What Made the Eighteenth Century Writers and Their Novels

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By

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book originated as an MA dissertation a long time ago. It then lay buried as a file on my computer for many years until I opened it again. In rereading it as a much older man, I was immediately captured by the dialogue eighteenth-century novelists exchanged with their readers to encourage them to share the virtues, habits and beliefs they pursued in their novels—an issue I had neglected when I wrote my dissertation. In particular, I was intrigued by the skills those authors expected of their readers so that the latter could satisfy their demands and the tasks they required them to carry out. From that moment the original MA dissertation began to develop into a totally different work; new issues were explored, new insights added, new interpretations given, and new, updated studies were integrated. It took more than two decades to make the original dissertation the book it is today.

Throughout it, I have referred to many studies in order to provide both a sufficiently comprehensive view of secondary sources I mention in the book and a survey of the level of investigation they have reached. The picture is certainly fragmentary and incomplete. I heartily hope I have not misinterpreted any of them. If I have, I do apologize and strongly recommend the reader to consult the original works.

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INTRODUCTION

AIMS AND PERSPECTIVES

In a 1981 interview, the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur[1] claimed that any literary discourse involves a triangular relation. There is the speaker (writer), the listener (reader) with his/her answers (comments) and, as a third element, the world of facts (the novel). When writers die, their literary work doesn't vanish with them but survives beyond the contingencies of the historical period which produced it. It transcends, that is, the original discourse that shaped it, freeing itself from time constraints.

A literary work is an act of communication conveying human experiences which, as Jerome McGann[2] pointed out, involve the writer and the reader in different emotional, intellectual and aesthetic responses. It is in such a perspective that I have approached the studies included in this book.

In one of his aphorisms, Friedrich Nietzsche claimed that the present is influenced by the past as well as the future. This is the perspective I have taken to answer the questions above, though giving present, past and future different time references. By present, as it is used in this book, I intend the eighteenth century, when the novels in question were written. I have investigated them by examining both the influence of the cultural, social and religious phenomena that took place before them (at a past time, in relation to them) and of the scientific and philosophical phenomena that occurred after them (at a future time, in relation to them). The latter include Chaos Theory in the case of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea of "Logical Space" and the way we picture a set of possibilities in our mind ("facts") triggered by the real world in Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*. Finally, H. Paul Grice's cooperative principle has been used to probe the kind of dialogue

[1] Paul Ricoeur, "Phenomenology and the Theory of Literature: An Interview with Paul Ricoeur," interviewed by Erik Nakajavani, *Modern Language Notes* 96, no. 5 (1981): 1085.

[2] Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1985), 129.

Henry Fielding exchanges with the readers of *Tom Jones* with all its omissions, vagueness, and ambiguity.

Hence, by past (before the eighteenth century) I mean the echoes from Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in Fielding's *Tom Jones* and the Italian *Comedy of Art* as a source for his style of characterization. I examined Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* to see how the afflatus of sixteenth-century religious doctrines like Methodism and Quietism (the latter preaching the total abandonment of the soul to God) informed the mood and responses to death of Clarissa Harlowe in her last days. As regards Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, I argue that religion (and the workings of Divine Providence, in particular) and materialism cannot be separated in the hero's and the heroine's minds, to the extent that they constitute two sides of the same coin.

The central focus in the discussion of these novels is thus on the kind of skills readers were expected to master in order to fulfil the expectations of the novelists, and how these expectations were shaped by the cultural and political climate of the time. The book is organized as follows. The first chapter gives a general survey of the debate on education that sparked off in England in the eighteenth century. Various proposals were made regarding which subjects to study, the role of teachers, methodology, and other related issues. Apart from philosophers like John Locke and other scholars and journalists who wrote about such topics, novelists, too, contributed in lesser or greater degrees to the debate by disseminating their ideas in the preface and the chapters of their novels or writing essays in journals.

The second chapter explores how in *Tom Jones* Fielding encourages his readers to fill in the "vacant spaces" in the novel with their own "conjectures." In particular, he asks them to recover vague or deliberately erroneous references about past authors, thus testing their "sagacity" and ranking them into two different groups: "upper graduates in criticism" and "lower class" readers. He expects the former to grasp the references, both overt and covert, to Classical and Renaissance authors such as Homer, Virgil, Cervantes and Ariosto, and the latter, instead, to enjoy the plot and learn moral lessons. As we shall see, in Fielding's dialogue with his readers, despite the recurring omissions in the text, he never flouts H. Paul Grice's cooperative principle.

The third chapter is also devoted to Henry Fielding, whose acute sense of comedy did not derive exclusively from his natural good humour and experience as a playwright in the wake of Restoration drama but also from the Italian *Comedy of Art*. The latter was a type of play in which actors wore masks to represent stock characters. Masks were first used in the Greek

theatre, both in comedies and tragedies, and showed exaggerated facial features. The *Comedy of Art* exploited them to give life to human types, like the lover, the beloved, the miser, and so on. Even though there is no conclusive evidence that Fielding knew or saw Italian actors performing, many of the characters in his novels and plays show similar traits to the masks of Italian comedies. English adaptations of these comedies, known as *Harlequinade Pantomime* or *Opera Buffa*, did indeed have significant impact on theatre-goers in eighteenth-century London, and Fielding may also have had a chance to see some of the Italian actors who performed in the city and across England.

The fourth chapter investigates Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* from the point of view of Chaos Theory and Complex Systems. The chapter takes into consideration key features of the theory like non-linearity, unpredictability, sensitivity to initial conditions, and strange attractors which appear in *Tristram Shandy*. In the novel, the reader is incessantly called to cope with such phenomena whenever a passage, a blank page, or unusual graphic elements give rise to digressions which make the plot depart from its main trajectory.

The fifth chapter discusses the management of space and movement in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker.* Starting from Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea of "Logical Space," the chapter examines the way in which Godwin and Smollett picture a series of possibilities in the representational space of the heroes' mind as they wander through England, Scotland, and Wales in the eighteenth century. In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein asserted that "we make to ourselves pictures of facts," meaning by "picture" the model of reality we construct in our minds. The journey Caleb and Matthew Bramble undertake is a roadmap into different possibilities while observing the state of "things as they are" in their country.

The sixth chapter deals with religion, reward and repentance in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* examined from the angle of the doctrines of Methodism and Quietism. The latter was a religious practice originated by the Spanish mystic and writer Miguel de Molinos in seventeenth-century Italy. In *Clarissa*, the heroine abandons herself to such a state by quitting the world for a fatalistic acceptance of her destiny. By surrendering to God, she chooses a quietist attitude culminating in the repression of any will to act.

Finally, the seventh Chapter reviews the relationship between materialism and religious beliefs in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* to show that the two aspects are not inseparable in their minds. Even though Defoe has always been considered the champion of the

practical outlook on life typical of the middle-class man, his novels balance such an attitude with a strong religious and moral inspiration. The spiritual breath which pervades his novels is fed by an unshakable trust in the workings of Divine Providence which is always at the service of any commercial enterprise, provided the teachings of God are followed. The Latin quotation of the title of the chapter *Ora et Labora* ("work and pray") captures such a mood. It was the traditional motto of Benedictine monks, summing up the fundamental rules they had to live by. It highlights the crucial role manual work had for the religious education of man and the other way round. It perfectly sums up the spirit of Defoe's novels.

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CHAPTER 1

TRAINING THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL READER

> There are indeed in some writers visible instances of deep thoughts, close and acute reasoning and ideas well pursued. The light these would give, would be of great use, if their readers would observe and imitate them.
> John Locke, "Reading"[3]

In his seminal work *The Rise of the English Novel*, Ian Watt[4] maintains that the success of this genre in the eighteenth century was fostered, among other factors, by the simultaneous growth of the rate of literacy and of a middle class of voracious readers. Subsequent studies objected to the central role Watt had attributed to such factors. John Bender [5] claimed that it wasn't the increase in literacy to encourage the development of the novel and that, rather, the converse held. J. P. Hunter,[6] then, disputed the view that the increase in literacy was an eighteenth-century phenomenon and dated it back to the seventeenth century, at least one century before the rise of the novel as a literary form. Finally, W. A. Speck[7] argued that any such direct relationship of cause and effect between the emergence of the novel and that of the middle class would be very difficult to prove.

More recent studies have identified a variety of concurrent factors for the rise of the novel, such as more efficient printing technologies, the huge expansion of the book market and its impact on the literary arena of the time. These factors changed the relationship between writers and readers in

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[3] John Locke, "Reading," in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), 45, Internet Archive, Digital Publication August 15, 2008. https://archive.org/details/lockesconductofu00lock/page/n5/mode/2up.

[4] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974).

[5] John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[6] J. P. Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York, NY: Norton, 1990).

[7] W. A. Speck, *Literature and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Harlow: Longman, 1998).

a significant way. Russell West,[8] in particular, claims that the use of new printing technologies gave rise to an "anonymous" reader whose identity writers could neither define nor imagine, thus creating a communicative barrier between writers and the reading public. Olga Kuminova calls such a barrier the "veil of print,"[9] whereby the elitist but easily identifiable literary audience of earlier centuries eventually became a sort of "virtual readership" and readers and writers were prevented from being directly in touch with each other. At the same time, Gillian Paku[10] observes, this new form of communication stimulated readers to co-participate in the making of the novel by finding personal meanings in it through what she calls "emotional investment."

Apart from such a creative effort, it is widely recognized that novels played a crucial role as pedagogical guides for readers, simultaneously providing materials of support to educational institutions both private and public (such as schools, charitable institutions, preceptors, and academies). Richard Barney[11] contends that novels contributed to the dissemination of new ideas of citizenship, individual freedom, and social responsibility. This new mode of spreading knowledge and social responsibilities was another factor which prompted the growth of literacy, even though the precise contours of what should exactly be understood by *literacy* in the eighteenth century remains an object of debate which has elicited a variety of different interpretations. While numerous, though divergent, quantitative analyses have been produced about the number of people who could have been considered literate, a qualitative analysis of the phenomenon is almost impossible to provide.[12] D. Cressy estimates that fifty-eight per cent of the male population could be considered literate against thirty-two per cent of the female population around the 1740s. He adds that all male and female

[8] Russell West, "To the Unknown Reader: Constructing Absent Readership in the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Fielding, Sterne and Richardson," *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 26, no. 2 (2001):109.

[9] Olga Kuminova, "To See Across the Veil of Print: Virtual Re-personalization of the Reader-Author Relationship During the 'Reading Revolution,'" *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* 3, (2011): 59.

[10] Gillian Paku, *Anonymity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford Handbooks online, 2015), 13, Oxford Academic, accessed May 03, 2021, https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/43514/chapter/364251253

[11] Richard Barney, *Plots of Entertainment, Education and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[12] See Keith Thomas, "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England," in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd Bauman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 98

members of the London commercial classes were considered literate by the end of the eighteenth century.[13] Other studies, however, dispute his assessment.

As for defining *literacy* itself, Ian Watt[14] held that in eighteenth-century England it involved knowledge of the classics and of their languages, Greek and Latin. While such view is also shared by S. Cowan,[15] P. Hunter[16] argues that, as far as novels were concerned, readers spanned social classes, from the aristocracy to labourers, largely independently of gender, thus applying the term also to those uneducated in the classics who read only for pleasure. Speck,[17] on the other hand, further points out that after the Hardwicke's Act of 1753, the term *literacy* could simply denote the ability to sign a marriage register.

Given the different skills associated with literacy under its several definitions, it is interesting to note that reading novels required a variety of abilities. In their prefaces and dedications, novelists addressed specific types of readers and gave them precise assignments. William Godwin, for example, encourages them to read *Caleb Williams* to gain understanding of such social evils as "domestic and unrecorded despotism,"[18] and uses fiction to arouse the attention of readers not acquainted with "books of philosophy" to prompt them to reflect on the difference between "reformation" and the preservation of "the existing constitution."

Tobias Smollett is less peremptory towards his readers. In *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, instead of addressing the readers directly in the preface, he uses two editors to explain what kind of relationship he intends to establish with them. The first of the two editors is the Reverend Dustwich, a Welshman like Smollett, and the second is a London bookseller named Henry Davis. The opening letter the latter writes to the former is rich in quotations from Latin, thus implying that the type of reader he has in mind is a well-educated one. Also, the Reverend assures the bookseller that

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[13] David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 154.
[14] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 37.
[15] Steven Cowan, *Education in England During the Eighteenth Century: The Growth of Public Literacy* (London: Institute of Education Publication, 2011).
[16] Paul Hunter, "The Novel and Social/Cultural History," in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19.
[17] W. A. Speck, *Literature and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, 11.
[18] William Godwin, *Things as they are, or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794: New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1870), 19. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, last updated April 14, 2020, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn6nrc&view=1up&seq=1.

the publication of the letters will contribute to the "information and edification of mankind."[19]

Morality is the trademark of eighteenth-century fiction. Henry Fielding too pursues "wisdom and virtue" but, unlike Smollett, he does it through more demanding tasks which consist in testing his readers' sagacity, at the same time upsetting them with misquotations and vague references to classical authors.[20] Daniel Defoe, instead, makes his aim clear by announcing in the preface to *Robison Crusoe* that he wants to provide the reader with "instruction" through Robinson's "example." In *Moll Flanders*, he wants to show the beauty of repentance by recommending the book to those who "know how to read it." In *Clarissa*, Samuel Richardson admonishes fathers to be cautious "against the undue exertion of their natural authority over children in the great article of marriage" and advises them to warn "children against preferring a man of pleasure to a man of probity." Above all, he wants to "investigate the highest and most important Doctrines, not only of Morality, but also of Christianity, by shewing them thrown into Actions in the Conduct of *worthy* Characters,"[21] while the "*unworthy*" are condemned. Finally, Laurence Sterne in his address "to the Right Honourable Mr Pitt" in *The Opinions of Tristram Shandy* writes that he wants to give his reader enjoyment and mirth, because when a man laughs, "he adds something to this Fragment of Life."[22]

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[19] Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, 2 vols, 1 (1771: London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1820), 1. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-digitized, last updated June 26, 2020, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101076780996&view=1up&seq=1.

[20] Examples of misquotations and vague references in *Tom Jones* are provided from the very beginning of the novel. In his dedication to the Honourable Lyttelton, where he appeals to the principle of truth he has pursued in writing the novel, Fielding both misquotes and vaguely refers to Plato's "naked charms," neither saying which book it is drawn from (*Phaedrus*) nor specifying that the word "naked" is his own addition.

[21] Samuel Richardson, "Preface," in *Clarissa*, 8 vols, 1 (1747-48: London: Printed for S. Richardson, 1751), VII. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-digitized, last updated January 04, 2021, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435024779720&view=1up&seq=15&skin=2021.

[22] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767: New York, NY: Modern Library, 1928), 11. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-digitized, last updated September 10, 2020, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015007044004&view=1up&seq=9&skin=2021.

From what has been illustrated above, there is no doubt that writers adjusted their novels to the tastes of their readers. Peter Hinds[23] affirms that the growing appetite for novels in the eighteenth century spawned a large production of books written in a variety of forms, including diaries, letters, religious instructions, reports of everyday life, etc. These demanded different skills in the "virtual communication" that writers and readers engaged in. Such skills were the result of the intense debate on education which reflected the cultural spirit of the time.

Indeed, in the Age of the Novel, the role and function of a consolidated form of education traditionally based on the study of the classics was being taken over by more modern views in keeping with the need of a rising middle class of traders and artisans. Despite this, the study of Latin and Greek continued to be the distinguishing element between the education of young aristocrats and that of the lower strata of society. It was imparted in the form of compositions, either in grammar schools or through private tutors. Yet, a growing dissatisfaction with the way classical languages were studied was emerging. Lawrence Stephens[24] points out that especially state schools were increasingly seen as riotous places where violence prevailed over morals and, what was worse, the quality of learning they provided was starting to be neglected. Stephens contends that the problem lay in the economic and financial reasons that had compelled to meet the needs of the mercantile class which wanted more practical and scientific subjects to be introduced in their curricula. As a result, some schools continued to teach Latin and Greek while others changed by introducing arithmetic, algebra, and geometry.

The reorganization of school curricula was a deeply felt issue and, as such, extensively debated in public audiences, coffee-houses and in the press. The latter, especially, devoted a great number of articles to the topic. In 1732 *The Gentlemen Magazine* wrote that any man liable to run a country should not only be sufficiently fluent in classical languages but also learn "Mathematicks" in order to acquire "Penetration, Depth and Attention" to enable him "at length to reason closely, clearly and strongly."[25]

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[23] Peter Hinds, "The book trade at the turn of the eighteenth century," in *The Oxford Handbook to Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. J. A. Downie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 13.

[24] W. B. Stephens, *Education in Britain 1750-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 42.

[25] A. M. Ramsay, "On Princely Education," *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1732, 889. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-digitized, last updated September 27, 2020, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015016468301&view=1up&seq=1.

For those who did not share such a view, the education of the gentleman and of the upper classes more at large continued to require a reasonable knowledge of Latin as well as such past masters like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Rabelais, Moliere, or Milton.[26] At the very opposite end was the "curriculum of life," by which was meant the choice to go on the road and learn through experience. It is what many of the heroes and heroines of eighteenth-century novels chose to do, as in the instances of *Tom Jones*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Caleb Williams*, and *Moll Flanders*.

A central figure in the debate on education was John Locke whose works *Of Conduct of Understanding* and, especially, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* were highly influential throughout the eighteenth century. In the former work, Locke advocates a type of education capable of opening up the minds of learners for future uses in life, while in the latter he lays emphasis on "judgment" and "character" more than on the training of the intellect. According to Locke, "fathers who intend ever govern their Children, should begin whilst they are *very little*" so as to "establish the authority of a Father *as soon* as he is capable of Submission."[27] Locke focusses specifically on the education of the gentleman and covers many issues related to teaching and learning, like the usefulness of Latin, the habit of corporal punishment, the choice of a tutor, and the pursuit of "reason" and "virtue." In regard to Latin, he maintains that while it is important for a gentleman, it is totally useless for children. Locke, in fact, complains about the teaching of Latin on which young students are compelled to "spend many Hours of their precious Time uneasily."[28] He believed, more generally, that it is useless for children to learn any language because they forget "the Rules of Grammar" as soon as they leave school. [29] He further deplored the way Latin was taught, pointing out that "the Fear of the Rod"[30] as an educational method to teach Latin was not the right way to encourage pupils to learn. He preferred private tutors who could take care of children from an early age and provide them with "some discreet, sober, nay, wise Person about them."[31] Tutors should also protect their pupils from bad

[26] A. R. Humphreys, "The Social Setting," in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature,* ed. Boris Ford, 8 vols, IV (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), 35.
[27] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693: Dublin: Printed by John Kiernan for T. Walker, 1778), 44. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-digitized, last updated June 30, 2020, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101068027067&view=1up&seq=7&skin=2021.
[28] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 238.
[29] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerting Education*, 244.
[30] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerting Education*, 51.
[31] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 113.

influences, provided they are endowed with "great Sobriety, Temperance, Tenderness, Diligence, and Discretion."[32] These, in Locke's views, were not qualities that people who work for poor salaries could possess. A tutor, in fact, must "carefully preserve [children] from the influence of ill Precedents."[33]

Proposals for the reform of the school system inundated almost every journal, covering all possible aspects: the training of schoolmasters, the behaviour of students, the content of curricula, teaching methods, the moral aspects of education, the teaching of practical subjects, and assessments of the achievements of education or, otherwise, its failure.[34]

An example of the importance attributed to education is provided by John Clarke's *An Essay upon Study*, published in 1731. After claiming that studying means not only the pursuit of knowledge and the training of the mind but also a better appreciation of amusement and "diversion," he both promotes his proposal for a more efficient school system and a criticism of what is wrong with it. First, he highlights the importance of Latin and Greek to qualify scholars for a university degree. Then, he praises the advantages of a liberal education as an "opiate against the trouble." Finally, he lists the subjects that may contribute to the improvement of the mind. Among them were mathematics, natural philosophy, and languages. At a lower level, he ranks subjects that are not functional to scholars and are studied only for "immediate Pleasure, or Amusement: Such as Poetry, Plays and Novels." Such subjects do not belong to learning but are simply works of imagination where a man can find pleasure by "acquitting himself handsomely therein."[35] John Clarke considered novels only as a form of entertainment and a means to stimulate the imagination of men (not women, apparently), not as an instrument which could contribute to the improvement of the mind and the pursuit of knowledge and virtue.

In the novels from this period, on the contrary, there is ample evidence of a serious aim to instruct (but also to entertain as Clarke expected of any course of study), and the importance of education was never neglected. In Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Thwackum and Square are the tutors who follow

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[32] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerting Education*, 113.
[33] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 112.
[34] See Marsha Varney, "Education of eighteenth-century French and English Periodicals (1700-789)," PhD Dissertation, 1978, The University of Arizona University Libraries, last updated May 10, 2022, file:///C:/Users/stefa/Downloads/azu_td_7824363_sip1_m.pdf.
[35] John Clarke, *An Essay upon Study* (London: A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, 1731), 6, Google Books, accessed May 11, 2022, https://books.google.it/books?id=VVooAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=liberal&f=false.

principles which are the opposite to those recommended by John Locke. They are portrayed as cunning, dishonest, insensitive, and unfeeling, and as wasting their time arguing on ineffectual philosophical and religious issues which are in blatant contrast with their practical behaviour. They find pleasure in beating poor Tom, a punishment which Locke defines as "the most unfit of any to be us'd in Education" because it is the source "of all vicious Actions, and the Irregularities of Life."[36] Rather than being "models" of virtue, as Locke recommended, these two tutors are ridiculed by Fielding.

> Had not Thwackum too much neglected virtue, and Square religion, in the composition of their several systems, and had not both utterly discarded all natural goodness of heart, they had never been represented as the objects of derision in this history.[37]

Surely, what was important for Fielding was not so much the institution responsible for the education but the people who provided it. In this regard, Allworthy is a good educator, while not a tutor, not only because he is endowed with "generosity," "goodness of heart," "honour" and "wisdom" but also because he can teach these qualities through living examples. He is, however, also naïve and easily "taken in" by scheming people like Thwackum and Square. Consequently, Fielding implies, education through experience is also vital and this is what he wants his readers to learn. Knowledge of the classics remains a precious instrument through which to achieve wisdom and virtue, and these qualities, together with innocence, "may attract the admiration of mankind," as Fielding wrote in his address to John Lyttelton in *Tom Jones*.[38]

Samuel Richardson addresses his readers in a different way. He does not urge them to rely on their intellectual skills but on their Christian principles, nor advocates a sound education based on the classics but rather a moral, spiritual one close to that taught in charity schools. A very similar attitude could be found in the instructions an unknown author gave to apprentices in

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[36] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 50.

[37] Henry Fielding, *The History of* Tom Jones*, a Foundling* (1749: New York, NY: A. L. Burt Company, 1899), 94. Henceforth *Tom Jones*. All references are to this edition. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, last updated April 2, 2022, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.39000025024790&view=1up&seq=99&skin=2021.

[38] Henry Fielding, "To the Honourable John Lyttelton, Esq," in *Tom Jones* (Encyclopaedia Britannica: London, 1948), XIV, Internet Archive, Digital Publication June 27, 2005. https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.215352/page/n5/mode/2up?q=XIV.

the *Gentleman's Magazine* in October 1733, though Richardson had already undertaken the task of compiling *An Apprentice's Vademecum,* published one year later, where similar Christian principles were pursued. A good tutor is one who directs his apprentice

> in the several Branches of his duty to God, his Master and himself; and shewing him the fatal Consequences of his Neglect thereof, with Regard both to his *temporal* and *eternal* Happiness. Digested under proper Heads, with Prayers particularly adapted. Composed by a Divine of the Church of *England*, for the Instruction of his own Children, and now made publick for the Goods of others.[39]

Swift and Defoe had very different ideas on education. Swift favoured a more formal type while Defoe preferred a practical-spiritual direction. In *The Compleat English Gentleman* Defoe wrote that it is "the knowledge of things, not words, [that] make a scholar."[40] Also, he considered classical languages not strictly necessary for a gentleman even though their knowledge could help. Defoe gives an example of how useful practical things are rather than learning Latin by reporting the case of a man he knew who, thanks to the teachings of a tutor, become well-learned in a variety of subjects.

> In … 4 year and half, he was a mathematician, a geographer, an astronomer, a philosopher, and in a word a compleat scholar: and all this without the least help from the Greek or the Latin.[41]

However, a few lines below he adds that the same gentleman, thanks to the help of his tutor, succeeded in learning Latin and reading Latin authors. Throughout *The Compleat English Gentleman*, Defoe asserts his preference for a kind of learning based on experience, supporting it through examples which show that even though a gentleman has neither attended any school nor mastered any "learned" language, he can still come to know them either by travelling or by reading books. He prefers scientific subjects to the humanities. In what appears to be a patriotic impulse, he exalts his English

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[39] [?] *The Gentleman's Magazine,* September 1733, 534. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-digitized, last updated April 11, 2020, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hxy1xp&view=1up&seq=1.

[40] Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman,* ed. Karl D. Bulbring (1729: London, Nutt, 1890), 212. Google books, accessed March 4, 2022, https://books.google.it/books?id=WopaAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=phylosopher&f=false.

[41] Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman,* 207.

contemporaries at the expense of the classics. Some of the achievements of the former, he points out, "shine brighter in English than ever they did in Latin." These range from studies and new discoveries in astronomy, travelling, medicine, physics, as well as "mathematicks, fortificacion, incampments, intrenchings, millitary discipline, beseiging and defending towns." In all such fields, the level of knowledge his contemporaries have reached, Defoe claims, far exceeds that achieved from anything that "what ever went before them."[42]

It is no coincidence that this is the kind of learning which endows Robinson with the practical skills required to build a hut when he is stranded on the island. He can measure the exact place where to build it and fortify it to protect himself against wild beasts. In the first edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe highlights the usefulness of learning by imitation, experience, and perseverance: of "fact" over "fiction", in short. In a puritanical strain, in any case, such learning cannot dispense with a rightful religious attitude, as man, Defoe writes, cannot forget to "justify and honour the Wisdom of Providence in all the Variety of our Circumstances."[43]

The same goes for *Moll Flanders* who, though an educated woman, has the same experience of the world as that recommended in "An Academy for Women." In this essay, Defoe makes the argument for an academy where women could receive some appropriate form of higher education and be taught according to their "genius and their Quality." They should not be prevented from learning how to play, sing, and dance, because, he assumes, these are their "favourite pastimes." Also, they should be "taught all the Graces of Speech, and all the necessary Air of Conversation." Finally, in a more progressive, as well as practical, claim he hopes for an education in which women could

> be brought to read books, and especially history, and so to read as to make them understand the world, and be able to know and judge of things when they hear of them.[44]

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[42] Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman,* 231.

[43] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, in *Romances and Narratives by Daniel Defoe*, ed. George, A. Aitken, 3 vols, 1 (London: J.M. Dent & co., 1895), LXVII. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-Digitized, last updated December 15, 2022, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015078553487&view=1up&seq=1.

[44] Daniel Defoe, "An Academy for Women," in *An Essay upon Projects* (1697: London: Cassell & co. 1894), 169, 170. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-
digitized, last modified April 24, 2022,
https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112010442850&view=1up&seq=1&skin=2021.

In comparison with Defoe, Swift appears more conservative. He held that the study of Latin and Greek is a distinguishing element of an individual's education. For this reason, he was very critical of the education given in public schools, where the study of classical languages, as it was imparted in his times, was a "waste of time." The aims of a school education should be to pursue "incitements to virtue, and discouragement from vice" through imitation and good examples "drawn from the wisest reasons, the strongest motives, and the most influencing examples,"[45] the latter given by the works of the ancient masters. This is the reason why learning Latin and Greek is important: it was an instrument to deter bad behaviour and bad manners.

Harvey J. Graff[46] points out that the eighteenth century laid the foundations of social progress by pursuing educational policies through which, in accordance with Locke's view, moral and intellectual improvement could be achieved. Graff also highlights that despite the lively public debate about such issues, the most important institutions paid little attention to them. Only after the first half of the century the renewal of the curriculum was given a new impulse, involving all types of schools with the proviso, however, that almost all of them concerned the middle and upper classes. The education of the lower classes, conversely, continued to be based on the teaching of moral behaviour rather than the intellectual exercise of the mind. Harvey J. Graff underlines that admission to secondary schools was restricted for the poor among whom, it was believed, genius could not have citizenship.

This is the conservative attitude Tobias Smollett had towards education; one typical of the landed gentry which he defends in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. Education had to be functional to the preservation of the *status quo* and the privileges of the upper classes (but "illiterate plebeians" may be present among English, not Scottish, "juries," he complains in *Humphry Clinker*). For servants, peasants, and workers, education should provide the basic skills functional to the work they had to carry out and only a basic level of reading. Consistently with such a view, Humphry, a servant who joins Matthew Bramble along the journey and who turns out to be his illegitimate son, cannot write. On the other hand, educating the masses meant subverting a consolidated social order. Education for the upper

[45] Jonathan Swift, "An Essay on Modern Education," in *The Prose of Jonathan Swift*, XIII vols, XI, ed. Temple Scott (1732: London: George Bell), 55, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.100146/page/n11/mode/2up?view=theater.

[46] Harvey J. Graff, "1660-1780," in *The Legacies of Literacy in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press,1991), 179.

classes was instead an instrument to wield power and control those below them. Indeed, the idea that culture could be disjoined from education is also mentioned in *Roderick Random*, where personal development contributing to the understanding of the world and its complexities can be achieved through experience.

Among the new educational institutions that appeared in the Augustan Age there were those based on the French academies, the curricula of which included instructions in military exercises and a variety of modern subjects like foreign languages. Swift disapproved of them and objected to the "current opinion" of his age that "to dance, to fence, to speak French" were the only accomplishments a gentleman should pursue. In "An Essay on Modern Education," he deplores the "current opinion" of that time that states that "mingling the sons of noblemen with those of vulgar" corrupt the former and that "whipping breaks the spirit of lads well born."[47]

As already pointed out, Swift has a conservative outlook when he deals with training in Latin and Greek. Again in "An Essay on Modern Education," he reports that, during a conversation in a coffee-house with two gentlemen, he replied to a boastful officer who challenged the importance of the classics. The officer contended that a soldier cannot hope to win in a war with "his nouns and his verbs, and his philosophy, and trigonometry." With such weapons, the officer added, he wouldn't go far in a battlefield or "a siege … or blockade, or reencountering." In his final remark, Swift accuses the officer of "ignorance and contempt of learning," for a gentleman, whether a soldier or not, cannot do without learning and knowledge.

Godwin too was critical of the educational system of his age. For example, he opposed the idea of a national education. As a radical thinker, he believed that such a system would impose a set of fixed norms and knowledge which prevented personal growth. Learning and knowledge acquired in universities and public institutions do not keep pace with that possessed by "the unshackled and unprejudiced members of the same political community." The moment in which any sort of learning is administered by a "permanent establishment" it starts to show "an aversion to a change."[48]

He thus maintained the schools of his time were not the right place to learn. "There are," he wrote, "other ways of attaining wisdom and abilities

[47] Jonathan Swift, "An Essay on Modern Education," 52.

[48] William Godwin, "On National Education," in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, 2 vols, 2 (1793: London: Printed by G.G. and J. Robinson, 1799), 298. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, Google-digitized, last updated June 26, 2020, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc1.cu09896430&view=1up&seq=1.

beside the school of adversity but there is no way of attaining them but through the medium of experience."[49] It is by learning on the road, also known as the curriculum of life, that knowledge can be learned. It is the curriculum of life that Caleb Williams completes which prevails over the one taught in schools.

Regardless of where learning takes place, in "An Account of the Seminary" Godwin claims that children's development as well as their "moral disposition depend very much, perhaps entirely, upon education." [50] Either through experience or formal instruction what matters is that all forms of education be carefully planned and not left to chance. A principle that he insists on is that educators must not impose their will on pupils. In an enlightened way which anticipated twenty-first century pedagogical principles, he maintained that children are flexible to any kind of learning and capable of acquiring any sort of knowledge and behaviour if they are well trained. The means to make students develop their potentialities is that teachers, tutors and preceptors must be capable of capturing their attention and arouse interest in what they teach. If they fail, it is because they are bad teachers. Education, for Godwin, has to be centred on the pupils not on teachers; priority goes to the former independently of the objectives reached.

In *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Godwin reiterates the importance of a regular education for the progress of society. A bad education, he maintains, is the cause of any kind of depravity. Yet, again, a standardized educational system must be "discouraged" because it would inevitably fall under the influence of the government and the church. Hence, a national education would not be free and open but a

> more formidable nature than the old and much contested alliance of church and state. Before we put so powerful a machine under the direction of so an ambiguous agent, it behoves us to consider well what it is that we do.[51]

The aims of education are teaching the truth, not falsehood, and, again, most of the responsibility lies on the teacher whose merits depend solely on "what comes directly under his cognizance, and cannot be disguised," as Godwin

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[49] William Godwin, "Of Education, the Education of a Prince," in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* 2, 11.

[50] William Godwin, "An Account of The Seminary That Will Be Opened On Monday, The Fourth Day of August, At Epsom In Surrey," Ebook, 10, The Project Gutenberg, release date January 1, 2004, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10597/pg10597-images.html.

[51] William Godwin, "Of National Education," in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, 2, 302.

wrote in "An Account of the Seminary." Falkland appears to be a good instructor at the beginning of *Caleb Williams* but later turns into a villain because he "disguised" his true nature by deceiving Caleb.[52] Initially "mild and humane," he later turns "the gentle yoke" of his teachings into an instrument of oppression which deprives Caleb of his freedom. He is no longer, that is, the model of honour, refinement, virtue, sensitivity he once represented. In the end, however, Caleb changes perspective and shows more sympathy towards his old master. Adopting a reformist stand, he blames Falkland's fall on the social prejudices and conventions which have corrupted his integrity and led him to his ruin.

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[52] Godwin, "An account of the Seminary," 1.

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CHAPTER 2

LOWER- AND UPPER-CLASS READERS IN FIELDING'S *TOM JONES*

> And Hector groan'd in wrath, that that swift dart / Had thus escaped his hand all in vain; / And stood bewilder'd, lacking other spear, / Loud on his brother of the sun-white targe, / He shouted with shrill voice for second shaft. / Vainly—for no Deiphobus nigh. / Then Hector knew his hour and cried ...
> —Homer, *Iliad*.[53]

In *Tom Jones* Fielding distinguishes between "low order" readers, whom he expects to interpret events and incidents according to their imagination, and "upper graduate" readers, of whom a much greater effort of "exercises of judgement and penetration" could be "reasonably" required.[54] Not only does Fielding ask his more sophisticated readers to use their imagination while reading but he also challenges them to grasp the moral and cultural implications of his novel. This is a task which demands a sound classical education which Fielding tests through a wealth of references to Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Ariosto and other writers whose echoes reverberate throughout the novel. He engages a constant dialogue with them without apparently being, as Wolfgang Iser[55] argues, too prescriptive. On the contrary, he continuously flatters them to use the "wonderful sagacity"[56]

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[53] Homer, *Iliad*, translated by J. G. Cordery, 2 vols, 2 (London Oxford and Cambridge: Rivingtons, 1871), 284, 285, Internet Archive, digitizing sponsor Google, added date August 5, 2008, https://archive.org/details/iliadhomer01cordgoog/page/n4/mode/2up?view=theater.

[54] Henry Fielding, *The History of* Tom Jones*, a Foundling* (1749: New York, NY: A.L. Burt Company, 1906), 84. Henceforth *Tom Jones*. All references are to this edition. Courtesy of Hathi Trust Digital Library, accessed November 24, 2021, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.39000025024790&view=1up&seq=99&skin=2021.

[55] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974), 31.

[56] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, 83.