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**Literary Praxis and Pedagogic Philosophy in British
Educative Fiction after Rousseau**



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DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

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Oliver Melvill
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ABSTRACT

LITERARY PRAXIS AND PEDAGOGIC PHILOSOPHY IN BRITISH EDUCATIVE FICTION AFTER ROUSSEAU

OLIVER MELVILL

Finding its origin in the educational philosophy forwarded by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 1760s, this thesis examines how the experimental system of education proposed in *Emile or On Education* (1762) was received and adapted in the educative writing of Maria Edgeworth, Mary Hays and William Godwin. Focusing primarily on Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1798), and Godwin's *Fleetwood* (1805), this thesis examines how Rousseau's educational model was adapted towards the end of the 1790s as a philosophy of literary reception that was grounded in active, practical experimentation and literary praxis.

Drawing a line between didacticism and education, Rousseau opened up the possibility for an educational philosophy that shifted the focus away from didactic pedagogy towards an understanding of education that focused on the act of reception rather than the imparting of ideas. While many critics have, like Godwin, focused on the implications that this shift in perspective has had for the relationship between the teacher and pupil, less apparent is how Rousseau's experiential educational model was revised towards the end of the eighteenth century in ways that reframed the role that literature could play in education. What Maria Edgeworth, Mary Hays and William Godwin recognise in the 1790s is that the interaction between the reader and the novel has the potential to function in a fundamentally similar fashion to the relationship Rousseau theorises in *Emile* between his student and the physical world.

Focusing on how each of these writers envisions the act of reading, this thesis demonstrates how, within the Rousseauvean educational framework, reading is reconstituted by Edgeworth, Hays and Godwin as a practical, empirically justifiable educational act. Through an examination of this experiential approach to literary

reception, this thesis explores how the growing emphasis on the practical nature of the interaction between readers and literary texts functions to involve readers in the educational process. Through this conception of active readerly reception, works like *Belinda*, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *Fleetwood* open up the possibility for a form of auto-education that, I argue, enables a movement towards a democratisation of education that could be situated outside of the bounds of institutionalised educational systems.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: ROUSSEAU AND READING AS EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS

you can learn anything from a book -- or nothing. You can learn to be a suicide bomber, a religious fanatic... as easily as you can learn to be tolerant, peace-loving and wise. You can acquire unrealistic expectations of love as readily as, probably more readily than, realistic ones. You can learn to be a sexist or a feminist, a romantic or a cynic, a utopian or a skeptic. Most disturbing, you can train yourself to be nothing at all; you can float forever like driftwood on the current of text; you can be as passive as a person in an all-day movie theatre, as antisocial as a kid holed up with a video game, and at the same time more conceited than both.¹

(Cristina Nehring, 'Books Make You a Boring Person')

While eighteenth-century responses to the novel tend to highlight the dangers of reading, modern scholarship has more often sought to justify it on the basis of its ability to engender positive social behaviour through an appeal to empathy. Following in Wayne Booth's footsteps, Suzanne Keen has more recently attempted to chart the ethical consequences of novel-reading by drawing on a combination of personal testimony, narratology and fields as diverse as cognitive neuroscience and developmental psychology in an effort to develop a more nuanced approach to reader-response theory.² At a time in which we have seen dramatic cuts in funding within the humanities and increasing concerns surrounding diminishing global 'literary' readership numbers, the assumption that novel-reading, through imaginative and empathetic identification, creates better or more morally responsible people has remained as attractive a proposition as it is unconvincing.³ The problem that persists with attempting to define

¹ Cristina Nehring, 'Books Make You a Boring Person', *The New York Times*, 27 June 2004, section Books, p. 23.

² Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 278–79; Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 65–100.

³ For more recent accounts of the role that empathetic identification plays in literary reception, see especially Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, New Ed edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, U.S.A., 1992), p. 148; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, New Ed edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 90; Keen, pp. xiv–v; D.C. Batson, Nadia Ahmad, and E.L. Stocks, 'Benefits and Liabilities of Empathy-

any hermeneutic theory of reading is that actual readers very seldom prescribe to the critical conventions attributed to them. As Cristina Nehring succinctly puts it in her essay 'Books Make You a Boring Person' (2004), 'you can learn anything from a book -- or nothing.'⁴ The interpretive agency lies entirely in the hands of the reader and it is only through their subjective experience of the text that they are able to derive any tangible meaning or learning outcome. While I am not purporting to reopen debates surrounding Roland Barthes' famous challenge to authorial intention, Nehring's approach to the relationship between the reader and the text provides a useful point of entry for my discussion of the reception of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's educational ideals in Britain in the late 1790s and beginning of the 1800s. Finding its origin in the educational philosophy forwarded by Rousseau in the 1760s, this thesis examines how the experimental system of education proposed in *Emile or On Education* (1762) was received and adapted in the educative writing of Maria Edgeworth, Mary Hays and William Godwin as a means of involving the reader in the educational process. Focusing primarily on Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1798), and Godwin's *Fleetwood* (1805), this thesis examines how Rousseau's educational model was adapted towards the end of the 1790s as a philosophy of literary reception that was grounded in active, practical experimentation and literary praxis. Focusing on how Edgeworth, Hays, and Godwin each envision the role of reading and literature in education, I examine how the act of reading is imagined in educative literature at the end of the eighteenth century and what this might mean for our understanding of the role that literature would eventually come to play in more modern systems of education.

When, in 1973, Pierre Chanover compiled his 'Pedagogical Bibliography' which sought to provide a tool for exploring the possible application of Rousseau's educational ideas as a means of addressing contemporary problems in education, he prefaced his subject bibliography with the bold claim that 'Rather than simply providing hints on how to raise a model child or attacking certain facets of the education of his day, his educational

Induced Altruism', in *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil, Second Edition*, ed. by Arthur G. Miller (London: Guilford Publications, 2016), pp. 360–70 (pp. 360–70); Nancy Eisenberg, Richard A. Fabes, and Tracy L. Spinrad, 'Prosocial Development', in *Handbook of Child Psychology* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), p. 647.

⁴ Nehring, p. 23.

treatise questioned the *entire* underlying philosophy not only of eighteenth-century education but of the eighteenth-century notion of human psychology and morality.⁵ But while Rousseau may have had a significant influence on progressive educational philosophy from Johann Pestalozzi onwards, it would be misleading to imply that his impact on formal, institutional education systems in the eighteenth century was in any way as profound as Chanover's introduction might suggest.⁶ If anything, as Gary Thomas is at pains to highlight, in spite of Rousseau's immense popularity in Britain throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, things continued for the large part as they were, 'with recitations of lists of facts and the chanting of Latin conjugations all the way up to the advent of universal compulsory schooling towards the end of the 19th century.'⁷ With the act for national education only being passed as late as 1870, it is unsurprisingly difficult to discuss formal education in Britain in the eighteenth century in any systematic fashion. Those grammar schools that had survived into the late eighteenth century relied, for the most part, on the type of catechistic approach outlined by Thomas, with many of the more prominent private academies and schools trusting in a similar approach that privileged 'formal training by drill and repetition.'⁸ In a particularly memorable passage, Charles Edward Mallet outlines how even at the University of Oxford oral examinations at this time had degenerated into a routine repetition of predetermined sets of questions

⁵ Pierre Chanover, 'Rousseau: A Pedagogical Bibliography', *The French Review*, 46.6 (1973), 1148–58 (p. 1148). Emphasis mine.

⁶ This is not to say that Rousseau's *Emile* was not influential, more that it had limited influence within the formal educational institutions of the time with his impact being felt more obviously within the spheres of domestic education and educational philosophy in general.

⁷ Gary Thomas, *Education: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 12–13.

⁸ For a more comprehensive discussion of the state of institutional education within Britain in the eighteenth century see, John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007), p. 176; H. C. Barnard, *History of English Education from 1760*, Sixth Edition edition (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1961), p. 20; Richardson also provides a useful discussion of the nature of systemic education of the period, paying particular attention to the role that literature played in the learning process at the time in Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832*, 1st Pbk. Ed edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 64–65.

and answers.⁹ With the closest thing to the sort of large-scale school systems we are familiar with today being the network of Charity and Sunday Schools supported by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), education in the eighteenth century was for the most part coloured by the type of catechetical education propagated by the Charity and Sunday School movements.¹⁰ And while much has been made of the dialectic approach to learning following the end of the Renaissance in Europe, as an educational model, it seems to have had limited scope in England.¹¹ As Alan Richardson points out, 'In actual practice [...] dialectic tended to yield to the mechanical production of set answers, obedient behaviour within the educational setting, and (for the lower classes) passive literacy.'¹² The main problem with this type of education, as Rousseau sees it at least, is that it is inherently didactic and as such fails to rationally or intellectually involve the student in the educational process. Because the word didactic highlights the act of instruction rather than reception in the learning environment it calls to attention the hierarchical nature of the traditional educational relationship between teachers and students. It is difficult, therefore, to dissociate the catechetical approach to teaching that we see employed throughout British schools at this time with this conception of didacticism and the unidirectional nature of the transfer of knowledge that this emphasis on instruction implies. Rousseau's fundamental educational intervention in the 1760s was to shift away from this emphasis on instruction towards an educative theory that privileged learning over teaching. It is worth, therefore, thinking of Rousseau's philosophy as being educational rather than didactic. It is a better descriptor for

⁹ Sir Charles Edward Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford*, 3 vols (London: Methuen & Company, Limited, 1924), III, pp. 163–66.

¹⁰ Allen and McClure provide an extensive discussion of the role that the SPCK played in developing the network of Charity and Sunday Schools in Britain during the eighteenth century in W. O. B. Allen and Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898*. (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1898), p. 135; M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 5.

¹¹ Linking the rise of dialectical argument to the emergence of a small scale intellectual entrepreneurial class Stephen Greenblatt has argued that dialectic is directly linked with moves towards an emphasis on independent reasoning in educational thinking in the Renaissance period. See, Stephen J. Greenblatt, 'Improvisation and Power', in *Literature and Society: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1978*, ed. by Professor Edward W. Said, New Series edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 64–65.

¹² Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, p. 64.

Rousseau's learner-centred approach in that while didacticism implies a hierarchical power dynamic in the educational environment, 'education' as a term emphasises a broader stress on learning and provides a more fruitful way of understanding the process he envisions. With its focus on the hierarchical relationship between educators and pupils, formal education of the sort Richardson is describing relies less on rational engagement with material, focusing more on compliance and passive reception of didactic instruction. With Rousseau's primary focus being on the development of autonomous rationality, the top-down didactic approach to teaching is, for him, as ineffective as it is antithetical to his educational philosophy; 'If I were to design a picture of the most deplorable stupidity,' he writes in *Emile*, 'I would draw a pedant teaching children their catechism; and were I resolved to crack the brain of a child, I would oblige him to explain what he said when he repeated his catechism.'¹³ What was so revolutionary about Rousseau's educational methodology in the eighteenth century was that, contrary to the catechistic approach favoured in so many of the formal educational institutions of the time, his experimental educational philosophy opened up the possibility of an educational system that shifted the focus away from didactic pedagogy towards an understanding of education that focused on a consciously active reception of ideas. While many critics have, like Godwin, focused on the implications this shift in perspective has had for the relationship between the teacher and pupil, less apparent is how Rousseau's experiential educational model was revised towards the end of the eighteenth century in ways that reframed the role that literature could play in education.

In an instructive call for papers for a conference held at Newnham College, Cambridge in July 1998 entitled 'Experience Constructed: Didactic Literature in the British Atlantic World, 1500-1800,' the organisers offered a list of works they considered 'didactic' literature: 'from vade-mecums of bee-keeping to grammars, from "compleat" cookery

¹³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia: Or, A New System of Education*, trans. by William Kenrick, 2 vols (London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1762), II, bk. IV, p. 257.

courses to universal manuals on arithmetic.’¹⁴ Having set out to ‘shift the focus from conduct literature scholarship,’ Natasha Glaisyer and Sara Pennell were looking to address what they saw as a generally undertheorised and largely neglected concept – didactic literature – arguing that ‘the study of didactic texts as a whole lacked thorough and critically sophisticated treatment.’¹⁵ Limiting their discussion to ‘how-to’ and self-help books that were explicitly framed to educate, the contributors, with the exception of Randall Ingram who sought to trouble the notion that works in the early modern period can be neatly divided into didactic and literary categories, actively steered clear of the novel in their discussion of didacticism.¹⁶ And, while there has been a recent rise in interest in education in the late eighteenth century with more recent influential works published by Alan Richardson, Mary Hilton, Stephen Bygrave, and Michael Bell which all deal with education and literature in the period, the idea of just what didactic, or indeed educational literature is or could be, remains largely uncontested.¹⁷

I have made a point, throughout this thesis, of not categorising the texts I will be discussing as didactic literature, preferring the term educative literature instead. This is primarily because, given the way in which I argue they are asking to be read, they do not

¹⁴ ‘Expertise Constructed: Didactic Literature in the British Atlantic World, 1500-1800, Cambridge, July 1998’ <<http://goldenpages.jpehs.co.uk/static/conferencearchive/98-7-exp.html>> [accessed 3 June 2016].

¹⁵ ‘Expertise Constructed: Didactic Literature in the British Atlantic World, 1500-1800, Cambridge, July 1998’; Natasha Glaisyer and Sara Pennell, *Didactic Literature in England, 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 1.

¹⁶ Randall Ingram, ‘Seventeenth-Century Didactic Readers, Their Literature, and Ours’, in *Didactic Literature in England, 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed*, ed. by Natasha Glaisyer and Sara Pennell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 73.

¹⁷ Notable examples include Richardson’s interrogation of the role that increasing literacy played in the development of educational systems in the eighteenth century in Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*; Hilton seeks to redress the gender bias in cultural histories of education by contextualising leading female educational thinkers of the time in Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation’s Young: Education and Public Doctrine in Britain, 1750-1850*, Ashgate Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Bygrave examines the limits of Enlightenment thought as it is expressed within education institutions at the time in Stephen Bygrave, *Uses of Education: Readings in Enlightenment in England*, The Bucknell Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009); Bell will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter Michael Bell, *Open Secrets: Literature, Education, and Authority from J-J. Rousseau to J.M. Coetzee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

represent, to my mind, the top-down prescriptive pedagogical approach that a word like ‘didactic’ implies. Through an examination of *Emile* in the second chapter of this thesis, I deal more directly with Rousseau, developing the idea of literary praxis by introducing into my discussion this concept of educative literature. I expand on April London’s idea that representations of reading in early eighteenth-century novels can be used as a form of addressing the actual reading habits of real-world audiences by examining how the formal elements of Rousseau’s text encourage an active critical mode of reading.¹⁸ I follow London’s conception that these representations can offer ‘a form of “metacommentary” imbedded within texts in order to direct interpretation and foster appropriate practices,’ but develop this by considering how different narrative strategies are utilised by Rousseau as a means of promoting this educative imperative.¹⁹ Constructed so as to encourage literary praxis, *Emile* rejects the propositional didacticism we see developed in both traditional educational treatises and early moralistic literature. Rousseau’s text offers, rather, an educative alternative that, by combining educational intent with a reliance on narrative forms, seeks to evoke an active critical response from readers, rendering *Emile* as an inherently anti-didactic text in the process. Educative literature, as I use it, thus consciously mirrors the term ‘didactic literature’, but does so only to emphasise its difference from it. That is to say that rather than merely telling the reader what to think, *Emile* functions to actively involve the reader in the interpretive process enabling a form of reading that seeks to mirror the self-empowered approach to learning we see depicted within the text itself, emphasising the experimental nature of the Rousseauvean educational ideal.

What Maria Edgeworth, Mary Hays and William Godwin recognise in the 1790s is that the interaction between the reader and the novel has the potential to function in a fundamentally similar fashion to the relationship Rousseau theorises in *Emile* between

¹⁸ April London, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 68.

¹⁹ London, p. 68; London follows Michael McKeon in particular in her theorising of literary representation. This will be returned to in greater depth in the following chapter on Rousseau. For McKeon’s presentation of literary pedagogy see, Michael McKeon, ‘Prose Fiction: Great Britain’, in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume 4. The Eighteenth Century.*, ed. by H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), no. 4, 238–63 (p. 262).

his student and the physical world. Focusing on how each of these writers envisions the act of reading, this thesis demonstrates how, within the Rousseauvean educational framework, reading is reconstituted by Edgeworth, Hays and Godwin as a practical, empirically justifiable educational act. Through an examination of this experiential approach to literary reception, this thesis explores how the growing emphasis on the practical nature of the interaction between readers and literary texts functions thereby to involve readers in the educational process.

Finding its roots in William Kenrick's translation of Rousseau's text in 1762, the vogue for experimental education that swept through Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century ensured that educational philosophy was at the forefront of conversation throughout Europe at the time.²⁰ The experimental mode of education forwarded by Rousseau would eventually have such a broad and far-reaching influence, that the controversial principles laid out in *Emile* for which Rousseau was so persecuted during his lifetime, have become, in modern educational practice, conventional and for the most part even taken for granted. Following the popularisation of practical, experimental education in the nineteenth century by the likes of Johann Henrich Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel and later educationalists like John Dewey and Maria Montessori, Rousseau's ideas hardly seem revolutionary with the child-centred approach to education he proposed having become more and more ingrained in contemporary educational practice.²¹ What Rousseau's text provided in the eighteenth century,

²⁰ Both Stephen Bygrave and Roy Porter quote figures suggesting that around two hundred works of educational theory were produced and published in England between 1762 and 1800, Bygrave, *Uses of Education*, p. 21; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 343; quoting John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (New York: Methuen, 1973).

²¹ Primary examples of this emphasis on children in the educational environment include, Christian Gotthilf Salzmann, *Elements of Morality, for the Use of Children: With an Introductory Address to Parents*, trans. by Mary Wollstonecraft (J. Crowder, 1799); Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children: An Attempt to Help Mothers to Teach Their Own Children and an Account of the Method, a Report to the Society of the Friends of Education, Burgdorf*, ed. by Ebenezer. Cooke, trans. by Francis C. Turner and Lucy E. Holland (London: S. Sonnenschen & Co and C. W. Bardeen, 1894); Friedrich Froebel, *The Education of Man*, trans. by W. N. Hailmann, International Education Series (New York: D. Appleton and

however, was a marriage of content and form that foregrounded the potential for the application of learner-centred education to the developing understanding of how readers interacted with literary texts. Building on earlier works like Roger Ascham's *Scholemaster* (1563), Comenius's *Didactica Magna* (1632), and John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), Rousseau's immensely popular *Emile* would, with William Kenrick's English translation, cement his ideas in the English public consciousness by the mid 1760s.²² Focusing on the experiential nature of the educational process, Rousseau's hybrid treatise/novel emphasises an increasing focus on the role of the student and reader in the learning process. Building on an experiential educational model, it was not a far step from an education gained by interacting with the world at large, to an understanding of learning that could possibly encompass the novel as an educative medium.

An understanding of the novel as an educational form offered a potentially more wide-reaching mode of education than that represented by the surviving grammar schools and emerging SPCK network. Allowing for a decentralised approach to learning, literary education offers an educative approach that, particularly with the advent of the circulating library in the eighteenth century, was limited in its scope and influence only by literacy rather than upbringing, gender, race or class. What Rousseau's text presents, in other words, is the possibility of fulfilling the ideal of universal education that Comenius had forwarded in 1632.²³ While Rousseau's approach to the education of women in book V may not seem much in keeping with Comenius's belief that education was the birthright, not just of 'the children of the rich or of the powerful only, but of all alike, boys and girls, both noble and ingnoble, rich and poor,' the educational ideals he forwards in the first four books of *Emile* would come to encourage in the writers who drew so strongly on his philosophy towards the end of the eighteenth century, a

Company, 1826), V; John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916); John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (Collier-Macmillan, 1969).

²² Rousseau's text was so popular at the time that reports claim that many booksellers found it more profitable to rent it by the hour rather than to sell it, see Gary Thomas, p. 12.

²³ Johann Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius*, ed. & trans. by Maurice Walter Keatinge (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1896), p. 218.

remarkably similar egalitarian spirit.²⁴ His emphasis on the experiential nature of the educational process opened up the possibility for a form of self-empowered learning that could be situated outside of the bounds of institutionalised education systems. Through a pedagogical philosophy that would come to champion reading as educational practice, *Emile* inevitably enables the re-emergence of ideas surrounding the possibility of the democratisation of education; an idea that only really begins to find voice in the educative novels written in Britain towards the end of the eighteenth century.

It might, however, seem surprising to think of Rousseau as a champion of the novel given his infamous disparagement of books. Education is after all, for Rousseau, particularly for younger children, an essentially empirical process, and he explicitly advocates a system of education that until preadolescence, concerns itself almost entirely with the child's physical development. 'As every thing that enters the human understanding, is introduced by the senses,' he argues, 'the first kind of ratiocination in man is a kind of sensitive reasoning; and this serves as the basis of his intellectual reason. Our first instructors in philosophy are our feet, hands and eyes. In substituting books in their place, we do not learn to reason; but to content ourselves with the reasoning of others.'²⁵ While this may seem to suggest an empirical model that rejects literary education through its inability to engender true rational thought, by book III he is advocating the reading of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), claiming that 'we must have books.'²⁶ Departing from Helvétius's argument that reason and judgement are grounded entirely in sensation, reason is, as we will see, for Rousseau not reducible to the senses. Thus, while books are not appropriate in the early stages of education prior to the development of one's *amour propre*, once one is able to retain sufficient critical distance from the text, reading has the potential to function as valid educational practice, a practice that is predicated not on the relative validity of lived experience compared to that gained through reading but rather on the

²⁴ Comenius, p. 218; For an overview of critical writings on Rousseau's sexual politics, see Mary Trouille, 'The Failings of Rousseau's Ideals of Domesticity and Sensibility', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 24.4 (1991), 451–83 (pp. 451–55); Joel Schwartz, *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); see also J. Douthwaite, 'Experimental Child-Rearing After Rousseau: Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education and Belinda', *IRISH JOURNAL OF FEMINIST STUDIES*, 2.2 (1997), 35–56.

²⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia: Or, A New System of Education*, trans. by William Kenrick, 2 vols (London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1762), I, bk. II, p 217–8.

²⁶ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. III, p. 59.

maturity of the reader.²⁷ For Rousseau, ‘to exercise the senses is not merely to make use of them; it is to learn rightly to judge by them.’²⁸ Learning becomes in these terms not a purely physical process of observation but one grounded in abstract rational judgement. Essentially revealing himself as a sceptic, Rousseau’s observational approach to early education is predicated not on a purely physical, but a rational, intellectual understanding of the world. He writes in these terms in *Emile*:

It remains for me to treat, in the succeeding books, of the cultivation of a kind of sixth sense; called *common-sense*; not so much because it is common to all men, as because it results from the well-regulated use of the other senses, and instructs us in the nature of things, from their concurrent appearances. This sixth sense has, of course, no particular organ; but resides in the brain; its sensations, which are purely internal, being called *perceptions* or *ideas*. It is the number of these ideas that limits the extent of our knowledge; it is their perspicuity that determines the clearness of the understanding; and it is the art of comparing them with each other, that is called *human reason*.²⁹

While Rousseau is at pains to ensure children interact with the world on physical rather than moral terms, his program of sensory development which forms the groundwork for the eventual exercise of independent reason is conceived as a staged process. This staged conception of rational development forms the basis for his desire to remove children from society until such a time that they have developed a well-regulated understanding of themselves in relation to the physical world around them, a process designed to protect a healthy *amour de soi*.³⁰ Because Rousseau’s primary educational concern is the development of self-sufficient rationality, he delays reading along with social integration

²⁷ A relative, factitious sentiment, born for Rousseau in society, *amour propre* ‘inclines every individual to set greater store by himself than by anyone else, [it] inspires men with all the evils they do one another, and is the genuine source of honor’ (Rousseau, ‘Second Discourse’, n. XV. p. 218). For discussions concerning the relationship between rational judgement and empiricism in Rousseau see, Denise Schaeffer, *Rousseau on Education, Freedom, and Judgment* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), pp. 46–48; Ryan Patrick Hanley, ‘Rousseau’s Virtue Epistemology’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 50.2 (2012), 239–63.

²⁸ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 234.

²⁹ My emphasis, Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 296.

³⁰ Loosely understood here as self-love, *amour de soi* represents for Rousseau ‘a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to attend to its self-preservation, and which, guided in man by reason and modified by pity, produces humanity and virtue.’ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘Second Discourse’, p. 218.

until he believes the student is adequately independent so as to interact with external perceptions and ideas safely. Rousseau's principal anxiety with regard to literary education is what he sees as the danger of a loss of agency in the rational process. Reading is a form of experience, therefore, that is carefully managed, with the early mimetic reading of *Robinson Crusoe* giving way eventually to a more hermeneutic approach once Emile has become safely socialised. But, as we see above, the cultivation of 'human reason' is not entirely contingent on empirical experience. Because, while the perceptions and ideas that form the basis for this reason might result from a sensory understanding of the world, they are not reducible, in Rousseau's construction, to it. Human rationality is formed, rather, through a critical interrogation of these abstract ideas. This is why, contrary to the concerns he voices in his arguments against poetics in both his *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* (1750) and *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre* (1758), Rousseau does not actually reject reading as educational practice. In much the same way that physical experience of the world is able to exercise Rousseau's sixth sense, reading has the potential to produce the same sort of perceptions and ideas, albeit perceptions and ideas conceived originally by other people. This becomes less of a concern for Godwin, whose theory of literary reception emphasises the distancing of reading as an interpretive act from ideas surrounding authorial intention. 'If the story be a falsehood,' he argues, 'the emotions, and in many readers the never-to-be-destroyed impressions it produces, are real.'³¹ But while Godwin's validation of reading as an empirically sound experience might sound appealing, it is worth remembering that for Rousseau, reason is only produced by the active comparison of ideas and perceptions. That novels have the potential to emotionally affect readers is not, therefore, in doubt for Rousseau. He is concerned rather, to stress the necessity of reflecting critically on these received impressions. Books are only dangerous, therefore, if one reads them uncritically, mimetically accepting and replicating the ideas presented within them, thereby resulting in an unhealthy prominence of *amour propre* and through this a loss of rational autonomy in the reader. What Rousseau's epistemological model reveals, then, is a philosophy of learning that is predicated on active, critical interrogation of experience, whether it be physical or intellectual in nature. This emphasis of critical praxis in Rousseau's writing

³¹ William Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Pickering & Chatto, 1993), p. 321.

gives rise eventually to what I have termed the British educative novel at the hands of Edgeworth, Hays and Godwin towards the end of the century.

Given Rousseau's authorship of both *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and *Emile*, it should come as no surprise that he would be intimately involved in contemporary debates surrounding aesthetic experience. The first task of this thesis must be, then, to establish a link between the epistemological basis on which Rousseau's educational philosophy rests in *Emile* and his theory of receptive education. This becomes one of the main driving forces in my discussion of Rousseau in the second chapter of this thesis. Following a brief introduction to Rousseauvean thought, I examine why both *Emile* and *Julie* are so important for how writers towards the end of the eighteenth century conceive of the potentially educative capacity of literature. Using the formal ambiguity of Rousseau's texts as a starting point, I argue that his seeming hostility towards literature can be, and was in the 1790s in Britain, recalibrated as a staged theory of literary education. Paying particular attention to Rousseau's formulation of different modes of reading, I explore how eighteenth-century theories of sympathy allow, in Rousseau, for an experience of reading that has the potential to renegotiate the problem of relating real-world ethical response to readerly interaction with literary texts. Focusing on the function of literariness in *Emile*, I examine how the mixed-narrative mode of the text asks to be read, presenting us with a form of experience that Maria Edgeworth would come to term 'practical' education.

My discussion of the relationship between educational theory and fictional practice centres up to this point primarily on the interaction between the student and their environment within Rousseauvean pedagogical theory. By focusing on the importance of Rousseau's emphasis on the role of the learner in the educational process I hope to begin to elucidate how this reframing of the traditional pedagogical relationship, when considered within the experimental educational model he posits, has the potential to expand our understanding of the relationship between the reader and the text. I use the term literary praxis throughout this thesis as a means of drawing attention to how Rousseau's practical mode of learning was productively applied to understandings of

readerly response by Edgeworth, Hays and Godwin. More often associated with Karl Marx, praxis is a term that need not apply to sweeping political calls to action and finds its roots rather in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Meaning something close to 'action' in its Greek root, praxis is used by Aristotle to mean doing, as opposed to thinking (theoría) or making (poiésis). Within more modern educational theory, the term has been used by David A. Kolb as a means of understanding the process of experimental learning. Kolb uses praxis as a means of signalling the critically self-reflexive nature of the type of learning gained through this experimental approach.³² It is worth noting, however, that Kolb's appropriation of the term loses some of the sense of the Aristotelian original. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle makes a distinction between poiésis and praxis because while both ideas constitute a degree of action, the goal of poiésis, sometimes translated as 'production', is external to the process itself whereas praxis differs from this sort of action principally because it is its own end. What I would like to suggest, then, is that praxis, when applied to the educational environment, or more strictly in this sense, to theories of reader-response, refers to both the act of reading itself, but also the act of critical reflection encoded in that action. It is a term then that is grounded very firmly in the type of learning Rousseau suggests is so imperative. It is both practical and experimental and very crucially conceives of the act of critical reflection as precisely this, an action. What this means, particularly given Aristotle's emphasis on the process itself, is that the act of reading, if we conceive of it as praxis, constitutes a practical, empirically justifiable mode of reading.

However, while clearly 'practical' in the sense that it represents a system that was built on active interaction between the student and their surrounding world (albeit a largely constructed one), what Edgeworth is quick to seize upon as the primary flaw in Rousseauvean educational thinking was that it remained overly theoretical and essentially hypothetical. And so while he goes to great pains to recommend a practical mode of education grounded in both praxis and experience, Rousseau's understanding of education is inherently theoretical. Exploring Rousseau's reception in Britain, the third

³² David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 1 edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1983), pp. 7, 31; see also, Linda H. Lewis and Carol J. Williams, 'Experiential Learning: Past and Present', *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1994.62 (1994), 5–16 (p. 6).

chapter of this thesis will focus on Maria Edgeworth's attempt to ground Rousseauvean educational theory in empirical observation building towards a more feasible, practicable approach to childrearing. Born of the conviction that Rousseauvean education is excessively reliant on theoretical metaphysics at the expense of real-world experience and genuine feeling, the 'practical' approach championed by Edgeworth is intended to be both practicable as well as concerned with everyday activity. More than this, however, educational philosophy is, for Edgeworth, necessarily authorised by real-world experience. My suggestion is that Edgeworth is able to marshal her practical experience of the growing child's mind as a means of lending greater force to her contributions to public debates surrounding both child-centred learning as well as the role literature could potentially play in education.

By briefly outlining both Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Thomas Day's ill-conceived attempts to actually raise children in line with the system Rousseau outlines in *Emile*, I set out to examine what exactly Edgeworth's educational intervention entails, focusing particularly on her idea of 'practical' education. I make the case that Edgeworth's earlier children's literature epitomises what I have earlier called educative literature. By emphasising the self-empowered readerly reception grounded in literary praxis that we see in *Emile*, these stories represent a far less didactic intervention than has often been suggested, with works like 'The Purple Jar' and its more radical counterparts 'The Bee and the Cow', and 'The Mimic' being aimed as much at children as they are at their parents. This dual nature frames these otherwise seemingly simple moralistic tales as educational experiences that stress a shift away from didactic instruction towards the promoting of a more empowered educational approach to reading. More than this, these earlier works display a preoccupation that is striking in its similarity to the sorts of tableaux we see in *Emile*, with the doubled nature of the texts providing educational interventions aimed both at adults and children. Shifting the focus towards the end of the chapter to Edgeworth's later novel *Belinda* (1801), I examine how she attempts to put her philosophy of practical education into practice in longer form fiction, examining how *Belinda* functions as an exercise in, and proponent of, the model of guided experimental education championed by Edgeworth and her father in *Practical Education* (1798).

Expanding on Edgeworth's concept of 'practical' education, chapter four examines how Mary Hays modifies experimental education through recourse to autobiographical authority in her radical novel *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796). Drawing on the type of autobiographical writing popularised by Rousseau in the middle of the century, Hays plays with conventions of fiction and life-writing in a manner that displays a shift towards the politically-conscious psychological realism so admired and imitated by Edgeworth at the beginning of the nineteenth century. More than merely being a question of psychological verisimilitude or the sort of sugaring of philosophy Godwin would so famously allude to in the preface to *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), Hays's reliance on real-life exempla is able to lend a degree of authenticity to her writing that has the ability to validate the use of fiction as both a philosophical and educative medium.³³ Pushing against Samuel Johnson's conception of didactic fiction, Hays builds on earlier works like Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary, A Fiction* (1788) in developing her own literary formula that she would eventually come to term 'familiar narrative.'³⁴ Envisaged within the same mode of experimental education we see forwarded by Rousseau in *Emile*, Hays, in *Emma Courtney*, emphasises the need to ground both education and literature in individual experience. Through an examination of her correspondence with William Godwin, much of which reappears almost verbatim in her novel, I examine how her reliance on the Helvétian primacy of passions combined with an *a posteriori* understanding of knowledge acquisition allows for a conception of emotional experience that is, for Hays, integral to rational thought. Looking at how Hays renegotiates the relationship between rationality and sensibility, I argue that Hays's text allows for a

³³ Framing his novel as a critical interrogation of what he saw as an inherently despotic political system Godwin couches his philosophical project within novelistic convention, justifying his recourse to fiction in his controversial preface because, he argues, 'this is a truth highly worthy to be communicated to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach', William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and Arnold A. Markley, 1st Edition edition (Peterborough, Ont. ; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 55.

³⁴ Mary Hays, 'On Novel Writing', in *The Monthly Magazine* 4 (London: Printed for R. Phillips, 1798), p. 181; Hays describes her literary theory in the context of her discussion of Johnson's 1750 'Rambler' article, see Samuel Johnson, 'Rambler, 4 (31 March 1750)', in *Novel and Romance, 1700-1800: A Documentary Record*, ed. by Ioan Williams (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), pp. 142–46.

philosophy of education that is able to incorporate into the rational system forwarded by Rousseau a privileging of emotion that is conspicuously missing in Rousseau's own account of early rational development.

Considering the impact that both Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft had on William Godwin, chapter five examines his engagement with Rousseau in both *The Enquirer* (1796) and his later novel *Fleetwood* (1805). In much the same fashion as the Edgeworths do, Godwin would famously take exception to what he saw as the visible hypocrisy inherent in the pedagogical relationship outlined by Rousseau in *Emile*, contending in *The Enquirer* that 'his whole system of education is a series of tricks, a puppet-show exhibition, of which the master holds the wires, and the scholar is never to suspect in what manner they are moved.'³⁵ In a striking parallel to the sort of educational engagement promised by reading, Rousseau relies, for Godwin, on staged and overly constructed moral lessons. Grounded in its rejection of one of the fundamental paradoxes in *Emile*, Godwin's primary attack on Rousseauism lies in his critique of Emile's relationship with his mentor, who while purporting to educate him in self-dependence, actively controls almost every element of his early education. This discussion will bring us in a full circle back to the sorts of arguments I began this introduction with, considering the relationship between the reader and the text and the role that empathy has to play in reader-response theory. Primarily framed around a discussion surrounding Godwin's theory of literary tendency, this chapter will look at how Godwin abstracts Rousseau's educational thinking as a means of lending greater weight to his defence of literary praxis. And while Godwin's novel is as much a critique of sensibility as it is of the Rousseauian pedagogical relationship, the educational philosophy we see expounded by Godwin in *Fleetwood* is predicated less on the detached rationalism we see reflected in his early political philosophy, being defined instead by process of dynamic emotional engagement and active socialisation. I would contend, therefore, that his understanding of reading as a form of literary praxis has the potential to provide a more complete educational experience than any of the carefully contrived lessons Godwin so criticises Rousseau for relying on in *Emile*.

³⁵ William Godwin, 'The Enquirer', in *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Pickering & Chatto, 1993), p. 126.

Building on Godwin's politicisation of Rousseauvean pedagogy, my conclusion will examine what this developing understanding of literary education means in the modern world. Examining Mary Shelley's representation of Rousseauvean ideas in *Frankenstein* (1818), I will make the case that in this later example of educative fiction, Shelley develops ideas of literary praxis revealing the limitations inherent in forms of literary reception that attempt to unbind themselves from the hierarchical pedagogic structures Rousseau so vehemently wrote against in the 1760s. I will show how she reveals a blind spot in Rousseauvean education by considering the consequences of a self-empowered experiential literary education when undertaken by a subject who does not comfortably embody the physical and cultural norms within their social context. By exploring what the consequences of this interrogation of Rousseauvean education might have in the modern world, I will make a case for the importance of examining the relationship between educational theory and fictional practice not just in the eighteenth century but even more pertinently in contemporary literary theory.

As this thesis is chiefly concerned with the reception of Rousseauvean philosophy in Britain, I have worked with Rousseau primarily in English translation. Where specific terms might impinge on the meaning of particular segments I have made a point of highlighting this in the original French. For the sake of consistency, I have used the William Kenrick translation from 1762 throughout this thesis as it was the most influential and widely read at the time.³⁶ As the highly contentious book V of *Emile* did not appear in this first edition which was rushed to publication before Kenrick could complete his translation, I will be using the 1763 edition of this same translation for any references to book V in my discussion. All quotations are, therefore, from these editions unless otherwise stated. It is worth noting, however, that all three of the authors I am dealing with read different versions of the text. While it appears that Edgeworth relied

³⁶ It is worth noting that Rousseau's text has undergone five major translations in the English language, three within a year of its original publication in French. For an in depth discussion of the translation history of the text, see, J. J. Chambliss, 'Allan Bloom's Translation of *Emile*: Rousseau Imitated', *Educational Theory*, 30.3 (1980), 253–56.

primarily on Kenrick, Hays seems to have read the Alexander Donaldson translation and Godwin, to the best of my knowledge, read Rousseau in the original French. Where there are obvious differences in the translations, I have made a note of it in my discussion. In a similar vein, any reference to Rousseau's *Julie* will be relying on the 1761 translation of the text by the same William Kenrick as it forms the basis of all English translations from *Julie's* initial publication until the 1997 Stewart and Vaché edition. While Kenrick's translation is admirable, it should be noted that he (or possibly his publisher) entirely disregards Rousseau's original structure, reordering the original six parts into four volumes, renumbering and rearranging the letters within them. He also transforms a passing comparison between Julie and Héloïse into her name, renaming the novel *Eloisa*. These concessions aside, it remains the authoritative translation throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Where the meaning has been obscured in translation and it is integral to a particular reading of the novel I have cited the original French.³⁷

The texts I am examining in this thesis are not ordered chronologically. Edgeworth's later works come after Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* as well as most of the earlier philosophical writing of Godwin's that I will be looking at. This is partly because I feel that Edgeworth provides a more coherent introduction to the reception of Rousseauvean philosophy in Britain than Hays, who is by no means a systematic thinker, or Godwin, whose engagement with Rousseau is more politically motivated. I seek rather to chart a history of ideas, proceeding progressively further away from the detached theoretical philosophy we see in Rousseau towards the more grounded and emotionally engaged understanding of education we begin to see in the interpretation of aesthetic experience produced in the early nineteenth century at the hands of Godwin and Shelley.

³⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Eloisa: Or, A Series of Original Letters Collected and Published by Mr. J. J. Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva, Translated from the French. To Which Are Added, The Adventures of Lord B--- at Rome; Being the Sequel of Eloisa (Found among the Author's Papers after His Decease.)*, trans. by William Kenrick, 4 vols (London: Vendor and Hood, Longman and Rees, Cuthel and Marton, J. Walker, Lane and Newman, B. Crosby, J. Hookham, and J. Harding, 1803); for a more accurate translation which restores Rousseau's original architectonics see, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, trans. by Jean Vaché and Philip Stewart, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1997), vi.

Towards the end of book V of his *Confessions* (1782) Rousseau relates a disastrous attempt to make a type of invisible ink called *l'encre de sympathie* that leaves him unable to see for several weeks in the summer of 1737.³⁸ Following instructions set out in Jacques Ozanam's 1694 *Récréations Mathématiques et Physiques*, the type of invisible ink Rousseau is attempting to make is able to become either visible or invisible once exposed to the correct 'sympathetic' catalyst.³⁹ After corking the solution of quicklime, orpiment (arsenic sulfide) and water, Rousseau inadvertently causes it to explode in his face, blinding him for six weeks and leaving him so concerned for his health, having accidentally swallowed some of the solution, that he calls for his last will and testament to be drawn up.⁴⁰ I draw attention to this anecdote, not because of the near-fatal consequences of Rousseau's failed experiment but because I am drawn to the idea of 'sympathetic ink', or as I would suggest as a more fruitful translation, 'catalytic ink'. The idea that a text can only become visible once it is exposed to the correct catalyst is one that seems destined to evoke parallels with the process of literary praxis I suggest Rousseauvean education encourages. That Rousseau is attempting to make and write in *l'encre de sympathie* at just the time he is learning to speak what he calls 'le jargon des livres' in his *Confessions* is almost too perfect an allegory not to ignore.⁴¹ To write in sympathetic ink would be to presuppose the possibility of a catalytic reading, an act of literary praxis, one that through sympathetic imagination has the potential to engender an educative experience of the text. David Marshall, for one, has suggested that the link

³⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions*, ed. by Michel Launay, II vols (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), II, bk. V, p. 255; For the experiment Rousseau was attempting to recreate see Jacques Ozanam, *Récréations mathématiques et physiques* (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1750), bk. 3, pp 222–24.

³⁹ Louis de Jaucourt describes the effects of using this combination of inks in the 1755 edition of Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*. Having set out two methods for making sympathetic ink, one using the same ingredients Rousseau uses in his failed experiment, Jaucourt writes: 'Sur une écriture invisible, on met une écriture visible, et l'on fait disparaître l'écriture visible et fausse, et paraître l'invisible et vraie,' *Encyclopedia, Ou Dictionnaire Raisonné Des Sciences, Des Art, et Des Metiers*, ed. by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (Paris, 1755), v, p. 634.

⁴⁰ Rousseau, II, bk. V, p. 255.

⁴¹ Rousseau, II, bk. V, pp. 254–5.

between sympathy and literature suggested in Rousseau's *l'encre de sympathie* anecdote should be read as symptomatic of a new form of writing that Rousseau is attempting to create in his *Confessions*: '[a] language that would hide itself, revealing its true face only to a reader capable of reproducing the meaning buried beneath the surface.'⁴² Marshall's suggestion is that this is achieved through 'not just feeling or the capacity for feeling but more specifically the capacity to feel the sentiments of someone else.'⁴³ Taking the place of Hume's 'moral sense' in explaining moral sentiment through a correspondence of feeling, Marshall is relying here on Adam Smith's conception of sympathy that builds on Hume's experimental method by suggesting morality is constructed through the imaginative act of appealing to human experience.⁴⁴ The primacy that this emphasis on divinatory hermeneutics places on authorial intention, suggests that the idea of sympathetic ink does far more than reveal Rousseau's preoccupation with the communicability of ideas, focusing more on the suitability of their expression than the process of reception. Reframing Marshall's 'sympathetic reading' in my discussion of *Emile*, I hope to demonstrate how, for Rousseau, reading is sympathetic, but not in the way that the parallel with Adam Smith's concept of imaginative interpersonal identification suggests.⁴⁵ Relying, rather, on the concept of *sympathie* taken from

⁴² Rousseau, II, bk. V, p. 255; David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau and Mary Shelley*, 2nd ed. edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 173.

⁴³ Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, p. 3; For other notable modern interrogations of sympathy, see, I. Csengei, *Sympathy, Sensibility and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Chippenham and Eastbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 5–9; Michael Bell, *The Sentiment of Reality: Truth of Feeling in the European Novel* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 2–7; Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790's* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 20–58; John Mullan, 'Sensibility and Literary Criticism', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume 4, The Eighteenth Century*, ed. by H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 419–33.

⁴⁴ For an outline of Hume's moral sense theory see, David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, 1 edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), I, bk. 3, pp. 302–6.

⁴⁵ As outlined by Smith in Adam Smith, *Adam Smith: The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 11–17; For a more in depth discussion of the intricacies of discussions of sympathy in the eighteenth century and related words and concepts, see Geoffroy Atkinson, *The Sentimental Revolution: French Writers of 1690-1740*, ed. by Abraham C. Keller (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), pp. 62–98; Geoffroy Atkinson and Abraham C. Keller, *Prelude to the Enlightenment:*

Ozanam's recipe for invisible ink that I have rendered as 'catalytic', I would like to suggest that Rousseau is trying to write, metaphorically at least, in *l'encre de sympathie* and it is the act of reading itself, if conducted critically, that has the potential to reveal his lessons. Because while I do see the influence of the understanding of sympathy forwarded by Marshall in Rousseau's conception of preadolescent reading, Rousseau's stress on literary praxis in the later stages of development reveals a movement towards a more detached rational heuristic hermeneutic approach to both reading and education than that suggested by Smith's conception of sympathy. That being said, I will return to Smith at greater length in my discussions of both Mary Hays and William Godwin's fiction which, in my reading, reveal the need to reconcile the rational and emotional components in these two competing conceptions of the term. By the time Godwin is writing *Fleetwood*, the concept of catalytic reading, or literary praxis, has come to involve the sympathetic act that Smith so famously theorises in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), but this is only after the forceful intervention of Mary Hays who redresses what she sees as the unnecessary separation of rationality and sentiment. Through my reading of how literary praxis was received from Rousseau and developed by Maria Edgeworth, Mary Hays and William Godwin in what I have called educative fiction, I hope to highlight in the following chapters how, in its literary reception, Rousseau's educational model reconstrues the novel as a potent form of experiential education.

French Literature, 1690-1740 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), p. 26; R. F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 11–55; Northrop Frye, 'Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility', *ELH*, 23.2 (1956), 144–52 (pp. 311–18); George S. Rousseau, 'Nerves, Spirits and Fibres: Toward the Origins of Sensibility (1975)', in *Nervous Acts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 157–84 (pp. 137–57).

CHAPTER TWO

'LA SERVANTE DU JARDINIER': *EMILE* AND LEARNING TO READ WITH ROUSSEAU

'So arithmetic, geometry, and all the education our future rulers need as a preliminary to dialectic – these are things we should offer them while they are children. But we shouldn't present these subjects as a compulsory syllabus they have got to learn.'

'Why is that?'

'Because for a free man learning should never be associated with slavery. Physical exertion, imposed by force, does the body no harm, but for the soul no forced learning can be lasting.'

'True.' He said.

'In which case, my friend, when you're bringing children up, don't use compulsion in teaching them. Use children's games instead.'¹

(Plato, *The Republic*, 536d-e; 537a.)

An outspoken champion of self-empowered learning, Elizabeth I's tutor, Roger Ascham, would proclaim in his posthumously published treatise on education, *The Scholemaster* (1570), that 'yong children should rather be allured to learning by ientilnes and loue, than compelled to learning, by beating and feare.'² Concerned with whether it is the teacher's job to impart truths and ideas or to encourage students to discover this knowledge for themselves, the debate Ascham involves himself in here lies at the core of educational philosophy from as early as Plato's *Republic* (c. 380 BC). A focus on 'learning' rather than teaching opened up the possibility of an educational system that concentrated on student experience, an insight that would eventually inform works from Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) through to the popularisation of progressive pedagogy at the hands of John Dewey and the 'Progressive Educational Movement' in the 1880s.³ Fostering an environment in which students are encouraged to take some sense of control over how they approach their own education, Ascham implies the possibility of moving beyond the inherently

¹ Plato, *Plato: The Republic*, ed. by G. R. F. Ferrari, trans. by Tom Griffith, 1 edition (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), bk. 7, p. 246.

² Roger Ascham, 'The Scholemaster (1570)', in *English Works of: Toxophilus, Report of the Affaires and State of Germany, the Scholemaster*, ed. by William Aldis Wright, Cambridge Library Collection (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 171–302 (p. 197).

³ See especially Dewey, *Democracy and Education*; Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

manipulative nature of traditionally hierarchical didactic relationships towards a type of learning in which the student is empowered to pursue their own educative aims and goals. Ascham's arguments look forward to the works of the Czech educator Comenius and later Locke and Rousseau, preaching, through his doctrine of learning-by-doing, what is now most often understood as 'progressive' education.⁴ In his treatise Ascham draws on a discussion between Socrates and Glaucon in *The Republic* (a section of which functions as the epigraph to this chapter) in order to highlight a tension between whether knowledge is something that should be accumulated and recorded, its acquisition contingent on a knowledge of facts or whether it exists in a more relative and processual form, best acquired through personal discovery and revolving around the development of rational faculties and problem solving. Applying this logic to the teaching of Latin, Ascham uses the example of teaching grammar through practical translation as a means of exploring this debate. Moving away from the 'common waie used in common Scholes, to read Grammer alone by it selfe, [which] is tedious for the Master, hard for the Scholer, and colde and uncomfortable for them bothe,' Ascham champions a style of teaching in which the student is made to learn through the practical application of language rather than by rote learning of grammar and rules.⁵ 'Let the Master,' he writes, 'at the first, lead and teach his Scholer, to ioyn the Rewles of his Grammer booke, with the examples of his present lesson, until the Scholer, *by him selfe*, be hable to fetch out of his Grammer, everie Rewle, for everie Example.'⁶ Considered by Ascham as being both less onerous as well as more enriching for the student, he is quick to emphasise the need to encourage

⁴ See especially Salzmann; Pestalozzi; Froebel, V; Dewey, *Democracy and Education*; Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

⁵ It has been noted that Ascham's method is markedly similar to that outlined by Cardinal Wolsey in a letter written to the masters of Ipswich school in 1528 and is thus, with the exception of his emphasis on encouragement and praise, very likely more grounded in established contemporary educational practice than has often been thought to be the case, Ascham, pp. 182–84; *An Essay on a System of Classical Instruction: Combining the Methods of Locke, Milton, Ascham, and Colet: The Whole Series Being Designed to Exhibit a Restoration of the Primitive Mode of Scholastic Tuition in England, Disembarrassed of Its Modern Abuses* (London: J. Taylor, 1829), pp. 14–16; Thomas Wolsey, 'Thomas Cardinal of York, &c. to the Masters of Ipswich School, Greeting', in *An Essay on a System of Classical Instruction: Combining the Methods of Locke, Milton, Ascham, and Colet: The Whole Series Being Designed to Exhibit a Restoration of the Primitive Mode of Scholastic Tuition in England, Disembarrassed of Its Modern Abuses* (London: J. Taylor, 1829), pp. 16–26.

⁶ My emphasis, Ascham, p. 184.

work done ‘by himself,’ working hard to create lessons in which the student is able to understand their own mistakes while being sure to praise work which is done well, arguing that ‘there is no such whetstone to sharpen a good witte, and encourage a will to learninge, as praise.’⁷ What Ascham is picking up on in his attempt to develop Plato’s dialogue is an aphorism forwarded by Socrates in Book VII of *The Republic* that would eventually become one of the cornerstones of modern education; the assertion that ‘no forced learning can be lasting.’⁸ In a passage markedly similar to the Platonic arguments cited by Ascham, John Locke would go on to make the point repeatedly in his treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693, writing that we, ‘even from our cradles, love liberty, and have therefore an aversion to many things for no other reason but because they are enjoined to us.’⁹ It is this insight that would lay the foundation for the development of a more accessible, universal education system which, through its emphasis on experiential learning would become the basis for many of the more progressive educational works that would emerge towards the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ Ascham’s text, however, struggles inevitably to problematise the traditional teacher/student dynamic and the student remains, even ‘allured to learning’ within his progressive framework, construed in the passive voice as the object of a didactic relationship that remains relatively uni-directional. The fact that he is arguing in favour of allure over compulsion does little after all to undercut the power dynamic between the teacher and the student which relies, in both instances, on the reinscription of the hierarchical nature of the relationship. It would take another two centuries before, with the publication of *Emile* in 1762, Rousseau would eventually show how progressive educational philosophy had the potential to re-evaluate this relationship in ways that

⁷ Ascham, p. 183.

⁸ Ascham relies heavily on Socrates’s arguments and it is in his ‘counsell, iudgement, and authoritie,’ he writes, that ‘I will repose my selfe, vntill I meete with a man of the contrarie mynde, whom I may iustlie take to be wiser, than I thinke Socrates was.’ Ascham, p. 198; Plato, bk. 7, p. 246.

⁹ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. by John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton, The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 208.

¹⁰ Following the publication of *Emile* in 1762, an estimated 200 educational treatises were published in English by 1800, see Porter, p. 343; quoting Lawson and Silver, *A Social History of Education in England*; Stephen Bygrave, *Uses of Education: Readings in Enlightenment in England* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009), pp. 21–67.

Ascham never could. Building on the success of *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* published in the previous the year, *Emile* displays Rousseau's move away from the more expository approach we see in his earlier political writing towards a conscious blurring of narrative forms in *Emile*. This impulse towards narrativization that we see in *Emile* displays an attempt to reframe the manner in which Rousseau imagines his readers to be interacting with his more abstract philosophical writing. This changing relationship with his readership, allows Rousseau to explore a new type of educational writing in *Emile* that can emotionally and imaginatively involve readers in the educational process, thereby enacting the self-same educative experience that he is outlining within the text itself. *Emile* is constructed, in this way, to function as both an experience and an exposition of the influential system of experiential education that Rousseau is positing here.¹¹ Examining how Rousseau's use of literary forms and tropes in *Emile* reframes the relationship between the reader and the text, in this chapter I will make the case that in spite of Rousseau's apparent distrust of the literary form, it is the very literariness of *Emile* that enables it to function as both an illustration and example of Rousseauvean education. Revealing an underlying tension within Rousseau's pedagogical philosophy, I make the case that while he is at pains to construct a 'natural' scene of learning in *Emile*, its artful construction better fits it to the structure of the novel. It would be just this paradox that would eventually give rise to some of the more influential readings of Rousseau I will be examining throughout this thesis. Concentrating on how the mixed-narrative mode we see developed in the *Emile* functions to involve the reader in the educational process, in this chapter I will focus on how Rousseau constructs a framework that allows for a conception of literary praxis in which reading has the potential to function as an empirically grounded experimental experience, enacting, in turn, the mode of learning he proposes within the text itself.

¹¹ This argument is put forward persuasively by Bell in *Open Secrets*, see Bell, *Open Secrets*, p. 17; Duffy provides a more wide ranging discussion of Rousseau's influence in Edward Duffy, *Rousseau in England: The Context for Shelley's Critique of the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 16–31; see also William A. Frank, 'Introductory Essay', in *The Anti-Emile: Reflections on the Theory and Practice of Education Against the Principles of Rousseau*, by H. S. Gerdil, trans. by William A. Frank, Tra edition (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2011), pp. xv–xlii (pp. xvi–xvii); Gary Thomas also provides a useful, if brief discussion of Rousseau's influence in Gary Thomas, pp. 12–13 and 19–25.

Written in an attempt to come to terms with what Rousseau saw as being the corrupting influence of social convention, *Emile* represents, at its most basic level, Rousseau's bid to chart a system of education that had the potential to diminish the impact of this socially imposed corruption. Combining philosophical arguments with fictional anecdotes, in *Emile* Rousseau constructs an imagined student and pupil through which to explore his pedagogical philosophy in an extended thought experiment which for the first three books is designed to foster in Emile natural individual autonomy. Given that *Emile* is operating within a tradition that had historically made use of a more declarative, direct approach, Rousseau's move away from the 'how to' teaching manual style of educational writing signals a distinct movement towards an emphasis on active readerly reception in educative literature. The text is received through the perspective of an increasingly fictitious narrator, and Rousseau's use of consciously imaginary characters and situations signals a distinctly literary turn away from a tradition that, at its most radical, was still struggling to move beyond the Platonic dialogue. Often read as an early example of the *bildungsroman*, *Emile* is essentially a collection of hypothetical anecdotes in which we follow the eponymous character through a series of lessons which are constructed and designed by the text's narrator, Jean-Jacques, himself a hypothetical tutor, to encourage in Emile a healthy self-sufficiency garnered through his empirical experience of the seemingly natural world around him. While undoubtedly not a straightforward text, it is surprising how readily *Emile* has been attributed with the epithet 'novel.'¹² It is a fallacy that has been played out as much in modern scholarship as it did in Rousseau's time, and so it is worth noting that while one of the most important aspects of Rousseau's text is that it draws on fictional narrative and makes use of many distinctly novelistic conventions, it is not strictly a novel. Rousseau's text is not a straightforward pedagogical

¹² While it may function as a convenient label, the term 'novel' is not strictly a historically accurate term with its application to narrative prose fiction only really beginning to find widespread usage at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Richetti's discussion of the term is useful in situating it within a historical context, see John Richetti, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. by John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1–5; Michael Bell discusses this miscategorisation of *Emile* as well as providing an enlightening discussion of how the formal ambiguity in *Emile* answers different truth protocols to those we would expect of a more conventional educative treatise, Bell, *Open Secrets*, pp. 18–19.

treatise either, because while *Emile* is part novel, it is also part educational manual and part philosophical exposition. Conceived initially as a relatively straightforward educational treatise, Rousseau's earliest drafts display none of the fictional elements which so categorise the eventual published text. Peter Jimack's reading of the *Manuscript Favre* has highlighted how these early drafts, devoid of narrative voice and even the imagined tutor and pupil who would give the work its ultimate title, represent a far more impersonal mode of address to the reader.¹³ As the text itself evolved, it gained a narrator, fictional characters and a plot in keeping with the progression of Emile's education, coming more and more to represent a work very much at home within a novelistic tradition we would now refer to as *bildungsroman*. Michael McKeon's formulation of the eighteenth-century novel would certainly seem to represent just this in *Emile*: 'The eighteenth-century novel,' he writes, 'may well be said to 'internalize' pedagogy in the way it characteristically conceives the education of the protagonist as a lesson in probabilistic knowledge ideally replicated in the formal experience of the reader.'¹⁴ While McKeon's pithy summary of the form may function surprisingly well as an outline of Rousseau's pedagogical project, to frame *Emile* as a novel would, as I have suggested, drastically misrepresent Rousseau's text. His reliance on formal novelistic conventions is, I believe, more a symptom of the sort of educational communication he is intending than a sustained attempt to create a work of educational fiction. In attempting to come to terms with just why it was such an influential text towards the end of the eighteenth century, I would contend that the formal elements that govern this communication become key. What is so important about the text, in other words, is that, much in keeping with McKeon's formulation, it is not just a text about experimental education but one that has the potential to function for the reader as an educational experience itself. And yet, very often discussions of *Emile* focus almost exclusively on what Rousseau is saying about education, eschewing discussion of how it formally functions to engage the reader in

¹³ See, Peter D. Jimack, 'La Genèse et la Rédaction de l'Émile de Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (Geneva: Institut et musée Voltaire, 1960), XIII; Peter Jimack, *Rousseau: 'Emile'* (London: Grant & Cutler Ltd, 1984), p. 178; Timothy O'Hagan provides a useful discussion of the manuscript in Timothy O'Hagan, *Rousseau* (Psychology Press, 2003), p. 61.

¹⁴ McKeon, NO. 4, p. 262; McKeon is drawing on Patey's concept of probability in Augustan fiction in, Douglas Lane Patey, *Probability and Literary Form: Philosophic Theory and Literary Practice in the Augustan Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), chap. 7 and 8.

relation to this content.

This is not, however, a trend that is as apparent during Rousseau's lifetime. An early English reviewer of Rousseau's newly translated *Emilius and Sophia, Or, A New System of Education*, would write of it in November 1762:

Mr. Rousseau can handle the most beaten topic with novelty, and throw new light on subjects which have been thought exhausted. As if he enjoyed a peculiar sensation, every object strikes his mind in a very uncommon manner; and hence it is probable that his writings will be admired as the effusions of genius, while his precepts will be neglected as the effects of caprice and affectation.¹⁵

While hardly an endorsement of his ideas, this review is telling in its recognition of the public admiration, not necessarily only for the content of Rousseau's latest publication but more for the style of his writing. Citing the *Critical Review* from February of the same year in which he is described as a man 'peculiar and original in everything,' Edward Duffy writes that 'as the 1760s began, "ingenious" was the established and almost obligatory epithet for Rousseau.'¹⁶ Riding for the most part on the immense popularity of his *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* which had been translated into English as *Eloisa, or a series of original letters* (1761) by the same William Kenrick who would later translate *Emile*, *Emile's* reception is very much coloured by that of its predecessor. Many of the earlier reviewers of *Emile* seem to have approached it with similar expectations, eagerly eulogising Rousseau's elevated writing style and its exquisite sensibility. Much in keeping with this, in January 1763 another reviewer frames *Emile* in terms more obviously compatible with the sentimental novel:

All the feelings of exquisite sensibility are freely painted, without a single touch that provokes impurity or alarms delicacy. Nature is copied with such heat of enthusiasm, as declares our author's heart susceptible of the soft passion, and intimates that he has sacrificed both to the Loves and Graces. His own passions and his readers are

¹⁵ 'Art. II. Emilius and Sophia: Or, a New System of Education. Translated from the French of J. J. Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva', in *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, ed. by Tobias George Smollett (London: R. Baldwin, 1762), xiv, 336–46 (p. 336).

¹⁶ 'Art. III. A Discourse upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind', in *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, ed. by Tobias George Smollett (London: R. Baldwin, 1762), xiii, 100–107 (p. 100); Duffy, p. 16.

equally at his command; in the midst of a dry didactic discourse, he twitches the heart and bedews the face with sympathetic tears.¹⁷

Conflating the narrator of the text, Jean-Jacques, with Rousseau himself, the reviewer chooses to focus predominantly on the affective potential of *Emile*, rendering a text originally intended purely as a work of abstract theory as something more akin to *Julie* than the dry, didactic discourse Rousseau seems to be promising us in his preface.¹⁸ These parallels are doubtless drawn because rather than discussing education as an abstract concept, Rousseau modifies didacticism through an appeal to sensibility, couching his arguments within distinctly novelistic constructs, he 'twitches the heart and bedews the face with sympathetic tears,' as the *Critical Review* puts it - not something one would expect of an educational treatise. Moving away from the purely theoretical work Rousseau sketches in the *Manuscrit Favre* in which the character Emile does not even appear, the final published version is, as has been noted, replete with a narrator, fictional characters and a plot more in keeping with the *bildungsroman* than a work of abstract theory. By embracing the same sensibility that had so moved the readers of *Julie*, Rousseau departs from the expository tradition of educational writing, situating his interlocutors within an overarching narrative, allowing him to make use of the sentimental potential of the fiction while still enabling him to explore his more abstract educational philosophy. Considered in light of the type of imaginative participation we see in Adam Smith's formulation of sympathy, Rousseau's reliance on fictional tropes and forms allows for a type of readerly reception in which the reader experiences the text in a fashion not possible in works of purely abstract theory. As Smith is at pains to highlight, 'though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations.'¹⁹ The reader is forced in other words to move beyond a purely literal understanding of reading, relying instead on an imaginative set of substitutions in which they are made to relate their own empirical experience of the world to that of the

¹⁷ 'Art. IV. Emilius and Sophia: Or, a New System of Education', in *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, ed. by Tobias George Smollett (London: R. Baldwin, 1763), xv, 21–34 (p. 31).

¹⁸ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, p. xi.

¹⁹ Smith, pp. 11–12.

fictional characters that Rousseau has drawn for us. The literariness of *Emile* can perhaps be read then as something not far from Philip Sidney's famous 'medicine of cherries', covering over the coercive truth, but functioning to enable rather than thwart critical thought.²⁰ Indeed, what I hope to be able to show in this chapter is just how the process that McKeon outlines, in which the eighteenth-century novel internalises pedagogy by creating a doubled reading of the text, is reflected in *Emile*.²¹ Rousseau's text becomes, within my conception of it, a form of educative literature, which by promoting the process of literary praxis enables a reading of Emile's educational journey which is turn replicated through the reader's own formal experience of the text.

This doubled experience of the text becomes particularly apparent in books III and IV of *Emile* as Rousseau begins using more anecdotes in his writing, ingraining the process by which the combination of literary and philosophical discourses is occasioned in the text. A case can no doubt be made that literature's framing in terms of aesthetics and the more modern separation of literature from philosophy was already well underway at this point in the eighteenth century.²² That being said, Rousseau's conscious blurring of literary and philosophical discourses in *Emile* nevertheless requires some attention in this discussion as it is integral to understanding how Rousseau is able to reframe the act of reading as an educative experience categorised in my discussion as an act of active literary praxis. More than this, the blurring of forms in the text goes, I believe, a long way towards explaining the particular attraction of *Emile* for many of the educational theorists who draw so strongly on Rousseau's work in Britain towards the end of the eighteenth century. Michael Bell, for one, construes this formal ambiguity, at least initially, in a relatively negative light, as a self-fulfilling pedagogical circle, one that combines philosophical exposition with an essentially predetermined literary structure. 'To what extent,' he asks,

²⁰ Philip Sidney, *An Apology For Poetry (Or The Defence Of Poesy): Revised and Expanded Second Edition*, ed. by R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 96.

²¹ McKeon, NO. 4, p. 262.

²² On this transition from *bonnes* to *belles lettres* see in particular, Patey, pp. ix–xiii; and Eric Donald Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 141–44; see also, Christopher Clausen, *The Place of Poetry: Two Centuries of an Art in Crisis* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

‘is it a controlled philosophical hypothesis, or a naïve wish-fulfilment in which the author suffers the classic illusion of the pedagogue?’²³ It seems on the face of it rather difficult to argue with Bell here; *Emile* is undeniably an exercise in wish-fulfilment, a fact that Rousseau himself recognises in the text: ‘I have, therefore,’ he writes, ‘in this work made choice of an imaginary pupil, and have taken the liberty to suppose myself of a proper age, in health, and possessed of the requisite abilities to undertake his education.’²⁴ Conceding his pupil to be an entirely fabricated construction, permissible, Rousseau argues ‘particularly in a case where a model for imitation is proposed,’ he likewise reimagines himself as a model tutor.²⁵ And so, a third of the way into the first book, Rousseau reconstitutes himself as an essentially fictional character. While this may seem justifiable within a philosophical framework which demands an idealised model through which to play out Rousseau’s thought experiment, in this imaginative act, Rousseau has entirely shifted the readerly expectations by replacing himself with a fictional construct who is, let us not forget, at the same time the narrator of the text from this moment onwards. Rousseau justifies his imagining of the hypothetical and idealised *Emile* and *Jean-Jacques*, writing:

This method appears to me useful, in preventing an author, diffident of himself, from running into chimeras: for, when he deviates from the ordinary practice, he has only to try his method on his pupil; and he will soon see, or the reader will see for him, whether he follows the natural progress of infancy and the sensations of the human heart.²⁶

This seems to be something of a contradiction, however, as the imagined pupil becomes in these terms a test by which a potentially fallible tutor can measure their own successes or failures. What Rousseau fails to account for in this justification, is the altering of his own imagined self, a process which would seem to render this justification irrelevant. What it does achieve, however, is to demonstrate the constructed nature of Rousseau’s

²³ Bell, *Open Secrets*, p. 19.

²⁴ While I have ascribed this sentiment to Rousseau himself, it is difficult to know, given the nature of the text whether it should be attributed rather to the narrator Jean-Jacques. Given the passage outlines the hypothetical changes which result in his character, it seemed more accurate at this time to designate Rousseau himself as the primary narrative voice.

Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, vol. 1, p. 35.

²⁵ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. I, p. 38.

²⁶ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. I, pp. 35–36.

thought experiment, because the model student not only provides a compass for himself but also becomes, in turn, a test against which the reader can measure the efficacy of Rousseau's philosophy. This does seem something of self-fulfilling prophecy, particularly given that Emile remains a hypothetical invention and is thus designed himself to fulfil Rousseau's pedagogic promise. Emile serves, through his rather obviously scripted responses to lessons, responses which are almost all proposed by the hypothetical Jean-Jacques himself, to consistently validate his tutor throughout the text. But perhaps this is to miss the point of the exercise because while Rousseau's philosophical experiment may seem flawed, he is not attempting to provide the reader with a factual antecedent here. Nowhere does Rousseau claim that Emile represents a realistic pupil. He is knowingly constructed for the purposes of Rousseau's discussion, a discussion that proposes a novel educational system, but one that remains as nebulous and vague as its eponymous hero. With the exception of expressing some strong views with regard to Emile's literary education, Rousseau doesn't actually set out any definitive, easily implementable plan, but rather expresses a hypothesis and proceeds to follow it through to what he considers to be its logical conclusion given its supposedly ideal parameters. What *Emile* is, in other words, is a philosophical hypothesis played out through what Rousseau would call a 'tableau d'imagination' or, for now, a fictional story.²⁷

Drawing attention to his formal break with the traditional educational treatise, in *Emile*, Rousseau is at pains to highlight how this formal difference affects the relationship between the text and the reader. 'It may be objected to me,' he acknowledges in his preface, 'that my book contains rather a heap of reveries than a treatise... If I sometimes assume an affirmative tone, therefore, it is not with a view to impose my notions on the reader; but only to tell him what I really think.'²⁸ In an approach to authorial intervention similar to that he supposes in *Julie*, Rousseau is content merely to express his views, seemingly leaving the interpretative onus in the hands of the reader. *Julie*, an epistolary novel, devoid of a narrator, suggests a potentially more limited relationship with his readership but does offer a useful starting point to examine how Rousseau's relationship with the reader develops with the publication of *Emile*. Equally concerned with the

²⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Eloisa*, vol. 1, p.xii.

²⁸ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, vol. 1, p. xv.

reception of fictional representation, the second preface to *Julie*, the ‘préface dialoguée’, provides for this discussion, an insightful conversation surrounding the relationship between form and readerly reception. Framed as a Platonic dialogue, it follows a debate between ‘R’, supposedly Rousseau himself, and ‘N’, ‘a man of letters’, who discuss the relative merits of the real or fictional status of Rousseau’s novel. While ostensibly a question of genre, this seemingly innocuous problem opens up a potentially more pointed discussion which suggests that fiction, when validated by personal experience, has the potential to lend weight to the treatment of philosophical problems. Verisimilitude in *Julie* is after all closely linked with its ability to inspire affective attachment and forms the basis for the reasoning most often cited following its publication that the story must be based on real life because, as one admirer of Rousseau’s put it, he was so moved by the story of Julie and Saint-Preux that he knew it must be true.²⁹ Very directly influenced by *Julie*, *Emile* just as actively blurs the boundaries between the fictional and non-fictional modes. Using N to address this relationship, particularly in relation to *Julie*, Rousseau, in the preface, introduces the discussion of reality and fiction through two concepts, a portrait and a tableau based on imagination (rendered in Kenrick’s translation as ‘picture’). N argues:

A portrait has its merit if it resembles the original, be that original ever so strange; but in a picture which is the produce of imagination, every human figure should resemble human nature, or the picture is of no value: yet supposing them both good in their kind, there is this difference, the portrait is interesting but to a few people, whilst the picture will please the public in general.³⁰

If, in N’s estimation, the letters which make up Rousseau’s novel have real-life referents, then his work ceases to be a work of fiction, becoming merely the biography of its characters and one can in these terms no longer judge the work by purely aesthetic standards. If, however, *Julie* is fictional it is, in N’s estimation, poorly executed because it

²⁹ Anonymous reader to Rousseau, March 1761, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Correspondance Complete de Rousseau: 1761, Lettres 1620-1814*, ed. by R. A. Leigh (Voltaire Foundation, 2004), VIII, pp. 257–58.

³⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Eloisa: Or, A Series of Original Letters Collected and Published by Mr. J. J. Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva, Translated from the French. To Which Are Added, The Adventures of Lord B--- at Rome; Being the Sequel of Eloisa (Found among the Author’s Papers after His Decease.)*, trans. by William Kenrick, 4 vols (London: Vendor and Hood, Longman and Rees, Cuthel and Marton, J. Walker, Lane and Newman, B. Crosby, J. Hookham, and J. Harding, 1803), I, pp. xi–xii.

doesn't subscribe to his standards of universality. Drawing a distinction between appreciation and judgement, Huntington Williams argues that the Rousseauvean "Portrait" derives its force from the singularity and difference of the individual who portrays himself,' whereas the 'value of the "Tableau d'imagination" derives from its capacity to represent 'l'humanité'.³¹ It is in this idea of a *tableau d'imagination* that we find the key to understanding the formal composition of *Emile*. In a rather engaging passage in which Rousseau, or possibly at this point Jean-Jacques, sketches Emile's character, he spends a considerable amount of time constructing a pupil to fit into a generalised European mould. He is a 'common man', of 'ordinary capacity', he is an orphan and, because Rousseau writes, 'my pupil must be an inhabitant of the earth,' he is from a temperate climate so as to make him more easily adjustable wherever he may be.³² It is in *Emile's* ability to represent *l'humanité*, albeit a male European construction of it, that the answer to Michael Bell's question can be found: *Emile* is both a controlled philosophical hypothesis as well as an exercise in wish-fulfilment, but this wish-fulfilment is not necessarily naïve. By fictionalising his treatise, Rousseau is appealing to N's universality, an appeal that goes a long way to explaining its wide-reaching eventual influence. Although, as we shall see in the following chapter, the indeterminate nature of the educational system that Rousseau is charting in *Emile* is as influential as the ambiguity that comes with the universality hinted at in *Julie* in understanding *Emile's* reception towards the end of the eighteenth century. It is, after all, Rousseau's philosophy of learning that is the point of his text rather than any attempt to chart an actually practicable pedagogical system.

Difficult as it may be to nail down an implementable set of lessons in *Emile*, this should not come as much of a surprise given the nature of Rousseau's project. Put simply, the content of Emile's education is not necessarily important; what matters more to Rousseau is the educational process itself. The reason for this is that the one thing Rousseau is attempting to achieve above all else is to teach children to think for

³¹ Huntington Williams, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography*, Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 110.

³² Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. I, pp. 38–39.

themselves. The paradox inherent in this assertion is self-evident but because children are not born with fully-fledged rational capacity and exist within necessarily hierarchical relationships with parents and, in Rousseau's formulation, tutors, the child must be taught how to be independent.³³ Vivasvan Soni argues that this autonomy is based on an educational strategy that rejects contemporary educational practice in order to cultivate self-sufficiency, or as he terms it 'freedom'. 'Conventional education' he argues, 'is hierarchical and authoritarian, and whatever the content it imparts to the child, it cannot but reproduce authoritarian habits of thinking. The child does not develop its own capacity for judgment, but relies on the commands and judgements of others.'³⁴ More than merely mirroring Rousseau's arguments against exposure to literature prior to the advent of rational autonomy and a well-regulated *amour propre*, this suggests that capacity for judgement is the most integral outcome of Rousseauvean education primarily because it is the only way to guarantee true rational autonomy. It is here that the distinction between didacticism and education becomes most obvious in Rousseau's text, with the tutor in *Emile* being less concerned with the teaching of facts and rules than with the guiding of students, allowing them to discover things for themselves.

The Rousseauvean governor is not then a teacher in the traditional sense but rather an educator, a word whose very root means to lead, to bring out or to raise up. Rousseau is not interested in telling the student what to do, but rather nurturing them, or 'cultivating' their faculties, both rational and otherwise. *Emile* as a text mirrors this approach in many ways, rejecting a more declarative didactic approach in order to engage the reader in a far more nuanced, indirect fashion. In much this way Jean-Jacques's tutoring of Emile relies on something close to Ascham's 'allure' by engaging his sentiment in order to create environments in which Emile is able to exercise his rational faculties. 'I should rather also denominate a master in [education],' Rousseau writes in *Emile*, 'a governor, than a

³³ For discussion on paradoxes of autonomy in Rousseau, see Vivasvan Soni, 'Committing Freedom: The Cultivation of Judgment in Rousseau's "Emile" and Austen's "Pride and Prejudice"', *The Eighteenth Century*, 51.3 (2010), 363–87 (pp. 364–65); Elizabeth Rose Wingrove, *Rousseau's Republican Romance* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 19, 56, 99–100; Linda Zerilli, *Signifying Woman: Culture and Chaos in Rousseau, Burke, and Mill* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 50; Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 130.

³⁴ Soni, p. 364.

preceptor; because it is less his province to instruct than conduct: it is not his business to lay down precepts, but to teach his pupil to discover them.’³⁵ While it may be in *Emile* that we find the fullest expression of Rousseau’s educational ideas, the earlier *Julie* provides a fitting and apt metaphor through which to understand the Rousseauvean educator, one very much in keeping with the preceptor/governor distinction he outlines in *Emile*. In a passage in which Julie, now Madame de Wolmar, describes her role in educating her children in a letter to Lord Edward, Julie gives herself the appellation *la servante du jardinier*, writing:

A naughty word in their mouths is a plant or seed foreign to the soil, sown by the vagrant wind: should I cut it off by reprimand, it would not fail ere long to shoot forth again. Instead of that, therefore, I look carefully to find its root, and pluck it up. I am only (said she, smiling) the servant of the gardener; I only weed the garden by taking away the vicious plants: it is for him to cultivate the good ones.³⁶

The educator in these terms becomes, on the face of it, merely an ancillary presence, with the main educative role lying in the hands of the students themselves.

This does, however, mask an overtly authoritarian undercurrent in Rousseau. While he does, like Locke, emphasise the need for encouraging rational judgement over rote learning, this can only be achieved through an active involvement on the part of the tutor, so much so in *Emile* that even the most chance of encounters and incidents are arranged and orchestrated by the seemingly omnipresent educator. Education becomes, then, in *Emile* as Michael Bell succinctly puts it, ‘a supplement to natural experience,’ necessitating that Rousseau’s tutor ‘must seek as far as possible to create the effect of unmediated experience’ even as Emile is secretly controlled and manipulated by his tutor.³⁷ ‘Let him always be his own master, *in appearance*,’ Jean-Jacques advises the prospective young teacher, ‘and do you take care to be so *in reality*. There is no subjection

³⁵ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. I, p. 38.

³⁶ Letter CXXXIX. ‘To Lord B---’ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Eloisa*, pp. 328–29, Letter III of part 5, in the original French.

³⁷ Bell is playing on J. M. Cohen’s translation of Rousseau’s *Confessions* in which when translating his discussion of his habit of masturbation as being a dangerous ‘supplement,’ Cohen renders this as a ‘means of cheating Nature.’ Bell, *Open Secrets*, pp. 18–19; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. by J. M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1953), p. 108.

so compleat as that which preserves the appearance of liberty.’³⁸ It is this very paradox at which Godwin so famously aimed his argument in *The Enquirer*: that education is by its nature necessarily despotic.³⁹ Very much in keeping with this objection, Daniel Cullen builds on the manipulative nature of the tutor’s relationship with Emile, arguing that this dynamic precludes the possibility of any real autonomy, maintaining that for Emile ‘his act of volition is indistinguishable from one of submission.’⁴⁰ Cullen’s approach is by no means unique and is mirrored by Lester Crocker as well as the more forceful arguments of David Gauthier who argues that ‘captivity of the will is at the core of Rousseau’s account of education,’ and it is this that produces a ‘feigned’ freedom, one that, in keeping with Godwin’s early criticism of Rousseau, means that freedom in Rousseau can never, in Godwin’s terms at least, be genuine.⁴¹ Even the Edgeworths balked at Rousseau’s system of ‘contrivance and deceit’ in their seminal work, *Practical Education* (1798).⁴² But it is just this reliance on the constructed character of Rousseau’s supposed ‘natural’ learning environment that I hope to show enables his philosophy to be so easily incorporated into theories of literary reception.

Writing in book II of *Emile*, Rousseau outlines the nature of the teacher-pupil relationship in no uncertain terms, ‘[the student] ought not to be compelled to do any thing contrary to his inclinations; but then he ought not to be inclined to do any thing contrary to yours: he ought not to take a step which you had not foreseen; nor open his lips to speak, without your knowing what he is about to say.’⁴³ What the subject of Rousseau’s educational system believes to be lived experiences become then, in most cases, false. Rousseau would contend, however, that because of the control inherent in Emile’s learning

³⁸ My emphasis, Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 204.

³⁹ Godwin, ‘The Enquirer’, pp. 107, 131 and 126.

⁴⁰ Daniel Cullen, *Freedom in Rousseau’s Political Philosophy* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), p. 131.

⁴¹ David Gauthier, *Rousseau: The Sentiment of Existence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 36 and 41; see also Lester Crocker, ‘Rousseau’s Emile: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness’, in *Rousseau and the Eighteenth Century: Essays in Memory of R.A. Leigh*, ed. by Marian Hobson, John Leigh, and Robert Wokler (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1992), pp. 101–15.

⁴² Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 2 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1798), vol. 1, p. 242.

⁴³ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 204.

environment, he is able to provide a theoretically superior education to that possible through actual lived experience. But then, Rousseau never pretends that his tutor will be anything but controlling and manipulative, and the Edgeworths' reservations in particular ring somewhat hollow given that they propose a learning environment that is, in many ways, no less controlled than that Rousseau suggests.⁴⁴ In fact, with the exception of Godwin, the stress on the need for surveillance and control seems to have remained a constant in much of the progressive pedagogical literature produced towards the end of the eighteenth century. Catherine Macaulay would write in *Letters on Education* in 1790: 'Never suffer your offspring to be from under the eye of the tutor, or the governess,' a sentiment which could almost have been lifted word for word from Lord Henry Home Kames's *Loose Hints Upon Education* (1781) in which he urges 'keep children as much as possible under the eye of their parents.'⁴⁵ On a larger scale even, Louis le Peletier's educational plan presented to the French National Convention in 1793 by Maximilien Robespierre is striking in its demand that public education exercise the kind of perpetual vigilance Rousseau insisted from his tutor in *Emile*. Drawing on the Rousseauvean principle that virtue could not be imposed by force or taught through rational instruction, Robespierre recognised that the level of state control and surveillance le Peletier's system demanded was neither practical nor indeed possible.⁴⁶ Opting instead for what Gregory Dart thinks of as an 'aesthetic education', Robespierre's attempt to foster civic unity through the manipulation of aesthetic effect mirrors Rousseauvean educational ideals through an approach Jürgen Habermas outlines, making the point that 'since [the Rousseauvean legislator] could rely neither on force nor on public discussion... he had to take refuge in the authority of an indirect influence "which can compel without violence and persuade without convincing."⁴⁷ Given this reliance on indirect influence, the

⁴⁴ See especially their discussion of the nursery. Maria Edgeworth and Edgeworth, vol. 1, p. 14; Richardson discusses the nature of this relationship in more detail in Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, pp. 52–63.

⁴⁵ Catharine Macaulay, *Letters on Education, With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*, ed. by Gina Luria (New York: Garland, 1974), p. 72; Lord Henry Home Kames, *Loose Hints Upon Education: Chiefly Concerning the Culture of the Heart*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: J. Bell, G. Robinson and J. Murray, 1782), p. 157.

⁴⁶ For Robespierre's account of Le Peletier's proposal see Maximilien Robespierre, *Ecrits*, ed. by Claude Mazauric (Paris: Messidor, 1989), pp. 252–67.

⁴⁷ Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 108–10; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural*

temptation is to read the Rousseauvean pedagogic relationship as an early example of what Foucault calls 'disciplinary power' in *Discipline and Punish* (1975).⁴⁸ Rousseau's emphasis on the need for surveillance and control in the earlier stages of education would seem to fit comfortably into Foucault's discussion of the 'invention' of the disciplines and the general shift away from the exercise of 'sovereign power' that we see during the Enlightenment.⁴⁹ Because successful education relies, for Rousseau, on near-constant observation and benevolent coercion, one can easily see, in his conception of the pedagogic relationship, why he is unable to rely on the more direct authority we see in more traditionally didactic forms of education. However, by emphasising, much as Godwin does, the fostering of agency in the student, Rousseau's system of surveillance and control is intended not to create a more tractable pupil but rather to help promote self-sufficiency as well as provide a more individualised learning experience. And so, while Rousseauvean education does rely on control through recourse to the generalised surveillance we see proposed in Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, it is not a system that is designed to become self-perpetuating in the same fashion. That is to say, Rousseau is attempting to foster self-reliance in his student, and this is not the same as the self-discipline we see postulated by Foucault. Rousseau's education is, if anything, designed to achieve the very opposite. The Rousseauvean student is intended to be reliant only on himself and Rousseau is concerned to foster a critical attitude towards social convention in his student that would render systems of control like those proposed by Foucault ineffectual. This distinction does, however, open up the question of *amour-propre* which would again seem to represent a very similar form of referential self-government to that supposed in *Discipline and Punish*. But I would argue that the Rousseauvean pupil rejects a Foucauldian model in that his education is explicitly intended to protect him from this comparison of self with society. This preoccupation in *Emile* is why we see Rousseau delaying the process of social integration until he believes his student to be rationally self-sufficient and thereby proof against the sort of disciplinary power Foucault outlines in *Discipline and Punish*. But this is not to say that

Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 98–99.

⁴⁸ The concept of disciplinary power is most fully articulated by Foucault in his discussion of panopticism in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 195–228.

⁴⁹ Foucault, p. 225.

Rousseau is not advocating the exercising of power over his hypothetical student. We see in Foucault a similar conception of surveillance to that objected to by Godwin in *The Enquirer* in which he highlights the danger inherent in the Rousseauvean model should the student become aware of the extent of the control exercised over him by the tutor. Foucault's point is, of course, that an awareness of the sort of power dynamic we see in the Rousseauvean educational environment creates a system of control in which the student 'assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.'⁵⁰ But in Rousseau's conception, this power dynamic is necessarily hidden from the student and thus designed to serve a very different imperative.

Because the control exercised over the pupil is obscured, Rousseau follows Ascham in relying on allure over compulsion in the learning environment. Children are, Rousseau writes, much like lions: they need to be 'tamed by kindness [...] The essential thing is to get them to love you. After that, you may make them walk on red-hot irons.'⁵¹ For this reason, Jean-Jacques advises the prospective teacher 'Let [the student] find in your conversation that complacency which is flattering to his young heart; spare no pains to induce him to make you his confident, as by that means only you can ever be his master.'⁵² Given the progressive tenor of Rousseau's writing, excessive authoritarian declamations like this seem shockingly out of place. On the one hand, Julie's gardening metaphor fits comfortably into the idea of a tutor as a nurturing educator, helping the student grow, and on the other, Rousseau's tutor is transformed into something of an unsettlingly manipulative figure. But, much as Ascham is unable to challenge the established relationship between the teacher and the pupil, one gets the sense that this is not at all

⁵⁰ Foucault, pp. 202–3.

⁵¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Minor Educational Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau*, trans. by William Boyd, Classics in Education (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1962), xi, p. 91.

⁵² This quotation is taken from book V of *Emile* and, as has been discussed in my introduction, this passage does not appear in the 1762 edition of Kenrick's translation of *Emile*. It is, however, included in all subsequent editions following the republication of Kenrick's translation in 1763 as a four volume set, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia: Or, A New System of Education*, trans. by William Kenrick, 4 vols (London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1763), iv, vol. III, p.186.

what Rousseau has set out to do here. Godwin's famous exception to Rousseau is, after all, that he feels that the Rousseauvean system does not allow students to adequately exercise their own rational judgement, something not far from Rousseau's own intended aim. In spite of Godwin's rather sinister representation of Rousseauvean education as nothing more than puppetry, the fact that independence is illusory and thus, in Godwin's mind, disingenuous is not in *Emile* as important to Rousseau as the achievement of his desired end result. And while Rousseau's radical rejection of more traditional educational practices in favour of active, experiential learning stands in stark contrast to his coercive, even duplicitous, description of the teacher-pupil relationship, this only becomes a problem should the staging of the lessons become visible to the learner, thereby reverting to the authoritarian pedagogy that Rousseau is trying to avoid. The fact that the freedom of experience is an illusion in Rousseauvean education is not, I would argue, in *Emile* a problem because the illusion of this freedom is, for Rousseau, almost as good as the real thing should the mechanics of the relationship remain hidden to the student. What literature offers is a unique ability to circumvent this paradox through its potential to engage readers both emotionally and critically. Transparently unreal, literature's very textuality comes inevitably to provide the ideal conduit for the Rousseauvean model of education in which the educator is able to control the terms of the narrative but at the same time ensure that the student retains interpretive autonomy.

Emile does, however, present something of a conundrum because while it may formally rely on literary conventions, Rousseau's own views with regard to literature, as they are reflected in *Emile*, suggest a deep distrust of the fictional form. It is worth dwelling, therefore, if only briefly, on Rousseau's presentation of Emile's own relationship to literature in the text before returning to consider how this affects our understanding of how he conceives of the relationship between readers themselves and *Emile*. Given Rousseau's accusations in both the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* and the *Letter to d'Alembert* that literature functions as a major corrupting influence in ideal societies, the use of literature in Emile's education might seem striking, and would suggest that while he may be relying on literary conventions in *Emile*, he would not have conceived of the

text as anything like the novel that so many modern critics seem to see it as.⁵³ One of the primary goals of Emile's initial education within the text certainly seems to be protecting the child from the potentially morally damaging infringement on autonomous rational judgement that Rousseau worries might be precipitated through early exposure to literature. Challenging established tradition, Rousseau advocates the removal of literature in its entirety in the very early stages of education, arguing that 'Reading is a vexation to children, and yet is the only occupation they are usefully employed in. Emilius will hardly know what a book is at twelve years of age.'⁵⁴ This complete elimination of literature from Emile's early education stands at odds, however, with the importance placed on reading in his own education by Rousseau in the *Confessions*. Reading is for Rousseau a formative act, one that has a direct and lasting impact on his own developing consciousness. He relates: 'I do not know how I learned to read; I only remember my earliest reading, and the effect it had upon me; from that time I date my uninterrupted consciousness.'⁵⁵ For Rousseau then, reading has an active role in the process of subject formation. He privileges here an understanding of reading which moves towards a dynamic relationship between the act of reading itself and the reader's developing self-knowledge. As Janie Vanpée charts it, reading is for Rousseau 'first and foremost an activity that informs and transforms the acquisition of knowledge. It is a practice that affects its practitioner.'⁵⁶ Given the extent of the control that Jean-Jacques would have us believe is essential to Emile's education, one can easily begin to see why Rousseau sees literature as a potentially problematic influence if not approached with due caution. This is why Rousseau advocates a staged literary education. Intricately tied to the safe development of *amour propre*, literature is only safe once the reader is able to interact

⁵³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Sciences and Arts', in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. & trans. by Victor Gourevitch, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1–28 hereafter referred to as 'The First Discourse'; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'J. J. Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva, to M. d'Alembert', in *Letter to D'Alembert and Writings for the Theater*, ed. by Allan Bloom, Christopher Kelly, and Charles E. Butterworth, trans. by Allan Bloom, Trans. from the French ed. edition (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2004), pp. 251–352.

⁵⁴ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 195.

⁵⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, ed. by P. N. Furbank, Everyman's Library ; (New York: Knopf, 1992), bk. I. p. 6.

⁵⁶ Janie Vanpée, 'Reading Lessons in Rousseau's "Emile Ou de l'éducation"', *Modern Language Studies*, 20.3 (1990), 40–49 (p. 41).

with it critically, a process that is contingent, for Rousseau, on the development of autonomous rationality.

Rousseau does, however, recognise literature's educative potential and, as we shall see, is not necessarily above marshalling it to his own ends. What we see in *Emile* is a movement away from the idea of a more direct relationship between reading and knowledge acquisition exemplified by projects such as the *Encyclopedie* in which Diderot and d'Alembert envision their *Encyclopedie* as an interpretively neutral tool for more direct attainment of knowledge. *Emile* as a text possesses an equally potent educational potential but one that is by no means governed by this same neutral understanding of knowledge acquisition. As Vanpée argues 'Far from giving direct access to knowledge, reading can just as easily block its dissemination. Far from guaranteeing instant knowledge and wisdom, reading can corrupt, mislead, or turn the reader into a foolish pedant.'⁵⁷ Rousseau's approach in *Emile* thus remains open to the possibility of the corrupting influence of the literature he so censures in the *First Discourse* and *Letter to d'Alembert*. This is, in essence, the reason why Rousseau delays Emile's reading, his historical education in particular, until he is considered to be morally ready for it. His conception of reading becomes, in these terms, representative of the staged theory of education he is theorising throughout the text. Because the reading of fiction requires imaginative empathy, it cannot as a form be constructively interacted with by the young Emile who, through his isolation from society does not possess an adequately guarded sense of self to interact with it safely. The problem lies inevitably in the very nature of Rousseau's educational project as an attempt to describe an educational system that would allow for the reconciliation of the natural/social opposition he had originally outlined in the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (1755).⁵⁸ Concerned primarily with an attempt to show how socially-imposed corruption could be diminished or even prevented in its entirety, Rousseau's principal concern is that people, through social convention, destroy and debase themselves, and it is only through a reformed and meticulously constructed system of education that humankind can begin

⁵⁷ Vanpée, p. 41.

⁵⁸ Hereafter referred to as the 'Second Discourse', Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Second Discourse'.

to diminish this socially-imposed corruption.⁵⁹ Up until the end of book III, Rousseau is primarily concerned with the rearing of an idealised ‘natural man’ who exists as much as is possible up to this point as an extra-social being, self-driven and rational, a supposedly self-sufficient autodidact. However, as Rousseau is at pains to remind us, ‘there is a wide difference between educating a man for society, according to the principles of nature, and the rearing of a savage, to be sent afterwards to inhabit the woods.’⁶⁰ Strange though it may seem, given its primacy as the explicit intended outcome of Rousseau’s text, the discussion of Emile’s moral education and social integration is delayed, along with his exposure to uncensored literature, until part way through book IV where at the age of 15 Emile’s rational faculties have been judged to be sufficiently well-developed so as to protect him against the supposed corrupting influences of both society and literature.

Reading is not, however, entirely removed from Emile’s preadolescent education. In order to account for this Rousseau theorises two different modes of reading. Prior to the age of 15, Rousseau is only comfortable with a heavily censored reading plan primarily because he believes Emile to have an essentially referential understanding of the word. He argues, as I highlighted in the introduction, that ‘the first kind of ratiocination in man is a kind of sensitive reasoning.’⁶¹ This reasoning, sensitive because it is empirical, is divorced from more abstract rationality. Because, ‘human reason’, as Rousseau imagines it, is developed through the act of comparison and the interrogation of the impressions received through this first type of sensitive rationalization, rational development is separated into two different phases. The first, less critical, understanding of the world is more mimetic, in that the sensory reception of experience is more or less directly representative, while the second rational process involves the critical interrogation of these receptions, or the ‘sixth sense’ we saw in the introduction.⁶² This dual conception

⁵⁹ For an extensive discussion of the tension between the individual and society in Rousseau see Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, Charles R. Walgreen Foundation Lectures (Chicago,: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 255; Allan Bloom, ‘Introduction’, in *Emile or On Education*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. & trans. by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 28; Arthur M. Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau’s Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 3.

⁶⁰ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, p. 249.

⁶¹ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p 217–8.

⁶² Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 296.

of the rational process is reflected in Rousseau's framing of reading in *Emile*. Prior to Emile's socialisation, his ability to read critically is hampered by his more direct understanding of his environment. He reads referentially or as I understand it, mimetically. This mimetic mode of literary reception gives way, once Emile is more rationally adept and is able to read texts in the more actively critical fashion I have categorised in this thesis as literary praxis. I draw attention to my earlier discussion of Rousseauvean epistemology because I think Rousseau's conception of early sensory reception offers a constructive analogue for the manner in which he conceives of Emile's more mimetic early reception of literary texts. We see this primarily in Rousseau's defence of *Robinson Crusoe* which, once heavily censored by the tutor, is able to be read uncritically with little danger:

Since we must have books, there is one already which, in my opinion, affords a complete treatise on natural education. This book shall be the first Emilius shall read: In this, indeed, will, for a long time, consist his whole library, and it will always hold a distinguished place among others. It will afford us the text, to which all our conversations on the objects of natural science, will serve only as a comment. It will serve as our guide during our progress to a state of reason; and will even afterwards give us constant pleasure unless our taste be totally vitiated. You ask impatiently, what is the title of this wonderful book? Is it Aristotle, Pliny, or Buffon? No. It is *Robinson Crusoe*.⁶³

Given Rousseau's emphasis on self-sufficiency in Emile's early education, the choice of *Robinson Crusoe* does not seem initially that strange. It would certainly make sense to use an example of a man able to survive marooned on an island for over twenty-eight years as a means of teaching Emile self-reliance. Unaware of the fictional nature of the text and able only to read mimetically at this point in his intellectual development, Emile is invited by Rousseau to realise 'that desert island, which [Rousseau had] at first made use of only by way of comparison.'⁶⁴ Rousseau is inviting Emile, in other words, not to engage with *Robinson Crusoe* actively, but to receive and imitate the text passively, in the very fashion he cautions against in the *First Discourse* and *Letter to d'Alembert*. Believing his undeveloped *amour propre* to be sufficient proof against the potentially corrupting influence of the novelistic form, Rousseau encourages Emile to identify with Crusoe in the hope that he reincarnates the text in real life. It is worth bearing in mind here that Emile's

⁶³ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. III, pp. 59–60.

⁶⁴ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. III, p. 60.

exposure to *Robinson Crusoe* occurs in book III at a time prior to the birth of his sexuality and maturation of his fully developed *amour propre*. Emile, at this point, still exists, in other words, as an idealised natural man devoid of society. When Rousseau writes, 'I would have him indeed personate the hero of the tale [...] He should affect even his dress, wear a coat of skins, a great hat, a large hanger, in short, he should be entirely equipt in his grotesque manner, even with his umbrello, though he would have no occasion for it,' he is committing the exact mistake we will see him cautioning against in his reading of La Fontaine's fables in book II.⁶⁵ Cognisant of the moral dangers presented by fiction, Rousseau is careful to ensure that Emile is exposed to *Robinson Crusoe* in a relatively pre-social and, for Rousseau therefore, pre-moral state. With no moral implications, Emile's reading of *Robinson Crusoe* is designed to coincide with his referential understanding of the world.

While his reading of *Robinson Crusoe* is necessarily mimetic, once Emile has begun the process of socialisation, Rousseau is at pains to highlight that his later reading of Plutarch must inevitably be more critical in nature. Rousseau's conception of Emile's historical education, coming only after the age of 15, stands here in sharp contrast to his exposure to *Robinson Crusoe* precisely because it has an intended moral function. Because Rousseau is concerned that once Emile begins to compare himself with other people and encounter ideas that are not his own, this might impinge on his rational autonomy it becomes important that he develop a mode of reading that is able to safeguard his rational self-sufficiency. If Emile's historical education is, as Rousseau puts it, a study that will 'display the human heart,' it becomes important for Rousseau that Emile is morally prepared for this phase of his education.⁶⁶ Functioning for Rousseau as the means by which Emile can come to understand corrupted societal morals while maintaining his own purity, Emile's historical education is a means by which metaphorically 'to bring him acquainted with the human heart, without endangering his own.'⁶⁷ Rousseau does, however, caution:

⁶⁵ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. III, p. 61.

⁶⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia: Or, A New System of Education*, trans. by William Kenrick, 4 vols (London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1763), II, bk. IV, p. 203.

⁶⁷ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, p. 204.

by making him so early an observer [...] He will grow familiar with the sight of vice; and, as by custom we lose our sensibility for the wretched, he will soon contemplate the actions of the wicked without horror. He will soon consider the general depravity as an example for his imitation, rather than as a lesson of instruction, and will see no reason why he should endeavour to be better than the rest of mankind.’⁶⁸

If Emile is not able to sufficiently guard against excessive sympathy, reading can in these terms just as easily impede as further Emile’s moral education, and he is required therefore to maintain an objective distance between himself and the object of his study for him to remain in any sense “unspoilt”. Drawing on his own experience, Rousseau charts the danger of this form of mimetic identification in a socialised student, which comes for him at the loss of self-sufficiency and the eventual corruption of the reader. He charts this loss of self in *Confessions*, writing how once he had learnt to read at the age of six, ‘the interest became so lively’ that he and his father would ‘read in turns without stopping, and spend whole nights in this occupation... unable to leave off until the volume was finished.’⁶⁹ This initial enthusiasm for reading soon gives way a more dangerous form of mimesis represented for the young Rousseau through the heroes of Ancient Greece and Rome. In Plutarch, the young Rousseau finds role models he believes to be fitting of emulation:

Unceasingly occupied with thoughts of Rome and Athens, living as it were amongst their great men... I believed myself a Greek or Roman; I lost my identity in that of the individual whose life I was reading; the recitals of the qualities of endurance and intrepidity which arrested my attention made my eyes glisten and strengthened my voice.⁷⁰

It is just this potential for the conflation of the real and the imaginary that worries Rousseau more than anything else, a process that represents for him the potential wresting of rational agency from the reader. The danger presented by literature in *Emile* lies, then, in its ability to engender in readers an uncritical, mimetic response. It is this potential loss of self, garnered through emotive identification, in literature that highlights for Rousseau its potential for the corruption of rational autonomy and through this morals. He thus cautions in *Emile* that ‘with regard to my Emilius, if in his comparisons it

⁶⁸ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, p. 203.

⁶⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, bk. I. p. 7.

⁷⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, bk. I. p. 8.

should ever happen that he had rather be another than himself, were it even Socrates or Cato, all is lost. He who begins to be estranged from himself, will soon forget himself entirely.’⁷¹ As his moral integrity lies in his self-dependence, the older Emile is required to read actively, maintaining critical distance from that text in order to gain knowledge of his subject while not resigning his ontological agency to it. In *Emile* Rousseau is thus at pains to argue ‘That which renders man essentially good, is to have few wants, and seldom to compare himself with others; that which renders him effectively wicked, is to have many wants, and to be frequently governed by opinion. Upon this principle is it easy to perceive that all the passions of men or children, may be directed, as to produce good or evil.’⁷² Given the expressed aim in *Emile* of shaping a social being who is not dependent on others, this initial proscription of literature in early education certainly seems to stem from just this potential for the erosion of rational self-sufficiency that uncritical reading might possess. Despite Rousseau’s warnings against them and his repeated assertion that he mistrusts books, they are, however, destined, as *Emile* progresses, to play a key role in Emile’s development from an idealised natural man into a citizen, a transition that will be cemented through Emile’s eventual historical education. Built around literature’s potential for creating intellectual experiences that exist outside of Emile’s early isolated education, his historical education plays an important role in helping to socialise him. In an attempt to foster rational comparison and reflection, Rousseau hopes that by encouraging a form of reading categorised by active critical praxis he can help reinforce the rational self-sufficiency he believes is necessary for healthy social integration. Reading proves a tool by which he can help expedite this process, but only if it is engaged in actively and critically by his student.

Rousseau’s depiction of Emile’s literary education is of primary interest because it tells us a great deal about how he understands how readers might engage with *Emile* as an educative text itself. I would contend that we can fruitfully consider Rousseau’s depiction of literary reception within the text as a form of ‘metacommentary’, as we have seen April

⁷¹ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, p. 220.

⁷² Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, p.141.

London categorise it, designed 'to direct interpretation and foster appropriate practices.'⁷³ It is worth, therefore, returning, if only briefly to the second preface to *Julie*, it provides, as I have argued, one of the best hints at how Rousseau imagines that actual readers might read *Emile*. In it, the reader is cast as a character who, only after having already read the novel, enters into a dialogue with Rousseau. Robert Ellrich has argued that this temporal framing of the discussion suggests that 'the reader is meant, then, to make his first encounter with the work unaccompanied by the author,' an assertion that would seem, on the face of it, in keeping with the type of defence of reading that Rousseau offers us in the preface to *Emile*.⁷⁴ Rousseau's inclusion of this explanatory preface to *Julie* as well as the copious footnotes included in his guise as editor of the letters, suggests, however, that Ellrich has perhaps underestimated him. As Ellrich will go on to highlight, Rousseau is constantly aware of 'the need to educate the reader,' so while the text may not have a conventional narrative voice, this does not mean that the reader is interacting with the letters (fictional or not) without experiencing them through a narrative veil.⁷⁵ Rousseau would after all go to great pains in *Emile* to highlight the need to maintain the illusion of independence in any successful educative relationship. Collapsing, in some sense, the distinction here between the illusionary and the real, the fact that freedom exists only 'in appearance,' as we have seen, is not necessarily a problem for Rousseau because the illusion of this freedom is for him, if it is maintained, as good as the real thing. This move away from the more expository style of writing we see in his earlier philosophical works is indicative both of a change in form, but so too a change in understanding, on the part of Rousseau, of the potential for expression this form possesses. In a development that sees a distinct departure from the fantasy of an unmediated relationship with an ideal reader that we see in Rousseau's earlier writings, this increasing reliance on narrative conventions is symptomatic of Rousseau's increasingly fractious encounter that we will see with the more limited actual reading public. Following the publication of *Julie*, *Emile* signals an end to his belief in the possibility of a perfect reader with whom he could enjoy 'complete solidarity.'⁷⁶ Famously

⁷³ London, p. 68.

⁷⁴ Robert Ellrich, *Rousseau and His Reader The Rhetorical Situation of the Major Works* (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 1969), p. 39.

⁷⁵ Ellrich, p. 39.

⁷⁶ Ellrich, p. 42. See also pp. 44-61 for Ellrich's discussion on how Rousseau's relationship with his readership changes following the publication of *Emile*.

paranoid and, particularly in the wake of the scandal surrounding *Emile's* publication, suspicious of the reading public's ability to fully comprehend his ideas, Rousseau's responses to unfavourable readings of his texts display the beginnings of a shift in attitude towards his readership. In the brief *Réponse à une lettre anonyme* (October 15, 1758), Rousseau's response to a hostile reading of his *Letter to d'Alembert* displays this change in outlook. 'If you read me, it is not my fault,' he writes, continuing, 'as it is not good that we do not get along better, we'd better not discuss it.'⁷⁷ Moving away from the simple rejection of a potentially hostile readership we see in this example, in *Emile* Rousseau displays a consciousness of potential readers with possibly limited understanding who, unable to enjoy a complete solidarity or perfect understanding of his text, require therefore a text that is formally able to engender in the reader a more active engagement with it.

In a wonderful example of this concession to a limited implied reader, Rousseau's critique of La Fontaine's fable, *The Crow and the Fox*, performs, for the reader's benefit, the sort of critical reading Rousseau expects his reader to be able to engage in, functioning in the text as a kind of allegory for reading. The fable takes the shape of a moral tale in which a fox steals some cheese from a crow by enticing it, through flattery, into singing and subsequently dropping the piece of cheese it had been holding. At least initially, one would think that the young Emile would have much to learn from the crow's mistakes. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that Rousseau has set the fable up as something of a straw man, dissecting the text mercilessly in order to highlight just how unsuitable it is for children who, at such a young age are, to Rousseau's mind, unable to fully comprehend figurative abstractions because of their essentially mimetic understanding of the world around them. What this section of the text does is provide the reader with a guide for how to approach the very text they are reading through enacting a piece of literary criticism within the text itself. So when the fox tries to entice the crow to sing for him by telling it 'you are a phoenix among the lords of these woods,' Rousseau is quick to draw attention to both the fox's eloquence as well as its use of figurative language, posing the question,

⁷⁷ My translation, for the original French see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Correspondance Générale de J.-J. Rousseau*, ed. by Théophile Dufour and Pierre Paul Plan (Paris: A. Colin, 1925), pp. 85–89.

‘how is a child to understand this finesse?’⁷⁸ This question could, as we shall see, just as easily be aimed at the reader as the young child who is hypothetically encountering the tale within the text itself. Rousseau is quick to highlight the seeming absurdity of the tale, positing hypothetical responses from Emile throughout. So when in the tale the fox, who has praised the crow’s appearance, says ‘*Repondoit à votre plumage*, be answerable to your feathers,’ thinking to flatter the bird into singing, Rousseau is quick to interrupt his quotation of the tale.⁷⁹ ‘*Repondoit!*’ he interjects, making the absurdity of the phrase apparent by placing it in the mouth of a child who is reading the text literally, ‘What can that word mean?’ he asks ‘Endeavour to teach a child to compare two qualities so different as the plumage and the singing of a bird; and see how well he will understand you.’⁸⁰ More than just a cute anecdote, what Rousseau is trying to do here is begin the process of training the reader to think critically about what they are reading, and while he is at pains to explain every line at this point, as *Emile* progresses, the authorial interruptions become less and less frequent as the assumption that readers are able to make these jumps themselves becomes more justified. But much as the fable of the fox and crow functions as a demonstration of critical reading, Rousseau’s choice of this fable in particular is no mistake, with the tale functioning in turn as a warning against the dangers of reading uncritically. Just as the crow is seduced by the fox’s stories, the child is in turn seduced by Fontaine’s storytelling, identifying, in Rousseau’s reading, not with the crow but the fox:

Trace the progress of children in learning fables, and you will find that, when they are in a capacity to make any application of them, they almost always do it in a manner contrary to the intention of the fabulist; and that, instead of remarking the error or fault you are desirous of guarding them against, they fall in love with the vice of the party exposed. In reading the fable above-cited, for instance, children laugh at and despise the silly raven; but they are fond of the fox.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 189.

⁷⁹ I have included the French half of the Fontaine quotation for clarity as Kenrick’s translation obscures the meaning of Rousseau’s corresponding discussion, Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 189.

⁸⁰ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 189.

⁸¹ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 192.

Once again, however, the outcome of Rousseau's rationale here is less important than how his critical demonstration attempts to mediate the reader's interaction with the text, seeking to drive the development of their own hermeneutic logic.

Relying on the staging of educational experiences rather than direct dictation and instruction, *Emile* is littered with interactive examples construed by Rousseau as being a more effective mode of education for both the reader and his imagined pupil through encouraging interpretive agency in the learning process. Inviting a double reading in which lessons are both expounded within the text as well as enacted through the reading of it, we can begin to see how *Emile* functions in relation to McKeon's earlier conception of internalised pedagogy in eighteenth-century literature. More than that, however, this doubled reading lays the groundwork for the eventual reception of Rousseauian educational philosophy in the British educative literature we see produced towards the end of the 1790s. 'Never command him to do anything in the world,' Rousseau cautions early in book II and it is this dictum that goes on to inform much of his tutor's interaction with Emile throughout the text, one that will come to form as important a role in developing the growing relationship between the reader and the text itself.⁸² 'I cannot repeat it too often,' Rousseau's tutor advises in book IV 'let your lessons to youth consist in action rather than in words; they must learn nothing from books which may be taught by experience.'⁸³ Gary Handwerk argues that it is the profusion of these 'elaborately staged pedagogical events' that highlights in *Emile* that 'in education nature must be supplemented by art,' a relationship that we are confronted with from the very first lines in the text.⁸⁴ Nowhere is this made more apparent than in his drawing of Emile's elaborately staged lessons in book III. In the encounter between Emile and a magician we see the most fully developed example of this. Constructed ostensibly as a lesson in magnetism, Emile's interaction with the magician and his magnetic duck has an equally important moral dimension, designed above all else to teach Emile about himself while

⁸² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, IV, vol. I, bk II, p. 130.

⁸³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, IV, vol. II, bk. IV, p. 240.

⁸⁴ Gary Handwerk, 'Mapping Misogyny: Godwin's "Fleetwood" and the Staging of Rousseauian Education', *Studies in Romanticism*, 41.3 (2002), 375–98 (p. 383).

at the same time providing an interpretive lesson for the reader of the text itself. Having seen a magician making a wax duck follow a piece of bread around a pan of water, Emile's tutor uses the incident to teach him about magnets. Upon returning home, they ponder how the trick might have been accomplished and, eventually having shaped their own duck around a magnetic needle, are able to move it around as freely with the help of their magnet as the magician was able to with his piece of bread. Emile, 'who [has] with difficulty so long contained himself,' rushes back to the fair and, armed with his own piece of bread (in which he has hidden a piece of iron), is able to replicate the trick much to the magician's chagrin.⁸⁵ The magician, 'though a little confounded, embraces him, felicitates him on his success, and begs he will honour him with his presence the next day.'⁸⁶ The following day, however, when Emile and his tutor return to the fair, he is unable to control the duck as he had the day before and, jeered by the crowd and humiliated by the magician, Emile and his tutor, humbled and confused, return home in silence. The following day they receive a visit from the magician who rebukes Emile for mindlessly discrediting him and threatening his livelihood. Explaining that he had the previous day merely concealed a child under his table who was able to manipulate the duck with a stronger magnet, he turns to leave, admonishing the tutor in turn:

I can easily excuse the child, says he aloud, as he offended only through ignorance: But you, sir, who ought to have known his error, why did you permit him... Your experience should be the authority for his conduct. In reproaching himself, as he grows up, for the faults of his youth, he will doubtless reproach you for those of which you did not advise him. Having said this, he departs, leaving us both in a good deal of confusion.⁸⁷

Undoubtedly a memorable lesson for the student, this quotation hints at the complexity of a passage that, from a simple explanation of magnetic fields, becomes a lesson about sympathy and sensitivity, designed, it would seem, to curtail *Emile's* developing vanity and inhibit the development of any unseemly *amour propre*. This address to the tutor, however, displays a deeper level of manipulation here on the part both of the tutor, Jean-Jacques and Rousseau. The narratorial comment that proceeds this lesson is enlightening and provides a hint as to how Rousseau is setting this passage up as a means of guiding

⁸⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, IV, vol. II, bk III, p. 26.

⁸⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, IV, vol. II, bk. III, p. 27.

⁸⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, IV, vol. II, bk. III, pp. 31–32.

the reader through a rational interrogation of the narrative itself. In it Jean-Jacques addresses the young teacher, his apparent addressee:

The circumstantial account of this example is of more consequence than it may at first appear. How many lessons are contained in this one! How many mortifying consequences are sure to follow the first emotion of vanity! Watch, with care, young preceptor, this first emotion in your pupil; and be assured that, if you can thus make it productive of humiliation and disgrace, you will be long before you see any appearance of a second. What preparations are here! You will say; I confess it; and all to make us a compass to serve us instead of a meridian.⁸⁸

The Magician's rebuke of the tutor becomes in these terms more than a confession of weakness in front of Emile. He is using, if this passage is to be believed, Emile's humiliation as a means of reinscribing the tutor's own control over him, becoming, in turn, the compass by which Emile will in future measure his actions. Going to pains to emphasise that this rebuke is delivered aloud, it would seem, on further reflection, to be addressed predominantly to Emile. By admonishing the tutor over his role in failing to prevent Emile's humiliation and subsequently charting a hypothetical future in which Emile is made, as he grows, increasingly aware of a plethora of faults that his tutor supposedly has the ability to prevent, his speech comes to function as a warning to Emile of the potential repetition of similar lessons should he fail to take heed of his tutor's advice. While this does, on the one hand, display an unsettling lack of empathy on the part of the tutor who marshals his student's humiliation to render his lesson more effective and long lasting, it also demonstrates how Rousseau has constructed the tale to similarly instruct his reader. It is telling that Jean-Jacques's explanatory prompt, comes only after the completion of the passage. The reader is allowed to interact with the passage, initially at least, in a relatively unmediated fashion with little narratorial interruption. Jean-Jacques's prompt that every example in the lesson is perhaps more important than it initially appears becomes something of a test for the reader. By proposing the reader's response, 'What preparations are here!' Jean-Jacques lifts a veil, revealing the constructed nature of the lesson. We as the reader are thus able to experience the lesson twice. By not fully expounding the mechanics behind the lesson, Rousseau seems to betray something of his earlier fantasy of perfect comprehension. It does, however, also signal the type of standard by which he is measuring his reader, a reader whom he expects to be able to

⁸⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, IV, vol. II, bk. III, pp. 32–33.

make significant interpretative leaps on their own. We see this in the 1765 edition of *Emile* in which Rousseau includes a footnote in which he responds to Johann Heinrich Samuel de Fermoy, who had in 1763, written an *Anti-Emile*, criticising Rousseau. In his *Anti-Emile*, de Fermoy had critiqued the character of the magician who he had dismissed as a contrived character, only being able to exist in ‘the world of Emiles.’⁸⁹ ‘The clever M. de Fermoy,’ Rousseau responds, ‘was unable to suppose that this little scene was arranged and that the magician had been instructed about the role he had to play; for, indeed, I did not say so. But on the other hand, how many times have I declared that I did not write for people who have to be told everything?’⁹⁰ Ellrich describes the inclusion of this footnote as ‘a clever psychological strategy, mixing threat and flattery: the reader is given the option of being stupid with Formey, or Lucid with Rousseau.’⁹¹ Rousseau is not just flattering the reader as Ellrich outlines it; he is involving the reader in a lesson similar to that which Emile himself undertakes in the text. By construing de Formey as an interpretively inept reader, he implies that the reader ‘does not need to be told everything,’ while in the same sentence explaining the very thing he is claiming he does not need to. What this achieves, then, is a similar illusion of freedom to that which he constructs in Emile’s lessons. By deferring his explanations, however, Rousseau does allow for the reader to first engage with the lesson on their own terms. So while the reader may be experiencing a similarly constructed lesson to that presented within the text, it is a lesson that is designed through experience and repetition to encourage the very rational self-sufficiency he is flattering the reader with possessing in his response to de Formey.

What Rousseau’s text achieves inevitably, through its focus on the practical, empirical nature of the educational process, is to emphasise the role of the student and reader in the learning process. Pushing against the very idea of didacticism, what *Emile* represents is a text that, while tied to the need for control within the teaching environment, shifted

⁸⁹ J. H. de Fermoy, *Anti-Emile* (Berlin, 1763); qtd in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, ed. & trans. by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 487.

⁹⁰ qtd in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 487.

⁹¹ Ellrich, p. 55.

the focus away from didactic pedagogy towards an understanding of educational praxis that focused on the reception rather than the imparting of ideas. What this enables is a conception of learning that, through its emphasis on the learner, has the potential to function outside of the bounds of institutionalised educational systems, implying the potentially continuing nature of education. The key to this in Rousseau's text lies as much in the relationship between *Emile* and his tutor as it does between the text and its reader. By fostering an environment in which both students and readers are encouraged to take some sense of control over how they approach their own education, what *Emile* does is open up the possibility of moving beyond traditionally didactic relationships by involving the student or reader in the educational process rather than relying on propositional didacticism and moral dictation. Calling for a type of reading that invites a more active involvement on the part of the reader, Rousseau mirrors Joseph Bartolomeo's argument that 'effective moralizing involves the reader in the action as well,' highlighting in the text that it is 'the reader's deduction – rather than the author's dictation – [that] allows for successful moral communication.'⁹²

⁹² Joseph F. Bartolomeo, *A New Species of Criticism: Eighteenth-Century Discourse on the Novel* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994), p. 127 and 125.

CHAPTER THREE

'WIT ENOUGH TO FIND IT OUT': *PRACTICAL EDUCATION* AND A LESSON IN MORALS IN MARIA EDGEWORTH'S *BELINDA*

Remember, however, that nothing is more useful than to learn to form ideas with precision, and to express them with accuracy; I have not given you a definition to teach you what a horse is, but to teach you to *think*.¹

(Aikin and Barbauld (née Aikin), *Evenings at Home; or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*)

We should never force any system upon the belief of children; but wait till they can understand all the arguments on each side of the question... It is probable, that if children are not early taught by rote words which they cannot understand, they will *think* for themselves! and, however strange their incipient theories may appear, there is hope for the improvement of children as long as their minds are active.²

(Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*)

It has been my contention that the intersection between narrative form and the experiential educational model that is presented by Rousseau in *Emile* enables an understanding of literature as an educational medium that is as empirically grounded as the type of lived experience which Rousseau champions throughout his educational writings. But while it may be Rousseau who provides the intellectual basis for this discussion, it is only through the works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Thomas Day, and Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth that we begin to see this relationship comprehensively explored and to some extent even theorised within a literary framework in the British tradition. While Barbauld was most certainly one of the more influential early adapters of Rousseau's educational philosophy and Day one of the more controversial, both stopped short of the sort of systematic engagement with

¹ John Aikin and Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Evenings at Home: Or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*, 6 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1792), vols 1, p, 136.

² Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, 'Notes: Containing Conversations and Anecdotes of Children', in *Practical Education*, ed. by Susan Manly, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), xi, 409–29 (p. 421). As the primary author of the text, I will refer to Maria Edgeworth as 'Edgeworth' throughout, using her father's full name when necessary, to avoid confusion.

Rousseauvean education we see in both the educational and literary works of Maria Edgeworth. Having witnessed, through her father and Day's ill-judged educational experiments, the effects of two of the earliest sustained attempts to practically raise children according to Rousseauvean principles, Edgeworth very early recognised the impracticality of Rousseau's method when applied to actual children. Building on Barbauld's age-graded children's books, Edgeworth was, through *Practical Education* (1798), her early children's literature and later novels for adults, most notably *Belinda* (1801), able to develop a more practicable theory of education that, through its movement away from abstract theorising towards an educational philosophy grounded in experience and praxis, would come to promote a more critical mode of reading that had the potential to justify literature as an empirically valid educational medium.

Finding her roots in the Rousseauvean movement best described as 'experimental learning', Edgeworth is participating in a tradition that, as we have seen, has most often sought to situate Rousseau as the starting point of what would come eventually to be known as progressive education. Paraphrasing Alfred Whitehead's famous quip that European philosophical tradition exists only as a continuing reaction to and development of Platonic thought, John Darling prefaces his 1994 account of the history and philosophy of 'child-centred education' with the bold assertion that 'modern educational theory is a series of footnotes to Rousseau.'³ More than merely a quotable piece of wordplay, Darling's situating of Rousseau as the teleological starting point of the progressive educational movement remains consistent throughout major works on the history and philosophy of education from Robin Barrow (1978) and Blenkin and Kelly (1981) through to John Howlett (2013).⁴ The general disregard for the works of earlier educational philosophers like Locke and Comenius that this privileging of Rousseauvean thinking demonstrates is in some ways surprising given Rousseau's striking lack of

³ John E. M. Darling, *Child-Centred Education and Its Critics*, 1 edition (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1993), p. 17.

⁴ An obviously truncated list, I have chosen to highlight these three text because of their influential nature but also because they highlight how the representation of Rousseau remains constant over the course of four decades of modern educational philosophy, see Robin Barrow, *Radical Education: A Critique of Freeschooling and Deschooling* (M. Robertson, 1978); Geva M. Blenkin and A. V. Kelly, *The Primary Curriculum* (P. Chapman, 1987); John Howlett, *Progressive Education: A Critical Introduction* (A&C Black, 2013).

practical experience as an educator. Unlike many of his predecessors, Rousseau never ran a school or even taught anyone in any traditionally recognisable sense of the word and that he sent all five of his children to the Paris Foundling Hospital at birth is telling of a certain lack of belief in his own ability to raise children.⁵ It should not then be much of a surprise that many of the earliest attempts to raise children in keeping with the principles set out in *Emile* seem to come to devastating ends. Rousseau did after all claim that he was not trying to suggest a 'practicable' manual for raising children, writing to a critical reader in 1764: 'You are quite right to say it is impossible to create an Emile; but do you really think that was my intention and that the book that bears this title is truly a treatise on education? It is quite a philosophical work based on the principle, advanced by the author in other writings, that man is naturally good.'⁶ This hardly seems to be the sort of thing one would expect from a man who would come to be seen as one of the predominant authorities on childcare both during his lifetime and well into the nineteenth century. In many ways, Maria Edgeworth's career as an educator finds its beginnings in just this paradox. Growing up alongside her brother, whom her father had attempted to raise along Rousseauvean principles, Edgeworth's childhood was characterised by a traumatising first-hand experience of her father's misguided experiment, one which would bring the impracticality of *Emile* into sharp focus, laying, in turn, the foundations for the eventual conception of *Practical Education*.

⁵ Rousseau even relates that following this he neither knew nor even saw any of them again, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, pp. 320–22, 332–35, 387, 515–16; While the truth of this has been questioned by Patrick Riley, Patrick Riley, 'Introduction: Life and Works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. by Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1–7; its veracity remains for the large part unquestioned by Rousseau's biographers, see for example J. M. Cohen, 'Introduction', in *The Confessions*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, trans. by J. M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1953), p. 13; Christopher Kelly, 'Rousseau's Confessions', in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. by Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 302–28 (p. 315); Christopher Bertram, 'Jean Jacques Rousseau', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2017 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017), p. 4.

⁶ Letter to Philibert Cramer, 13 October 1764, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Correspondance Complète*, ed. by R. A. Leigh, Publications de l'Institut et Musée Voltaire (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1965), xxi, p. 248.

Comparing ‘the many plausible ideas’ contained in *Emile* to what he believed to be ‘the obvious deficiencies and absurdities, that [he] saw in the children in almost every family with which [he] was acquainted,’ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, following the birth of his first child in 1764, ‘determined to make a fair trial of Rousseau’s system.’⁷ In what would become one of the first, and in the English speaking world, certainly one of the most well publicised, attempts to implement Rousseau’s radical educational philosophy, Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s ill-conceived ‘trial’ would lead inevitably to his striking reflection on the eventual death of his son in 1796 that ‘his way of life had become such as promised no happiness to himself or his family – it is therefore better for both that he has retired from the scene.’⁸ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, anxious to emulate Rousseau’s methods, encouraged the ‘little Dick’ to spend most of his time outside having been taught to pursue his own will in everything. ‘Bold, free, fearless, [and] generous,’ the young Dick was ‘capable of bearing privation of every sort,’ but by the age of nine his father would be forced to admit: ‘Whatever regarded the health, strength, and agility of my son, had amply justified the system of my master; but I found myself entangled in difficulties with regard to my child’s mind and temper [...] it was difficult to urge him to anything that did not suit his fancy, and more difficult to restrain him from what he wished to follow.’⁹ Although Richard Lovell Edgeworth does not go into any great detail in outlining his educational methods, it is clear that the attempt to follow Rousseau’s example was both taxing and ultimately frustrated. ‘I steadily pursued it for several years,’ he writes, ‘notwithstanding the opposition with which I was embarrassed by my friends and relations, and the

⁷ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq. Begun by Himself, and Concluded by His Daughter, Maria Edgeworth*, 2nd edn (London: R. Hunter and Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1821), vol. I, pp. 172–3.

⁸ Letter from Richard Lovell Edgeworth to Mrs. Powys, (1796), cited in Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 107; While it remains one of the most well known, Edgeworth’s experiment was by no means unique in the English speaking world, for other high profile examples see William Tighe, *William Tighe’s Statistical Observations Relative to the County of Kilkenny Made in the Years 1800 and 1801* (Kilkenny: Grangesilvia Publications, 1998), pp. xi–xiii; Stella Tillyard, *Citizen Lord: The Life of Edward Fitzgerald, Irish Revolutionary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), pp. 13–21; Brian FitzGerald, *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster (1731-1814): Letters of Lady Louisa Conolly and William, Marquis of Kildare (2nd Duke of Leinster)* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1949) see especially letters 236, 248 and 342.

⁹ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, vol. I, p. 173 and 268–69.

ridicule by which I became immediately assailed on all quarters.’¹⁰ Even Rousseau himself, who would meet the young Dick at age 7, recognised a certain social deficiency in him, warning his father that his chauvinism and stubbornness did not bode well for the young boy. Indeed, after a string of failed governors and difficult stints at a Catholic seminary and an English boarding school, the young Dick would eventually in 1779 at the age of 15 ask permission from his father to go to sea. Becoming increasingly alienated from his father and family over the rest of his life Richard Jr. would eventually settle in South Carolina where he passed away in 1796. Immortalised some 20 years later by Austen in the form of the wayward Dick Musgrove in *Persuasion* (1816), Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s first son would be remembered for decades in popular imagination as the headstrong, unmanageable ‘child of nature’, a cautionary tale in the dangers of neglect and ungoverned education.¹¹ I make note of Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s experiment not to discount the validity of Rousseau’s ideas, which remain by his own admission theoretical, but more because it laid the groundwork, not only for the education of Edgeworth’s oldest daughter, Maria, but also for the educational treatise she would eventually publish in 1798.¹² Touted by Alice Paterson as ‘the most important work on general pedagogy’ to be published between Locke and the Victorian era, one would be hard pressed to discuss the reception of Rousseauvean educational ideals in the English speaking world without recourse to Maria Edgeworth’s hugely influential *Practical Education*.¹³ Born out of the failure of both Richard Lovell Edgeworth and his friend

¹⁰ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, vol. I, p. 173.

¹¹ See for example John Timbs, *A Century of Anecdote from 1760 to 1860* (London: Richard Bentley, 1864), pp. 49–50.

¹² Published in conjunction with her father, there are obvious problems concerning the authorship of large sections of *Practical Education* and although it is difficult to discern the degree of influence that Richard Lovell Edgeworth had over large portions of the work, the Edgeworths do provide a useful outline in the preface to the 1815 edition in which they write: ‘All that relates to the art of teaching to read in the chapter on Tasks, the chapters on Grammar, and Classical Literature, Geography, Chronology, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Mathematics, were written by Mr. Edgeworth, and the rest of the book by Miss Edgeworth’ (Edgeworth and Edgeworth, I, pp. v–vi.). While it is impossible to ascribe the entirety of any section of the book to either author, for the sake of this discussion I will be using the outline provided above in order to ascertain, where necessary, the authorship of relevant parts of the text and unless explicitly stated will assume Maria Edgeworth to be the primary author of the text.

¹³ Alice Paterson, *The Edgeworths: A Study of Later Eighteenth Century Education* (London: University Tutorial Press, 1914), pp. v–vi.

Thomas Day's respective Rousseauvean experiments, it sets out to rework Rousseau's text in a more feasible, practicable approach to childrearing. Written primarily by Maria Edgeworth, *Practical Education* is grounded in her real everyday experience of the growing child's mind, stressing the need for empirical observation and active experimentation in order to understand how best to educate children. Built around discussion and dialogue, not just with her father, but even more importantly with the various family children who would become her subjects and inspiration, writing was for Edgeworth a communal experience.¹⁴ *Practical Education* was conceived and composed, much in keeping with this emphasis on community, in the family library surrounded by her younger nieces and nephews and is full of records of actual conversations with children, lively anecdotes and examples drawn from Edgeworth's immediate surroundings.¹⁵ Anne Thackeray would write of this in 1883 that when 'someone asked Miss Edgeworth how she came to understand children as she did, what charm she used to win them, 'I don't know,' she said kindly; 'I lie down and let them crawl over me.'¹⁶ In many ways, this approach to education exemplifies what Maria Edgeworth and her father term 'practical education'.¹⁷ Built around two key principles, the Edgeworths use the term to highlight that their approach to education is not abstract or theoretical but also, more importantly, is grounded in, and 'authorized by experience' of the real world, with their educational program being built on an *a posteriori* approach to knowledge acquisition and being derived therefore primarily from experience and praxis. 'We have chosen the title *Practical Education*,' they write, 'to point out that we rely entirely upon practice and

¹⁴ Myers draws attention to this emphasis on dialogue and discussion in Mitzi Myers, 'Reading Rosamond Reading: Maria Edgeworth's "Wee-Wee Stories" Interrogate the Canon', in *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi B. Sokoloff (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), pp. 57–79 (pp. 58–59).

¹⁵ A process further explored in far greater depth by Myers in Mitzi Myers, 'Socializing Rosamond: Educational Ideology and Fictional Form', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 14.2 (1989), 52–58 (p. 54).

¹⁶ Anne Thackeray Ritchie, *A Book of Sibyls: Mrs. Barbauld, Miss Edgeworth, Mrs Opie, Miss Austen* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 127.

¹⁷ Though most famously used by Maria Edgeworth the term derives originally from work begun by her first stepmother Honora Sneyd and serves as the title of a posthumously published story that would eventually be revised by Maria to be included in *Early Lessons* (1801), see Honora Sneyd Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education, Or, The History of Harry and Lucy* (London: J. Jackson, 1780).

experience.¹⁸ Susan Manly is quick to suggest that this methodological approach, ‘founded in communal exchange, creative community, correspondence and conversation,’ renders it ‘unlike Rousseau’s *Emile*,’ but Manly’s out-of-hand rejection of Rousseau obscures the importance of a text that was one of Edgeworth’s primary influences.¹⁹ Built around a similar understanding of how children learn, *Practical Education* privileges a comparable mode of experiential, child-centred education to that posited by Rousseau and while Edgeworth would go on to criticise Rousseau’s excessively contrived educational environment, her conception of the relationship between the teacher and the pupil remains remarkably alike.²⁰ With her implied critique of contemporary pedagogical practice that privileged rote-learning and what the Edgeworths considered to be ‘narrow, outdated curricula,’ Edgeworth is writing, as we shall see, in much the same vein as Mary Wollstonecraft in the challenge she poses to the privileging of precedent and tradition so stridently defended by conservative thinkers and writers like Edmund Burke towards the end of the century.²¹ Predicating her educational system, in keeping with Rousseau, on empirically derived learning in which children are made to think for themselves, Edgeworth privileges an educational philosophy in which children are conceived to be learning continually from their own experience.²² Catherine Toal has proposed that this emphasis on the practical nature of education in Edgeworth’s educational treatise is construed as an implicit critique of Rousseau’s radical educational model, quoting Rousseau’s preface to *Emile* in which he

¹⁸ Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, ed. by Susan Manly, The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), xi, pp. ix, v.

¹⁹ Susan Manly, ‘Introductory Note’, in *Practical Education*, by Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, ed. by Susan Manly, The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), xi, p. vii.

²⁰ This will be explored in greater depth in due course but it is worth noting that although Edgeworth is comfortable recommending a similar degree of parental or tutorly authority, she disagrees with Rousseau’s attempt to disguise the hierarchical nature of conventional pedagogy. Believing in the limited scope of both the child’s experience and, through her empirical epistemological leanings, their imagination, Edgeworth sees no reason why this authority must be concealed.

²¹ See for example, Burke’s defence of precedents, ‘wise prejudice’ and the sanctity of custom in Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France 1790*, ed. by L. G. Mitchell and William B. Todd, The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The French Revolution: 1790-1794 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), VIII, p. 146.

²² See Myers, ‘Socializing Rosamond’, p. 54.

laments, 'I hear it incessantly repeated, "propose only what is practicable." But this is just the same as if people should propose what is really practiced.'²³ Rousseau's argument would seem to suggest that in order to effectively challenge established norms, one needs to think, as he claims to do in *Emile*, beyond a purely utilitarian approach to education. While Rousseau does, as Toal highlights, attack the idea that educational philosophy should be 'practicable', this does not necessarily mean that this is the sense of the word that the Edgeworths were attempting to convey in the title of their work. They were after all quick to stress in the preface to *Practical Education*, 'we have no peculiar system to support, and, consequently, we have no temptation to attack the theories of others; and we have chosen the title of Practical Education, to point out that we rely entirely upon practice and experience.'²⁴ A quotation from a preface may not prove sufficient to refute Toal's claim. However, the insistence on their reliance, not just on real-world observation but also through a process best described as educational praxis, the critical reflection that their experiential model entails, implies that, while the Edgeworths were indeed interested in what Rousseau so flippantly dismisses as 'what is really practiced', they have, as we shall see, far more in common with his educational philosophy than Toal suggests.

That being said, it is worth highlighting that *Practical Education* does represent a departure from Rousseauvean thinking, but it is one based less on how the Edgeworths conceived of the learning process and more on their methodological approach to educational philosophy. Discussing the influence that her first step-mother, Honora Sneyd had on *Practical Education*, Edgeworth outlines Honora's approach to education crediting her with the conception of the eventual title of the treatise. 'She was of the opinion,' Edgeworth writes, 'that the art of education should be considered as an experimental science, and that many authors of great abilities had mistaken their road by

²³ Catherine Toal, 'Control Experiment: Edgeworth's Critique of Rousseau's Educational Theory', in *An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and Her Contexts*, ed. by Heidi Kaufman and Christopher J. Fauske (University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 212–34 (p. 212); see also Manly, xi, p. x; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, iv, vol. 1, p. xvi. I will for the sake of consistency continue to use the 1762 Kendrick translation of *Emile*

²⁴ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, xi, p. 5.

following theory instead of practice.’²⁵ Drawing on her step-mother’s original work and built around her own experience and observation of how children learn, *Practical Education*, with its *a posteriori* emphasis on that which ‘is really practiced,’ is built on a very different foundation to Rousseau’s highly theoretical text. This has, at times, been taken to represent a certain reactionary conservatism that would seem to mirror Rousseau’s contempt for educational systems built on contemporary practice, but this approach, I believe, fundamentally misrepresents Edgeworth’s educational philosophy.²⁶ While it may seem anti-Rousseauvean in its feasibility, *Practical Education* is more than merely a means of addressing one of the principal flaws that Edgeworth sees in Rousseau’s educational thinking and remains firmly tied to the radical challenge to didacticism that Rousseau proposes in *Emile*, that successful education relies on learning rather than teaching. Mitzi Myers’ assertion that ‘the Edgeworths wanted to *rethink* education from the child’s level up, [...] rather than from the theoretician’s precepts down’²⁷ is in this light somewhat misleading because while it may accurately represent a revolutionary methodology, this bottom up approach to learning is by no means novel following both Rousseau and Locke’s demonstrations for the need for this shift earlier in the eighteenth century. What *Practical Education* provided was not necessarily a new theory of education but rather a practical demonstration of how to achieve the sorts of education proposed in the more theoretical work done by earlier writers like Comenius, Locke and Rousseau. It represents, in other words, an attempt to propagate a shift away from the Aristotelian concept of *theoría* towards that of *praxis* within the realm of educational theory. It is a shift in thinking that is perhaps best exemplified in a plea to the reader that prefaces the appendix that contains the collection of anecdotes on which *Practical Education* is based. The appendix, entitled ‘Notes, Containing Conversations and Anecdotes of Children’, contains a record of observations originally collected by Honora

²⁵ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, ‘Notes: Containing Conversations and Anecdotes of Children’, xi, p. 409.

²⁶ Cafarelli has argued that perception of Edgeworth’s ideas as progressive hide a system that is both reactionary and in fact regressive, see Annette Wheeler Cafarelli, ‘Rousseau and British Romanticism: Women and British Romanticism’, in *Cultural Interactions in the Romantic Age: Critical Essays in Comparative Literature*, ed. by Gregory Maertz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 145; see also Douthwaite, p. 51.

²⁷ Mitzi Myers, “‘Anecdotes from the Nursery” in Maria Edgeworth’s *Practical Education* (1798): Learning from Children “Abroad and At Home””, *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, LX.2 (1999), 220–50 (p. 231).

Sneyd and continued after her death by various members of the Edgeworth family. It is fragmentary and difficult to read but that is not the point of it. It is intended not as a complete, documentary account of the growing child's mind but rather as a call to action, a spark Edgeworth hopes 'may awaken the attention of persons equal to the undertaking.'²⁸ It is an attempt to convince readers, mothers in particular, to begin keeping similar records. At the beginning of the segment, Edgeworth quotes a passage from Thomas Reid's *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) that had previously appeared in the preface to her earlier work *The Parent's Assistant* (1796). In the passage, Reid urges us to study the minds of children, writing:

If we could obtain a distinct and full history of all that hath passed in the mind of a child from the beginning of life and sensation till it grows up to the use of reason, how its infant faculties began to work, and how they brought forth and ripened all the various notions, opinions, and sentiments, which we find in ourselves when we come to be capable of reflection, this would be a treasure of natural history which would probably give more light into the human faculties, than all the systems of philosophers about them, from the beginning of the world.²⁹

Edgeworth is by no means pretending to this grand claim but rather calling for participation in her progressive pedagogical project. Her anecdotes become in this way proleptic, creating the foundation, as Mitzi Myers has argued, for a 'revolutionary Enlightenment educational methodology,' one that sought to dignify the study of children and drive an understanding of 'reformist pedagogy as the basis of a revisionary cultural narrative.'³⁰ Thus, when Edgeworth writes, 'if able preceptors and parents would pursue a similar plan, we might, in time, hope to obtain a full history of the human mind,' her call to action is striking in its ambition. Read in conjunction with her quotation of Reid, her suggestion would seem to be that a collection of empirical observations of the sort she is calling for would be more useful in understanding the 'human faculties' than the entire existing history of philosophical thought concerning rationality and the workings of the human mind. While I'm sure that Edgeworth is not going so far as actually to make this claim, it is nevertheless an insinuation that is telling of an educational project firmly

²⁸ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, xi, p. 409.

²⁹ quoted in Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, xi, pp. 409–10; Edgeworth is quoting the 4th edition of the text published in 1785, see, Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, 4th edn (London: T. Cadell, 1785), p. 10.

³⁰ Myers, 'Anecdotes from the Nursery', pp. 221, 237.

based on empirical observation and a philosophy of learning grounded in the sort of critical reflection her emphasis on educational praxis would support. Authorising her methodological approach by highlighting its basis in real-world observation, her call to action, through its grounding in Reid's plea, asks readers inevitably to participate in her pedagogical project. It is a project that would go on to inspire, if we are to believe Myers, the fashion for parent diaries that swept through both England and America throughout the nineteenth century, with those kept by Charles Darwin, Elizabeth Gaskell and Bronson Alcott being some of the more notable examples.³¹

In the chapter entitled "Books" towards the end of the first volume of *Practical Education*, Edgeworth gives an account of the reading practices of Swift, Gibbon, Franklin and Marie-Jeanne Roland. Commenting on the role played by literature in what she terms 'the formation of [...] character and taste,'³² Edgeworth observes:

Formally it was wisely said, "Tell me what company a man keeps, and I will tell you what he is;" but since literature has spread a new influence over the world, we must add, "Tell me what company a man has kept, and what books he has read, and I will tell you what he is."³³

Mirroring Catherine Macaulay's assertion that 'there is not a virtue or vice that belongs to humanity, which we do not make ourselves,' in *Practical Education* Edgeworth argues much in keeping with this that 'virtues, as well as abilities, or what is popularly called genius, we believe to be the result of education, not the gift of nature.'³⁴ In an assertion that is remarkably similar to the guiding principle behind Rousseau's educational program, morality and education become in Edgeworth's terms essentially coextensive, with virtue and vice directly linked to personal experience.³⁵ Identity, in these terms, is

³¹ Myers, 'Anecdotes from the Nursery', p. 236.

³² Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 2 vols (Boston: J. Francis Lippitt and T.B. Wait & Sons, 1815), I, p. 332.

³³ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, I, p. 332.

³⁴ Catharine Macaulay, *Letters on Education: With Observations On Religious And Metaphysical Subjects*, Reissue edition (Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 11; Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, XI, p. 397.

³⁵ Bygrave, *Uses of Education*, p. 147.

for Edgeworth directly informed and influenced by personal reading habits. But this is not to say that Edgeworth does not believe the consumption of literature always to be an entirely constructive experience. She is, after all, attempting to suggest the easiest means of inducing useful and agreeable habits, well-regulated sympathy and benevolent affections,' a project that is contingent on the development of a self-reflexive morality in which the reader can make critical judgments about both the text as well as their own reading experience.³⁶ The key, for Edgeworth, is the development of a 'well-regulated sympathy.' Using examples of sympathetic characters such as Gil Blas, Tom Jones and Count Fathom who are clever and entertaining but also morally ambivalent, the reader is warned of the danger of an uncritical consumption of a type of literature which promotes sympathy and identification with characters who through an overly sympathetic uncritical reading have the potential to negatively shape one's morality.³⁷ Because, for Edgeworth, 'imitation is the involuntary effect of sympathy' in the uneducated reader, exposure to these types of characters only becomes "safe" for Edgeworth once the reader's 'habits of integrity are thoroughly formed; and... they are sufficiently skilful in analysing their own feelings to distinguish whence their approbation and pleasure in reading these characters arise.'³⁸ What this implies is the suggestion of a manner of reading in which the reader is required not only to read the text they are confronted with analytically but also to critically engage with their own reaction to the experience of reading.

The full significance of Edgeworth's call to action only becomes apparent, however, when considered in conjunction with Edgeworth's other pedagogic works because while *Practical Education* may be considered by many to be the most important English work on general pedagogy until Herbert Spencer's 1861 *Essay on Education*, it was in reality only through works like *The Parent's Assistant* that Edgeworth's educational methods found widespread acceptance and even a degree of critical acclaim in the 1790s. It was

³⁶ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, 1, p. iv.

³⁷ Edgeworth is referencing characters from works by Le Sage, Fielding and Smollett, see especially, Alain-René Le Sage, *Histoire de Gil-Blas de Santillane Par Lesage* (Librairie de Firmin Didot Freres, Paris, 1848); Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed. by Doreen Roberts, Reprint edition (Wordsworth Editions, 1992); Tobias George Smollett, *Ferdinand, Count Fathom*, ed. by Jerry C. Beasley, New Edition (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

³⁸ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, 1, p. 190.

through this early educative literature written for children and eventually her more developed and nuanced novels like *Belinda* that she was eventually able to demonstrate the potentially wide-ranging impact of the empirically grounded theory of learning she champions in *Practical Education*. Often disregarded by modern readers because of its expressly didactic intent, much of Maria Edgeworth's fiction, that written for children in particular, has historically been dismissed as overtly admonitory and lacking in imaginative merit.³⁹ However, as critics like Mitzi Myers have brought attention to what Clóna ÓGallchoir styles, 'Edgeworth's intriguing and complex blend of romance and realism,' Edgeworth has increasingly been lauded not just for her understanding of children but also, in her adult fiction, for her representative style and ability to create both realistic and vivid dialogue.⁴⁰ Framing her children's literature within this affective moralising framework, Edgeworth is quick to highlight in *The Parent's Assistant* that, 'To prevent the precepts of morality from tiring the ear and the mind, it was necessary to make the stories, in which they are introduced, in some measure dramatic; to keep alive hope and fear and curiosity, by some degree of intricacy.'⁴¹ While far less sophisticated in its approach than what we begin to see in Edgeworth's longer fiction, this earlier writing displays an approach to education that recognises the usefulness of narrative as a means of involving the reader in the learning process. Building on a literary model predicated on a combination of sympathetic characters and realistic exemplars, Edgeworth's early

³⁹ See, for example presentation of Edgeworth's writing in, Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, Main edition (Boston: Houghton, 1985); F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, ed. by Rev. Brian Alderson, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Sylvia W. Patterson, 'Eighteenth-Century Children's Literature in England: A Mirror of Its Culture', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, XIII.1 (1979), 38–43; Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1984).

⁴⁰ A more recent trend that has been widely asserted following Myers' initial work on the subject, see especially, Elizabeth Eger and Clóna ÓGallchoir, 'Introductory Note', in *The Parent's Assistant*, by Maria Edgeworth, ed. by Elizabeth Eger and Clóna ÓGallchoir, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), x, p. xiii; See, especially Mitzi Myers, 'Romanticising the Moral Tale: Maria Edgeworth and the Problematics of Pedagogy', in *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, ed. by James Holt McGavran Jr (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991); Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*; Norma Clarke, in *Opening The Nursery Door*, ed. by Mary Hilton, Morag Styles, and Victor Watson (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 91–103.

⁴¹ Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant ; or, Stories for Children*, New / With 30 illus. and 5 coloured plates by F.A. Fraser. (London, New York,: G. Routledge, 1891), p. vi.

works, exemplified by stories such as ‘The Purple Jar’ in *The Parent’s Assistant*, are designed, in keeping with this, to guide young readers towards making self-empowered decisions. They mirror *Practical Education* in the sense that they validate literature as an educational medium by suggesting that aesthetic experience is grounded in something more than sentimental transportation and imaginative identification by encouraging experimental learning. Reading is set up by Edgeworth as an active process, one in which the reader is given the space to form their own conclusions. By exposing sympathetic characters to situations where there is not always a clear moral path, the narrative allows characters, and through them, readers, to learn through their mistakes by not making them immediately clear. Edgeworth is encouraging literary praxis in the sense that the experience of the reader is not one of passive abstract identification but rather, in much the same way we saw in Rousseau’s marshalling of the magician and the duck example in *Emile*, one of active interpretive participation in the text. Her children’s fiction is constructed very much in keeping with the anecdotal appendix to *Practical Education* as a pedagogical call to action. More than merely targeting the young reader, her children’s fiction invites a type of double reading, aimed not only at children but at their parents as well, at once addressing children with moral problems but also demonstrating through adult figures (most obviously characters like Rosamond’s mother in ‘the Purple Jar’) how best to lead them through the learning process. Edgeworth is thus able to stage her educational philosophy through both demonstrating the educational process, and, as I hope to demonstrate, by creating enough uncertainty within the narrative so as to invoke a more active mode of reading on the part of the child.

Appearing initially in the 1796 edition of Maria Edgeworth’s *Parent’s Assistant*, ‘The Purple Jar’ would eventually come to be recognised as the archetypal Georgian didactic tale and remains one of Edgeworth’s few works of children’s writing that has historically received any critical attention.⁴² While undoubtedly not as sophisticated as some of the

⁴² The most notable examples being Darton; Mary F. Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure in Reading: An Introduction to the History of Children’s Books in England from the Invention of Printing to 1914 with an Outline of Some Developments in Other Countries* (Boston: Horn Book, 1972); Gillian Avery, *Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children’s Stories 1780-190* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965); *From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children’s Literature to 1850*, ed. by Patricia Demers and Gordon Moyles, Third Edition edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982); Myers, ‘Socializing

later Rosamond stories, that are aimed at slightly older readers, ‘The Purple Jar’ represents the beginnings of an educational approach to narrative storytelling that would come eventually to inform Edgeworth’s adult literature and thus provides a useful insight into the link between Edgeworth’s educational theory and literary practice. Built on her practical observation of real children, Rosamond brings life to the piece through her exuberance and playfully childish language. While not perhaps as obvious an example of dialectal writing as we see in her use of Hiberno-English in *Castle Rackrent* (1800), ‘The Purple Jar’ mirrors Edgeworth’s early Irish writing in its use of dialect as a form of creating realistic, sympathetic characters.⁴³ Her writing, as she puts it, foregrounds ‘facts... which may seem trifling,’ ‘minuteness of detail’ and ‘the usual incidents of life,’ because, as she argues, ‘examples from romance can never have such powerful effect upon the mind, as those which are taken from real life.’⁴⁴ In *Castle Rackrent* Edgeworth draws on her early experience interacting with the Edgeworthstown tenants working as her father’s secretary and bookkeeper in order to provide the British reading public with a portrait of ‘the real character of the [Irish] people.’⁴⁵ While she would make this goal explicit in works like ‘The Limerick Gloves’ in which she addresses the British perception of the Irish head on, her reliance on real-world exemplars and well-observed characterisation would lead Walter Scott to write in the postscript to *Waverley*, that he set out ‘to describe these persons [in *Waverley*] not by a caricatured and exaggerated use of the national dialect, but by their habits, manners and feelings; so as in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth.’⁴⁶ It is, as we shall see, her same ability to realistically draw characters that allows for so much of the educational potential we see in her writing for children.

Rosamond’; Myers, ‘Reading Rosamond Reading: Maria Edgeworth’s “Wee-Wee Stories” Interrogate the Canon’.

⁴³ For in depth discussions of Edgeworth’s use of Hiberno-English in her Irish writing see Joyce Flynn, ‘Dialect as Didactic Tool: Maria Edgeworth’s Use of Hiberno-English’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 2 (1982), 115–86; Brian Hollingworth, *Maria Edgeworths Irish Writing: Language, History, Politics*, 1997 edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 1997), pp. 86–92 and 225–26.

⁴⁴ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, I, p. iii-iv and 274.

⁴⁵ Letter from R.L. Edgeworth to William Strutt quoted in Anne Thackeray Ritchie, ‘Introduction’, in *Popular Tales*, by Maria Edgeworth (London: Macmillan and co., 1895), pp. vii–xiii (p. x); See also Marilyn Butler, pp. 86–88.

⁴⁶ Walter Scott, *Waverley; or ‘Tis Sixty Years Since*, Reissue edition (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1871), chap. 72.

Grounded in naturalistic observation uncharacteristic in children's fiction at the time, Edgeworth is able to draw characters that were, through their realistic portrayal, revolutionary in their own right. Indeed, she is often considered, on the back of this realistic approach, to be the first classical writer for children, the earliest real 'novelist for the nursery,' as Edward Verrall Lucas would put it.⁴⁷ In a wonderfully telling endorsement of these early tales Lady Anne Romilly relates in a letter to Edgeworth how her children are able to 'feel sympathy with [Rosamond's] faults and feel they resemble her in many things.'⁴⁸ This is primarily because Rosamond resembles real children more than almost any other child appearing in literature at the time; she sounds, behaves and thinks like a child. And in Rosamond's agonising over her choices in stories like 'The Purple Jar', Edgeworth displays a shrewd understanding of child psychology, in many ways far ahead of its time. So we see a Rosamond who, when presented with the choice between what she thinks is a purple vase and a much needed new pair of shoes, responds 'Mamma! – yes, - I believe. – If you please I should like the flower-pot; that is, if you won't think me very silly, mamma.'⁴⁹ More than merely putting a more colloquial language in the mouth of her young heroine, Edgeworth's syntactical breaks mirror the broken speech of a young girl unable to make a difficult decision. By constantly interrupting the sentence, whether it be with grammatical stops, interjections or merely by not providing the satisfaction of a fully resolved verb-object construction, Edgeworth is able to mimetically recreate the moment of indecision while simultaneously drawing the reader in, titillating them with the lack of resolution and inevitable uncertainty surrounding the necessary correctness of the eventual decision.

Ever garrulous, the young Rosamond is at pains to voice her logic in the text, 'This Month!' she decries agonising over whether she could possibly delay her need for new shoes any

⁴⁷ RH Newby, 'The Achievement of Maria Edgeworth', *Listener*, 1949, 986–87 (p. 986); Edward Verrall Lucas, 'Introduction', in *Old Fashioned Tales*, ed. by Edward Verrall Lucas (Kessinger Publishing, 1905), p. xi; see also Myers, 'Socializing Rosamond', p. 52.

⁴⁸ *Romilly-Edgeworth Letters, 1813-1818: With an Introduction and Notes by Samuel Henry Romilly*, ed. by Samuel Henry Romilly (London: Murray, 1936), p. 83. For other accounts of children's reactions to Edgeworth's fiction see p. 95-7.

⁴⁹ Maria Edgeworth, *Early Lessons*, ed. by Elizabeth Eger, Cliona ÓGallchoir, and Marilyn Butler, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), xii, p. 117.

longer 'that is very long indeed!' she continues 'You can't think how these hurt me; I believe I'd better have the new shoes – but yet, that purple flower-pot – Oh, indeed, mamma, these shoes are not so very, very bad; I think I might wear them a little longer; and the month will soon be over: I can make them last till the end of the month; can't I – Don't you think so, mamma?'⁵⁰ More than merely sympathising with a realistically drawn young girl, the young reader is made aware of the impending consequences of her eventual choice. The elliptical nature of the writing, highlighted in the excessive use of syntactical breaks, delays the fulfilment of the promise of resolution represented by Rosamond's eventual decision. This allows for the reader, or in this case very often the listener, to have the space to draw their own conclusions, with the doubts raised by Rosamond throughout casting aspersions on even the most sympathetic reading. The eventual choice, even having been made, is returned to again and again, foreshadows the eventual disappointment that will be the arrival of the much anticipated vase: 'it was not long before the shoe came down on at the heel, and many times was she obliged to stop, to take stones out of her shoe, and often was she obliged to hop with pain; but still the thoughts of the purple flower-pot prevailed, and she persisted in her choice.'⁵¹ With even these very visceral bodily reminders of Rosamond's inappropriate choice being unable to sway her, the reader is, admittedly not very subtly in this example, made to come to their own conclusion without having to be told outright, at least initially, that her choice is a bad one. This process of delayed gratification with which Edgeworth is attempting to engage readers in a process of active critical praxis is used with far more sophistication in her later novels for adults and will be addressed at far greater length in relation to *Belinda*. What is perhaps more immediately interesting in examples like these found in the many Rosamond tales is how this struggle to find interpretive closure becomes derivative, in this far more focused dialectal example, of a certain childish experience of the world. By which I mean, rather than casting Rosamond as a mirror for adult sensibility, Edgeworth portrays her without the patronising parroting of preconceptions that had so coloured children's literature in the earlier parts of the eighteenth century, displaying her attempts to come to terms with ideas and concepts that are to the young reader as foreign and difficult as they are for Rosamond. It is just this mimetic similarity

⁵⁰ Edgeworth, XII, p. 117.

⁵¹ Edgeworth, XII, p. 117.

of experience that Rosamond has the power to suggest. Much like her reader, or indeed listeners, Rosamond is unsure, she does not understand how the world works yet, and in her inability to comprehend the consequences for her actions and decisions she is able to evoke a degree of empathy born of sympathetic identification. Edgeworth provides, through her portrayal of Rosamond's language, and through its breaks and stops her thought process, a sympathetic voice for the young reader to identify with.

But, as I suggested in relation to the magician anecdote in *Emile*, Edgeworth's text is not quite so straightforward. Indeed, much as Rousseau does, Edgeworth, in *The Parent's Assistant* construes her moral tales so as to invite a doubled reading. They are not entirely aimed at the children who are being read these early stories but are as importantly aimed at the adults reading them with the children. Mirroring Rousseau's approach, the tales become practical demonstrations of her educational philosophy, providing a set of demonstrations for how to enact it within realistic, if most times hypothetical situations. It is worth, dwelling, then, if only briefly, on the figure of Rosamond's much-maligned mother in the text. Following the rather drawn out, even as one critic styles it, 'tragedy' that is Rosamond's slow and inevitable decision not to buy new shoes, it is perhaps not surprising that much has been made of her mother's lack of guidance in the tale.⁵² Myers is not wrong to write, 'Rosamond is easy to love, and all critics do. But packaged with Rosamond come the moral and the rational mother, the latter loathed even more than the former.'⁵³ Eveline Godley even goes so far as to relate how 'Her mamma's almost fiendish satisfaction, when the jar is brought home and the horrible fact is revealed that the colour depends on the liquid inside it, still deserves to be quoted.'⁵⁴ But as much as her mother is often characterised as uncaring and overly unsympathetic of Rosamond's dilemma, she forms an important role in the fiction, providing not only a guide for how parents can effectively allow their children to make self-empowered decisions, difficult though it may be at times, but also enables the character Rosamond to fulfil this same important educational prerogative. 'Education,' in the terms outlined in *Practical Education* is after all distinct from 'instruction,' as the educator is for Edgeworth required to listen and

⁵² Eveline Godley, 'A Century of Children's Books', *Living Age*, 16 June 1906, pp. 689–98 (p. 691).

⁵³ Myers, 'Socializing Rosamond', pp. 53–54.

⁵⁴ Godley, p. 691.

question rather than lecture because for Edgeworth dialogue constitutes pedagogic practice. This is true of her own educational philosophy that is drawn from the observation of and discussions with children but also in how she believes education should be conducted: 'from conversation, if properly managed, children may learn with ease, expedition, and delight, a variety of knowledge; and a skilful preceptor can apply in conversation all the principles we have laboriously endeavoured to make intelligible in a quarto volume.'⁵⁵ 'The Purple Jar' does not stage this sort of educational discussion as radically as stories like 'The Bee and the Cow' and 'The Mimic', which through the use of almost entirely unmediated conversation allow the children in the tale to speak and reason for themselves and more importantly to teach and learn from one another, but by involving children in conversation, Edgeworth constitutes them as educational agents in their own right.⁵⁶ 'It is not our object to make mathematicians,' Edgeworth argues, 'but to make it easy for our pupil to become a mathematician, if his interest, or his ambition, make it desirable; and above all, to habituate him to clear reasoning, and close attention.'⁵⁷ It is significant, then, that Rosamond's mother only intercedes once Rosamond has made her decision through both discussion and her own reasoning, making the consequences of said decision clear. Being sure not to lecture her daughter or berate her with moral declamations, Rosamond's mother goes to extreme lengths to ensure that she can understand the importance of making self-empowered judgements. More than merely relying on affective appeal, Edgeworth disavows what she describes as 'the dictatorial anathematizing tone' of the theorist, highlighting through the character of the mother the need for young readers to judge for themselves.⁵⁸ This represents a markedly Rousseauvean tendency in Edgeworth's fiction which, while the eventual learning outcome may seem relatively contrived, does not actually spell out the intended moral of each respective tale, allowing young readers to judge for themselves.

⁵⁵ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, xi, p. 429.

⁵⁶ Maria Edgeworth, *Continuation of Early Lessons*, 2 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1814); Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant*, ed. by Elizabeth Eger and Cliona ÓGallchoir, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), x, pp. 106–29; See also Myers, 'Reading Rosamond Reading: Maria Edgeworth's "Wee-Wee Stories" Interrogate the Canon', pp. 61–63.

⁵⁷ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, xi, p. 308 and 258; Bygrave, *Uses of Education*, pp. 153–54.

⁵⁸ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, xi, p. 397.

In *Practical Education* we can already begin to see the emergence of this approach to education that is moving away from a reliance on straightforward moral dictation. Writing in the preface, the Edgeworths quote the maxim 'Il est permis d'ennuyer en moralites d'ici jusqu'a Constantinople,' continuing, 'Unwilling to avail ourselves of this permission, we have sedulously avoided declamation, and, wherever we have been obliged to repeat ancient maxims, and common truths, we have at least thought it becoming to present them in a new dress.'⁵⁹ Drawing attention to the relationship between moral development and fictional practice in *Practical Education*, Edgeworth relates, as Mitzi Myers aptly puts it, how 'the new stress on emphatic guidance (rather than dictation) in the learning process translates into a literary theory stressing reader identification and realistic narratology.'⁶⁰ This is not, however, to say that Edgeworth does not recognise the dangers presented by the literary form and its ability to invite, in an uncritical reader, what was seen as a potentially damaging excess of sympathy. So, while she writes in the preface to *The Parent's Assistant* that the stories are necessarily dramatic, this appeal to a more 'dramatic' education must, for Edgeworth, be moderated. Although the implication of Edgeworth's preface seems to be that readers learn less effectively when presented with lessons that they cannot relate to and enjoy, this appeal to sympathy must remain necessarily restrained. 'Sentimental stories and books of mere entertainment' function, for Edgeworth, as a form of literature which, to the uncritical reader, 'lowers the tone of the mind, and induces indifference for those common pleasures and occupations which, however trivial in themselves, constitute by far the greatest portion of our daily happiness.'⁶¹ What Edgeworth is working towards, then, is an understanding of education that recognises the potential strengths of sympathetic identification in delivering moral lessons as well as one that acknowledges the need for active participation on the part of the reader. She uses a similar formulation to that we see in *Emile* by attempting to actively involve readers in the interpretive process by delaying explanatory gratification. Where Rousseau requires narrative intervention of the sort we see in the magnetic duck and Fontaine examples in which he retrospectively

⁵⁹ 'It is permissible to bore with moralities from here to Constantinople,' Edgeworth and Edgeworth, I, p. iv.

⁶⁰ Myers, 'Socializing Rosamond', p. 54.

⁶¹ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, I, p. 288.

explains the educative intent of the text, in Edgeworth's more nuanced adult fiction we see the emergence of an educative form that no longer relies on the need for this type of propositional moral exposition.

It is in *Belinda* inevitably that we most obviously see a move towards a more fully developed form of educative fiction with a conscious departure from the more straightforward affective moralising approach we see in stories like 'The Purple Jar.' Positioned from the outset as a 'Moral Tale,' *Belinda* centres around the developing rationality of the novel's eponymous heroine.⁶² Following in the footsteps of Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), Edgeworth's text is located within a growing tradition of literature concerned with the role that both education and reading play in the development of moral identity. Building on the philosophic tale popularised by Voltaire and Marmontel in France in the decades leading up to Edgeworth's own writing, she draws on Marmontel's *Contes Moraux*, moving beyond its English Georgian counterparts that epitomised closure and tended towards moralistic preaching, towards a fiction that while not perhaps as witty as Marmontel's stories, sought, more importantly to promote reflective thought.⁶³

⁶² All citations from *Belinda* will be of the 1994 Oxford World Classics edition, which reprints the 1802 edition. For a discussion of the substantial revisions made to the text between 1801 and 1810 see Kathryn Kirkpatrick "Note on the Text" in the same edition, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin's "Introduction" in Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, ed. by Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (J.M. Dent, 1993), and Marilyn Butler's Appendix "The Post-Publication History of *Belinda* and *Patronage*" in Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Clarendon Press, 1972).

⁶³ Jean-François Marmontel, *Contes moraux* (A Paris : Chez Merlin, Libraire, 1775); For a comprehensive discussion of Edgeworth's use of the Moral Tale see Myers, 'Romanticising the Moral Tale: Maria Edgeworth and the Problematics of Pedagogy'; Mitzi Myers, 'Little Girls Lost: Rewriting Romantic Childhood, Righting Gender and Genre', in *Teaching Children's Fiction: Issues, Pedagogy, Resources*, ed. by Glenn Edward Sadler (New York: Modern Language Association, 1992), pp. 131–42; and Susan Manly, 'Introduction', in *Selected Tales for Children and Young People*, by Maria Edgeworth (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Finding its roots in the French tradition, *Belinda* is not a moralising children's story but rather a philosophical exploration of genre. By reading *Belinda* in keeping with Edgeworth's declaration in the preface that she is presenting us with a 'Moral Tale' devoid of the 'folly, error, and vice' usually associated with fiction, Kathryn Kirkpatrick goes so far as to argue that in *Belinda* Edgeworth offers 'a new kind of moral fiction.'⁶⁴ While Belinda Portman does certainly seem to be 'the antithesis of the woman of sensibility' which Kirkpatrick argues sets *Belinda* apart from earlier didactic fiction, it is the 'folly, error and vice' presented in the novel and the reader's interaction with it which is key to Edgeworth's educational project.⁶⁵ Myers persuasively argues that her framing of the text as a 'Moral Tale' is not so much a rejection of the novel as a form but rather is designed to signal 'to contemporary readers the intellectual, argumentative, analytical genre she domesticates, feminises, and frequently subverts.'⁶⁶ Given her role as the author of *Practical Education*, Edgeworth's prefatory claims seem to have been taken rather seriously. Writers at the *Monthly Review* introduce *Belinda*, drawing the reader's attention both to Edgeworth's previous work as well as directing the reader to her framing of the text as a moral tale. The reviewer/s writes:

The name of Miss Maria Edgeworth does not now require any introduction to our readers; and the account which we gave on her elaborate treatise on Education (Rev. vols. xxx. and xxxi. N.S.) will, in particular, have produced considerable respect for her talents. We are called to notice a production apparently of an entirely different nature, but which may in reality be considered as designed to answer purposes somewhat similar, since the author offers it as "a Moral Tale."⁶⁷

To take Edgeworth's *apologia* at face value, however, is to misunderstand how Edgeworth's text functions educationally. Writing within an already established critical discourse that understood fiction as having an inherent moral impact on the reader, Edgeworth's text begins, as I hope to demonstrate, to move beyond the more binary moralistic understanding of what it meant for a novel to be didactic that had been exemplified by writers like Samuel Johnson earlier in the century. And while many

⁶⁴ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 3; Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick, 'Introduction', in *Belinda*, by Maria Edgeworth, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. ix–xxv (p. xiii).

⁶⁵ Kirkpatrick, p. xiii.

⁶⁶ Myers, 'Little Girls Lost: Rewriting Romantic Childhood, Righting Gender and Genre', p. 136.

⁶⁷ *The Monthly Review*, 37 (1801), p. 369.

writers in the later part of the eighteenth century heeded Samuel Johnson's famous warning that: 'It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation,' *Belinda* marks a distinct move away from the type of affective moralising he advocates.⁶⁸ But, although Edgeworth's eponymous character does seem to represent just the sort of positive exemplar championed by Johnson, fitting the type of protagonist one would expect in a novel of the sort that Edgeworth seems to be hinting at in her preface, *Belinda's* eponymous heroine hardly seems to be the focus of the novel. She has in more recent times been described as 'little more than an embodiment of principles,' a character 'simply too virtuous to be interesting, too virtuous to provide problems of moral depth.'⁶⁹ Even Edgeworth confessed in a letter to Margaret Ruxton written while she was revising the novel for Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *British Novelists*: 'I really was so provoked with the cold tameness of the stick or stone Belinda, that I could have torn the pages to pieces.'⁷⁰ It is certainly not hard to see why so many have found the Lady Delacour narrative more compelling.⁷¹ The reviewer/s for the *Monthly Review* even go so far as to suggest that Belinda Portman 'usurped the superior right of Lady Delacour to give the title to the work: for it is to the character and agency of the latter [...] that the tale owes its principal attractions.'⁷² In this way Edgeworth's text represents McKeon's 'pedagogic danger,' in that the 'best' moral exemplar in the text seems to fail to invite reader identification and, if anything, Edgeworth succeeds, through her portrait of Lady Delacour in rendering the vice which she claims to be working against attractive. *Belinda*, if we are going to read it

⁶⁸ Johnson, p. 144.

⁶⁹ Oleta Elizabeth McWhorter Harden, *Maria Edgeworth* (Boston, Mass.: Twayne, 1984), TEAS 375, p. 52; James Newcomer, *Maria Edgeworth, the Novelist, 1767-1849: A Bicentennial Study* (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1967), p. 25.

⁷⁰ Maria Edgeworth, 'Letter to Margaret Ruxton, December 1809', in *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth, with a Selection from Her Letters*, ed. by Frances Anne Edgeworth (London: Joseph Masters and Son, 1867), p. 229.

⁷¹ The most notable examples of this tendency focus on Lady Delacour are, Marilyn Butler, p. 308; Isabel Constance Clarke, *Maria Edgeworth, Her Family and Friends*. (London, New York,: Hutchinson, 1950), p. 110; Harden, TEAS 375, p. 52; Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 109–11; Newcomer, pp. 25–26; Heather MacFadyen, 'Lady Delacour's Library: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Fashionable Reading', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 48.4 (1994), 423–39 (p. 424).

⁷² G. E. Griffiths and Ralph Griffiths, 'Review of *Belinda*', in *The Monthly Review.*, 37th edn, 1802, pp. 368–74 (p. 368); Kowaleski-Wallace, p. 110.

as the 'Moral Tale' Edgeworth would like us to, seems to have moved beyond the exemplary modes of fiction typified by the works of Richardson towards something closer to the type of text I. A. Richards had in mind when he so famously declared: 'a book is a machine to think with.'⁷³ In other words, Edgeworth's text requires an exercising of active critical praxis that moves beyond the type of admonitory didacticism that the prominence of a character like Lady Delacour in the text would suggest. This should not come as much of a surprise; the type of positive pedagogy suggested by Johnson seldom seems to have resulted in effective moral communication. As early as the 1760s we can already begin to see this turn away from exemplary moral fiction. Writing on Maria Susanna Cooper's *Exemplary Mother* in 1769, a reviewer for the *Monthly Review* criticises Cooper, writing:

Narratives are more welcome, and no less instructive, when the events and catastrophe are so calculated as obviously to suggest profitable inferences, which are left to the operation of the reader's mind; than where the writer furnishes all the deductions and documents himself: for the reader in the latter case being merely passive, rather tires than improves, and is more inclined to pass with rapidity from incident to incident, than to afford that regular attention which the Author merits and requires.⁷⁴

The reviewer is calling here for a type of writing that invites a more active mode of reading on the part of the reader. In a very similar vein, Joseph Bartolomeo argues that 'effective moralizing involves the reader in the action as well.'⁷⁵ Indeed, for both Bartolomeo and, it seems, this reviewer, 'the reader's deduction – rather than the author's dictation – allows for successful moral communication,' and it is just this that Edgeworth is attempting with *Belinda*.⁷⁶

⁷³ It must however be noted that Tom Keymer has in more recent years suggested that 'Richardson knowingly fostered the active participation of readers,' begging for a more sophisticated understanding of *Clarissa*'s relation to the reader; Tom Keymer, *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader*, Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Thought ; 13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xiii, p. xviii; I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925), p. 1.

⁷⁴ 'Review of The Exemplary Mother', in *The Monthly Review*., ed. by G. E. Griffiths and Ralph Griffiths, 40th edn, 1769, p. 477.

⁷⁵ Bartolomeo, p. 127.

⁷⁶ Bartolomeo, p. 125.

If this is indeed the basic requirement for successful moral communication, as Bartolomeo suggests, the first half of the advertisement for *Belinda* is enlightening. ‘Every author’, Edgeworth writes, ‘has a right to give what appellation he may think proper to his works. The public have also a right to accept or refuse the classification that is presented.’⁷⁷ As the entry point into the text, this assertion is important. It represents a conscious attempt to marshal the educational program she posits in *Practical Education*. Acknowledging the experiential nature of the educational process she envisions, she prompts the reader to draw their own conclusions based on their reading experience while at the same time hinting at her role, not massively dissimilar to Rousseau’s ‘gardener’s assistant’, in leading the reader to the conclusions she desires. The realisation of the text, in this case, the moral lessons embedded in it, lies in the hands of the reader. Being careful not to provide explicit guidance, Edgeworth furnishes the reader with a framework for the realisation of the lesson, while not actually providing them with direct answers. So when Lady Delacour at the end of the novel eventually breaks the fourth wall and addresses us, there is an expectation that the reader has learnt something through their reading of the novel, though what exactly this is, is even now not made explicitly clear. The final chapter ends with Lady Delacour’s declaration: ‘Now, lady Delacour, to show that she is reformed, comes forward to address the audience with a moral – a moral! – yes, // Our *tale* contains a *moral*, and, no doubt, // You all have wit enough to find it out.’⁷⁸ The final lines of the novel are delivered in verse. Lady Delacour’s moral, delivered as an epilogue, is designed, it would initially seem, to provide a sense interpretive of closure. What it achieves inevitably, however, is rather to open up a possibility for a reading of the text in which the reader is invited to make their own, by now seemingly empowered, moral judgments. By the end of the novel, or here ‘*tale*’, the reader should, it seems, have been provided with sufficient guidance that an explicit moral is not necessary. Harking back to the moment at the beginning of chapter three where Lady Delacour similarly fails to deliver on a promise for moral closure, we are made to devise our own moral, the ultimate test of Edgeworth’s lesson. In many ways, this earlier hint towards a definitive

⁷⁷ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 3.

⁷⁸ An adaption of the epilogue from Gay’s *The What D’Ye Call It*, see John Gay, *The What D’ye Call It: A Tragi-Comi-Pastoral Farce: As It Is Acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane* (London: Henry Lintot, 1736), p. 47; Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 478.

“answer” to the moral problem posed by the text is just as important to Edgeworth’s educational aims as the final moment of unresolved tension.

Addressing Belinda, Lady Delacour prefaces her narration of her life, or as she styles it, her ‘history’: ‘But I begin where I ought to end, with my moral, which I dare say you are not impatient to anticipate – I never read or listened to a moral at the end of a story in my life – manners for me, and morals for those that like them.’⁷⁹ Much as Stanley Fish sought to replace the seemingly objective reality of the text with the temporal ‘experience’ of the reader, this prefatory remark generates an expectation of what is to follow.⁸⁰ Teleologically mirroring the experience of the text itself, even the promise of this sentence is unfulfilled creating a precise expectation of what is to follow while conveniently saying nothing. While the parenthetical digressions within the sentence do teach us something important about the coquettish nature of Lady Delacour’s character and serve as a prefatory caveat to the reader, its moral promise remains unfulfilled. The lack of fulfilment acts to create an expectation in the mind of the reader who is made to look, or at the very least wait for the lesson presented by the ‘history’ throughout the tale, and indeed, throughout the rest of the novel. This type of strategy finds its perfect mouthpiece in Lady Delacour who, as a self-confessed coquette, teases the reader as much as she does the men in the history she relates. Addressing Belinda, a few lines before the narration of her history, she confesses: ‘I have done a horrid act this day [...] absolutely written a *twisted* note to Clarence Hervey, my dear – but why did I tell you that? Now your head will run upon the twisted note all day, instead of upon “The life and opinions of a Lady of Quality, related by herself.”’⁸¹ By creating the expectation of something to follow, Lady Delacour succeeds in doing just what she is professing not to: making sure Belinda’s ‘head will run upon the twisted note all day,’ just as the reader’s mind is made to ‘run upon’ the moral lesson her tale supposedly holds. Containing something close to the moral of her story (that one should learn from past mistakes), Lady Delacour’s claim; ‘I never read or listened to a moral at the end of a story in my life,’

⁷⁹ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 35.

⁸⁰ Stanley Fish, ‘Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics’, *New Literary History*, 2.1 (1970), 123–62 (pp. 125–27); Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism*, New Accents (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 92–93; Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁸¹ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 35.

should function to invite attention from the reader, warning against the danger of reading the tale that is to follow passively.⁸² This is bracketed by a series of similar warnings, both explicit and otherwise so as to make sure the reader does not become complacent. Lady Delacour, for example, tells Belinda in her note inviting her to hear her tale that she has ‘taken a double dose of opium,’ a prescription she repeats mid-way through the story.⁸³ And if the realisation that the narrator of this section of the novel is drugged is not enough to ensure that the reader at the very least thinks twice about what they are reading, in an example of what Wolfgang Iser calls ‘explicit guidance,’ Edgeworth makes sure that we are reminded of the need to judge what we are reading critically, in a series of directives, aimed for the most part at Belinda.⁸⁴ It can certainly be no mistake that just four pages after the completion of Lady Delacour’s tale, she cautions Belinda: ‘novel reading, as I dare say you have been told by your governess, as I was told by mine, and she by hers, I suppose – novel reading for young ladies is the most dangerous,’ asking Clarence Hervey, ‘Do, pray Clarence, help me out, for the sake of this young lady with a moral sentence against novel reading.’⁸⁵

The reader is prompted to engage here in a mode of reading that is designed, through the consumption of literature paradoxically to guard them against the perceived damaging effects of the novelistic form. Edgeworth does not deny that morally deplorable characteristics can become potentially attractive in literature, and writes, in keeping with this, that ‘in many engaging characters in society, and in many entertaining books, deceit and dishonesty are associated with superior abilities, with ease and gaiety of manners, and with a certain air of frank carelessness, which can scarcely fail to please.’⁸⁶ The worry is that because deceit and dishonesty have become, as a result of excessive consumption of romantic literature, acceptable qualities, the overly sympathetic reader can form potentially dangerous attachments to these types of characters.⁸⁷ The danger lies, however, for Maria Edgeworth, not in the type of reading material one consumes but

⁸² Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 35.

⁸³ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 34 and 51.

⁸⁴ Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University press, 1974), p. 47.

⁸⁵ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 72.

⁸⁶ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, I, p. 190.

⁸⁷ See especially Edgeworth and Edgeworth, I, pp. 190–91, 274, pp. 259–261 and 288–291.

rather the manner in which one consumes it. Indeed, Edgeworth's choice of the appellation 'characters' even in relation to non-literary exemplars speaks to the dangerous link between the unregulated consumption of literature and the development of undesirable character. She seemingly builds towards an understanding of self in which identity, particularly in the case of the character of Lady Delacour, becomes contingent on not only an identification with literary characters but also through quotation, allusion and parody, a literarily informed act of self-definition. For many of the characters in the novel, their position in society is directly linked with this form of self-identification. Heather MacFadyen argues in keeping with this that for Lady Delacour at least, 'the ability to assume a constantly shifting series of identities is the key to [her] success in eliciting the publicity essential to her status as a fashionable woman'.⁸⁸ It is, however, just this type of theatricality that leads inevitably to her eventual unhappiness.⁸⁹ Edgeworth presents Lady Delacour in this way as a cautionary tale of sorts, in which her growing conflation of the real and the imaginary and her eventual loss of self in literature lead to her tragic position at the start of the novel. Lady Delacour is, however, seemingly aware of this. Consistently presenting herself as a Gil Blas or princess Scheherazade, Lady Delacour relates her life history, 'The Life and Opinions of a Lady of Quality, Related by Herself', as a hybrid, a romance and a cautionary tale.⁹⁰ She begins with the caveat, addressing Belinda: 'My dear, you will be woefully disappointed, if in my story you expect anything like a novel. I once heard a general say, that nothing was less like a review than a battle; and I can tell you that nothing is more unlike a novel than real life.'⁹¹ This attempt to distinguish her story from a novel is surprising given her description of her history as

⁸⁸ MacFadyen, p. 425.

⁸⁹ For work on *Belinda* dealing with performance and theatricality see Susan Bolet Egenolf, 'Edgeworth's *Belinda*: An Artful Composition', *Women's Studies*, 31.3 (2002), 323–48; Jeanne M. Britton, 'Theorizing Character in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 67.4 (2013), 433–56; Teresa Michals, '"Like a Spoiled Actress off the Stage": Anti-Theatricality, Nature, and the Novel', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 39.1 (2010), 191–214; Katherine Montwieler, 'Reading Disease: The Corrupting Performance of Edgeworth's *Belinda*', *Women's Writing*, 12.3 (2005), 347–68; Terry F. Robinson, '"Life Is a Tragicomedy!": Maria Edgeworth's "*Belinda*" and the Staging of the Realist Novel', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 67.2 (2012), 139–76.

⁹⁰ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 35; Characters in Le Sage; and, Hanan Al-Shaykh, *One Thousand and One Nights* (Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 2013). Both Gil Blas and Scheherazade are known for their storytelling ability.

⁹¹ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, pp. 35–36.

a series of 'adventures' surpassing those of Gil Blas while then drawing a parallel between her own story and *One Thousand and One Nights*, by likening herself on multiple occasions to Scheherazade.⁹² Her assertion then, that 'of all lives, mine has been the least romantic,' certainly seems at odds with her presentation of the history itself that is so excessively couched in romantic tropes.⁹³ The likening of her tale to a 'review' which cannot do justice to the 'battle' itself hints at the possibility that her life is if anything even more romantic than the tale she is about to recount. A profoundly unreliable narrator, Lady Delacour becomes, through the obvious disjuncture between her characterisation of her history and the content of the history itself, a vehicle through which Edgeworth can begin to prompt the reader to make critical judgments of the text itself as well as to think about what the act of reading entails. Edgeworth presents us here with an understanding of reading, then, which is inherently dialogic, relying on the reader for the construction of its meaning. The nature of the encounter with the text is therefore dictated not merely by the text itself but is also mediated by the very act of reading. The reader's moral development and his or her literary education become thus deeply intertwined. Reading becomes in this manner an act of literary praxis, a morally self-reflexive act, but importantly one that must be for Edgeworth inevitably self-empowered. It is only once the reader is 'sufficiently skilful' in analysing the text itself as well as their own feelings in relation to it and they 'can make all these reflections for themselves, [that] they may read Gil Blas with as much safety as the Life of Franklin, or any other of the most moral performance.'⁹⁴

Building on Edgeworth's earlier stories like 'The Mimic' and later 'Angelina' in *Moral Tales for Young People* (1801), *Belinda* functions self reflexively as an exercise in, and proponent of, the model of guided experiential education championed by Edgeworth and her father in *Practical Education*. What becomes increasingly apparent as one reads *Belinda* is that Edgeworth is inviting a similar double reading to that we see in 'The Purple Jar', and while the text is, on the one hand, trying to involve the reader in the pedagogical

⁹² Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 35.

⁹³ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 36.

⁹⁴ Edgeworth and Edgeworth, I, p. 191.

process, it is also representing how it functions. In *Belinda* this is not achieved through the same inclusion of the mother/pedagogue we see in the Rosamond stories, but Edgeworth does encourage an encounter with pedagogical philosophy more generally through an exploration of a series of competing educational practices. Most obviously, the Percival household provides an analogue for the Edgeworth home and replicates the experimental model propounded in *Practical Education* in an idealised representation of Edgeworthian rational domesticity. On the other hand, Lady Delacour's fashionable approach founded on parental non-involvement provides a thinly veiled pastiche of popular contemporary educational practice but does little more than validate the practical experimental approach championed by the Percivals who provide the site for Delacour's eventual reform. These two educational representations form an integral part of the novel, providing context for the central premise of the text as well as providing the vehicle through which much of the action is eventually resolved. Readers are left inevitably with a similar choice to that presented in 'The Purple Jar', to judge, for themselves what they believe to be the correct course of action, albeit a relatively transparent one.

While this clash of educational ideals may well be interesting as a site of conflict within the novel, it is not as relevant to this discussion as Edgeworth's satirical representation of Thomas Day's notorious attempt to educate a wife along Rousseauvean principles.⁹⁵ Presenting the reader with a third, far more contentious educational mode, Edgeworth's attack on Day's misguided attempt to implement Rousseauvean education builds on Wollstonecraft's condemnation of book V of *Emile* in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and is reminiscent of Edgeworth's critiques of Rousseau in *Practical Education*. Distinctly satirical, Edgeworth's examination of Rousseau's problematic approach to the education of woman is neither as direct as Wollstonecraft's nor as cutting as Mary Hays's but this does little to diminish the effect of the passage which becomes as much an attack on book V of *Emile* as it is on contemporary attempts to put Rousseau's philosophy into

⁹⁵ The Thomas Day story on which the Virginia St Pierre story is based interestingly receives a footnote in the November 1832 edition of *Fraser's Magazine* (James Anthony Froude and John Tulloch, *Fraser's Magazine* (G. W. Nickisson, 1832), pp. 554–56.) longer than the review of *Belinda* itself. While this may point to the fact that knowledge of the incident was not as widespread in 1832, it also demonstrates the remarkable interest in Day's experiment even after so much time had passed.

practice. Taking aim at Day in particular, Edgeworth's critique of Rousseau's "man-made" woman, 'formed to please and to be subjected to man' lampoons gendered educational plans of the sort Rousseau proposes while at the same time allowing Edgeworth to interrogate the role that literature could play in undermining this sort of educational inequality.⁹⁶ A firm friend of Edgeworth's father and the implied subject of her satire, Thomas Day was equally enamoured of Rousseau as the young Richard Lovell Edgeworth and would write to him in 1796, 'Were all the books in the world to be destroyed [...] the second book I should wish to save after the Bible, would be Rousseau's *Emilius*.'⁹⁷ Determined to follow Rousseau's plan in book V of *Emile*, at the age of twenty-one Day adopted two young girls aged eleven and twelve and naming them Sabrina Sidney and Lucretia respectively, and undertook his plan to educate himself a wife. The girls, having been initially placed in the care of a widow just outside of London by Day, were eventually removed to France where Day assumed their education himself. By 1770, however, he had begun to despair of his plans and finding Lucretia to be 'invincibly stupid', placed her in the care of a milliner, providing her with enough of a dowry to eventually set her up in marriage a few years later.⁹⁸ I will not go into much greater detail, suffice to say that he soon grew tired of Sabrina, sending her to a boarding school before abandoning the project altogether in 1774. Even with this greatly truncated account, it is very easy to see where the inspiration for Clarence Hervey's ineffectual Rousseauvean experiment came from. Virginia St. Pierre is, however, more than merely a literary Sabrina Sidney; she becomes a vehicle through which Edgeworth is satirically able to undermine gendered educational philosophy as well as to interrogate how Rousseauvean pedagogy relates to reading practice. As I have highlighted in the previous chapter, in spite of Rousseau's formal reliance on literary conventions and an educational model that served inevitably to justify the empirical validity of reading within an experiential framework, he remained distrustful of literature within the educational sphere. One would be hard pressed to argue that the overly constructed educational environment he presents us with in *Emile* represents anything close to the 'natural' lived experience he is purporting to champion. The irony of Rousseau's overreliance on art and artifice was not lost on Edgeworth. It

⁹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, IV, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, vol. 1, p. 221.

⁹⁸ George Warren Gignilliat, *The Author of Sandford and Merton: A Life of Thomas Day, Esq* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 65.

would come to form one of the central motifs of her attack on Rousseauveanism in both *Belinda* and *Practical Education* as well as forming the basis for the educational authority that the novel begins to claim towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Often neglected in favour of debates surrounding colonialism and gender transgression in *Belinda*, the subplot containing Clarence Hervey's adoption of Rachel, the orphan he renames Virginia St. Pierre (an amalgam of the author and protagonist of Bernardin de St Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1787)), and his attempt to educate her as a Rousseauvean Sophie further highlights this underlying preoccupation with both reading and education within the text. Ostensibly framed in the text as a history written by Hervey as a means of justifying his connection with Virginia, the self-contained Virginia narrative is prefaced: "To save our hero from the charge of egotism, we shall relate the principal circumstances in the third person."⁹⁹ The Clarence Hervey of this passage represents a similarly problematic narrator to that which we have seen in Lady Delacour in the recounting of her "history" earlier in the text. However, while the Delacour example is delivered for the most part in direct speech, Hervey's account of Virginia's education is further mediated by a narrative voice that wilfully distorts and corrupts the already subjective narrative, a narrative that is framed, lest we forget, to exonerate Hervey in the eyes of both Belinda and Delacour. Presented in a manner reminiscent of the sentimental fiction which we are lead to believe results in Virginia's inevitably distorted sense of self as the narrative progresses, Edgeworth is at pains to make the terms of her debate clear in this section of the text. Hervey is styled as the romantic 'hero' of the tale, reconstituting the 'history' we are being presented with as just the sort of romantic narrative that Sarah Green and Hannah More were publicly decrying, with novels being seen by many to 'poison the mind, and soften and pervert understanding.'¹⁰⁰ It should come as no surprise then that within the first few lines of the section, we are presented with a Hervey bewitched by fiction. Having encountered Rousseau: 'He was charmed with the picture of Sophia, when contrasted with the characters of the women of the world, with whom he had been

⁹⁹ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 362.

¹⁰⁰ Sarah Green, *Mental Improvement for a Young Lady, on Her Entrance into the World* (London: Minerva Press, 1793), p. 101; see also Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education: With a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent Among Women of Rank and Fortune*, 2 vols (T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1799), I, p. 31.

disgusted; and he formed the romantic project of educating a wife for himself.¹⁰¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that Hervey's presentation of Virginia is one in which she is seemingly unable to extricate herself from her literary identities. She is, after all, a 'romantic project', a 'picture' drawn from Rousseau, one which even in Rousseau is doomed inevitably to fail. As Barbara Taylor aptly and succinctly puts it, 'Sophies are made, not born.'¹⁰² Edgeworth provides us here with a dramatic sketch of Wollstonecraft's critique of Rousseau. Writing in Chapter V of *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft uses the bed of Procrustes as a powerful metaphor for the plight of women forced to fit into contemporary, male-dominated visions of femininity.¹⁰³ Writing of Rousseau's Sophie, she presents a brutal picture:

Supposing woman to have been formed only to please, and be subject to man, the conclusion is just, she ought to sacrifice every other consideration to render herself agreeable to him: and let this brutal desire of self-preservation be the grand spring of all her actions, when it is proved to be the iron bed of fate, to fit which her character should be stretched or contracted, regardless of all moral or physical distinctions.¹⁰⁴

Stripped even of her own name, Rachel/Virginia represents something of an exaggerated example of this sort of Procrustean thinking. She is from the outset depicted as an explicitly literary, even fictional construction, designed to adhere to a set of standards that do not or even cannot exist in the real world. Like all good satire, however, the picture that Edgeworth paints is uncomfortably close to the bone. And while Edgeworth has been criticised at times for the marital resolution of the Virginia narrative which seems only to reinforce Rousseauvean gendered prejudice, this fails to account for Virginia's literary education that, far from bolstering the Procrustean ideal, proves its inapplicability. Looking forward towards Virginia's encounter with her literary progenitor, the entire Virginia narrative functions here to remind us of the literary nature

¹⁰¹ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 362.

¹⁰² Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 85.

¹⁰³ In Greek mythology, the bed of Procrustes fit all his guests. If they were too short, he would stretch them, and if they were too tall, he would shorten them by cutting off their extremities. Eventually captured by Theseus, Procrustes's reign of terror was supposedly ended by "fitting" him to his own bed.

¹⁰⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', in *The Vindications: The Rights of Men and The Rights of Woman*, ed. by D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Broadview Press, 1997), p. 199.

of the text. Satirising both *Emile* and Rousseau's reservations regarding aesthetic experience in both the *Letter to d'Alembert* and his *Confessions*, when Virginia eventually discovers a volume of Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul and Virginia*, she is presented as being supposedly unable to distinguish between her own feelings and those of her fictional namesake. But far from "fitting the bed," it is important to remember that this presentation is partly mediated a male narrative voice, in whose interest it lies that she adhere to this mould. In a process of extratextual disruption, we are confronted with the type of moment in the text where, as Susan Egenolf puts it, 'the fictional texture of the work is disrupted, revealing both its structuring and the cultural and social world beyond the text.'¹⁰⁵ While Egenolf is more concerned with the depiction of Virginia in the picture commissioned by Hervey earlier in the text, this moment nevertheless serves a similar function in which both the character and reader are made aware of the mechanics at play in the construction of identity, displayed here through Virginia's growing awareness of Hervey's educational plan, born itself out of literary transportation. The moment Virginia encounters the Virginia of *Paul and Virginia* becomes, in light of this, all the more self-referential. Relating that 'Virginia threw her arms round Mrs Ormond, and laid her head upon her friend's bosom, *as if she wished* to realise the illusion, and to be the Virginia of whom she had been reading', the narrator even hints at not only a difficulty in divesting her own identity from her literary double, but more worryingly an apparently active attempt to lose herself in the fiction.¹⁰⁶ Importantly, however, at this point, the 'frame of art' is made apparent. The optative "as if she wished" implies that this wishing is unresolved and serves to undermine the picture Hervey has, up to this point, painted of Virginia, who in spite of her characterisation in the text as the idle young romance-reader, remains self-aware. She does not, as Rousseau suggests is the case, lose herself in fiction. The narrator, whose presentation of Virginia up to this point has seemed to be in line with Hervey's, acknowledges Virginia's imagined self as an illusion and we encounter a character who challenges Mrs Ormond, lamenting, 'how could you possibly know *all* my thoughts and feelings? I never told them to you; for, indeed, I have only confused ideas, floating in my imagination, from the books I have been reading. I do not distinctly know my own feelings.'¹⁰⁷ Virginia displays a degree of self-awareness at this point that belies

¹⁰⁵ Egenolf, p. 323.

¹⁰⁶ My emphasis, Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 381.

¹⁰⁷ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 381.

an ability to retain critical distance from her literary progenitor that neither Hervey, the Day/Rousseau analogue in the text, nor Mrs Ormond are able to see. Recognising her blurring identity but remaining able to distinguish between her own feelings and those she has developed through reading, even Virginia is able to find some degree of critical distance from the text. Her perceived inability to distinguish between her imaginative and overly sympathetic interaction with the romances she reads and reality serves inevitably to highlight the failure of Clarence Hervey's educational experiment rather than any failing on Virginia's part, satirising the very idea that uncensored reading plans are in any way pedagogically dangerous. As I will go on to discuss in the following chapter, this inescapable awareness of the textuality of novels renders the sorts of criticisms of the form raised by Green and More as essentially untenable. If anything, what this undermining of Rousseau's own reservations concerning literature provides, is a justification, as we will see in my discussions of both Hays and Godwin, for the applicability of his philosophy of learning when applied to literary texts.

Edgeworth's satire is not, however, merely an attack on contemporary theories of aesthetic experience. Her presentation of Virginia in the text serves as another point of conflict in her exploration of Rousseauvean educational methodology. Set up in direct opposition to the happy Percival children, Virginia becomes the vehicle both for Edgeworth's antagonistic engagement with Day but also her continuing critique of Rousseau. Constructed as a model against which to measure Clarence Hervey's highly flawed pedagogical methods, the Percivals represent the progressive educational ideal, following, in their domestic education of their children, something very close to the practical educational model that Edgeworth had outlined in *Practical Education*. Mr Percival comes, in the narrative, to represent the ideal Edgeworthian pedagogue. 'From the merest trifles he could lead to some scientific fact, some happy literary allusion, or philosophic investigation,' and education founded, in this presentation of it, on discussion and dialogue and firmly grounded in the domestic environment.¹⁰⁸ Held up against this rational domestic ideal, Hervey's Rousseauvean natural woman suffers greatly by comparison. Kept in a state of social and intellectual stasis in the vain attempt to preserve Virginia's imagined innocence, Harvey abandons even the pretence of education

¹⁰⁸ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 216.

following a single failed attempt to teach her how to write. Instead, Virginia must rely on the romances she is allowed to read, to teach her about the world. In spite of the eventual satirical resolution of the Virginia subplot, the narrative is shot through with what will eventually be revealed as relatively tongue-in-cheek warnings against the consumption of novels. Virginia's mother, 'a sentimental girl, who had been spoiled by early novel-reading' elopes with an officer at the age of sixteen and is subsequently "ruined".¹⁰⁹ Virginia herself fares little better and develops into a confused young woman who cultivates such a warped understanding of society through the ideals expressed in the romances she so avidly consumes that she, for most of the narrative, is presented as being unable to extricate any sense of self divorced from the books she has been reading. But it would be misleading to think of Virginia's social naivety as being the result of her literary education, particularly in light of her enforced isolation and exclusion from society at the hands of Hervey and his misguided educational experiment. Hervey's presentation of her is increasingly brought into question as the text progresses, and her character becomes more obviously in keeping with the satirical tenor we see in the resolution of her narrative arc than an embodiment of the criticism of excessive novel reading we are initially presented with by Hervey. The case of Virginia, however, does more than merely satirise the idea that unregulated consumption of literature can distort the reader's sense of self, it functions to highlight that for Edgeworth, how the reader interacts with a text is far more important than the nature of the literary text itself. If anything, what this passage displays is the extent of the reclamation of Rousseauvean educational philosophy at the hands of the likes of Wollstonecraft, Hays and Edgeworth by this time. Though by no means an ideal subject, the much-maligned Rachel/Virginia comes inevitably to embody something of the tenor of Wollstonecraft's excited reading of Rousseau in 1787. Understanding the obvious limitations of Rousseau's approach in book V of *Emile*, Wollstonecraft nevertheless recognises something more universal in Rousseau's text, writing to her sister, 'He chuses a *common* capacity to educate – and gives reason, that genius will educate itself.'¹¹⁰ 'It was Rousseau's opinion respecting men,' that Wollstonecraft 'extend[ed] to women,' in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and in

¹⁰⁹ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 408.

¹¹⁰ Original emphasis, Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina Wollstonecraft, 24 March 1787, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Ralph Martin Wardle (London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 145.

Virginia, we have a fitting embodiment of this philosophy.¹¹¹ Using one of Rousseau's principle ideals to undermine his own problematic gendered approach to education, Virginia refuses to be "fitted to the bed." What Edgeworth shows in this passage is something close to what Wollstonecraft recognises in her 1787 reading of *Emile*, that reading can function as a more widespread form of educational practice that has the potential to destabilise the gendered prejudice that is so prevalent in educational philosophy at this time.

This focus on reception as a valid educative principle holds with the argument I have forwarded surrounding Rousseau's reframing of the emphasis of pedagogical relationships in the previous chapter; however, Edgeworth is by no means passively accepting Rousseauvean educational philosophy. What we see in Edgeworth's reception of Rousseau is a conscious effort to ground his theoretical arguments in practical observation, constructing a more empirically justifiable educational methodology. Edgeworth's educational philosophy comes in turn to reflect this preoccupation with empirically defensible antecedents, and we see this in her deployment of educative fiction. Edgeworth's conception of literary reception, grounded in her practical approach to education, is, in this way, equally concerned with the need to both demonstrate and enact the experimental learning she is advocating. In her earlier literature for children, this is exemplified in the Rosamond stories that invite a two-tiered reading, both illustrating the ideal Edgeworthian pedagogue, a lesson aimed primarily at parents, while also encouraging, in the younger reader, active intellectual participation in the moral lessons played out within the narrative itself. As we begin looking at Edgeworth's adult fiction the educative intent is in no ways diminished but, given the relative maturity of the implied reader, the moral elements of the text are less overtly signposted by Edgeworth. By removing the narrative guidance that we see through the inclusion of Rosamond's mother in 'The Purple Jar' for example, in *Belinda* Edgeworth leaves the educative moral of the text unresolved. By encouraging more mature and complex interpretive praxis, the text thus ensures the adult reader is just as actively involved in

¹¹¹ Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', p. 129.

the educative project as the implied readers, both young and old, that we see in Edgeworth's children's fiction.

CHAPTER FOUR

'A MORE STRIKING AND AFFECTING LESSON': EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE IN MARY HAYS'S *MEMOIRS OF EMMA COURTNEY*

Rouse the nobler energies of your mind; be not the slave to your passions, neither dream of eradicating them. Sensation generates interest, interest passion, passion forces attention, attention supplies the powers, and affords the means of attaining its end: in proportion to the degree of interest, will be that of attention and power. Thus are talents produced. Every man is born with sensation, with the aptitude of receiving impressions; the force of those impressions depends on a thousand circumstances, over which he has little power; these circumstances form the mind, and determine the future character. We are all the creatures of education; but in that education, what we call chance, or accident, has so great a share, that the wisest preceptor, after all his cares, has reason to tremble: one strong affection, one ardent incitement, will turn, in an instant, the whole current of our thoughts, and introduce a new train of ideas and associations.¹

(Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*)

In this piece of advice offered by Emma Courtney to her adopted son, Augustus, in the opening pages of Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), Hays outlines an educational manifesto striking in its similarity to that which Edgeworth would adopt in *Practical Education* in 1798. Grounded in the same mode of experimental education we see forwarded by Rousseau in *Emile*, Hays's model similarly emphasises the need to ground education in individual experience. Her inclination towards Helvétian empiricism, however, allows for a philosophy of education that was able to incorporate into the strictly rational system forwarded by Rousseau, a privileging of the importance of emotional experience that is conspicuously missing in Rousseau's own account of early rational development.² By drawing on her own life, she introduces into her writing a

¹ Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, ed. by Marilyn Brooks, Broadview Literary Texts (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2000), p. 42.

² Much has been made of Hays's familiarity with Helvétius in modern scholarship with Marilyn Brooks providing much of the impetus behind arguments in favour of reading *Emma Courtney* as a work of Helvétian philosophy. See especially, Marilyn Brooks, 'Introduction', in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, by Mary Hays, Broadview Literary Texts (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2000); Marilyn Brooks, 'A Critical Study of the Writings of Mary Hays, With an Edition of Her Unpublished Letters to William Godwin.' (Queen Mary & Westfield College, University of London, 1995), pp. 52–95; Burton R. Pollin, 'Mary Hays on Women's Rights',

depth of personal experience that privileged a shift towards a more active emotional engagement with the reader just as contemporary critics were calling for a move away from what was seen by many as being a dangerously affective form. More than merely adding a deeper emotional intensity to her writing, Hays draws on her own lived experience as a means of valorising her text, conceiving of a form of literary praxis that privileges emotional experience as being integral to rational thought. Grounded in the same 'practical' experimental approach that Edgeworth would come to champion in *Practical Education*, Hays plays with conventions of fiction and life-writing in a manner that displays a shift toward the politically conscious psychological realism so admired and imitated by Edgeworth at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Published in the same year as Maria Edgeworth's *Parent's Assistant* in 1796, Hays's *Emma Courtney* was conceived in November 1795 following a 'hint' from William Godwin that a fictional exploration of her life might help her come to terms with what had become an increasingly difficult and ultimately frustrated relationship with Dissenting Unitarian, William Frend.³ In much the same way that Godwin would turn to the novel as a philosophical vehicle in 1794, Hays uses it to examine the fraught philosophical relationship between rationality and sensibility, building towards an understanding of literary affect that was able to justify felt emotion as empirically valid within the experiential educational model advocated by Rousseau in the 1760s. In what had become a commonplace approach within the emergent Jacobin fiction of reform that Godwin's *Things as they are; or, Caleb Williams* (1794) would come to typify, Hays embraces the idea that the novel could effectively function as a vehicle for philosophical discourse. Taking her cue from the Quixotic satires that proliferated throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century, Hays's text is intimately concerned with education, paying particular attention to the role that reading played in the early development of character. In a preface that meticulously sets up the educative intent of the work, Hays marshals Helvétius as a means of foregrounding this preoccupation. The Preface begins:

Etudes Anglaises, 3 (1971), 271–82 (p. 274); Gina Luria Walker, "'Sewing in the Next World": Mary Hays as Dissenting Autodidact in the 1780s', *Romanticism on the Net*, 2002.

³ Hays to Godwin, 5 November 1795. Mary Hays and Marilyn L. Brooks, *The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, Mellen Critical Editions and Translations ; (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), v. 13, pp. 405–7.

The most interesting, and the most useful, fictions, are, perhaps, such, as delineating the progress, and tracing the consequences, of one strong, indulged, passion, or prejudice, afford materials, by which the philosopher may calculate the powers of the human mind, and learn the springs which set it in motion.⁴

Born out of Hays's particular brand of philosophical necessitarianism, this framing of the narrative in terms of its potential utility functions to highlight the dual nature of the text. Conceived here by Hays as a 'useful' fiction, *Emma Courtney* becomes, in these terms, a narrative concerned with tracing the consequences that make its heroine's actions in the text inevitable, while also suggesting the possibility that future error might be mitigated through an interrogation of the past. The novel's preoccupation with this type of causal determinism frames the text as a potentially potent educative medium that, through its ability to engender emotional readerly response, has the capacity to forcefully affect the reader's life in much the same way that Hays is suggesting Emma's reading does within the narrative itself. Importantly, however, Hays does gesture towards the Rousseauvean preoccupation with modes of reading because, much as the experience of reading the text within Hays's deterministic parameters renders its influence on the reader inevitable, her framing of the reader as a philosopher suggests that the reader has the agency to control this effect to some degree. Using 'to calculate' in the potential mood, Hays would seem to be promoting a rational interaction with the text, but, as we shall see, this straightforward reading belies a far more critical interrogation of contemporary educational thought in the text. That it is 'strong, indulged, passion' that provides the material for the rational examination of human nature she is suggesting should, in keeping with this, be telling of an approach to literary texts that is not as cautionary as Hays's prefatory remarks would suggest.

Framing her text as a lesson in literary form, Hays writes: 'the errors of my heroine were the offspring of sensibility; and that the result of her hazardous experiment is calculated to operate as a *warning*, rather than as an example.'⁵ This is not at this time a new thematic concern by any stretch of the imagination, with Hays even going so far as to label her subject 'a sentiment hackneyed in this species of composition.'⁶ And, while many of

⁴ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 35.

⁵ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 36.

⁶ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 36.

her earlier reviewers seem to have taken this caveat at face value, I would suggest that this overlooks a far more sophisticated engagement with the genre than a literalistic reading of Hays's nod to the Jacobin agenda that her prefatory remarks would suggest. If one attends to her engagement with the novel as a form as well as the plot itself it quickly becomes apparent that the warning Hays is presenting us with is not a warning against the supposed 'dangerous consequences' of unrestrained passion that reviewers in the *Analytical Review* and *Monthly Magazine* were so quick to praise her for.⁷ As Janet Todd quite rightly observes, the effect of Hays's text is far from cautionary 'the perspective throughout is dangerously the heroine's and she is as likely to glory in as denigrate the plot.'⁸ The reader is, after all, as she goes on to argue, 'allowed to identify with [Emma], indeed is encouraged to do so – as she [the reader] has been in most of the novels of high sensibility.'⁹ Much in keeping with this reading, Hays outlines a far more telling plan for her literary project in a letter to William Frend written in the early months of 1796;

I wish (said I) to employ myself in a work of fiction, to engage my mind, sluice off its impression. A philosophical delineation of errors of passion, of the mischiefs of yielding to the illusions of the imagination, might be useful _ Nothing coolly written cou'd express, with equal force, the feelings, mistakes & miseries, I mean to depicture.¹⁰

What is immediately striking about Hays's delineation of her project is the seeming disjuncture between the driving force behind the work and her choice of vehicle. Defending the philosophical legitimacy of her project, Hays frames fiction as the ideal medium for her intellectual exploration of passion because of its ability to introduce a greater degree of authenticity into her examination of feelings and passions in a way not possible in more traditional works of abstract philosophy. Pushing against the 'cool'

⁷ *The Analytical Review, or History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign, on an Enlarged Plan.*, 25 (London: J. Johnson, 1797), p. 174; *Monthly Magazine*, 3 (London: Printed for R. Phillips, 1797), p. 47.

⁸ Janet Todd, "'The Unsex'd Females': Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays", in *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1660-1800* (Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 236–52 (p. 242); see also, Nicola J. Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 45.

⁹ Todd, "'The Unsex'd Females': Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays", p. 243.

¹⁰ Quoted in Mary Hays, 'Letter to William Godwin, 6th February 1796', Hays and Brooks, v. 13, p. 430.

rationality of theoretical discourse, Hays justifies fiction as a valid philosophical medium because of its ability to better replicate feelings and passions, thus enabling a degree of empirical experience on the part of the reader. Heavily influenced by Rousseau's *Héloïse*, Hays uses the epistolary genre to dramatize the relationship between the reader and the text, casting characters as both authors and readers who continually engage both in the creation and consumption of literary texts.¹¹ Louise Joy has suggested that this move towards the fictional form and her use of first-person narrative in particular allowed Hays to 'rehabilitate the subjective component that falls out of accounts of emotions offered by non-fictional philosophy.'¹² This becomes particularly important when considered in relation to her engagement with both Godwin and Rousseau. Rousseau in particular becomes a target here because, while much of his educational philosophy is concerned with emotional growth, his persistent and enduring insistence on the need to regulate emotions is, for Hays, at odds with lived experience and therefore untenable. Because the Rousseauvean cultivation of emotions we see in *Emile* is theoretical, it becomes in turn, through this idealistic genesis, thereby both unrealistic and unattainable. *Emma Courtney* comes inevitably, then, to undermine much of book four of *Emile* by highlighting just how disconnected the Rousseauvean understanding of emotional development is from the real world. In the model of Edgeworth, what Hays's text achieves then, is to provide a 'practical' example of emotional education, one that enables a grounding of the overly theoretical approach typified by works like *Emile*; affording, through its basis in lived experience as well as its ability to engender emotional identification, a two-tiered justification for Hays's approach. More than merely offering a validation of the autobiographical nature of the text, the vicarious experience of emotion allowed for by her use of the first-person confessional narrative enables the formal and philosophical challenge to Rousseau that *Emma Courtney* inevitably poses. The consequences of surrendering to the very 'illusions of the imagination' that make the novelistic form so appealing a medium in the first place are rendered thereby integral to her philosophical project, becoming the site of her inevitable educational intervention.

¹¹ See Marshall (2005) for an in depth discussion of how Rousseau's *Héloïse* dramatises the epistolary form, exploring the introduction of aesthetic experience into the landscape of the sentimental novel, David Marshall, *The Frame of Art: Fictions of Aesthetic Experience, 1750–1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 91–126.

¹² Louise Joy, 'Novel Feelings: Emma Courtney's Point of View', *European Romantic Review*, 21.2 (2010), 221–34 (pp. 221–22).

In a telling letter to Godwin written in February of 1796, Hays defends her text, arguing:

Had I, you say, “worship’d at the altar of reason but half as assiduously as I have sacrificed at the shrine of illusion, my happiness might have been enviable.” - But, do you not perceive, that my reason was the auxiliary of my passion - or rather, my passion the generative principle of my reason?¹³

Bringing us back to Hays’s opening remarks in the preface to *Emma Courtney*, what this argument suggests, then, is that Hays’s reliance on the Helvétian primacy of the passions combined with an educational philosophy grounded in an *a posteriori* understanding of knowledge acquisition renders emotional experience as being integral to rational thought. Hays draws here on Helvétius’s argument in *De l’Esprit: or, Essays on the Mind and its Several Faculties* (1758) that ‘in man all is reducible to feeling,’ going on to claim that ‘The total absence of passion, if possible, would reduce us to the most absolute stupidity; and that the less we are animated by our passions, the nearer we approach that state.’¹⁴ Built in turn around the Rousseauvean ideal that our educational obligation to interrogate our sensations renders experience instructional, Hays vindicates the ‘errors of passion’ that serve as the driving force behind *Emma Courtney* because of their instructional capacity. Looking forward to the fusion of sensibility and reason we see emerging in her correspondence with Godwin, this Helvétian insistence on the usefulness of mistakes introduces the idea that emotions, or more strictly, feelings, have the potential to functionally educate, even within this seemingly cautionary framework. What Hays is suggesting in her letter to Frennd is that the apologetic preface she would go on to give her novel is largely unnecessary because of her emphasis on the attempt rather than the outcome. She is thus at pains to point out in *Emma Courtney*:

Every writer, who advances principles, whether true or false, that have a tendency to set the mind in motion, does good. Innumerable mistakes have been made, both moral and philosophical:- while covered with a sacred and mysterious veil, how are they to be detected? From various combinations and multiplied experiments, truth, only, can result.¹⁵

¹³ Hays to Godwin, 6 February 1796, in Hays and Brooks, v. 13, p. 425.

¹⁴ Claude Adrien Helvétius, *De l’Esprit: Or, Essays on the Mind and Its Several Faculties* (London: The Translator, 1759), p. 7 and 160.

¹⁵ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 36.

More than merely providing a justification for the educational validity of the fictional form, this passage functions both as a defence for her own process of self-examination as well as making a case for its place within the public sphere in its eventual novelistic form. If it had not been published two years earlier, Hays's project could almost be read as a direct response to Edgeworth's call to action in the appendix to *Practical Education*. Even had it not been drawn from Hays's own lived experience, the very shape and frame of the narrative supports the Edgeworthian ideal that the only way to come to terms with human nature is through practical observation of people. Emma's coda seeks to vindicate her writing on these terms, addressing her adopted son: 'I have unfolded the errors of my past life – I have traced them to their source – I have laid bare my mind before you, that the experiments which have been made upon it may be beneficial to yours!'¹⁶ Emma's justification for the confessional nature of the text thus becomes a self-reflective version of this pedagogical method. Profoundly 'practical' in Edgeworth's sense of the word, Hays's approach to the text, grounded in her observation and interrogation of her own life and feelings, construes felt experience as both the subject and the foundation of her philosophical argument. Drawing on the principle that education is supplementary to experience, we are thus presented with an Emma Courtney who urges us in the opening letter to Augustus's son, 'Learn, then, from the incidents of my life [...] a more striking and affecting lesson than abstract philosophy can ever afford.'¹⁷ Markedly different from the understanding of affectivity we see in Hays's earlier *Letters and Essays*, this signals a shift away from a stress on the need to moderate emotions towards an affective philosophy more in keeping with Hays's own lived experience.¹⁸ More than the straightforward didactic lesson we might expect following Hays's prefatory arguments, Emma's framing of the narrative as an 'affecting lesson' suggests a text that sits uncomfortably at an intersection between the novel of sentiment and the didactic novel of the sort famously favoured by Samuel Johnson.

¹⁶ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 220.

¹⁷ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 43.

¹⁸ See for example 'Hentrietta and Edwin', Hays's examination of grief following the death of John Eccles, which was published in *Letters and Essays* and draws heavily on Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), stressing the need for emotional regulation and restraint.

In the tradition of works like Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), *Emma Courtney* courts the same uneasy relationship between pronouncements on education and a tendency towards what Michael Bell calls 'literalistic moral conception' in literature.¹⁹ Born of the idea that sentimental fiction was able to exert moral power over a reader through the process of emotional identification, 'the moral or didactic impact of the work' becomes in Bell's terms 'isomorphic with the moral nature of the characters.'²⁰ Not dissimilar to didactic fiction such as Thomas Day's *History of Sandford and Merton* (1783-1789) and much of Hannah More's later *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795-1817), Hays's portrayal of Emma's errors, supposedly the result of an improper education, contrasted with Emma's retrospective caveat would appear to reflect this literalistic conception of fiction.²¹ *Emma Courtney* would seem then to be engaging in the type of affective verisimilitude that Bell develops in relation to Samuel Richardson's novels in which readers conscious of the fictional nature of the text nevertheless respond to it with emotional identification creating a situation whereby 'emotions of reality and the indulgence of fiction [are] mutually intensifying.'²² Given that the *Monthly Review*, *British Critic* and *Critical Review* were all quick to point towards Hays's debt to Rousseau, with the *Monthly Review* even going so far as to praise Emma as the 'third Eloisa,' it is tempting to read *Emma Courtney* in these terms.²³ The perception of verisimilitude in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is after all closely

¹⁹ Bell, *Open Secrets*, p. 38.

²⁰ Bell, *Open Secrets*, p. 38.

²¹ Thomas Day, *The History of Sandford and Merton*, ed. by Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave (Peterborough, Ont. ; Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2010); Hannah More, 'Cheap Repository Tracts', in *Hymns in Prose for Children / by Anna Laetitia Barbauld ; with a Pref. for the Garland Ed. by Miriam Kramnick. Cheap Repository Tracts / by Hannah More ; with a Pref. for the Garland Ed. by James Silverman.*, by Anna Letitia Barbauld and Hannah More, *Classics of Children's Literature 1621-1932* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977).

²² Bell, *Open Secrets*, p. 9; Bell develops the implications of the term 'affective verisimilitude' in Bell, *The Sentiment of Reality*, pp. 7–11; see especially Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady*, ed. by Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1986).

²³ *Monthly Review*, 22 (London: Hurst, Robinson, 1797), p. 449; *The British Critic: A New Review*, 19 (London: F. and C. Rivington, 1797), pp. 314–15; *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature.*, N.s., 19 (London: W. Simplin and R. Marshall, 1797), pp. 109–11. It is worth noting that the more conservative *British Critic* was not as complimentary of this influence as the *Monthly Review* with the reviewer condemning Hays's engagement with both

linked with its ability to inspire affective attachment. The experience attained through the act of reading *Héloïse* is construed, therefore, in Bell's terms, as being empirically justifiable through its ability to engender actual emotional response. Readers of Rousseau were, as we have seen, quite often so moved by the story of Julie and Saint-Preux that they 'knew' it to be true.²⁴ Indeed, for Bell, 'there is an especially close, even a principled, relationship implied between the moral efficacy of the narrative and its apparent historicity.'²⁵ This would hold then with the assertion that sentimental literature, through an exploitation of a readerly appetite for feeling, takes on a pedagogical role, training readers through engendering exemplary emotional engagement with characters, because, as Janet Todd is at pains to explain, in sentimental literature 'life and literature are directly linked, not through any notion of mimetic depiction of reality, but through the belief that the literary experience can intimately affect the living one.'²⁶ Where *Emma Courtney* departs from this model is in that, while Hays is able to marshal sentimental tropes, in Todd's terms, as a means of authorising her didactic message, it possesses something more than mere 'apparent' historicity. The argument generally put forward in relation to Hays is that because *Emma Courtney* has such a thinly disguised autobiographical referent, this lends Hays's text a similar degree of verisimilitude to texts like *Héloïse*, but one based on a physiological realism born of personal experience rather than from the psychological idealism represented by the likes of Richardson and Rousseau. The text engages, in other words, in a double authorising in which its actual historicity justifies its message while at the same time reciprocally implicating the reader in the text. Hays's novel comes then to represent an experiential lesson decrying the dangers of indulging in excessive sensibility but one which remains conscious of the potential for heightened sensibility which the novel as a form possesses. Actively marshalling the very thing which the novel seems to be warning against, Hays engages in the relationship between this affective potential and the novel's didactic ends. Moving

Rousseau and Helvétius, claiming 'a less limited circle of reading and acquaintance would better qualify her to discharge the duties of her sex.'

²⁴ See for example, Anonymous letter to Rousseau, March 1761, Rousseau, VIII, pp. 257–58; Letter from Mme Du Verger to Rousseau, 1762, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Correspondance Complete de Rousseau: 1762, Lettres 1620-1814*, ed. by R. A. Leigh (Voltaire Foundation, 2004), X, p. 47.

²⁵ Bell, *The Sentiment of Reality*, p. 7.

²⁶ Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1986), p. 4; for a fuller discussion of this relationship see Keen, pp. 42–48.

beyond a straightforward parroting of Jacobin didacticism, however, Hays develops her own literary formula marshalling conventions of sentimental fiction in a move towards what she would eventually term 'familiar narrative.'²⁷

Writing in a *Monthly Magazine* article in 1798 in which she discusses Johnson's 1750 *Rambler* article, she sets out her own ideas in what Marilyn Brooks has called her 'literary manifesto'. In it Hays writes:

The business of familiar narrative should be to describe life and manners in real or probable situations, to delineate the human mind in its endless varieties, to develop the heart, to paint the passions, to trace the springs of action, to interest the imagination, exercise the affections, and awaken the powers of the mind. A good novel ought to be subservient to the purposes of truth and philosophy.²⁸

More than merely highlighting her belief in a verisimilitudinous literature, one that is by necessity educative, Hays develops a narrative model here that engages reason through sentiment. With these terms most often placed in opposition to each other, Hays unsettles what becomes here a false dichotomy between sentiment and reason. In a privileging of sentimental feeling over purely rational discourse, Hays gestures towards Godwin's preface to *Caleb Williams* in which he writes that if he 'shall have taught a valuable lesson, without subtracting from the interest and passion by which a performance of this sort ought to be characterized, he will have reason to congratulate himself upon the vehicle he has chosen.'²⁹ Mirroring Godwin's project, in *Emma Courtney*, Hays forwards a similar educational program in which, while literature should be subservient to 'truth and philosophy,' it remains one of the most potent vehicles for it. But as we shall see, Hays's text is not a literary construction of the sort produced by Godwin. It departs from the Godwinian formula in that it is very directly linked with her own personal experience in a manner more reminiscent of the early writings of Inchbald and Wollstonecraft. Hays, in fact, goes far beyond the sort of autobiographical writing we see both Wollstonecraft and

²⁷ Hays, 'On Novel Writing', p. 181.

²⁸ Hays, 'On Novel Writing', p. 181.

²⁹ William Godwin, *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, New Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 1.

Inchbald engaging in, with many of the letters within the text being almost verbatim copies of actual letters between both her and Friend in the case of the Harley correspondence and Godwin in the case of the letters between Emma and Mr Francis. Hays, thus, explains to Godwin in 1795, 'The epistolary form I conceived the most adapted to my style & habits of composition, but I cou'd not please myself - fictitious correspondence affords me not the stimulus which I ever feel when addressing my friends.'³⁰ *Emma Courtney* becomes as a result of this, a direct challenge to the fundamental idealism of a form that traditionally depicted characters 'not as they really exist, but, as, we are told, they ought to be – a sort of *ideal perfection*, in which nature and passion are melted away, and jarring attributes wonderfully combined.'³¹ Functioning to justify her reframing of the novel in a fashion more in keeping with the psychological realism produced by the practical pedagogical approach favoured by Edgeworth, this critique of idealism suggests a philosophical rationale for her reliance on autobiographical experience in *Emma Courtney*. Her engagement with Johnson becomes in these terms especially pointed, particularly given his belief that 'in narratives where historical veracity has no place, the most perfect models of virtue ought to be exhibited.'³² Hays argues rather that:

It is not necessary that we should be able to deduce from a novel, a formal and didactic moral; it is sufficient if it has a tendency to raise the mind by elevated sentiments, to warm the heart with generous affections, to enlarge our views, or to increase our stock of useful knowledge. A more effectual lesson might perhaps be deduced from tracing the pernicious consequences of an erroneous judgement, a wrong step, an imprudent action, an indulged and intemperate affection, a bad habit, in a character in other respects, amiable and virtuous, than in painting chimerical perfection and visionary excellence, which rarely, if ever, existed.³³

In these terms it is easy to see where Hays departs from Bell's literalistic moral conception of literature. Because, just as Rousseau is concerned with a departure from a propositional approach to education, Hays similarly favours an experiential method and even though we are presented with a very direct moral at the beginning of the novel, the actual body of the work is more concerned to argue rather than merely to state that

³⁰ Mary Hays to William Godwin, November 1795, in Hays and Brooks, v. 13, p. 412.

³¹ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 36.

³² Quoted in Hays, 'On Novel Writing', p. 180.

³³ Hays, 'On Novel Writing', pp. 180–81.

moral. In much this fashion, Hays foregrounds the role of the reader in interpreting the text. So, while she is at pains to highlight the role of the writer/philosopher in 'delineating the progress, and tracing the consequences, of one strong, indulged, passion, or prejudice,' she is equally concerned to prepare the reader, or as she styles them in her preface, 'the philosopher', for her often contradictory presentation of this process. Emma is thus at pains to entreat her adopted son in the opening pages of the novel to 'exercise your understanding, think freely, investigate every opinion, disdain the rust of antiquity, raise systems, invent hypotheses, and, by the absurdities they involve, seize on the clue of truth.'³⁴ As the addressee of the text, Augustus the younger functions as an analogue for the reader, with Hays opening the text on a note of confrontation, challenging him to consider his reception of the text within this retrospectively critical framework. Crucially, however, this advice doesn't preclude the possibility of indulging in the same emotional excesses the text is supposedly warning against, only that one have the capacity to reflect upon them and by doing so learn something from the experience. Her early appeal for a sympathetic reading of Emma's 'errors' comes then to reframe them as the site for her engagement with both Rousseau and Helvétius. Because the educational emphasis lies, for Hays, in much the same fashion we see in Aristotle's conception of praxis, in the attempt itself, she highlights how emotions can function as powerful educative mediums, writing again in the preface:

The philosopher – who is not ignorant, that light and shade are more powerfully contrasted in minds rising above the common level; that, as rank weeds take strong root in a fertile soil, vigorous powers not unfrequently produce fatal mistakes and pernicious exertions; that character is the produce of a lively and constant affection – may, possibly, discover in these Memoirs traces of reflection, and of some attention to the phaenomena of the human mind.³⁵

Supported by the Helvétian educational justification of failure, Hays pushes against the view that fiction's didactic potential lies solely in its capacity for the portrayal of idealised positive moral exemplar.³⁶ What this suggests is that Emma is advocating that her adoptive son follow the same course of action that she so suffers for following throughout the course of the narrative. The retrospective attainment of enlightenment on her part,

³⁴ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, pp. 35, 42.

³⁵ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 37.

³⁶ Johnson, p. 144.

however, implies that the act of reading *Emma Courtney* is, in these terms, mimetic of the type of experimental education Emma is undergoing throughout the text. This would allow, then, for an understanding of affective identification that has the capacity to create an experience of the text that moves beyond a passive reception of descriptive prose. It is just this danger which so worries Johnson, when he warns us in his preface to the March issue of the *Rambler* in 1750 that 'if the power of example is so great, as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken, that when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited.'³⁷ Building on the idea that novelistic example, through its affective potential, is inevitably didactic, he warns that: 'It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are proper for imitation.'³⁸ To this assertion Hays poses the question 'In fitting beings for human society, why should we seek to deceive them, by illusive representations of life? – Why should we not rather paint it as it really exists, mingled with imperfection, and discoloured by passion?'³⁹ It is here that we find in Hays's writing its primary educative thrust, while, drawing attention to the relationship between moral development and fictional practice, Hays engages in a process whereby, as Mitzi Myers aptly puts it, 'the new stress on emphatic guidance (rather than dictation) in the learning process translates into a literary theory stressing reader identification and realistic narratology.'⁴⁰ Because while earlier novels like Richardson's *Clarissa* were generally praised for their ability to incite readerly response through this sort of exemplary affective moralising, Hays contends that novelistic examples of this sort cannot effectively function in the manner in which Johnson claims. 'The character of *Clarissa*,' Hays argues, is 'a beautiful superstructure upon a false and airy foundation, can never be regarded as a model for imitation. It is the portrait of an ideal being, placed in circumstances equally ideal, far removed from common life and human feelings.'⁴¹ Because the focus of sentimental literature is not on the text itself but rather on the reading of it, or more

³⁷ Samuel Johnson, 'Rambler, 4 (31 March 1750)', in *Novel and Romance, 1700-1800: A Documentary Record*, ed. by Ioan Williams (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), pp. 142–46 (p. 144).

³⁸ Johnson, p. 144.

³⁹ Hays, 'On Novel Writing', p. 180.

⁴⁰ Myers, 'Socializing Rosamond', p. 54.

⁴¹ Hays, 'On Novel Writing', pp. 180–81.

strictly the reader's emotional engagement with it, the aesthetic experience of the text quickly becomes, in these terms, dissociated from the real world. It becomes, therefore, difficult to justify a character like Clarissa, or indeed Emile, as a perfect example primarily because both characters represent an ideal and their example is thus unrealistic and subsequently unattainable. Hays is taking exception then, not with the 'beautiful superstructure', as it were, but rather, with its shaky foundations. By substituting this 'airy foundation' with her own lived experience, Hays is able to engage in a type of emotional realism that is empirically justified through its grounding in experience while at the same time able to engender affective identification in the same way that both *Clarissa* and *Héloïse* are able to, thereby creating in turn an empirically grounded affective readerly experience. Hays is able, in this way, to provide an intellectual validation for her approach, justifying her use of autobiographical material as a means of bridging the gap between felt emotion and abstract philosophy. It is a point to which Hays repeatedly returns, because for Hays as we have seen, fiction should be subservient to philosophy but, because of her empirical leanings, philosophy is, for Hays, *a posteriori* and thus only meaningfully pursued through an examination of lived experience. As Mark Philp points out in *Godwin's Political Justice*, 'philosophy, as even the empiricist must recognize, is not in the final analysis an empirical science [...] there is an almost equal underdetermination of theory by evidence.'⁴²

Experience is key, then, to Hays's literary project, forming both the justification and basis for her use of autobiographical fiction. Doggedly defending her novel in a letter to Godwin in 1796, Hays asserts that from her perspective '[her] story is *too real*, [she] cannot violate its truth.'⁴³ Resolute in her defence of the philosophical legitimacy of her approach, she argues:

My M.S. was not written *merely* for the public eye – another latent, & perhaps stronger, motive lurked beneath – If this in some respects has spoiled my story (for I

⁴² Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Duckworth, 1986), p. 60.

⁴³ Mary Hays to William Godwin, May 1796, in Hays and Brooks, v. 13, p. 457.

suspect most of your remarks are just) it has also given to it, that “energy of feeling, & ardor of expression” which impressed you.⁴⁴

Hays’s insistence on the primacy of her own emotional experience displays more than mere self-interest, further highlighting the potential role that empathetic identification could play in her engagement with the form. Louise Joy persuasively argues that this validation of the first-person mode of enquiry ‘mounts a powerful case for the intervention fiction can make in this area, proposing that fiction can sketch emotions with an authenticity that is missing from abstract debates conducted in non-fictional essays and treatises.’⁴⁵ Hays’s own defence of her novel to Godwin would seem to agree, with Hays writing, ‘My aim was merely to shew, & I searched into my own heart for the model, the possible effects of the present system of things, & the contradictory principles which have bewilder’d mankind, upon private character, & private happiness.’⁴⁶ By exploring the relationship between the narrative and its real-world referent, Hays further intensifies the educational capacity of the text, rendering her narrative prose as a sort of ‘practical’ fiction rather than the more abstract, even hypothetical approach one might expect of so philosophical a work. She is not, after all, writing in the vein of Richardson or Rousseau. ‘In delineating the character of Emma Courtney,’ she writes, ‘I had not in view these fantastic models: I meant to represent her, as a human being, loving virtue while enslaved by passion, liable to the mistakes and weaknesses of our fragile nature.’⁴⁷

A thinly veiled version of Hays herself, Emma Courtney comes to represent something close to what Gary Kelly praises Inchbald’s *A Simple Story* for, in which he claims the English Jacobins of the 1790s had ‘a model of psychological self-examination on which they could pattern their own studies of the influence of society and its institutions on the development of individual character.’⁴⁸ What Inchbald achieved, for Kelly, was ‘that

⁴⁴ Mary Hays to William Godwin, May 1796, in Hays and Brooks, v.13, p. 457.

⁴⁵ Joy, ‘Novel Feelings’, p. 226.

⁴⁶ Mary Hays to William Godwin, May 1796, in Hays and Brooks, v. 13, p. 458; Gina Luria has shown that this is an almost verbatim copy of Wollstonecraft’s sentiments on the question of chastity in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, see Gina M. Luria, ‘Mary Hays’s Letters and Manuscripts’, *Signs*, 3.2 (1977), 524–30 (n. 11, p.530).

⁴⁷ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 36.

⁴⁸ Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 64.

novels could use personal experiences to give greater intensity – a personal animus – to treatment of public issues.⁴⁹ Given the widespread knowledge of the autobiographical nature of both Inchbald and Hays's texts and the generally positive reception *A Simple Story* received at the time, it is perhaps surprising that following *Emma Courtney*'s publication Hays faced as much public censure as she did. And while Elizabeth Hamilton's scathing portrayal of Hays as Bridgetina Botherim in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) misses the point of Hays's text entirely, the uncritical conflation of Emma Courtney and Mary Hays in much of the anti-Jacobin press led inevitably to Hays's dubious distinction of becoming, as Marilyn Brooks puts it, 'notorious as the caricature of herself.'⁵⁰ Considered by many of her contemporaries as 'a scandalous disrobing in public,' *Emma Courtney* has often fallen victim to the misconception that the autobiographical genesis of the novel rendered it little more than 'a monologic transfer of "life" into "text",' and has too frequently been mistakenly understood through an overly simplistic reduction of text to biography.⁵¹ Consciously engaging in the textualisation of her own personal experience, we see in *Emma Courtney* a process at work that Tilottama Rajan calls autonarration.⁵² Not necessarily a straightforward mimetic engagement of the relationship between her life and the literary text, Hays's text can be better read, argues Rajan, through a recourse to Julia Kristeva's idea that this type of writing effects a series of transpositions between life and fiction, a double textualisation of both the narrative and Hays's personal experiences on which it is based.⁵³ Far from being a one-dimensional transfer of 'life into text,' Hays's novel is, as Rajan highlights, 'a textually self-conscious work,' which she claims, 'draws upon personal experience as part of its rhetoric, so as to

⁴⁹ Kelly, p. 64.

⁵⁰ Marilyn Brooks, 'A Critical Study of the Writings of Mary Hays, With an Edition of Her Unpublished Letters to William Godwin.', p. 96. Botherim's straightforward parroting of Godwin's *Political Justice* in an attempt to impress those around her demonstrates, I believe, Hamilton's failure to understand Hays's critical position in a text that is very aware of the gap between the philosophical discourse she is engaging in and the reality of lived experience.

⁵¹ Tilottama Rajan, 'Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' "Memoirs of Emma Courtney"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 32.2 (1993), 149–76 (p. 149).

⁵² Rajan, 'Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' "Memoirs of Emma Courtney"', pp. 149–50.

⁵³ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 59–60.

position experience within textuality and relate textuality to experience.⁵⁴ Emotions, grounded in personal experience and literature, are for Hays deeply intertwined; as she was to write to Godwin in 1796, 'we never paint well, but when we *feel* our subject.'⁵⁵ And so, when Godwin protests that the 'radical defect' of Hays's novel is that Emma, 'interested only about herself, will find it difficult to interest others,' Hays is quick to justify her text:

No tragedy, no fiction, can affect passions, that does not concentrate them, in a great measure, in one object. – It is the nature of strong passion, particularly in retirement,⁵⁶ to be absorbed in its sensations – without this a passion wou'd cease to be strong – No terrible effects are to be dreaded from an impression that can easily be diverted – the moment you give the stream vent by different channels, the inundation is no longer to be feared.⁵⁷

The question of sensibility becomes, then, for Hays in particular, something more than merely a theme or a tragic flaw in her main character: it poses a problem which lies at the heart of both how and why *Emma Courtney* was written. As Hays had found in Helvétius: 'Philosophy cannot advance without the staff of experience: it does indeed advance but constantly from observation to observation, and *where observation is wanting it stops*. All that philosophy knows is, that man feels, [and] that he had within him a principle of life.'⁵⁸

Built around a firm belief in this environmental determinism, the narrative of *Emma Courtney* is primarily concerned to trace the causal links and events from Emma's early childhood through to her eventual alienation from civilised society. For Hays, we are all

⁵⁴Rajan, 'Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' "Memoirs of Emma Courtney"', p. 149.

⁵⁵ Mary Hays to William Godwin, May 1796, in Hays and Brooks, v. 13, pp. 456–58.

⁵⁶ A notion Hays finds in Rousseau. The preface to her novel opens with a quote from *Héloïse* in which Rousseau writes, 'The perceptions of persons in retirement are very different from those of people in the great world: their passions, being differently modified, are differently expressed; their imaginations, constantly impressed by the same objects, are more violently affected.' Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Mary Hays to William Godwin, May 1796, in Hays and Brooks, v. 13, pp. 457–58.

⁵⁸ Original emphasis, Claude Adrien Helvétius, *A Treatise on Man, His Intellectual Faculties and His Education: A Posthumous Work of M. Helvetius. Translated from the French, with Additional Notes, by W. Hooper*, trans. by W Hooper (B. Law and G. Robinson, 1777), pp. 96–97; while there has been some debate as to when Hays first came into contact with Helvétius, Burton Pollin has provided conclusive evidence that she was familiar with the 1777 edition of *A Treatise On Man* prior to writing *Emma Courtney*, see Pollin, p. 275.

the product of our education, and because of its ability to evoke an emotional response, literature is the most significant element of this. Mirroring the preoccupation in so many of the Romantic novels produced around this time, Hays's text is concerned to argue for the life-long impact of early reading.⁵⁹ While her own writing is intimately concerned with its philosophical and educational potential, the narrative itself is equally telling of Hays's literary agenda. Influenced more by Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* perhaps than *Emile*, *Emma Courtney* is not a practicable rewriting of Rousseauvean educational philosophy of the sort we see at the hands of Maria Edgeworth but rather a practical interrogation of Rousseau's problematic approach to emotional and moral development. That being said, it is also deeply concerned to trouble established educational ideas both thematically and formally. In much the same way Edgeworth was attempting to use narrative fiction in *The Parent's Assistant* (1796), Hays's presentation of Emma Courtney's early education functions self-reflexively to highlight both the pre-existing flaws in contemporary approaches to education as well as trouble existing perceptions with regard to the educative potential presented by the novel. So, when Hays presents us with a picture in which the young Emma passes her youth in what seems a direct depiction of Wollstonecraft's plea for early childhood to be 'passed in harmless gambols,' this itself becomes a comment on educational practice.⁶⁰ Setting her young character up for the eventual consequences promised in the preface, of the indulgence of one strong 'passion,' Hays charts how Emma becomes enamoured with romances as a young child. Entranced by early retellings of '*Arabian Nights*, *Turkish Tales*, and other works of like marvellous import', the young Emma quickly becomes captivated by these fantastical tales: 'the more they excited vivid emotions, the more wonderful they were, the greater was my transport: they became my favourite amusement, and produced, in my young mind, a strong desire of learning to read the books which contained such enchanting stories.'⁶¹ Emma subsequently learns to read from a very young age and by the time she is six, she is reading, if somewhat uncomprehendingly, Pope's Homer and Thomson's

⁵⁹ See Katie Trumpener, 'Tales for Child Readers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period*, ed. by Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 177–90 (pp. 177–79).

⁶⁰ Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', p. 153.

⁶¹ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 48. Italics added for book titles in quotation.

Seasons for her uncle and his friends. Her early childhood becomes in this fashion defined by quixotism in much the vein of Lennox's *Arabella*:

Every day I became more attached to my books; yet, not less fond of active play; stories were still my passion, and I sighed for a romance that would never end. In my sports with my companions, I acted over what I had read: I was alternately the valiant knight – the gentle damsel – the adventurous mariner – the daring robber – the courteous lover – and the airy coquet.⁶²

While this passage seemingly presents the picture of the ideal childhood, Hays uses this tableau to lay the groundwork for what is to become Emma's eventual tragic flaw. And, although the emphasis on physical activity and play mirrors the Rousseauvean approach to early education favoured by the likes of Wollstonecraft and later Edgeworth, the over indulgence in literary romance is far from the Rousseauvean ideal. As we have seen, Rousseau was, after all, to argue in both the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* (1750) and the *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre* (1758) that literature functions as a major corrupting influence in ideal societies. Divided into two distinct phases, the educational program forwarded by Rousseau in *Emile* is, on a very basic level, conceived principally so as to reconcile humankind's innately selfish nature with the pressures and demands of civic society and it is telling that he delays Emile's reading until the age of 15. This relatively extreme approach, may not have had much practical application but remained influential. Generally approached in sentimental fiction through its inverse, the youth corrupted by excessive reading was to become something of a stock sentimental trope. In a worry seemingly, at least initially, mirrored in Hays's presentation of Emma, reading is dangerous for Rousseau because of its ability to function as a formative act, one that had, for Rousseau at least, a direct and lasting impact on his own developing consciousness. He relates in his *Confessions* (1782): 'I do not know how I learned to read; I only remember my earliest reading, and the effect it had upon me; from that time I date my uninterrupted consciousness.'⁶³ An understanding of knowledge acquisition in these terms begins to shed light on these sort of reservations about exposure to literature at an early age. Charting the danger of the type of identification performed in Hays's text by the young Emma, Rousseau warns against readerly identification which comes at the loss of

⁶² Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 49.

⁶³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, bk. I. p. 6.

self. So, while *La Nouvelle Héloïse* may well have been regarded by many as one of the most influential sentimental novels of the eighteenth century, Rousseau by no means commended literature as a mode of producing “sensible” people. In fact, Rousseau sought just the opposite. In *Emile*, as we have seen, Rousseau delays Emile’s uncensored interaction with literature until, ‘to preserve a sound judgement and integrity of heart, [he] has been the object of eighteen years assiduity.’⁶⁴ It is thus only towards the end of book III of *Emile*, that Rousseau is able to concede: ‘We have succeeded in the formation of an active, thinking being; to complete the man we have nothing more to do than to render him affectionate and susceptible; that is to say to perfect his reason by sentiment.’⁶⁵ It is only once Emile is seen to be, in some senses, refined and sensible that he is even allowed to read novels: Rousseau’s fear being that unregulated consumption of literature produces a damaging excess of sympathy. But where Rousseau is concerned to perfect reason by sentiment, as we have seen, the inverse is true of Hays.

Hays engages rather in a reversal that mirrors Rajan’s presentation of the text as being involved not only in the narrativisation of life in text but also being conversely aware of the possibility for a transposition from text to life. Through her acting out of the romances she is reading, Emma quite literally builds towards a performative understanding of self here in which identity becomes contingent on an identification with literary characters and also through quotation, allusion and parody, a literarily informed act of self-definition.⁶⁶ The young Emma, in these terms, becomes a sort of literary construction, but one that, quite interestingly, defies the gendered stereotype of her role as the young lady, corrupted by excessive exposure to romances. As we have seen in the previous paragraph, Emma plays the part of traditionally subservient female roles, the ‘gentle damsel,’ or the ‘airy coquet,’ but also plays proactive, strong, traditionally masculine characters. Modified by strong adverbs that denote agency, the young Emma not only becomes a knight, a mariner, a robber and a lover, but enacts these roles as valiant, adventurous, daring and courteous. This might seem a trivial point, but what this does

⁶⁴ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, p.215.

⁶⁵ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. III, p. 116.

⁶⁶ Ideas which Judith Butler explores in: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 2011); and Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (Routledge, 2014).

demonstrate is a process of self-definition in which Emma is constructed, not as a passive participant but as the protagonist of her own romance. Not to lose sight of the role this passage plays in developing Emma's character flaw, Hays had after all meant to represent her, not in view of the 'fantastic models,' prompted by Johnson, but 'as a human being, loving virtue while enslaved by passion, liable to mistakes and weaknesses of our fragile nature.'⁶⁷ Emma's eventual 'hazardous experiment' in the latter part of the novel, should, however, come as no surprise given her understanding of herself within the bounds of the romantic narrative, existing as the perceived protagonist of the story. This Rousseauvean process of loss of self in literature is exacerbated as Emma grows up, as she relates: 'my avidity for books daily increased: I subscribed to a circulating library, and frequently read, or rather devoured – little careful in the reflection – from ten to fourteen novels in a week.'⁶⁸ In a nod to the Quixotic tradition, Emma's consumption of romances becomes, in the period before her literary education is taken over by her father, excessive, even grotesque. With the romances she is reading construed as a form of sustenance, her devouring of romances renders the act of reading as little more than a crude bodily function. Far from requiring cerebral reflection, romances become something to be consumed and discarded with little or no thought. It should come as little surprise, then, when Mr Courtney does finally take an interest in his daughter's education, that he confronts her, 'it is as I apprehended... your fancy requires a *rein* rather than a *spur*,' prescribing, 'Your studies, for the future, must be of a soberer nature, or I shall have you mistake my valet for a prince in disguise, my house for a haunted castle, and my rational care for your future welfare for barbarous tyranny.'⁶⁹ In a passage that serves to reinforce contemporary prejudices regarding the sentimental novel, Courtney's remarks mirror the concerns of men like James Fordyce who famously derided the novel for encouraging 'extravagant desires, and notions of happiness alike fantastic and false.'⁷⁰ More than serving as a reiteration of the pedagogic dangers posed by uncritical consumption of fiction, this moment introduces a mentor who possesses the ability to shape Emma positively. Regardless of his inevitable intention, however, Courtney highlights the extent

⁶⁷ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 36.

⁶⁸ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 53.

⁶⁹ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 55.

⁷⁰ James Fordyce, *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the Advantages to Be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women. A Discourse, in Three Parts*, 2nd edn (Dublin: T. Cadell, 1776), p. 48.

to which Emma's unregulated consumption of romances has rendered her, in his construction, as being so emotionally driven that she verges on the animalistic. Hays's explicit emphasis on Courtney's use of equestrian terms displays the controlling nature of the pedagogical relationship between Emma and her father. She is construed by Courtney here as being so dominated by 'fancy' and emotion that she requires a bit and bridle; she requires, in his terms, a controlling influence or in keeping with his metaphor, a rider. Representing, at this point, the patriarchal, male voice, the introduction of Courtney represents a challenge to Emma's autonomy, highlighting the lack of female agency in Emma's construction of self when faced with a traditional educational power dynamic.

While Hays may not seem as concerned with the process of subject formation as Rousseau, 'the mode of instruction by novels,' is, for Hays, fraught with many of the same issues that Rousseau outlines in *Emile*.⁷¹ As the initial set up of her presentation as an otherwise laudable heroine, corrupted by an excess of sensibility, Hays's account of Emma's early education seems, at face value, relatively straightforward. One can immediately begin to appreciate how someone who has grown up continually acting the part of romantic clichés, might struggle to deal with the rigours of the real world. In the most extreme playing out of this in the text, Emma falls in love with the absent son of Mrs Harley in spite of never having met him, exulting Augustus as the 'St Preux, the Emilius of my sleeping and waking reveries.' Building on her opening quotation of Rousseau in the preface, Emma's idolisation of the still imagined Augustus is framed so as to be considered within the context of her isolation and subsequent vulnerability:

Cut off from the society of mankind, and unable to expound my sensations, all the strong affections of my soul seemed concentrated to a single point. Without being conscious of it myself, my grateful love for Mrs Harley had, already, by a transition easy to be traced by a philosophic mind, transferred itself to her son.⁷²

⁷¹ Quotation taken from the preface to Robert Bage's *Man as he Is* (London: Minerva Press, 1792), vol. 1, p. i-vii, quoted in Appendix B of Robert Bage, *Hermesprong: Or, Man as He Is Not*, ed. by Pamela Perkins (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), p. 366.

⁷² Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 91.

Falling in love with what is, at this point, an essential fictional character, Emma falls victim to the conflation of the real and imaginary that her excessive sensibility renders in Hays's terms unavoidable. Her sentimental excess even goes so far as to lead her to seclude herself at Morton Park following her rejecting of a marriage proposal from Montague where she fosters 'the sickly sensibility of my soul, and nursing wild, improbable, chimerical visions of felicity, that, touched by the sober wand of truth, would have "melted into thin air."' ⁷³ But as Hays is quick to highlight, any affection cultivated in this way is predicated on its unattainability. As Helvétius would point out in *De l'Esprit*, 'the end of passion is not the attainment of the object toward which it is directed, but the pleasurable effect of the attained object on the self as agent.' ⁷⁴ Emma is able to some extent to acknowledge this, retrospectively realising 'I loved an ideal object (for such was Augustus Harley to me) with a tender and fervent excess; an excess, perhaps, involving all my future usefulness and welfare.' ⁷⁵ This becomes a problem in the text, because her unhappiness, as indeed was Hays's own, is tied up then in the bind whereby she has been educated to perceive happiness in terms of love and domestic bliss, giving greater force to her eventual lament: 'I feel, that I am neither a philosopher, nor a heroine – but a woman, to whom education has given a sexual character.' ⁷⁶ Hays's necessitarianism comes, then, to demonstrate in these terms the inevitability of both Emma's pursuit of Augustus as well as her inability to conform to the gender expectations of Georgian society. It is perhaps at this point in the novel that we can most obviously see the influence of Mary Wollstonecraft in the text.

Hays's stance on the education of women has very often been directly linked to passages in Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. ⁷⁷ The opening paragraphs of the

⁷³ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 93.

⁷⁴ Ernst Cassirer and Mordecai Grossman, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. by Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettergrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 86; Helvétius, *De l'Esprit*, pp. 8–9.

⁷⁵ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 92.

⁷⁶ Original emphasis, Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 149.

⁷⁷ Much work has been done in studying Wollstonecraft's influence on Hays, with many more recent studies focusing on how in much of Hays's writing, her character's experience of the world is governed by their physical embodiment and constrained by societal norms that function to limit their social and professional opportunities. See, for example, Vivien Jones, 'Placing Jemima: Women Writers of the 1790s and the Eighteenth-Century

second chapter of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* are particularly pertinent to this discussion. In them Wollstonecraft highlights how:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of a man; and should they be beautiful, every thing else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives.⁷⁸

The sexualised nature of education prepares women, in Wollstonecraft's terms, for dependence and precludes the possibility of emancipation from the overwhelmingly oppressive gendered hierarchy so pervasive at this time. This criticism of societal mores is, of course, one of the principal themes that run through Hays's novel and in turn forms the basis of the more radical exploration of gendered inequality in her 1799 novel *The Victim of Prejudice*. In a passage that could almost have been taken verbatim from Wollstonecraft, Emma rails against Francis's claim that 'The first lesson of enlightened reason, the great fountain of heroism and virtue, the principle by which alone man can become what man is capable of being, is *independence*.'⁷⁹ Highlighting, much as Wollstonecraft does in the second chapter of her *Vindication*, that in an unjust society independence is not necessarily as universally attainable as Francis seems to believe, Emma takes particular exception with the implicit inscription of gendered prejudice that we see in his and by extension Godwin's philosophical outlook.⁸⁰ 'Why call woman, miserable, and impotent,' she writes, 'women, *crushed, and then insulted* – why call her to independence – which not nature, but the barbarous and accursed laws of society, have denied her. *This is mockery!* Even you, wise and benevolent as you are, can mock the child

Prostitution Narrative', *Women's Writing*, 4.2 (1997), 201–20; Eleanor Ty, 'The Imprisoned Female Body in Mary Hays's "The Victim of Prejudice"', in *Women, Revolution, and the Novels of the 1790s.*, ed. by Linda Lang-Peralta (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1999); Marilyn Brooks, 'Mary Hays's The Victim of Prejudice : Chastity ReNegotiated', *Women's Writing*, 15.1 (2008), 13–31; Andrew McInnes, 'Feminism in the Footnotes: Wollstonecraft's Ghost in Mary Hays' Female Biography', *Life Writing*, 8.3 (2011), 273–85.

⁷⁸ Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', p. 126.

⁷⁹ Original emphasis, Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 170.

⁸⁰ Much of this is taken from a letter that Godwin had sent to Hays in early 1796, with large portions of it reappearing as quotations in a letter she sent to him in February of the same year. See, Mary Hays to William Godwin, 6 February 1796, in Hays and Brooks, v. 13, p. 425.

of slavery and sorrow!’⁸¹ Godwin’s objection that the ‘radical defect’ in the novel lay in Emma’s non-reciprocal infatuation with Augustus, displays, therefore, a misunderstanding of the philosophical drive of the narrative. As Hays would go on to argue:

It wou’d have been infinitely more interesting had my heroine been beloved, but this wou’d not have been the story I meant it should be, and to this scarcely any of the sentiments wou’d have been appropriate – It would also in my opinion have had less originality – in short, it would have made totally different characters.⁸²

The lack of romantic fulfilment becomes in these terms integral to the novel’s philosophical argument and brings us back to Hays’s original assertion that the text was designed to function primarily as a warning. The warning, however, becomes, in these terms, not one against the pernicious consequences of indulging in excessive sentiment, but rather against the environmental context that results in the inevitability of Emma’s supposedly anti-social actions. Scott Nowka argues that ‘the result is a novel of education, but one with a potent philosophical twist: when women are brought up as men’s equals, that very education means that they cannot help but behave as such.’⁸³ I would venture that this does not go far enough because, while the text does indeed suggest the possibility of this sort of educational ideal divorced from gendered prejudice, it also highlights why it can’t work at that particular time. Because, while Emma’s progressive education results in a rational, thinking woman who proves her intellectual superiority to many of the men in her acquaintance throughout the text, society, as Brooks argues, ‘was not yet ready to anticipate the desires of radical women and hence did not provide the situation which would make those desires attractive and socially legitimate.’⁸⁴ Emma’s despairing recognition of her constructed dependence following the death of her

⁸¹ Original emphasis, Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 173. The use of slavery as a descriptor for the state of women in contemporary society actively mirrors Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in which she marshals the language of oppression and captivity to highlight the role that social convention plays in the repression of woman’s rights, see for example, Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman’, pp. 130, 143 and 160.

⁸² Mary Hays to William Godwin, May 1796, in Hays and Brooks, v. 13, p. 458.

⁸³ Scott A. Nowka, ‘Materialism and Feminism in Mary Hays’s *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*’, *European Romantic Review*, 18.4 (2007), 521–40 (p. 522).

⁸⁴ Marilyn Brooks, ‘A Critical Study of the Writings of Mary Hays, With an Edition of Her Unpublished Letters to William Godwin.’, p. 84.

father becomes in this light a potent piece of socio-political commentary. 'Cruel prejudices!' she exclaims:

Why was I not educated for commerce, for a profession, for labour? Why have I been rendered feeble and delicate by bodily constraint, and fastidious by artificial refinement? Why are we bound, by the habits of society, as with an adamant chain? Why do we suffer ourselves to be confined within a magic circle, without daring, by a magnanimous effort, to dissolve the barbarous spell?⁸⁵

Powerfully rhetorical, Emma's frustration highlights the problem with Nowka's reading of Hays's text as an answer to these sorts of questions, as both Emma and Hays herself suffer the consequences of acting as if social reformation had already taken place. In her presentation of the effects of this 'magic circle' Hays offers, through her text, an exploration of Wollstonecraft's critique of internalised sexual inequality in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Hays's interaction with Wollstonecraft's position is mediated, however, through her reading of Helvétius. Her resulting deterministic representation of human character highlights the extent to which we are shaped, not only by our experiences and education but more pertinently in this example, by our social context. Emma's obvious frustration in her response to Francis is not only, therefore, with the lack of opportunities afforded to women in contemporary society or purely intended as a mirror for Wollstonecraft's attack on the frivolity of fashionable female education. By bringing our attention to what Emma terms 'the barbarous spell', she just as forcibly emphasises the effects of what Brian Michel Norton calls 'internalised "prejudice,"' and makes a compelling case for how socialisation within an inherently misogynistic society compromises female agency in a way that neither Francis or by extension Godwin can account for.⁸⁶

Addressing this more directly in her *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798), Hays writes on the difficulty of positing female identity given the construction of

⁸⁵ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, pp. 65–66.

⁸⁶ Brian Michael Norton, "'Emma Courtney', Feminist Ethics, and the Problem of Autonomy", *The Eighteenth Century*, 54.3 (2013), 297–315 (p. 300). Hays addresses this more directly in Mary Hays, 'On the Influence of Authority and Custom on the Female Mind and Manners', in *Letters and Essays, Moral, and Miscellaneous* (London: T. Knott, 1793), pp. 19–30.

women that 'have lost even the idea of what they might have been, or what they still might be':

We must therefore endeavour, to describe them [women] by negatives. As, perhaps, the only thing that can be advanced with certainty on the subject, is, - what they are *not*. For it is very clear, that they are not what they ought to be, that they are not what men would have them to be, and to finish the portrait, that they are not what they appear to be.⁸⁷

In Hays's account, women at this time lack ontological agency, being constructed through social obligation, male desire and physical appearance. In the only positive construction in the piece, women are, as the result of social convention, construed as 'portraits,' inanimate objects whose value depends entirely on aesthetic appeal. Modified by the 'we' at the beginning of the quotation, Hays ascribes this unjust ontology not only to the men who construct women as such but also, through her inclusion of both herself and the reader in the inclusive pronoun, anyone who passively accepts this judgement. Women deictically become 'them', a group of people who are not only 'described by negatives', a clever pun in itself, but are excluded from the 'we', the implied subject of the verb 'to describe'. By excluding women from the process of description, Hays places 'them' as the object of the social 'we', rendering them at the mercy of 'we's' taxonomical description. In the following sentence, however, Hays reverses this construction. The repeated use of the negative in conjunction with the infinitive form of the 'to be' verb results in a powerful statement about the injustice inherent in the construction of female identity as it stands in contemporary society. The use of the infinitive form of the verb denies the possibility of a subject, and while this in itself is a pertinent socio-political statement, the combination of this in conjunction with the aforementioned negative construction undermines the power of each of the three defining discourses. Serving to highlight the disjuncture between the unjust 'describing' of women and the reality which is, as Hays presents it, very different, she presents a situation in which all parties are denied agency over 'them'. This double negation serves in some sense to create a space in which there can be some ontological redemption as Hays presents a situation which denies the

⁸⁷ Mary Hays, *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (Garland Pub., 1974), pp. 70, 67. Written before Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Hays's *Appeal* was only published in 1798 to avoid duplication of ideas, Marilyn Brooks, 'Introduction', p. 8.

possibility of taxonomical definition, allowing a space between in which identity does not necessarily need definition.

Hays satirises the type of rhetoric she is railing against here throughout *Emma Courtney*. In a passage which makes this point with even greater force, Emma encounters a gentleman, styled in a humorous reversal of gender stereotypes, 'our accomplished coxcomb,' at her father's house, who on hearing that Emma is reading, under her father's direction it must be added, something more than mere romances, exclaims:

"This lady reads, then" – said our accomplished coxcomb – "Heavens, Mr Courtney! you will spoil all her feminine graces; knowledge and learning, are insufferably masculine in a woman – born only for the soft solace of man! The mind of a young lady should be clear and unsullied, like a sheet of white paper, or her own fairer face: lines of thinking destroy the dimples of beauty; aping the reason of man, they lose the exquisite, *fascinating* charm, in which consists their true empire; - Then strongest, when most weak –"⁸⁸

Using her 'accomplished coxcomb,' Hays satirises the rhetoric typical of men like Fordyce and John Gregory who, in their conduct books, endeavoured to make women's subservience seem attractive to them.⁸⁹ Tellingly, the gentleman doesn't even address Emma directly in this passage but addresses her through her father, an act which not only undermines Emma intellectually but also gestures to the lack of female agency alluded to in *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women*. Mr Courtney quickly alleviates any fears that he might represent a similarly restrictive mode of education, fulfilling Emma's hope 'of reading new books, and of being suffered to range uncontrouled through an extensive and valuable library.'⁹⁰ In an image which would make men like Fordyce and Gregory shudder, Emma becomes a symbol of the liberated woman. In a reversal of her earlier presentation in her reading of romances, Emma is, although still under the

⁸⁸ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 57.

⁸⁹ Fordyce; John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters: By John Gregory, M.D.* (Thomas Ewing, and Caleb Jenkin, 1774); both authors condemned by Wollstonecraft in Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman'.

⁹⁰ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 54.

guidance of her father, allowed access to the library. Hays presents us with another powerful tableau, painting Emma's now unrestrained access to her father's library.

Mr Courtney now entrusted me with the keys of the bookcases, though which I ranged with ever new delight. I went through, by my father's direction, a course of historical reading, but I could never acquire a taste for this species of composition. Accounts of the early periods of states and empires, of the Grecian and Roman republics, I pursued with pleasure and enthusiasm: but when they became more complicated, grew corrupt, luxurious, licentious, perfidious, mercenary, I turned from them fatigued, and disgusted, and sought to recreate my spirits in the fairer regions of poetry and fiction.⁹¹

Regardless of his good intentions, however, Mr Courtney's position as gatekeeper to knowledge remains somewhat troubling, with Emma never quite managing to become entirely self-empowered in her pursuit of knowledge. While Emma may seem to be exercising her own will here, she remains controlled by her father who fulfils the role of the Rousseauvean governor, attempting where possible to create the effect of unmediated experience. Rousseau's instruction in *Emile* could very easily be directly applied to Hays's educational tableau here; he writes: 'Let him not know, that in doing your will he is obedient to you, nor that in doing his you are subservient to him. Instil no ideas of command or obedience, but let him conceive both your actions and his own to be equally independent.'⁹² In a way, then, Emma remains constrained – albeit within a gilded cage – and while her father is no doubt meant to represent the enlightened tutor, she remains trapped by the social inequality highlighted just a few pages prior to this. It is, however, in an encounter with Rousseau, that we are provided with a potential hint at the possibility of moving beyond this. Emma relates:

In the course of my researches, the *Heloise* of Rousseau fell into my hands. – Ah! with what transport, with what enthusiasm, did I peruse this dangerous, enchanting work! – How shall I paint the sensations that were excited in my mind! – the pleasure I experienced approached the limits of pain – it was tumult – all the ardour of my character was excited. – Mr Courtney, one day, surprised me weeping over the sorrows of the tender *St Preux*. He hastily snatched the book from my hand, and, carefully collecting the remaining volumes, carried them in silence to his chamber: but the impression made on my mind was never to be effaced – it was even

⁹¹ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 59.

⁹² Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, I, bk. II, p. 116.

productive of a long chain of consequences, that will continue to operate till the day of my death.⁹³

Mr Courtney is perhaps right to fear his daughter's encounter with Rousseau but not for the reasons that would seem obviously apparent. Taking Emma at her word, most critics have drawn attention to this passage as the beginning of her downfall, citing the fact that her reading of Rousseau is crucially interrupted and she, having not read the second part of Rousseau's novel detailing Julie's moral redemption, remains corrupted by her reading. In a moment which at once displays one of the most direct instances of censorship and control on the part of Mr Courtney, this passage also becomes the moment at which Emma is closest to gaining educational emancipation. With Rousseau's focus on a self-guided education, it is little surprise that many of the female autodidacts like Hays and Inchbald writing towards the end of the eighteenth century draw so strongly on him. His didactic program represents the possibility of moving beyond the gendered approach to education so prevalent at the time, an approach which one shouldn't forget Rousseau himself advocated. The proliferation of educative literature in the 1790s, however, demonstrates an attempt to combine this Rousseauvean potential for self-driven learning with the affecting potential of the novel. It is perhaps not surprising that so many considered the novel dangerous as it represents, in an age of increasingly and more widespread literacy, the removal of the power of the traditionally masculine guardians of learning, subverting the patriarchal power structures that had for so long put the keys in the hands of men.

Drawing on her correspondence with Godwin, Hays presents, in the letters exchanged between Emma and Francis, an extended discussion on the nature of the sort of education through literature we see in her presentation of Emma's own education in the text.⁹⁴

⁹³ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 60.

⁹⁴ In this correspondence Hays draws on a series of letters she exchanged with Godwin as well as drawing on his ideas found in *Political Justice*, 'The Enquirer' and *Caleb Williams*, see especially, William Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 3: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. by Mark Philip (Pickering & Chatto, 1993), bks III, chapter 3 'Of Promises'; IV, chapter 5, 'Of Cultivation of Truth'; V, chapter 24, 'Of the

Writing to Francis, Emma bemoans that 'Every thing I see and hear is a disappointment to me:- brought up in retirement – conversing only with books – dwelling with ardour on the great characters, and heroic actions of antiquity, all my ideas of honour and distinction were associated with those of virtue and talent.'⁹⁵ Emma's struggle to reconcile the virtue expounded in the literary texts she has grown up reading with her experience of the real world embodies a profoundly Godwinian sceptical conundrum. How can one teach virtue, if one's empirical experience of the world seems to prove its nonexistence? Or, as Emma frames the question, 'is virtue, then, a chimera – does it exist only in the regions of romance?'⁹⁶ While this may be a problem for Rousseau, Emma is essentially corresponding with Godwin at this point, broaching then, not a question of the suitability of literature as a pedagogical tool but rather how to communicate knowledge that is essentially suspect. For Godwin, moral truth is found through critical interrogation of known facts, and it is only through a lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of known truths that moral error ensues, meaning that this truth, or the virtue that Emma seeks, can only be found through the exercising of personal reason and judgement.⁹⁷ Francis's response builds on Godwin's emphasis on private rationality, arguing that 'he, who tamely resigns his understanding to the guidance of another, sinks at once, from the dignity of a rational being, to a mechanical puppet, moved at pleasure on the wires of the artful operator.'⁹⁸ While fiction may not always represent the realities of the actual world, Francis offers Emma an argument that allows for the possibility of the redemption of literature. Representing a form that is able to resolve this problematic power dynamic, literature possesses the potential to guide the reader by engaging them in a constructive educational exchange without necessarily imposing on the reader directly. In fact, for Emma, it is only through literature that one can experience true virtue. While we must acknowledge the role that reading has already played in her education, for her it becomes

Dissolution of Government'; and VII, chapter VIII, 'Of Law'; Godwin, 'The Enquirer'; Godwin, *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*.

⁹⁵ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 79.

⁹⁶ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 80.

⁹⁷ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 3: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, p. 45; William Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 4: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice Variants*, ed. by Mark Philip (Pickering & Chatto, 1993), p. 82.

⁹⁸ Hays is using Godwin, 'The Enquirer', p. 126.

experience of the real world that impinges on her ability to perceive true virtue, assaulting her with questions and doubts which, she writes, 'teach [her] to mistrust the existence of virtue [and] endeavour to impose on [her], in its stead, a fictitious semblance; and to substitute, for the pure gold of truth, a paltry tinsel.'⁹⁹ Playing on convention, Hays refers to the truth gained empirically as, 'a fictitious semblance,' with the learning garnered through literature itself being the more real of the two. That Francis chooses not to refute this claim in his responding letter tells us volumes with regard to both Hays and Godwin's views on the matter. While acknowledging the danger inherent in uncritical consumption of literature, Hays, through Emma, addresses the possibility posed by literature for addressing the Godwinian conundrum that effective education requires the communication of meaning to inherently impressionable people, while at the same time providing them with the skill to critically engage with said communication.¹⁰⁰ Godwin presents, in other words, the middle ground in which Hays is able to operate, presenting a literature which is able to appeal to the reader's sympathy while simultaneously allowing for educative communication.

What *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* is, then, is an exponent of just this movement, a piece of educational literature that, like *A Simple Story*, comes to represent an experiential lesson decrying the dangers of indulging in excessive sensibility but one which remains conscious of the potential for heightened sensibility which the novel as a form possesses. Finding her experience to be at odds with the type of extreme rationalism she had advocated in her earlier writing, Hays, in *Emma Courtney*, uses fiction as a medium through which she could locate felt emotion within radical reform; she modifies the type of rational restraint advocated by Wollstonecraft and Godwin, and by doing so legitimises her own felt experience. And although her early correspondence with William Godwin in 1794 would suggest an earnest attempt on her part to justify her earlier advocacy of extreme emotional restraint, what we see in *Emma Courtney* is a distinct shift in her approach to moral philosophy, one that is played out as strikingly in her novel as it is in

⁹⁹ Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Thomas provides a useful discussion of the problem this possess to Godwinian philosophy in Richard Gough Thomas, 'Scepticism and Experience in the Educational Writing of William Godwin' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2015), pp. 14–16 <<http://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/615947/>> [accessed 13 October 2016].

the letters she exchanged with Godwin that would come to make up so much of the material within it. Actively marshalling the very thing which the text seems to be warning against, the novel engages in the relationship between this affective potential and the novel's educative ends, modifying the understanding of educational praxis we see in both Edgeworth and Rousseau by grounding it in emotional experience. More than merely adding intensity to her treatment of debates surrounding female education, the autobiographical referent at the heart of the text allows Hays to challenge the established Johnsonian understanding of the novel's didactic function by substituting a new kind of exemplar, one which is both definitively female as well as being one which is predicated on real-world experience. Drawing on Rousseau, Hays thus engages in a double authorising in which her text's actual historicity justifies her message while at the same time reciprocally implicating the reader in the text, allowing Hays – through writing from a subject position that is both autobiographical and female – to challenge the conventions of sentimental literature as well as problematise established views on the relationship between reading and education. Engaging self-consciously in debates surrounding both the effect and affective potential of the novelistic form, Hays introduces into the conception of educative fiction a type of example that both legitimises the educative element of the text while at the same time enabling her to embrace the very sentimentalism her text is supposedly warning against.

CHAPTER FIVE

LITERARY 'TENDENCY' AND THE ACT OF READING IN WILLIAM GODWIN'S *FLEETWOOD*

Public affection, as well as public virtues, must ever grow out of the private character, or they are merely meteors that shoot athwart a dark sky, and disappear as they are gazed at and admired.

Few, I believe, have had much affection for mankind, who did not first love their parent, their brothers, sisters, and even the domestic brutes, whom they first played with. The exercise of youthful sympathies forms the moral temperature; and it is the recollection of these first affections and pursuits that gives life to those that are afterwards more under the direction of reason.¹

(Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*)

In the introduction to this thesis I quoted an extract from a letter William Godwin had addressed to the young historian Joseph Bevan in which he offered him advice on how best to undertake a course of literary studies. The letter, rather aptly entitled *Letter of Advice to a Young American on the Course of Studies it Might be Most Advantageous for him to Pursue*, was subsequently published by Godwin's small publishing house on Skinner Street as a small 15-page pamphlet in February of 1818. In his *Letter of Advice*, Godwin argues for the merits of pursuing a course of study in the classics, justifying the study of fictional texts by claiming that even 'if the story be a falsehood, the emotions, and, in many readers, the never-to-be-destroyed impressions it produces, are real.'² In my introduction, I used this quotation as a means of valorising literature as an empirically justified educational medium. Coming in the wake of my discussion of Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, I return to Godwin's advice to the young Joseph Bevan because it functions to highlight the striking similarity between Hays's and Godwin's relative understandings of literary affect. In the previous chapter I alluded to that fact that Godwin's critique of Rousseauvean education coupled with his enduring belief in private rationality allowed for an understanding of literary experience as having the potential to function as a more constructive form of educational praxis than learning

¹ Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', pp. 303–4.

² Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, p. 321.

undertaken within real-world pedagogic environments. This idea is dramatically brought to life in Hays's *Emma Courtney* in the discussion of education staged by Hays between Emma and Mr Francis. But, although it must again be said that a large part of the opinions expressed by Francis are reprinted verbatim from actual letters Godwin had written to Hays, it would be misleading to claim that Hays's representation of Godwin's position was necessarily faithful. In this chapter I would like, therefore, to examine Godwin's educational ideas more directly. By looking at what exactly it is about Rousseau's educational system Godwin is taking exception to, I will examine how this objection is played out in his most comprehensive fictional engagement with Rousseau, *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805). Tempered by Godwin's immersion in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft following her death in 1797, his educational philosophy, as we see it presented in *Fleetwood*, displays an increasing focus on the importance of private sympathy. And while the narrative of *Fleetwood* itself may be offering a rather comprehensive attack on Rousseauvean pedagogy, Rousseau's problematic account of emotional education in particular, the narrative framing of the text, by contrast, asks for it to be read as just the sort of lesson it is seemingly cautioning against. By examining the distinction Godwin draws in his *Enquirer* essay 'Of Choice in Reading' between the 'moral' and the 'tendency' of a fictional text, I will argue that the novel as a form, *Fleetwood* in particular, represents, for Godwin, the ideal medium for his engagement with Rousseauvean educational philosophy. By allowing for the possibility of circumventing the Rousseauvean paradox that rational autonomy must be taught, the novel provides, for Godwin, a more sincere educational experience than that gained through a pedagogical relationship governed by a traditionally hierarchical teacher-pupil dynamic. With his focus on the textuality of the novel, Godwin emphasises the potential for literary education to foster a degree of rational autonomy in the reader that he does not see as being possible within Rousseau's system. This chapter will make the case, however, that in spite of Godwin's scepticism with regard to the practicality of Rousseau's educational method, his consciously educative fiction reveals his educational understanding of literary reception to be essentially Rousseauvean. He departs from Rousseau, however, in his conception of literary 'tendency' that stresses the active nature of literary praxis. I hope to show, therefore, how, by recapturing the Aristotelean root of praxis as a term that is both active as well as self-contained, his conception of the educative reception of literary texts justifies the notion that literary 'tendency' focuses on the act of literary

praxis itself. In this chapter, I argue, therefore, that *Fleetwood* embodies this active conception of educative fiction, with Godwin's conception of literary praxis in the text stressing the self-contained nature of interpretive action with the action itself being the focus of the act rather than any particular defined outcome.

In his essay entitled 'Of Choice in Reading,' published in *The Enquirer* in 1797, Godwin draws a distinction between the 'moral' and the 'tendency' of a book. In the essay, he proposes:

The moral of any work may be defined to be, that ethical sentence to the illustration of which the work may most aptly be applied. The tendency is the actual effect it is calculated to produce upon the reader, and cannot be completely ascertained but by the experiment. The selection of the one, and the character of the other, will in a great degree depend upon the previous state of mind of the reader.³

His use of the word 'calculated' is perhaps somewhat misleading. As his discussion goes on to make clear, the 'tendency' of a work refers to the effects that a piece of writing produces on a reader regardless of authorial intention. This distinction will become increasingly important when I begin to consider the relationship between Godwin's political philosophy and his theory of reading, but for now it serves as a useful point of entry into understanding the role that literature plays within Godwin's educational philosophy. By attempting to come to terms with first the 'moral' and then the 'tendency' of *Fleetwood*, I hope to elucidate the aforementioned Rousseauvean inclination we see in Godwin's understanding of reader-reception and how this could be read as reflecting his own unique iteration of literary praxis in the text.

Godwin's discussion of literary 'tendency' has attracted a fair amount of critical attention so it is worth dwelling on it briefly before turning more directly to *Fleetwood* itself. Tilottama Rajan, for example, has presented Godwin's belief in readerly interpretive agency as standing in stark contrast to the more explicitly didactic approach we see in

³ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, p. 139.

some of Thomas Holcroft's fiction.⁴ 'The reader cannot be governed by the announced moral of the text,' she argues, positing on the basis of her reading of 'Of Choice in Reading,' that the reader must, according to Godwin's formulation, 'read actively, doing more than simply reproducing the text.'⁵ Her argument that the discovery of 'tendency' through experiment represents a form of 'divinatory hermeneutics,' constituted, in her terms as a, 'historicizing of intention,' fails, I believe, however, to account for the emphasis Godwin places on private judgement in his political philosophy.⁶ That being said, if we consider Godwin as proposing an inherently heuristic approach to reading, Rajan's suggestion that his use of the word 'tendency' implies a privileging of readerly impression over any sort of revelatory discovery within the text, would, as I hope to show, be in keeping with Godwin's framing of literary praxis as an analytical act that privileges the process of interpretation over any definable outcome.⁷ Godwin does, after all, argue in 'Of Choice in Reading,' that 'the moral of a work is a point of very subordinate consideration, and that the only thing worthy of much attention is the tendency.'⁸ Graham Allen, has drawn much from this quotation, arguing that the principal problem with this understanding of readerly agency is that by subordinating the role of the 'moral' of a work, one opens up the potential for incorrect or unhappy interpretations of the text. His argument is that:

Even if we allow for the principle of reason, and understand that principle in terms of the idea of reason's ability to render itself, the recognition of the historical contingency of the contents of reason – reason's forms and presentations – would suggest that a heuristic hermeneutics, a vision of education as able to instruct beyond power and mastery, could not possibly calculate the results of its future readings.⁹

The principal concern I have here is that I believe Allen has misconstrued Godwin's use of the word 'moral'. Allen's reading aligns with that of Patricia Meyer Spacks in viewing

⁴ Tilottama Rajan, 'Wollstonecraft and Godwin: Reading the Secrets of the Political Novel', *Studies in Romanticism*, 27.2 (1988), 221–51 (p. 223).

⁵ Rajan, 'Wollstonecraft and Godwin', p. 224.

⁶ Rajan, 'Wollstonecraft and Godwin', p. 224.

⁷ Rajan, 'Wollstonecraft and Godwin', p. 225.

⁸ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, p. 139.

⁹ Graham Allen, 'Godwin, Fénelon, and the Disappearing Teacher', *History of European Ideas*, 33.1 (2007), 9–24 (p. 15).

the moral as being a relatively stable principle corresponding to authorial intention.¹⁰ I am, however, more persuaded by Roger Maioli's reading that 'Godwin is making a different point... and distinguishing not between the author's and reader's perspectives, but between what a work of literature *says* and what it *does* to readers.'¹¹ In fact, Allen's argument that 'Literature can never say what it wants to say outside of the double structure of allegory,' plays into this idea, because when one considers Godwin's conception of reading in light of both his attack on the insincere hierarchical nature of the Rousseauvean pedagogic relationship and his ethical defence of private judgement in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), it becomes increasingly apparent that the author's intention is wholly irrelevant for Godwin.¹² Richard Gough Thomas persuasively argues along these lines that, for Godwin, 'How a reader interoperates a text is of secondary consideration to the act of interpretation itself and so, unlike the teacher, the text cannot force the reader into a new negative shape.'¹³ This focus on how the textuality of literature affects the act of interpretation is, I believe, exactly the point of Godwin's discussion in 'Of Choice in Reading'. Literary texts are such productive educative media because they do not rely on the enforcement of ideas and they function to destabilise the hierarchical nature of the pedagogic relationship by allowing for a more equal interaction between the learner and the learning materials themselves. Literature provides, in Godwin's own words, 'the materials of thinking,' because, as Allen argues, 'All literature can do is suspend such tensions, such duplicities, in the sense of raising them to their view of the pupil.'¹⁴ And so, while I am primarily interested in how *Fleetwood* enacts Godwin's concept of literary 'tendency', or to use Maioli's construction, 'what it *does* to the reader,' it is necessary first to understand something of its moral, or 'what it *says*' with regard to Rousseauvean educational philosophy.

¹⁰ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 4–5.

¹¹ Roger Maioli, *Empiricism and the Early Theory of the Novel: Fielding to Austen* (Springer, 2017), p. 121.

¹² Allen, 'Godwin, Fénelon, and the Disappearing Teacher', p. 23.

¹³ Richard Gough Thomas, p. 90.

¹⁴ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, p. 78; Allen, 'Godwin, Fénelon, and the Disappearing Teacher', p. 23.

Primarily framed in response to Rousseauvean education, *Fleetwood* was published in 1805 and charts the consequences of following an educational program along the lines set out by Rousseau in *Emile*. Posited by Gary Kelly as both the last English Jacobin novel as well as 'perhaps the first Romantic novel in England,' it is a text that represents transition both within British intellectual and social life and, as we shall see, within Godwin's own thinking.¹⁵ In *Fleetwood*, Godwin draws attention to how the shortcomings of the hierarchical pedagogical relationship outlined in *Emile* precludes the possibility of a constructive educational experience on the part of the student. Relying on very staged and overly constructed ethical lessons, the artificiality of Emile's education provides him only with pseudo-experience in Godwin's eyes, experience that lacks sincerity. Grounded in Godwin's rejection of one of the fundamental paradoxes in Rousseau's *Emile*, *Fleetwood's* primary attack on Rousseauveanism lies in Godwin's critique of Emile's relationship with his mentor, who, while purporting to educate him in self-dependence, actively controls almost every element of his early education. Fundamentally opposed to Godwin's own relativistic educational ideals, the Rousseauvean pedagogical relationship serves in *Fleetwood* as an example for the reader of the dangers of pursuing inauthentic educative experience, breeding a character who, through lack of adequate emotional guidance, becomes increasingly solipsistic and progressively more and more misanthropic as the text progresses. In spite of Fleetwood's belief in his own rational capacity, his lack of interpersonal sympathy means that he is unable to develop sound moral judgement. It is essentially this that Godwin is trying to show us with *Fleetwood*: that while it remains the duty of the individual to act on their own judgement, informed and equal interaction with others is integral in building a responsible citizen. In *Fleetwood*, then, Godwin is embarking on a project remarkable in its similarity to that we have seen undertaken by Maria Edgeworth in the later parts of *Belinda*. What we see in Godwin's interrogation of *Emile* in *Fleetwood* is a text, much like *Belinda*, that it is both concerned formally to challenge Rousseau's philosophy of learning while similarly providing illustrations of this within the narrative itself. Godwin departs from Edgeworth, however, in the emphasis he places on the act of praxis itself, framing the

¹⁵ Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805*, p. 225; Arnold A. Markley and Gary Handwerk, 'Introduction', in *Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling*, by William Godwin, ed. by Arnold A. Markley and Gary Handwerk (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2000), p. 9.

exercise of independent reason as being both the means to and the end of the interpretive act. In this chapter, therefore, I will first examine Godwin's representation of Rousseau's educational program as a site of conflict within the narrative itself before turning to an exploration of both how this interacts with his own educational and political philosophy as well as how this is played out on a formal level within the text. This will lead on to a discussion of Godwin's own philosophy of reading and how this, when considered in conjunction with the types of narrative framing he uses in *Fleetwood*, results in a text that exemplifies Godwin's concept of literary 'tendency'.

Godwin's presentation of Rousseauvean education is not, however, straightforward in *Fleetwood*. Godwin's account of Fleetwood's early pastoral education along the mountainous Merionethshire coastline in Northern Wales should stand out immediately to anyone who has read *Emile* as a blatant misreading of Rousseau, conflating the Natural Man of the *Second Discourse* with his presentation of early education in *Emile*. Thomas has argued that this is done intentionally on Godwin's part and that by invoking a popular (rather than strictly accurate) understanding of *Emile*, Godwin is signposting to his broader readership that the novel is a commentary on Rousseau's work.¹⁶ This might, however, be to overestimate the depth with which Thomas assumes Godwin's general audience has read Rousseau. Fleetwood's early life in Wales is more than merely a Rousseauvean signpost, and it serves, as the text progresses, to lay the groundwork for the development of his flawed sense of *amour propre*, setting up, in the process, the initial premise for Godwin's critique of Rousseauvean education. Presenting the reader with a 'received' contemporary understanding of Rousseauvean education, a 'tendency' perhaps that Godwin has repurposed as a 'moral', Fleetwood's early education evokes the rejection of formalised learning in favour of the perceived indulgence which had drawn so much contemporary criticism of *Emile*.¹⁷

¹⁶ Richard Gough Thomas, pp. 115–16.

¹⁷ See, John Brown, *Sermons on Various Subjects*. (London: L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1764); Macaulay, *Letters on Education*. Both authors wrongly associate Rousseau with the excessive indulgence of children, of the sort we see in Richard Lovell Edgeworth's attempt to raise his son along Rousseauvean lines, even if Macaulay does frame this indulgence

Fleetwood's early education in the novel is characterised by unregulated freedom and the suggestion of a healthy Rousseauvean *amour de soi*, although this is quickly revealed as selfishness and arrogance as the text progresses. Fleetwood is allowed to explore this freedom within a markedly Rousseauvean isolated natural world in Merionethshire. Providing the narrative voice in the text, the much older Fleetwood looks back on his childhood: 'My earliest years were spent among mountains and precipices,' he relates, 'amidst the roaring of the ocean and the dashing of waterfalls... The jarring passions of men, their loud contentions, their gross pursuits, their crafty delusions, their boisterous mirth, were objects which even in idea, my mind shrunk from in horror.'¹⁸ As an early hint that the framing of Fleetwood as a Rousseauvean Natural Man might not be entirely true to Rousseau's original ideal, the older Fleetwood inadvertently draws parallels between the human characteristics of the social world with the natural environment in which he grows up with both being described through recourse to adjectives that evoke violent imposition. The sublime power of the natural environment is reduced by the proximity of his description of humanity, not to a peaceful place of refuge, but to the same jarring and boisterous nature with which society is categorised by Fleetwood. In the face of this overpowering experience, the younger Fleetwood is dwarfed in comparison. Fleetwood's sense of self becomes increasingly internalised, unable to assert his identity within an environment in which he does not belong.

Inclined to hiking and walking as a child, Fleetwood's physical independence should induce in him a predisposition towards a healthy Rousseauvean reverie. However, rather than inclining him towards self-sufficiency and independence, this early immersion in nature serves in *Fleetwood* rather to induce in the young Casimir a level of self-regard that serves inevitably to inhibit his moral growth. Consciously invoking the Rousseau we find in *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782) and *Confessions*, Godwin portrays a young Fleetwood who regularly loses himself in what is best described as daydreaming: 'I acquired a habit of being absent in mind from the scene which was before my senses. I

more in the light of a sort of benevolent neglect. See especially Letters IV and VII, (p.46 and 67).

¹⁸ William Godwin, *Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling*, ed. by Arnold A. Markley and Gary Handwerk (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2000), pp. 53–54.

devoured at first with greedy appetite the objects which presented themselves; but by perseverance they faded on my eye and my ear, and I sunk into a sweet insensibility to the impressions of external nature.’¹⁹ Too self-involved to experience a loss of self in nature, Fleetwood partakes in a sort of reverse reverie, losing his ability to interact with the outside world both empirically and critically. Fleetwood’s insensibility to the world around him renders him incapable, in Godwin’s terms, of sincerely exercising his rational judgement. Not only this, but if we take Godwin’s arguments in ‘Of History and Romance’ seriously, Fleetwood is essentially incapable here of possessing constructive self-knowledge, because it is only, as Godwin argues, through critical praxis that one can achieve constructive self-reflection:

It is only by comparison that we come to know any thing of mind or ourselves. We go forth into the world; we see what man is; we enquire what he was; and when we return home to engage in the solemn act of self-investigation, our most useful employment is to produce the materials we have collected abroad, and, by a sort of magnetism, cause those particulars to start out to view in ourselves, which might otherwise have laid for ever undetected.²⁰

Revealing the influence here of Adam Smith, Godwin is arguing, much as Mary Hays has, that well-regulated sympathy is an integral component in the act of rational reflection. What Fleetwood is lacking is the ability to engage in the act of critical comparison, an integral part of developing a healthy *amour propre* for Rousseau. Fleetwood comes to embody, as we will see, through his inability to engage in critical praxis, an example of the consequence of passive literacy in the text, this is, however, only made fully apparent once he becomes more fully socialised and the consequences of his self-regard begin to become apparent.

Revelling in his own retraction from an empirical experience of the world around him, Fleetwood becomes a parody of the self-sufficient pupil we encounter at the end of Book III of *Emile*. While Emile’s initial education becomes that of his relation to his environment, which remains possible so long as he only knows this environment through his purely physical nature, Fleetwood comes to embody an excess of this, retreating so

¹⁹ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 56.

²⁰ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, p. 292.

far into himself that Rousseau's intended self-sufficiency is rendered mere self-indulgence.²¹ Rousseau, as we have seen, formulates the education of Emile so as to remove this contradiction between the individual and society in an attempt to prepare him for a necessarily social existence, but because morality in Rousseau is only developed once one is brought into contact with society, there remains a worry that if not sufficiently prepared for his interaction, the experience can prove damaging. 'Let us remember that, [*amour propre*] no sooner displays itself,' Rousseau contends, 'than personal interest begins to act; that our young man compares himself with every one he observes.'²² For this reason, Rousseau attempts to create a system whereby Emile is educated from the outset to be dependent, at least initially, on only himself: 'he considers himself as entirely unconnected with others. He requires nothing of any one, and thinks no one hath a right to require any thing of him. He stands alone and independent in the midst of society.'²³ Rousseau and Godwin are thus equally concerned with preserving individual rational autonomy. The problem with Rousseau's system, as Godwin conceives it, lies not in its aims, therefore, but rather in the process by which he attempts to realise them. Fleetwood's early experience of the world, thus, becomes a vehicle through which Godwin can begin his critique of an educational system that he believes to be incapable of developing the sort of rational self-sufficiency both he and Rousseau are attempting to cultivate.

The older Fleetwood functions to guide the reader's experience of his early education. Providing an interpretive prompt, he is able to acknowledge some of the shortcomings inherent in this early education, lamenting his indulgence in internal reveries:

I was engaged in imaginary scenes, constructed visionary plans, and found all nature subservient to my command. I had a wife or children, was the occupier of palaces, or the ruler of nations... [The nature] of this species of dreaming, when frequently indulged, is to inspire a certain propensity to despotism, and to render him who admits it impatient of opposition, and prepared to feel every cross accident, as a usurpation upon his rights, and a blot upon his greatness.²⁴

²¹ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, p.141.

²² Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, pp.219–20.

²³ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. III, p.132.

²⁴ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 56.

The young Fleetwood should only, in Rousseau's terms, possess *amour de soi* at this point. The despotic nature of Fleetwood's imagined relationships, however, hint that this might not be the case. Foreshadowing his own eventual inability to maintain his relationship with Mary in book III, his early imagined relationships both with other people and the natural world around him teleologically hint at Fleetwood's eventual adult character. The older Fleetwood admits, 'this effect of my early habits I fully experienced, and it determined the colour of my riper years.'²⁵ Mirroring the desire to trace the consequences of one's upbringing that we see in both Edgeworth's and Hays's fiction, Fleetwood's retrospective narrative suggests a similar preoccupation in Godwin's novel. Presented through the perspective of the older Fleetwood, it certainly begins to feel something like a justification for much of Fleetwood's problematic conduct in the later parts of the narrative. Fleetwood's despotic fantasy and the positioning of his hypothetical wife and children as inferior even at such an early stage portends his eventual struggle to function within normal society.

Making the point that marriage is the inevitable, if somewhat flawed, goal toward which Fleetwood's education is directed, Handwerk argues that by maintaining this consistency with Rousseau, Godwin is able to critique his educational system more effectively:

As it was for Rousseau in *Emile*, marriage is in *Fleetwood* the goal towards which the system of education is ultimately directed. But rather than envisaging marital bliss, Godwin asks how a particular upbringing, a particular and not atypical set of formative experiences, could produce a character as paternalistic and misogynistic as Fleetwood turns out to be.²⁶

Perfectly formed to further Fleetwood's already established solipsism, his childhood tutor does little to prepare an already self-absorbed Casimir Fleetwood for the social world. That the tutor is somewhat self-centred himself and is considered by Fleetwood to be lacking in both intelligence and creative talent serves only to reinforce Fleetwood's already dangerously inflated self-worth. Given Rousseau's expressed intention to educate a socially responsible citizen, Godwin's choice of tutor, while realistically drawn, does little to assist in an educational program which is intended to prepare the student for a

²⁵ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 56.

²⁶ Handwerk, p. 380.

social world. Fleetwood's disdain for his tutor's perceived insufficiencies manifests, however, merely to reinforce Fleetwood's arrogance: 'I never dreamed for a moment that it could be less than sacrilege to measure his understanding with my own. This systematical persuasion of superiority occasionally broke out into little petulancies, which did not fail grievously to wound my kind friend's self-esteem. I was positive, assuming, and conceited.'²⁷ Fleetwood's reflection on the episode marks a manipulative undercurrent in the narrative. As the older Fleetwood becomes increasingly sympathetic through his remorseful deliberations, it becomes progressively apparent that they might be designed to achieve just this. Evidently unreliable, Fleetwood, through his repeated narrative interventions provides points at which the reader is encouraged to engage with the process of narrative representation more actively.

As the text progresses, Fleetwood advances to the stage of his Rousseauvean education whereby it is appropriate that he be brought into contact with wider society. The repeated warnings of inappropriate behaviour and remorseful reflections of the older, supposedly reformed Fleetwood create a growing sense of apprehension for the reader. So when Fleetwood's firmly entrenched *amour de soi* develops into suitably socially benevolent behaviour leading him to partake in numerous acts of philanthropy, these acts of charity should not ring entirely true. It is strange that a character who not long before this was unable to engage sympathetically with anything but himself is able to exhibit anything close to the universal benevolence Godwin argues for in *Political Justice*. In a similar use of narrative intervention that we saw in Rousseau's use of Jean-Jacques in *Emile*, Godwin, through the older Fleetwood, provides a retrospective reflection on the narrative, ensuring a doubled experience of the text that serves to promote critical reflection. The initial unmoderated reading of Fleetwood's philanthropic actions gives way to a more active engagement with their ambiguity following the reflection of the older character:

No doubt, my pride did not come away ungratified from these enterprises. Far be it from me to assert, with certain morose and cold-blooded moralists, that our best

²⁷ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 58.

actions are only more subtle methods by which self-love seeks its gratification. My own heart, in every act of benevolence I ever performed, gave the lie to this execrable doctrine.²⁸

Although Fleetwood's narratorial intervention hints at eventual redemption on Fleetwood's part, as the text progresses it also serves to highlight the fallibility of the narrative. While it is not until the end of Book III that Godwin presents us with a Fleetwood who represents anything close in character to the Fleetwood who is able to retrospectively acknowledge the self-serving nature of this early philanthropy, the retrospective intervention at this point should make even this later redemption appear somewhat suspect. Even the incident being reflected on here, which is set up as a sort of proof of the natural development of Fleetwood's character along proper Rousseauvean lines, is undercut with a healthy dose of scepticism. The older, questionably wiser Fleetwood, is able to recognise that when his young self puts himself in great danger to help William that his desire to help, while inspired by a degree of sincerely sympathetic feeling, is born, not from true altruism, but a mix of self-gratification and a desire for attention brought about by his earlier acts of charity. There is, he muses, 'a very subtle and complicated association in human feelings. The generous sympathy which animated my charitable deeds was pure ... There is no doubt, however, that the honourable character I exhibited on these occasions prompted me more joyfully to seek their repetition.'²⁹ With charity providing the basis of the sympathetic moment whereby *amour de soi* is transformed eventually into *amour propre*, Fleetwood's interaction with William and his family comes at an important point in his education and is undermined inevitably by the selfish motivation for his actions. Representing the first example in the text of interpersonal sympathy, Fleetwood's charity errs, however, on the side of egoism: 'the attachment which I felt to them was that of a patron and a preserver; when I observed the degree of content which prevailed among them, when I witnessed the effusions of their honest esteem and affection, my heart whispered to me, 'This would not have existed but for me!'"³⁰ This is not the sort of altruistic thought of a man motivated by Godwinian universal benevolence. In spite of stemming from Fleetwood's sympathetic character, these early incidents only serve to reinforce his solipsistic tendencies. On a

²⁸ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 60.

²⁹ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 60.

³⁰ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 64.

basic level, this reveals Godwin's scepticism that Rousseauvean education is in any way capable of producing successfully socialised people, but it also comes to highlight the reason why he believes this not to be possible. Lacking empathy, Fleetwood's isolation has only fostered in him a lack of interpersonal sympathy, and he is thereby incapable of social benevolence.

Marking the end of Fleetwood's isolation, his interaction with William and his family ushers in the period in his education in which he enters broader society. Departing for Oxford, his entrance into society at large proves disastrous as he struggles to navigate the Hobbesian environment at university before falling afoul of scandal in Paris. Coming off the worse in two affairs, Fleetwood is left jaded, his natural misanthropy developing rapidly toward the misogyny we see when he eventually comes into contact with the McNeil family. Fleetwood's experiences at Oxford and in Paris represent the point in Fleetwood's development whereby his *amour de soi*, through his comparison with other men, completes its inevitable transformation into *amour propre*. And yet Fleetwood is hardly a paragon of Rousseauvean self-sufficiency. The self-knowledge, understood through *amour propre*, perpetuated by Rousseau in *Emile* is designed inevitably to serve to inhibit Emile's integration into society by teaching him to understand himself, at this crucial encounter between the natural man and society, as being morally incompatible with the civic collective. This is where Godwin begins to bring the comparison between Fleetwood and Emile into sharper focus. Because, as we have seen in Rousseau's own text, Emile's education fails to help him integrate into the wider world as he is made to understand himself as being morally superior to society at large. Rousseau argues, as we have seen, that 'Emilius, reflecting on his superiority among the human species, will be tempted to suppose the work of your reason to be the produce of his own, and to attribute his happiness to his merit. Mankind, says he to himself, are fools, but I am wise. Whist he pities other he despises them; in congratulating himself he increases his self-esteem.'³¹ In *Emile*, Rousseau attempts to prepare Emile for a necessarily social world. However, as Godwin endeavours to show us, particularly in the early chapters of *Fleetwood*, Fleetwood's early Rousseauvean upbringing serves only to foster a solipsistic tendency that, rather than guarding against *amour propre*, actively guides him towards a sense of

³¹ Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia*, II, bk. IV, p. 223.

self that is predicated on his rejection of societal *mores*. By encouraging his student to understand himself in relation to society only once he has fostered an unhealthily high level of self-regard, framed by Rousseau as a supposedly healthy *amour de soi*, Rousseau creates an opposition that inevitably functions to exclude his student from a society he has been taught is morally corrupting and necessarily inferior to him. Until his eventual encounter with the McNeil family, Fleetwood, in keeping with Rousseau's prototypical Emile, is taught to understand himself as a necessarily extra-social being, a process contingent on his developing education.³² It is little surprise then that when Fleetwood is eventually introduced to society at Oxford it serves only to exaggerate his misanthropic tendencies. With an education explicitly designed to guard against the Rousseauvean paradox that essentially benevolent beings, through social interaction, become malevolent, this concept of socialised malevolence becomes key in understanding Fleetwood's developing self-knowledge.³³ He is, in Rousseau's terms, only able to safely interact with society once he has understood that by doing so he is corrupting himself and further distancing himself from his natural state. In Fleetwood's case, there does not seem to be enough self-reflection for him to understand this explicitly, but the consequences of Fleetwood's insufficient socialisation echo throughout the novel. Fleetwood is gradually made more and more aware of his own supposed superiority as the text progresses, fostering in him the mechanics that eventually dictate his misanthropic character and laying the foundation for his disastrous marriage to the young Mary McNeil.

The despotic representation of Fleetwood in the text marks a distinctive moment at which Godwin begins to move away from the assertion in the first edition of *Political*

³² Rousseau calls moral what we would, in Victor Gourevitch's view, now call social relations, see Victor Gourevitch, 'Introduction', in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. by Victor Gourevitch, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. vii–xxxix (p. xix).

³³ See James O'Rourke, "'Nothing More Unnatural': Mary Shelley's Revision of Rousseau", *ELH*, 56.3 (1989), 543–69 for a discussion of Cantor's development of this problem in relation to the Romantic imagination; Paul A. Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-Making and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Justice that private attachment compromises societal good, or as he puts it, the ‘general good of the species,’ towards a political philosophy influenced by the private affection so integral to Wollstonecraft’s understanding of public good.³⁴ The narrative of Fleetwood’s growing misanthropy serves to emphasise, in much the fashion we see in *The Enquirer*, that private judgement holds the key to moral truth and that interpersonal relationships, grounded in equality, are thus integral to any successful educational system. Displaying a marked shift from his early assertions that private affections endanger general moral good in the first edition of *Political Justice*, in Godwin’s critique of Rousseau in *Fleetwood* we see a conscious movement away from a belief in didacticism towards an understanding of learning grounded in discussion and dialogue. By the time Godwin would eventually write his *Letter of Advice* to Bevan in 1818 he would argue:

It is my opinion, that the imagination is to be cultivated in education, more than the dry accumulation of science and natural facts. The noblest part of man is his moral nature; and I hold morality principally to depend, agreeably to the admirable maxim of Jesus, upon our putting ourselves in the place of another, feeling his feelings, and apprehending his desires; in a word, doing to others, as we would wish, were we they, to be done unto.

This shift in thinking reflects Godwin’s familiarity with Wollstonecraft’s thinking following his work on her biography, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798). In *Fleetwood*, what we see is an argument in favour of an educational program grounded in Wollstonecraft’s belief that ‘the exercise of youthful sympathies forms the moral temperature [of an individual]; and it is the recollection of these first affections and pursuits that gives life to those that are afterwards more under the direction of reason.’³⁵

In a memorandum written in 1798, Godwin acknowledges his changing beliefs with regard to the role of private attachment in *Political Justice*, writing that his previous work ‘is essentially defective, in the circumstances of not yielding a proper attention to the

³⁴ William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, 2 vols (Dublin: Printed for Luke White, 1793), I, p. vii.

³⁵ Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman’, p. 304.

empire of feeling.³⁶ Drawing on Hume's philosophy of moral sentiment in the *Treatise on Human Nature* (1738), Godwin notes that:

The voluntary actions of men are under the direction of their feelings: nothing can have a tendency to produce this species of action, except so far as it is connected with ideas of future pleasure or pain to ourselves or others. Reason, accurately speaking, has not the smallest degree of power to put any one limb or articulation of our bodies into motion. Its province, in a practical view, is wholly confined to adjusting the comparison between different objects of desire, and in investigating the most successful mode of attaining those objects.³⁷

Godwin writes, therefore, in the preface to *St Leon*, published a year later, that while the principles he argues in *Political Justice* remain essentially unchanged, he is eager to stress that 'domestic and private affections [are] inseparable from the nature of man, and from what may be styled the culture of heart, and [he is] fully persuaded that they are not incompatible with a profound and active sense of justice in the mind of him that cherishes them.'³⁸ Presented as the 'warmest eulogium' of 'the affections and charities of private life,' *St Leon* represents an opportunity for Godwin to publicly revise the utilitarian theory of justice he presents in *Political Justice*.³⁹ Signalling this change in approach, he argues in *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the rights of Woman*:

a sound morality requires that "nothing human should be regarded by us as indifferent;" but it is impossible we should not feel the strongest interest for those persons whom we know most intimately, and whose welfare and sympathies are united to our own. True wisdom will recommend us to individual attachments; for with them our minds are more thoroughly maintained in activity and life than they can be under the privation of them, and it is better that man should be a living being, than a stock or a stone. True virtue will sanction this recommendation; since it is the object of virtue to produce happiness, and since the man who lives in the midst of domestic relations, will have many opportunities of conferring pleasure, minute in

³⁶ cited in Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, His Friends and Contemporaries. With Portraits and Illustrations*, 2 vols (London: H.S. King, 1876), I, p. 194.

³⁷ cited in Paul, I, p. 194; Godwin is basing this argument on David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by Ernest Campbell Mossner, New edition edition (Baltimore, Md: Penguin Books Ltd, 1969), pp. 507–10; See Chris Jones, pp. 98–102; and B. J. Tysdahl, "'Fleetwood': Sentimentality in a New Key', in *William Godwin as Novelist* (London: Athlone Press, 1981), pp. 97–125 (pp. 101–3) for a comprehensive discussion of the influence of Hume's *Treatise* on Godwin's shift towards the novel of sentiment.

³⁸ William Godwin, *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by William Brewer (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2006), p. 52.

³⁹ Godwin, *St. Leon*, p. 52.

the detail, yet not trivial in the amount, without interfering with the purposes of general benevolence. Nay, by kindling his sensibility, and harmonising his soul, they may be expected, if he is endowed with a liberal and manly spirit, to render him more prompt in the service of strangers and the public.⁴⁰

Godwin acknowledges here that the private affections he so derides in the first edition of *Political Justice* are recommended by what he calls true wisdom and sanctioned by true virtue. Private affection becomes, for Godwin, a virtue in itself, which, more than merely not interfering with general benevolence, in fact, serves to develop it. Considered by Godwin as being integral to his developing political theory, he includes portions of this passage verbatim in the preface to the first edition of *St Leon* and in *Thoughts Occasioned by Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon* (1801).⁴¹ Addressing one of the central concerns in *Political Justice*, Godwin attempts here to come to terms with the difficulty in communicating virtue in an unjust world which will both negatively influence the educator as well as provide a readily apparent contradiction to Godwin's benevolent doctrine.

Lacking well developed private affections, Fleetwood lacks the empathy required to feel genuine sympathy with the other people in his life. A victim of an upbringing that has served only to foster an increasing level of narcissism in him, Fleetwood's growing misanthropy is framed by Godwin as being the direct result of his Rousseauvean education. Using his failed marriage with Mary as a means by which to demonstrate Fleetwood's profound lack of empathy, this passage serves as the first complete lesson he learns in the text. Divested for the first time of manipulative figures of authority, Fleetwood is allowed to experience failure. His final breakdown following the staging of his mock anniversary dinner signals the first time in the text that Fleetwood is made to take responsibility for his own actions. It is from this 'actual' experience that the more critical, self-reflexive Fleetwood that we encounter narrating the story throughout the

⁴⁰ William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2001), pp. 127–28.

⁴¹ William Godwin, *St. Leon* (London: G. G. & J. Robinson, 1799), pp. x–xii; William Godwin, *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon, Preached at Christ Church, April 15, 1800: Being a Reply to the Attacks of Dr. Parr, Mr. Mackintosh, the Author of an Essay on Population, and Others* (London: Taylor and Wilks, and sold by G. G. and J. Robinson, 1801), pp. 25–26.

text emerges. His education is for the most part unsound, highlighted very vividly by Godwin in his decline into madness following his inability to deal with the emotional demands of real life; the optimistic conclusion of the novel, however, offers both Fleetwood and the reader with some hope of redemption. By focussing on Fleetwood's failure, Godwin expands on his empirical understanding of knowledge, demonstrating that it is only through the real risk of failure that true experience can garner constructive learning. *Fleetwood* comes in this way to highlight one of the most important elements of Godwin's philosophy of education and where he differs most strongly with Rousseau, that in order for education to function properly there needs to exist a degree of agency on the part of the student. Just as he is aware that the reader can at any time walk away from his novel, the student must be able to exercise their own rational judgement. If *Fleetwood* signals a continuation of a trend in Godwin's literature towards a developing understanding of the role private emotion plays in political justice, what Godwin is presenting us with here is, in fact, a politicisation of Rousseauvean education in which he rejects the idea that denying people the opportunity to reason for themselves will ever result in responsible or even happy members of society.

This is all, however, made relatively explicit in Godwin's novel and only addresses one half of Godwin's critique of Rousseau and while his presentation of Fleetwood in the text provides a potent attack on Rousseau's inadequate account of emotional education, it does little to address the despotic nature of the Rousseauvean pedagogic relationship. It is worth returning, then, to Godwin's own ideas with regard to reading, because it is only really through an understanding of Godwin's conception of reading that we can appreciate the radical educational intervention that he is attempting in *Fleetwood*. In Chapter IV of *Political Justice*, Godwin contends that 'there are three principal causes by which the human mind is advanced towards a state of perfection; literature, or the diffusion of knowledge through the medium of discussion, whether written or oral; education, or a scheme for the early impression of right principles upon the hitherto unprejudiced mind; and political justice, or the adoption of any principle of morality and

truth into the practice of a community.⁴² Hinting at the arguments he will eventually level against Rousseau in *The Enquirer* and *Fleetwood*, in *Political Justice* Godwin lays out the bones of his system of literary education. As an introduction to Godwinian educational thought, however, this quotation is somewhat misleading. His conception of education in terms reminiscent of printing might seem promising given the literary focus of this discussion, but the metaphor is clearly prescriptive and is as likely to confuse an understanding of Godwin's eventual educational philosophy as enlighten it. As has repeatedly been mentioned throughout this thesis, one of Godwin's, and as we have seen, Edgeworth's principal problems with Rousseauvean education is that it is both an excessively contrived and inevitably restrictive construction. And so, the idea that education consists of the imprinting of ideas onto a largely inactive subject seems odd coming from a man famous for his claim in *The Enquirer* that 'All education is despotism', by which Godwin means that, 'it is perhaps impossible for the young to be conducted without introducing in many cases the tyranny of implicit obedience. Go there; do that; read; write; rise; lie down; will perhaps for ever be the language addressed to youth by age.'⁴³ The relative justness of the principles he supposes in *Political Justice* hardly seems relevant, then, in light of the flawed method by which they are imparted. More telling of his later thought, then, is his conception of literature in *Political Justice* which is conceived as being largely dialogic in nature.⁴⁴ This shift in thinking would suggest that of the three principal causes he has outlined in the above quotation, the category headed 'literature' represents the most educationally constructive one. David O'Shaughnessy charts this change through a reading of Godwin's forays into dramatic writing over the period, but this shift in perspective could as easily hold with Mark Philp's influential thesis in *Godwin's Political Justice* (1986) that the year surrounding Wollstonecraft's death and his work editing her biography in 1797 is largely responsible for much of the impetus behind

⁴² William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. by Mark Philp, 1 edition (OUP Oxford, 2013), p. 20.

⁴³ Godwin, 'The Enquirer', p. 107.

⁴⁴ This understanding of literary reception is reflected in David O'Shaughnessy's argument that Godwin reframed his educational philosophy over the course of the 1790s from an inherently didactic approach towards a more dialogic one. See, David O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, The Enlightenment World, 23 (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 11–12.

Godwin's evolving thought over the period.⁴⁵ Informed by Mitzi Myers's earlier work, the argument that holds that Godwin's relationship with Wollstonecraft lead to the softening of the utilitarianism we see in the first edition of *Political Justice* is persuasive and has more recently been convincingly championed by both Ian Ward and Louise Joy.⁴⁶ In Philp's words, 'this meeting between 'cold rationalism' and 'Rousseauian naturalism' must have had a profound impact on Godwin,' and indeed did as evidenced by *St. Leon* and *Fleetwood*, but to claim that Wollstonecraft influenced his earlier writing in *The Enquirer* is more difficult to uphold, with large parts of his earlier educational writing being published before her death and his work on her posthumous biography.⁴⁷ It is worth, therefore, remembering that Godwin was engaging with Rousseauvean educational thought independently of Wollstonecraft and the arguments he forwards in *The Enquirer* are as much informed by the interaction between his earlier belief in political utilitarianism grounded in rational self-reliance and Rousseau's own student-focused experimental education he had posited in *Emile*.

Before considering why literature offers such an attractive educational proposition for Godwin, or even discussing how he conceived of the practice of reading, it is important then to understand his ideas regarding the significance of rational self-reliance in *Political Justice*. Rational judgement forms the basis for his interpretive theory of literary 'tendency' and, striking in its similarity to Rousseau's preoccupation with *amour propre*, forms the foundation of the educational philosophy he expounds in *The Enquirer*. Because the exercise of reason, to paraphrase Aristotle, is the greatest good for Godwin, one of the central tenets of *Political Justice* is that it is one's duty as a responsible political individual to act according to one's own personal reasoning and judgement. For Godwin, 'every man has a certain sphere of discretion which he has a right to expect shall not be infringed by his neighbours. This right flows from the very nature of man... all men are fallible: no man

⁴⁵ See especially Philp, pp. 175–92.

⁴⁶ Mitzi Myers, 'Unfinished Business: Wollstonecraft's "Maria"', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 11.2 (1980), 107–14; Mitzi Myers, 'Godwin's "Memoirs" of Wollstonecraft: The Shaping of Self and Subject', *Studies in Romanticism*, 20.3 (1981), 299–316; See also Ian Ward, 'A Man of Feelings: William Godwin's Romantic Embrace', *Law and Literature*, 17.1 (2005), 21–46; Louise Joy, 'St. Leon and the Culture of the Heart', *History of European Ideas*, 33.1 (2007), 40–53.

⁴⁷ Philp, p. 175.

can be justified in setting up his judgement as a standard for others.⁴⁸ While this rational relativism may seem contentious within a work of political philosophy, it is born of Godwin's belief in the link between objective, clear-sighted rationality and moral truth. More tellingly, it forms the basis for his belief that education, within a traditional pedagogic relationship, is inherently despotic. Because teaching fundamentally relies on the imparting of ideas and thoughts from one person to another – within this very simplistic model, from the teacher to the student – the traditional model of instruction is for Godwin rationally untenable and represents an infringement on the natural rights of the student. This forms the basis for his eventual justification of literature as an educative medium. Because the interpretive onus lies in the hands of the reader, interaction with literature offers an educational experience that does not infringe on the 'discretion' of the reader. Given the general concern surrounding the potential effects that literature, novels in particular, could have on readers at this time, Godwin's relatively laissez-faire approach to reading is refreshing and illustrates both his commitment to and enduring reliance on private judgement. In fact, Godwin goes so far as to argue in *The Enquirer* that it is illogical to fear the impact of the content of novels on readers.

Finding recourse to the same sort of argument that Rousseau uses in relation to Fontaine's 'The Fox and The Crow', Godwin draws our attention to didactic tales in which the explicit moral does not necessarily align with the reader's interpretation of the text. But, where Rousseau uses this discussion of fables in *Emile* to argue for the need to censor early reading, Godwin offers it to justify the harmlessness of early reading in the formulation of character. He argues: 'To ascertain the moral of a story, or the genuine tendency of a book, is a science peculiarly abstruse. As many controversies might be raised upon some questions of this sort, as about the number six hundred and sixty six in the book of Revelations.'⁴⁹ Unbinding the text from authorial authority, Godwin distinguishes here, as we have seen, between the 'moral' of a text, its stated argument, and its 'tendency', the argument understood by the reader. But, for Godwin, rather

⁴⁸ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 4: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice Variants*, p. 82.

⁴⁹ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, p. 137.

controversially at this time, the intellectual value of a work of literature need not be isomorphic with its moral content.

The principal praise is certainly due to those authors, who have a talent to “create a soul under the ribs of death;” whose composition is fraught with irresistible enchantment; who pour their whole souls into mine, and raise me as it were to the seventh heaven; who furnish me with “food for contemplation even to madness;” who raise my ambition, expand my faculties, invigorate my resolutions, and seem to double my existence. For authors of this sort I am provided with an ample licence; and, so they confer upon me benefits thus inestimable and divine, I will never contend with them about the choice of their vehicle, or the incidental accompaniments of their gifts.⁵⁰

Godwin even goes so far as to claim that it is perfectly possible for the reader to derive ‘discernment, and refinement, and activity,’ in works of questionable ethical predisposition and there are as many upstanding works of fiction and writers, ‘who have no other characteristic attribute but that of a torpedo.’⁵¹ Some of the most intellectually stimulating novels are, in Godwin’s conception, the most morally ambiguous and challenging, and the ethical content of any particular work of fiction is tied, therefore, inevitably to its ‘tendency’ rather than its explicit ‘moral’. Much in keeping with this, Rajan identifies what she sees as the propensity for Godwin’s fictional work to disestablish textual authority by involving the reader in the construction of the text, allowing for what she calls Godwin’s hermeneutic heuristic fictional form.⁵²

By involving the reader in the making of the text it initially creates new possibilities. It allows us not to be locked into the text of things as they are. At the same time, because it creates a form in which meaning does not have to be embodied in the text, it does not fall into the contradiction into which the novels of Holcroft fall, where an idealized ending is superimposed on the real world and made to claim mimetic authority.⁵³

⁵⁰ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, pp. 140–41.

⁵¹ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, p. 140.

⁵² Rajan, ‘Wollstonecraft and Godwin’, p. 221; see also Tilottama Rajan, ‘Deconstruction or Reconstruction: Reading Shelley’s “Prometheus Unbound”’, *Studies in Romanticism*, Percy Bysshe Shelley, 23.3 (1984), 317–38; and Tilottama Rajan, ‘The Supplement of Reading’, *New Literary History*, 17.3 (1986), 573–94.

⁵³ Rajan, ‘Wollstonecraft and Godwin’, pp. 249–50.

The sort of relationship with the text that Rajan proposes here is useful in understanding why fiction, within Godwinian philosophy, has the potential to function as such a powerful pedagogic tool. Building on 'Of History and Romance,' the fictional form is, for Godwin, the ideal conduit to explore his philosophy of education not only because it facilitates greater freedom of expression but more importantly it allows for greater freedom of reading.⁵⁴ Developing what he sees to be a more constructive form of pseudo-experience, Godwin uncouples himself from what he sees as the insincere, staged nature of Rousseauvean moral lessons, rejecting their veracity based on their inherent deception. Turning instead to fiction, Godwin provides, in *Fleetwood*, a different type of pedagogical experience to that allowed by a treatise like *Political Justice*. Transparently unreal, fiction allows the reader to interact with the text outside of the traditionally pedagogic relationship. Rejecting the hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the pupil that characterises *Emile*, Godwin's educative fiction provides the reader with the necessary distance to interrogate the text critically, casting the reader not as a pupil who needs to be taught but an individual who is able to exercise their own private rational judgement on their own terms when interacting with the text. In *Fleetwood*, Godwin offers us a series of arguments against Rousseau, Fleetwood's misanthropic character being one example; the interpretive onus, however, lies in the hands of the reader. Godwin thus develops an understanding of literary praxis that recognises the very act of reading as providing the ideal model for intellectual improvement by allowing readerly agency in the learning process.⁵⁵ Arguing that literature's power lies in its potential for the 'diffusion of knowledge through the medium of discussion,' Godwin foregrounds the necessity of unbinding textual meaning from authorial intent, encouraging an open, equal 'discussion' between the reader and the text.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ William Godwin, 'Of History and Romance', in *Caleb Williams*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and Arnold A. Markley, 1st Edition (Peterborough; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2000), pp. 453–67.

⁵⁵ William Godwin, 'Of History and Romance', in *Caleb Williams*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and Arnold A. Markley, 1st Edition edition (Peterborough, Ont. ; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2000), pp. 453–67 Godwin recommends Plutarch and Livy as being the ideal conduits of this sort of writing.

⁵⁶ Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, p. 20; Rajan provides the most comprehensive discussion on the relationship between the reader and text in Godwinian fiction Rajan, 'Wollstonecraft and Godwin'; see also Rajan, 'The Supplement of Reading'; and Allen, 'Godwin, Fénelon, and the Disappearing Teacher'.

Godwin departs from Rousseau, then, because, in spite of the fact that he is often lauded for his championing of self-empowered learning, Rousseau's radical rejection of more traditional educational practices in favour of active experiential learning in which children ideally educate themselves, stands in stark contrast to his coercive, even duplicitous, description of the teacher-pupil relationship. Godwin contends in *The Enquirer* that 'his whole system of education is a series of tricks, a puppet show exhibition, of which the master holds the wires, and the scholar is never to suspect in what manner they are moved.'⁵⁷ While the impracticality of keeping these wires hidden from the student is something to which Godwin will return, the implications of their discovery are for Godwin dire in its potential ability to undermine the eventual character of any student taught in this fashion.

The person who has thus been treated, turns restless upon the bed of his dungeon. He feels every thing that can give poignancy to his fate. He burns with indignation against the hourly events of his life. His sense of suffering, which would otherwise be blunted, is by the refinement, like the vitals of Prometheus, for ever preyed upon, and for ever renewed.⁵⁸

Coming from the man who famously declared 'all education is despotism', it should perhaps not be surprising that he characterises Rousseau's educational system in *Emile* as a 'fictitious equality,' fraught with 'incessant hypocrisy and lying.'⁵⁹ A violation of the principles of honesty and need for both truthfulness and self-sufficiency (or in this case the ability to exercise one's reason and act according to personal judgement) which are so integral in *Political Justice*, Godwin's rejection of Rousseau's pedagogical relationship becomes both ethical as well as practical. Addressing these concerns in essay XII, or 'Of Deception and Frankness' in *The Enquirer*, Godwin argues that, in spite of the value of many of Rousseau's insights, his educational system remains, on the basis of this flawed relationship, essentially untenable:

⁵⁷ Godwin, 'The Enquirer', p. 126.

⁵⁸ Godwin, 'The Enquirer', p. 123.

⁵⁹ Godwin, 'The Enquirer', p. 107 and 131.

The treatise of Rousseau upon education is probably a work of the highest value. It contains a series of most important speculations upon the history and structure of the human mind; and many of his hints and remarks upon the direct topic of education, will be found of inestimable value. But in the article here referred to, whatever may be its merit as a vehicle of fundamental truths, as a guide to practice it will be found of the most pernicious tendency. The deception he prescribes would be in hourly danger of discovery, and could not fail of being in a confused and indistinct manner suspected by the pupil; and in all cases of this sort a plot discovered would be of incalculable mischief.⁶⁰

Godwin objects both to the hypocrisy inherent in the discord between Rousseau's stated educational goals and the method he proposes to attain them but also on the basis of the potentially dire consequences of the discovery of the tutor's deception. More than this, however, Godwin is deeply concerned by the questionable value that such lessons might have. *Fleetwood* as a text, for instance, is transparently unreal and by providing us with the 'materials of thinking,' engages our critical reflection primarily because we are not forced to accept Godwin's arguments against Rousseauvean education.⁶¹ The fact that the freedom of experience is an illusion in Rousseauvean education is not, however, as we have seen, in *Emile* a problem for Rousseau as while Emile is educated in self-dependence, Rousseau's explicit goal is to educate a useful member of the republic. The illusion of independence in Emile's early education is acceptable, in other words, because in spite of Rousseau's emphasis on self-dependence this freedom remains an illusion in adult life. Godwin, however, differs quite fundamentally in his approach to education. Rousseau is looking to develop a free but essentially self-disciplined subject in order for them to become a useful member of society; for Godwin, however, the critically independent subject is not a means to an end but the desired outcome of any successful educational system.⁶² Godwin's critique of *Emile* in *The Enquirer* is based, therefore, on his ethical objection to Rousseau's educational system. *Fleetwood* serves, through its literary form

⁶⁰ Godwin, 'The Enquirer', p. 126.

⁶¹ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 5: Educational and Literary Writings*, p. 78.

⁶² For a more detailed discussion of this relationship see Richard Gough Thomas; Gary Kelly also provides an interesting discussion of the relationship between *Confessions* and some of Godwin's unpublished fragments, however, as Handwerk has argued, *Fleetwood* is not a novel that can easily be discussed as either a romance or an autobiographical text, Gary Kelly, "'The Romance of Real Life': Autobiography in Rousseau and William Godwin", *Man and Nature / L'homme et La Nature: Actes de La Société Canadienne d'étude Du Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 1 (1982), 93–101; Handwerk, p. 378.

itself, then, as a practical demonstration of what Godwin imagines to be the consequences of an educational system based on deception and duplicity.

Nowhere is Godwin's critique of Rousseauvean duplicity more apparent than in Fleetwood's interactions with Ruffigny. Functioning as, the 'Rousseauvean sage' of the text, Ruffigny is the embodiment, in *Fleetwood*, of the Rousseauvean tutor outlined in *Emile*.⁶³ In a painstakingly drawn Rousseauvean lesson towards the end of the first volume of *Fleetwood*, Ruffigny engineers a situation in which Fleetwood becomes lost in the natural beauty of Lake Uri contemplating the valour and virtuous examples set by past heroes before informing him of his father's passing. Designed in part to chastise Fleetwood while instilling in him an unforgettable moral lesson, the experience would appear initially to have worked admirably. The older Fleetwood recalls:

The communication of the melancholy intelligence no doubt affected me very differently from what it would otherwise have done, in consequence of the frame of mind, which this day's excursion, and the various objects I had beheld, produced in me. My sensibility was increased by the preparation, and the impression I received was so much the deeper. I do not pretend to divine Ruffigny's motives for so contriving the scene. Perhaps he knew enough of human nature to believe that it rarely happened to a son in the bloom of life to break his heart for the loss of an aged parent. Perhaps he understood and disapproved of the train of life in which I had lately been engaged, and thought the thus softening of my heart the most effectual way of recalling me to my better self.⁶⁴

Ruffigny's attempt to inspire in Fleetwood a return to reason and virtue, instilling in him a renewed sense of social responsibility, seems, following Ruffigny's autobiography, to have served its purpose admirably. As the text progresses, however, we begin to see that this is not the case. Rather than addressing Fleetwood's misanthropy, the experience inspires in Fleetwood just the opposite, heightening, as Handwerk argues, the distance between his estimation of himself, his father and Ruffigny and society at large.⁶⁵ 'I loved and inexpressibly honoured the characters of Ruffigny and my own immediate ancestors; but this only whetted my disapprobation of the rest of my species.'⁶⁶ While he might not understand the reasons behind it, because Fleetwood is aware of Ruffigny's manipulation

⁶³ Markley and Handwerk, p. 25.

⁶⁴ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, pp. 127–28.

⁶⁵ Handwerk, p. 393.

⁶⁶ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 138.

in constructing the scene at Lake Uri, the lesson remains, in Godwinian terms, inadequate. Appealing to Fleetwood's sensibility, he is not asked to exercise reason at any point and the lesson, designed to guide Fleetwood towards a particular learning outcome, does so without allowing Fleetwood any agency, excluding him from the learning process. Presented here, by Godwin, as an example of Rousseauvean pseudo-experience, the Lake Uri incident becomes an example of the type of teaching he argues against in *The Enquirer* as both unethical and impractical.

When Fleetwood describes his early education and relation with his tutor in the opening chapter, however, we are presented with a very different relationship to that experienced between Fleetwood and Ruffigny. It is not entirely the sort of Rousseauvean relationship one would expect, but something altogether more in keeping with Godwinian independence and while this passage in the text seems on the face of it to be a critique of Rousseauvean education, I would suggest it represents a more ambiguous educational intervention than might be thought the case.

I studied for the most part when I pleased. My father was contented to discern in me a certain inclination to learning, and did not think of putting on me a task greater than I was willing to endure... though I learned from my preceptor almost every thing valuable that he was able to teach, I never looked up to him. His foibles were obvious, and did not escape my observation.⁶⁷

It would seem that this passage likely represents an approximation of how an attempt to replicate the circumstances outlined in *Emile* in the real world might function, serving as a tableau designed to satirise the practicality of Rousseau's ideal education. While superficially in keeping with Rousseauvean self-sufficiency, Fleetwood's tutor's influence is conspicuously absent. Bearing in mind that this passage is narrated by Fleetwood, the possibility that his tutor has in fact successfully deceived him, keeping his influence in staging a seemingly self-driven education hidden, is perhaps unavoidable. The passage, read through Fleetwood's perspective, would, in this case, serve to highlight the unreliability of his narrative voice. However, Fleetwood's distinctly unRousseauvean

⁶⁷ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 58.

relationship with his tutor suggests a more self-reflexive interpretation. Unable to form a meaningful relationship with his tutor, Fleetwood disrespects his authority, destabilising the Rousseauvean teacher-pupil relationship. Garnered for the most part from Fleetwood's own arrogance, the picture he paints here is remarkably similar to the type of education Godwin argues so strongly in favour of in *The Enquirer*. Empowered to learn on his own terms and free, apparently, from the 'despotic' influence of the Rousseauvean tutor figure, Fleetwood is able to exercise, or in this case more often not exercise his own rational judgement on his own terms. The fact that Fleetwood invariably fails to integrate into society is often seized as being the outcome through which Godwin is seeking to critique Rousseauvean education, however, the apparent failure of Fleetwood's early education is more telling of the inability of the education to foster in him interpersonal sympathy. It would seem to be a critique, then, not of rational failure, but of emotional immaturity. That he lacks the empathy required to interact with his tutor constructively, dismissing him as useless based on his lack of poetical prowess, is characteristic of the type of solipsistic, even hubristic behaviour that Fleetwood displays throughout the novel. Devoid of private attachments, Fleetwood, lacks the degree of sympathy required for him to engage in meaningful interactions with the other characters he encounters and his claims that as a teenager he has learnt everything he could possibly learn from a tutor whose only apparent fault seems to lie in his inability to write satisfactory verse, serve as a sharp reminder of this; Fleetwood's 'foibles [are] obvious,' in other words 'and [do] not escape [our] observation.'⁶⁸

But, as we have seen, Fleetwood is not the real focus of the novel but rather the medium through which we are asked to engage with the narrative, nothing more perhaps than material for thinking. Framed in the first person, *Fleetwood* builds on *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon*, in its use of what Pamela Clemit argues is 'Godwin's boldest innovation, his use of the first-person narrative to explore his philosophical interests.'⁶⁹ Rejecting the school of thought that in the late twentieth century sought to separate *Political Justice* from Godwin's fictional work, she makes a case that Godwin's narrative technique in *Caleb Williams* engages the reader's personal judgement through soliciting their active

⁶⁸ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 58.

⁶⁹ Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford England : New York: OUP Oxford, 2001), p. 6.

participation in the interpretive act of reading. She proposes, however, that Godwin's use of narrative voice in his fictional writing following *Caleb Williams* 'suggests his increasing scepticism about the unfettered exercise of private judgement.'⁷⁰ While this may be a tempting line to take in relation to the more historical novels like *St Leon*, it does not signal a distinct shift in Godwin's approach to fiction in general. If anything, his continued use of first-person narrative throughout his later works displays not only how integral Godwin's belief in private judgement is to his fiction, but also why fiction is such a useful tool for Godwin in playing out his philosophical ideas. His use of first-person narration, with its inherent unreliability, lays the burden of interpretation at the feet of the reader. Offering an alternative to Burke's more pessimistic view of human potential, Godwin allows the reader a degree of agency by not providing the reader with answers.⁷¹ Fiction offers the potential, for Godwin, to act as an experiential outplaying of his assertion in *Political Justice* that 'Nothing can be more necessary for the general benefit, than that we should divest ourselves, as soon as the proper period arrives, of the shackles of infancy... that men should judge for themselves, unfettered by the prejudices of education, or the institutions of their country.'⁷² Given *Fleetwood's* explicit educational concerns, this opens up an interesting possibility in that while it is a novel ostensibly about education and in which Fleetwood systematically charts the process of his education, it is not in these lessons themselves that the potentially educative function of the text lies. *Fleetwood* would seem, in fact, not to provide a lesson, but rather a set of examples, which once

⁷⁰ An argument that is made persuasively by Clemit in relation to *St. Leon*, Clemit, p. 6 and 88–90; Gary Kelly builds on this, arguing that this scepticism is reinforced by Godwin's reading of contemporary histories of sixteenth-century Europe in Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805*, p. 221; see especially William Robertson, *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V*, 1777; and Robert Watson, *The History of the Reign of Philip II. King of Spain*, 1792.

⁷¹ Godwin builds on Wollstonecraft's earlier rejection of Burke in *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, arguing against Burke's idea that it is people's individual duty to subject themselves to what he saw as a naturally hierarchical society. See Mary Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke; Occasioned by His Reflection in France', in *The Vindications: The Rights of Men and The Rights of Woman*, ed. by D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Broadview Press, 1997), pp. 31–98; Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France: And on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to That Event. In a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Paris (1790)*, ed. by Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 171–72.

⁷² Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 3: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, p. 236.

rationally interrogated by the reader have the potential to become lessons. The key lies in the potentiality of the educative function of the text for Godwin. He, very much in keeping with this, rejects Rousseau's presentation of the teacher-pupil relationship as unethical because it is both inherently unequal and grounded, for Godwin, in deception. Framed as despotism in *The Enquirer*, this relationship becomes in *Fleetwood*, analogous with the 'truth,' that is famously set out in the preface to *Caleb Williams* as being so 'highly worthy to be communicated to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach.'⁷³ It is in *Fleetwood's* very fictional nature, then, that we find a possible solution to the pedagogic problem posed by the hierarchical educational relationship that Godwin finds so troubling.

The only thing standing in the way of the attainment of Godwin's much-vaunted perfection is the potential failure of interpretation on the part of the learner. But for Godwin, moral truth, born of rational judgement is found through critical interrogation of known facts, and so it is only through a lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of known truths that error ensues. We see this again in *Political Justice*, in which he argues:

Men always act upon their apprehensions of preferableness. There are few errors of which they are guilty, which may not be resolved into a narrow and inadequate view of the alternative presented choice. Present pleasure may appear more certain and eligible than distant good. But they never choose evil as apprehended to be evil.⁷⁴

On the face of it, this presents an understanding of education remarkably similar to Rousseau's in that education is designed to protect the subject from a potentially corrupting society. The distinction lies in Godwin's rejection of pedagogical compulsion which impinges on an individual's rational faculty for discerning moral truth and thus one's ability to perform 'right' actions. This is not to say that Godwin rejects dialogue in learning, it forms one of the fundamental principles of Godwin's literary educational theory, but for this dialogue to be constructive, it must be both candid and engaged between equals.

⁷³ Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, p. 55.

⁷⁴ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 3: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, p. 45.

This conception of education as being necessarily anti-didactic forms the basis of how Godwin understands his fiction as being inherently educative and justifies, in turn, Godwin's understanding of literary praxis as being a process that need not be governed by the outcome of the interpretive act but retains its value through the educative validity of the action itself. While there is no way to ensure reading is critically constructive, the obviously fallible narrative voice we are presented with encourages the sort of critical distance that encourages the type of informed rational interrogation of the text Godwin argues is so necessary in *The Enquirer*. Providing a timely example of the need not just for the exercise of rational judgement but for a rationality informed by sympathetic social awareness, we find a Fleetwood, who, believing himself superior to those around him, is very obviously lacking in the empathetic capacity to fully understand his relationship with the world around him. *Fleetwood* becomes, in a strange way, a sort of Godwinian reading guide, one that Fleetwood inevitably fails in but the reader is able to approach on their own terms. By presenting his philosophy as fiction, Godwin places the sum of the educative experience in the hands of the reader and in whose hands the potential for unlocking the educational possibilities of the text lie in their entirety. Far from merely functioning on an interpretive level, this breaking down of the traditional pedagogical relationship is played out both physically and temporally. Not only is the reader able to choose how they interpret an indecisive and unreliable text, but because *Fleetwood* is a book, they are able to choose when they encounter the text and are equally empowered to stop reading or even chose not to read it at all. They are, much like the young Fleetwood, able to study 'for the most part when [they] please.'⁷⁵ For Godwin, this is the crowning triumph that fiction represents. Through appealing to the reader as judge, Godwin can very tangibly stimulate his 'unspeakably beautiful' doctrine of private judgement.⁷⁶ Accepting the possibility that the reader may not choose to engage critically with the text, or even choose to read it at all, Godwin ethically valorises his text, its form becoming itself an argument against Rousseauvean pedagogy. *Fleetwood* becomes in this way a demonstration of why Rousseau's rejection of literature and reading in favour of experiential learning is in many ways unnecessary, arguing that the act of literary praxis

⁷⁵ Godwin, *Fleetwood*, p. 58.

⁷⁶ Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 3: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, p. 182.

has the potential to provide a more complete educational experience than any of the carefully contrived lessons Rousseau's Emile is faced with.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: OR, THE NEW PROMETHEUS

As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings concerning whom I read, and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathized with, and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none, and related to none. 'The path of my departure was free;' and there was none to lament my annihilation. My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic: what did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them.¹

(Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus*)

Published in the same year as her father William Godwin's *Letter to a Young American*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) comes a full 13 years after *Fleetwood* was first printed in 1805. And yet, in the young Mary Shelley's first novel we find the ideal vehicle for a discussion of the implications and impact of the received Rousseauvean educational ideas developed towards the end of the preceding century. But, while Shelley's text is an important development of what I have called educative fiction, it also represents a critical engagement with ideas of literary praxis in that it reveals the limitations inherent in forms of literary reception that attempt to unbind themselves from the hierarchical pedagogic structures Rousseau so vehemently wrote against in the 1760s. In the formal composition of *Frankenstein*, it is not difficult to read the text as a vindication of the ambitiously anti-didactic literary education Godwin had imagined in *The Enquirer* in 1797. Making use of confessional first-person narrative and constructed around a distinctly Godwinian solipsistic hero, it is a text that is deeply involved in the politics of reading. Formally the novel is presented through a series of complex frames, each one narrated in the first-person, deeply subjective and often contradicting the other sections of the text. It is, as Graham Allen quite rightly highlights, 'a novel which places a huge emphasis on the reader's own interpretive responses.'² An extension of Godwin's anti-

¹ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. by J. Paul Hunter, Norton Critical Edition, 2nd Revised Edition (W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), p. 89.

² Graham Allen, *Shelley's Frankenstein*, Reader's Guides (London ; New York: Continuum, 2008), pp. 28–29.

didactic methodology, *Frankenstein* certainly represents something more complex than the 'show don't tell' approach to reader-reception that Godwin's literary demonstration of 'things as they are' implies. But as much as Shelley's text represents a wonderfully textured example of how a novel can formally facilitate the process of literary praxis that I have been examining throughout this thesis; for the sake of this conclusion, it contains, a far more pertinent interrogation of Rousseauvean pedagogic philosophy in Shelley's presentation of the education of Frankenstein's creature within the text itself. It is in Shelley's radical reimagining of the Rousseauvean learner in *Frankenstein* that we see her departure from earlier writing on the subject by considering the consequences of a self-empowered experiential literary education when undertaken by a subject who cannot comfortably exist within their cultural and social context.

Written with the expressed aim of shaping a social being who is not dependent on others, Rousseau's formulation of Emile's education is famously construed in such a way as to remove this contradiction between the individual and society in order to prepare him for a necessarily social existence. In contrast to the creature in *Frankenstein*, however, the Emile we see in Rousseau's text is, as we have seen, explicitly created as an idealised European everyman. And in much this fashion, the characters we encounter in the literary interpretations of *Emile* which I have examined in this thesis, the Belindas, Virginias, Emmas and even Fleetwoods all represent characters, who, in spite of their, at times, anti-social nature, are comfortably able to exist within their social context. Even examples like Henry Norwynne in Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796) or the eponymous hero of Robert Bage's *Hermesprong* (1796) who are consciously distanced from European society (usually as a means of satirising elements of it) are able to reintegrate into the society from which they have initially been removed. Shelley's crowning triumph in *Frankenstein*, however, is that she reveals a blind spot in Rousseauvean education by considering how it might work if the subject is not so perfectly constructed for cultural and societal integration within the European environment in which the text is set.

Unaware initially of his own physical alterity, Frankenstein's creature is the ultimate auto-didact and is, by the time we see him encountering Victor Frankenstein on the slopes

of Mont Blanc, well read, intelligent and easily the most articulate character in the text.³ And yet, by this time, he is fully convinced of the impossibility of his existing within European society. This might, at a superficial level, seem to be the result of his overtly racialised physical construction in the text, but what we see in the description of his linguistic and literary education is an encounter with European imperial ideals, which, once contextualised by the creature, form the basis of an internalised sense of difference and alterity that only becomes more and more pronounced as the narrative progresses.⁴ As Patrick Brantlinger aptly highlights, ‘the story of the Monster’s acquisition of language and literacy is... the narrative of his coming to self-knowledge, though for him self-knowledge and self-alienation are identical.’⁵ On the most obvious level, this is played out through his inherent exclusion from the De Lacey domestic circle. It is through them that he learns language, first by observing the family through a chink in their wall before vicariously learning to read along with the newly arrived Safie. Situated within the innermost frame of the narrative, the description of the creature’s linguistic education, narrated, lest we forget, by the creature himself, is, to put it lightly, questionable at best. In light of the ease and rapidity with which he apparently learns to speak and read, it is difficult to disregard Walter Scott’s quip in his 1818 review of the novel that the creature ‘learns the use of language, and other accomplishments, much more successfully than Caliban, though the latter had a conjuror to his tutor.’⁶ Shelley’s highlighting of the conflicting narratorial motivations and narrative frames in this exaggerated description of the creature’s linguistic education aside, what this description of his linguistic education does is lay the foundation for his eventual literary and historical education, a

³ Although we must remember that this is all related through Victor Frankenstein in whose interest it is to depict him as persuasive.

⁴ For a comprehensive discussion of the racial construction of the creature, see, H. L. Malchow, ‘Frankenstein’s Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *Past & Present*, 1993, 90–130; For insightful interrogations of how language itself becomes the site for the creature’s developing alterity, see, Peter Brooks, ‘Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts: Language and Monstrosity in Frankenstein’, *New Literary History*, 9.3 (1978), 591–605; John Bugg, ‘“Master of Their Language”: Education and Exile in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68.4 (2005), 655–66.

⁵ Patrick M. Brantlinger, ‘The Reading Monster’, in *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 59–65 (p. 63).

⁶ Walter Scott, ‘Remarks on Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus; a Novel’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 1818, 613–20 (p. 617).

process that forms the basis for both Shelley's engagement with Rousseau as well as her critique of social inequality in the text. It is at this pivotal point in the narrative, then, that the creature begins to come to terms with western political thought through Felix's reading of Volney's *Ruins of Empires*. Made to reflect on his own place within European society, in a Lacanian moment of self-awareness, the creature relates:

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers – their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I stared back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity.⁷

At this point, he is not yet fully aware of the consequences of this physical difference, and I would suggest that the development of this destructive conception of self is not entirely predicated on his physical comparison with the De Laceys. As he is wont to remind us some few pages later, 'Increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was.'⁸ Having been moved to tears following a description of the subjugation of the original inhabitants of the Americas in *Ruins of Empire*, it quickly becomes apparent that the creature's sense of self and identification with the subject of the colonial discourse he sees in Volney, is increasingly informed by his literary education. It is not, however, in his encounter with *Ruins of Empire* that we see the full impact of the creature's growing self-alienation as he is yet to fully engage with literary texts on his own terms, divorced from the interpretive authority provided, albeit unwittingly, by the discussions of Volney between Felix De Lacey and Safie. It is only once he has been able to read and reflect on literature outside of this implied teacher-student dynamic that he fully begins to appreciate the implication of texts like *Ruins of Empire* in how he begins to understand his own place within society. His conception of self only becomes fully developed in the text, then, following his discovery of a leather portmanteau containing 'Paradise Lost, a volume of Plutarch's *Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werter*.'⁹ Representing a new stage in his education, he is able to read these new texts unmediated by Felix De Lacey, who had, in his reading of Volney been acting as an

⁷ Shelley, pp. 78–79.

⁸ Shelley, p. 91.

⁹ Shelley, pp. 88–89.

unknowing intermediary, colouring the creature's understanding of the text. In a description of his interaction with these newly found texts, the creature describes, in a passage that almost reads as a Godwinian justification of reading, 'I now continually studied and exercised my mind upon these histories.'¹⁰ Having only encountered reading through Volney's history, the creature reads his new found treasures as factual documents, but this does little to dim the impression that the texts have upon him. *Paradise Lost*, in particular, has the most obvious impact and he relates:

Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect... Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.¹¹

This reading of Milton has often been read to represent the creature to be, as Michele Turner Sharp puts it, 'the worst kind of reader imaginable.'¹² But, I don't think Shelley is trying to suggest the creature is interpretively inept. When we consider that this passage is situated between his political education at the hands of Volney and a growing understanding of self in relation to a social context that consistently seems to exclude him from it, the creature's identification with Milton's problematic protagonist in the poem is perhaps unsurprising. I would suggest that what this does is reveal a lack of cultural understanding on the part of the creature that allows for a reading of Satan considered from outside of his religious context. Divorced of this context, the narrative strategies within the text that are designed to foster identification with Satan are rendered somewhat less problematic from an interpretive standpoint. In fact, what we see, in this very brief description of the creature's reading of the text is an active attempt to understand the different focal points within the narrative and a degree of critical distance, mirroring Plutarch's *Lives* perhaps, that enables him to consider the merits of multiple standpoints within the text. Regardless of his broadly sympathetic reading of the text though, what the creature's reading of Milton does here is move his perception of his

¹⁰ Shelley, p. 89.

¹¹ Shelley, p. 90.

¹² Michele Turner Sharp, 'If It Be a Monster Birth: Reading and Literary Property in Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein"', *South Atlantic Review*, 66.4 (2001), 70–93 (p. 82); see also, Alan Richardson, 'From Emile to Frankenstein: The Education of Monsters', *European Romantic Review*, 1.2 (1991), 147–62 (p. 154).

place in society beyond the domestic sphere. His identification with Satan is telling of a sense of alterity more profound than that expressed in his reading of *The Sufferings of Young Werther*. Establishing knowledge of himself in these terms becomes, in the text, integral to the creature's self-realisation as other. By defining himself in relation to society as a whole, or even on the cosmic level we see in Milton, the creature understands himself within a binary that serves only to position him as existing outside of this society, as an extra-social being. It is the self-empowered approach to learning posited by Rousseau, however, that serves inevitably to inform the process whereby this exclusion becomes internalised, and he becomes so heavily involved in his own self-alienation. His literary education thus comes to serve, as Shelley's text progresses, as the vehicle through which the creature becomes complicit in the process of imposition by which he actively partakes in his own eventual social exclusion which becomes in turn, as a result of his expressed intent to avoid it, all the more tragic.

Given my focus on the process of literary praxis as a form of reader reception that validates reading as an empirically justifiable educative act, it might seem strange to end this thesis with a discussion of a depiction of reading that seems almost to justify Samuel Johnson's famous attack on the novel in 1750. But what is happening in Shelley's novel, is not, I think, the damaging affective assimilation Johnson had warned against in his *Rambler* article. The reading creature that Shelley has presented us with represents a being capable of critical self-reflection, as evidenced in the text by his increasingly solipsistic tendencies as the novel progresses. What I am suggesting, rather, is that it is very difficult to encounter literary texts divorced from the hierarchical, inherently oppressive learning experiences people like Edgeworth, Hays and Godwin had been trying so vehemently to move away from. The act of reading imposes context and this context is not always entirely amenable to the equitable interaction with the novel that would allow for the sort of democratised educational possibilities Rousseauvean experimental learning suggests is possible.

What *Frankenstein* does is anticipate debates surrounding education that only really begin to become articulated in the 1950s and 60s by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and

Gayatri Spivak. Calls for readings of eighteenth-century literature informed by postcolonial discourse are by no means new, and this is not entirely what I am attempting here.¹³ But we can find, in the arguments put forth by Fanon in the middle of the twentieth century and the more forcible recent interventions by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, an understanding of the implications of the conception of literature as an inherently educative medium that has telling consequences for how we understand the impact of Rousseauvean literary praxis in the modern global context. In wa Thiong'o's 1986 collection of essays, *Decolonising the Mind*, he presents us with a notion of literary interaction not much different from that imagined by Shelley in *Frankenstein*. In it he writes:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, and their entire relationship to nature and to other beings.¹⁴

On the face of it, this construction of literature as a vehicle for cultural knowledge seems relatively benign, and could very easily fit within the modern justifications for reading that I mentioned at the start of this thesis, but, when we consider this within a context such as that Shelley has drawn in *Frankenstein*, the act of reading becomes a potentially potent form of cultural imposition. This is, of course, what wa Thiong'o is trying to show us here, arguing in a more localised context that 'English' literature has no place in Kenya because of its inherent ability to erode local cultures and beliefs. This does not seem massively far from the presentation of the social and cultural education Frankenstein's creature experiences through his literary education in Shelley's 1818 novel. Published some 33 years before wa Thiong'o's text Fanon's presentation of literary education in

¹³ For recent attempts to develop a systematic approach to appreciating the role of colonial discourse in our developing understanding of eighteenth-century literature see especially, Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003); Felicity Nussbaum, *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD. ;London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); *The Postcolonial Enlightenment : Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London : Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann Educational, 1986), p. 16.

Black Skin, White Masks can just as easily be read as an analogue for Shelley's depiction of the creature's reading of Milton in *Frankenstein*. In his seminal text Fanon writes of children's reading habits in the Antilles:

In the magazines [comic books] the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians; since there is always identification with the victor, the little Negro, quite as easily as the little white boy, becomes an explorer, an adventurer, a missionary "who faces the danger of being eaten by the wicked Negroes." I shall be told that this is hardly important; but only because those who say it have not given much thought to the role of such magazines.¹⁵

Fanon is, of course, arguing that popular culture, when situated outside of its implied context functions as a potent form of cultural imperialism. I am not, however, suggesting that all readers consume literary texts in the same relatively simplistic fashion that the children in Fanon's example do. One of my driving arguments in this thesis has, after all, been that Rousseauvean educational philosophy allows for a conception of reading as literary praxis which is inherently critical and self-reflexive, because, as we have seen, key to Rousseau's pedagogic philosophy is a rejection of didactic learning. But by situating Fanon's comic books in the Antilles, what he is trying to show us is that it becomes very difficult to interact with these books divorced from the political and colonial context in which they are being read. Context imposes, in this example at least, an ideological hierarchy that dominates the learning environment. And this is exactly what wa Thiong'o is taking from Fanon. If, following wa Thiong'o, we consider how this sort of interaction might function in somewhere like Kenya or the West Indies, the political history in both these contexts situates 'English' literature at an uncomfortable position within the implied colonial power dynamic.¹⁶ More simply put, by reading 'English' Literature in Africa, for instance, we inherently destabilise the possibility of divorcing reading from the imbalanced power dynamic Rousseauvean education is so focussed on undermining. And this is the warning that Fanon, wa Thiong'o and even

¹⁵ Frantz Fanon, 'The Negro and Psychopathology', in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 109–62 (p. 113).

¹⁶ I use the word English here to represent the linguistic nature of the texts rather than their geographic origin. This argument can just as easily be made with regard to French literature in the Congo or Portuguese literature in Mozambique. I merely note this so as to ensure there is no confusion between the geographical origin of the work although, in the case of Kenya at least, the argument would remain unchanged.

Shelley are providing: that the Rousseauvean conception of learning is unreasonable when we consider the contextual consumption of literature, because, when we place both the reader and text in social and historical context it is impossible to escape the imbalance that the power structures encoded in our necessarily political world impose on the reading experience. wa Thiong'o even goes so far as to indicate that these power dynamics are encoded within language itself. While I am not suggesting a comprehensive solution to Fanon's conundrum, although wa Thiong'o's radical decolonial arguments may well provide one, the difficulty of coming to terms with the possibility of establishing critical distance in the learning environment is a problem that is worth dwelling on.

As I have suggested in my analysis throughout this thesis, if we conceive of reading as a process of literary praxis, it provides an understanding of literary education that has the possibility to provide a learning experience outside of the bounds of hierarchical power dynamics by emphasising the agency of the reader in the learning process. Godwin provides a potential answer to both Fanon and Shelley's dilemma here, then, because, as we have seen in his arguments in *Political Justice* he claims 'there are few errors of which [men] are guilty, which may not be resolved into a narrow and inadequate view of the alternative presented choice.'¹⁷ Rational judgement is found in the critical interrogation of known facts, for Godwin, and so it is only through a lack of knowledge or a misunderstanding of known truths that rational error can conceivably ensue. This would suggest the possibility, that given sufficient knowledge, or an acknowledgement, to borrow again from Godwin, of the puppet strings at play, it might be possible to resolve Shelley's creature's conundrum as well as that of Fanon's Antillean children. But that is perhaps a problem for another project.

Throughout this thesis I have drawn attention to the manner in which Rousseau's educational model allowed for a move away from didacticism and how, through the growing emphasis on the practical nature of the interaction between readers and literary

¹⁷ I use 'men' to maintain consistency with Godwin's text, Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin Volume 3: An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, p. 45.

texts, Edgeworth, Hays and Godwin were able to produce educative texts that had the capacity to involve readers actively in the educational process. My predominant focus has been on how, through this conception of active readerly reception, *Belinda*, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *Fleetwood* opened up the possibility for a form of auto-education that enabled a movement towards a democratisation of education that could be situated outside of the bounds of institutionalised educational systems. I suggested in my discussion of *Emile*, that Rousseau's emphasis on the role of the learner in the educational process opened up the possibility for the reframing of his conception of experimental education in the late eighteenth century as a model of literary praxis that had the potential to renegotiate the problem of relating real-world ethical response to readerly interaction with literary texts. I have shown, through an examination of the literary characteristics in *Emile*, that Rousseau had already begun to lay the groundwork for the emergence of what I have called the educative novel in Britain between the end of the 1790s and early 1800s.

Examining how Rousseauvean pedagogy was received in Britain towards the end of the century, I explored how Maria Edgeworth sought to ground Rousseauvean education in real-world experience and genuine feeling. Recalibrated by Edgeworth as 'practical' education, she develops the Rousseauvean model of learning as a mode of literary praxis that emphasises practicable education and everyday experience. Finding voice in both her earlier writing for children and longer-form adult fiction, Edgeworth's conception of educative literature focuses on the dual nature of the educative text, both expounding her educational philosophy within the narrative itself as well as seeking to create a reading experience that is able to enact this educative imperative.

In Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, however, we see a very different educative intervention. Equally concerned with educational practice, her text mirrors the conception of educative fiction we see in Edgeworth's writing but pushes Edgeworth's 'practical' intervention further. Containing extended passages of direct philosophical discussion couched within a highly emotive epistolary narrative, Hays plays with philosophical and fictional literary conventions, constructing a text that, through its mixed-narrative mode, mirrors Rousseau's experimental approach in *Emile*. Containing copies of actual letters and grounded, very obviously, in Hays's own autobiographical

experience, *Emma Courtney* represents an educative intervention that is, in many ways, more radical than those proposed by both Edgeworth and Rousseau. In her novel, Hays modifies experimental education through recourse to autobiographical authority, renegotiating the relationship between rationality and sensibility and conceiving of a form of literary praxis that privileges emotional experience as being integral to rational thought.

Godwin displays a similar preoccupation with emotion in *Fleetwood*, framing his critique of Rousseauvean pedagogy within his text around what he sees as being the inability of Rousseauvean education to produce sympathetic people. Godwin's educational philosophy that we see expounded in *The Enquirer*, however, reveals his literary intervention to be interceding on a more fundamental level. Taking exception to what he sees as the visible hypocrisy inherent in the pedagogical relationship outlined by Rousseau in *Emile*, Godwin contends in *The Enquirer* that 'his whole system of education is a series of tricks, a puppet-show exhibition, of which the master holds the wires, and the scholar is never to suspect in what manner they are moved.'¹⁸ Grounded in its rejection of one of the fundamental paradoxes in *Emile*, then, Godwin's primary attack on Rousseauveanism lies in his critique of Emile's relationship with his tutor, who while purporting to educate him in self-dependence, actively controls almost every element of his early education. In my discussion, primarily framed around an interrogation of Godwin's theory of literary 'tendency', I made the case that Godwin abstracts Rousseau's educational thinking as a means of lending greater weight to his defence of educative literature, arguing that the act of literary praxis has the potential to provide a more complete educational experience than any of Rousseau's carefully contrived lessons in *Emile*. But, as I suggested in the opening sentences of this thesis, 'you can learn anything from a book – or nothing,' in the words of Christina Nehring, the agency lies almost entirely in the hands of the reader.¹⁹ This is, after all, the point Godwin is trying to make in *Fleetwood*, that in accepting the possibility that the reader may not choose to engage critically with a text, or even choose to read it at all, learning garnered through reading represents the most fully realised iteration of Rousseau's learner-centred experimental

¹⁸ Godwin, 'The Enquirer', p. 126.

¹⁹ Nehring, p. 23.

education. I would venture to suggest, in agreement with Godwin, that by appealing to the reader as judge, literary praxis offers a vehicle for the exercise of private judgement unbound from the problematic hierarchies represented by the traditional pedagogic relationship and through educative literature offers a potentially more productive form of educational experience.

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