9-1-2009

Law and Literature: Story-Telling and Norms in Rousseau's *Emile*

Eric Engle

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/bjglsp>

Part of the [Law and Gender Commons](#), and the [Law and Society Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Eric Engle, *Law and Literature: Story-Telling and Norms in Rousseau's Emile*, 18 Buff. J. Gender L. & Soc. Pol'y 1 (2009).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/bjglsp/vol18/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Buffalo Journal of Gender, Law & Social Policy by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact lawscholar@buffalo.edu.

LAW AND LITERATURE: STORY-TELLING AND NORMS IN ROUSSEAU'S *EMILE*

BY ERIC ENGLE

INTRODUCTION

*"Every virtuous nation has shown respect to women.
Consider Sparta, Germany, and Rome...."*¹

The school of law and literature seeks to examine law from the perspective of literary analysis. It proposes that court cases are a form of literature and can be studied with literary tools. It also argues that literature can inform court decisions and interpretations of law because literary analysis can be used to interpret legal texts. Literature presents a dynamic image to the reader. The reader takes up lessons from the story and then lives them out. Thus, literature serves to instill voluntary Foucauldian self-policing, the internalization of norms for compliance.

In this article, I present a critique of Rousseau's parable of the love story of his fictional ideal young citizens, Sophie and Emile. I argue that this parable embodies and reproduces hierarchical inequalities and seeks to compel the citizen to internalize the values of rugged sexism that Rousseau thinks best serve the state. I will not so much focus on literary devices as I will on the actual story line, to see how the story line creates scenarios on which legislators and judges may act. Essentially, the story presented is a set of scenarios for the society to take up and live out. Rousseau is scriptwriter for the entire French Nation and, due to the universalistic vision of French liberalism, the entire world. The problem is the stories Rousseau is telling us are usually outright disgusting, though they are occasionally (unintentionally) comical.

¹ JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, *EMILE, OR ON EDUCATION*, 1367 (Barbara Foxley trans., J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. 1911) (1762), *available at* <http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/contents2.html>.

Rousseau's position on gender inequality is the same old story: he presents a symbolic equality of the sexes, but then replaces it with a real inequality justified by the character of "natural" differences. The result is subjugation of women (homosexuals are beyond the pale of course), by and under the influence of social games. The problem is that in these games, there are no fireworks; they at the same time both hide and reveal inequality, inequality that leads to suffering. Rousseau does not describe the ugly side of gender relations, the reality of gender oppression. The omitted part of his story is, in that sense, the more important side. And that is the reality of law, literature, and gender: gender as abuse, ownership, domination, and control. Violence is invisible, unimportant, secondary, and something to be ignored, if not swept under the table. Literature is the vector to expose or impose that reality.

I. EQUALITY

A. *Illusory Equality*

Rousseau begins to build his inequality-in-equality story with a comparison and contrast of the sexes:

In all that does not relate to sex, woman is man. She has the same organs, the same needs, the same faculties. The machine is constructed in the same manner

In all that does relate to sex, woman and man are in every way related and in every way different. The difficulty in comparing them comes from the difficulty of determining what in the constitution of both comes from sex and what does not. . . .

All we know for certain is that everything in common between men and women must come from their species and everything different must come from their sex.²

² *Id.* at 1251-52.

One could suppose that the fundamental distinction for Rousseau really is based only on reproduction. But he goes well beyond that and indeed essentially reiterates the same gender inequality found in Plato and Aristotle.

Perhaps it is not fair to judge civilizations that lived under another mode of production by our own values. It is impossible to completely ameliorate or repair the damage of slavery, racism, or sexism. But we must judge and criticize these “dead white males.” Otherwise, the damage which is the logical outcome of their thinking repeats. If there is any doubt that Rousseau is sexist, perhaps the following passage dispels it:

This habitual restraint [the so-called “natural” gender relations] produces a docility which woman requires all her life, for she will always be in subjection to a man, or to man's judgment, and she will never be free to set her own opinion above his.³

To which I can only say: Oh. Really?

B. “Natural” Inequality of Talents

Having started by basing inequality in reproductive power, Rousseau turns that into inequality according to specific reproductive role and finally, into generalized sexual inequality according to social role. Rousseau presents these inequalities as due to “natural” merits, but in reality, they are socially constructed around the roles of dominator and dominated. Rousseau constructs sex as a game, a merely symbolic hunt. But in fact sex was, and to a lesser extent than ever still is, the hunt of dominator to capture and dominate the dominated: rape is just the obvious example. For Rousseau, sex as hunting and dominance by men over women are “inevitable” and “natural.”

Rousseau's so-called natural inequality results from different reproductive powers and the resulting (to my view

³ *Id.* at 1300.

constructed) social roles. For Rousseau, this inequality is also “natural”:

All the faculties common to both sexes are not equally shared between, them, but taken as a whole they compensate for each other. Woman is worth more as a woman and less as a man. When she makes a good use of her own rights, she has the advantage; when she tries to usurp our rights, she stays beneath us. It is impossible to go against this general truth except by quoting exceptions, which is the usual manner of argumentation by partisans of the fair sex.⁴

Fairly obviously, this discourse is a discourse by men, among men, about women. From a literary perspective, it is a monologue, and that is why it is so empty and dissatisfying even after history has proven Rousseau wrong. The ideal of a complementary partnership is the better vision of Rousseau. It is the reality to create. But the social relations he wanted to reproduce in the short-term (Christian elements of docility and familiarity) will not encourage equal partnerships – though the ones he wanted to encourage in the long term (pagan elements of strong women) might.

Rousseau justifies a different education for young girls than for boys by sex inequality, but thereby perpetuates that inequality. For example, he writes:

To cultivate the masculine virtues in women and to neglect their own is obviously to do them an injury. Women are too clear-sighted to be thus deceived. When they try to usurp our privileges they do not abandon their own. But the result is that being unable to manage the two, because they are incompatible, they fall below their own potential without reaching ours and lose half of their worth. Believe me, wise mother, do not try to make your daughter a good man in defiance of

⁴ *Id.* at 1275.

nature. Make her a good woman, and be sure it will be better both for her and us.⁵

Thus, we see that for Rousseau any affirmation of substantive equality is “usurpation.” The choice of that term, “usurpation,” shows the inequality inherent in his thinking. Usurpation is an attack by ones lower on their superior. Moreover, the characterization of sexual dissidents as demented and of deviance from heterosexuality as perversion and a source of suicides, murders, and forced sexual relations is also wrong.

C. “*Natural*” *Inequality of Intelligence*

Rousseau believed that women were intellectually limited because he believed that sex inequality was the “natural result of natural facts.” Regarding women’s intellect, he writes plainly that:

Women are no strangers to the art of thinking, but they should only skim the surface of logic and metaphysics [i.e. women should focus on practical works]. . . . She makes most progress [success] in the moral sciences and æsthetics; as to physical science she retains some vague idea of the general laws and order of this world.⁶

It reminds one of the characterizations of the intelligence of so-called “inferior” humans in Africa. Rousseau continues in this vein:

The search for abstract and speculative truths, for principles and axioms in science, for all that tends to wide generalisation, is beyond a woman's grasp; their studies should be thoroughly practical. . . . A woman's thoughts, beyond the range of her immediate duties, should

⁵ *Id.* at 1276.

⁶ *Id.* at 1494.

be directed to the study of men, or the acquisition of that agreeable learning whose sole end is the formation of taste. For the works of genius are beyond her reach, and she has neither the accuracy nor the attention for success in the exact sciences. As for the physical sciences, to decide the relations between living creatures and the laws of nature is the task of that sex which is more active and enterprising, which sees more things, that sex which is possessed of greater strength and is more accustomed to the exercise of that strength. Woman, weak as she is and limited in her range of observation, perceives and judges the forces at her disposal to supplement her weakness, and those forces are the passions of man. . . . She must find a way to make us desire what she cannot achieve unaided and what she considers necessary or pleasing. Therefore she must have a thorough knowledge of man's mind -- not an abstract knowledge of the mind of man in general, but the mind of those men who are about her, the mind of those men who have authority over her, either by law or custom.⁷

Similarly,

Woman should discover, so to speak, an experimental morality; man should reduce it to a system. Woman has more wit, man more genius; woman observes, man reasons. Together they provide the clearest light and the profoundest knowledge which is possible to the unaided human mind -- in a word, the surest knowledge of self and of others of which the human race is capable.⁸

⁷ *Id.* at 1357.

⁸ *Id.*

D. The Critique of Naturalism

My criticism of Rousseau is not limited to the effects of his ideas (which are rape, suicide, murder, and mental and physical deformations). I also criticize his basing his proposals on the idea of “natural” inequality. The results of Rousseau’s ideas are several types of violence. If one sees that the result of the type of thought Rousseau exemplifies, typical western patriarchy, is several varieties of violence, then one must ask whether Rousseau’s assumptions are incorrect. We will see that his idea of “nature” is either ambiguous (without definition) or circular.

Nature can be defined in at least two ways: (1) what exists – because all things are natural phenomena and (2) what is “normal,” customary, and usual.

If I say that something is natural descriptively, then the only thing I say is that it exists in the universe. However, “nature” in discourse is usually not meant merely descriptively. Rather, nature as an argument for what ought to be is essentially a prescription. For example, homosexuality exists, and so it is in fact natural. But many “natural” law theorists would never admit the natural character of homosexuality.

“Nature” as prescriptive is almost always used equivocally – to claim that what ought to be is what in fact is the case, that deviations from what ought to be ought not in fact exist as they are not a part of nature. “Nature” as a prescription presents the idea that a thing is “natural” if it leads to the “good” – if it is customary, normal, and in short, accepted by the dominant class: “natural,” not as what exists (a description), but rather as what is normal, i.e. the norm (a prescription – what ought to be). To use the nature of things as an argument, to say that something is, and then consequently that another thing should be, is usually an equivocation and/or contains a hidden enthymematic premise. The idea of prescriptive “nature” is just about always pseudo-reasoning because nature-as-a-prescription is almost always linked to an equivocation between the idea of nature as a description (describing the universe as it is) and “nature” as prescription, i.e. a description of how the author wants the world to be.

Finally, if the “natural” really is what “is,” then there is not much point in arguing out what it “is” since it is the case, is even self-evident, and probably does not imply anything prescriptive, being as it is the case. The sort of naturalist reasoning which equivocates between nature as a description and natural as a prescription is inadmissible, but *not* because of a supposed refusal of inferring from ought to is. Rather, reasoning from is to ought is inadmissible here because of the equivocation of prescriptive and descriptive uses of the term nature and/or enthymematic presumptions which usually mask that equivocation. As I have said elsewhere, Hume is badly misunderstood by late modern American legal theory.

Why is there a presumption of the existence of a “natural” order of things? The “natural order” is necessary as the foundation of several value judgments. If there is a natural order, which inevitably leads to truth and/or happiness, then it is right to follow that. But “nature” (existential) order (a description) includes several things that are not “natural” (prescriptives).

This “natural order” is an assumption. For “nature” in the universal sense (nature is defined as anything existing) generally has no prescriptive usefulness (unlike a chain of statements about nature). We cannot demonstrate the existence of a natural order even one iota different from the reality that does exist. Murder is descriptively “natural” because murder happens in nature. However, no one would argue that murder ought to be normal because it is a part of the “natural order.”

Whenever trying to externalize a model of “reality,” one risks universalizing his own individual experiences, which is not at all a scientific method because it leads to the risk of errors due to lack of comparative verification and the limited experiences of any one individual. In *Emile*, Rousseau made the presumption that socially constructed relations are “natural,” i.e. genetic. But his externalization of that model is not necessarily bad if there are ways to contest, compare, and synthesize the various opinions – which explains the power of dialectical method. Comparison and interplay of each individual’s model of reality through social interaction is the

basic fact justifying democracy in a world based on mutual respect and mutual consent. It seems to be the best, perhaps the only, way of conducting human affairs. Critics of skepticism and moral relativism were strong enough to upset the old moral order: it must be reestablished on a more human and less dogmatic basis. The alternative is morally and economically unthinkable – more genocide, war, and pointless dehumanization with attendant poverty both literal and metaphoric.

II. MYTHOLOGY AND CONTRADICTION: SPARTA

*"Return with your shield - or on it."*⁹

*"A Spartan mother had five sons in the army and awaited news of the battle. A Helot arrived; trembling she asked his news. 'Your five sons have been killed.' 'Vile slave, was that what I asked you?' 'We have won the victory.' She ran to the temple to give thanks to the gods. That was a citizen."*¹⁰

My position is that Rousseau is sexist. I must clarify that his vision of women is at times contradictory. Rousseau wants to create a strong, athletic woman, but also to have the docile, motherly woman. The "classic" myth of women in the West is the "vision" of the virgin/prostitute (Mary, mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene; the proper woman at dinner and the whore in bed). This "vision" was then expropriated and used by capitalism in pornography. But the crypto-pagan Rousseau has a different ideal: the duality of mother/warrior. Although he eroticizes power and glorifies war, at least this vision offers more opportunities for women's development and self-expression. However, Rousseau combines his ideal with the detritus of the virgin/whore complex. The better description would be that there is a sub-current of the

⁹ This is a proverb attributed to Spartan mothers. See PLUTARCH, *Lacaenarum Apophthegmata*, in III MORALIA 465 (Frank Cole Babbitt trans., Loeb Classical Library 1931) (1572).

¹⁰ *Id.* at 26.

Christian vision of the woman who remains as a relic (and as a contradiction) in the thought of Rousseau.

History teaches us that Sparta was a militarized, communist society. Its economy was undeveloped because Spartans believed that an easy life would lead to weakness. Their objective was to structure their society so as to have a strong military with which to defend themselves. According to the legends, Sparta was gifted with very strong and talented athletes. Not only men, but also women exercised their physical talents there.

Thus, Sparta was a hierarchical society on the military level, but was egalitarian on the economic and sexual levels. With regard to equality, history teaches us that the best commissioned officers worked their way up through the ranks of non-commissioned officers and that the best form of leadership is informal.¹¹ History also teaches us that these same societies have produced women warriors. Thus, we see a correlation between equality in a society and the quality of its military force. Rousseau's Sparta looks like an ideal Polis in several aspects.

The quotations above, which glorified war, show the idealization of Sparta by Rousseau and that his idea of the relationship between women and men is dichotomous, split between the vision of the church (total bivalent inequality) and the Roman vision (a bond between spouses, but inequality relating to the powers over children and third parties).

Rousseau's theory is distorted and contradictory on the topic of women and the role of women in war as well as in his construction of other physical relationships between the sexes. He seeks to create a new woman to compliment his new man. So, he wants a strong woman, a new Minerva, but *also* a mother:

The exaggeration of feminine delicacy leads to effeminacy in men. Women should not be strong like men but for them, so that their sons may be strong. Convents and boarding-schools, with their plain food and ample opportunities for activities,

¹¹ See United States Army, *Military Leadership*, FM 21-100.

races, and games in the open air and in the garden, are better in this respect than the home. .¹²

Likewise,

In Sparta the girls used to take part in military sports just like the boys, not that they might go to war, but that they might bear sons who could endure hardship. That is not what I desire. To provide the state with soldiers it is not necessary that the mother should carry a musket and learn Prussian drills.¹³

Rousseau again follows Plato on the need for a militarized communal society, saying:

I am quite aware that Plato in the *Republic* assigns the same gymnastics to women and men. Having rid his government of private families and knowing not what to do with the women, he was forced to make them into men. That great genius has figured out everything and foreseen everything; he has even thought ahead to an objection that perhaps no one would ever have raised; but he has not succeeded in meeting the real difficulty. I am not speaking of the alleged community of wives, the oft-repeated reproach concerning which only shows that those who make it have never read his works. I refer to the civil promiscuity which everywhere brings the two sexes in the same occupations, the same work, and could not fail to engender the most intolerable abuses. I refer to that subversion of all the tenderest of our natural feelings, which are sacrificed to an artificial sentiment that can

¹² ROUSSEAU, *supra* note 1, at 1284.

¹³ *Id.* at 1285.

only exist by their aid.¹⁴ As if a natural bond were not required in order to form conventional ties; or that love for one's relations were not the basis for the love that one owes to the state; or that it is not through one's attachment to the small society of the family that the heart becomes attached to the larger society of one's nation; or that it is not the good son, the good husband, the good father who makes a good citizen!"¹⁵

The reason for exercise is frankly functional – to bring forth strong children, a pagan outlook. But at the same time, Rousseau wants to keep women in the same position as the old order – wife and protective mother, docile, Christian. Rousseau seems to think the two competing visions are complementary. But the contradiction is fundamental enough to be evident at times in his own texts: “Can she be a nursing mother to-day and a warrior tomorrow?”¹⁶ Well, why not? Other than the fact that war kills women’s children.

The division between mother and warrior is fairly fundamental to Rousseau – but it is not always the case historically. He ignores the fact that historically there were women warriors; the most recent examples being those in the Soviet Union during the Second World War, Israel, Vietnam, and Eritrea during their wars of independence. Historically, women warriors also existed in Scythia, although the patriarchy does not want to admit that.

In trying to find the ideal city (kalipolis), we contrast the Polis in Sparta (communist, militarized, and conservative) and Athens (aristocratic, artistic, philosophical, and liberal). In general, late modernity sees greater *virtu* in Athens because it was freer, more liberal. Is that the case? Were you freer in Sparta or Athens? I think the ideal of liberty is at least ambiguous, if not empty. The human condition is fundamentally dependent physically and mentally. We are

¹⁴ I believe here he means homosexuality.

¹⁵ ROUSSEAU, *supra* note 1, at 1271.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 1269.

conditioned in many ways and by many experiences. How can we speak of abstract freedom? It seems to me that the idea of freedom is used (and abused) generally to justify inequalities as “natural” and/or “contractual.” Freedom as an abstract “glittering generality” seems empty of meaning and therefore is an ideal tool of demagogues. To show this, I propose the following argument: does liberty consist in choosing to do right or in doing what is right? Is the freedom to poison and fatten and harm one’s self freedom? Freedom, if it exists, is to know what is right and to choose to do it – which still is conditioned, relative, and to that extent, predetermined. Predetermination and freedom seem contradictory.

So the question becomes in which society would one have the best opportunity to know and choose to do right?

Let us carry the debate forward 2000 years. In the 1970s, where would one have had the best opportunity to know and choose to do right – in the United States (Athens) or the Soviet Union (Sparta)? The former was decadent. The latter was authoritarian and sclerotic. If you are in a decadent society, you are not likely to be able know the good – there are too many bad possibilities. But if you are in an authoritarian society, it is also nearly impossible to know the good because there are no alternatives.

This indicates that the question of autonomous moral choice is a false one: we always have imperfect knowledge and to that extent, are not free. Seeing that we are constructed by our society, that we are inevitably the product of this society, and that our knowledge is inevitably partial, how could we make a “free choice”? Heuristics help. If a proposition leads to bad ends, it is probably bad too. The truth produces truths (which are not necessarily good – something can be true and bad). Lies produce lies. The difference between truth and falsehood is revealed here – lies in general do not lead to good things, especially in the long term. A thing may be true, but bad, but it is very rare that something is false and good. This is a general rule, and general rules are not universally true. Nevertheless, this proposal is sufficiently certain that we can depend on it as a way to live practically.

It seems to me that the opposition between truth and falsehood is absolute. Thus, their opposition cannot be synthesized. It is a destructive opposition, not a synthetic one.

III. SEX AND VIOLENCE

A. Rape

Rousseau's inequality appears innocent, but leads to the reality of violence. So, I have to deal with the topical of sexual violence.

Most people believe what they want to believe and do not believe what they do not want to believe. We are all shaped by our experiences to interpret "reality" in accord with our dominant assumptions. To overcome this obstacle was one target of Nietzsche in his quest for "Übermenschen" - supermen. The initiatory cults - the army, sects, and police - seek to generate, more or less consciously, a shock sufficient to force the subject to rethink all his experiences. In the case of dominating organizations, the objective is to destroy the subject and instill the ideas of the organization. The liberating cults also seek to shock, but thereby to force the subject to rethink all the time and to think for himself - i.e. to start to philosophize and to escape from the tendency to just assume that whatever we observe is one more case of reality confirming our assumptions. Rousseau shows unintentional blindness in this way when he addresses the topic of sexual violence. He interprets social reality to conform to his erroneous presumptions. For example, he wrote: "The freest and sweetest of acts does not permit of any real violence; indeed both reason and nature are against it..."¹⁷ That sentence is ignorant. Rousseau seems unable to believe in the reality of sexual violence or to conjecture that sexual violence is pervasive. He does not want to see the ugly reality because that reality is ugly. Similar statements appear elsewhere, for example, "[T]he stronger is the master in all appearance and yet in effect depends on the weaker."¹⁸ That is wrong. The economically

¹⁷ *Id.* at 1260.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 1261.

independent sex was sexually dominant because it was economically independent. Men were not in fact dependent on women, but women were dependent on men. The consent of women to sex in that system was mere acquiescence and was often absent.

The sex-violence nexus is pervasive, either due to evolution or economic relations, but probably both. In any case, sexual violence is there, a reality and a pervasive one. I suppose the sex-violence nexus exists, to varying levels, in most relationships. And the results are not always (even most of the time?) “just a game” – just ask any victim. But having an understanding of this fact is the first step to changing it. You can escape the “game” of capitalist, sexualized violence put into service of the economic order. No one has a monopoly on sublimation or eroticism.

The blindness of Rousseau on the reality of sexual violence is also evident in the following passage:

The progress of enlightenment acquired through our vices has considerably changed the earlier opinions held among us on this point, and one hardly hears speak any more of cases of sexual violence since they are so seldom needed and because men no longer would believe them. Yet such stories are common enough among the ancient Greeks and Jews, for such views belong to the simplicity of nature; it is only the experience of libertinage [that] has been able to uproot them. If fewer acts of violence are cited in our days, it is surely not because men are more temperate. It is because they are less credulous, and a complaint which would have persuaded simple people would provoke only mocking laughter among ourselves. Therefore silence is the better course. In the Book of Deuteronomy in the Bible there is a law under which the abused maiden was punished along with her seducer if the crime were committed in a town, but if in the country or in a lonely place, the latter alone was

punished. "For," says the law, "the maiden cried for help but was not heard." From this benign interpretation of the law, girls learned not to let themselves be surprised in well-frequented places.¹⁹

Rousseau does not seem to understand that victims of crime are not at fault and that claims of rape are generally sincere. Rousseau holds women responsible for being raped.

B. Loyalty

The same vision of super-responsibility for women also manifests in Rousseau's view of marriage.

[I]t is not permitted to anyone to violate his faith, and every unfaithful husband who deprives his wife of the sole reward of the austere duties of her sex is an unjust and cruel man. But the unfaithful wife does more; she dissolves the family and breaks the bonds of nature. By giving the man children that are not his own she betrays all of them; she adds treachery to infidelity²⁰

What really counts most for Rousseau is social opinion. "It is thus not only important that the wife be faithful but that she be judged so by her husband, by those near him, by everyone. . . . [S]he must have in others' eyes as in her own conscience the evidence of her virtue."²¹ That passage highlights the fact that social "reality" is socially constructed and is more double standard.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 1262.

²⁰ *Id.* at 1266.

²¹ *Id.* at 1267.

C. Objectification of Women

The logical conclusion of the thought of Rousseau, which was inherent from the beginning, is that woman is a thing defined around her reproductive ability. Children are property and so are women – property owned by men. Women are a capital good: they produce more women. The mechanization of women to breed soldiers and workers, a common theme in the West, appears quite clearly in Rousseau's thought. "Women, you say, do not always have children. No, but their proper aim is to do so. Just because there are a hundred or so large cities in the world where women live licentiously and have few children can you claim that their role is to have few children?"²² But that is exactly what economic development led to: women having fewer children, more of whom survived into adulthood; pursuing careers; and adopting a sexuality wherein consent became possible because economic dependence ended.

A problem of one school of natural law (natural law as God's own law, for example) is that when it sees facts in nature, it does not like it; it throws the belief that law should reflect "nature" out the window. Prescriptive theories of natural law often ignore the facts of nature.

Returning to the critique of Rousseau, he mixes colonization and objectification of women in the following passage, where he makes a comparison of animals to humans:

Yet female animals are without this sense of shame and what is the result? Do they, like women, have the same unlimited desires that shame serves to curb? With female animals, their desire comes only with need. When the need is satisfied, the desire ceases and they no longer make a pretense of repulsing the male but do it for real. They do exactly the contrary of what the daughter of Augustus did; once the boat is filled with cargo, they refuse to take on more passengers.²³

²² *Id.* at 1268.

²³ *Id.* at 1258.

Here, Rousseau speaks of animals and slave ships as an analogy for women. However, sexual relations are not a combat. Rousseau argues that desire among women is not as easy to meet as that of men. Maybe the men are bad in bed?

Relations between the sexes according to Rousseau are inevitably and naturally unequal. His view, in my opinion, is twisted and leads to twisted outcomes.

D. War Between the Sexes?

Rousseau concluded his book with the marriage of his two puppets. At least in his sub-conscious, he recognizes the internal contradictions in his thinking. He describes the so-called seduction of the strong, but stupid Emile orchestrated by the ugly, but useful Sophie: "The charms of this maiden enchantress rush like torrents through his heart, and he begins eagerly to quaff down the poison with which he is intoxicated."²⁴

A loving relationship does not begin with poison. If Rousseau wanted to build a little Minerva, he finished instead with a spider. The choice of the term "poison" by Rousseau shows the fear, power, and war which is inherent in sexual relations – according to his perspective. This pathetic story is sad and could be otherwise. That is the reality to build.

CONCLUSION: *EMILE*, A TRAGICOMEDY

Rousseau intends to present several stirring stories explaining the justice of his worldview. We are told, essentially, of the girl who cried rape, the girl who did not know her place, the girl who tried to be a man, the girl who had sex with some other man, and above all, the baby factory for the war machine. The good girl is useful for something after all. These stories however shape judicial and political consciousness and have influenced who knows how many people by presenting them a presentiment and model of situations to live out in their own lives. The best use of this literature today is as tragicomedy. It is tragic because the sort

²⁴ *Id.* at 1457.

of nightmares it presages really are avoidable, yet comic because history has definitively outgrown the world Rousseau believes we live in or ought to live in. Karl Marx said, "History repeats itself – first as tragedy, then as farce." As the left learns to mock its opponents, I look forward to seeing more tragedies made farcical.