades during which she lived and worked. Writing in 1995 about the prominence of *Evelina* in Burney criticism, Doody argued that it was time to reintegrate the novel with Burney's other work, but

¹⁴ *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, pp. 137-138.

also with the world, for every 'novel enters into dialogue with other works, or parodies or cannibalizes or subverts them'. Recognizing the complex relationship between works of fiction, Doody emphasized that 'every novel is intertextual, a tissue of allusion'.¹⁵ This study has tried to reintegrate Burney's fiction with the world. The way the novels engage with conduct literature has long been noted and debated, but this study highlights Burney's dialogue with grammar books. A manuscript fragment in the Berg Collection contains a review of Ben Jonson's grammar book; and a letter to her nephew dated 4th March 1801 asks his advice about Ash's grammar, and whether it would be a good choice for her to use with her son, Alex.¹⁶ Such references, along with diary entries recording her worries about her own grammar, demonstrate Burney's involvement with prescriptive and proscriptive texts about language. As noted earlier, many grammar books provided promiscuous exercises of 'bad' English for students to observe and correct. In many ways, then, the fictional 'bad' English users in Burney's novels might be traced to such exercises, her use of dialogue reflecting a hybridization in her use of form. Indeed, dialogue itself is central to her instructive purposes, since it was a long established feature of philosophical, religious, didactic, and educative texts.

Reintegration of Burney's fiction in debates about language has also revealed her involvement in a range of debates carried out in various discursive fields. Some of these debates have been revisited in this conclusion; others include theories on acting, emulation, and ventriloquism, as well as discussion of hysteria and madness. Significant also, are the allusions to contemporary events and controversies, which are evident in the novels, such as the controversy over women's coteries, as referenced in *Cecilia*. Since Doody wrote her review, cultural historians have engaged with Burney's personal reading, and there have been some attempts by literary scholars to explore the connections between specific novels and other works.¹⁷ This study focuses particularly on dialogue, and has drawn attention to similarities, but mostly differences, between Burney's fiction and that of her literary forbears and contemporaries. In addition, discussion has made links with dialogue in dramatic texts, including Shakespearean tragedy, Restoration comedy, and eighteenth-century comedies of manners. In this way I have highlighted what special features of Burney's fiction earned it contemporary praise for being natural and convincing, while functioning effectively for characterization, comic and polemic purposes. The indirection which, my thesis argues, characterizes the work of Burney, relies on this kind of reader knowledge, and these kind of reader assumptions. Such indirection is achieved largely through the use of dialogue, a dialogue woven through with allusions, while creating characters who were so vivid to contemporary readers, that they thought they recognized real people in their appearance and speech.

¹⁵ Doody, 'Beyond *Evelina*', 359-371 (p. 365 and p. 371).

¹⁶ *JAL*, IV, 473.

¹⁷ In 'Beyond *Evelina*', Doody discusses links between *Evelina* and Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless*, as well as more ancient texts; Joseph Bartolomeo explores links between *Evelina* and *Roderick Random*, in chapter 4 of *Matched Pairs*, pp. 123-151; Antoinette Marie Sol makes a case for links between *Evelina* and *Cecilia* and works by Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni and Pierre Choderlos de Laclos: see *Textual Promiscuities*, especially pp. 51-109 and pp. 159-204; in Chapter 1 of *The Female Reader in the English Novel*, Joe Bray discusses Burney's reading of Smith and Hume: see pp. 28-57.

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On-line Databases Used Throughout my Study

EEBO

ECCO

Googlebooks

OED

Project Gutenberg

17th-18th Century Burney Collection: Newspapers