

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with an analysis, as well as, a comparison of the novels *Evelina, Or, The History of Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), *Cecilia, Or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782) and *Camilla, Or, a Picture of Youth* (1796) written by Fanny Burney who was an influential author of women's literature in the late 18th century. Her novels are classified as part of the didactic tradition of reformed heroines that had been established at the time. Her main characters mostly follow a similar formula of their background, financial situation and moral virtue. What changes, however, is that the satiric quality of her lessons which reflects the society of the day and gains increased intensity and moral awareness.

The major part of the thesis is the analysis of *Evelina*. This section contains a discussion of the novel's narrative mode and the heroine's social development, family circumstances, mentor characters and her financial situation along with her attitude towards it; emphasizing the satirical purpose. In the first chapter, the focus is on the various misunderstandings and embarrassments which serve as tests that are necessary for her to evolve. Then it is commented on the social critique that is demonstrated on the characters who surround Evelina and then linked to the 18th century philosophy, drawing on the opinions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft, both significant figures of the period.

The second chapter is dedicated to Burney's next novel, *Cecilia*. It follows a structure analogous to the previous one and concerns the issues relevant to the content of the novel, because this time the author explores the commercialism rather than the right manners of the social sphere. The satire is more encompassing as the themes turn more serious. Nevertheless, the parallels in the heroines' circumstances are obvious.

Next, the comparison will continue with *Camilla* where the similarities and differences are most apparent as one may notice a further shift in the didactic ambition of the novel. The

lessons become more pronounced and the reform involves a higher number of characters, overall creating a more elaborate narrative, though the similarity of the topics remains strong.

The final part summarizes the progress of Burney's writing. It concerns the reception of the novels at the time of their publication and it is touched on the critical value of her lessons and the didactic message of these "guides" that were considered as good instructions for young women in society, one of her novels even being approved of as a study for youth.