

## The Motif of Education in Sentimental Narrative

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The motif of education is important in sentimental literature and in eighteenth-century narrative. It is both a central issue in terms of social reform in an enlightened sense, and a focal point in the love and courtship themes which are present in such narrative, the so-called *seduction plot*. It appears as a frequent topic in many authors of English, French, German and Spanish literature. The connection between the issue of education and the seduction plot is observed in the protagonists of the latter, especially in the male main character, either a libertine villain or a lovable but rakish seducer, whose personality has been influenced by a deficient education. Furthermore, such literature shows a concern more specifically focused on education, also discernible in journalism and theatre. It deals with topics such as the functionality of education itself and the pedagogy used both in public schools and in education at home with a tutor, mostly presented from a progressive perspective, usually influenced by the work of Rousseau. The progressive tendency of the sentimental novel becomes a radical discourse in the feminist and Jacobin novel of the end of the eighteenth century.

Keywords: education; sentimentalism; narrative; Enlightenment; seduction; Rousseau

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### El motivo de la educación en la literatura sentimental

El motivo de la educación es importante en la literatura sentimental y en la narrativa del siglo dieciocho. Su presencia es frecuente, tanto como tema de interés general para la reforma de la sociedad en un sentido ilustrado como por su importancia dentro de la temática amorosa o de cortejo presente en tal narrativa, concretamente en la denominada *secuencia de seducción*. Esta constituye un tipo de trama habitual en numerosos autores de las literaturas inglesa, francesa, alemana y española. El encaje de la temática educativa y la secuencia de seducción se observa a través de sus protagonistas, sobre todo e invariablemente del masculino, que es un villano libertino o, alternativamente, un seductor amable pero de malas costumbres, cuya personalidad se ha formado mediante un proceso educativo deficiente. Existe también un interés más específicamente educativo en la literatura de esta época, visible en la narrativa, pero también en el periodismo y en el teatro. Este trata asuntos como la funcionalidad de la educación y las metodologías adecuadas en las escuelas públicas, así como la enseñanza privada en el hogar, todo ello desde una perspectiva habitualmente progresista e influida por la obra de Rousseau. La tendencia progresista de la novela sentimental se vuelve radical en la novela jacobina y feminista de finales de siglo.

Palabras clave: educación; sentimentalismo; narrativa; Ilustración; seducción; Rousseau

The motif of education is present in sentimental narrative in two possible ways: as reflections on the best methods and modes of education and in plots that clearly show the happy or unhappy consequences of the form of education that the main characters have received. We can also distinguish between novels focused on the education of children and young people, on the one hand, and those of courtship or seduction, on the other. In the latter, the education received by the protagonists is an instrumental factor in the development of their character. Education can thus be the central motif of a tale or of a long narrative, as is the case in *The Fool of Quality*, by Henry Brooke (1765-70), *Eusebio*, by Pedro Montengón (1786-88), or *The History of Sandford and Merton*, by Thomas Day (1783-89). However, works of this type are structured in multiple brief narrative sequences around a biographical axis, and the whole is unified not by a clearly visible main sequence, but by the paedagogic issues examined or, in more general terms, by the theme of personal growth, as in the genre traditionally denominated *Bildungsroman* or *novel of education*.<sup>1</sup> Such novels aspire to present the reader with a certain ideal of morality and sociability by means of a fictitious biography and a discourse that contains lessons for life in society. More specifically, paedagogic reflections regarding the acquisition of knowledge and values in the context of the relationship between master and pupil play a major role.

In the case of seduction narratives, which we will exemplify here with the works of Samuel Richardson (*Pamela* [1740], *Clarissa* [1748]), Henry Mackenzie (*The Man of Feeling* [1771], *The Man of the World* [1773]), Hugh Kelly (*Louisa Mildmay* [1767]) and Sophie von La Roche (*Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* [1771]), we see that the character of the virtuous young woman is backed by an appropriate education.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, behind the libertine villain, or even the “reformable” rake, with his sexually predatory customs rather than a perverse nature, we often find a faulty education that instills the deeply mistaken principles that rule the world and are associated in these narratives with the urban *milieu*, the metropolis and the higher classes: the correct education being that which assists the action of a person’s inherent nature compared to the wrong one being that which twists it and leads the person astray. Rousseauian metaphysics of the essential—the natural morality of the heart—underlies each sentimental narrative by means of the motif of education in a broad sense, an education whose failure is the ultimate explanation of any social evil, usually through the sins of spoiled libertine children. Thus, in eighteenth-century narrative, the topic of private education (at home, with a tutor)

<sup>1</sup> This is a traditional category but the limits and definition of the type are not so clear. In *Plots of Enlightenment*, Barney summarizes the key German terms: “Given my emphasis on education as key to understanding this type of novel, I must also address the terminology, because given the German penchant for taxonomic distinctions, the *Bildungsroman* proper is usually immediately distinguished from the variants, particularly the *Entwicklungsroman* and the *Erziehungsroman*” (1999, 26). We will include in this discussion both *Erziehungsromane* (Day, Montengón) with its specific interest in pedagogic issues, and the proper *Bildungsroman* type, which deals more generally with the formation of the character of the (male or female) protagonists.

<sup>2</sup> As we see in *Sidney Bidulph*, by Frances Sheridan, where the following is said about the education of the heroine: “She had educated her daughter, who was one of the greatest beauties of her time, in the strictest principles of virtue, from which she never deviated, through the course of an innocent though unhappy life” (1995, 11).

appears frequently and is often associated with the stereotypes of its failure. However, the education in public schools fares no better.<sup>3</sup> If the former is presented as excessively permissive, in the latter the danger lies in the spread of bad habits amongst young people. Consequently, a mistaken education constitutes the origin of the personality of the main character types in a narrative sequence central to the sentimental novel, the *seduction sequence*, who are often a libertine man and a young woman of exacerbated sensibility and with sublime ideas about virtue and morality.

All these seduction tales show the end result of a mistaken education—the formed character of the now adult protagonists, which determines the course of the narrative. In others, such as *Sandford and Merton*, by Thomas Day, the motif of education occupies a more central position throughout the novel, since the main characters are the children whose moral and sentimental education is the object of the narrative. In the case of the aristocratic child Tommy Merton, however, first a process of miseducation can be perceived, which is reversed by the intervention of the good master, Mr. Barlow, with the help of the other child, the farmboy Harry Sandford.

When comparing the Merton boy, his character, family and environment, with the childhood of the male protagonists of seduction sequences in other novels (Lovelace in *Clarissa*, Thomas Sindall in *The Man of the World*, Lord Derby in *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*), it becomes obvious that Tommy was destined to be another libertine seducer, or at best one of the lovable, reformable rakes who often feature in sentimental narrative. Thus, he would have been just another of those characters in which the influence of bad principles and education is regulated by a benign nature, but not before having caused a great amount of suffering to himself and to others in the course of the dramatic action. The damage caused by the reformable rakes in comic actions is usually less serious, as we can see in Restoration Comedy or even in *Pamela*. Yet, whenever the plot approaches the sphere of drama and tragedy—in serious comedy, drama and bourgeois tragedy or their narrative equivalents—the emphasis on the issue of education is great and has an irremediable tinge. Tommy Merton displays the same family and social circumstances that can be recognized as the origin of the bad habits of many libertines: riches, the possibility of satisfying every caprice, an indulging mother with a complete lack of rigour, a father who prefers to ignore his child in his infancy and some companions who—being more advanced in the *Rake's Progress* due to their age—complete the process of deformation with the teaching of bad habits that they had started to learn from others at a public school.<sup>4</sup> The importance of

<sup>3</sup> In the eighteenth century, British Public Schools were educational institutions independent of the Anglican Church and therefore open to young boys (usually over twelve) of different creeds and social classes. They were, nevertheless, already associated with the elite, a role which they have retained to the current day. Private education at home was also favoured among the upper classes, usually completed by the Grand Tour, the extensive trip around the continent made by young men, in which they were accompanied by a servant-tutor or a local guide. Young men at college were also accompanied by tutors chosen by their families.

<sup>4</sup> *Rake's Progress* is a series of canvases by the famous British artist William Hogarth. It illustrates the importance of debauchery, libertinism and the social type of the rake in British eighteenth-century culture.

the topic can be discovered in the first moments of the narrative and in the early childhood of the character:

Tommy Merton who at the time he came from Jamaica, was only six years old, was naturally a very good-natured boy, but unfortunately had been spoiled by too much indulgence. While he lived in Jamaica, he had several black servants to wait upon him who were forbidden upon any account to contradict him. If he walked, there always went two negroes with him, one of whom carried a large umbrella to keep the sun from him, and the other was to carry him in his arms whenever he was tired. . . . His mother was so excessively fond of him, that she gave him everything he cried for, and would never let him learn to read, because he complained that it made his head ache.

The consequence of this was that, though Master Merton had everything he wanted, he became very fretful and unhappy. (Day 1970, 231)

The saving difference in this case is the fact that, from a certain moment onwards, the father prefers not to ignore the education of his child completely. Although he does not assume the Rousseauian ideal of a father who personally takes the responsibility for the educative task, he does choose an ideal master in Mr. Barlow. This happens when the boy is still very young and his natural goodness has not yet been lost. We see the same case in the Spanish novel *Eusebio* when an adoptive father, Mr. Myden, chooses Hardyl as the master for his son, Eusebio. Hardyl will turn out to be the uncle of Eusebio, although none of them are aware of the fact when he is appointed (Montengón 1988, 87-129). In both these cases, the fathers show more wisdom than their wives and remove their sons from the permissive atmosphere of the home, which is particularly pronounced in the Merton family. In *Eusebio*, Mr. Myden has taken care of the orphan boy after the latter survived a shipwreck on the coast of New England and although he has some doubts about the advantages of sending him to Hardyl, finally he chooses this option against the wishes of his wife, Susannah, who acts like a natural mother in that she is more loving than prudent and behaves in an overprotective way. In this, Susannah behaves much like the mothers of those future libertines Tommy Merton and his companions, Master Compton and Master Mash, who are presented not simply as too loving and indulgent but as proud and foolish as well.

Compton and Mash are being educated at public schools and then become companions of Tommy Merton when he temporarily leaves Mr. Barlow's home to go back to his parents for a feast, which represents a clear moment of relapse into his bad habits (following the example of Compton and Mash, the child behaves whimsically once again). About young Master Compton, the narrator observes, "He had almost finished his education at a public school, where he had learned every vice and folly which is commonly taught at such places, without the least improvement either of his character or his understanding" (Day 1970, 289).

Public schools are therefore portrayed as infectious places where bad habits are easily spread. This same role may even be played by college if the young student frequents bad

company, as we can see in the first part of Mackenzie's novel *The Man of the World*, where we witness the ruin of Billy Annesly, a young man, innocent and passionate, who, while not a young child, is nevertheless a protagonist who undergoes a formation process in a coming-of-age story.

Among the female protagonists of seduction plots in sentimental courtship novels, we can distinguish several subtypes, according to the reason or reasons behind their ruin: 1. virtuous young women, deceived, overpowered and raped—the paradigmatic case being Clarissa; 2. young women who are too innocent, sometimes victims of a wicked plot, but often also of their own desire and their lack of knowledge of the nature of the world and the sexual and gender relations in a patriarchal society—this is the case of the heroines of Mary Delariviere Manley and Eliza Haywood in much of the presentimental narrative of the first part of the century, who could be called *unfortunate mistresses* (Ballaster 1992, 179); 3. those whose lack of virtue can be seen as a lack of good sense or prudence, whose fall is usually associated with the absence of an appropriate education, substituted for by the reading of sentimental novels—this is the case of Emily Atkins in *The Man of Feeling*, an example of seduction with tragic consequences, and of Betsy Thoughtless in the homonymous novel by Eliza Haywood, in a more comic context; 4. finally, those who may be characterized as *sensible*, in a negative and euphemistic submeaning of the term, the same as is used in the gallant French novels of this period—those of Crébillon Fils, Dorat, Duclos and others—and which implies an obvious connotation of less virtue and chastity—this is the case of Louisa Mildmay in Hugh Kelly's novel of the same name.

In the subtypes defined there is a gradation of virtuousness from a higher to a lesser degree. There are heroines who unite the traditional patriarchal virtues of chastity and obedience with sensitivity and good sense. Yet, in other cases, an excess of sentimentalism can be perceived, together with a lack of prudence that turns the story into a more conservative type, an admonitory tale that warns against the excesses of the language of sensibility and works as a critique of sentimentalism in its own terms.

However, the treatment of education in sentimental narratives does not consist only of the warning against negative examples, the risk of creating an egotistical libertine or a daydreaming, novel-reading young lady.<sup>5</sup> Authors may also emphasize the instillation of positive values, at the core of which—particularly in the higher stages of the sentimental novel—social sensibility and its practical consequence, benevolence, will have a leading role. The most important book on the subject in the eighteenth century, *Émile* by Rousseau, illustrates the topic with a positive model, the education of the protagonist.

In English courtship and sentimental novels, the positive model is often represented by a heroine who assumes traditional feminine virtues, such as chastity, prudence and filial

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<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the young heroine is virtuous and intelligent but may nevertheless be under the influence of literary obsessions after having read too many sentimental novels. Her readings do not completely spoil the character but are a weak point that counteracts her other virtues and are at the core of her tragic end. This is the case of Theresa Morven in Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins' *The Victim of Fancy* (1787).

obedience. It is the imperative necessity of Clarissa to fail in her obligation to obey her family which causes her such acute suffering and makes her story tragic. The conflict of duties that Richardson's heroine faces is hugely important. The fact that she makes the right decision of following the imperative of dignity, refusing to marry the wealthy but physically and morally repulsive Solmes, is the source of her suffering and illustrates a moral dilemma for the character, which is also a confrontation of ethical systems. Creating an opposition in this moment between the new ethics of sensibility and an older moral system that focuses more on obedience and other traditional virtues, Richardson's novel does not claim to affirm the former and deny the latter, but aims to strike a difficult balance between the two. In another slightly later novel, *Sidney Bidulph*, by Frances Sheridan (1761), the protagonist is involved in similar conflicts, in which the traditional foundations of feminine virtue, obedience, prudence, modesty, are reinforced; the same behaviour that will be defended in conduct books, such as the sermons of James Fordyce or the posthumous letters of John Gregory to his daughter.<sup>6</sup> The conservative Richardsonian type of sentimental novel can be recognized therefore for this didacticism, which offers a model of perfect or almost perfect young heroines, and for the presence of the seduction plot. Defined this way, the influence of this subgenre reaches not only British authors such as Henry Mackenzie, Hugh Kelly and Frances Sheridan, but also German literature, as in the case of *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, by Sophie von la Roche. This novel, which follows *Clarissa* quite closely in plot and characters, can be associated with *Empfindsamkeit*, the German literary movement and style equivalent to Sensibility, which precedes the more typically romantic *Sturm und Drang* of Goethe and Schiller.

At the same time, in Spain, Iriarte's comedies display a didacticism that teaches the importance of an education useful for life. They do not deal with the typical seduction plots of English novels, but rather shows the consequences of excessive permissiveness. In *El señorito consentido* (1788) y *La señorita malcriada* (1788), we see two very clearly defined types in the title of the comedies (a spoilt young master and a spoilt young lady) that will also appear in narratives and in periodical essays on men and manners (*artículo costumbrista* in Spain): the male is a mediocre libertine, a rakish and idle young man, given to spending the family fortune amongst false friends and treacherous lovers. The female is perhaps more peculiar to the Spanish background: a motherless young lady who leads an easy life and has something in common with certain characters of the tales of Mackenzie and Marmontel—a propensity to choose the most inadequate suitor, in this case a rogue who pretends to be a nobleman.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Conduct books of this type were held in bad esteem by feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and satirized by Jane Austen in her novels.

<sup>7</sup> This is also the case in *La bonne mère*, featured in *Contes moraux*, by Marmontel (1822, I, 53-79) and in *History of a Marriage Made from Enthusiastic Attachment*, by Mackenzie (1808, VI, 109-119). In the authors, like Iriarte, Marmontel and Mackenzie, who offer us a progressive and enlightened approach to the much debated issue of marriage and a woman's freedom in the choice of her husband, there is a difficult search for balance between the various factors determining that choice. The feelings of the young women should be the principal one but others,

In the novels of the second half of the eighteenth century, such as those of Sterne, Mackenzie, Brooke and Montegón, we occasionally find seduction plots, often in either a dramatic or a pathetic form. Yet, at this point, social themes begin to prevail and occupy centre stage although the benevolence of earlier sentimental heroines is an occasional motif—such as Clarissa’s will—which provides an opportunity to display the young woman’s deep sensibility, her good heart and great virtue. The novels of this new phase, with male protagonists and often centering around a journey, usually have practical benevolence as their focus, which gives birth to numerous digressions that interrupt the course of the action.

The clearest example of this is Henry Brooke’s *The History of the Earl of Moreland; or the Fool of Quality*, where an uncle educates his nephew, Harry Clinton, a second son neglected by his parents, who only think about their elder child and heir (while providing him with the mistaken education mentioned above as the origin of the libertine character). Thus, while the elder son and heir is miseducated by his parents, the second-in-line, Harry, is educated by his uncle to become a male paragon. Under his uncle’s tutelage, which consists mainly of the practical and continued learning of benevolence, through encounters with other characters and a variety of experiences and adventures, the nephew develops the character of a sentimental hero.

In one section of the novel, which works as a framed-in tale, we also read the story of Hammel Clement, illustrating a more specialized though less frequent treatment of an education issue. Whereas the focus of most of the stories touching upon education is the basically moral issue of character building—as in some of the tales of Marmontel—the story of Mr. Clement deals with the social functionality (or rather dysfunctionality) of the humanistic education administered in British public schools at the time, i.e., the education to which the higher classes were destined: the “education of a gentleman.”<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Clement’s father is a *nouveau riche* artisan and trader who, through mere vanity, chooses this kind of education for his son. Later on, and using the excuse of his son’s dissolute behaviour, the father disinherits the young man and withdraws all monetary help, leaving him without any resources (although, in fact, the real reason is the father’s re-marriage to a wicked stepmother, who is plotting the ruin of her stepson). Strolling around London cafés, Hammel meets Goodville, a benevolent man keen on helping him, but who, alas, can only offer him positions requiring specific knowledge: arithmetic, accountancy, architecture, military fortifications, sailing and civil or ecclesiastical law,

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typical of marriages in earlier times in history—such as the interests of the families, honour and wealth—are not to be forgotten.

<sup>8</sup> Marmontel’s *La bonne mère* (1822, I, 53-79), *L’école des pères* (1822, I, 149-176), *Le misanthrope corrigé* (1822, II, 1-46), *La femme comme il y en a peu* (1822, II, 47-82). These could be seen as *Bildungsroman* novels but in the form of shorter moral tales that are the French author’s speciality. Marmontel was a typical encyclopedist, a liberal man of letters who advocated progress and religious tolerance. However, his moral tales are closer to the spirit of the sexual and social conservatism of many British sentimental novels than to most contemporary French narrative, which is either gallant (Crebillon, Pinot-Duclos, Dorat etc.) or openly libertine and pornographic.

sadly nothing related to Hammel's scholarship and skills in the Latin, Greek and Hebrew:

My poor dear child (mournfully answered Mr. Goodville), by all you can find you know no one thing of use to yourself, or any other person living, either with respect to this world, or the world to come. Could you make a pin, or a waistcoat button, or form a pill box, or weave a cabbage net, or shape a cobbler's [*sic*] last, or hew a block for a barber, or do any of these things by which millions daily maintain themselves, in supplying the wants and occasions, and fashions or vanities of others; you might not be under the necessities of perishing. (Brooke 1839, I, 106)

In other words, Hammel's studies are purely ornamental in character, adequate for the aristocratic families whose children have had their fortune and a secure living since birth though such studies do not even prepare them to enter Law or Medicine, nor for a career in the church. Goodville mentions these professions because they have a certain relation with Hammel's studies and also because it was common for the second-in-line children of the nobility to continue their public school humanistic studies with a career in these fields. But Hammel's situation is worse than that of a simple artisan. He knows fewer useful things and his worldview—a consequence of having received the education of a gentleman—means it is unthinkable for him to become an artisan. We must remember that Eusebio's good master, Hardyl, teaches his pupil the job of basket weaver, and makes him renounce his nobility prejudices, which had been inculcated to the child from an early age.

This is one of the paedagogic issues that will be treated in an *Erziehungsroman* and that constitute typical matters of concern of sentimental culture and eighteenth-century society. In *Virtuous Discourse*, Dwyer notes their discussion in the press of Edinburgh from 1775 onwards (1987, 76-79). A brief summary for public schools in the Scottish context is surprisingly contemporary: education in values, esteem for teachers, parents' participation in the education process, lack of discipline and the use of punishments and cruelty.

The story of Mr. Vindex—an example of the aforementioned—is also included in the long novel *The Fool of Quality* and deals with yet another aspect of the education issue. Mr. Vindex is a tutor hired by Mr. Clinton—uncle and mentor of the protagonist—to educate Harry and a poor boy called Ned that he has taken from the streets—of roguish character but good heart. This teacher uses the methods of the public schools he comes from, especially authoritarianism and cruelty. While Mr. Clinton is away on business, the young children are left to the charge of the tutor and other servants (in fact, the tutor could well be considered one of the servants) giving rise to a number of incidents, more humorous than dramatic, which originate in confrontations between Mr. Vindex and Ned. The source of this enmity is the rigidity of the tutor, who whips the child until flaying him, considering nevertheless that Ned's pranks are also serious and humiliating for the master.

When Mr. Clinton comes back, he dismisses the tutor, holding him responsible for everything that has happened and voicing his opposition to the tutor's beliefs about education:

I am sorry, Mr Vindex, for the treatment you have got, and still sorer that you got it so very deservedly.

I have long thought, Mr. Vindex, that the method of school-masters, in the instruction of our children, is altogether the reverse of what it ought to be. They generally lay hold of the human constitution, as a pilot lays hold of the rudder of a ship, by the tail, by the single motive of fear alone.

Now, as fear has no concern with anything but with itself, it is the most confined, most malignant and the basest, though the strongest of all passions. (Brooke 1839, I, 96)

In the case of the Spanish novel *Eusebio*, an aristocratic child is also educated in benevolence and bourgeois values by his uncle, and the coincidences with Brooke's novel are not limited to this, but include details such as the importance of trades and attitudes towards poor children and slaves. The main difference is given by the catholic context of Montegón's work, although in most of the novel the role of neostoic discourse is more relevant than religion. Only on his deathbed does Eusebio's uncle Hardyl renounce his pagan philosophy and accept the triumph of the Catholic faith: "Otra más tremenda verdad es la que importa y conviene que te manifieste por todos títulos, y principalmente para tranquilizar mi conciencia en que, a pesar de todas las máximas de la filosofía, triunfa la religión con toda su terrible majestad" (Montegón 1988, 758).<sup>9</sup>

From their treatment of the education issue, the narratives cited here demonstrate a tendency to assume a Rousseauian version of the language of sensibility—with the implications of favouring the more progressive, sometimes even radical positions among the ideological trends of the period—in the works most explicitly interested in it and which pay it the greatest attention. This is a popular form of sentimentalism, clearly visible in the works of Thomas Day and Henry Brooke, in the sentimental development of such characters as the children, Tommy Merton, Harry Sandford, Harry Clinton and Ned. The same treatment is given to the educators Mr. Barlow, Mr. Clinton and Mr. Hardyl, even to Mr. Vindex himself, whose cruelty, as we find out at the end of his story, is a consequence of his own misfortunes. He is redeemed and undergoes a conversion to goodness and sentimentality, in one more of the stereotyped tearful scenes in which these stories abound. Rousseau's radical views on education are important here, but no more so than the

<sup>9</sup> The problems of censorship in Montegón's novel, which may be the background to this radical shift in ideologic perspective, are dealt with in the introduction to Fernando García Lara's edition of the novel. The censor expresses his doubts: "si la filosofía moral debe o no enseñarse prescindiendo de la religión, como lo hace el autor de *Eusebio*, es una cuestión muy controvertida, y no muy bien decidida por los autores" (Montegón 1988, 46). The religious issue is also visible in other sentimental novels and in Sandford and Merton, while it does not play a big role, it is still present in the fact that Mr. Barlow is a minister of one of the progressive sects of dissenter protestantism. In *The Fool of Quality*, the educator is actually a methodist and the novel assumes this religious perspective—new at that time—and indeed methodists even used the book in their proselytizing work. In contrast, Mackenzie and Rousseau defend a "religion of the heart," less subject to any church and compatible with all of them, as evidenced in a famous section of *Émile*, La profession du foi du vicaire savoyard (Rousseau 1966, 345-409) and in Mackenzie's *The Story of La Roche* (1808, V, 175-207).

sentimentalization of children—something characteristic of the culture of Sensibility—and a form of neostoicism visible in Mackenzie and Montengón. In Rousseau himself the tendencies of political radicalism, sentimentality and renovated stoicism coexist. The civic and paedagogic reflexions of *Émile* are in contrast with an exaltation of self-sacrifice and stoic virtue in *La nouvelle Héloïse* and the romantic self-reflection of the autobiographic works.

While Rousseau can be considered a radical thinker for his approach to social and political issues, and to the education of young boys, the section of *Émile* dedicated to female education—the fifth chapter, “Sophie ou la femme”—has traditionally been accused, justifiably, of extreme conservatism or even misogyny. The metaphysics of the natural man and the morals of the heart lead to a complete relegation of women, whose social role—as presented in this section of the book—is limited to maternity and as an assistant in the happiness of man.<sup>10</sup> Yet the radical tendency of sentimentalism will continue in a number of authors that publish their works in the nineties and have therefore been included in the genre of the *radical or Jacobin novel*. This radicalism becomes more acute in some female authors, made visible both in the treatment of the seduction sequence and in the issue of education, male and female. The authors of this period include: Robert Bage, Thomas Holcroft, John Moore, William Godwin, Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Hays, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Robinson. The female authors mentioned deal with the female problematic, the education and social role of women, from a clearly feminist viewpoint.

In this period, Mary Robinson published *A Letter to the Women of England* (1799) and Mary Wollstonecraft, her most important work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). The opinions expressed therein—and also in novels like *Mary, a Fiction* (1788) or *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (1798)—are critiques of the traditional view of the nature of woman, and the forms and methods of their education which aim to perpetuate and develop this prejudice of what women are *by nature*: less able beings, soft, malleable, capable of a certain moral and esthetic sublimeness, but at the same time inferior in practical pursuits and the struggle of life. Wollstonecraft criticizes sentimental language from a feminist perspective and accuses it of promoting masculine interests, naturalizing the marginalized position of women in patriarchal society.<sup>11</sup> In the essay by Mary Robinson we find the typical arguments of an early feminist thinker, albeit in a radical or extreme form, calling for social and legal equality between men and women while, at the same

<sup>10</sup> This accusation is sustained even by male authors with more progressive views of the gender questions, such as Abbé Le More and Riballier, as is shown in Gutwirth's *Twilight of the Goddesses*: “Riballier may well compose a stinging attack on Rousseau's sexism, but when he does so, he phrases it in nearly apologetic terms, after making due obeisance” (1992, 149-50).

<sup>11</sup> We can talk about an attack on sentimentalism from the earlier of these novels (*Mary*) which is the autobiographical narrative of a sensible young woman whose unhappy life is explained by the social conditioning of her sentimental education and her unfortunate marriage with a tyrannical husband. *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* is also the story of the oppression and imprisonment of two women, the protagonist and her jailer, decided by the husband of the former in order to protect the patrimony of the family, in fact his exclusive enjoyment of it.

time, arguing for the spiritual superiority of women, based on the different nature of each sex: “The fact is simply this: the passions of men are originated in sensuality; those of women in sentiment: man loves corporeally; woman mentally: which is the nobler creature?” (2003, 44). The writing of Robinson is clearly aggressive and perhaps suffers from the same inclination to oversimplify the similitudes or differences between sexes as her patriarchal or chauvinist rivals. She thinks masculine and feminine souls are of a different nature, always conceiving souls in a materialistic or naturalistic way: “Till the passions of the mind in man and woman are separate and distinct, till the sex of *vital animation, denominated soul*, be ascertained, on what pretext is woman deprived of those amusements which man is permitted to enjoy?” (2003, 44; emphasis added). Robinson also thinks that, although there are reasons to suspect that women have superior souls, the current state of human knowledge does not permit it to be ascertained. However, the most common opinion between men of learning is the superiority of men. This opinion, according to Robinson, is not based on their learning, but on their prejudices, which are the excuse to justify their power, their social advantages and the different consequences of vices for men and women. Robinson mentions sensuality, gaming, drinking and violence—as in duels motivated by the avenging of offences—insisting that women, although being generally more virtuous, should have “the right” to these vices, or, more precisely, the right not to suffer worse consequences from them than those suffered by men. This double line of argumentation—claiming for equality even in the “right to vice,” while attributing at the same time, a spiritual superiority to women—is a very interesting characteristic of Robinson’s thinking which can be followed through into the different trends or schools of later feminist thought.

Robinson also gives her opinion on the education of women, condemning the secular tendency of patriarchal society to reduce it to the minimum:

Not many centuries past, the use of books was wholly unknown to the commonality of females; and scarcely any but superior nuns, then denominated ‘learned women’ could either read or write. Wives were then considered as household idols, created for domestic life and born to yield obedience. To brew, to bake and to spin, were then deemed indispensably necessary qualifications: but to think, to acquire knowledge, or to interfere either in theological or political opinions would have been the very climax of presumption! Hence arose the evils of bigotry and religious imposition. (2003, 65-66)

In spite of the difficulty of accessing books and knowledge, Robinson gives long lists of learned and wise women of different periods in history and cultures, from Ancient times to her contemporaries, and includes, of course, the important group of intellectual women from the middle decades of the eighteenth century called *bluestockings*. Robinson cites the opinion of one of them—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu—on female education, given in response to some satirical lines of Pope: “In education all the difference lies / WOMEN if taught, would be as brave, as wise / As haughty men, improv’d by arts and

rules” (2003, 66). Also a victim of the satire of Pope, the novelist Eliza Haywood had an important role in promoting the education of women, not only at school or as young ladies, but as adult members of society. She was the publisher of *The Female Spectator*, an important journal of the forties, famous for being the first not only intended for female readers but also written and published by a woman. As it promoted a more appropriate education for women, it focused even on a field traditionally exclusive to men, as natural science. The message is very clear: not only are scientific readings and pursuits a source of honest pleasure, but they must be an important part of the education of women as well. Haywood creates a character of a young lady interested in science, Philo-Naturae, to whom she dedicates several articles (1999, 123-28; 187-203). Haywood’s aim with this journal is to promote new female types to substitute the negative traditional stereotypes like the pious lady or the coquette. It also defends the idea of the equal capacity of men’s and women’s mind, although certainly not in the radical and more aggressive ways of the female writers of the nineties.

Although Eliza Haywood, Mary Robinson and Mary Wollstonecraft were novelists, as well as authors of essays and journals where they advocated for the cause of female education,<sup>12</sup> an almost total integration of late sentimental narrative and the topics of education and seduction can be found in the work of Mary Hays, another intellectual of the Jacobin and radical group of the nineties, and an outstanding feminist. She wrote two novels *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799). We will focus on the latter, which is built around a sequence of seduction and rape duplicated in two generations, in which the tragic stories of a mother and a daughter, both called Mary, is narrated. The mother has been condemned and executed for the killing of her seducer after going through all the stages of the typical tragic plot of seduction—deceived, victim of men, ruined and led to prostitution—and her story is narrated to her daughter in a letter that the adoptive father and benefactor of the young Mary, Mr. Raymond, gives to her. This story should have been an admonitory tale for the daughter but it does not work as such, since the same basic narrative of masculine abuse and female victimization, although with a slightly different slant, is repeated in the second generation. Mary’s fate is not, like that of her mother and many other sentimental heroines, to be seduced by the man she loves, but rather to be raped by the aristocratic villain, Sir Peter Osborne.

The message that the older Mary very clearly states and the younger one repeats touches on the issue of education in several moments. It claims that the education of women puts excessive emphasis on chastity—something that Hays had already dealt with in her previous novel *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*—and sees the loss of virginity—as something tragic and irreparable. The education women receive also leaves them little chance of earning a living as free, independent persons. In addition, the double standard forgives

<sup>12</sup> Barney deals with a number of earlier “women educators and novelists intent on imagining new social possibilities for their female peers under the auspices of pedagogical reform” (1999, 21): Mary Astell, Judith Drake, Lady Mary Chudleigh and Damaris Masham.

all sexual faults of men while making women victims of not their own, but their seducers' or rapists' faults. The victimized woman is rejected and led to crime or prostitution by prejudice, the greatest of social evils that the novel denounces. Even a good-hearted, honest man like William Raymond (attached to the young Mary by the bonds of pure love since their childhood at Mr. Raymond's home) will become a "man of the world" and stop loving Mary, so her friends tell her. These are inevitable laws of society, in which education acts as the central *locus* of social ideology and source of individual prejudices.

In conclusion, the view of education in eighteenth-century narrative is mainly progressive. However, at least in the earlier novels, it integrates conservative aspects proceeding from the novelistic tradition and other sources: a preoccupation with chastity and the integrity of the female body—the focus of interest in the seduction plot—and an obsession with the stoic hardening of the character, more visible in *Eusebio* than in Brooke's novel with which it shares so much. This importance of the discourse of ancient stoicism substitutes the role of religion through most of the Spanish novel, although, at its end, Hardyl, the uncle and good tutor of Eusebio, even repents and renounces this pagan creed to proclaim the need to submit strictly to the Catholic faith, if one intends to save one's soul. The issue of education in sentimental narrative, although always the object of concern and topic of long or frequent digressions, often has a subordinate functional stance: it motivates character and is—for all its flaws and shortcomings—the origin of the development of many dramatic and tragic plots. At the same time there are important tales and novels which focus on it primarily. This genuine interest and its historically new treatment is accompanied by the prevalence of sentimental language. This justifies distinguishing the genre *sentimental novel* as having a central role in eighteenth-century narrative. Even the radical as well as the progressive feminist novels of the last decade of the century can be considered a form of sentimental narrative, although they denounce the weakening and perverse effects of the education and socialization of women that took place not just through the educative system but also through sentimental novels. The language of the genre, and the genre itself, integrates physiological, psychological, moral, religious and political elements, superimposing them onto the other ancient and more traditional types of discourse also present.

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