

In Covers Green and Gold: Fin-de-siècle Evelina Sous les couvertures vertes et dorées : Evelina à la fin de siècle

Svetlana Kochkina

Volume 60, 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1099115ar>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/pbsc.v60i1.36118>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Bibliographical Society of Canada/La Société bibliographique du Canada

ISSN

0067-6896 (print)
2562-8941 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Kochkina, S. (2023). In Covers Green and Gold: Fin-de-siècle Evelina. *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada / Cahiers de la Société bibliographique du Canada*, 60, 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.33137/pbsc.v60i1.36118>

Article abstract

The first novel by Frances Burney, *Evelina, Or, a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, published in 1778, has enjoyed long-standing popularity, having never gone out of print in English. A distinct cluster of its editions appeared at the end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th century. This period in book history was marked by the creative work of private-press book designers, printers, binders, and illustrators inspired by the Aestheticism, Arts and Crafts, and Art Nouveau movements. Even though their pioneering work was destined for narrow circles of collectors and connoisseurs, it profoundly influenced the development of both industrial and artists' book design, heightening the awareness of books' aesthetic appeal. The fin de siècle was a time of nostalgia for idealized pre-industrial society, symptomatic of Victorian and Edwardian escapism, which found its expression in lavish book ornaments and illustrations executed in the Directoire and Louis XVI styles. Late 19th - early 20th-century Evelinas, illustrated and decorated by Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Rackham, and Hugh Thomson, produced by Dent, Newnes, and Macmillan, reflect a profound influence that innovative private presses had on general publishing practices and the quality of industrially produced books. These Evelinas, beautifully illustrated, bound in decorative covers, and well-printed, exemplify both the newly awakened interest in the book's physical make-up and aesthetical aspects and the late-Victorian and Edwardian escapist nostalgia characteristic of fin de siècle publishing.

© Svetlana Kochkina, 2023



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

In Covers Green and Gold: Fin-de-siècle *Evelina*

SVETLANA KOCHKINA
McGill University

Abstract

The first novel by Frances Burney, *Evelina, Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, published in 1778, has enjoyed long-standing popularity and has never gone out of print in English. A distinct cluster of its editions appeared at the end of the nineteenth- to the beginning of the twentieth-century. This period in book history was marked by the creative work of private-press book designers, printers, binders, and illustrators inspired by the aestheticism, arts and crafts, and art nouveau movements. Even though their pioneering work was destined for narrow circles of collectors and connoisseurs, it profoundly influenced the development of both industrial and artists' book design, heightening the awareness of books' aesthetic appeal. The *fin de siècle* was a time of nostalgia for idealized pre-industrial society, symptomatic of late Victorian and Edwardian escapism, which found its expression in lavish book ornaments and illustrations executed in the Directoire and Louis XVI styles. Late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century *Evelinas*, illustrated and decorated by Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Rackham, and Hugh Thomson, produced by Dent, Newnes, and Macmillan, reflect a profound influence that innovative private presses had on general publishing practices and the quality of industrially produced books. These *Evelinas*, beautifully

illustrated, bound in decorative covers, and well-printed, exemplify both the newly awakened interest in the book's physical makeup and aesthetic aspects and the late-Victorian and Edwardian escapist nostalgia characteristic of *fin de siècle* publishing.

Résumé

Le premier roman de Frances Burney, « *Evelina : ou, l'entrée d'une jeune personne dans le monde* », publié en 1778 et dont les éditions en anglais n'ont jamais été épuisées, reste toujours populaire parmi les lecteurs. Un groupe bien défini de ses éditions est apparu à la fin du XIXe - début du XXe siècle. Dans l'histoire du livre, cette période a été marquée par les créations de maisons d'édition, d'imprimeurs, de relieurs et d'illustrateurs inspirés par l'esthétisme, le mouvement arts et crafts et l'art nouveau. Même si leur œuvre pionnier était destiné à des cercles étroits de collectionneurs et de connaisseurs, il a profondément influencé le développement de design du livre industriel et d'artiste ayant éveillé la prise de conscience de son aspect esthétique. La fin de siècle était aussi une période de nostalgie de la société préindustrielle idéalisée, symptomatique du désir d'évasion victorienne et édouardienne, qui a trouvé son expression dans de somptueux ornements et illustrations de style directoire et Louis XVI. Les *Evelinas* de la fin du XIXe - début du XXe siècle, illustrés et décorés par Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Rackham et Hugh Thomson, publiés par Dent, Newnes et Macmillan, reflètent une profonde influence que ces maisons d'édition innovatrices ont exercé sur la pratique générale de publication et la qualité des livres produits industriellement. Ces *Evelinas*, superbement illustrés, bien imprimés et en couvertures décoratives, témoignent à la fois du nouvel intérêt pour la manifestation physique et les aspects esthétiques du livre ainsi que de la nostalgie évasionniste de la fin de l'époque victorienne et édouardienne si particulière aux éditions de la fin de siècle.

Frances Burney (1752–1840) was a successful eighteenth-century English novelist and playwright, as well as an exceptional diarist. Burney's legacy comprises four novels, eight plays, a three-volume biography of her father, and twenty-five published volumes of journals and letters covering more than seventy years. In addition to the historical and evidential value of her correspondence and diaries, numerous editions, translations, and reprints of her works published in the course of the last 240 years represent a wealth of data on the history of publishing, reading, and authorship. Until recently, however, researchers in bibliography and book history have paid little attention to her published legacy. *Evelina*'s genesis and public debut were well documented by Burney herself, by literary critics, and later by her biographers. Janice Thaddeus, in her book on Burney's life as a professional writer, pays some attention to the publication history of *Evelina*.¹ Still, the rest of the book's life in print has been shrouded in uncertainties and omissions. Joseph Grau published the only enumerative bibliography of Burney's works in 1981.² Sadly, fifty-one *Evelinas* published before 1981 are missing from it, while a number of those present are listed erroneously with publications dated incorrectly, reprints attributed wrongly to specific editions, and editions listed as reprints and reprints as editions.³ To date,⁴ the only comprehensive work in

¹ Janice Farrar Thaddeus, *Frances Burney: A Literary Life* (Macmillan, 2000).

² Joseph A. Grau, *Fanny Burney: An Annotated Bibliography* (Garland Publishing, 1981). Some editions are also listed in Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schöwerling, *The English Novel, 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

³ For example, Grau lists a 1908 reprint of Dent/1893 (the existence of which could not be confirmed), while he omits the 1903 reprint of the same edition.

⁴ This article stems from my study of *Evelina*'s publication history from 1778 to the present, undertaken as a Ph.D. project. While its complete results are communicated in the dissertation, *Evelina: A Life-Story of a Book, Told by Its Paratext*, and in a forthcoming book, this article reports in detail on one of the findings made in the course of the study.

bibliography and book history based on Burney's legacy is Catherine Parisian's 2009 study of Burney's second novel, *Cecilia*.⁵

Burney's first novel, *Evelina, Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, published anonymously in 1778, was a critical sensation and widely read. Its appearance "legitimised the novel as an aesthetically and morally acceptable form"⁶ and marked the beginning of the end of a period when novels were considered disreputable. Burney's novel was generally seen as the book that made novels respectable for women to read and write. Up to the present day, *Evelina* has been published in 174 editions, reprints, and dramatic adaptations and has been translated into eleven languages and English braille script.⁷ During its 240-year publication history, it has never gone out of print in English. Even in the nineteenth-century, in the wake of John W. Croker's notoriously vicious criticism of Burney's later works, the *Wanderer* and *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, there were from three to ten editions and reprints of *Evelina* published per decade. During its lifetime, *Evelina* appeared in a range of editions, with their quality varying from cheap mass-market volumes to books published in literary series aimed at upper segments of the middle class. A small but distinct cluster of *Evelinas* was produced at the end of the nineteenth- to the beginning of the twentieth-century. Though industrially published,

⁵ Catherine M. Rodriguez, "The Strange and Surprising Adventures of a Novel: Publishing Frances Burney's *Cecilia*" (Diss., University of Virginia, 2006); Catherine M. Rodriguez, "The History of a Novel's Travels Abroad: Foreign Editions of Frances Burney's *Cecilia*," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 99, no. 4, 2005, pp. 539-71; Catherine M. Parisian, "Intersections in Book History, Bibliography, and Literary Interpretation: Three Episodes in the Publication History of Frances Burney's *Cecilia*," in *Producing the Eighteenth-Century Book: Writers and Publishers in England, 1650-1800*, edited by Laura L. Runge, Pat Rogers, and J. Paul Hunter (University of Delaware Press, 2009), 135-62; Catherine M. Parisian, *Frances Burney's Cecilia: A Publishing History* (Ashgate, 2012).

⁶ Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 127.

⁷ *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines "edition" as "a printed version of a given work that may be distinguished from other versions either by its published format (for example, paperback edition, popular edition, abridged edition), or by its membership in a complete batch of copies printed from the same setting of type, usually at the same time and place."

they exemplified changing tastes of the reading public and contemporary aesthetic developments in book design that marked *fin de siècle* publishing.

The last decades of the nineteenth-century opened a new era in book history. After years of low-quality production, manufacturers began focusing their attention on books' aesthetics. Several factors explain this change. On the one hand, technological developments of the second half of the nineteenth-century that had made book production easier and less expensive did not necessarily bring corresponding aesthetic progress. Books became cheaper to make and were produced on an industrial scale to satisfy the demands of mass readership, which led to declining quality in their manufacture and design. According to Ruari McLean, "ordinary book production deteriorated during the seventies and eighties because of new possibilities in cheapness of methods."⁸ On the other hand, the designers and proponents of the aestheticism, arts and crafts, and art nouveau movements rebelled against the increasing ugliness of the industrial age, its mass-produced commodities, and poorly designed machine-made everyday objects.

This duality led to the emergence of the revival of a printing movement, with a proliferation of fine-press printing, exquisitely illustrated books, and refined hand-binding and book-decorating practices. After the 1880s, several printers and designers (for example, William Morris, Charles Ricketts, and Charles Guillot) and binders (such as Thomas J. Cobden-Sanderson and Marius Michel) emerged, whose pioneering work in private presses, though destined for narrow circles of collectors and connoisseurs, had a profound influence on book design development. They brought the importance of books' aesthetic aspects to commercial publishers' attention, which led to higher quality industrial publishing, including for products targeting the mass market.

Regrettably, *Evelina* has never been produced by private presses. Its late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century editions by Dent, Newnes, and

⁸ Ruari McLean, *Victorian Book Design and Colour Printing* (University of California Press, 1972), 230.

Macmillan, however, exemplify the newly awakened interest in a book's physical makeup and aesthetic aspects, reflecting the beneficial influence of private presses on industrial book publishing practices. The *fin de siècle Evelinas* are elegant volumes decorated and illustrated by artists who left their mark on the history of book illustration: Aubrey Beardsley, a pioneer of line drawing and a significant figure of aestheticism; Arthur Rackham, one of the most popular and prolific artists of the Golden Age of English book illustration; and Hugh Thomson, another pioneer of line-drawing, the author of illustrations for the famous Peacock edition of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and the originator of the Cranford school of book illustration.

These well-designed and attractively illustrated *Evelinas* were published in series that included titles that would sell well and were popular with the reading public, but innocuous in terms of their content. Dent, Newnes, and Macmillan's decision to include *Evelina* in their series could be attributed to several factors. The first is the novel's potential for illustration, as it lends itself well to nostalgic pictorial interpretation. Thus, it was particularly suited to a time when increased attention to books' aesthetic appeal was revived by art nouveau, arts and crafts, and late-Victorian and Edwardian nostalgia for pre-industrial times. The second factor was probably the publishers' desire to capitalize on the rising recognition of Burney's merits as a novelist and to secure their share of profits from the ever-popular novel that George Bell had been steadily reprinting in his series since 1881.

Joseph Malaby Dent (1849–1926), a printer apprentice turned successful bookbinder and, later, a thriving publisher, brought awareness of books' aesthetic aspects and the influence of new artistic movements into the publishing business. In the late 1880s, he began publishing well-bound and well-decorated literary classics printed in an attractive type in small runs. Before his highly successful *Evelina* was issued in the affordable and democratic *Everyman's Library* (1909), Dent published two other editions of the novel: in 1893 (hereafter Dent/1893) and 1903 (hereafter

Dent/1903/Temple).⁹ Dent/1893 was part of his informal series of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century classical novels issued without a series imprint, but in uniformly designed and bound volumes. The series included, among others, ten volumes of Austen's works – a milestone edition, the first to have a serious editorial discussion of her texts – and Burney's *Cecilia*. It is worth noting that Dent's *Evelina* was far more popular than his *Cecilia*. It was reprinted in 1894, 1899, 1901, and 1903 – unlike *Cecilia*, which was never reissued.¹⁰

⁹ To make it easier to distinguish between and discuss particular editions and reprints of *Evelina*, I have established unique publication identifiers. The identifiers adhere to the following format: the last name of the publisher/year/any other relevant information helpful for distinguishing a particular edition or reprint.

¹⁰ Parisian, 30.

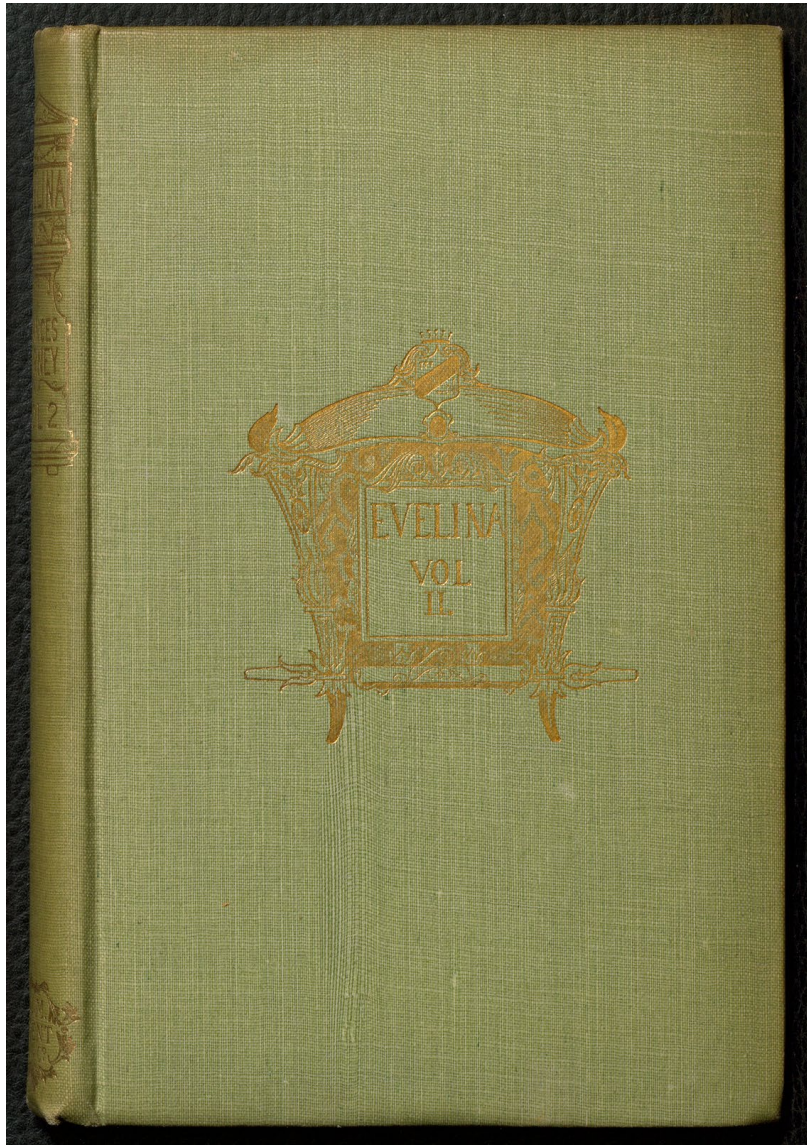


Figure 1: Cover of Dent/1893

Dent/1893, though industrially produced, bears several characteristics usually present in the deluxe or limited editions introduced by late-nineteenth-century publishers who offered books of visibly better quality and aesthetic value to affluent customers in response to the increasing affordability of mass-market and railway editions. This *Evelina* is a two-volume edition, light, slim, and elegant, made to be aesthetically pleasing

rather than practical. It is bound in light green smooth thin cloth with gilt lettering and gilt ornament on its cover (see Figure 1), which was also used for Dent's *Cecilia* by Burney and *Corinne* by Mme. de Staël, as well as decorative head- and tail-pieces placed before and after the prefatory matter and main text. The book is printed in small, crisp, clear, and delicate roman type with gothic blackletter used for chapter numbers, which is reminiscent of the rediscovery of and fascination with Gothic revival and pre-Raphaelite art. Dent produced it in two variants: uncut on large hand-made paper and issued in a limited number of 200 copies destined to appeal to an aesthetically inclined and wealthier audience and in a smaller size on good quality machine-made paper with a gilded top edge and two deckled edges. Another feature that made Dent/1893 akin to contemporary deluxe editions is a facsimile of Burney's signature placed underneath Burney's portrait frontispiece in the first volume.¹¹

¹¹ Eric Leuschner, "'Utterly, Insurmountably, Unsaleable': Collected Editions, Prefaces, and the 'Failure' of Henry James's New York Edition," *Henry James Review*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2001, pp. 24–40 (25–26).

Figure 2: Title page of Dent/1893

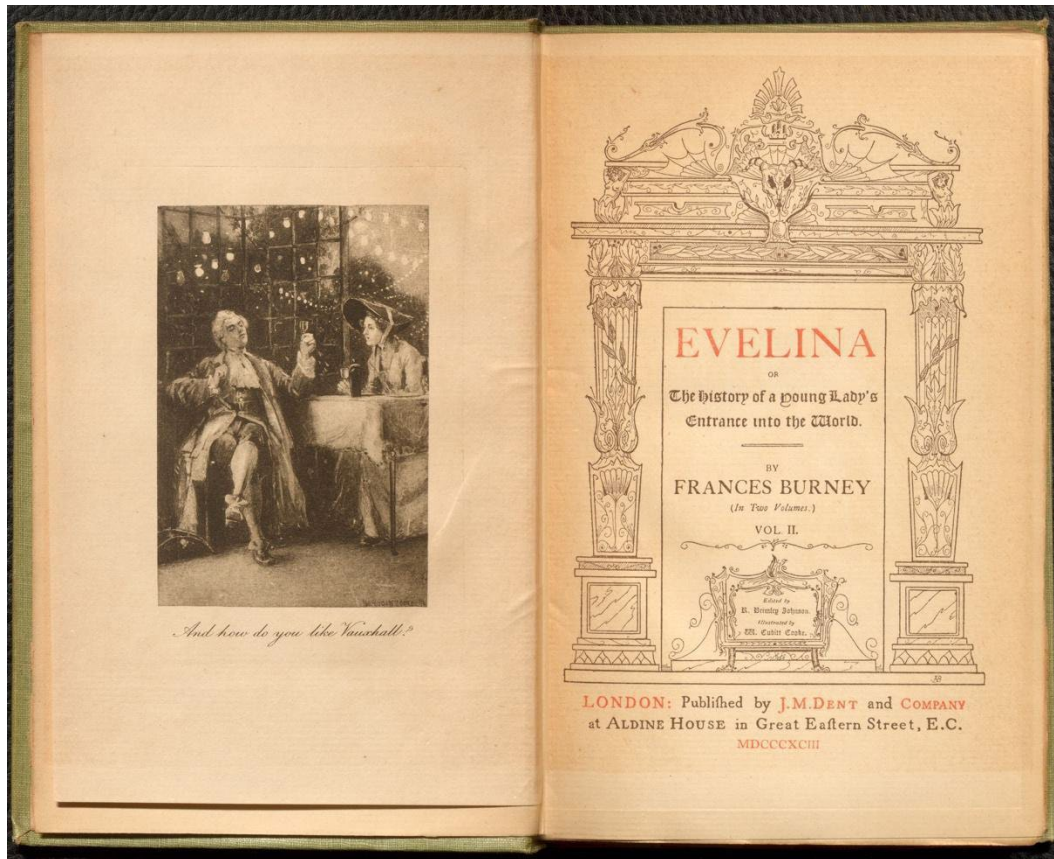


Figure 2: Title page of Dent/1893

Other visual elements of Dent/1893 also contribute to the book's sophisticated look and feel. Its title page is printed in red and black in roman and gothic decorative letters within an ornamental border. The border – an elegant arch with leaves, swirls, and female figures – is classical in its general outline, but it verges on rococo in its meticulously detailed decorative elements, executed in the airy drawing (see Figure 2). Both the title page and the gilt cover element were designed by a pioneer of line drawing in book illustration and a significant figure of aestheticism,

Aubrey Beardsley.¹² It is worth noting that Dent was the first publisher to employ Beardsley as an illustrator. Besides these lesser-known designs for *Evelina*, Beardsley also produced for Dent, in the same year, the illustrations and decorative elements for a highly ambitious *Le Morte Darthur* (1893),¹³ printed in the newly developed technique of photo-engraved line-block.¹⁴

Dent/1893 was the first *Evelina* since 1822 to have in-text illustrations. In addition to Burney's portrait in a Vandyke gown by her cousin, Edward Burney, the book includes six wash drawings by William Cubitt Cooke (1866–1951), who also illustrated *Cecilia* and Austen's novels produced by Dent. He was a watercolourist, draughtsman, printmaker, friend of Arthur Rackham, whose illustrated books he sometimes coloured,¹⁵ and a member of the Langham Sketching Club, a place that “incorporated a rare and distinguished breed – the black and white illustrator.”¹⁶ In contrast with *Evelina*'s earlier illustrations, Cooke's images do not portray any episodes of crude humour, practical jokes, or public embarrassment of the heroine; instead, the characters, dressed in late-eighteenth-century fashions, are depicted in graceful poses, gallant scenes, and misty romantic settings (see Figure 3). The illustrations, sepia photogravure reproductions, were printed as separate plates and each was bound with its protective tissue, another common feature of expensive editions

¹² The original drawing for the cover was sold at Sotheby's in June 1987 from archives of J.M. Dent; later, it was in the collection of the scholar and collector Mark Samuels Lasner, to be sold in 2012 at the New York Antiquarian Book Fair by Kelmescott Bookshop (catalogue *Artists' Books, Private Press, 19th Century Literature*).

¹³ Nicholas Frankel, “Aubrey Beardsley ‘Embroiders’ the Literary Text,” in *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, edited by Richard Maxwell, Victorian Literature and Culture (University Press of Virginia, 2002), 25–97; Edward Hodnett, *Five Centuries of English Book Illustration* (Scolar Press, 1988), 191–92.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Wakeman, *Victorian Book Illustration: The Technical Revolution* (David and Charles, 1973), 147–50.

¹⁵ An example is Harriet Martineau, Arthur Rackham, and W. Cubitt Cooke, *Feats on the Fiord* (Dent, 1914), which was sold by David Brass Rare Books.

¹⁶ “Langham Sketch Club,” in Artist Biographies, accessed 14 January 2021, <https://www.artbiogs.co.uk/2/societies/langham-sketch-club>.

targeting readers with a taste for refinement, which was reinforced by the book's binding and title page.

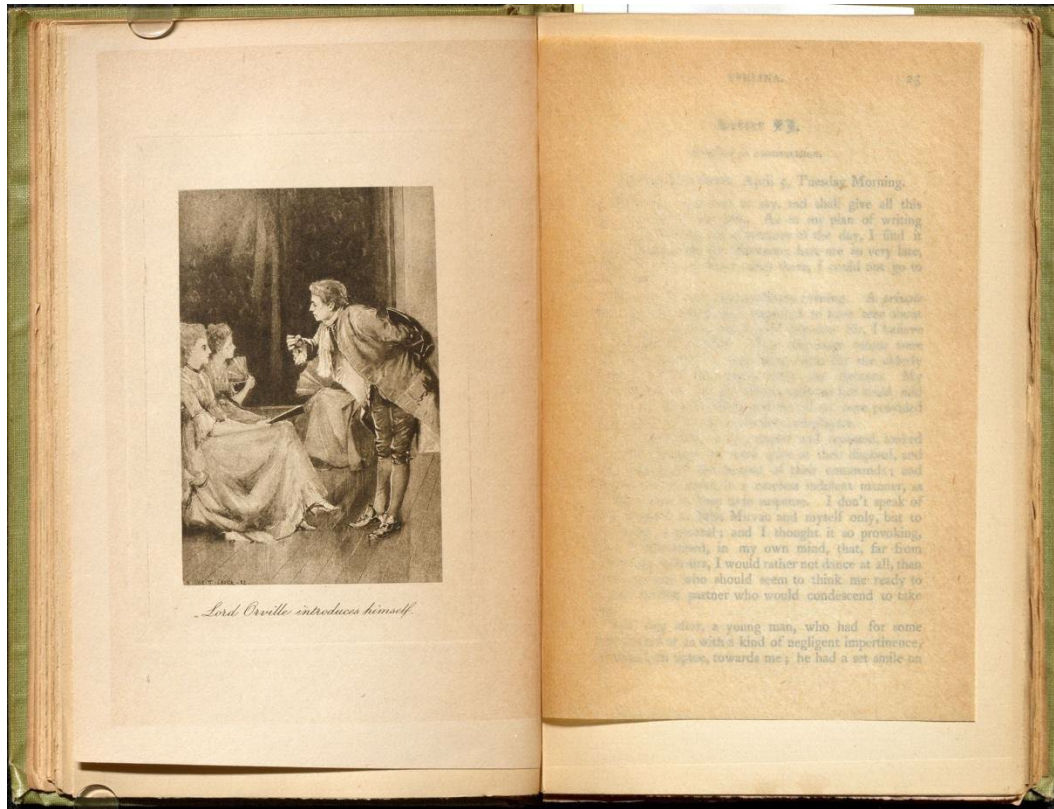


Figure 3: Illustration in Dent/1893

The prefatorial matter in Dent/1893 supports its visual makeup and contributes to the impression of an elegant and refined book produced to appeal to a *fin de siècle* public acutely attuned to aesthetics. It features a list of illustrations at the beginning of each volume, drawing readers' attention to the book's pictorial aspects. Dent/1893 was the first *Evelina* after the one published by Bell in 1881 to appear with a contemporary editorial preface. Richard Brimley Johnson, the preface's author, was “a biographer, critic, and editor specializing in nineteenth-century English

literature and literary figures,”¹⁷ who edited, among others, the works of Austen, published by Dent without series in 1892, later in the *Everyman's Library*, and in several luxury and gift editions.¹⁸ The 14-page preface, “Frances Burney,” focuses on the naturalness, feminine decorum, and refinement of both the novel and the author. Johnson praises the “buoyant freshness” of the “natural and impulsive” novel and Burney’s “direct, lucid, and effective” writing style.¹⁹ He underlines the place that *Evelina* occupies in the history of literature, putting a strong emphasis on the novel’s respectability: it “made circulating libraries respectable, and established the position of the novel [...] [and] proved beyond all cavil the fact that women could write books that were worth reading, and do so without forfeiting the good opinion of their acquaintance.”²⁰ The preface also brings to readers’ attention Burney’s own sense, sensitivity, and delicate feelings that “almost reconcile us to the old-fashioned grace of ‘sensibility.’”²¹ In the same vein of decorum and “marked degree of refinement,”²² Johnson describes her cultured family; her industrious and famous father; the brilliant atmosphere in Burney’s house, full of the international celebrities of the time; and the fact that Dr. Johnson, Edmund Burke, Horace Walpole, and Sir Joshua Reynolds were among her friends and admirers. Maintaining the theme of Burney’s creativity and refinement, and indirectly drawing attention to the illustrations in the book, Johnson writes in the preface about the miniature drawings for *Evelina* by Burney’s cousin Edward, “a favoured pupil of Sir Joshua

¹⁷ “Johnson, R. Brimley (Reginald Brimley), 1867-1932,” in *Social Networks and Archival Context* (University of Virginia Library and National Archives and Records Administration), accessed 14 January 2021, <https://snaccooperative.org/ark:/99166/w6m04qjs>.

¹⁸ Susannah Carson, *A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen* (Penguin, 2010), 280.

¹⁹ Frances Burney, *Evelina, Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (Dent, 1893), xxi.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xviii.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xi.

²² *Ibid.*, xii.

Reynolds.”²³ Charlotte Burney’s description of the drawings that he cites as “sweet,” “delightful,” “lovely,” and “handsome”²⁴ continues the leitmotif of graceful freshness. The general impression left by the preface is of a book that would appeal to an audience that appreciates a “degree of refinement” in their reading matter.²⁵

²³ Ibid., xxi.

²⁴ Ibid., xxi–xxii.

²⁵ Ibid., xxii.

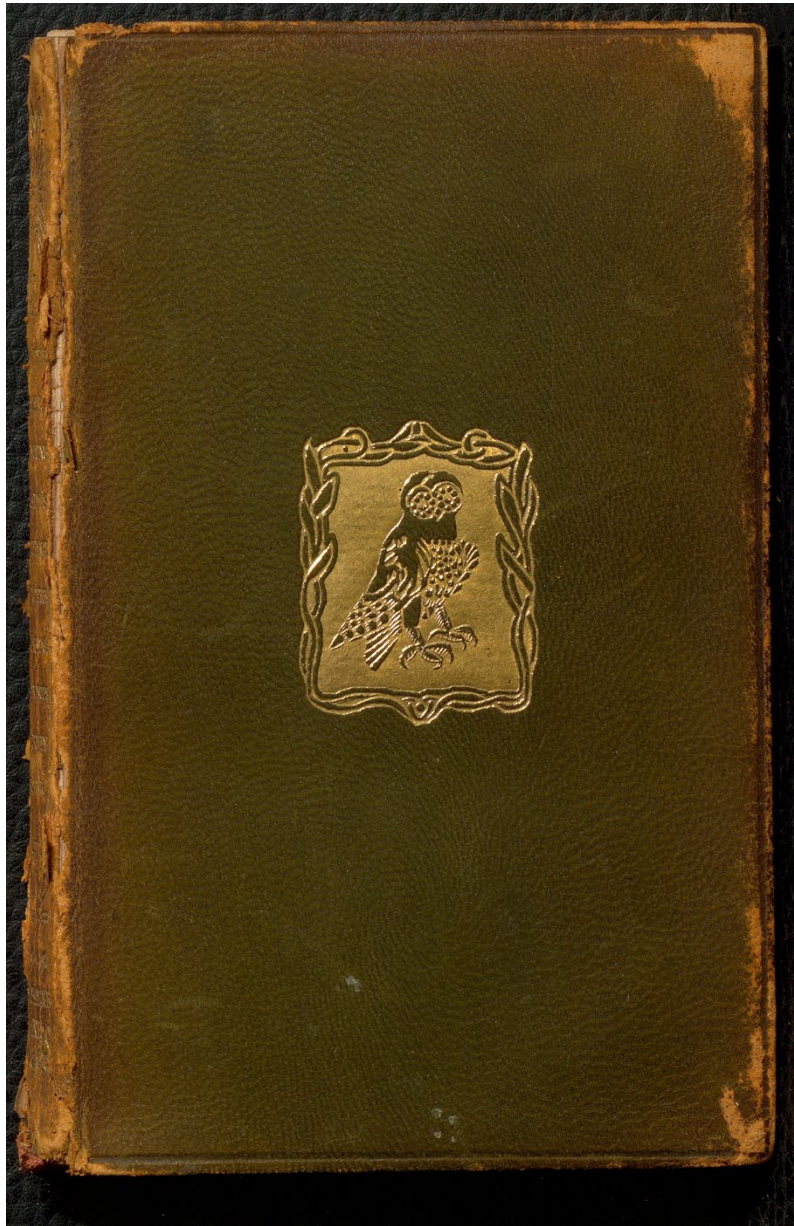


Figure 4: Cover of Dent/1903/Temple

In 1903, when the last reprint of Dent/1893 appeared, the publisher also issued another *Evelina* in its Temple Classics series, which focused on reprints of classic literature. Dent/1903/Temple is two slim and small volumes (only fifteen centimetres high) with covers soft to the touch and

bound in dull green leatherette with gilt ornaments on the spine and a gilt owl in the middle of the front cover (see Figure 4). The text is printed on exceedingly thin but strong and smooth paper in a small, clear, and beautiful roman type and black letter, the latter used for chapter numbers (as in Dent/1893). An ornamental border in red and black ink in the art nouveau style encloses the book's title page in red and black ink (see Figure 5). Dent/1903/Temple also reproduces two illustrations from Dent/1893 (both protected by tissues): Burney's portrait by Edward Burney as a frontispiece to the first volume and *Evelina's* return to her guardian's house as a frontispiece to the second volume.

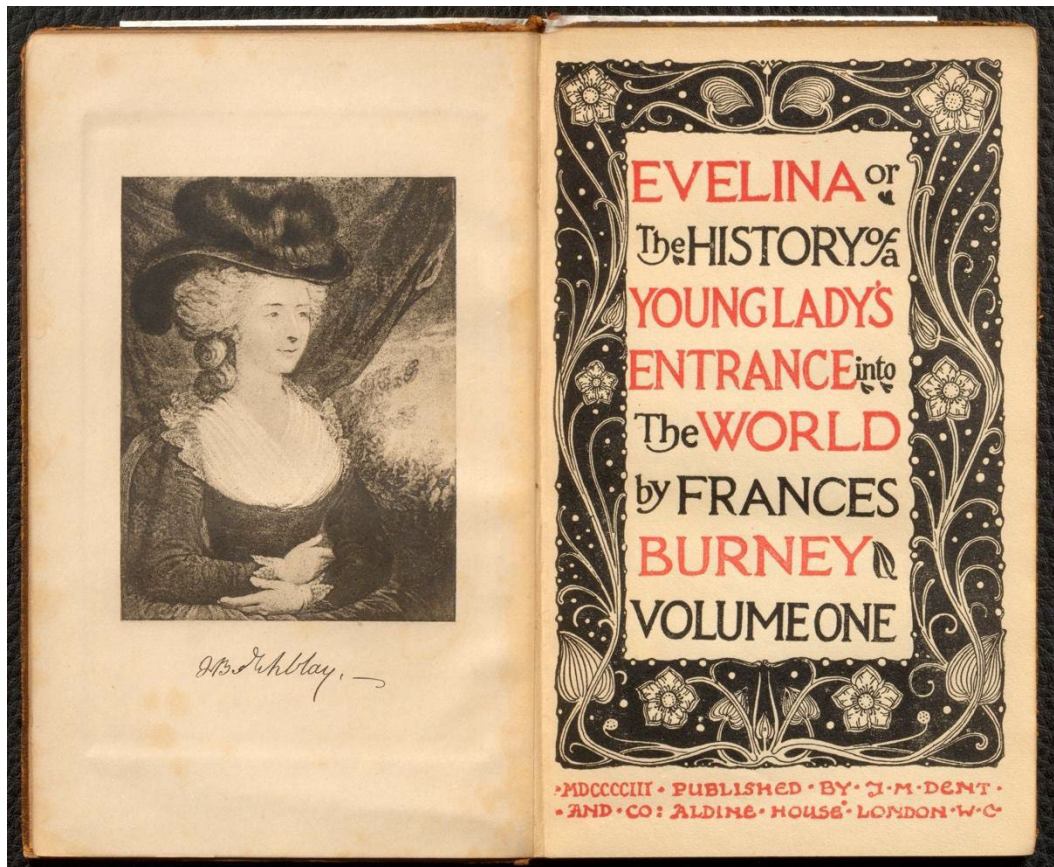


Figure 5: Title page of Dent/1903/Temple

Five years after Dent/1893, when its reprints were still appearing, George Newnes released another edition of *Evelina*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham, and the only one by this publisher. One of the main points of interest of Newnes/1898 is that it is not a typical example of either the publisher's or the illustrator's output. George Newnes (1851–1910) left his mark on book history not by publishing books. Newnes, who is now considered the father of modern magazine publishing and popular journalism, built his enterprise (in his own words) to give “wholesome and harmless entertainment to crowds of hard-working people, craving for a little fun and amusement.”²⁶ In 1881, Newnes launched his first magazine, *Tit-Bits*, which “was to be the matrix of twentieth-century popular journalism” and the basis of Newnes' fortune. The magazine, targeting a lower-middle-class audience, was “made up entirely of entertaining and interesting anecdotes.”²⁷ His best-known publication was the *Strand Magazine*, which was first to publish Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series and other popular middle-brow authors, such as H.G. Wells, P.G. Wodehouse, Rudyard Kipling, and Agatha Christie. Newnes' book publishing activities were mainly limited to cheap series of how-to books and popular literature he produced in the early twentieth-century. *Evelina* appeared in his short-lived New Library series of classic favourites (including *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell), which was never thoroughly planned or developed, judging by the limited number of seven titles included in the series.

As limited as the series was, the New Library was home to an edition of *Evelina* that, if not as refined as Dent/1893, Dent/1903/Temple, and Macmillan/1903, still conforms to the *fin de siècle* trend of attending to the

²⁶ “George Newnes Limited,” in *British Literary Publishing Houses, 1881-1965*, edited by Jonathan Rose and Patricia Anderson, Dictionary of Literary Biography (Gale Research, 1991), 226.

²⁷ A.J.A. Morris, “Newnes, Sir George, First Baronet (1851–1910), Newspaper Proprietor and Politician,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2012), updated 24 May 2012, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-35218>.

visual makeup and design of books published for a mass readership. For two shillings and sixpence, middle-class customers could purchase the volume in modestly ornamental green covers stamped with black rules and a heart-shaped wreath and embellished with sixteen black-and-white line drawings by Rackham. Rackham (1867–1939) was later to become one of the most popular and prolific artists of the Golden Age of English book illustration, best known for his three-tone, coloured pictures in children's stories, such as *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (1900), *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906), and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1907). His otherworldly and ethereal images in “sinuous pen line, softened with muted watercolours,”²⁸ full of fairies, hobgoblins, and gnarled trees, had a significant and lasting influence on fantasy book illustration.

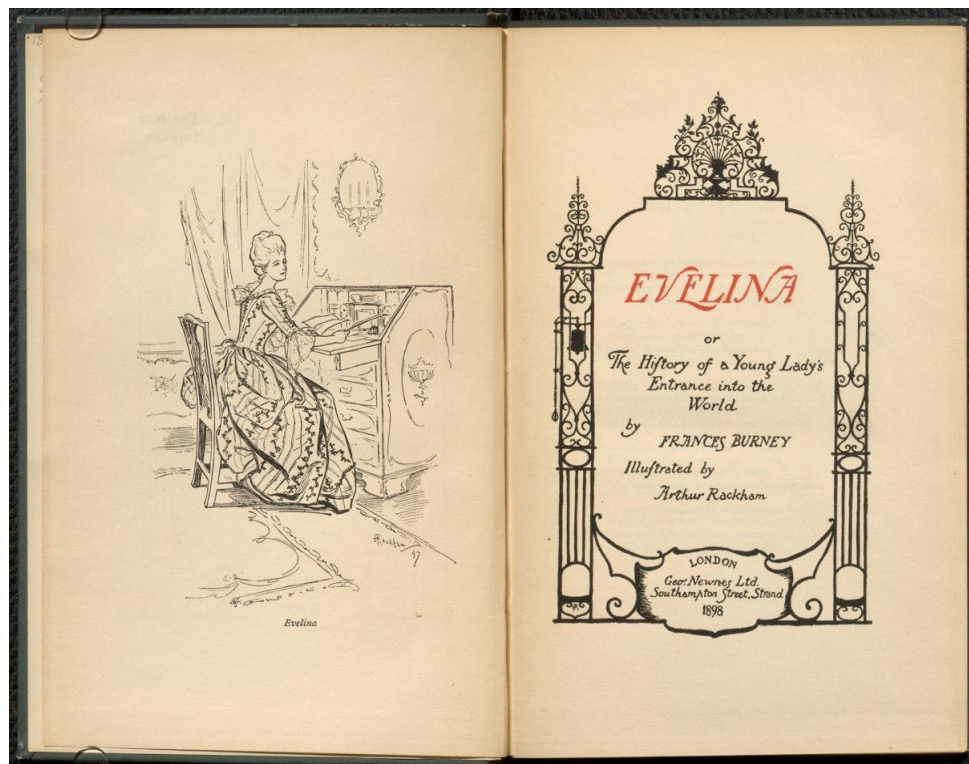


Figure 6: Frontispiece and Title page of Newnes/1898

²⁸ Jim Vadeboncoeur, “Arthur Rackham,” in *Images*, accessed 14 January 2021 via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine, <https://www.bpib.com/illustrat/rackham.htm>.

Rackham's drawings in Newnes/1898 belong to the early part of his career (his first illustrated book, *To the Other Side*, was published only five years earlier, in 1893) when his style had not yet acquired its later fluidity. They are drawn in thick pen, often with massed areas of black in the background, a technique that he developed in his later books into the use of silhouettes, which previously had been considered of limited application for book illustration.²⁹ In Newnes/1898, his elegant and nostalgic characters are dressed according to the time of the novel's action and depicted with grace and soft humour. The illustrations, not typical of Rackham's usual style, somewhat suggest the influence of Hugh Thomson and his Cranford school (see Figure 6). It is worth noting that Newnes, with his usual business flair, regarded the name of Rackham, though far from being at the pinnacle of his fame, an enticement important enough to be put not only on the title page but also on the dark-green cloth cover. The edition of *Evelina* produced by Newnes was a modest expression of a distinct trend in book publishing and design at the turn of the century. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth-century, the art nouveau and arts and crafts movements had lost ground in book design. Meanwhile, since the last decade of the nineteenth-century, nostalgic ornaments and illustrations in the Directoire and Louis XVI styles had become increasingly popular.³⁰ During this period, books bound in highly decorative, gold-blocked, brightly coloured covers and illustrated in the commercially successful style called Thomson's or Cranford school flourished. These books continued the tradition of heavily illustrated and lavishly bound Victorian gift books with their distinct look, feel, and

²⁹ Amanda Cockrell, "Rackham, Arthur," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2006), accessed 14 January 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195146561.001.0001/acref-9780195146561-e-2660>; James Hamilton, *Arthur Rackham: A Biography* (Arcade Publishing, 1990); James Hamilton, *Arthur Rackham: A Life with Illustration* (Pavilion, 1990).

³⁰ John Lewis, *The 20th Century Book: Its Illustration and Design* (Herbert Press, 1984), 47.

content, which had thrived in the mid-nineteenth-century.³¹ Victorian gift books, produced from the late 1830s to the 1870s, bound “in brilliant reds, blues, and greens picked out with gilt,”³² were often published to be bought as Christmas presents, though the “principal criterion was not seasonal content but rather material features of ornamental bindings and wood-engraved illustration.”³³ The contents of these “gold and green and blue” books were non-controversial: safe classics, poetry, travel, or popular science with their main “feature [that] might be identified as ‘pictureability,’”³⁴ or their potential to accommodate illustrations.

A new wave of similarly lavishly illustrated and decoratively bound books emerged during the *fin de siècle*, with its nostalgia for idealized and genteel pre-industrial society. This trend is best exemplified by the books published by Macmillan and illustrated by Thomson and his imitators. As Percy H. Muir points out, the popularity of these books published, decorated, and illustrated in Thomson’s Cranford style, was “as significant of Victorian escapism as the Morris movement. Thomson arrived on the book illustration scene just when the consciousness of the squalor and shoddiness of the mechanical age awakened a nostalgia of ‘good old days’ when life was simply more decorative.”³⁵ Macmillan, a company with an initially strong religious and educational focus, had made, since 1850, successful forays into and significant advances in fiction publishing (they were the ones to publish the *Alice* books) and had an unerring business flair for books that would last. The decision to work with the autodidact illustrator Thomson was to bring lasting recognition to him and a commercially successful publishing line for more than 30 years to Macmillan.

³¹ Tara Moore, “Books for Christmas, 1822–1860,” in *Victorian Christmas in Print* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³² Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *Poetry, Pictures, and Popular Publishing: The Illustrated Gift Book and Victorian Visual Culture, 1855-1875* (Ohio University Press, 2011), 242.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Percy H. Muir, *Victorian Illustrated Books* (Batsford, 1971), 199.

Hugh Thomson (1860–1920) was another pioneer in the technique of commercial line-block pen-and-ink illustration. He began publishing his work in this form in Macmillan's *English Illustrated Magazine* in 1886.³⁶ His first successes in book illustration came with *Coaching Ways and Coaching Days* (1888), published with his 214 drawings, and *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1890), with 183 illustrations that sold out all five thousand copies in the first three weeks of December.³⁷ *Cranford* by Elizabeth Gaskell (1891), which enjoyed immense popularity and was reprinted with his illustrations sixteen times by Macmillan and more than forty times by other publishers, solidified his reputation.³⁸ Thomson's illustrations in *Cranford* were so popular that they gave the name to Macmillan's book series and the style of book illustration that came to be known as the Cranford school.³⁹ By the time Thomson began illustrating Austen, the appearance of his latest books had become "an event in the art world as well as in publishing."⁴⁰ In 1895, *Pride and Prejudice*, with his 160 line drawings, ornamental initials, and a drawn title page executed in his characteristic manner, was published by George Allen in the famous Peacock edition, so-called because of the peacock-themed endpapers, title page, and lavish gilt-embossed cover. With their gentle humour and attention to period details, Thomson's pen-and-ink drawings remain the most frequently reprinted illustrations of *Pride and Prejudice* to the present. Critics compare the long-lasting influence of Thomson's illustrations on generations of readers to the one exercised by actor Colin Firth on the modern audience.⁴¹

³⁶ Wakeman, 149–50.

³⁷ Thomas Recchio, *Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford: A Publishing History* (Ashgate, 2009), 100.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 247–50.

³⁹ See Thomas Balston, "English Book Illustrations, 1880-1900," in *New Paths in Book Collecting: Essays by Various Hands*, edited by John Carter (Constable, 1934), 172-90; Olivia Fitzpatrick, "Thomson, Hugh (1860–1920)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by David Cannadine (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 14 January 2021, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36503>; Hodnett, 218–20; M.H. Spielmann and Walter Jerrold, *Hugh Thomson, His Art, His Letters, His Humour and His Charm* (A. & C. Black, 1931).

⁴⁰ Hodnett, 218.

⁴¹ Devoney Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 53.

Thomson's drawings of "unprecedented charm" in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Cranford*, and *Evelina* do not caricature but humanize their subjects by the benign outlook and good-natured realism that Thomson conveyed, presenting the "society of the past that was remote enough to seem serene and near enough to be remembered."⁴² The illustrations were a good market fit for an audience harkening back to the seemingly unspoiled and simple life of a bygone era. According to Austin Dobson, for whom Thomson illustrated a book of poetry, "there is nothing in his work of elemental strife, – of social problem, – of passion torn to tatters."⁴³ Instead, Thomson's illustrations, often described as delightful, present to the readers "charming male and female figures in the most attractive old-world attire," interacting in refined interiors.⁴⁴ They show the past through the "softening gaze of retrospect"⁴⁵ and with exceptional attention to and veracity in detail. When working on a book set in a particular period, Thomson would spend "many days in the British Museum or the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington, examining details of costume and furniture, old prints and architectural records, and taking meticulous notes."⁴⁶ With its potential for illustrations of eighteenth-century belles, fops, manners, fashions, and interiors, *Evelina* "was most congenial to Thomson's nature and stimulated the most satisfactory illustrations"⁴⁷ (see Figures 7 and 9).

⁴² Hodnett, 218.

⁴³ Austin Dobson, *De Libris: Prose and Verse* (Macmillan, 1908), 111.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 111.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 111-12.

⁴⁶ Lansing V. Hammond, "Hugh Thomson 1860-1920," *Yale University Library Gazette*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1951, p. 133.

⁴⁷ Hodnett, 219.

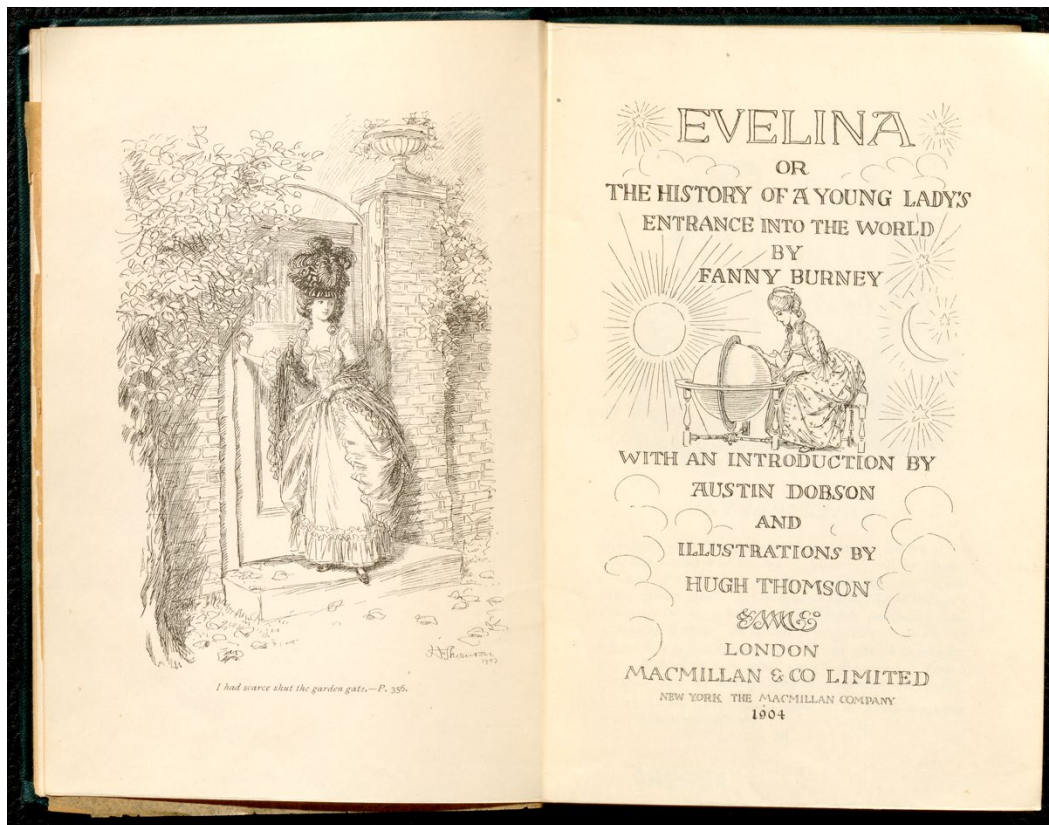


Figure 7: Frontispiece and Title page of Macmillan/1904

In 1903, Macmillan published the last edition of the *fin de siècle* cluster of *Evelinas* with a characteristic focus on their design and decorative aspects. It appeared first in the *Illustrated Pocket Classics*, described in the bound-in advertisement as a series of “dainty gift-books.” It was reprinted five times – in 1904, 1910, 1920, 1925, and 1932 – moving in 1920 into the highly popular, extensively illustrated, and decorative *Cranford* series. The book has seventy-five delicate and graceful pen-and-ink drawings by Thomson sprinkled through the text, each protected by a tissue. It is handsomely bound in emerald-coloured cloth with three gilt edges and embossed gilt tooling on the spine and front cover, which shows a girl figure in late-eighteenth-century clothes, under a densely foliated tree (see Figure 8). Macmillan/1903 and its earlier reprints are, in their look and feel, a close recreation of classic Victorian gift-books that were “increasingly rococo

books bound in bright-coloured cloth and blocked not only with lettering, but also with pictures or designs symbolical of the character of the text within.”⁴⁸



Figure 8: Cover of Macmillan/1903

⁴⁸ Michael Sadleir, *The Evolution of Publishers' Binding Styles: 1770-1900*, Bibliographia, Studies in Book History and Book Structure (Constable; Richard R. Smith, 1930), 53.

In Macmillan/1903, Thomson's distinct illustration style perfectly aligns with Edwardian escapism and nostalgia and the contemporary taste for the line, detail, and period atmosphere in book illustration. Thomson draws refined ladies, noblemen, and even less-appealing characters with his usual humour and knowledge of eighteenth-century furniture and costumes. The illustrations showing elegant figures in decorative settings fill this *Evelina* with the picturesque sophistication, distinction, and gracefulness of an idealized eighteenth-century. The novel's disturbing episodes, marked by low passions, crude humour, and physical aggression toward female or less vigorous male characters, or situations that caused Evelina any public embarrassment, are either not shown or presented through a softened lens. Thus, the horrifying scene of the monkey set upon the unfortunate fop, Mr. Lovel, by the boorish Captain, becomes a picture of Evelina and Miss Mirvan standing in pretty half-coquettish fright on Louis XV chairs while the good-humoured Captain laughs heartily with the monkey, who is presented as tame and smartly-dressed, sitting quietly beside him (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: Illustration to Macmillan/1903

Macmillan's *Evelina* was the third most often reprinted of all the novel's English editions. The last of the reprints, though less lavishly decorated on the outside but still with all seventy-five illustrations, was published in 1932, during the Great Depression, filling possibly the same escapist need that drew late Victorian and Edwardian readers to books with Thomson's illustrations. His drawings also made their way into *Evelinas*, produced by other publishers. After two successful Macmillan editions, Century Company, in their *Evelina*, issued in the well-produced but short-lived English Comédie Humaine series, reused eleven out of seventy-five of Thomson's illustrations (Century Company/1906 and Century Company/1907). There is no notice in Century co.'s books of permission to reprint these illustrations. This borrowing may have been a late act of piracy, as literary property remained a source of bitter contention between American and British publishers until the passage by Congress of the *Chase Act* in 1891, and even for some time afterward.⁴⁹ Alternatively, it could have resulted from a collaboration born out of failed negotiations on a possible merger of two companies, briefly considered in the late 1880s.⁵⁰ Similar to his illustrations in *Pride and Prejudice*, Thomson's drawings for *Evelina* have maintained their appeal to this day. In 2013, Asturias d'Epoca published the second Spanish translation of Burney's novel, faithfully reproducing all the illustrations from Macmillan/1903 (and even retaining their position in the text). I have also found at least one Kindle edition and one Kobo e-book edition and a couple of print-on-demand *Evelinas* (by Createspace and Girlbooks) that have used Thomson's drawings.

Besides its lasting influence on *Evelina*'s illustrative matter, another significant point of Macmillan/1903 is the form of the author's name. The dubious honour of introducing the diminutive and domestic form of Burney's given name, "Fanny," belongs to Macmillan and its editor, Austin Dobson. "Fanny" was used for the first time to designate the

⁴⁹ John P. Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (Routledge, 2006), 136.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth James, *Macmillan: A Publishing Tradition from 1843* (Palgrave, 2001), 176.

author in Macmillan/1903 and in Dobson's biography of Burney, published in Macmillan's prestigious English Men of Letters series in the same year.⁵¹

Similar to Dent/1893, the textual paratext in Macmillan/1903 accentuates the book's visual makeup. The list of illustrations and the illustrator's name on the cover and title page draw readers' attention to the book's pictorial aspect. The main focus of the positive and uncontentious "Introduction," abridged from a chapter in Dobson's biography, is the romantic history of *Evelina*'s publication and the first edition's brilliant reception.⁵² The "Introduction" emphasizes the decorous sophistication of both the novel and its author, quite fittingly for a gift-book edition nostalgically harkening back to its Victorian predecessors. Dobson recounts at length (for seven pages), using complimentary language and citing flattering testimonies from famous figures and celebrities (Dr. Johnson, Mrs. Thrale, Burke, and Reynolds), the sentimental and unusual genesis of the novel⁵³ and Burney's rise to fame. He describes Burney as an ideal lady-author, a "refined young lady of punctilious and even prudish disposition,"⁵⁴ and a "reserved, delicate, emotional young woman" who wrote "to amuse herself" "without thought of publication," confiding "only to the discreet ears of her admiring sisters."⁵⁵

Similar to the introduction in Dent/1893, and not surprisingly for an introduction to an edition embellished with no less than seventy-five illustrations, Dobson pays attention to the pictorial history of *Evelina*. He

⁵¹ Austin Dobson, *Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay)*, English Men of Letters (Macmillan, 1903).

⁵² Peter Sabor demonstrates the significance of Dobson's preface to Macmillan/1903 and his biography of Burney published in the English Men of Letters series as pioneering contributions to the field of Burney studies. Peter Sabor, "Annie Raine Ellis, Austin Dobson, and the Rise of Burney Studies," *Burney Journal*, vol. 1, 1998, pp. 25–45.

⁵³ To please her overbearing stepmother Burney burned her first novel, *The History of Caroline Evelyn*, a precursor to *Evelina*, which told the story of Evelina's unfortunate mother.

⁵⁴ Fanny Burney, *Evelina, Or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, Macmillan's Illustrated Pocket Classics (Macmillan, 1903), x.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ix.

does not refer, however, to the illustrations in the Dent editions, market competitors of Macmillan/1903. Not so subtly hinting that the illustrations in the volume that he is prefacing are much more suited to the novel than the ones that appeared in the Lowndes editions (1779), he loftily suggests that Lowndes “was not well advised” in commissioning illustrator John Hamilton Mortimer, who was known for his depictions of “banditti and monsters.”⁵⁶ According to Dobson, the illustrations by Thomson, being executed by an “especially sympathetic pictorial interpreter,”⁵⁷ are far more appropriate for the book. Also, Dobson mentions in a positive tone the “delicate little”⁵⁸ illustrations to *Evelina* by Burney’s famous cousin, Edward, not failing to point out that they were exhibited at the Royal Academy, thus implying the superiority of a gentler type of pictorial approach, similar to the one in Macmillan/1903. To conclude the account of *Evelina*’s illustrative trajectory, he relays an anecdote of Catherine II of Russia commissioning a series of compositions for the book by Angelica Kauffmann. Dobson acknowledges that he discovered “no traces of any scenes from Fanny Burney’s novel” in the “famous Hermitage on the Neva.”⁵⁹ Nonetheless, he mentions the story as a way of reinforcing the refined overtones in the novel’s history, which could not fail to appeal to prospective buyers and readers of the lavishly bound and illustrated volume intended as a “dainty gift book.”

Evelinas published at the turn of the nineteenth-century share several common traits and form a distinct and well-defined, though short-lived, cluster or type. They are characterized by heightened attention to their illustrations and physical makeup. Their features include illustrations that elegantly and faithfully reproduce eighteenth-century fashions and

⁵⁶ Ibid., xviii

⁵⁷ Ibid., xvi.

⁵⁸ Ibid., xviii.

⁵⁹ Ibid., xviii. The museum’s online catalogue does not confirm the existence of these drawings. “The State Hermitage Museum,” accessed 14 January, 2021, <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/?lng=en>.

settings; covers that are attractively designed and bound; with gilding on covers and edges; and paper that is of quality or even hand-made. The attractive visual and material packaging of these books is supported by the publishers' paratexts that emphasizes the aesthetic merits and refined qualities of the book and its author. These *Evelinas* exemplify the *fin de siècle* period in book history, characterized by both heightened awareness of the aesthetic aspects of the book, influenced by art nouveau, arts and crafts, and the revival of printing movements, and late Victorian and Edwardian nostalgia for a romanticized pre-industrial society.

Author Biography

Dr. Svetlana Kochkina is a lecturer at McGill School of Information Studies and the Head of Access and Lending Service at McGill Library. In 2020, she defended her PhD thesis on *Evelina's* publication history, which served as the basis of the forthcoming monograph. She does research and publishes on the history of the book, the evolution of the form and paratextual elements of the book, and Frances Burney's social networks.

Copyright © 2023 Svetlana Kochkina. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).