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**Romantic Inheritance or Realist Repudiation:**

**Responses to Rousseauvian Education in *Eugénie Grandet* and *Indiana***

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By

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## **Romantic Inheritance or Realist Repudiation:**

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In this thesis, I will study two manifestations of the legacy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's educational and political theories between 1832 and 1833: George Sand's *Indiana* (1832) and Honoré de Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* (1833). I will argue that both novels treat the difficulties that uneducated or domestically educated young women face when they first encounter the artificial relationships of society, and that both authors attribute their protagonists' situation to the lack of connection between the ideology of their upbringing and that of society. Furthermore, I will view these texts within the context of Romanticism, which buoyed the influence of Rousseauvian thought in the early nineteenth century by declaring nature preferable to society, a critical tenet of Rousseau's theories. Social and political changes, however, led to Romanticism's decline as the nineteenth century progressed, and this waning influence, coupled with the rise of Realism, can be observed in *Indiana* and *Eugénie Grandet*.

The first chapter of this work will discuss the ideas that Rousseau presents in *Emile, ou de l'éducation* (1762) and the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754). Although women are painted as independent in the original state of Nature, Rousseau argues in *Emile* that they should be domesticated in society, and he outlines the male and female educations that he believes will best prepare men and women for their assigned gender roles in society. The two chapters that follow treat the interpretations of Rousseau's theories that Sand and Balzac put forward in *Indiana* and *Eugénie Grandet*. Sand refutes the nineteenth-century discourse concerning women's innate "irrationality," attributing Indiana's difficulties with love and social norms to the distance between her "natural" education on Ile Bourbon and the artificiality of French relationships, eventually rejecting the possibility that reformed education can purge society of its corruption. Balzac, meanwhile, traces Eugénie's transition from naïve young woman to true adulthood, when she is versed in the relations of "*intérêt*" that govern those around her. Eugénie, raised to base her relationships on true affection, is eventually isolated by her education, but Balzac does not envision her possible escape from society.

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## I. Introduction

In *Les Nuits de Paris*, Restif de la Bretonne makes the following observation concerning the effects of Rousseau's theories on French society:

C'est l'*Emile* qui nous amène cette génération taquine, entêtée, insolente, impudente, décideuse, qui parle haut, fait taire les vieillards et montre, avec une égale audace, tantôt sa folie native, fortifiée par l'éducation, tantôt sa sagesse immaturée, âcre et verte, comme le verjus de mi-août. Ce n'est pas, ô Jean-Jacques! que tes principes soient mauvais: ils ne sont qu'abusibles, et c'est ce qu'avaient pressenti de sages têtes de Parlement. J'ai vu, depuis 1763, comment les liseuses ont élevé leur indocile progéniture. Les mères en général confiaient leurs enfants à des nourrices: cela était contre la nature; mais il l'est davantage encore que certaines mères nourrissent elles-mêmes, et J.-J. ne l'a pas dit.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's texts, noted by Restif in this citation from 1786, carried over into the following century, with the cult of domesticity that many associated with his name gaining popularity as Romanticism and distaste for eighteenth-century society grew. As Restif notes, however, Rousseau's principles were sometimes abused and misinterpreted, hindering their ability to transform social relationships through the revalorization of maternity and the reinvention of education. Some women, who lived in luxury and concerned themselves with social status and appearances, were unqualified for the rigor of following Rousseau's tenets, leading to the miseducation of their children, who are not trained to behave according to social norms, according to Restif.

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<sup>1</sup> Restif de la Bretonne, *Les Nuits de Paris* (Paris: Editions du Trianon, 1930) 191.

It is important here to define the term “education” within the post-revolutionary context, for indeed the word’s meaning to nineteenth-century French society differed from its contemporary reference to institutionalized “instruction” in a school setting. In the pages to follow, I will adopt the distinction made by Jennifer Popiel, who defines “instruction” as “denoting acquisition of a specific skill, like reading, while education entails the development of the whole person.”<sup>2</sup> Instruction via schooling was not widely available for girls in the nineteenth-century – a government decree in 1802 created a system of public secondary schools for boys, but did not create a similar structure for girls – and the home was considered the safest and most “natural” environment in which to raise a young woman. This viewpoint evolved in part from the writings of Rousseau, who begins his educational treatise *Emile* (1762) by declaring that “tout est bien sortant des mains de l’Auteur des choses, tout dégénère entre les mains de l’homme.”<sup>3</sup> Women, he posited, were ideally limited to an education in useful domestic knowledge because they should remain relegated to the private sphere as adults, where they were responsible for providing a moral education to their children and taking care of their families. Meanwhile, reason and creativity were associated with masculinity and the public sphere from which women were excluded. To advocate the intellectual emancipation of women through serious study was considered a threat to the natural relationship between the sexes and to their separate roles in society, a division which Rousseau also discusses in *Emile*.

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<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Popiel, *Rousseau’s Daughters: Domesticity, Education, and Autonomy in Modern France* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008) 12.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l’éducation* (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1966) 35.



Although Rousseau's texts and theories were widely associated with the domestic movement in the nineteenth century, Margaret Darrow explains that "through the second half of the eighteenth century, many of the philosophes attacked the manners and morals of aristocratic women, constantly holding them up to bourgeois models of domestic felicity."<sup>4</sup> Rousseau's advocacy of women's restriction to the domestic sphere is not, therefore, unique, nor is he the sole founder of the cult of domesticity: Lesley Walker writes that "Rousseau should be understood as a consolidator, rather than an initiator, of a movement that sought to idealize domesticity and motherhood."<sup>5</sup> This movement carried over into the nineteenth century, aided by the popularity of Romanticism, which is often regarded as a revolt against the exaltation of rationality by the French *philosophes* and the artificiality of eighteenth-century French society. In fact, Patrick Coleman discusses Rousseau's common characterization as a Pre-Romantic, a term that he finds problematic due to its anticipatory nature, but which highlights the similarities between Rousseau's theories and Romantic values.<sup>6</sup> He further explains that "a commonplace of literary history is the story of how themes, moods, poses even, and literary devices we associate with the Romantic period find early expression in Rousseau's writing" (Coleman 68). One of these Romantic themes, nature's preferability over the artificiality of society, is particularly fundamental to Rousseau's theories, especially those concerning the intersection of education and social roles.

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret H. Darrow, "French Noblewomen and the New Domesticity," *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979): 43.

<sup>5</sup> Lesley H. Walker, *A Mother's Love: Crafting Feminine Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Danvers: Rosemont, 2008) 71.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Coleman, "Rousseau and Preromanticism: Anticipation and Oeuvre," *Yale French Studies* 66 (1984): 69.

In the early 1830s, under the July Monarchy, two popular novels were published in which women's domestic education and ideological upbringing play a significant role: *Indiana*, written by George Sand in 1832, and *Eugénie Grandet*, which Honoré de Balzac published in 1833. Each novel takes a form similar to that of the male-centered *roman d'éducation*, in which an ignorant young person struggles with the realities of social life. The female protagonists of these two texts are educated outside of the classroom, one by her cousin in a natural setting on an island in the Indian Ocean and the other by her parents in a home in the French countryside. Each education and subsequent adulthood reflects divergences from and similarities to the female education proposed in Rousseau's *Emile* that was so crucial to the nineteenth-century debate on how women should be educated. These two texts also reveal a lack of connection between their characters' educations and the social reality that surrounds them. Society differs from the young women's expectations because it is based on artificial, unnatural types of relationships with which Indiana and Eugénie have no experience, and this difference leads them to misinterpret others and suffer. Both *Indiana* and *Eugénie Grandet* also treat the effects of the Civil Code, drawn up between 1800 and 1804, long after the life of Rousseau.

Sand and Balzac both criticize society, but for different reasons, and by employing different tactics. Sand, as a woman and Idealist, attacks the social institution of marriage and the role that women's education plays in her subordination to men in an unnatural society. She exalts the power and beauty of passion, especially the passion of true love, while simultaneously recognizing the impossibility of such a feeling being reciprocated in a society based on appearances and performance. Indiana, who is brought

up by her cousin Ralph in the natural setting of Ile Bourbon, is not equipped with the education necessary to interpret the words and actions of those around her, especially the men in her life. Sand employs the male narrator figure and male characters to reflect nineteenth-century masculine discourses that criticized women's "innate" irrationality and impressionability, but undermines this rhetoric by stressing that it is a lack of education into the norms of society, not women's inherent nature, that leads to Indiana's weaknesses. Like Rousseau, Sand praises nature as a place free from the artificiality of society, and she sends Ralph and Indiana back to Ile Bourbon to live out their lives in peace. In this way, Sand maintains some of the tenets of the Romantic movement that was beginning to wane at the time that she was writing, exalting nature and discussing the deep suffering of her protagonist.

Balzac equally notes the inability of women to interpret and maneuver within society, but focuses on the importance of money in almost all social relationships, something that Eugénie is not educated to understand. As a Realist, abandoning many but not all aspects of Romantic thought, Balzac takes the approach of describing the realities of society faithfully, depicting the difficulties that Eugénie faces in her search for love because of her naïveté regarding money and society. The signs that Eugénie and others see around them do not reflect the truth of her financial situation, and her ideological upbringing by her mother in the home of her monomaniacally miserly father leads to her ignorance of the importance of money in society. The disconnect between her sentimental education, which leads her to seek true love and to base her actions on sincere feeling, and the relations of monetary and social interest that govern the

relationships of the people around her leads to her eventual disillusionment. There is no happy ending for Eugénie, who loses her beloved cousin Charles to his societal aspirations, then marries without love because the Church tells her that she should take part in society because of her wealth. Eugénie, unlike Indiana, is unable to escape from society, and therefore does not achieve true love and happiness. Balzac envisions a more realistic ending to her story, but maintains the Romantic notion of suffering for the sake of love.

In both of these novels, the young women's educations lead to their inability to interpret the text of society. It is their upbringing, which leaves them blind to the discourses and rules of the ideology of society, that leads to their suffering. Neither woman is happily married at the end of her story, nor is either woman a mother, although that is the ultimate goal of their upbringing, according to the common conception of women's education in the nineteenth-century. The fates of Indiana and Eugénie undermine the Rousseauvian-inspired privileging of marriage and motherhood as women's exclusive social destinies, and, by extension, posit an implicit criticism of an education that does not prepare women for the possibility of a different future. Although writing at approximately the same point in time, Sand and Balzac belong to very different literary movements and thus employ different tactics to make their point. Be that as it may, the two authors reach essentially the same conclusion: a uniquely domestic, and thus necessarily limited education for women is problematic in nineteenth-century society. This is because, Sand and Balzac maintain, protecting women from exposure to the dominant (and often injurious) discourses of the world in which they live necessarily

leads misunderstanding, and thus suffering. This reveals the waning influence of Romanticism on writers of the time period – while Sand maintains a Romantic viewpoint by returning Indiana to nature at the end of her novel, Balzac refuses this possibility, preferring a more realistic, social future for Eugénie, in spite of her unhappiness.

In this thesis, I will trace manifestations of Rousseau's ideas on education and gender through these two texts in order to evaluate how each author interacts with his theories and with contemporary thought on women's education and proper place in nineteenth-century French society. I will begin by discussing Rousseau more extensively, particularly focusing on his depictions of women and their education, then continue on to treat the nineteenth-century novels in question. As texts, I will primarily discuss Rousseau's *Emile, ou de l'éducation* and his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, as well as Sand's *Indiana* and Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*.

## II. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Women's Education

The political and educational ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, expressed in his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754) and *Emile, ou de l'éducation* (1762) contain two perplexingly contradictory conceptions of women. In the first text, it is inferred that women in pre-societal nature depended upon themselves for survival and existed almost entirely independently from men. Meanwhile, in the fifth chapter of *Emile*, Rousseau specifically describes women as weak creatures who should remain in the private sphere, mothering their children and providing domestic bliss to their husbands. This troubling shift from independence to domestic restriction has been characterized as sexism by some scholars, including Paul Thomas and Lori Marso, while others like Jennifer Popiel see women's placement in the home to be a role that is different but equal civic value to men's public existence. In either case, it is important to note that the domestic existence prescribed to women by Rousseau is not natural to them within his formulations, but is instead the result of education. In this chapter, I intend to show that domestic wifedom and motherhood are roles that Rousseau sees as important functions that women should be prepared to perform in order to correct contemporary society's corruption. To this end, Rousseau's education for women, as outlined in *Emile*, maintains their weakness in order to make them interdependent with men, but also makes it difficult for women to find a place for themselves outside of the domestic sphere when necessary, or for them to successfully interpret the artificial relations of society.

Rousseau's theories on education were influenced by the works of François Fénelon, and the latter's *Avis de Monsieur de Fénelon, Archevêque de Cambrai, à une dame de qualité, sur l'éducation de mademoiselle sa fille* (1688) is of particular importance to Rousseau's conception of women's education. Fénelon considers the home or a well-run convent to be the place where young girls can receive the best education, depending on whether their mother is "sage, tendre, et chrétienne," and whether she has sufficient time to commit to her daughter's upbringing.<sup>7</sup> However, according to Fénelon, if women are not destined to become nuns, it is better to accustom them to society little by little, rather than to educate them in isolation, after which the student leaves "comme une personne qu'on avait nourrie dans les ténèbres d'une profonde caverne, et qu'on ferait tout d'un coup passer au grand jour" (Fénelon 1128). This idea is also purported in Voltaire's *L'éducation des filles*, published the year before *Emile*, in which Sophronie writes that her mother did not send her to a convent for an education, because she was not destined to live in a convent.<sup>8</sup> This highlighting of the importance of continuity between a girl's education and her future is taken up in Rousseau's *Emile*, but also provides one of the bases on which the author's project becomes problematic, as I will discuss later in this chapter. Fénelon also writes that young women should become accustomed to accepting what others tell them, especially with regards to religion, because he feels that a woman who desires to reason and who studies too much "se flatte d'être un génie supérieur dans son sexe, elle se sait bon gré de

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<sup>7</sup> François Fénelon, "Avis de Monsieur de Fénelon, Archevêque de Cambrai, à une dame de qualité, sur l'éducation de mademoiselle sa fille," *Oeuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997): 1127.

<sup>8</sup> Voltaire, "L'éducation des filles," *Mélanges* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1961) 443-445.

mépriser les amusements et les vanités des autres femmes” (Fénelon 1130). In the end, what is most important for the archbishop is the development of a young woman’s relationship with God and that she is modest, because these qualities will provide her with spiritual comfort and help her to attract a wise, moderate husband.

Rousseau, like Fénelon, advocates the limitation of women’s knowledge to information that is applicable to their daily activities. He rejects the concept of public education, whether in a convent or in schools, for both genders due to the social artificiality and relations of *amour-propre* that such an environment would pass on to students. Rousseau writes the following about women: “Elles n’ont point de collèges: grand malheur! Eh! Plût à Dieu qu’il n’y en eût pour les garçons! Ils seraient plus sensément et plus honnêtement élevés” (*Emile* 473). Geraint Parry explains this idea by noting Rousseau’s opposition to the “positive” education that “treats the child’s mind as a blank sheet on which can be printed, at as early an age as is feasible, the appropriate ideas about the world and society.”<sup>9</sup> For Rousseau, the best education for children takes place as far as possible from corrupted society. In an ideal situation, parents would have received an education that prepared them to correctly educate their children. In such a scenario boys would be educated by their fathers and girls by their mothers. In instances where parents are unable to do so on account of the education they have themselves received, a well-chosen tutor of the child’s same gender is recommended by Rousseau. Indeed, this is the model that is described in *Emile*. Both scenarios, it must be noted, are based upon the belief that men and women should concern themselves with the education

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<sup>9</sup> Geraint Parry, “*Emile*: Learning to Be Men, Women, and Citizens,” *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2001): 253.



of their like-gendered children whenever possible. Rousseau, observing some differences of behavior between male and female children, attributed these dissimilarities to natural sexual differences, and designed educations with the intent of building upon and molding these differences in order to create a sexually conditioned role for each gender. However, he recognizes that life and education in society magnify these “natural” differences, which are in reality very small, which explains his concern with educating children into their appropriate gender behaviors and ideologies.

By educating men and women into different but complementary social roles, Rousseau hoped to positively affect the corruption of society, which had come to be dominated by relations of *amour-propre*. As defined by Rousseau, *amour-propre* is a feeling of self-interest in human beings that, in social settings where one can compare his or her situation to that of other people, leads to competitiveness, corrupts relationships and distances human beings from nature by giving them unnatural desires. According to Rousseau, humans are not naturally social beings. He concludes this from the “peu de soin qu’à pris la Nature de rapprocher les Hommes par des besoins mutuels, et de leur faciliter l’usage de la parole, combien elle a peu préparé leur Sociabilité, et combien elle a peu mis du sien dans tout ce qu’ils ont fait, pour en établir les liens.”<sup>10</sup> Paul Thomas correctly interprets Rousseau as believing that it is this sociability, rather than nature, that leads to the play of passions in society, because “in making ourselves less dependent on nature and more dependent on each other, we have misused our natural liberty and

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<sup>10</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l’Origine et les Fondements de l’Inégalité Parmi les Hommes* (Paris: Flammarion et Cie, 1969) 81.

developed new compulsions which we impose on ourselves.”<sup>11</sup> Objects and achievements that seem to be “natural” needs in society actually result from man’s sociability, and from the relationships that govern him in that setting. In order to gain social consideration, it became necessary to project the correct “image” to others, and the link between the natural man and his existence in society was broken (*Discours* 104). Language, which arose from man’s social need to communicate with others, was dissociated from its use to express true needs and desires, becoming instead a means of gaining attention and flattering others. Appearances grew in importance as people esteemed outer beauty, while opinion, an unfathomable concept in the state of nature, became a gauge of man’s successful manipulation of his image.

Rousseau’s focus on the family and gender roles as a locus of change stems from his admiration of the Golden Age, a period of human society’s development during which humanity reached the best possible tension between humankind’s natural state and the “petulant” activity of *amour-propre*, and inequality was at a minimum (*Discours* 101). It is during this period of history that females began to remain in the home raising children while males became responsible for providing nourishment to their families. This is the first instance of males and females living different sorts of lives, since each was previously responsible for all aspects of his or her own survival (*Discours* 98), but it is also the first state in which men and women begin to work together to achieve common goals. From this new family situation arose “les plus doux sentiments qui soient connus des hommes, l’amour conjugal et l’amour Paternel” (*Discours* 98). The family of the

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Thomas, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sexist?,” *Feminist Studies* 17 (1991): 209.

Golden Age represents the purest form of society in Rousseau's eyes, and *Emile* presents his plans for using education to rehabilitate contemporary social relations, which have become corrupt due to *amour-propre*, by generating these affectionate feelings and improving morals in the family setting. This project, however, requires women to return to the home, for they play an important role in this moral rehabilitation.

By domesticating women, Rousseau makes the family the center of the female world as well as the building block of society. Through their education, women are indoctrinated into his ideology of appropriate gender roles and are able to influence and serve as moral guides to their husbands, who act in the public sphere. They are also responsible for raising the next generation of men and women who subscribe to the ideals that Rousseau espouses in *Emile*. The role of mother is especially important to Rousseau because the mother-child relationship is the first social relationship that a human being experiences, and he strongly advocates breastfeeding by mothers, not wet-nurses, because it is through the revalorization of this mother-child link that Rousseau's plan to reshape society would begin. Due to these responsibilities, adulterous women are criminalized in Rousseau's view. He writes that "tout mari infidèle qui prive sa femme du seul prix des austères devoirs de son sexe est un homme injuste et barbare; mais la femme infidèle fait plus, elle dissout la famille et brise tous les liens de la nature" (*Emile* 470). The adulterous woman is responsible for bringing suspicion into the family, because the husband can no longer be sure that his children are legitimate, and this leads to the breakdown of the family unit on which Rousseau's society is structured. Paternal and conjugal love cannot exist to keep the family united in such a situation. Women must

also be much more attentive than their male counterparts to the opinions of others, because their reputation can affect their marriage prospects as well as the stability of their family.

Rousseau admits that restriction to the home is not natural for women in *Emile*, in which he repeatedly underlines the importance of a domestic education in creating a woman who will be happy in that environment. He writes that “pour aimer la vie paisible et domestique il faut la connaître; il faut en avoir senti les douceurs depuis l’enfance,” and that “ce n’est que dans la maison paternelle qu’on prend du goût pour sa propre maison” (*Emile* 509). The upbringing of one generation of women in a domestic environment will, therefore, create better and happier mothers who will be responsible for educating the next generation of women in this way. In addition to learning to enjoy domestic life, young girls raised by their mothers learn to imitate this female example’s activities. Although Rousseau sometimes tries to pass these learned behaviors off as “natural” attributes of females, they are more likely the result of the child’s modeling process. For example, he claims that young girls begin to concern themselves with ornamentation and appearances “almost from birth,” but later recognizes these actions as a result of education rather than nature, writing that “de quelque part que viennent aux filles *cette première leçon*, elle est très bonne” (*Emile* 476 – my italics). Likewise, little girls do not enjoy learning to read and write, in his view, but they willingly learn to sew, because “elles s’imaginent d’avance être grandes, et songent avec plaisir que ces talents pourront un jour leur servir à se parer” (*Emile* 479). Young girls learn many of their appropriate gender activities from watching the model of the mother – they want to know

and do what their adult counterpart knows and does. This is one reason why Rousseau believes that girls should be educated by their mothers: although he does not see maternal love as a natural link beyond the pity that the mother feels for her helpless infant, her role in her daughters' education is crucial to Rousseau, for "notre éducation commence avec nous; notre premier précepteur est notre nourrice" (*Emile* 42). The mother is the person best equipped to model the female gender role to young girls.

As he outlines in *Emile*, Rousseau views human nature as an inherent but malleable entity governed by education and lifestyle. He observes the following in his *Discours*: "Il est aisé de voir qu'entre les différences qui distinguent les hommes, plusieurs passent pour naturelles qui sont uniquement l'ouvrage de l'habitude et des divers genres de vie que les hommes adoptent dans la Société" (90) Different ways of living and varied upbringings create different physical capabilities among men and, by extension of the same principle, among women (*Discours* 90). Rousseau's educational treatises are designed with the intention of molding original human nature into a form that will best contribute to a future male or female role in society. For women, Penny Weiss contends, this involves a physical weakening process, for Rousseau admits that "en tout ce qui ne tient pas au sexe, la femme est homme: elle a les mêmes organes, les mêmes besoins, les mêmes facultés" (*Emile* 465).<sup>12</sup> However, I would argue that Weiss does not consider the fact that for Rousseau, women have already been weakened by their new sedentary lifestyle at the dawn of the Golden Age (*Discours* 98). By restricting

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<sup>12</sup> Penny A. Weiss, "Rousseau, Antifeminism, and Woman's Nature," *Political Theory* 15 (1987): 81-98.

women to domestic life, Rousseau merely maintains this physical weakness rather than creates it. It is equally worth noting that Rousseau does not state that men are naturally powerful or that women are naturally weak and passive. Rather, he relates these characteristics to the common goal of creating attraction and need between the genders, writing that “l’un *doit être* actif et fort, l’autre passif et faible” (*Emile* 466-my italics). In this citation, Rousseau stresses the necessity of these qualities because they are required for his social project to succeed, and his educational plans prepare young men and women to fulfill their physical roles.

Women’s mental capabilities are equally weakened by Rousseau’s domestic upbringing, according to Weiss, because he limits the amount and types of information that women should learn rather than allowing them to pursue advanced study. Rousseau, however, does not want to create women who cannot think at all: he writes in *Emile* that “le bon sens est également des deux sexes,” and he comments that nature “veut que [les femmes] pensent, qu’elles jugent, qu’elles aiment, qu’elles connaissent, qu’elles cultivent leur esprit comme leur figure” (480, 474). In this way, women will be better mothers to their young children, who will require education, and better companions to their husbands. However, concerning subjects of study for women, Rousseau writes that young women “doivent apprendre beaucoup de choses, mais seulement celles qu’il leur convient de savoir” (*Emile* 474). Women are not encouraged to pursue advanced study, but Rousseau does not desire academic achievement from *Emile*, either. Paul Thomas underlines this fact, writing that by devaluing the importance of abstract reasoning and creativity, Rousseau positions himself against a tradition that valued such abilities

(Thomas 198). Instead, women's knowledge of domestic activities, "natural" concern with relationships, and ability to find the means to a predetermined end complement the knowledge and skills that Rousseau provides to his male student in the first four books of *Emile*.

By maintaining the state of women's weakened physical strength and limiting their mental capabilities, Rousseau intended to make the two genders interdependent. Whereas in nature men and women had no need to remain together after copulating, the Golden Age brought families together, and Rousseau wanted to ensure the permanence of this social building block. To this end, men and women receive complementary educations so that they can act as one entity. Rousseau writes that marriage results in "une personne morale dont la femme est l'œil et l'homme le bras, mais avec une telle dépendance l'un de l'autre, que c'est de l'homme que la femme apprend ce qu'il faut voir, et de la femme que l'homme apprend ce qu'il faut faire" (*Emile* 492). Without one or the other role being fulfilled, Rousseau's project cannot function, and for that reason he staunchly supports separate social roles for each gender throughout *Emile*, in which he repeatedly condemns "cette promiscuité civile qui confond partout les deux sexes dans les mêmes emplois, dans les mêmes travaux, et ne peut manquer d'engendrer les plus intolérables abus" (473). Men, for Rousseau, should represent the family in the public sphere, while women should withdraw to the private sphere, but the latter are given a surprising amount of power within their domain. Rebecca Rogers notes that Rousseau

“infused this condition with new responsibilities in the transformation of bourgeois morals and the attainment of virtue.”<sup>13</sup>

The limitation of women’s intellectual development is equally key to Rousseau’s project of interdependence because it allows for their opinions to be shaped by their husbands, minimizing discord between contradictory ideologies. Rousseau specifies that “toute fille doit avoir la religion de sa mère, et toute femme celle de son mari,” and even explains that, if one of these two religions is false, the sin will be forgiven by God due to the woman’s docility and submission (*Emile* 492). Like Fénelon, Rousseau stresses the importance of teaching girls to love religion, rather than versing them in doctrine and having them memorize verses and doctrines. He also suggests that wives should be instructed by their husbands: “Elle ne sera point le professeur de son mari, mais son disciple; loin de vouloir l’assujettir à ses goûts, elle prendra les siens” (*Emile* 538). Women’s limited education provides their husbands with the opportunity to shape the knowledge and opinions of their wives, eliminating discord within the family through the implementation of a sort of Pygmalion urge in which women are mentally shaped to be complementary to their husbands. This would not be possible if women were entrenched in their own religious views or if their knowledge were already varied enough that they could have educated opinions on different subjects.

For Rousseau, wifedom and motherhood constitute the most admirable roles that a woman can fill in society. However, as I have discussed above, neither role is natural to women, and education is the key to preparing them to accept these functions in society

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<sup>13</sup> Rebecca Rogers, *From the Salon to the Schoolroom: Educating Bourgeois Girls in Nineteenth-Century France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2005) 20.



and their entailed mental and physical restrictions. *Emile* as a text is addressed to the “tendre et prévoyante mère,” indicating that his intended audience is female. What does it mean that women both read and accepted Rousseau’s ideas on their limitation to the private sphere, and to the roles of wife and mother? Mary Trouille explains that “in an age of loveless marriages of convenience and widespread adultery, many of Rousseau’s female contemporaries viewed him as the champion of a new moral order in which women could play a central role.”<sup>14</sup> As the ideals of family and motherhood that Rousseau expresses in *Emile* gained popularity over time, many women espoused the ideology of domesticity. However, while Rousseau’s aspiration to regenerate society is a noble goal, not all of the results of his domestic education were positive. Two problems in particular seem worth examining – domestic women’s inability to read the society that surrounds them, and their occasional inability to fulfill the roles that Rousseau gives them, in spite of an expressed desire to do so.

Lori Marso notes that “we can assume that Sophie’s natural inclinations are uncorrupted since she has spent her life in seclusion, unaware of the temptations of city life and its façade of virtue which inheres in women of society.”<sup>15</sup> This may be true of all women raised in the domestic sphere – it is impossible to understand the fabric of an artificial society if one has no experience with falseness or critical reading – but Marso does not acknowledge that Rousseau does allow young girls to experience some aspects of social life: the young Sophie interacts with other young people in society (*Emile* 523).

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<sup>14</sup> Mary Trouille, “The Failings of Rousseau’s Ideals of Domesticity and Sensibility,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 24 (1991): 452.

<sup>15</sup> Lori Marso, “Rousseau’s Sophie: Natural Woman, Virtuous Citizen,” *The Image of Nature* (Pueblo: The Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery, 1993) 364.

However, Rousseau's heroine is unable to read objectively because of her education, a fact that is evidenced by her response to Fénelon's *Télémaque* in which she literally falls in love with the main character, revealing her preference of a fictional ideal to the reality that she finds in existing society. Although we might today find their generalization to be too simplistic, William Ray notes that Rousseau, as well as his contemporaries, considered impressionability to be a natural quality in women and one that made them particularly susceptible to romantic books, which would in turn corrupt their moral education.<sup>16</sup> This same impressionable reading of the text of society presents a problem for the domestic daughters of Rousseau, as readers can observe in eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature when multiple authors treated the theme.<sup>17</sup> As the "eye" of the family, women are taught to observe and feel the needs of others, but their lack of training in critical reading makes society's artificiality indecipherable to uneducated women. Furthermore, women are unable to act to improve their situations because they hold no power in the public sphere and cannot work culture to their advantage.

Given that Rousseau's *Emile* contributed to the popularity of the ideology of domesticity that was already developing at the time of its writing, it is finally worth noting that not all women were able to adhere to his ideal gender roles because they are unnatural, and not every woman is destined to be a mother. Rousseau both admits and denies this fact, writing the following: "Les femmes, dites-vous, ne font pas toujours des enfants! Non, mais leur destination propre est d'en faire" (*Emile* 471). While Rousseau

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<sup>16</sup> William Ray, "Reading Women: Cultural Authority, Gender, and the Novel. The Case of Rousseau," *Eighteenth-Century French Studies* 27 (1994): 423.

<sup>17</sup> Among other texts, George Sand's *Indiana*, Honoré de Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*, and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* all incorporate this theme.

is correct that women are the only sex that is physically capable of bearing children, he seems unwilling to consider the fact that some women are biologically unable to do so. Likewise, he overlooks the fact that many women are unable to marry for reasons besides “opinion” – whether for familial, financial, or other problems. Mary Trouille discusses one such woman, Henriette, who wrote to Rousseau to ask his advice when she was unable to marry. For lack of other options, Henriette turned to serious study, even though she idealized marriage and motherhood. Rousseau does not provide a guiding path to women like Henriette in *Emile* because such women represent an exception to his ideology, although it is also evident that Rousseau did not see a useful social role for educated women in society and that he would not condone this choice, particularly since such a life choice upsets the distinction between the genders and could lead to excessive *amour-propre*. It is interesting to observe the disconnect between Henriette’s ideological upbringing and the reality that she faces in society, however, because this situation reveals a problem that we see later in *Eugénie Grandet* and *Indiana*.

As Judith Still recognized when observing Rousseau’s portraits of women in his *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* and *Emile*, the reader must look twice in order to fully understand what Rousseau says.<sup>18</sup> At first glance, Rousseau’s restriction of women to the domestic sphere seems to be the result of a misogynistic viewpoint on the female intellect. However, at second glance, it stems from a desire to recreate society – a desire so important to Rousseau that he is willing to keep

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<sup>18</sup> Judith Still, “From the Philosophy of Man to the Fiction of Woman: Rousseau’s *Emile*,” *Romance Studies* 18 (1991): 76.

women both mentally and physically weak in order to make them interdependent with their male counterparts. This plan, though well-intended and well-received in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, falls short on multiple counts. By educating women for life in the private sphere, Rousseau fails to fully prepare them for their inevitable exposure to society in all of its artificiality, which leads to misreading and gullibility, problems which he recognizes and discusses in his less well-known sequel to *Emile*, *Les Solitaires* (1780). Rousseau also fails to address the topic of women who adhere to his domestic ideology, but are unable to fulfill their prescribed roles. These problematic aspects of Rousseau's educational treatise do not go without notice by other authors, especially in the nineteenth century, when the text of culture became increasingly incomprehensible due to political changes and industrialization. One such author, George Sand, takes a feminist position on the problem of women's education and prescribed gender roles in *Indiana*, her first novel, in which she tells the story of one young woman's seduction and disillusionment when faced with the falseness of society.

### III. Questions of Nature and Nurture in George Sand's *Indiana*

In her first novel, *Indiana*, published in 1832, George Sand strongly criticizes the falseness of the French society that surrounds her protagonist, a position that aligns her with the pro-nature theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Romantic movement. Like Rousseau, Sand also considers education to be a critical factor in a person's development, as Pierre Vermeylen explains in his text on Sand's social and political views: he writes that, for Sand, "il faut une instruction généralisée, accessible à tous, non pour uniformiser les hommes mais pour permettre de déceler et de développer leurs qualités propres."<sup>19</sup> Although Sand was educated in a convent, many other young women of her time were educated in the home, according to the Rousseauvian principles with which the movement towards female domesticity was often associated in the early nineteenth century. Sand paints society as a place whose successful navigation requires an unnatural social education, and she criticizes the distance from natural instincts and feelings that this "school" of social life creates. In this chapter, I will consider how Sand, in criticizing the artificiality of society and the relationships of *amour-propre* that separate its members from nature, also problematizes ignorance of social norms. In her early novel, the female author demonstrates the challenges posed by a lack of social education for women like Indiana who are not educated *in* society, but ultimately must enter into that realm. It becomes increasingly evident that Sand, who agrees with Rousseau concerning society, nature, and natural gender roles, also agrees with him on the topic of "natural" differences of intelligence between the genders, attributing

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<sup>19</sup> Pierre Vermeylen, *Les Idées Politiques Et Sociales De George Sand* (Brussels: University of Brussels, 1984) 108.

Indiana's ignorance to her upbringing rather than her innate unintelligence. However, Indiana's association with nature renders her point of view and actions preferable to those of the people around her. For Sand, Indiana's lack of social education comes to represent a means by which some male characters attempt to mislead her and by which women are kept from rising up to protest the inequalities in marriage and in society. These inequalities were caused in large part by the institution of the Civil Code that reduced women to the status of a legal minority, but which, according to Claire Goldberg Moses, also shaped a feminist consciousness due to its open proclamation of the political significance of sex.<sup>20</sup>

Sand's early protagonist, Indiana, is the recipient of a "natural" education following many of Rousseau's precepts, but this upbringing does not prepare her for the artificial realities of French society, and it is this fact that leads to her eventual heartbreak and near destruction. Although the narrator and male characters repeatedly use stereotypes of female irrationality to describe or analyze her behavior, Indiana's inability to interpret society's artificiality is revealed to be a result of her inadequate social education, not an inevitable result of her gender. For Rousseau and Sand, education and lifestyle are the true sources of many qualities that are considered "natural" in nineteenth-century France, though Rousseau does claim that there are some innate differences between the sexes and builds his educational plans upon these dissimilarities. Indiana's education on Ile Bourbon and subsequent behaviors contrast sharply with the social upbringing and ambitious maneuvering of Parisian characters such as Raymon and Laure.

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<sup>20</sup> Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984) 18.

Sand, however, does not condemn Indiana's ignorance, but seems to prefer it to the falseness of society. It could be argued that her entire novel can be read as a commentary on Rousseau's thoughts concerning ignorant women:

Je ne blâmerais pas sans distinction qu'une femme fût bornée aux seuls travaux de son sexe, et qu'on la laissât dans une profonde ignorance sur tout le reste; mais il faudrait pour cela des mœurs publiques très simples, très saines, ou une manière de vivre très retirée. Dans de grandes villes, et parmi des hommes corrompus, cette femme serait trop facile à séduire; souvent sa vertu ne tiendrait qu'aux occasions. Dans ce siècle philosophe, il lui en faut une à l'épreuve ; il faut qu'elle sache d'avance et ce qu'on lui peut dire et ce qu'elle doit penser (*Emile* 502).

This citation summarizes the situation in which Indiana finds herself and from which Raymon profits – unaware of the temptations and artificiality that she will encounter, Indiana is unprepared to enter the social realm. Society is not a simple place, and leaving women in total ignorance condemns them to secondary status and risks their corruption.

Misogynistic stereotypes appear in *Indiana* in the commentary of the narrator and the male characters, Sir Ralph and Raymon. Sir Ralph, who is brought up on Ile Bourbon with Indiana and who is in charge of her education, claims that Noun and Indiana are “folles,”<sup>21</sup> as are all women in his view, and he has “une médiocre opinion de l'intelligence et du raisonnement chez les femmes” (*Indiana* 152). The narrator comments that “la femme est imbécile par nature; il semble que, pour contre-balancer l'éminente supériorité que ses délicates perceptions lui donnent sur nous, le ciel ait mis à dessin dans son cœur une vanité aveugle, une idiote crédulité » (*Indiana* 235). By attributing women's weaknesses to their “nature,” the male characters echo

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<sup>21</sup> George Sand, *Indiana* (Paris: Ancienne Maison Michel Lévy Frères, 1888) 30.

generalizations and scientific discourses of the nineteenth century that corroborate their viewpoint. It is interesting that Sand attributes such misogynistic discourse to Ralph, who is constructed as the character most complementary to Indiana due to his “natural” education and opinions, and, given the prevalence of commentary concerning Indiana’s ignorance and her natural moral attributes, it would be tempting to assume that in 1831 Sand subscribed to these stereotypical beliefs. The author, however, repeatedly undermines the idea that such weaknesses are an unalterable facet of women’s nature, and in this way criticizes the Rousseauvian view, promulgated by Ralph, that women are naturally irrational.

Indiana’s initial education takes place in a colonial setting, far from the French society so harshly criticized by Sand. She is raised by a “père bizarre et violent” who deprives her of affection to the point that “elle n’avait jamais connu le bonheur que donne l’affection d’autrui” (*Indiana* 59). Her view of the world is shaped by this lack of nurture, but also by the guidance of Sir Ralph, who brings her up in nature according to his own ideology, which aligns with both Rousseauvian and scientific discourses of the period. The reader already knows what Sir Ralph believes concerning the intelligence of women, and this is played out in Indiana’s education, in which “il s’était borné à lui donner quelques connaissances positives et d’un usage immédiat,” as illustrated by the fact that “elle savait donc à peine l’histoire abrégée du monde, et toute dissertation sérieuse l’accablait d’ennui” (*Indiana* 152). While her knowledge is limited in a way that aligns with Rousseau’s education for women, her upbringing is vastly different from that of Sophie. The fact that Indiana is not raised by her mother in a loving, domestic setting



is problematic because it implies that she has not been inducted into the ideology of her appropriate social gender behaviors, duties and domestic tasks, including the ultimate goals of motherhood and nurturing, but the natural setting of her education implies that her education follows the precepts of nature that are valorized by Sand. Indiana, as the reader well knows, is not a mother, and therefore does not fulfill the primary function of her gender's role in society – to produce and raise children. Sand does not seem to regard this abstention from her accepted social gender role in a negative light. As Naomi Schor recognizes regarding Indiana's lack of children from her marriage to Delmare, "Sand emphasizes perhaps the most significant form of resistance to the implacable determinations of the marriage plot, the daughter's no, her refusal to consummate the marriage into which she is forced to enter."<sup>22</sup> In fact, it seems possible that, given the effect of Indiana's early education on her subsequent behaviors, Sand chooses to deny Indiana children with Ralph precisely due to the lack of nurturing in her own childhood – she is not prepared to be a mother.

The narrator tells his reader that Indiana asks questions of Raymon that any child of society could answer, demonstrating both her innocence and her ignorance of social discourses and norms. Indiana's inculcation into the "natural" ideology of Sir Ralph is further demonstrated by her resistance to Raymon's attempts at "enlightening" her about society, in which Indiana "opposait aux intérêts de la civilisation érigés en principes, les idées droites et les lois simples du bon sens et de l'humanité; ses objections avaient un caractère de franchise sauvage qui embarrassait quelquefois Raymon" (*Indiana* 152). Her

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<sup>22</sup> Naomi Schor, *George Sand and Idealism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993) 88.

lack of social awareness and her fidelity to the principles she learns from Ralph are the true cause of Indiana's inability to interpret the world around her, not her gender, for Françoise Mayeur writes that "l'éducation forme les mœurs autant que l'esprit," and that "elle s'adresse aussi au cœur, voire à l'âme de l'enfant, elle entend le préparer complètement à la vie adulte."<sup>23</sup> By shaping her outlook on life, Indiana's education has given her a specific point of view and certain customs that Raymon's persuasion cannot eradicate. It is also due to Indiana's upbringing surrounded by the misery of slaves that she develops "une indulgence et une bonté adorables avec ses inférieurs, mais aussi une volonté de fer" (*Indiana* 59). This generosity, attributed by Raymon to women's nature, is instead revealed to be the result of her childhood and education. Raymon equally attributes her idealization of love and her willingness to sacrifice to achieve that goal to the reading of novels, a common scapegoat for women's romantic illusions in the nineteenth century. Confronted with her willingness to abandon Delmare to be with him, Raymon "se retranch[e] dans l'opinion où il était qu'Indiana ne l'aimait point, qu'elle appliquait maintenant à sa situation l'exagération des sentiments qu'elle avait puisée dans les livres" (*Indiana* 186).

Raymon cannot comprehend the sincerity of Indiana's love for him, and attempts to explain it according to the artificial principles of society, in which a woman would not act in such a way without an ulterior motivation because such sincere feeling does not exist. The reader, however, discovers that Indiana's resolution to give her heart to the man who loves her was made during and due to her unhappy childhood, when she hoped

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<sup>23</sup> Françoise Mayeur, *L'éducation des filles en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1979) 7.

to be rescued and loved. The narrator explains that Indiana made a habit of saying that she would wait for someone to liberate her and love her (*Indiana* 60). Naomi Schor points out that “for all her reading of silly women’s novels—that is, romances—when Indiana fantasizes, it is not, as Emma [Bovary] later will, about the beautiful people and Paris, but rather about freedom for herself” (*Idealism* 53). This lack of interest in the accoutrements of *amour-propre* and social advancement differentiates Indiana from the social beings around her. Although Raymon stereotypes this type of romantic illusion as natural to women, Sand regards it as a socially constructed characteristic that is born of habit, which is usually acquired through education. The feasibility of Indiana’s romantic project is, however, questionable in French society.

The education of Raymon is important as well, for he is painted as the master of society. Sand writes that “on l’avait élevé pour le monde, on avait dirigé toutes ses pensées vers un but élevé, on avait pétri toutes ses facultés pour un bonheur de prince” (*Indiana* 45). This education explains Raymon’s fidelity to the principles of society and his ability to manipulate the language and other signifiers that are created by this ideological truth. His mother is the one who teaches him morality as a child, but the effects of her effort reveal her to be unsuited for this responsibility. Sand writes that “c’était d’elle qu’il tenait ces excellents principes qui le ramenaient toujours au bien, et l’empêchaient, malgré la fougue de ses vingt-cinq ans, de démériter de l’estime publique” (*Indiana* 43). It is also Mme de Ramière who protects Raymon from public judgment rather than correcting his mistakes, spoiling her son until no natural ‘moral’ impulses are retained. Raymon loves his mother, but relies on her to help him solve the problems that

he causes himself, including Indiana's naïve appearance at his home after leaving her husband. Sand writes that, upon the death of his mother, "[Raymon] perdait tout le bien-être moral de sa vie" (*Indiana* 250). In this instance, Sand criticizes the plan for women to educate their sons in order to create a better society because some women's love for their children prevents them from correcting negative behaviors. The maternal education can fail, and this leads to the continuation of society's problems.

In the end, Raymon's marriage to Laure provides a sort of social double for Indiana and Ralph—the first relationship is based on *amour-propre* and social advancement while the second is based on true love. The existence of Laure is yet another attack on the concept of the inevitability and generality of women's ignorance. Even though this character is painted as a negative figure in the novel due to her extreme coldness and Machiavellian behavior, Laure serves as a counter-argument to essentialist visions of women's lack of intelligence because, despite her gender, she is able to understand and manipulate the society in which she is raised and lives. She is also proud, and Sand writes that "elle mettait tout son orgueil à n'être point au-dessous de ce siècle froid et raisonneur; son amour-propre eût souffert d'y porter les niaises illusions d'une pensionnaire ignorante" (*Indiana* 276). Laure sees happiness and love as illusions of which she should not dream in such a society. Like Raymon, Laure divorces feeling and reality because they are seen as weaknesses in such an artificial society, and she must do so in order to be able to manipulate the social realm to her advantage. This character's ability to understand and maneuver within society stands in stark contrast to Indiana's misreading, as well as to another female protagonist of the early 1830s, Eugénie Grandet.

The misreading of men and society is a common problem for female characters in eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century literature, whether as a result of their ignorance or of their belief in an alternate ideology. Indiana, as John T. Booker has pointed out, can be seen as a precursor to Emma Bovary, Gustave Flaubert's famously out-of-touch heroine, but Indiana seems to be more unable to see the truth behind Raymon's actions than unwilling to accept it.<sup>24</sup> Incapable of deciphering the reality behind the signs of society, Indiana falls prey to Raymon's professions of love. The narrator, however, shows the truth of the situation to the reader by commenting on the irregular nature of Raymon's passion and his unnatural relationship with words, writing that "cet homme [...] traitait l'amour comme un art d'agrément" and that "il joua la passion à s'y tromper lui-même" (*Indiana* 202). Love is a rehearsed performance for Raymon, and his words bear little connection to reality. The narrator explains that "l'habitude acquise auprès des autres donnait à ses paroles cette puissance de conviction à laquelle l'ignorante Indiana s'abandonnait, sans comprendre que tout cela n'avait pas été inventé pour elle" (*Indiana* 54). Language is a social product, and, once again, it is Indiana's lack of social education that dooms her to seduction, because she has never experienced language as divorced from the feelings that it signifies in nature. Meanwhile, the narrator repeatedly compares Indiana to French women, commenting that these women would never be so silly as to be fooled by Raymon, while at the same time pointing out that Indiana *doesn't know how* to function in society: "Une Française, une personne du monde n'eût pas perdu la tête dans une situation si délicate; mais Indiana

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<sup>24</sup> John T. Booker, "Indiana and Madame Bovary: Intertextual Echoes," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 31 (2003) 226-36.

n'avait pas d'*usage*; elle ne possédait ni l'habileté ni la dissimulation nécessaires pour conserver l'avantage de sa position" (*Indiana* 120).

The comparisons between Indiana and French women strengthen the argument that society is based on a social education, but equally demonstrative is the situation of Noun, Indiana's servant and childhood companion. Noun's letter to Raymon, although written on the stationary of her mistress, reveals her lack of education regarding the rules of French grammar and spelling. The narrator pities her, but seems shocked by her ignorance, writing that "la pauvre fille de l'île Bourbon ignorait même qu'il y eût des règles à la langue" (*Indiana* 47). This lack of knowledge reminds Raymon of Noun's true social status and makes him ashamed of their relationship, but the narrator forgives him by attributing this prejudice to his education. Véronique Machelidon, writing on the question of race in *Indiana*, notes this situation and writes that "whereas the servant can pass as white visually and aurally, her lack of control over the complexities of French grammar signals her exclusion from the symbolic rules of French culture and society."<sup>25</sup> I would argue that even when considered outside of the question of race, it is Noun's lack of education in the linguistic norms of French society that excludes her from Raymon's affection in this instance. Noun is able to make Raymon forget that she is not a member of French society up until this point, when her letter brings into relief the fact that she is nothing more than a beautiful servant. This is another instance of appearances taking precedence over reality in French society, with the visual representation of language

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<sup>25</sup> Véronique Machelidon, "George Sand's Praise of Creoleness: Race, Slavery and (In)Visibility in *Indiana*," *George Sand Studies* 28 (2009): 33.

counting more than Noun's ability to speak it perfectly. An education becomes vital to success and acceptance in society.

The ability to manipulate and interpret language and appearances are two very important skills for succeeding in French society for which Indiana has no training. According to the narrator, "le plus honnête des hommes est celui qui pense et qui agit le mieux, mais le plus puissant est celui qui sait le mieux écrire et parler" (*Indiana* 105). While thoughts and behaviors may reflect the truth of a person, they are less important than language, which can be manipulated to serve other purposes or repeated from other sources, but which is also a uniquely masculine ability in *Indiana*. Nigel Harkness contends: "In Sand's work, linguistic mastery is one of the privileged markers of masculine power."<sup>26</sup> Rousseau writes that language is not a natural development, but a human capability that arose from social relationships, as the reader can see from how little natural disposition humans have to need and communicate with each other. Spoken and written languages are therefore a product of society, not a natural form of expression. Harkness expands upon this idea: "Outsiders such as Ralph, Sir Arthur, and Palmer may show themselves to be morally superior to their French counterparts Raymon, Marsillat, and Laurent, but on one axis of opposition at least, that of linguistic performance, their inferiority is consistently affirmed" (Harkness 35). Sand corroborates the assessment of language as artificial in *Indiana*, writing that it is "une reine prostituée qui descend et s'élève à tous les rôles; qui se déguise, se pare, se dissimule, et s'efface" (*Indiana* 105). Ralph, who is a more "natural" man than Raymon, is unable to manipulate linguistic

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<sup>26</sup> Nigel Harkness, *Men of their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction* (London: Legenda, 2007) 33.

signifiers with the same skill as his rival, and the reader learns that society judges him harshly for this shortcoming.

Raymon is first attracted to Indiana because her simple attire sets her apart from the well-dressed crowd at the ball, but he equally admires the French women he sees: “Il regardait ces femmes si brillantes aux lumières; il écoutait leur entretien délicat et fin; il entendait vanter leurs talents” (*Indiana* 50). Unlike these women, Indiana does not have conversational skills and talents that she might have learned growing up in society. She does not have to use language to express her feelings, though, unlike Raymon - Indiana’s eyes and face communicate for her. This type of communication is natural, as opposed to the man-made nature of language. The narrator writes that “l’air de bonheur avec lequel elle le contemplait à la dérobée, ses yeux qui avaient pour lui un éloquent et muet langage, son sublime sourire” (*Indiana* 151). The eloquent and silent language of Indiana’s eyes is not one that must be learned or mastered, but belongs naturally to every person in love. However, after her disillusionment, her eyes, formerly affectionate and warm towards her lover, no longer recognize Raymon, who appears changed to Indiana once she has learned his true nature (*Indiana* 201). While Indiana cannot manipulate language or appearances in the same way that the women at the ball can, she can express her feelings for Raymon through her natural gifts.

The question of passion also plays a role in the argument for education that George Sand wages in *Indiana*. Indiana and Noun are both passionate women, especially when compared with Laure’s calculated maneuvering. While the society around Indiana values detachedness from authentic feeling, Sand privileges the power of passion over the



moderation and reason advocated by social norms. Speaking of Noun, she writes that “la femme du dernier rang devient, en se livrant à tout le délire de ses émotions, plus pathétique et plus convaincante que celle à qui l’éducation a enseigné la modération et la réserve” (*Indiana* 75). The natural power of passion is more convincing than the self-control preached by Rousseau, but it is also looked down upon in French society and leads one to make choices that are not beneficial to one’s social status. One example of passion, as well as instinct, leading characters into social mishaps is the situation that arises when Indiana leaves her husband in order to be with Raymon. Sand writes that “elle n’avait pas encore réfléchi à sa situation; elle était tout entière sous l’influence de l’instinct” (*Indiana* 178). Indiana acts according to her passions, going to be with the man she loves instead of adhering to the unnatural rules and moderation required of and taught by society.

These rules of moderation are precisely what complicate Indiana’s relationship with Ralph, who is unable to express his love because he is too virtuous to betray Delmare, and whose inability to communicate as well as Raymon hinders his success in society. It is only after Ralph’s confession of love that Indiana is finally able to see the last element of truth that had been hidden from her by her lack of understanding of society. Sand writes that “rendue à la vérité, à la nature, [Indiana] vit le cœur de Ralph tel qu’il était; elle vit aussi ses traits tels qu’elle ne les avait jamais vus” (*Indiana* 349). Finally the “bandeau, qui depuis longtemps se détachait, tomba tout à fait de ses yeux” (*Indiana* 349). True love, expressed without the clichéd terms of Raymon, shows Indiana that she had long been misreading the behavior of Raymon and had bestowed her

affection on the wrong man. Ralph's honesty and virtue are two qualities that do not have to be taught by a social education in France, and the narrator writes that "paré de sa franchise et de sa vertu, il était bien plus beau que Raymon, et Indiana sentit que c'était lui qu'il aurait fallu aimer" (*Indiana* 349). No longer misguided by the words and false appearances of society, Indiana is able to see the truth. Ralph, however, as a male observer has not had the same problems of misreading as Indiana, criticizes her blindness towards him: "Injuste et aveugle femme! Tu n'as pas vu que je t'ai servie autant qu'il a été possible de le faire, et surtout tu n'as pas compris que je ne pouvais élever la voix en ta faveur sans me trahir" (*Indiana* 314). Indiana was unaware that appearances in society, whether good or bad, are misleading, and this caused her to misunderstand the true motivations behind Ralph's cold behavior towards her in the presence of her husband.

Sand completes her commentary on the questions of nature and education in her epilogue, in which Ralph and Indiana are once again living on Ile Bourbon, far from the artificiality and institutionalized gender inequalities of French society. Ralph expresses his affinity for their native island home by commenting that "ce que nul ne pourra jamais comprendre, c'est l'indignation profonde, c'est le désespoir sombre, qui s'emparèrent de moi lorsqu'on m'arracha de ces lieux [...] pour me charger des liens de la société" (*Indiana* 311). In spite of her criticism of Rousseau's belief in the existence of inherent differences between the sexes, as well as his advocacy of limited education for women in the social realm, Sand does not completely reject the concept of gender roles: even after leaving society, Indiana does not step out from the private setting. The narrator recounts

that “quant à Madame Delmare, sa retraite avait été si absolue, que son existence était encore une chose problématique pour beaucoup d’habitants” (*Indiana* 323). Marriage is removed from the equation because it is a social construction governed by the Civil Code and constitutes one man-made source of the inequalities between men and women in French society, along with the Rousseauvian education that only educates women for motherhood and wifedom. Indiana is not a mother when the narrator visits, leading the reader to believe that Sand does not feel that to be the only natural goal for women. Interestingly, Indiana also shows a desire to learn, and the narrator writes that “elle est avide d’apprendre ce que les préoccupations de sa vie l’ont empêchée de savoir” (*Indiana* 327). Although he then attributes this interest to a desire to let Ralph demonstrate his vast knowledge, appealing once again to his male-centered view of women, this event shows that the desire to learn is natural for women, and keeping them in ignorance is not. The role of Ralph in this construction is problematic, for he is at once the one who maintained Indiana’s ignorance during her education, and the one charged with answering the questions that she now poses. Once again following the precepts of Rousseau, Ralph is now able to shape the opinions of his “wife” by becoming her teacher. The educational situation of Indiana, which leads to her suffering when she is placed in the context of society, is acceptable when she is in a natural environment – it is the corruption of the social world that renders her ignorance unacceptable.

To those nineteenth-century members of society who would limit women and stereotype them as inferior beings, George Sand presents the case of Indiana, a young

woman whose lack of education into the realities of French society leads her to misread the text of society and suffer as a result. Throughout the text, Sand criticizes the limiting tenets of the feminine education prescribed by Rousseau in *Emile*, as well as the idea that such an education could lead to the regeneration of society. The departure of Ralph and Indiana from France at the end of the novel speaks to her belief in the impossibility of such a venture. Society is based on laws that lead the relationship between the genders to be unequal, and this is unacceptable to George Sand (*Indiana* 10). Providing women with the opportunity to learn and to prepare themselves for roles other than motherhood is an important step to attaining her desired goal of freedom for both genders.

#### IV. Balzac and the Monetary Education of *Eugénie Grandet*

Rousseau's influence on nineteenth-century educational and political discourse is evidenced by the widespread association of his name with an increasingly popular ideal of female domesticity in France after the Revolution, as well as by George Sand's implied commentary on his ideas in *Indiana*, a text that condemns the artificiality of society and envisions an escape to nature while simultaneously questioning the existence of "natural" differences of intelligence between the sexes. However, not every nineteenth-century author subscribed to Rousseau's condemnation of society, nor did every author criticize the social education required to understand it. One year after *Indiana*'s publication in 1832, Honoré de Balzac published *Eugénie Grandet*, in which he, like Sand, discusses the fate of a socially ignorant female character when she first falls in love, as well as the impossibility of true love in the face of society's relations of "intérêt," a term that refers to people's tendency to act in a way that profits them rather than according to sincere feelings. In this chapter, I will argue that although Balzac's depictions of domesticity and society in *Eugénie Grandet* frequently resemble those of his contemporary George Sand due to their shared evocations of women's inability to decipher the code of society, Balzac's novel differs in its focus on money as the determining factor in almost all relationships and in its conclusion about the possibility of love and happiness for naïve women, reflecting a radically different outlook from that of Sand. While his focus on the relationships of *amour-propre* that govern society aligns him with Rousseau and Sand, Balzac does not envision a happy ending for women who are not educated to read others critically. Unable to retreat to nature, Eugénie is initiated

into the world of “*intérêt*,” but forges a new path for herself that allows her to continue privileging sentiment in her relationships. Unfortunately, this act cannot heal the wound caused by the lack of connection between her early education and the reality of society.

Although the gap separating the lifetimes of Rousseau and Balzac seems wide, Balzac was familiar with the writings of the eighteenth-century author, and he mentions and analyzes Rousseau’s theories in some of his novels, such as *La Physiologie du mariage*, in which the author discusses the difficulties related to love and marriage. Raymon Trousson, writing on the similarities and differences between Rousseau’s and Balzac’s ideas, cites Balzac as writing, “ Mais voulez-vous savoir la vérité? Ouvrez Rousseau, car il ne s’agit pas d’une question de morale publique de laquelle il n’ait d’avance indiqué la portée” (*Oeuvres complètes* XI, 971-972, Cited Trousson 219).<sup>27</sup> Although Trousson indicates that Balzac admired many of the ideas of Rousseau, this perceived admiration is not entirely applicable to the subject of education. Trousson writes that “peu favorable à l’éducation d’Emile, Balzac a été séduit par la préparation de Sophie au mariage, qui autorisait la restauration d’autres valeurs que celles de l’argent et de la propriété” (235). At least for Eugénie Grandet, however, Balzac seems to deny such a restoration of values other than wealth, for Eugénie must eventually sacrifice her desire for true love and learn the ways of the world.

In the “Avant-propos” to *La Comédie humaine*, Balzac explains the theories and values that underpin his ambitious Realist project, and there he writes that

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<sup>27</sup> Balzac, Honoré de. *Oeuvres complètes*. Edition nouvelle établie par la Société des Etudes balzaciennes, Paris, Club de l’Honnête Homme, 1968-1971.

Cited in: Raymond Trousson, *Balzac: Disciple et Juge de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. (Droz: Genève, 1983) 219.

L'homme n'est ni bon ni méchant, il naît avec des instincts et des aptitudes; la Société, loin de le dépraver, comme l'a prétendu Rousseau, le perfectionne, le rend meilleur; mais l'intérêt développe alors énormément ses penchants mauvais.<sup>28</sup>

This passage seemingly contradicts itself, since society is simultaneously credited with perfecting man and with developing his negative penchants through relationships of interest. However, this paradox can be explained by Balzac's belief that all humans are born with negative tendencies that develop and grow due to social interests, whereas Rousseau attributes the birth of mankind's self-interested behavior, or *amour-propre*, to the birth of social relationships, which are not natural to man. As society "perfects" humankind, men and women are shaped into increasingly specific types based on their roles and status in the community, with the result that "dans la Société la femme ne se trouve pas toujours être la femelle du mâle" ("Avant-propos" 8). Where Rousseau only envisions the woman as a domestic wife and mother, Balzac allows for the possibility of many types of women, with each filling a different role in the social order. He does, however, agree with Rousseau on the belief that family is the basis for society, and not the individual ("Avant-propos" 13). Perhaps it is for this reason that many of his novels, like *Eugénie Grandet*, focus on family life as the site of social drama.

Even within the family sphere, Balzac regards almost all relationships as being based on *amour-propre*. He specifically depicts money and status, two socially constructed and interrelated concepts, as the primary foundations of the vast majority of human relationships in society, and this principle is illustrated especially clearly in

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<sup>28</sup> Honoré de Balzac, "Avant-Propos." *La Comédie humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976): 12.

*Eugénie Grandet*, whose title character is the only child of a monomaniacal miser. Grandet's paternal interest in his daughter is almost entirely based on her status as his future inheritor and he only cares for his wife because of the considerable dowry and inheritance that she brings to the marriage, although his conjugal affection wanes once he possesses her money.<sup>29</sup> This conjugal "love" is only rekindled when he realizes that the death of Madame Grandet will allow Eugénie to challenge him for her mother's inheritance, according to the Napoleonic Code. Grandet's interest in his wife is, therefore, dependent on her utility towards his financial gain, as is his affection for the servant Nanon. Meanwhile, the interest that the Cruchots and the Des Grassins take in Eugénie results from their desire to marry their sons to the young heiress, an act that would make one of their families very wealthy. Money, for Balzac, is the dominant form of inequality that replaces natural feeling in society and increases *amour-propre*, especially for the miser, whose passion is built upon two feelings: "l'amour-propre et l'intérêt; mais l'intérêt étant en quelque sorte l'amour-propre solide et bien entendu, l'attestation continue d'une supériorité réelle, l'amour-propre et l'intérêt sont deux parties d'un même tout, l'égoïsme" (*Eugénie* 160). All of Grandet's relationships can be traced back to his desire for money and his resulting *amour-propre* - even the feelings of paternal and conjugal love that Rousseau regards as the best feelings created by man's sociability are determined by money for this character. Eugénie and her mother, however, base their relationships on sincere affection. Therefore, only the love between and given by Eugénie and her mother is truly free from dependence on financial interests,

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<sup>29</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Eugénie Grandet* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1996) 71.



since even Nanon's relationship to Grandet is created by his hiring of and payment for her domestic services.

When we first meet Eugénie Grandet, we are quickly familiarized with her education and daily life. While the reader knows little about the first eight years of Eugénie's existence, he finds out that she has received a domestic education, led primarily by her mother, for the past fifteen years, and Balzac writes that "toutes les journées de la mère et de la fille s'étaient paisiblement écoulées à cette place, dans un travail constant" (*Eugénie* 78). This citation implies that Eugénie is content with her life, and that the calm regularity of her existence has not been broken by dramatic events. Balzac, however, quickly undermines his peaceful image of domesticity by comparing the women's incessant domestic work to a "labeur d'ouvrière" (*Eugénie* 78). Giving what appears to be an outsider's view of the women's work, Balzac reveals the distance between the women's perception of their lives and the reality observed by others, especially for Eugénie. By raising his daughter at home (and the reader cannot imagine him spending the money to educate her elsewhere), Grandet indoctrinates Eugénie into his own personal ideology, creating for her a world in which money, divorced from its use value, has no immediate power and should be economized, in spite of the fact that the desire for money plays a determining role in the relationships between those around her. Balzac highlights one element of this indoctrination when he discusses Grandet's annual birthday gift to Eugénie – a piece of gold. The author asks, "N'était-ce pas mettre son argent d'une caisse dans une autre et, pour ainsi dire, élever à la brochette l'avarice de son héritière?" (*Eugénie* 83). Although Rousseau advocates that education for women

should take place in the home and be led by their mothers, Balzac seems to criticize this type of upbringing by stressing its possible disconnect from reality – the child is subjected to the ideology of his or her parents, whether those ideas align with social truth or not.

Monsieur Grandet, the most financially savvy of the novel's characters, is also the most denatured, and his manipulation of language to achieve his ends and exploit others reveals the subordination of speech to social uses, as well as the focus that society places on appearances. If Charles does not believe that his uncle is wealthy, it is in part because Grandet has told him as much, saying that “Vous les entendrez peut-être tous ici vous disant que je suis riche [...] mais je n'ai pas le sou, et je travaille à mon âge comme un pauvre compagnon” (*Eugénie* 115). Grandet is also able to manipulate his speech in order to control the actions of others: his feigned stutter forces them to suggest ideas to him in a way that makes them seem to volunteer their time and money to help. Balzac writes that “le bredouillement affecté depuis si longtemps par le bonhomme et qui passait pour naturel, aussi bien que le surdité dont il se plaignait par les temps de pluie, devint [...] fatigant” for those who are listening and who attempt to assist him, leading them to become involved in his financial plans to their detriment (*Eugénie* 166). Grandet's stutter is an additional example of false appearances serving monetary and social interests in the text, and one which is used to dupe other characters into conceding to him.

Another means by which Grandet keeps his daughter and others from understanding the extent of his wealth is by manipulating the physical representations of financial status that surround him, which, due to his desire to economize, give the

appearance of extreme poverty. Grandet's ability to do this underlines the unnatural origin of wealth, which is a form of socially constructed inequality, but also serves to manipulate public perception, in particular for those who are not aware of his monomania. Charles' first impression of the Grandet home is one of shock at its poverty in comparison to the Parisian apartments that he has visited, but even later, when Eugénie has reasoned that her father is not poor, her cousin does not believe her and calls her "pauvre enfant" because he incorrectly believes that he can see a truth that is invisible to her. William Ray writes that "Balzac's various heroines, from Eugénie Grandet to Mademoiselle Cornon or Esther, seem particularly inept at decoding the text of culture to their advantage, when compared to male figures such as Vautrin, Rastignac, or Grandet" (Ray 426). This observation, though correct that Eugénie, as a young woman, has difficulty decoding the relationship between appearances and reality in society, overstates the importance of gender in this problem, for it fails to note that some young male characters like Charles Grandet also have this difficulty. These men are at times equally unable to interpret the relationship between appearances and reality because of their youth or inexperience, but Charles is able to learn this skill and profit from it in society, while Eugénie is left an unloved, unhappy figure, even after her initiation into the financial truths of society and those of her father. It is interesting to note, though, that Eugénie understands the truth of her family's wealth before Charles does.

In spite of, or perhaps because of Grandet's monomaniacal obsession with money, Eugénie is still innocent and naïve at the beginning of the novel, without any apparent realization of her wealth or any experience with money beyond saving her birthday gold.

She, like Indiana Delmare, is unaware of and unable to comprehend the social reality that surrounds her because she has not been educated to see it. Upon witnessing her joy at receiving an inexpensive birthday gift, the Cruchots “restèrent stupéfaits en voyant le regard joyeux et animé lancé sur Adolphe des Grassins par l’héritière à qui de semblables richesses parurent inouïes” (*Eugénie* 91). The extreme innocence of women like Eugénie is not criticized by Rousseau, but he does believe that there are difficulties and dangers to keeping women in an ideological state that is isolated from the true workings of society (*Emile* 502). Penny Weiss discusses one result of Rousseau’s support for women’s domestic education, writing that “inasmuch as one could say that Rousseau’s ideal is the noble savage, it is possible to argue that Rousseau’s woman is in some sense closer to this idea, for she would be less denatured to the extent that her rationality was less developed” (Weiss 88). The innocent and family-educated young woman is Rousseau’s choice as the best available option for society, and Eugénie fulfills this role to a certain extent, although the reader must remember that she is not only a woman educated to fulfill her domestic social role, but also a woman educated into a certain family ideology that does not correspond with the real world. Eugénie is less denatured by *amour-propre* because she bases her relationships on affection rather than financial interest, and her ability to reason is not born until the arrival of her cousin Charles, whose appearance provides her with her first opportunity to compare her life to one that is unfamiliar.

Charles arrives at the Grandet home on the evening of Eugénie’s twenty-third birthday celebration, appearing in all the fine Parisian accoutrements that befit a dandy with hopes of impressing the people of Saumur. At first intrigued by this richly-dressed

new arrival, considering him to be an “angel” in comparison to her neighbors in Saumur, Eugénie is moved by compassion when she learns of the death of Charles’ father and his subsequent financial ruin. Regarding the young man’s education, Balzac writes the following:

Charles était un enfant de Paris, habitué par les mœurs de Paris, par Annette elle-même, à tout calculer, déjà vieillard sous le masque de jeune homme. Il avait reçu l’épouvantable éducation de ce monde, où, dans une soirée, il se commet en pensées, en paroles, plus de crimes que la Justice n’en punit aux Cours d’assises, où les bons mots assassinent les plus grandes idées, où l’on ne passe pour fort qu’autant que l’on voit juste; et là, voir juste, c’est ne croire à rien, ni aux sentiments, ni aux hommes, ni même aux événements: on y fait de faux événements. (*Eugénie* 184)

Charles, like Raymon in *Indiana*, represents the society that young, ignorant women cannot comprehend due to its artificial relationships – image is more important than truth, and appearances cannot be trusted. Balzac feels that Charles’ social education does not yet dominate his way of thinking because he is still young and idealistic. It is clear, however, that this is the social “truth” to which Charles, even unknowingly, is inculcated and on which his viewpoint is founded. Based on his knowledge of their different early educations, the reader, who is given this information before Eugénie is aware of it, can foresee the sad conclusion of her relationship with Charles.

While Balzac’s representation of Charles as a socially educated man echoes the description of Raymon that Sand gives in *Indiana*, he does not concern himself with disproving the stereotype that women are ignorant and impressionable, especially when in love, but instead attributes these qualities to women’s nature, because he is describing “types” and believes that many tendencies are inherent and not taught. Balzac writes, for example, about Eugénie’s “pitié, l’une des sublimes supériorités de la femme, la seule

qu'elle veuille faire sentir, la seule qu'elle pardonne à l'homme de lui laisser prendre sur lui" (*Eugénie* 161). Pity, considered by Rousseau to be one of the sentiments natural to all of mankind, is here described as a feminine quality, perhaps because of the domestic education that keeps women in a more natural state. Men, who are more strongly associated with the public sphere and the social relationships of *amour-propre*, are no longer as connected with their natural feeling of pity, it seems, or never possessed it at all. As a male author describing the workings of society, it is also likely that Balzac's repeated references to "la femme" reflect his acceptance and observation of the gender stereotypes of his time period, while Sand took care to dismantle and refute them in *Indiana*.

Michael Lucey discusses the role of gender in *Eugénie Grandet*, contending that Balzac's description of Madame Grandet in particular is "slightly papered over with a moralistic discourse that the novel consistently shows not only to work at the expense of women, but in fact to be part of their training in gender."<sup>30</sup> Although she is universally admired for her piety and patience, Balzac reveals that Madame Grandet harbors a "sotte et secrète" pride that keeps her from rebelling against her husband's domination. This phrase, which criticizes Madame Grandet's behavior, suggests that she could have improved her situation if she had rejected her self-assigned social role as a submissive wife and spoken out. Balzac's use of "sotte" implies his judgment of Madame Grandet for not taking control of her future by influencing her husband or entering the world of money matters, of which she is aware based on her signature of legal documents giving

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Lucey, *The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003) 51.

her inheritance to Grandet, a scene that will later be repeated by Eugénie. Her daughter, witnessing the submission of her mother to her father's wishes, follows Madame Grandet's example until the arrival of Charles, at which point passionate love, something that her mother has never experienced, leads her to rebel against her father's avarice.

With the arrival of Charles comes the first experience of *amour-propre* in the life of Eugénie. Wanting to impress her cousin, she begins to worry about her physical appearance, concerned that she is not beautiful enough to attract him (*Eugénie* 124). The introduction of love into Eugénie's life also leads to her first break with the miserly habits formed by her financial upbringing by Monsieur Grandet – she begins to spend money on candles and special foods that she hopes will impress Charles. Eugénie also begins to see the value of owning nice material possessions: “Enfin souhaitant, pour la première fois de sa vie, de paraître à son avantage, elle connut le bonheur d’avoir une robe fraîche, bien faite, et qui la rendait attrayante” (*Eugénie* 121). Eugénie has had no one to impress until this moment, when she first seeks admiration and the good opinion of another human being, and she begins to focus on appearances. She also sees money as a means of helping others, or as a useful entity, for the first time, but her employment of it is still based on natural feeling rather than the relations of *amour-propre* and power that Grandet seeks. Eugénie observes to her cousin: “J’ignorais ce qu’était l’argent, vous me l’avez appris, ce n’est qu’un moyen, voilà tout” (*Eugénie* 189). The young woman has finally received a partial education into the importance of money in the relationships of those around her, but does not yet associate the need for money with the desire for power. As André Vanoncini astutely notes, power is a common symbolic function of gold: “L’or,

en raison de sa rareté et de sa pureté, s'associe, depuis sa représentation dans la Bible, à un idéal de perfection d'un côté, à un fallacieux rêve de puissance de l'autre."<sup>31</sup> Eugénie symbolically rejects the ideology of her father by giving away her birthday gold, following instead her sincere love for Charles.

The inability to read critically is a major flaw of Eugénie's education, and the one that ultimately leads to her unhappiness. One example of misreading by Eugénie is her perusal of the letter that Charles writes to his mistress after the death of his father, in which Eugénie does not see the coldness behind the written words of affection. Her love and her education blind her to the letter's truth in the same way that she is blind to society's truth. Balzac admits that Eugénie's education plays a role in her misreading, writing, "N'était-ce pas impossible alors que cette innocente fille s'aperçut de la froideur empreinte dans cette lettre? (*Eugénie* 183). Eugénie has no experience with the language of love, like Indiana Delmare, and reads the letter in accordance with her own romantically inclined vision, because "aux jeunes filles religieusement élevées, ignorantes et pures, tout est amour dès qu'elles mettent le pied dans les régions enchantées de l'amour" (*Eugénie* 183). The unnatural disconnect between the language written and the feelings that such words would normally express makes her task of translation more difficult. While Rousseau claims that "le monde est le livre des femmes: quand elles y lisent mal, c'est leur faute; ou quelque passion les aveugle," Balzac attributes some of their gullibility to a lack of social education, although he blames Eugénie's passionate love as well (*Emile* 508). Eugénie also misreads Charles' grief,

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<sup>31</sup> André Vanoncini, "Le Statut philosophique de l'or dans *La Comédie humaine*," *L'Année Balzacienne* 3rd ser. 7 (2006): 179.



believing that her cousin is mourning the loss of his relationship with his father, when he is actually mourning the loss of his “bontés paternelles” (*Eugénie* 183). Imagining all relationships to be determined by authentic love and affection because that is how she has been educated, Eugénie cannot see the financial interest in all the relationships around her, including that of Charles and his father.

Eugénie’s ideological education, by not preparing her to disinterestedly observe and think critically during an encounter with the unfamiliar, does not provide her with the self-control to govern her passion when she meets Charles. The birth of her love for Charles marks the birth of her first passion, something which cannot be destroyed by outside authority but could, at least for Rousseau, be governed by a good education. Rousseau discusses the development of jealousy in *Emile* as follows: “L’on peut dire à coup sûr de quelle sorte de jalousie Emile sera capable; car, puisqu’à peine cette passion a-t-elle un germe dans le cœur humain, sa forme est déterminée uniquement par l’éducation” (*Emile* 565). Balzac likewise relates Eugénie’s passion to her education, writing that “le passé d’Eugénie servira, pour les observateurs de la nature humaine, de garantie à la naïveté de son irréflexion et à la soudaineté des effusions de son âme” (*Eugénie* 158). Eugénie’s innocent past guarantees that her love is both sudden and unmeditated, but it does not prepare her to deal with its consequences, since passion often has negative consequences for Balzac’s heroes and heroines.<sup>32</sup>

Naomi Schor, analyzing Eugénie’s love for Charles according to Freud’s theories of narcissism and melancholia, determines that the young woman falls in love with

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<sup>32</sup> For a thorough explanation of Balzac’s theory on passion, see *La Peau de Chagrin*.

Charles due to his experiences of melancholy following the death of his father, a sentiment that she can understand from the melancholy of her home as it is described by Balzac and from the lessons of her beloved mother. Schor writes that “melancholy pervades the novel; from the first page to the last, there is a perfect, characteristically Balzacian adequation between the container (house) and the contained (Eugénie).”<sup>33</sup> I would argue, however, that Eugénie’s love for Charles is not based solely on her identification with his melancholy, but also results from her misreading of him as a character who values love and family, unlike her father. Grandet’s attitude contrasts sharply with Eugénie’s perception of Charles’ reasons for mourning, and he says that “ce jeune homme n’est bon à rien, il s’occupe plus des morts que de l’argent” (*Eugénie* 146). Until this time, Eugénie has not recognized her father’s preference for money over love, and this pushes her to identify with Charles’ outpouring of sentiment, even though the reader knows it to be based on material interest. Charles, although honest in his proclamations of love for Eugénie when he leaves to make his fortune, does not retain his innocent affection for his cousin once he becomes fully initiated into the world of money that his Parisian youth educated him to appreciate. Balzac writes that Charles “était dominé par l’idée de reparaître à Paris dans tout l’éclat d’une haute fortune, et de ressaisir une position plus brillante encore que celle d’où il était tombé” (*Eugénie* 253). This ambition leads him to the threshold of marriage to Mademoiselle d’Aubrion, a woman he does not love, in order to achieve wealth and social status.

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<sup>33</sup> Naomi Schor, *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory, and French Realist Fiction* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 100.

Eugénie has been taught to look at the signs and accept them, without thinking critically about their meaning, but this insufficient first education is later followed by a crueler lesson that teaches her the truth of society. As Richard Terdiman writes concerning the male *roman d'éducation*, “the education which it represented turns out to be an *education into signs*: into an experience of the semiotic which we now see to be crucial in modern relations of economic production and social reproduction.”<sup>34</sup> Although Eugénie is an unwilling participant in her own feminine *roman d'éducation*, this characterization of its final outcome seems applicable to her situation. After Grandet fully initiates Eugénie into the world of monetary relationship and teaches her his miserly habits, she finally learns to see and read others correctly. When reading the letter that Charles sends upon his return to France, she immediately understands the coldness that she was unable to feel in her perusal of his letter to Annette. While Eugénie and her cousin were on familiar terms at the time of his departure, with Charles calling her “chère Eugénie” and promising his eternal love with the phrase “A toi, pour jamais,” Charles begins his letter by addressing Eugénie as “ma chère cousine” and “vous,” marking a distance between them that did not previously exist. Eugénie’s last flicker of hope for happiness and natural love in her life is extinguished when Charles announces his intention to follow social convention, concluding that “l’amour, dans le mariage, est un chimère” (*Eugénie* 259). Later, Eugénie knows that there is no love in her union to the President of Bonfons, and Balzac writes that “habituée par le malheur et par sa dernière

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Terdiman, “Discourses of Initiation: On Some Contradictions In Balzac’s Encounter With the Sign,” *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 96.

éducation à tout deviner, [Eugénie] savait que le président désirait sa mort pour se trouver en possession de cette immense fortune” (*Eugénie* 274). The importance of money has finally become visible to her, and she is left with no hope that anyone will truly love her more than her money, because Charles was the only person who didn’t see her wealth. When William Ray comments that Balzac’s heroines have difficulty decoding society and culture to their advantage, the real problem, at least for Eugénie, is that they have not been educated to decode culture at all. Such an understanding of society can only come from a second education, one which destroys illusions and initiates the young woman into the true workings of society, a step that both Rousseau and Sand reject.

Michael Lucey concludes that although Balzac is very attuned to the situation of women in society, he cannot be considered a feminist, because he “seems content in *Eugénie Grandet* to reveal a woman’s predicament to her at the same time that he denies her the necessary discursive and psychological malleability to turn her predicament to her advantage” (Lucey 56). This conclusion seems unfair to Eugénie, for there is no indication that she desires to exploit the financial interest that others have in her. Her desire to join a convent and her decision to marry represent attempts to reject the artificial bonds of society, whether by replacing them with an authentic relationship with God, who loves Eugénie for herself and not for her wealth, or by giving control of her money to another who does enjoy financial gain. What advantage could Eugénie receive from a society based on *amour-propre* when there is no one besides Nanon who truly loves her and she doesn’t care about increasing her wealth? Given that her education, led by her mother, was founded on a belief in the existence of sincere relationships, it is not

surprising that Eugénie chooses to valorize this viewpoint. However, this does not indicate, as McClendon and Wood suggest, that Eugénie is a revolutionary character who throws off the bonds of patriarchy in order to control her own destiny.<sup>35</sup> Instead, Eugénie is a young woman whose parents are both deceased, and who is left to make choices about her future alone because there is no one else to guide her. She therefore makes her decisions based on her first education – the one that shaped her values. The reader must also remember that marriage to the President of Bonfons is not Eugénie’s first choice after her disillusionment regarding Charles’ love. It is the church that instructs her to remain in society and use her money for good, and it is the church that encourages her to marry. Eugénie’s decision to remain celibate in marriage is a testament to her valorization of true love over social convention, and her unwillingness to compromise this point of view. While Indiana Delmare is able to return to her native Ile Bourbon to live with Ralph in a state of “natural” marriage, Eugénie is not permitted the option of retreating from society, but must find a compromise in which she can remain loyal to her sincere love for Charles while fulfilling the duties required of her by society and her religion. Also, because she has grown up and been educated in France, there is likewise no Ralph, who, by rejecting social convention, can rescue her from this fate.

In the end, Eugénie’s desires are subordinated to the social obligations that she must fulfill in a way that makes one think of Rousseau’s project of assigning each gender

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<sup>35</sup> Wendell McClendon and Diane Wood, “Eugénie Grandet: A Woman in Transition,” *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 3.4 (1989): 199-209.

different roles in society. Eugénie is a wife, but her relationship is not based on true love, and she is only a mother to the poor people who rely on her charity, because she refuses to submit her body and spirit to a relationship of utility. By not having natural children, however, Eugénie erases the possibility of her ever again experiencing a relationship that, like her relationship with her mother, is untainted by the importance of money. This choice also prevents the possibility of any of her children having to go through the pain of disillusionment and initiation into relationships of *amour-propre* that govern society. Balzac concludes his story by writing that “telle est l’histoire de cette femme qui n’est pas du monde au milieu du monde, qui faite pour être magnifiquement épouse et mère, n’a ni mari, ni enfants, ni famille” (*Eugénie* 275). Instead, she continues to live her life according to the habits that she formed as a child in Grandet’s home, and it is that education, which shaped her viewpoint on life, that has led to her loneliness.

## V. Conclusion

The depictions of women's education and the subsequent struggles with social reality that Balzac and Sand present in their novels *Indiana* and *Eugénie Grandet* reflect a society that has changed drastically since Rousseau published *Emile*, but one in which the ideas of the eighteenth-century author are still influential. Industrialization and the institution of the Napoleonic Civil Code are just two of the substantial differences between 1762 and the 1830s, when Sand and Balzac wrote their two novels concerning the education and social difficulties of women, particularly with regards to the lack of connection between their domestic education and the artificiality of social relationships, as well as with certain aspects of the Civil Code pertaining to marriage and inheritance. While *Indiana* struggles with the realities of marriage, a social institution in which women are relegated to minority status, *Eugénie* deals with the issue of inheritance, which, according to the Code, women are able to claim after the death of their mothers.

However, it is also important to consider Romanticism when analyzing these two texts. The Romantic period, in which nature and feeling were exalted and pitted against the artificiality of society, was beginning to be replaced by other movements in the 1830s. Given the political and economic changes that took place in France over the time period between the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century, it is not surprising that some authors began to question the value of such a movement, and its influence began to wane, as the reader can see in the thematics of *Indiana* and *Eugénie Grandet*, whose heroines must be disillusioned from their ideology of privileging authentic feeling over social calculation. However, these characters are also thoroughly

Romantic in their suffering: Naomi Schor writes that “*Eugénie Grandet* is a novel whose central thesis is ‘doloristic,’ in keeping with a deep Romantic fascination with pain as a fundamental ontological experience” (*Chain* 101). She continues that because Balzac regards women as more prone to suffering than men, who can act in order to heal their sorrow, Eugénie is “the paradigmatic Romantic heroine (indeed, the paradigmatic Romantic hero is a heroine), and her suffering must be excessive” (*Chain* 102). Indiana, like Eugénie, suffers greatly in the name of love, but receives some consolation from her relationship with Ralph and her ability to escape society, while Balzac does not foresee a possible happy ending for Eugénie.

The differing interpretations of society and the very dissimilar conclusions for these two female characters reflect the philosophies of the two authors, but also reflect a shared preoccupation with depicting reality, although Balzac was far more concerned with painting a “real” picture of society than was Sand. *Indiana* constitutes one of her most “realist” novels, but still does not reflect a strict adherence to Realist principles. The two authors also agree on the importance of educating young women in the realities of society if that is where they are destined to live - although Sand prefers that her heroine remain true to her nature and retreat from society, Balzac indicates that a full initiation into social truth is necessary for women. He recognizes that society is fully divorced from nature and chooses to accept this reality rather than advocate a Romantic return to natural life.

Rousseau, like Balzac, realized that humanity could never truly return to the state of ignorance that characterized the Natural Man, nor could humankind truly regain the



perfect balance of the Golden Age. For this reason, he creates an educational treatise, *Emile*, with the intention of creating the best possible society from what existed.

Beginning with families, Rousseau advocated educating children to perform certain social gender roles that would help construct and maintain this society – for women, this included a domestic education that prepares them for marriage and motherhood, their two most important roles in the author’s eyes. Although his formulations influenced French society well into the nineteenth century, aided by the development and popularity of Romanticism, the realities of a changing society forced subsequent authors to reconsider his writings in the face of their new social truth. For Sand, this involves advocating a return to nature as the only possible solution for her heroine, while Balzac chooses to accustom Eugénie to society. What both authors recognize, and what Rousseau also realized, is that education plays an important role in shaping a person’s outlook and expectations in life. However, an upbringing that does not prepare young people for the realities that they will face leads to a ideological distance from society, causing pain and suffering when the illusions of youth and education are contradicted.

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