



EVELINA--ANNOTATED, with Commentary and Illustrations (BookDoors: Literature in Its Context)

Fanny Burney

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BookDoors' EVELINA is the most comprehensively annotated edition of Frances Burney's comic novel available in print or online. The annotations and commentary are expert.

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Frances Burney's brilliant comic novel depicts a young lady's entrance into a layered world: the fashionable London season of the nobility and gentry, then a return to another London, the old city and its more "middling sort," and finally the restorative retreats of spas and country estates.

Set in the mid-1770s Burney captures the opulence of peacetime England seen through the eyes of Evelina, age seventeen, variously described as a "artless young creature, with two much beauty to escape notice," "great quickness of parts, . . . [and] a certain air of inexperience and innocence that is extremely interesting."

Nobody to the world she enters and without fortune, Evelina seeks a baronet father's acknowledgement and the rights to a name and inheritance that should be hers. This quest for identity becomes a love story as the beautiful Evelina draws suitors ridiculous to threatening, but among them the thoughtful and attentive Lord Orville.

Her unease in new surroundings lends Evelina a keen eye for the missteps of those around her. Despite the hesitancy, fluster, and occasional embarrassment reflected in Lord Orville's nod to her "fearful excellence," Evelina learns to navigate a stratified yet fluid social scene, one beset with intricacies that could imperil a woman's standing.

The consummate gift for mimicry that so enriches Burney's journals carries over to Evelina's letters to delineate the shades of discourse that would echo through their Georgian settings: gallantry, farcical ranting, mannered affectation, raillery, obsequious pandering, and all the modes of speech adopted by those who are on-stage and playing for high stakes in the scramble that is the beau monde.

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