**CRITICAL INTERPRETATION: AN EXPLORATION OF THIS EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE THROUGH SARAH FIELDING’S *THE GOVERNESS* (1749)**

**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the significance of critical interpretation as a teaching method by closely analysing Sarah Fielding's novel, *The Governess* (1749). The concept of critical interpretation was not only advocated by male educationalists like Baruch Spinoza, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau in the seventeenth century but also by female educationalists like Madame de Genlis, Catharine Macaulay, Sarah Fielding, and Hannah More in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The main argument put forth in this paper is that Fielding places a high value on developing children's critical interpretative skills for their intellectual growth and knowledge acquisition.[[1]](#footnote-1) In *The Governess*, she portrays Mrs. Teachum as the ideal educator, emphasizing the importance of critical analysis in her students' reading materials and highlighting the significance of early education. The paper delves into Mrs. Teachum's comprehensive plan to demonstrate how critical interpretation serves as the primary lesson in Sarah Fielding's *The Governess*.

The chapter emphasizes the significance of interpretation., which involves comprehending the meaning of what we read, hear, or observe, and its significance in educating children. When the term "critical" is added to interpretation, it emphasizes the need for a more meticulous understanding of the material we engage with. This skill, when consistently practiced, helps students acquire both moral and practical knowledge. The responsibility of imparting this skill to students falls on the teachers, making it an educational practice aimed at improving students' interpretative abilities. Earlier philosophers and thinkers have stressed the importance of this practice. Plato referred to it as the ability to distinguish between allegorical and literal meanings, Spinoza called it the capacity to ‘distinguish and separate the true idea from other perceptions’, John Locke advocated using it to guide children in discerning between good and bad, and Rousseau praised it as a ‘good method’ to cultivate a love for learning in children.[[2]](#footnote-2) However, as time passed, this age-old educational practice, which was meant for both boys and girls, became overshadowed by patriarchal norms. This serves as the starting point for this paper, as it explores how Sarah Fielding's novel *The Governess* (1749), the first-ever children's novel, places significant emphasis on this teaching practice.

The story unfolds within a female academy, where nine young girls receive education under the guidance of their governess, Mrs. Teachum. Critics assert that Mrs. Teachum embodies the characteristics of an ideal educator as outlined by John Locke in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.[[3]](#footnote-3) In the novel, Mrs. Teachum endeavors not only to enhance the students' intellectual capacities through a comprehensive plan but also places equal importance on engaging them in outdoor activities for physical well-being, as evident in her weekly schedule.

The larger plan devised by Mrs. Teachum encompasses her unique approach to discipline, granting students the time and space for self-reflection, and imparting valuable life lessons by critically interpreting the books they read. However, this larger plan also faces criticism from scholars like Moyra Haslett and Mika Suzuki, who point out the infrequent presence of Mrs. Teachum, both in the classroom and within the novel itself. Haslett observes that the transformation of the girls from bad to good behavior is ‘effected through the behaviour of other girls rather than the encouragement of the teacher’.[[4]](#footnote-4) Suzuki, on the other hand, praises the benevolent character of Jenny Peace, the academy's eldest student, for fostering a sense of companionship and guiding the other girls to realize their mistakes. In contrast, the argument presented in this paper posits that a more profound and critical examination of the novel reveals Mrs. Teachum's active instruction and direction of Miss Jenny's actions. By delving into the character of Mrs. Teachum, one can better grasp how she fulfills the essential qualifications of Locke's ideal educator, who emphasizes teaching the eldest students to serve as role models for the younger ones, as described in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.

**SARAH FIELDING AND *THE GOVERNESS* (1749)**

The educational approach depicted in *The Governess* is rooted in an institutional setting that aims to nurture the imagination and interpretative abilities of its students. This method draws inspiration from Sarah Fielding's personal experiences with education, both during her time at school and through the friendships she developed as a young woman. While this paper does not delve deeply into Sarah Fielding's biography, it is essential to mention her childhood school to understand the source of inspiration for the character of Mrs. Teachum in *The Governess*.

During her childhood, Sarah Fielding faced the loss of her mother and was separated from her flamboyant father at the tender age of nine. Subsequently, her maternal grandmother assumed responsibility for her education, along with the other Fielding children, and sent her to Mary Rooke's Boarding School in Salisbury. While the school and its governess, Mrs. Rooke, are often considered as potential inspirations for Mrs. Teachum's academy in *The Governess*, they differ significantly in the type of education they provided. According to Christopher Johnson, ‘The curriculum at Mrs Rooke’s school, at least as it was described by Edmund’s servant Frances Barber, does not appear quite as intellectually challenging- and ultimately liberating- as the one created by the fictional Mrs Teachum’.[[5]](#footnote-5) Mrs. Rooke's school primarily focused on teaching French and lacked the possibility of offering Sarah any professional opportunities. However, later in life, Sarah Fielding collaborated with Jane Collier and Samuel Richardson to publish her first novel, *The Adventures of David Simple*, in 1744, followed by *The Governess* in 1749.[[6]](#footnote-6) These experiences and her education at Mrs. Rooke's school may have influenced her portrayal of Mrs. Teachum's academy and the educational philosophy presented in *The Governess*.

In the early eighteenth century, women writers often depicted a radical empowerment of women over men in their works. Margaret A. Doody notes that ‘In the novels or novellas of writers like Elizabeth Rowe, Mary Davys, Jane Barker or Eliza Heywood, the heroine, however disadvantaged, can implicitly defy the world of masculine authority around her by becoming the centre of the narrative.’[[7]](#footnote-7) However, *The Governess* stands apart from the works of these women writers due to its central theme focused on the education of children. As the first full-length children's novel, it underwent multiple editions, with the last one published in 1789.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The novel revolves around Mrs. Teachum's efforts to transform nine female students at her academy into virtuous and dutiful individuals without imposing any specific religious beliefs. Instead, she instils in them the critical interpretative skill, encouraging them to scrutinize and derive moral lessons from every book they read, ranging from fairy tales to contemporary plays. Mrs. Teachum allows their imagination to roam freely while listening to stories but nurtures their ability to question and critically analyse those stories later to draw virtuous insights.[[9]](#footnote-9) This chapter delves into the comprehensive plan devised by Mrs. Teachum to transform undisciplined students, initially fascinated by self-indulgent amusements, into disciplined individuals capable of making wise choices. It particularly explores the reasons behind Mrs. Teachum's methods of punishment and the critical interpretation she provides concerning fairy tales and a play read by Miss Jenny Peace, the oldest student at the academy.

In his analysis of *The Governess*, Christopher Johnson suggests that ‘Hoping to foster personal happiness, she sets out to train young girls to think independently, so that they can forsake their own self-interest.’[[10]](#footnote-10) Johnson argues that Fielding constructs an academy where the governess imparts the skill of independent thinking to her students. However, the author of this paper takes a different stance, proposing that Mrs. Teachum's primary focus is on teaching her students to interpret knowledge independently, rather than solely promoting freedom of thought. While freedom of thought allows children's imagination to flourish without restrictions, critical interpretation guides a child's imagination towards a proper analysis of the books they read, including fairy tales and plays, which is the specific focus of this paper.

Mika Suzuki also analyses *The Governess* and considers it a children's novel with the child at the center and the teacher at the periphery. In contrast, the paper's argument is that Mrs. Teachum, the governess, is the true protagonist and central figure in the plot, not at the periphery as Suzuki suggests. The absence of Mrs. Teachum around the nine girls in the novel is a deliberate technique employed by Fielding to emphasize the importance of freedom in education. However, Suzuki views this absence as a failure on Mrs. Teachum's part as a teacher and as a weakness in Sarah Fielding's role as an educationalist writer. Suzuki goes as far as replacing Mrs. Teachum with Jenny Peace, the eldest student, to take on the role of educating the other girls, shifting the credit from the teacher to the student.[[11]](#footnote-11)

This provides me an opportunity to explore the teacher-student relationship in *The Governess* in detail and shed light on Sarah Fielding's educational philosophy of interpretation, which Suzuki overlooks. Suzuki suggests that Fielding's novel merely borrows moral philosophy ‘from the thoughts on activities of people in general’, disregarding Fielding's unique educational philosophy.[[12]](#footnote-12) This leads the author to explore the type of education provided in early women's academies and how Fielding endeavors to re-implement this educational philosophy for women's education in the eighteenth century.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**CRITICAL INTERPRETATION: MRS TEACHUM’S TEACHING OBJECTIVE**

Fielding's portrayal of Mrs. Teachum, the governess of the academy and the central character in the novel, shows that she exercises a distant authority over the girls, giving them instructions only at the end of each chapter. This limited presence has led some critics to perceive Mrs. Teachum's role as ineffective, a mere substitute for patriarchal authority, and one that gradually fades away as the novel progresses. However, the author of this argument contends that Fielding's primary objective in creating Mrs. Teachum is not about her physical presence in the novel but rather the impact of the lessons she imparts. Mrs. Teachum in *The Governess* adopts a teaching approach from a distance, allowing the girls a sense of freedom to interpret the knowledge they receive. She encourages them to think critically and draw their own conclusions. However, she intervenes and corrects them at the end of each chapter if they fail to deduce a proper and virtuous conclusion from their interpretations.

Fielding dedicates *The Governess* to Mrs. Poyntz and explicitly expresses her aim of teaching interpretative skills to young girls, enabling them to develop benevolent passions into habits.[[14]](#footnote-14) She writes,

The design of the following sheets is to endeavour to cultivate an early Inclination to Benevolence and a Love of Virtue, in the Minds of young Women, by trying to shew them, that their True Interest is concerned in cherishing and improving those amiable Dispositions into Habits; and in keeping down all rough and boisterous Passions; and that from this alone they can propose to themselves to arrive at true Happiness, in any of the Stations of Life allotted to the Female Character.[[15]](#footnote-15)

In these lines, Fielding urges young girls to cultivate habits of benevolence and virtue to lead a happy life. She emphasizes the importance of restraining boisterous passions and developing an eagerness to acquire knowledge from all available sources. Fielding's intent is to foster interpretative skills in girls by trying ‘to show them’ the advantages of exercising benevolence and virtue. The ultimate advantage of cultivating these qualities is happiness, and if the girls become adept at discerning virtues and morals in various sources of knowledge, then happiness is ‘allotted’ in every ‘station’ of their ‘female character’.

While Fielding does not explicitly outline a process or solution for developing this efficiency in segregating virtues and morals in the mentioned lines, she conveys to her ‘young readers’ through *The Governess* that critical interpretation is the key to achieving this goal.[[16]](#footnote-16) The novel serves as a means for young readers to comprehend the importance of critical interpretation as the process through which they can effectively discern and understand virtuous and moral lessons from the knowledge they encounter. In essence, Fielding's message to young girls is to prioritize benevolence and virtue in their lives and to develop their interpretative skills through critical analysis, enabling them to find happiness and lead fulfilling lives in every stage of their female character. *The Governess* acts as a vehicle to impart this valuable educational philosophy to its readers.

Indeed, the reading of fairy tales plays a significant role in the transformation of the girls in *The Governess*, and Mrs. Teachum's absence during these moments has raised criticism. Initially, the girls are captivated by certain elements of the fairy tales, such as the decapitation of Barbarico or Mignon's fearlessness, without deducing any moral lessons from the stories.[[17]](#footnote-17) It is Miss Jenny, the eldest student at the academy, who intervenes and prompts the girls use they might make of it, instead of contending which was the prettiest part.[[18]](#footnote-18) The girls then all agree ‘that certainly it was of no use to read, without understanding what they read.’[[19]](#footnote-19) However, it is crucial to acknowledge that Miss Jenny's guidance and instructions to the other girls were prompted by Mrs. Teachum herself in the preceding chapter. It was Mrs. Teachum who instructed Miss Jenny to convey the proper interpretations of the fairy tales to the other students. Without Mrs. Teachum's guidance, Miss Jenny would not have taken on this role.

It is to be noted that Mrs Teachum's curriculum does not include the teaching of any fairy tales, but she does not discard or refuse their perusal if it is deemed necessary for delivering instructions. She tries to interpret them and provides guidance on their proper reading to instill virtues and morals. Another important point to consider is that Miss Jenny reads the first fairy tale without Mrs Teachum's permission. When Mrs Teachum learns of this the next day from Miss Jenny, she advises the girls, ‘Let me observe to you (which I would have you communicate to your little friends) that giants, magic, fairies, and all sorts of supernatural assistances in a story, are only introduced to amuse and divert [...] by no means let the notion of giants or magic dwell upon your minds.’[[20]](#footnote-20) Mrs Teachum explains that the attractive language and fantastic elements in fairy tales serve as a superficial layer of amusement over moral lessons, which can only be uncovered through critical interpretations of the tales. The following day, Miss Jenny instructs the girls to follow the example of the giant Benefico and use it for good purposes, and to endure sufferings like Mignon patiently until they find a remedy.[[21]](#footnote-21) Consequently, Miss Sukey recognizes her mistake of seeking revenge against someone who wronged her and shares her autobiography. It may appear that Miss Sukey's change of heart results from Miss Jenny's instructions the next day, but in reality, it is a result of Mrs Teachum's instructions to Miss Jenny on the previous day.

Mrs. Teachum's emphasis on critical interpretation extends to the dramatic arts as well, as seen in her approach to the play *The Funeral; or, Grief-a-la-mode* by Richard Steele, which is incorporated into *The Governess*. The play presents themes of ‘Simplicity of Mind, Good-nature, Friendship and Honour’ as observed by George Sherburn.[[22]](#footnote-22) Despite providing only a summary of the play in the novel, Fielding presents it as a tragedy rather than a comedy, which may not accurately represent its original form. Miss Sukey explains the plot of *The Funeral*, in which a servant named Trusty helps his master, Lord Brumpton, realize the wickedness of his wife, Lady Brumpton, who falsely declared him dead to marry him off and acquire his wealth. Trusty foils their plans by exposing Lady Brumpton's deceitful intentions, leading to the happy outcome of Lord Brumpton's son, Lord Hardy, marrying a fine lady named Charlotte.

As an educator, Mrs. Teachum takes the role of ‘explicitly correcting her students' thinking and behavior’ and endeavors to instill critical interpretative skills in their pursuit of knowledge.[[23]](#footnote-23) She considers the reading of plays without proper supervision as potentially harmful for children. She explains to the girls that,

Where that moral is not to be found, the writer will have it to answer for, that he has been guilty of one of the worst of evils; namely, that he has clothed vice in so beautiful a dress, that instead of deterring, it will allure and draw into its snares the young and tender mind. And I am sorry to say, that too many of our dramatic performances are of this latter cast.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Absolutely, Mrs. Teachum is vigilant in protecting her young readers from harmful influences in literature, particularly from plays that explicitly present vice. She believes that such presentations can have a detrimental impact on children, as playwrights may be insensitive to the impressionable minds of their audience. Fielding's decision to exclude the play *The Funeral* from the novel is likely motivated by her desire to shield her readers from its potentially harmful influence, as it contains useless amusement and tempting dialogues that could lead young minds astray.

Mrs. Teachum criticizes playwrights for their writing styles, accusing them of enticing young and impressionable minds towards vice rather than explicitly portraying virtues. Miss Sukey’s summary of *The Funeral* provides a perfect example. After Miss Sukey finishes Mrs Teachum once again lays emphasis on critical interpretation and says that ‘you forgot to describe what sort of women those two young ladies were, though, as to all the rest, you have been particular enough.’[[25]](#footnote-25) Mrs Teachum instructs her to focus more on analysing characters rather than being amused with the events of a story. To the other girls she says,

Moral does not arise only from the happy turn in favour of the virtuous characters in the conclusion of the play, but is strongly inculcated, as you see along, in the peace of mind that attends the virtuous, even in the midst of oppression and distress, while the event is yet doubtful and apparently against them; and on the contrary, in the confusion of mind which the vicious are tormented with, even whilst they falsely imagine themselves triumphant.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Mrs Teachum emphasizes that lasting happiness and inner peace are attained through constant virtue, rather than relying solely on happy outcomes. She also highlights that momentary success does not guarantee permanent happiness, exemplified by Lady Brumpton's experience in the play. Mrs Teachum guides the girls to see Trusty's loyalty and honesty as virtuous traits that ultimately lead to happiness and success.

Mrs Teachum’s larger plan of teaching interpretative skills to the girls is initially formulated after the girls fail to comprehend her punishment in chapter one of The Governess. Mrs Teachum is an ideal instructor who dedicates her life to the betterment of children at her academy and is often compared with Locke’s educator in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693).[[27]](#footnote-27) Brian McCrea suggests that The Governess has its ‘sources in Locke’s Some Thoughts Concerning Education’ and Warren Wooden emphasizes that ‘Rational Moralists including Sarah Fielding […] were under the influence of Locke.’[[28]](#footnote-28) When Locke writes that ‘He that has found a way how to keep up a child’s spirit, easy, active and free; and yet at the same time to restrain him from many things he has a mind to […] has in my opinion, got the true secret of education’, Mrs Teachum ideally personifies his educator.[[29]](#footnote-29) Locke’s views help us in establishing further differences and, at the same time, similarities between the two educators but the focus here is on their different styles of punishing children. Both educators agree that punishment for wrong deeds is as important as appreciation for good actions. According to Locke, love must follow punishment for the former to be effective. He writes that ‘Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds and love and friendship in riper years to hold it’.[[30]](#footnote-30) Therefore, it is necessary for an ideal educator to develop friendship with the student in order to have a deeper effect of his lessons but Fielding proposes a different method. Unlike the appreciations and friendships of Locke’s educator with his students Fielding’s Mrs Teachum distances herself from the girls after delivering the punishment in The Governess in order to provide an opportunity for them to assess their actions themselves and learn.

The girls fight over an apple in the first chapter of the book, and Mrs. Teachum only punishes them by depriving them of future amusements until they can demonstrate their worth. But no mention is made of the penalty. Fielding merely states, ‘But this is certain, the most severe punishment she had ever inflicted on any misses, since she had kept a school, was now laid on these wicked girl’.[[31]](#footnote-31) Fielding was pressured by The Governess Richardson to specify the punishment before publication, but Jane Collier informed him of the significance of this omission in a letter dated October 4, 1748.[[32]](#footnote-32) She claims,

I think, rather better that the girls (her readers) should not know what this punishment was that Mrs Teachum inflicts; but they should each, on reading it, think it to be the same that they themselves had suffered when they deserved it; for though Miss Fielding is an enemy to corporeal severities, yet there is no occasion that she should teach the children so punished that their punishment is wrong.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Collier suggests that Fielding designed the teacher's teaching methods with a specific approach to punishment. She argues that punishment should only be applied to children when they can grasp the reasons behind it. Regardless of Mrs. Teachum taking away the apples from the girls and making them reconcile, the girls hold on to resentment and hostility with a ‘grudge and ill-will in their bosoms; everyone thinking she was punished most, although she would have it, that she deserved to be punished least.’[[34]](#footnote-34) This emphasizes that the girls in the story are oblivious to their own errors and fail to understand how Mrs. Teachum's punishments can positively impact their future behavior. Jane Collier justifies the exclusion of Mrs. Teachum's punishment from the narrative precisely because of this lack of comprehension by the girls. According to Collier, readers should interpret the necessity of punishment alongside the girls in the academy, gaining insight from the lessons taught by Mrs. Teachum. In doing so, the readers can better understand the significance and purpose of discipline in the context of the story.

**CONCLUSION**

Mrs Teachum's actions in subsequent chapters of the novel shed light on the purpose and impact of the punishment she employs. After Miss Jenny reads the first fairy tale to the girls Mrs Teachum asks her to provide an everyday account of their time spent in the arbour ‘with a desire to know their different dispositions’ and to correct them before they leave the academy.’[[35]](#footnote-35) Her approach to teaching through fairy tales and plays is part of a broader plan, encouraging both the readers and the girls to analyze these stories critically. Mrs Teachum's ultimate goal is for the girls to gain interpretative skills that prompt them to reflect on their past errors and comprehend the rationale behind the punishment.It is noteworthy that Mrs Teachum diligently executes this plan to facilitate the girls' self-evaluation and comprehension. She tells Miss Jenny that ‘She herself had only waited a little while, to see if their anger would subside and love take its place in their bosoms, without her interfering again.’[[36]](#footnote-36)

The acknowledgment that students and teachers both play vital roles in the educational process is a significant finding of this chapter. While students are at the receiving end, teachers form the other half of the equation and are instrumental in shaping students' educational experiences. The three selected authors, including Sarah Fielding, emphasize the pivotal role of an ideal educator without whom the practice of teaching critical interpretation cannot thrive. This highlights the importance of understanding the fictional representation of schoolmistresses, an understudied topic compared to the extensive research on schoolmasters in literature from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The educational practice of teaching critical interpretation becomes relevant and effective when an educator comprehends its significance and actively works to improve their students' interpretative skills. This realization creates an opportunity for future researchers to delve into this essential aspect of educational philosophy, which is directly linked to the philosophy of critical interpretation itself. Further research in this area can offer two significant advantages.

Firstly, it can enhance our understanding of the historical representation of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England. By exploring how these educators were portrayed in literature of the time, we can gain insights into the prevailing attitudes and beliefs about education during that era. Secondly, this research can shed light on how the legacy of the educational practice of teaching critical interpretation has been carried forward by writers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By examining contemporary literary works, researchers can observe how the principles of critical interpretation and the importance of skilled educators continue to influence and shape educational narratives in modern times.

In conclusion, this chapter highlights the crucial roles of both students and teachers in the educational process, with an emphasis on the significance of an ideal educator in fostering critical interpretative skills in students. The potential for future research to explore the representation of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses in literature and their lasting influence on educational practices makes this a compelling and relevant area of study.

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13. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded (1740),* ed. by Peter Sabor with an introduction by Margaret A. Doody, (London: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 8.

1. The novel "The Governess" belongs to the genre of children's literature and offers insights into the education of women in eighteenth-century England. Fielding addresses 'young readers' in the preface, despite the characters being all girls, making her educational ideals applicable to both boys and girls. However, this chapter will focus solely on girls' education in the first half of the eighteenth century while using the term 'children's education' when referring to the novel as part of the children's literary genre. Sarah Fielding, The Governess; or, Little Female Academy, Printed for A. Bradley and R. James, Dublin, 1749, p. iv.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Plato, The Republic, ed. by Benjamin Jowett, (Auckland: Floating Press, 2009), pp. 73-5; Benedictus De Spinoza, Ethics, trans. by Andrew Boyle, (London: Heron Books), pp. 238-45; John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education, ed. by John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 45; Rousseau, Emile; or Concerning Education, translated by Barbara Foxley, (Read Books Ltd., 2007), pp. 78-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. According to Arlene Fish Wilner, Mrs Teachum educates the nine young girls in a manner similar to the methods used for boys' education by Locke, Rousseau, and Thomas Day. See ‘Education and Ideology in Sarah Fielding’s The Governess’, Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, 24 (1995), pp. 307-27, p. 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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5. Christopher D. Johnson, A Political Biography of Sarah Fielding, First Ed. (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Richardson expressed a strong interest in the punishment delivered by Mrs Teachum in chapter one and requested Fielding to provide more details about it in the novel. However, on October 4, 1748, Jane Collier explained to him in a letter the significance of keeping the readers unaware of the punishment in light of Mrs Teachum's larger plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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8. The variations in editions primarily consist of changes in the novel's title when published by different publishers. The information mentioned above is sourced from the University of Sheffield's Star Plus Library Catalogue, which lists the different versions of the novel. The first edition was printed by A. Miller in 1749, followed by six more editions in 1749, 1751, 1758, 1768, and 1781. Additionally, A. Bradley and R. James published another edition in 1749. The 1791 version of the novel does not specify the edition or publisher's name, only mentioning Dublin as the place of publication. Furthermore, the British Library Catalogue provides details of other editions published in 1765, 1769, 1789, 1804, 1968, 1987, and 2005, each under different publishing houses. DOI: [http://explore.bl.uk/primo\_library/libweb/action/search.do?ct=&pag=&indx=1&pageNumberComingFrom=2 &vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&ct=Next%20Page&tab=local\_tab&fn=search&indx=11&dscnt=0&vl(freeText0)=the%20governess%20or%20the%20little%20female%20academy&dstmp=1586553844459#](http://explore.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?ct=&pag=&indx=1&pageNumberComingFrom=2%20&vid=BLVU1&mode=Basic&ct=Next%20Page&tab=local_tab&fn=search&indx=11&dscnt=0&vl(freeText0)=the%20governess%20or%20the%20little%20female%20academy&dstmp=1586553844459#). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The inclusion of teaching interpretative skills sets The Governess apart from John Newberry's A Little Pretty Pocket Book (1744), which imparts morals to children through games. Newberry was the first to combine didactic literature with children's literature, thereby redefining the genre of children's novels by demonstrating its potential beyond mere amusement. For further reading on A Little Pretty Pocket Book, see Patrick C. Fleming, ‘The Rise of The Moral Tale: Children’s Literature, The Novel and The Governess’, Eighteenth - Century Studies, 46 (2013), pp. 463–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Christopher D. Johnson, A Political Biography of Sarah Fielding, First Ed. (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), p. 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Jenny Peace has received praise, while Mrs Teachum has faced criticism, particularly for her absence, as noted by other critics like Moyra Haslett and Courtney A. Weikle-Mills, as discussed earlier. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Mika Suzuki, ‘The Little Female Academy and The Governess’, Women's Writing, 1 (1994), pp. 325-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Suzuki explains that the early eighteenth-century academies were gentile and had a ‘kindly atmosphere’ whereas they turned dull and ‘grim’ towards its end. However, she writes further that Sarah Fielding’s ‘personal foresight’ had nothing to do with the kindly atmosphere that was in the earlier academies. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Sarah Fielding's connection with Stephen Poyntz remains uncertain, but she acknowledges him as an inspiration for the novel's design. In the dedication to Mrs. Poyntz, Fielding writes, ‘The Consideration, Madam, made me first hope, that a Design of this Nature, would not be unacceptable to you; and particularly, as this Scheme was, in a manner directed by Mr. Poyntz’. Sarah Fielding, The Governess, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In the preface to the novel, Fielding addresses young readers, indicating that Mrs Teachum's instructions are relevant to both boys and girls. Ibid, p. iv. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid, p. 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Sarah Fielding, The Governess, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. George Sherburn, A Literary History of England: Vol. 3: The Restoration and Eighteenth-century (1660-1789), 2nd ed., (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Jameela Lares, ‘Written Maternal Authority and Eighteenth-Century Education in Britain: Educating by the Book, by Rebecca Davies’, Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 40 (2015), pp. 298-300. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Sarah Fielding, The Governess, pp. 94-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The comparison is also sometimes made with Rousseau’s Emile; or On Education (1762), but since The Governess (1749) is published twelve years earlier, its influence on the French philosopher seems more likely. Arlene Wilner observes the same and writes that Rousseau picks up after Locke on the education of children but ‘there is no reason to claim The Governess as a source for Rousseau’. Arlene Fish Wilner, ‘Education and Ideology in Sarah Fielding’s The Governess’, Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, 24 (1995), pp. 307-27. Rousseau lays emphasis on restriction contrary to Locke or Fielding when he writes, ‘With children use force, with men reason; such is the natural order of things […] There is no more, is an answer against which no child ever rebelled unless he believed it untrue.’ Rousseau, Emile; or Concerning Education, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1889), pp. 53-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Brian McCrea, ‘The Governess (review)’, pp. 197-98; Warren W. Wooden, ‘Classics of Children's Literature and: From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children's Literature to 1850 (review)’, Children's Literature Association Quarterly, 7 (1982), pp. 62-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Postulate 46 in Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education, ed. by John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Sarah Fielding, The Governess, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Johnson discovers the reader-writer relationship in this letter but focuses more on Fielding’s unconventional writing style in order to reach a wider audience in the eighteenth-century. However, he misses a more severe message which Collier highlights through this letter and which justifies my exploration of imagination as Fielding’s prime objective in The Governess. He writes, ‘As a writer living by her pen, Fielding no doubt saw writing for children as a profitable opportunity. A letter from Jane Collier to Richardson demonstrates the degree to which Fielding and her circle were becoming savvy to the dynamics of marketplace.’ Christopher D. Johnson, A Political Biography of Sarah Fielding, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson. Vol.2, Printed for R. Phillips by Lewis and Rodem, (1804). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Sarah Fielding, The Governess, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)