



---

# **Universidad de Valladolid**

FACULTAD de FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS  
DEPARTAMENTO de FILOLOGÍA INGLESA  
Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

‘Practical Education’ in  
Maria Edgeworth’s Tales for Children

Carla Erica San Miguel Martín

Tutor: María José Carrera de la Red

2015-2016



## ABSTRACT

This B.A Thesis focuses on some aspects of Maria Edgeworth's lifework which did not necessarily contribute to her success as a novelist in the eighteenth century, but are of a great importance in her career as an educational and realistic writer of literature for young audiences. The Thesis presents a parallel reading of two of Maria Edgeworth's works: *Practical Education* (1798), a treatise advising parents on how to educate their children, and *Rosamond: A Series of Tales* (1918), seventeen stories based on a seven-year-old girl called Rosamond. With this analysis, the Thesis achieves its purpose of presenting the most unknown facet of Maria Edgeworth's career and demonstrates that the theoretical principles established in her treatise *Practical Education* are applied in Rosamond's tales. It also proves that her traditional recognition as a pioneering realistic tale writer was not in vain.

Keywords: Maria Edgeworth. *Practical Education*. *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*. Didacticism. Morality. Realism.

Este Trabajo de Fin de Grado muestra aspectos poco conocidos de la obra de Maria Edgeworth. A pesar de que no influyeron en su éxito como novelista, son de vital importancia en su carrera como escritora realista de literatura infantil. El trabajo se basa en una lectura comparada de dos de sus escritos: *Practical Education* (1798), un tratado en el que la escritora da consejos a los padres sobre cómo educar a sus hijos, y *Rosamond: A Series of Tales* (1918), diecisiete historias protagonizadas por una niña de siete años llamada Rosamond. Con este análisis alcanzamos nuestro objetivo de presentar los aspectos más desconocidos de la carrera como escritora de Maria Edgeworth, a la vez que demostramos que los principios teóricos establecidos en el tratado *Practical Education* se ven reflejados en los cuentos de Rosamond. Además se justifica el tradicional reconocimiento de Maria Edgeworth como escritora pionera en introducir elementos realistas en los cuentos infantiles.

Palabras clave: Maria Edgeworth. *Practical Education*. *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*. Didactismo. Moralidad. Realismo.



## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Introduction</b>  | 1  |
| <b>Chapter 1: An Approach to Maria Edgeworth</b>                                   | 3  |
| Cultural Context and Influences  | 3  |
| Maria Edgeworth's Writings   | 5  |
| <b>Chapter 2: Tales: Origins and Development</b>                                   | 7  |
| Maria Edgeworth's Literature for Children  | 8  |
| <b>Chapter 3: Morality and Didacticism in Maria Edgeworth's Tales for Children</b> | 11 |
| Reasoning: 'use your own understanding to govern yourself'                         | 12 |
| Prudence: 'accustom them to choose by themselves'                                  | 15 |
| Experience: 'the sooner we can give experience, the sooner we shall teach wisdom'  | 18 |
| Punishment: 'to give present pain to future advantage'                             | 20 |
| Freedom: 'we should avoid letting our opinion be known'                            | 22 |
| <b>Chapter 4: Realism in Maria Edgeworth's Tales for Children</b>                  | 25 |
| Characters   | 26 |
| Settings   | 27 |
| Quotidian Scenes   | 29 |
| <b>Conclusions</b>   | 31 |
| <b>Bibliography</b>  | 33 |



## Introduction

Maria Edgeworth, the Anglo-Irish writer whose fame rests mainly on her novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800)—allegedly the first historical novel—is also known for the educational and didactic literature she wrote for parents and children during most of her career. It is on this lesser-known facet of her lifework that this B.A. Thesis will focus.

For that purpose, we have chosen two different but complementary works: *Practical Education* (1798), a treatise written to advise parents on the education of their children; and *Rosamond: A Series of Tales* (1918), a compilation of stories for children based on the eponymous seven-year-old character Rosamond. With our parallel reading of both texts, we aim to prove that the theoretical principles she discusses in her educational treatise are of application to Rosamond's tales. In addition, we will use both works to support our discussion of Maria Edgeworth's pioneering status as a writer of realistic tales.

This is a different perspective from the one adopted by the authors of other research papers dealing with Maria Edgeworth's literature for young audiences. In 2009, Megan Lockard, from Grand Valley State University, chose Maria Edgeworth as the topic of her Master Thesis calling it *Codes of Conduct: Didacticism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth*. In her thesis she dealt with a great variety of themes such as tension of language, dialogues denoting "the other", or analysis of some of her novels, as is the case of *Castle Rackrent* and *Belinda*. In 2015, Dr. Suchitra Misra published an article in the *International Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences (IJHMS)* titled: "Maria Edgeworth: A Pioneer of Realist Juvenile Short Fiction". In this article, the author offers a biographical approach to the writer's influences and motivations, and goes on to discuss some of her compositions, never mentioning either of the books we are using for our reading.

The objectives that we pursue clearly show that our thesis covers untrodden ground. After we have drawn the intellectual and familial context of Maria Edgeworth's work and placed her in the proper literary period, we will rescue from oblivion a collection of tales, *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*, and the educational treatise that we owe to her and her father's combined efforts. All this is in preparation for our main objective, which is to carry out a parallel reading of the educational treatise and Rosamond's tales in order to

prove that both texts are connected and, what is more, that her tales are an application of the ‘theories’ she exposed in the treatise. To achieve this main objective, we will use an analytical methodology based on a comparative reading of both texts.

The content of this study will be structured in four main sections. In the first one, “An Approach to Maria Edgeworth”, we include the literary context in which Maria Edgeworth started her career as a writer and also the familiar context in which Ms. Edgeworth developed her taste for writing. In the second part, “Tales: Origins and Development”, we review the history of the literature for children, beginning with the role of children in the Old Testament and ending with the fantastic tales of the nineteenth century. The third chapter, “Morality and Didacticism in Maria Edgeworth’s Tales for Children”, starts the comparative reading of *Practical Education* and *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*, one we organize in terms of the five elements that prevail in both works by Maria Edgeworth: Reasoning, Prudence, Experience, Punishment and Freedom. To conclude, section four—“Realism in Maria Edgeworth’s Tales for Children”—continues with the parallel reading, but in this case it concentrates on the realistic characters, settings and scenes Ms. Edgeworth uses in her treatise and in her tales.

After all this, we will have shown a new perspective of Maria Edgeworth’s lifework based on some of her lesser-known compositions.



# 1

## **An Approach to Maria Edgeworth**

The protagonist of the present work, the Anglo-Irish writer Maria Edgeworth, was born in 1767. She enjoyed her major success in the nineteenth century, at a time when the Industrial Revolution had already taken place in Britain, and the middle classes experienced a period of prosperity in wealth and comfort. The Regency Era in England (1811-1820) was a period of great cultural achievement. Even though Romanticism was at its peak, many writers have been associated to this other trend, especially Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth. But the achievements of the Regency Era also reached other fields as is the case of music and architecture.

In literature, the new middle classes demanded new types of texts. Among the most demanded topics, the audiences showed a tendency for novels dealing with manners and the transformation of society. The novels associated with this new way of writing were characterized by being short and humoristic. Sex was not represented explicitly, ‘yearning’ being more prominent. Topics related to protagonists realizing about the importance of family life, women recovering from sexual abuse, or ladies being forced to become prostitutes, are some examples of the themes exploited by literary writers in this Regency Era—many of them well-known authors that are highly recognized in the present.

### **Cultural Context and Influences**

Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen were important novelists in the same period and their writings seem to have been influenced by each other. Unaffected by the prevailing Romanticism, they wrote domestic novels focusing on manners, even though Ms. Austen was neither didactic nor moralist. Maria Edgeworth, in some way or another, always wrote from the perspective of a practical teacher. A selective biographical sketch of Maria Edgeworth will help us to understand her work better.

During her formative years, Ms. Edgeworth enjoyed reading Walter Scott’s novels. Some important names such as Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Crabbe or Wordsworth were

popular at that time, but as has been mentioned, she was not influenced by their compositions. Maria felt certain sympathy towards the School of the Freethinkers Robert Bage, Thomas Holcroft and William Godwin. In a way, she was considered part of that group even though she did not consider herself as such.

She belonged to the Anglo-Irish landed aristocracy, but she was firmly concerned with the need of free access to education for all the different classes and genres. Her mission was being a teacher and sharing all she knew about education. Her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744–1817) influenced Maria in this respect and in most of her writings. It is to this influence that we now turn our attention.

Mr. Edgeworth was an educational theorist, writer, scientist and inventor. He was a good classicist, proficient in Latin grammar and rhetoric—although, as he recognizes, he was mainly interested in ‘experimental philosophy’. Mr. Edgeworth was involved in Irish politics in 1782. He took part in the last Irish House of Commons before 1801, but he was considered to be too thoughtful to be a politician and he always ended up acting as a philosopher. However, he was perceived as an Irish patriot who was involved in the concerns of his time such as the Catholic emancipation from the power of the Ascendancy. He had a good connection with his tenants and educated and trained them. As Maria Edgeworth stated in her *Memoirs*, young people and the tenants’ sons asked him for protection and advice, due to his rich experience in life.

As far as religion is concerned, Mr. Edgeworth did not include religious aspects in his writings. Since this silence was misunderstood by some readers, he clarified this in a letter included by his daughter in his *Memoirs*, where he states that “To introduce the awful ideas of God’s superintendence upon puerile occasions, we decline” (470).

Mr. Edgeworth was attracted by Rousseau’s theories on education. He confessed his delight in Rousseau’s *L’Emile* (1762) and the impact it had on his mind. Mr. Edgeworth tried some of these educational theories with his own children. As he stated in his *Memoirs*, he left his eldest son’s mind and body to the education of nature and of accident. The results he experienced were not as positive as Mr. Edgeworth expected, since his son showed “an invincible dislike to control” (112). After meeting Rousseau, Mr. Edgeworth confessed that his theory was misguided. Years later, he adopted Francis Bacon’s theories.

He left primitivism and innate predispositions behind and became an empiricist. His four marriages and twenty-two children gave him ample chance to put into practice his new perspective on education. He took notes about his children's progress, and used them as the empirical basis of his educational essays. In addition, he always defended the importance of home education.

His second child, Maria, became really close to him after the death of her mother when she was six. He started by giving her writing assignments. During most of her life, she assisted her father in accounting duties and in his library. Mr. Edgeworth encouraged Maria to write and supported her in her early works. Maria was involved in the educational experiments her father carried out in his family and worked together with him to prove the different educational methods. Most of their findings and experiments were presented in the book they published in 1798, *Practical Education*. In its preface they explained the contents of the book by stating that it showed the way in which young people should be taught and the importance of experience in education.

### **Maria Edgeworth's Writings**

Maria's first publication came out when she was twenty-eight. *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795) was a feminist essay about the women's right to education. As a defensor of female rights, and due to her efforts, she was made an honorary member of the Royal Irish Academy on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1842. But Maria was not only concerned with feminist issues. Due to Mr. Edgeworth's Welsh ancestors, she developed some interest in Celtic issues. In addition, she was also in contact with Irish tenants from whom she learnt about their culture and customs. The Irish Rebellion in 1798 affected her since her family had to escape from the rebels. She observed carefully the daily routines of the Irish and introduced them into her writings. She has been considered the first writer to deal with the racial peculiarities of the Irish, which she did with a delightful comprehension. It can be easily seen in some of her novels, such as her major work *Castle Rackrent* (1800), which was considered the first Irish novel that included formal and thematic pieces that appeared in later novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or in her last novel *Helen* (1834).

A constant in Maria Edgeworth's literary career is the production of short texts and tales. As early as 1796, a collection of children tales, titled *Parent's Assistant*, appeared. Among her Irish tales are *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802), *Leonora* (1806), *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1809 and 1812), and *Ennui* (1809). After the death of her father, she kept writing books as is the case of *Rosamond, a Sequel* (1821).

Maria was a successful novelist in London but her reputation rests on her presentation of Irish characters. This B.A. Thesis aims at showing a lesser-known facet of her literary career: that of the writer of children's stories. At a time when children literature was underestimated, she composed a collection of precious books that marked the beginning of realism in tales for children.

## Tales: Origins and Development

Because this Thesis deals with some of Maria Edgeworth's tales for children, we can start by sketching the origin and development of those tales throughout history. To do this, first we need to focus on the role of children in society. According to what M<sup>a</sup> del Carmen Pérez Diez stated in her Ph.D. thesis "*Retazos de un gozo hiriente*": *Las crónicas de Narnia de C.S Lewis* (Universidad de León, 2000), in pre-literary societies children were considered inferior to adults. They existed in relation to a society, economy or religion. In the Old Testament the figure of a child is represented as a 'replica' of his progenitor. In the classic societies they are seen as an adult in miniature size. In the case of girls it was even worse. They were seen as future wives and mothers of citizens and fighters, rather than as women. Children literature was not seen as something worthy since its target readers were 'children'.

In 1658 Comenius de Moravia published *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, republished in 1659 as *Visible World or, A nomenclature of All the Chief Things that Are in the World, and of Man's Employment Therein*. It was the first book with illustrations for children. Comenius defends the rights of kids to read something different from adults.

The apparition of children literature as an independent genre took place in the second half of the eighteenth century, as Dr. Pérez states in her already-mentioned Ph.D. Thesis: "La figura del niño como persona merecedora de una atención especial y seria, al igual que una literature exclusivamente para él, surgen en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII" (76). It was followed by important historical movements such as the Age of Enlightenment or the Romantic Movement. Those first tales conveyed a mixture of creativity and didacticism that continued in the next decades. The English writers were the first ones to create an independent literature for children.

English literature for children started to be valued thanks to the traders, who knew how to support and promote this business. Two main typologies of literature for children can be distinguished in the eighteenth century in England: didactic and realistic tales

against fairy tales based on fantasy. Didactic literature enjoyed a major success during the eighteenth century. Locke, in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1692), defends that children should learn for pleasure. He also encouraged parents and teachers not to tell children fantastic stories since those could frighten them. According to some authors, Locke understood fairytales as stories proper to servants and the low classes, and he meant to avoid that kind of influence on children. There is no doubt that one of the most important works during that period was *L'Émile* (1762), by Jean Jacques Rousseau. It influenced its contemporaries and succeeding generations. According to him, children should not grow up before it corresponds to their age. In that same frame we find Maria Edgeworth. She aims to show a real picture of children. Instead of trying to offer a perfect image of what children should be like, she introduces real characters acting in a realistic manner. Most of her tales are intended for children of middle and upper classes.

Despite the evident denial of fantasy, there were some fairytales that became popular by introducing morality in their stories. Charles Perrault's *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* was translated into English in 1729. Also, *The Oriental Moralist or the Beauties of the Arabian Nights Entertainment* (1791), written by Richard Johnson, included didacticism and was welcomed by the young audience. Contrarily to the general view, morality and fairytales were able to coexist in the same period.

When Romanticism held sway, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the fantastic tales gained popularity: the Grimm's fairytales, for instance, were translated into English in 1823. The "Golden Age" of children's stories began with Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and it was followed by numerous compositions that are still successful nowadays such as J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904) or Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). As we saw in the previous century, morality and fantasy still went along together, as in Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* (1874).

### **Maria Edgeworth's Literature for Children**

During her lifetime, Maria Edgeworth wrote multiple sets of tales. Most of them carried a moral and realistic message intended to illustrate and provide the audience with habits and values related to the education of children.

In 1796, she published her first book for children titled *The Parent's Assistant*. It included one of her most famous short stories, "The Purple Jar", which she will also include in later volumes. *The Parent's Assistant* was written under the influence and ideas that she took from her father. At the same time, it is well known that having had to take care of her multiple siblings inspired Ms. Edgeworth in composing her writings.

In 1801 she published *Moral Tales for Young People* and *Early Lessons*, and in 1804, in the same line, she published *Popular Tales*.

In the meanwhile she alternated novels with tales and short stories. But after the death of her father, Maria became more conservative in her ideas and started to write books for children again. In 1821 she published *Frank, A sequel to Frank in Early Lessons* and *Rosamond, A Sequel to Early Lessons*.

The protagonist of this last-named collection, Rosamond, made her first appearance in "The Purple Jar" (1796), aged seven. She reappeared in *Early Lessons* (1801) and its 1814 and 1815 sequels: *Continuation of Early Lessons*, volumes one and two. In the 1821 series of tales, Rosamond has grown to thirteen. This B.A. Thesis has chosen as its object of study the 1918 reprint of the 1856 collection *Rosamond: A series of Tales*, where the seventeen Rosamond tales originally included in the 1801, 1814 and 1815 compilations of *Early Lessons* are gathered.





### 3

## **Morality and Didacticism in Maria Edgeworth's Tales for Children**

For the purpose of the present dissertation, and with the intention of analyzing and connecting Maria Edgeworth's conceptions of morality and didacticism to some of the works she composed during her lifetime, we have paid special attention to two of her writings.

*Rosamond: A Series of Tales* (1918) is a compilation of seventeen tales Maria Edgeworth wrote for children. In them we see a seven-year-old girl called Rosamond grow up through the chapters. Most of the tales describe daily situations placed at home in which Rosamond learns by confronting new situations. Some of the stories are interconnected, as is the case of "The Black Bonnet" and "The India Cabinet", whereas some others do not follow a chronological sequence, for instance "Microscope" or "Wonders". Although Rosamond is the protagonist, she is not alone in the stories: her mother, father, older sister Laura, and two older brothers, Godfrey and Orlando, take part in Rosamond's everyday learning.

In addition, aiming to enrich and support the analysis of the already mentioned tales, we carried out the reading of the voluminous treatise *Practical Education* (1798). It brings together parts written by Richard Lovell Edgeworth and his daughter Maria—who did most of the writing—but it also includes (as an appendix) a selection of the notes taken by Honora Sneyd (1751-1780), Maria's step-mother, registering some 'real' conversations between the Edgeworth children and their parents. Even one of Maria's brothers (Lovell E.) participated in the introduction to the chapter on "Chemistry".

While Maria Edgeworth's father contributed to the more technical sections dealing with subjects such as geometry, chemistry, arithmetic, grammar or chronology, Maria's efforts focused on the most didactic chapters. *Practical Education* recalls educational ideas from famous philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke but, as it is stated in its preface, it is not intended to provide readers with a new educational theory, but

with a collection of remarks and experiments. At the same time, Maria's tales for children show an evident didactic intention which was very innovative at the time. Considering the impact they had on the literature for children produced during the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century, we have thought it appropriate to provide our readers with an overview of the moral and didactic features of this lesser-known facet of Edgeworth's oeuvre that relates those tales to their writer's speculations on the education of children in the 1798 treatise.

After going through *Practical Education* (1798) and *Rosamond: A Series of Tales* (1918), we can conclude that there are five aspects to which Maria gave especial importance in the education of children: reasoning, prudence, experience, punishments and freedom. In the following lines, each of these five points will be discussed and illustrated with the most significant examples that have been found throughout the reading of both writings.

### **Reasoning: 'use your understanding to govern yourself'**

In *Practical Education* (1798) Ms. Edgeworth repeatedly mentioned the importance of helping children to acquire a good sense of reasoning based on judgment and prudence. Although we will dedicate a whole section to studying the role of prudence in children's education, it is important to mention it together with reasoning, as Maria does in her writings. The next quotation has been taken from chapter twenty, "On Female Accomplishments, Masters and Governesses". In this case, Ms. Edgeworth is advising parents to educate their children in ambition, expecting from them to exercise their mental power: "Praise children for patience, for perseverance, for industry; encourage children to reason and to invent upon all subjects" (540).

In chapter twenty-three, "Wit and Judgement", Maria, once again, recalls the importance of reasoning together with judgment. According to her, they are essential in educating children is wisdom:

We shall now consider the power of reasoning in another point of view, as being essential to our conduct in life. (647)

The more we increase his knowledge of facts, the more we should exercise him in reasoning upon them; but we should teach him to examine carefully before he admits anything to be a fact or any assertion to be true. (676)

In chapter twenty-four, “Prudence and Economy”, she also remarks on the necessity of encouraging children to reason, especially girls, since she makes distinctions between boys’ and girls’ education: “In the education of girls, we must teach them more caution than is necessary to boys: their prudence must be more the result of reasoning than of experiment” (699).

When we read Rosamond’s stories, we find instances of this theoretical approach put in practice. In “The Purple Jar”, the first tale of the collection and one of the most popular tales by the Anglo-Irish writer, Rosamond has to take the decision of either spending money on a pair of much-needed shoes or on a purple jar she sees displayed in a shop. She spends some time considering both options, asking her mum for help, but she leaves her to reflect about it: “My dear, I want you to think by yourself; you will have time enough to consider the matter whilst I speak to Mr. Sole about my clogs” (5). At the end of the story, when she is finally conquered by the attraction of the useless jar, she realizes it was not the best option. Her shoes are getting worse and she can hardly walk. It is then when Rosamond reflects about the importance of reasoning before taking decisions and, as can be seen in the next quotation, Ms. Edgeworth ends the chapter with Rosamond wishing to act cleverer the next time she finds herself in a similar circumstance:

‘Oh mamma’ said she as she took off her hat.’ How I wish that I had chosen the shoes. They would have been of so much more use to me than the jar. However, I am sure, no, not quite sure, but I hope I should be wiser another time. (9)

In “Rosamond’s Day of Misfortunes”, the protagonist is too lazy to wake up on time. She starts the day in a hurry, crying out because of the guilt of having spent too much time lying in bed, instead of getting ready for breakfast. In such a pessimistic atmosphere, Rosamond is completely sure that it is going to be an awful day. In the next lines, taken from a

dialogue between Rosamond and her mother, the latter tries to make Rosamond reflect about how to face the problems:

-‘What is the matter now, Rosamond?’ said her mother.

-‘I don’t know mamma’

-‘But try to find out, Rosamond’ said her mother; ‘Think and tell me what it is that makes you feel so miserable. If you can find the cause of this owe, perhaps you will be able to put an end to it. What is the cause, can you tell?’ (27)

The conversation goes on in order to find out what makes Rosamond feel that way, and also, to make her understand that it was her fault to wake up so late and to try not to repeat it next time:

Because the way to prevent yourself from being foolish again is to find out what made you so now. If you tell me what you think and what you feel, perhaps I may help you to manage yourself so as to make you wise and good and happy (29)

This idea of reflecting about our own feelings is directly connected to what Maria explains in the last lines of *Practical Education*: “Those who reflect upon their own feelings, and find out exactly what it is that makes them happy, are taught wisdom by a very few distinct lessons” (728).

As we have seen in the previous quotes, one of Maria’s main goals is to educate children in wisdom. For that purpose, she considers it necessary to start by developing some other values, such as reasoning. In the next lines, once again, Maria is emphasizing the importance of being wise and the essential role of thinking and reasoning to solve real situations:

‘My dear little girl’, said her mother. ‘I should be glad of it. I am very much pleased to see that you can command your temper and that you can use your understanding to govern yourself. (36)

In “The Hyacinths”, Rosamond finds herself in the situation of having to choose between two options again. She recalls her mother’s opinion, but her mother, instead of telling her

what to do, suggests that she uses her understanding in order to reach the best of the solutions. As we saw in previous examples, Maria persists in stressing the importance of creating habits in children. She always invites the protagonist to reason by herself:

‘Don’t consult my ideas, Rosamond’, said her mother smiling. ‘You should see nothing in my eyes;’ and her mother turned away her head. ‘Use your own understanding because you will not always have my eyes to see with.’ (53)

### **Prudence: ‘accustom them to choose by themselves’**

In *Practical Education* we find a whole chapter dealing with prudence: chapter twenty-four, “Prudence and Economy”. In it, Maria Edgeworth focuses on the idea of letting children choose by themselves in order to become prudent and advises parents to apply this to everyday situations: “Instead of deciding always for young pupils, we should early accustom them to choose for themselves about every trifle which is interesting to childhood” (690).

There is also a closing chapter which provides us with a summary of the main topics the treatise has focused on, one of them being prudence itself. To argue the way in which the author understands it, we have isolated some significant lines:

Prudence we consider as compounded of judgment and resolution. When we teach children to reflect upon and compare their own feelings, when we frequently give them their choices in things that are interesting to them, we educate them to be prudent. We cannot teach this virtue until children have had some experience. (728)

As Ms. Edgeworth explains in the previous quote, she believes that having children taking choices in life will help them to grow up in prudence. Following that idea, we have found many situations in *Rosamond: A Series of Tales* where Rosamond had to decide between two options. In “The Purple Jar”, as we already commented in the previous section, Rosamond had to choose between buying some needed shoes or an attractive but useless jar:

- 'Well, which would you rather have, a jar or a pair of shoes?, I will buy either for you'.
- 'Dear mamma, thank you - but if you could buy both?'
- 'No, not both' (5)

In this case Rosamond made the wrong decision when she bought the jar. But the lesson she learnt is made explicit in the tale:

'Oh mamma,' said she, as she took off her hat, 'how I wish that I had chosen the shoes! They would have been of so much more use to me than that jar: however, I am sure, no, no quite sure, but I hope I shall be wiser another time.' (9)

In "The Two Plums", Maria Edgeworth reinforces Rosamond's habit of paying attention to small details when comparing and analyzing objects, with the aim of making the best choices. In this case, her mum placed two 'plums' on the table. One was a real plum, and the other one a stone. In the next lines we can read how Rosamond faced the new situation:

- 'Look upon the table, Rosamond,' said her mother, 'and tell me what you see.'
- 'I see two plums, mamma' said Rosamond, smiling, 'two nice ripe purple plums.'
- 'Are you sure that you see two nice ripe purple plums?'
- 'Not quite sure, mamma' said Rosamond, who at this instance recollected the purple jar; 'but I will, if you please, look at them a little nearer.' (12)

Rosamond recollected her experience from "The Purple Jar" and applied it to the new scenario. After considering it, she came to the right conclusion, guessing that one of them was no more than a colored stone. Rosamond ate the fresh plum, and afterwards her mum put her into a new internal conflict:

Her mother now placed the plum and the housewife beside one another, and said to her, 'take your choice of these two, my dear; I will give you either the housewife, or the stone plum, whichever you like the best.' (13)

Rosamond had to decide whether she preferred either a much needed housewife, or a useless stone plum. In the previous chapter she decided wrongly and regretted it; in this case she had learnt to stop and think:

- 'I hope, mamma', said Rosamond, with a very prudent look, 'I hope I shall not make such a silly choice as I did about the purple jar. Let us consider; the plum is certainly prettiest, but then, to be sure, the housewife would be most useful; I should not lose my needles if I had that housewife to keep them in. (14)

At the end she chose the housewife and never again lost a needle.

There is another clear example in "The Thorn". Rosamond had a thorn in her hand from a sweet-briar tree. When her mother was trying to cure her, she cried in pain, saying that she rather preferred to keep it inside instead of suffering so much in taking it out:

- 'As little as I possibly can, my dear', said her mother, 'but I must hurt you a little.'  
- 'Then mamma' said Rosamond, outing her hand behind her, 'if you please I had rather not have the thorn taken out at all.' (47)

Rosamond went on defending her position, as well as pretending that the thorn was gone:

- 'If it is gone, my dear, I am glad of it,' said her mother, 'there is no occasion that you should bear even the prick of a pin for nothing. I only advised you to choose the last of two evils. But why does your little finger stick out from all the rest of your fingers?' (48)

In the end, Rosamond accepted the thorn still hurt her and she agreed to have it taken from her. Her mother prized her with her gratitude:

Her mother took the thorn out of Rosamond; the pain was soon over; and when her mother showed her the thorn sticking upon the point of the needle, she rejoiced, and bending her finger exclaimed, 'Now I can use my finger again. Thank you mamma. You see, at last I did choose the least of the two evils'

- 'You have done prudently, and I am glad of it,' said her mother. (50)

As we have illustrated in the preceding lines, Maria Edgeworth gives a great importance to prudence when educating young people. It is understandable that at the beginning they do not make the correct decisions, but being perseverant and giving them the opportunity to decide, they will end up by applying what they have learnt by experiencing it. As we mentioned in the first sections of this B.A. Thesis, Mr. and Ms. Edgeworth followed Bacon's ideas based on the defense of the empirical approach to education. Maria Edgeworth's empiricism is evident in the lines that complete the quote with which we openend this section devoted to 'Prudence':

Instead of deciding always for our young people, we should early accustom them to choose by themselves about every trifle which is interesting to childhood: if they choose wisely, they should enjoy the natural reward of their prudence; and if they decide rashly, they should be suffered to feel the consequence of their own error. (690)

**Experience: 'the sooner we can give experience, the sooner we shall teach wisdom'**

This section of the B.A. Thesis is especially relevant for the purpose of the present analysis. In both the educational treatise and the Rosamond tales, experience is shown as all-relevant. One of the first statements in the first page of the preface to *Practical Education* gives us a clue as to the value that experience has in this piece of writing: "We have chosen the title of *Practical Education* because we rely entirely upon practice and experience" (1).

Indeed, in the chapters that follow there are constants allusions to the essential role played by experience in learning. In the first chapter, "Toys", the reader learns about how children should have direct contact with new objects at their own risk; how they should acquire knowledge by experiencing by themselves without an adult's participation:

When children are busily trying experiments upon objects within their reach, we should not, by way of saving them trouble, break the course of their ideas, and totally prevent them from acquiring knowledge by their own experience. (9)



When we reach the end of the book, in chapter twenty-four, “Prudence and Economy”, we see the authors dedicate a paragraph to emphasizing the negative effects of preventing children from experiencing by themselves:

Children who have but little experience frequently admit assertions to be true in general, which are only true in particular instances; and this is often attributed to their want of judgment: it should be attributed to their want of experience. Experience, and nothing else can rectify these mistakes. If we attempt to correct them by words, we shall merely teach our pupils to argue about terms, not reason. (675)

Continuing in the same chapter, we find two instances where once again Maria Edgeworth highlights the role that experience plays in the education of children, together with two of the most repeated values she introduced in her writings: wisdom and prudence.

Experience, it is said, makes even fools wise; and the sooner we can give experience, the sooner we shall teach wisdom. (690)

Let him try experiments upon his own feelings; the more accurate knowledge he acquires, the sooner he will be enabled to choose prudently. (692)

Experience set the basis of the treatise and, as has been proved in the previous lines, it also forms part of the educational process. Due to the important role it plays in *Practical Education*, it was not a surprise for us to find its omnipresence in Rosamond’s tales. In most of the situations Rosamond faces, she is left to take her own decisions and learn from experiencing either success or failure. As we saw before, in “The Purple Jar” she learnt by making mistakes, whereas in “The Plums”, once she had learnt the lesson from the experience she had in “The Purple Jar”, Rosamond enjoyed the success of being prudent and reasoning. As Maria Edgeworth defended in her treatise, leaving children to learn by themselves allows them to grow in wisdom.

In the tale “Party of Pleasure”, Rosamond is invited to a party for the first time. She had been told by a lady called Miss Blisset that it would be most enjoyable. Rosamond, being absolutely convinced she would have the best time ever, had very high expectations.

At that moment, her mum told her: “My dear, you had better judge for yourself than trust, without knowing anything of the matter, to what Miss Blisset tells you” (92). Advising her not to trust what people say without experiencing it, Rosamond’s mum brought Rosamond back to reality. After the party, Rosamond recognized it was not a great party due to the ill humor of the Blisset family, and she learnt that believing what others say without contrasting, was not truly worthy.

In “The Injured Ass”, Rosamond is very bored at home. She is constantly asking her mum what time it is, and she comes to the conclusion that time passes too slowly. However, Laura, her sister, who was busy drawing, thinks that time passes quite quickly. Rosamond cannot understand the reason why they have such a different sense of time. Her mother explains to her that, when you are busy, time seems to go faster, and she recommends her to do something to avoid being that bored: “You had better try the experiment and then you will know, my dear”(17). After Rosamond experiences it, she realizes her mum was right: “this has been a very short half-hour indeed, mamma. You were right; having something to do makes the time seem to go fast” (18). Once again, Rosamond learns by facing situations by herself. Her mum guides her in the process, but having her experiencing the situations by herself, provides her learning with much more meaning.

### **Punishment: ‘to give present pain to future advantage’**

In the different chapters and stories we are analyzing, there are multiple instances of the protagonism Maria Edgeworth gave to punishment in the education of children. She was against body pain or severe punishment that made no sense to children. Moderate punishments should be always applied with the purpose of making children understand what was wrong and how to avoid repeating the mistake.

In chapter seven, “On Obedience”, we find a reference to this:

Those who attempt to conquer obstinacy in children by bodily pain, or by severe punishments of any kind, often appear to succeed, and to have entirely eradicated, when they have merely suppressed the disease for a time. (190)

Indeed, we find an entire chapter dedicated to punishment in *Practical Education*: chapter nine, “On Rewards and Punishments”. Ms. Edgeworth starts by giving some clues to parents about how to approach punishment in the first years of life, when children may not have yet acquired the capacity to comprehend the benefit it will entail:

It is obvious, that we cannot explain to the comprehension of a child of three or four years old all the truths of morality; or can we demonstrate to them the justice of punishments, by showing him that we give present pain to future advantage. But though we cannot demonstrate to the child that we are just, we must satisfy ourselves upon this subject. (229)

As the chapter goes on, she provides readers with a clear statement on how severe punishments wrongly applied will not help children to correct their conduct:

Whenever our punishments are not made intelligible, they are cruel; they give pain, without producing any future advantage. To make punishment intelligible to children it must be not only immediately, but repeatedly and uniformly, associated with the actions which we wish them to avoid. (231)

In the same chapter, Ms. Edgeworth further exposes her concerns about punishments on the basis of her own experience:

Punishments are the abrupt, brutal resource of ignorance, frequently to cure the effects of former negligence. With children who have been reasonably and affectionately educated, scarcely any punishments are required. This is not an assertion hazarded without experience; the happy experience of several years, and of several children of different ages and tempers, justifies this assertion. (253)

In Rosamond’s stories we do not find any instance of punishments; her parents never use them in order to teach life lessons to her. On the contrary, they constantly reward her with their gratitude and make her experience by herself the benefits of acting properly.

In “Rosamond’s Day of Misfortunes” Rosamond did not make it on time for breakfast because she preferred to sleep longer. When her mother realized what happened, instead of punishing her or getting mad, she leaves her to face the situation on her own and to find the solution:

‘Rosamond,’ added she, ‘you will not gain anything by ill-humour. When you have done crying, and when you have dressed yourself, you may follow us down to breakfast’. As soon as her mother had shut the door and left her, Rosamond began to cry again, but after some time she considered that her tears would neither make her warm nor untie the knot in her cap, she therefore dried her eyes, and once more tried to conquer the grand difficulty. (26)

In addition, in the already mentioned story “The Purple Jar”, Rosamond made the wrong decision and, as we saw in previous sections, her mother never punished her; she helped her instead to understand that she did the wrong thing and to handle the consequences of her decision: “No, Rosamond; you must abide your own choice; and now the best thing you can possibly do is to bear your disappointment with good humour” (8).

### **Freedom: ‘we should avoid letting our opinion be known’**

Another repeated element Maria Edgeworth defends in her writings is the idea of letting kids act by themselves. This idea is connected to ‘experience’ which, as we saw, defends that children are supposed to learn by facing situations without an adult’s participation. In *Practical Education* there are several passages in which Maria Edgeworth expresses the importance of allowing the children to act freely.

In chapter five, “Acquaintance”, Maria talks about the importance of giving young people liberty when they face different situations of life, for instance, when making new friends. She also comments on the way fathers and mothers usually react to such circumstance:

In the choice of their friends, their acquaintance, in all the great and small affairs of life, let them have liberty in proportion as they acquire reason. Fathers do not commonly interfere

with their sons amusements, or with the choice of their acquaintance, so much as in the regulation of their pecuniary affairs; but mothers, who have had any considerable share in the education of boys, are apt to make mistakes as to the proper season for indulgence and control. (152)

In chapter twenty-one, “Memory and Invention”, Ms. Edgeworth deals with the children’s freedom to talk about what they read. In this case she approaches freedom from a different perspective, as an important step to help children with their memory: “By permitting children to talk freely of what they read, we are more likely to improve their memory for books, than by exacting from them formal repetitions of lessons” (581).

In “Taste and Imagination” she points out the relevance of giving children the possibility of seeing the world from their own perspective: “But in this earliest childhood cultivate his sense with care, that he may be able to see and hear, to listen and understand by himself” (607). And in the next chapter, “Wit and Judgment“, there is another clear example of Ms. Edgeworth’s emphasizing how children should be let free to make decisions: “In stating any question to a child, we should avoid letting our opinion be known, lest we lead or intimidate his mind” (668).

When we go through Rosamond’s stories, we find how Ms. Edgeworth constantly recalls the importance of freedom in Rosamond’s education. As we saw in previous examples, she is always left to decide by herself even when she makes the wrong decisions. In the last tales, Rosamond has grown up and is more conscious about everything. In “The India Cabinet”, Rosamond has to decide whether she prefers going through the cabinet with her mum instead of waiting for three days and doing it with her siblings and father, something which gives her much pleasure. At the end, she decides to be patient and wait for them:

‘Mamma, do you know, I am going to have a great deal of resolution: I shall put off seeing the rest of these things for three days, because I know I shall have so much pleasure if I do; and mamma, I show you now, and always, whenever I have an opportunity, I will prove to you that I have resolution enough to choose’. (113)

After that, she goes on reflecting about how good it feels to take one’s decisions:

‘Mamma, there is a sort of pleasure in commanding one’s self, which is better after all, than seeing Chinese tumblers or anything else.’

‘I am glad you experience that pleasure, my dear, and I hope that you will often feel it; that is always in your power; and this is more than can be said of most of other pleasures’ (113)

As we can see in the previous lines, Rosamond is growing in wit and judgment—the goal that educators should pursue, according to Maria Edgeworth’s treatise. The little girl is now able to apply what she learnt in previous adventures and enjoy the pleasure of acting properly in each situation.

Thus, in “Wonders” Rosamond decides to finish her duties before going out to play with her brother Godfrey. After such a good behaviour, her mother gratifies her with some interesting books. Godfrey makes fun of her, because he thinks they are too difficult for her to understand, and also because she has refused to play with him. Rosamond, proud of her good resolution and of having received the books as a prize, says:

‘But, Godfrey,’ resumed she, after being silent a few minutes, ‘I forgot to tell you why mamma gave me these nice books. It was because I remained with so much resolution to do my duty this morning; to finish my long sum, instead of going out with you, first, to be Queen of the East’.

‘Resolution! Duty!’ repeated Godfrey. ‘What a fine emphasis, Rosamond! As if it was such a grand duty, such a great exploit!’

‘Grand or not, it was my duty, and I did it,’ said Rosamond; ‘and Laura and mamma said I was right, and I know I was right.’ (177)

We can observe a clear change in Rosamond’s attitude towards the situations she has to face. Now she is able to decide by herself without making mistakes. She tends to remember previous situations and proves that she has learnt from them.

## Realism in Maria Edgeworth's Tales for Children

Maria Edgeworth's tales are considered to be some of the first realistic tales of the eighteenth century, when a genre dedicated to children emerged. There appeared Evangelical books written for this young audience, such as Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781); emblem books with animals as protagonists, such as *A Description of Three Hundred Animals* (1730), by Thomas Boreman; or instructional books, as is the case of *Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744) by John Newbery. In addition, some small and unexpensive books known as 'chapbooks' became popular. They were sold in the streets and dealt with fantastical stories. One example could be seen in William Calferat and Nathaniel Howard's *The Groans of the Gallows* (1846).

At the same time, moral books started to gain popularity, being oriented to the middle classes as a model for proper behavior. In that context, one of the most influential authors was Jean Jacques Rousseau with his *L'Émile* (1762). Together with him, we find our protagonist, Maria Edgeworth. Her view on what children's literature should be like was first stated in the preface to her 1796 collection of tales titled *Parent's Assistant*, where she says that there is no reason to fill the minds of children with fairies and fantastic worlds instead of useful knowledge. Confronting children with despicable characters in their readings will prepare them for what they have to avoid in real life, she argues. Edgeworth shows her vision against Dr. Jonson's idea that "Babies do not like to hear stories about babies like themselves; that they require to have their imaginations raised by tales of giants and fairies and castles and enchantments" (11). Supposing that this was true, Maria Edgeworth claims, it is a total waste of time. An "imitation of real life" (11) is much preferred by her.

In accordance with this idea of the importance of providing children with reality and useful knowledge, we find her children's stories based on reality. In this chapter, we will

analyze the realistic elements she made use of in order to create such a realistic atmosphere in *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*.

### Characters

In Rosamond's stories, we find a very reduced number of characters per story. Normally Rosamond appears together with her mother, her eldest sister Laura, her older brother Godfrey and her father. She also mentions the eldest brother, Orlando, although he does not appear properly in any story, for he studies in a school far from the city. An old lady friend of her mother's takes part in "The Black Bonnet", and in some other stories such as "Rosamond's Day of Misfortunes" some other friends are mentioned, since Rosamond attends a party with them. But as we said, it is usual to find Rosamond interacting with her family in most of the stories. The relation between the characters is that proper to a real family. Rosamond acts as a seven-year-old in every single way. As we saw in previous chapters, she makes mistakes proper to her age, she is all the time asking questions that reveal her curiosity, and is always arguing with her brother. She also admires her sister Laura and tries to imitate her as much as she can. Maria Edgeworth uses this familiar context to create an atmosphere close to the reality of her readers.

In *Practical Education* Maria Edgeworth also sets her examples in familiar contexts. In "On Rewards and Punishments", for instance, Ms. Edgeworth introduces a conversation between a nine-year-old boy and his father; he has lost a pencil and his father wants to make him aware of the importance of taking care of his own belongings:

June 16<sup>th</sup> 1796. S--- (nine years old) had lost his pencil; his father said to him, 'I wish to give you another pencil, but I am afraid I should do you harm if I did, you would not take care of your things if you did not feel some inconvenience when you lose them.' The boy's lips moved as if he were saying to himself, 'I understand this, this is just.' His father guessed that these were the thoughts that were passing in his mind, and asked whether he interpreted rightly the motion of the lips. 'Yes', said S--- 'that was exactly what I was thinking.' 'Then,' said his father, 'I will give you a bit of my own pencil this instant: all I want is to make the necessary impression upon your mind; that is all the use of punishment; you know we do not want to torment you.' (249)



In “Wit and Judgment” we also find instances of a conversation between a four-year-old boy and his father when the father explains to the child what being blind entails (cf. 653). In chapter twenty-one, “Memory and Invention”, there is a quotidian scene protagonized by two siblings and their father (cf. 585).

As we have seen in the different examples provided, one of the strategies to create realism in Maria Edgeworth’s compositions is based on the idea of drawing characters with whom her readers could identify themselves. At the same time, she portrays them as ordinary people. They enjoy the small pleasures of life, but also show glimpses of sadness and anger. They face problems and suffer, as we all do, and they also learn from the mistakes they make. Rosamond grows up from one tale to another and Maria Edgeworth adapts her behaviour to her age. She becomes more conscious about what surrounds her and behaves accordingly.

### **Settings**

Most of Rosamond’s stories take place at home. Although we are not given a detailed description of it, we get the impression of a quite comfortable and cosy home. We know it has a chimney where the family gets warm in the cold weather, and a garden where Rosamond plays. In addition, we learn that Rosamond shares her room with her sister Laura.

Some stories are indeed placed outside Rosamond’s home. It is true that Ms. Edgeworth does not focus on describing the surroundings, but she tends to mention where each situation takes place. In the first tale of the book, “The Purple Jar”, Ms. Edgeworth describes the settings by telling us that Rosamond and her mother were walking in the streets of London; she describes the shops they visit and how Rosamond wants to buy everything she finds on her way. In “The Party of Pleasure”, Rosamond attends a boat party and leaves home with her brother and some friends. And in “The India Cabinet” Rosamond accompanies her mother to Egerton Grove to visit an old lady. There, they meet Rosamond’s siblings and father, and in the following tales Maria Edgeworth describes the

journey back home. In “The Happy Party” they stop on their way back home and spend the day visiting a china manufactory. At the same time, in “Rivuletta” another setting is described: this time, Rosamond, her sister Laura, and her parents spend some time in the country. There, Maria Edgeworth pays special attention to ordinary elements such as roses, grass or shrubs. With this, she aims to offer a realistic vision of the world where there is no need to exaggerate or ornament the environment. Children should be able to admire things as they are, and to enjoy the simplicity of life. In the rest of the stories we find Rosamond at home, sometimes in the garden, some others in her bedroom or even in the kitchen. With this, Ms. Edgeworth tries to create situations with which children can identify. She does not describe sophisticated places, she just focuses on ordinary items in order to emphasize the reality of the context.

In this respect, it is surprising that in no story do we see Rosamond attending school, even though we *do* have fragments where we see her doing tasks at home. In *Practical Education*, we find several instances in which Maria Edgeworth claims her preference for educating children at home; only in those cases in which the required conditions are not met should they be sent to school. In chapter four, “Servants”, Ms. Edgeworth advises parents to take kids to school instead of leaving them with their servants when they cannot take care of them themselves. If that is the situation, she firmly warns them not to leave them at home, since she does not consider servants to be a good model for children:

Cannot parents sacrifice some of their amusements in town, or cannot they live in the country? If none of these things can be done, without hesitation they should prefer a public to a private education. In these circumstances they cannot educate their children at home: they had much better not attempt it, but send them at once to school. (132)

In the eighth chapter of the treatise, “On Truth”, Ms. Edgeworth talks again about the superiority of being educated at home, focusing in this case on truth and integrity:

We are aware that with children who are educated at public schools, truth and integrity cannot be taught precisely in the same manner as in private families: because ushers and

schoolmasters cannot pay the same hourly attention to each of their pupils, nor have they command of all the necessary circumstances. (219)

Also in a whole chapter dedicated to the issue—“ On Public and Private Education”—she highlights the importance of educating children at home:

We can assure parents from experience that, if they pursue steadily a proper plan with regard to the understanding and the moral habits, they will not have much trouble with the education of their children after the age we have mentioned, as long as they continue to instruct them at home. (499-500)

### **Quotidian Scenes**

As we have been illustrating in the previous sections, Rosamond’s stories are characterized by their realistic characters and settings. This realism is also evident in the quotidian scenes that Maria Edgeworth depicts in the seventeen stories gathered in *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*. There, Rosamond plays the role proper to a seven-year-old girl: we find her crying out in pain when she has a thorn in her finger, dealing with boredom in a stormy day, watering the plants in her garden, or even waking up late due to her laziness.

In most of the tales, Rosamond is led to entertain herself with small things and enjoy daily pleasures. In “The injured Ass” she cannot deal with her boredom and her mother suggests that she reads a book. In “Rosamond’s Day of Misfortunes” she finds a robin in her garden and spends most of her time taking care of it. In “The Thorn”, Rosamond takes advantage of the beauties of nature and focuses on the hyacinths she finds on her way. In “The Hyacinths”, Rosamond has fun planting some seeds in the ground. It seems clear that in most of the topics represented in the tales, Rosamond faces common situations that contemporary real children could face in their own contexts.

Something we find surprising is the fact that in none of Maria’s Edgeworth’s tales do we see any toy. Rosamond is taught to pay attention to the things that surround her, and she never asks for toys. In “Microscope”, the last tale in the series, Rosamond’s mother’s

words support our theory that Maria Edgeworth tends to stress the relevance of enjoying daily pleasures:

Rosamond, though there is no India cabinet here, and no wonderful things from other countries, yet there are, even in this room, many curious things and wonderful animals with which you are not acquainted, and which might afford you amusement enough this rainy day. (163)

The reason for this absence of toys in her tales may be connected to the author's dislike for their uselessness. This is of such importance for Maria Edgeworth that she devotes a full chapter to the issue in *Practical Education*, one appropriately called "Toys":

The glaring colours, or the gilding of toys, may catch the eye, and please for a few minutes, but unless some use can be made of them, they will, and ought to be, soon discarded. (2)

Once again, Ms. Edgeworth tries to portray familiar contexts, where children can find instances of a familiar world. She does not bring either fantastic elements nor exotic situations; as we mentioned in the previous chapter, she is against the uselessness of filling the children's minds with unreal events.

## Conclusions

This B.A. Thesis has shown some aspects of Maria Edgeworth's life and compositions that may be unknown to many readers of her works. Being popular in the nineteenth century on account of her successful novels such as *Castle Rackrent* (1800) or *Helen* (1834), Ms. Edgeworth had a special talent for children literature and a vocational tendency towards morality and didacticism that we chose as the true focus for our dissertation.

For that purpose, we have done a parallel reading of two of her writings dealing with children, written for two different audiences: parents and children themselves. *Practical Education* (1798), an educational treatise for parents which she wrote upon some notes left by her stepmother and in association with her father; and *Rosamond: A Series of Tales* (1918), a collection of some of her most representative tales for children. As has been shown, the influence of her father made a great impact on Maria Edgeworth and introduced her in an educational world where she proved to be highly talented.

Our analysis has been organized in two main sections: the first one focusing on moral and didactic aspects Maria Edgeworth valued in order to educate children, which are evident in both writings; and the second one being concerned with the realism portrayed in both texts, thus justifying her recognition as one of the first writers who introduced realism in tales for children.

For the first section of our analysis we went through all the chapters included in *Practical Education* which was followed by a deep reading of *Rosamond: A Series of Tales* in search for the elements Maria Edgeworth considered all-important when advising parents on the education of their children. After both readings, there were five main elements we recognized as of primary importance in both of Maria Edgeworth's compositions: reasoning, prudence, experience, punishment and freedom. According to the writer, children should be guided in their learning but let free to experience without their parent's intervention. In those conditions, children will develop their wit and will be able to reason prudently and to make their own decisions. In *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*, Maria Edgeworth contextualizes a seven-year-old girl in a learning process where those principles are perfectly applied. She offers daily examples of quotidian situations where Rosamond

faces conflicts proper to her age, and where she learns from them, following the empirical theories Ms. Edgeworth puts forward in *Practical Education*.

In the second part of our reading, and bearing in mind that Maria Edgeworth is considered one of the first writers who introduced realism in her tales, we have focused our study on the realistic features she introduced in *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*. We have concluded that the realistic identity created in her stories is based on the presence of everyday scenes with which contemporary children could identify. We always find the protagonist, Rosamond, surrounded by her family, arguing with her siblings, learning from her mother or enjoying her father's company. If we pay attention to the settings, we will also find quotidian environments such as a house, the country, or a garden. As Maria Edgeworth stated, she did not see the point of filling children's minds with supernatural events, so she created real situations and placed real characters in them—something that applies equally to the practical examples with which she illustrates her theories in *Practical Education*.

With this analysis, we have fulfilled our initial purpose, which was to present the most unknown facet of Maria Edgeworth's lifework. Making use of two of her most representative works in education, we have demonstrated that her most theoretical principles, introduced in *Practical Education*, were applied to the tales gathered in *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*.

Although we focused on two of her masterpieces, there is a long list of works she wrote under such influence, and which could be subjected to further studies.

## Bibliography

- Backscheider, Paula D. and Catherine Ingrassia (eds.). *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*. Malden, Oxford, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009
- Baker, Ernest A. *The History of the English Novel. Volume VI, Edgeworth, Austen, Scott*. Tootowa , NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979
- Bour, Isabelle. “Richard Lovell Edgeworth, or the Paradoxes of a ‘Philosophical’ Life”. *Études irlandaises* 34:2 (2009): 15-27
- British Library. “Historical Survey of Children’s Literature in the British Library”. <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpsubject/literature/chillit/childhist/childhistorical.html>. Accessed on 5 March 2016
- Edgeworth, Maria. *The Parent’s Assistant*. London: J. Johnson, 1800
- . *Castle Rackrent*. London: Dent, 1968 [1800]
- . *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth with a Selection from her Letters by the Late Mrs. Edgeworth*. London: Joseph Masters and Son, 1867
- . *Rosamond: A Series of Tales*. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1918 [1856]
- . *Selected Tales for Children and Young People*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013
- Edgeworth, Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth. *Practical Education*. London: J. Johnson, 1798
- . *Works of Maria Edgeworth*. New York: Samuel H. Parker, No.12, 1824
- Edgeworth, Richard Lovell. *An Eighteenth-Century Intellectual Friendship: Letters of Richard Lovell Edgeworth and the Wedgwoods*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1986
- Fernández Rodríguez, Carmen. “Maria Edgeworth and Children’s Literature: The Translation of *Parent’s Assistant* (1796) into Spanish“. *ES. Revista de Filología Inglesa* 34 (2013): 131-150
- Goodenough, Elizabeth, Mark A. Heberle and Naomi Sokoloff (eds.). *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature*. With a foreword by Robert Coles. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994

- Hare, Augustus J. C. *The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth*. Cambridge: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1895
- Lockard, Megan, *Codes of Conduct: Didacticism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth*. Grand Valley State University (Paper 700) 2009. Unpublished Masters Thesis
- Misra, Suchitra. "Maria Edgeworth: A Pioneer of Realist Juvenile Short Fiction". *International Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences (IJHMS)*. 3:5 (2015): 365-366
- Pérez Diez, M<sup>a</sup> del Carmen. "*Retazos de un gozo hiriente*": Las crónicas de Narnia de C.S Lewis. Universidad de León, 2000. Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis.
- Walker, Julian. "William Blake and 18th-century children's literature". *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*. <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/william-blake-and-18th-century-childrens-literature>. Accessed on 5 March 2016