

The Status of Women in *El Pensador*: A Conservative Complaint or Philanthropic Plea?

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Don José Clavijo y Fajardo's essay-periodical, *El Pensador* (The Thinker), was first published in Madrid between 1762 and 1767. A landmark publication, *El Pensador* debated contemporary social topics that had not previously received attention in the Spanish essay-press.¹ In his study, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain*, Richard Herr identifies *El Pensador* as standing out from the many periodicals that were in circulation in the second half of the eighteenth century: 'The first year of Carlos III's reign saw a flurry of periodical publications that collapsed for lack of interest. Most of these papers sought only to entertain or at most criticise social fashions, but [*El Pensador*] stood out for the daring depths of its observations'.²

El Pensador was published in two stages with a halt between 1764 and 1765. It is unclear why its publication was temporarily stalled.³ Consisting of eighty-six

1. Paul-Jacques Guinard, *La presse espagnole de 1737 à 1791. Formation et signification d'un genre* (Paris, Institut de recherches hispaniques, 1973) provides the most comprehensive treatment of the critical press in eighteenth-century Spain.

2. Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 183.

3. It has been suggested that it might have been as a result of Clavijo's relationship with a sister of the French writer Beaumarchais, then resident in Madrid. Clavijo was allegedly betrothed to the sister, but broke his promise to marry her, and, thus, in accordance with strict eighteenth-century social

issues, denominated *Pensamientos*, each of some twenty to thirty pages in length, *El Pensador* covers a range of socially engaged topics. The so-called 'époque du Pensador' yielded several essay-periodicals that, although different in ideas and format, were influenced by Clavijo's publication.⁴ The position of women in contemporary society was a major theme of *El Pensador* and accounted for approximately a quarter of its content. Its treatment of women has been judged by some modern critics to be conservative. *El dichoso pensador*, published in 1766, is the global title of six satirical pamphlets written by Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor, which engaged with the opinions put forward by *El Pensador* concerning the question of women in society.⁵ Valladares judged the ideas on feminine beauty expressed in *El Pensador* to be both conservative and bitter. More recently, Carmen Martín Gaité, in her study on love customs in eighteenth-century Spain, described the attitude of *El Pensador* towards the discourse of women as disparaging.⁶ Meanwhile, Sally-Ann Kitts has argued that Clavijo's work presents an idealised concept of the perfect woman that was in keeping with the intellectual and social demands of the time.⁷ This article presents an analysis of three essays, which examine the education and upbringing of women and their role in society as set out in *El Pensador*. I will argue that, far from being disparaging, the essays emphasise a woman's intellectual, mental and social capability, making her central to the composition of a valid and just civil society.

The debate on woman in eighteenth-century Spain was initiated by the writings of the Spanish Benedictine monk, Fray Jerónimo Feijoo y Montenegro (1676-1764). His essay, *Defensa de las Mujeres* (1726), was the first significant text in eighteenth-century Spain to challenge the lack of reason that had dominated the

convention, dishonoured her. Clavijo may have been unable to work on his publication while the allegation was being investigated. The only source that exists for this incident is Beaumarchais' version of events published in Paris in 1880. under that title of *Clavijo* by the, Librairie des bibliophiles.

4 .Guinard, p. 55.

5. Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor, *El dichoso Pensador* (Madrid: Joseph Martínez Abad, 1766).

6. Carmen Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España*, (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1994), p 70.

7. Sally-Ann Kitts, *The Debate on the Nature, Role and Influence of Woman in Eighteenth-Century Spain*, (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), p. 60.

traditional arguments relating to the debate on women. At this time, the *Defensa* represented an important starting-point for developing ideas of female citizenship amongst progressive intellectuals, social reformers and other campaigners.⁸ As well as revolutionising the debate with his accessible philosophical manner, Feijoo's conversational, yet provocative writings also played a significant role in moving the debate from the restricted sphere of the intellectual elite into mainstream society.⁹ The style of Feijoo's essays was adopted by informal critical thinkers of eighteenth-century Spain, who used the essay-press as a vehicle for transforming contemporary society. Following in the literary and intellectual footsteps of Feijoo, the publication of Clavijo's *El Pensador* developed further the pragmatic ideology and conversational tone characteristic of Feijoo's *Defensa*.

El Pensador regarded the position of women to be integral to the welfare of society and humanity as a whole. *Pensamiento* II, entitled 'Letter from the *Pensador* to Ladies Regarding their Education'; *Pensamiento* VIII, entitled 'Letter from a Young Lady Regarding her Upbringing'; and *Pensamiento* XII, 'On Education', are three forthright essays which deal with the education of girls and the nature of motherhood in eighteenth-century Spain. *Pensamiento* II, the first to deal with the topic of women, suggests that the education of girls should be directed towards the raising of children, and describes what an informally educated woman should be like. It also provides guidance on how women can adopt an appropriate set of duties and roles in the moral and social transformation of society, as well as providing an introduction to the writer's sentimental attitude and ideas about women.

El Pensador is acutely sensitive and sympathetic to the controversies surrounding criticism by men of women's education and participation in society. Anticipating negative reactions to his bold claims, the author of *Pensamiento* II expresses a high regard for women and defends a rational attitude concerning the debate¹⁰. The cautious opening lines are suffused with sentimentality and are

8. Monica Bolufer in her work, *Mujeres e ilustración: la construcción de la feminidad en la España del siglo XVIII* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 1998) and Kitts, *op. cit.*, have both written a more detailed analysis of Feijoo's influential work *Defensa de las mujeres*.

9. Kitts, *The Debate on the Nature, Role and Influence of Woman*, p. 13.

10. *El Pensador* (Madrid: Ibarra, 1763), I, p. 3. All future references will be to this edition.

sympathetic to what the author acknowledges to be a significant part of society. 'To whom else could I give preference to if not to the kindest and most beautiful section of society?'¹¹ As well as attempting to placate and persuade his readers, this rhetorical question aims to increase the self-respect of women. The writer goes on to defend a certain boldness in the censorship of women by explaining it as necessary for the reorientation of attitudes towards both women and those responsible for their education. Adopting a characteristically indignant tone, the author asserts that women were not developing themselves in the moral sphere. According to *El Pensador*, an improvement in the education of women was not only important in terms of personal justice, but it held significance both for the welfare of society and the prosperity of humanity.

According to *Pensamiento II*, the purpose of the education and upbringing of women was to train them in personal and social virtue. In an age that emphasised the charms of feminine grace, *El Pensador* insisted on stressing the importance of developing inner rather than physical qualities. Social display, argues the author, is a distraction from the true moral and intellectual beauty of women. 'What about the adornments of the mind? They have been treated with complacency'.¹² The admonishment is aimed at a contemporary society that placed emphasis on the appearance of a woman as a public display of a family's wealth and achievements to the detriment of her personal and intellectual development.¹³ Through its celebration of a woman's spirit and essential goodness, *El Pensador* emphasised what it was to be human to both the female reader and to wider society. Addressing a society that downplayed the subtle and sophisticated forms of personal expression, *El Pensador* took for granted the capabilities of a woman's mind as well as the dignity of her personality.

The author promotes a definition of womanhood that emphasises lasting qualities of civility and intellect, as opposed to the deleterious and transitory values of physical beauty. He sees cultivation of the mind and the soul as the most desirable

11. '¿a quién podía dar la preferencia sino a la amable, la más bella mitad del género humano?', *El Pensador*, I, p. 1.

12. '¿Y los [adornos] del espíritu? Se han tratado con pereza', 'Pensamiento II'; *El Pensador* I, pp. 5-6.

13. Monica Bolufer, *Mujeres e ilustración. La construcción de la feminidad en la España del siglo XVIII* (Valencia, Diputación de Valencia, Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 1998) p. 190.

way for a woman to achieve supremacy in the realm of heterosexual sociability. Reinforcing the point that there is no inequality between the sexes, *El Pensador* balances a beautiful, but frustratingly silent, female character with an equally frustrating, vacuous male counterpart. In a pair of sketches, the writer advocates feminism based on shared rationality. Refusing to concede a natural inequality in the area of courtship, reason is ascribed to women equally as it is to men. Although the writer is not interested in assigning the same roles to women as to men, there is nothing in the essay, or indeed in the rest of the *Pensamiento*, to suggest that *El Pensador* lacked confidence in the ability of women to undertake important informal positions of authority in society. The writer is magnanimous in his admission that women are handicapped by the lack of formal education they receive. 'She asks stupid and impertinent questions [...] Women are not obliged to know about Roman History'.¹⁴ Together with church history, the study of Roman history formed a substantial part of the curriculum for male education in eighteenth-century Spain. It is significant that the writer's indignation is aroused by the absence of Roman history teaching in the education of women. The observation is an indirect appeal for the formal education of women in society and for their inclusion as actors in the transformation of contemporary society based on the achievements of the ancients.

These ideas were expressed at a time when anxious mothers placed great emphasis on their daughters possessing a substantial range of accomplishments in order to flaunt their wealth and social status.¹⁵ The importance given to the cultivation of virtue as the pathway to a lasting and happy marriage would have provided a welcome break from the pressures of perfecting social rituals, developing feminine charm and battling the potentially unforgiving ageing process. A woman's education should, then, be seen as a means of liberation from a fickle, self-conscious society. Upholding the spirit of rationalism, the author of *Pensamiento II* argues for the justice of educating women and modifying their traditional upbringing; women are not considered to be weaker than men; the writer encourages young ladies and their mothers to reject passive virtues and gracious compliance with men. Through his praise of women who have to learn virtue, the writer demonstrates that women

14. 'Hace preguntas necias, e impertinentes [...] Ya se ve que las mujeres no estan obligadas a saber la Historia Romana', 'Pensamiento II', *El Pensador I*, pp. 9-10.

15. Bolufer, p. 190.

have the moral and mental capacity to embrace the rational qualities required of them in order to undertake successfully their important social roles and key duties as mothers, wives and wise counsels.

The final words of the *Pensamiento* serve as a warning to women to exercise virtue and discretion. In order for a successfully educated woman to be able to better exert a civilising influence, the author argues, she needs to be able to identify the manipulative flattery of self-interested men. 'I want to warn you and equip you to deal with the guile of men'.¹⁶ In its criticism of the tendency to consider a woman educated if she has been taught drawing-room decorum and feminine grace, *El Pensador* acknowledges the capability of a woman's mind, the dignity of her personality, her sense of self-respect and the desirability of giving her a moral basis upon which to undertake her central role and privileged position in the reformation of eighteenth-century Spanish society. It also acknowledges her role as a significant agent in the reformation of male behaviour.

The education of young ladies is further explored in *Pensamiento* VIII, 'Letter from a Young Lady Regarding her Upbringing'. Comprising two sections, the text is loosely adapted from *Speculation* 66, on the education of a young girl, and *Speculation* 212, a letter from an unhappily married gentleman, both of which were published in the eighteenth-century English journal, *The Spectator*.¹⁷ The first half of the *Pensamiento*, written in the form of a letter from a twenty-five year old noblewoman, is the intimate and tender testimony of a gracious woman whose lack of an intellectual education has been redeemed. The literary strategy of a letter from a reader is used to validate the argument for a reform of the traditional education of women, on the basis of the rationality previously set out in *Pensamiento* II. As well

16. 'Avisar a Vms, para que estén siempre alertas, y procurarles armas que se defiendan.'

'Pensamiento II', *El Pensador* I, pp. 29-30.

17. The influence of *The Spectator* on *El Pensador* was first identified by Juan Sempere y Guarinos in *Ensayo de una biblioteca española de los mejores escritores del reinado de Carlos III* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1787). H. Petersen's article 'Notes on the influence of Addison's *Spectator* and Marivaux's *Spectateur Français* upon *El Pensador*', *Hispanic Review* IV (1936), pp. 256-263 is the first to be dedicated wholly to the influence of *The Spectator* on *El Pensador*. The author identifies *Pensamientos* which he considers to be almost a direct translation of speculations in *The Spectator* via the French publication *Le Spectateur Français*. It is also possible that Clavijo and his collaborators read the English text.

as sustaining the illusion of a relationship with its readers, the use of the epistolary form establishes a pact between the literary persona and the subject of debate. It also helps to engage the reader with the plight of a young lady, whose intellectual education has been neglected by those entrusted with her welfare and upbringing.

This poignant and fluently argued letter complements the ideas expressed in *Pensamiento II*. It describes in detail the educational experience of a young noblewoman, which is characterised by the presence of an incompetent and sycophantic tutor and the behaviour of vain, self-interested parents eager to flaunt their wealth. The young woman's educational experience validates and confirms the fears expressed in *Pensamiento II*. The purpose of her expensive education was to prepare her to play an ostentatious role in contemporary society. 'In my presence they spoke about fashion, accessories and the use of charming manners so as to be able to cover up my defects'.¹⁸ The young noblewoman deeply regrets her training in drawing-room decorum and the wasteful concern shown by tutors and parents for empty public display. She articulates and reinforces a position that, for the most part, recognises the capability of a woman's mind and the desirability of encouraging her to be independent and vigorous. She laments that she spent her early adulthood surrounded by those who flattered and fawned, as well as by unenlightened women who encouraged her vanity, insincerity and coquetry.

The young woman concludes her testimony by paying tribute to the contribution made by *El Pensador* and the wise counsel of a male friend, the 'estimable Aristo', who had the courage to express 'bitter truths' to her.¹⁹ This sentimental interlude casts *El Pensador* and her wise male friend as the ideal educators. Yet the fact that men were charged with her enlightenment would have struck a chord with anxious mothers, who perhaps feared that educating their daughters would make them an unappealing prospect for eligible bachelors. But rather than showing distrust towards a well-educated woman, this passage confirms that men need not be afraid of women of intellect. On the contrary, according to the ideas expressed in *Pensamiento VIII*, a worthy man trusts a woman with knowledge and reason.

18. 'En mi presencia se trataba de modas, de adornos, de gracias exteriores, del modo de ocultar defectos y fingir perfecciones.', 'Pensamiento VIII', *El Pensador II*, p. 9.

19. 'Verdades amargas', 'Pensamiento VIII', *El Pensador II*, p. 14.

This inspirational episode, which is written with the same detail of psychological and emotional intelligence contained in other *Pensamientos*, also provides a thorough insight into the morality and concept of the dramatic redemption of a woman's character and judgement. 'I set out to take on board your advice and I devoted myself to developing much more stable and enduring wealth. The conversation and dealings with Aristo were pleasant and proved to be useful.'²⁰ In contrast to the depressed young daughter, subjected to an authoritarian and vacuous education, the testimony of this successfully reformed young woman is a sensational appeal to reason as the guarantor of female virtue. It reveals the purity and warmth of the appreciative young woman towards her benevolent and enlightened tutor, and the sentimental bond between father and daughter challenges autocratic notions of education and fraternal power. The companionate familial love that is expressed in this tender interlude is an eighteenth-century ideal, which is expressed elsewhere in *El Pensador*, as well as in the English essay-periodical *The Spectator*.²¹ Attached to the end of *Pensamiento VIII* is a letter claiming to be from a male reader. This text relates moments of great marital tension and satirises female literary reflections on unhappy marriages, by arguing that men too can be unhappily married. The inclusion of this short epistle on the education and upbringing of women would have provided further evidence that a woman must be prepared properly for her significant role in the establishment and upholding of social order.

Pensamiento XII, 'On the topic of education', is a relatively short, serious and engaging essay that deals with the duty of mothers to their children and is loosely based on the ideas on motherhood expressed in *Speculation 246* of *The Spectator*. The opening lines of the essay give the fullest expression of *El Pensador's* attitude to the topic of education in their denunciation of the poor quality of formal education in eighteenth century Spain. 'I am tackling a topic that is no less vast than

20. 'Propuseme tomar consejo de Vm. aplicándome a adquirir bienes más sólidos, y más durables. La conversación y el trato con Aristo empezó a serme agradable y útil, 'Pensamiento VIII', *El Pensador* II, pp. 14-15.

21. On the eighteenth century familial ideal, see Bolufer, p. 14 and Joseph Addison, Richard Steele and Donald Bond (ed.) *The Spectator* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965).

it is useful, and no less useful than it is necessary for the good of society'.²² The ideology of motherhood expressed in this *pensamiento* does not define a virtuous and sentimental ideal of parenting.²³ Neither does *El Pensador* attempt to construct a set of norms for female social reform. Operating within the noble ethic of care and the ambition for wider moral reform, *El Pensador's* literary and philosophical endeavours were directed towards the encouragement of both men and women to believe that motherhood played an important role in the creation of an enduring civil society, in spite of the potential risks to health and the social distractions that would have been involved in the eighteenth century. 'The health of the people depends on the care taken to develop the youth and even the childhood of its individuals'.²⁴ A particularly vivid picture of deficient motherhood and dysfunctional childhood lies at the centre of *Pensamiento XII*, which contrasts with the sentimentality of *Pensamientos II* and *VIII*. Echoing the final words of *Speculation 246*, the dismal picture painted by *El Pensador* focuses on the expensive and fashionable custom of hiring a wet-nurse and a nanny, both of which are represented as symptoms of parental neglect. The apparently casual way in which the mother and father hand over their child constitutes for *El Pensador* a personal, social and material trauma that pervades the rest of the *Pensamiento*. 'In the custom of handing over children to nannies is a grave error that is detrimental to the Nation, to health and to people's most fundamental rights.'²⁵

Breastfeeding—regarded by *El Pensador* as a measure of maternal virtue—and the necessity of personal attendance are emphasised as important aspects of motherhood in *Pensamiento XII*. That mothers themselves should look after their children is an opinion that is stated explicitly in similar texts directed towards economically privileged mothers, who were often denigrated as un-loving pleasure

22. 'Yo emprendo una materia no menos vasta que útil que necesaria para el bien de la sociedad', 'Pensamiento XII', *El Pensador I*, pp. 3-4.

23. For an excellent study of the practice and idea of motherhood in the eighteenth century, see Toni Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

24. 'La salud de los Pueblos consisten en el cuidado de formar la juventud, y aun la infancia de sus individuos', 'Pensamiento XII', *El Pensador I*, p. 4.

25. 'En la práctica de entregar los hijos a las amas de cría había error perjudicial al Estado, a la salud, y a sus más sólidos derechos', 'Pensamiento XII', *El Pensador I*, p. 9.

seekers.²⁶ Yet this literary chastisement of fashionable women was not concerned with the expression of a reduced ideal of the participation of woman in society. It was a chastisement of what *El Pensador* considered to be the unnatural and destructive social passions and 'the disastrous rule of fashion'.²⁷ Throughout the *Pensamiento* there is never a suggestion that motherhood is the only social role that should be undertaken by woman, or that it should prevent women from taking their place in the larger world. The anxieties expressed by *El Pensador* were not concerned with the wider role of woman, but focused instead on the duties of motherhood and parenting in general, which, according to *El Pensador*, had a privileged status in the civilising of Spanish society. 'The praises of domestic life are the most effective antidote to bad habits'.

In *Pensamiento XII*, *El Pensador* shows a genuine concern for families and especially for children and both men and women are held accountable for this dismal picture of parental failure. Parents are revealed by *El Pensador* to be selfish, materialistic and uncompassionate, rather than benevolent. A mother's inattentiveness and indifference towards her child provokes the indignation of the author. 'The worst thing is that far from finding the care that one expects, these poor children are usually victims of their mother's cruelty'.²⁸ Women, however, were not blamed by *El Pensador*. Motherhood competed with a woman's personal and social identity, which was, according to the *Pensador*, largely shaped by the destructive passions of fashion and trivial pleasures that eroded a woman's natural, virtuous capability. Mothers are represented by *El Pensador* as being suited uniquely to the role of first teacher for their children, as well as possessing incomparable nurturing capacities. *El Pensador* also considers them to be being uniquely placed to provide for their children emotionally.

Breastfeeding and nurturing were regarded by *El Pensador* as touchstones for maternal virtue, a point of view that was held widely in the eighteenth century.²⁹ They were also seen to be vital for a woman's health and well-being, as well as

26. Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood*, p 157

27. 'El funesto imperio de la moda', 'Pensamiento XII', *El Pensador* I, p. 28.

28. 'Lo peor es que lejos de encontrar el cuidado, que se figura, estas pobres criaturas son ordinariamente víctimas de la crueldad de sus madres', 'Pensamiento XII', *El Pensador* I, p. 11.

29. Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood*, p. 159.

indispensable for the survival of humanity. According to the *Pensamiento*, it was in the role of mother that women were failing most spectacularly. A mother's indifference to her offspring, argued *El Pensador*, resulted in the alienation of the affections of her children. Adopting a tone that punished and frightened rather than encouraged, *El Pensador* warned readers that apathetic parents would reap what they had sown. This rule of living is expressed emphatically in the tragic portrait of a widow whose children ignore her plight, and the graphic portrait of a dysfunctional family in which parent-child relations are apathetic and hostile.³⁰ *El Pensador* concludes this appeal to parents by celebrating the joys of motherhood as well as encouraging virtuous domesticity. The woman who is eulogised in the final words of the *Pensamiento* is not a delicate porcelain figurine, but a natural, healthy, robust and active mother who raised fourteen children and lived a long, healthy life after wholeheartedly embracing motherhood.³¹ *El Pensador's* closing words hold men entirely accountable for their choice of approach to parenting.³²

It is hard to believe that children in eighteenth century Spanish society were ignored to the extent that *El Pensador* suggests. It is likely that these observations were exaggerated for rhetorical effect and not intended to be taken literally. Approaches to parenting would have depended on the nature of the household and it is likely that both men and women would have read the *Pensamiento*. Despite dealing largely with motherhood, the observations of the *Pensamiento* could also have been aimed at men, who would have had final authority on how a child should be brought up. Likewise, it is not clear from the *Pensamiento* who would have approved or disapproved of breastfeeding and the handing over of children. According to the views expressed in *Pensamiento* II and *Pensamiento* VIII, there was no strong assertion of the doctrine of the inferiority of women; rather they provided a gloomy assessment of a frivolous and ostensibly indifferent section of society. The education of women, according to *El Pensador*, should not be subordinate to the needs of men; women are not the play things of men and neither are they objects for the display of a family's wealth. The moral reformer's conscience was stirred by the social and material excesses of a section of a society that used women as agents of

30. See 'Pensamiento XII', *El Pensador* I, pp. 16-17 and pp. 20-21 respectively.

31. Ibid, p. 30.

32. Ibid, pp. 30-1.

social mobility and respectability, but did not value, understand or acknowledge their distinctive and significant role in the creation of a companionate family and the fostering of a virtuous society. This change would require the rational and virtuous empowerment of women, rather than their exclusion and subordination.

Feijoo broached the question of women amongst a wider circle of intellectuals. Some forty years later, *El Pensador* popularised it, and provided society with intelligent, practical guidance on how to modify personal behaviour. Clavijo's publication kept the debate on woman in the Spanish public-eye for twenty years and the forthright publication was reprinted three times. The treatment of the female education and upbringing in *El Pensador* was not a conservative complaint against women. The ideas expressed in the three *Pensamientos* analysed here took the issue of educating and raising women beyond the spheres of law, theology and custom. The serious and sober *Pensamientos* focused on the lack of training in virtue and sound judgement that women received. The objective, put forward by *El Pensador*, was that a woman should not be subservient to her parents and husband, that she should not be subordinate to man and that she should not be a mere delicate object of admiration. The author expresses the idea that women should take the lead in fostering and balancing the individualism of virtue with family affection. The woman that *El Pensador* was defending was intelligent, independent, natural and robust. These are all characteristics that, according to eighteenth-century reformers, would have promoted civic virtue and social order more consistently in the home. According to *El Pensador*, women could be noble, virtuous and trustworthy beings, as well as being rationally and psychologically independent. The emphasis was placed upon women to develop those qualities and characteristics that enhanced their personal and social virtue and empowered them to make a stand against fashions that, according to the author, eroded their ability to nurture and uphold civil society. Yet there is no indication in any of this work that this was the only role appropriate for women. Marriage, motherhood and companionship are the roles that the author concentrated on because they were seen to be important aspects of human behaviour. When family life is functional, the positive effects on its individual members are clear.

The author's anxieties focused on the urban excesses that he considered to be a threat to family life and, therefore, civility. The views of *El Pensador* did not

simply provide a blueprint for the ideal wife and personal companion, but they defended good family life as a guarantor of the personal and social civility that were, in the opinion of the author, being undermined by an increasingly ostentatious and materialistic society. Clavijo was not a spokesperson for the male society that wanted to 'maintain the status quo of male domination'.³³ An acceptance of this status quo would have been served better by remaining silent on the topic of women in society. To echo the words of Guinard, if *El Pensador* paid so much attention to the topic of women in society, it was because its author thought them capable of so much more.³⁴

33. Kitts, *The Debate on the Nature, Role and Influence of Woman*, p. 54.

34. Guinard, *La presse espagnol*, p. 460.