

SABINA Y DOROTEA, A FORGOTTEN NOVEL OF 1797

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As short as it is, this little novel poses problems. *Sabina y Dorotea* was not printed in one of the more active literary publishing houses on the Valencian scene at the end of the eighteenth century, publishers like Salvador Faulí, Joseph Esteban, Benito Monfort, or the Hermanos de Orga. It is difficult to explain what lies behind the fact that the author chose the Imprenta del Diario of Valencia to publish his book in 1797.

Adding to our puzzlement is the discovery that the Imprenta did not put out any other novel in the entire period¹. Possibly this choice of a publisher with scant reputation for selling works of fiction explains the extraordinary rarity of the book. Justo Pastor cites neither the novel nor the author in his bibliography of Valencian literature published just thirty-three years later. Likewise it eluded the attention of both Palau and of Reginald F. Brown, a pioneer in the study of the novel, and the corresponding presses, from the years 1700-1850. The work finds no place either in the more recent studies of Juan Ignacio Ferreras and Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos. On the other hand, Francisco Martí Grajales does take note of the book in his regional bibliography, having located a copy in the Biblioteca Serrano Morales of the Ajuntament de Valencia, the same copy that Francisco Aguilar Piñal mentions in his invaluable listing of Spanish authors of the eighteenth century. Add to all this the fact that it is not at all clear who the author is, since nothing more is known of Hipólito Sabiu, and the name may well be a pseudonym².

1. In the decade 1790-99, all the presses of Valencia published 232 works, of which twenty-two came from the Imprenta del Diario. Six are pamphlets celebrating the beatification of an archbishop of Valencia; five treat religious material; three continue the satire of "currutacos" seen in the *Crotología*; two focus on agriculture and economics; and five take up miscellaneous topics.

2. The two last-mentioned bibliographers give his name incorrectly as "Hipolito Sabín". In similar fashion, Sabiu is identified in the copy held by the Biblioteca Serrano Morales, a fact most kindly confirmed for me by the director, Doña María Pía Catalá, to whom I extend renewed thanks for her kindness.

Like many novels at the end of the eighteenth century, *Sabina y Dorotea* has an extensive plot, and this opens a new series of problems. The book begins with the return of a young Austrian count to his lands with a new wife, Sabina, a Spanish lady. She gives birth to a daughter, Dorotea. Shortly afterwards, the husband, bored with routine domesticity, joins the company of some young libertines, and conceives a passion for one of them, Cecilia. In order to win the favors of this beautiful and wilful woman, the count devises a scheme in which he pretends to have received a letter from his wife's parents requesting a visit to them by their daughter and granddaughter. At the same time he orders a faithful servant to kill his wife as soon as she has embarked on the voyage. (Because Dorotea has just been named the heir of the Count's brother, the Count decides to keep her with him, the better to control the newly acquired wealth). Sabina's ship is captured by pirates in the pay of the malevolent servant; following the latter's plan, they subsequently inform the Count that his wife drowned and her body has been found ashore. The Count then marries Cecilia, and she introduces dissolute gatherings into the mansion which she insists that her chaste step-daughter attend. Dorotea tries to obey the wishes of Cecilia, but withdraws from the riotous parties once she sees the risks to her honor and virtue. The step-mother gives vent to her rage at having her wishes frustrated. She writes to the Count, absent on business, that his daughter has been behaving scandalously, especially with Lidoro, a cousin who accompanied the two women after their departure from Spain. The Count returns sooner than Cecilia had expected. She, who has been entertaining a new lover, finds herself forced to help him escape. This her gallant accomplishes by letting himself down from the window of Dorotea's bedroom. The father, returning at that moment, becomes furious on witnessing what appears to him ample confirmation of Cecilia's accusation against his daughter. He then orders the same faithful servant to carry the unfortunate girl to a country residence, and to leave her shut up there until he determines what to do with her.

Meanwhile, Lidoro has fled to Spain to seek help from the family. Sabina's brother, Eugenio, leaves with the cousin immediately in a brigantine, and this vessel, together with two others overcomes a pirate ship. The two Spaniards recognize that a jewel worn by one of the pirates is the same as the one Sabina had brought with her from her home. The pirates, the same by rare coincidence as had been engaged to murder Sabina, confess that they abandoned her on an uninhabited island. They then dressed the cadaver of an unknown woman in her clothing, and then informed the Count of the supposed death of his wife. This terrible confession, communicated to a magistrate, results in an order to jail the Count and Cecilia. The latter dies shortly after entering the prison, and the Count, finally apprehended, directs the two Spaniards to the country house where Dorotea is being held captive. On the way to the house, the group learns from a Spanish officer, a friend of Eugenio's by another extraordinary coincidence, that Sabina is still living. They eventually do find the young girl, and effect a happy reunion. Sabina, who has now rejoined them, relates how she survived so long on the island and how she was saved by a Spanish ship, captained, in

still another coincidence, by the same Spanish officer who had informed Lidoro and Eugenio that she had been rescued. The Count comes into the presence of his wife and daughter and humbly begs their pardon for his offenses; he promises on his knees to reform. At the end, back at the Count's estates, Dorotea rejects all the young men who come to seek her hand because she prefers to live contentedly with her parents in virtuous retirement.

The marvel is that all of this takes in the thirty pages devoted to the narrative! How Sabiu attained such remarkable condensation of his material is due to several stylistic, two of them appearing on the very first page. One is the use of a construction resembling the Latin ablative absolute, by means of which he resumes, usually in a past participle, a completed series of preliminary events –without entering into detailed narration of what took place– and pushes ahead the account of events with a verb in the preterite (I have modernized the spellings):

y habiendo tomado conocimiento con un caballero de la misma [ciudad], empezó a frecuentar...;

y precisando a partirse, manifestó a Sabina su amor;

que enterados [sus padres] del asunto, y movidos de tan ventajoso casamiento, adhirieron a la pretensión del Conde;

y divulgada la noticia de su llegada, acudieron sus amigos a darle el parabién de su venida;

Pasados los días de cumplimientos, empezó Sabina a pensar...

The second stylistic device is similar to the first, but consists of the preterite joined to a present participle:

empezó a frecuentar las tertulias y casas de distinción, conciliándose el aprecio de los concurrentes;

Sabina le respondió, dejándolo todo a la disposición de sus padres;

adhirieron a la pretensión del conde, acelerando las bodas...

In these ways the author can, in one page, marry and unknown Austrian officer to a Spanish lady, with the consent both of the young lady and her parents, return the happy couple to a German city, establish the newly married countess in her home while she awaits the birth of her daughter.

Other means to speed up the unfolding of the plot are also found in the repertory of the author. Sabiu chooses not to portray the distinctive or individualized features of things that are generally admitted or can be easily imagined. Instead he refers the reader to the category to which they pertain (“those which...,” “the ones who...”). The following examples illustrate this use of the construction *de estos/aquellos... que*:

... el conde de N... joven adornado de aquellas gracias naturales que atraen la voluntad de las damas (pág. 3).

... trabó amistad con unos jóvenes ociosos, de estos cuyo empleo no es otro que el ir de diversión en diversión... (pág. 4).

Su madre había procurado ilustrar su entendimiento, haciéndole aprender aquellas cosas que podían conducir a su instrucción y perfección (pp. 12-13).

To be effective, this citing of the category or type of the person or characteristic treated presupposes a shared system of values. People of the same intellectual or spiritual formation can easily comprehend rapidly, and be in agreement about, what are attractive manners in a young soldier or the most suitable education to infuse virtue in a tender soul. A similar confidence motivated the ethical generalizations that Sabiu allows himself to add to the novel, because he is preaching either to the already convinced or to those disposed to reform themselves in line with his teaching³. When the novelist writes the adjectival phrase I have underlined in the following sentence, he has no need to expatiate about the moral dangers the Countess fears: “no pudo Sabina disimular el disgusto que esto recibía por el peligro de la perdición de su familia, que ignorante de las diversiones *que tanto imperio tienen sobre los corazones de los jóvenes*, vivía contenta en su retiro...” (pág. 4). Sabiu, of course, wanted to be discreet, but he was also confident he could leave the offensive details of immoral behavior to the imagination of his readers. A second example, one of many, serves to point out how dramatic scenes can be left out by using the phrase that once again I have emphasized: “... originándose entre personas de uno y otro sexo acciones y palabras que, con máscara de día de alegría y regocijo, *son el escollo en que se destroza la virtud y honor de los jóvenes*” (pág. 10).

What lively pages a more adventurous novelist might have written with such an opportunity to paint licentious scenes! But the case is not that Sabiu was completely lacking in the ability to sketch animated occasions. He catches with sure touches the excited preparations for the wedding of the Count to Cecilia⁴, and in one or two instances shows the talent that he could have used to

3. Even though the addressee is a public already receptive to his message, the novelist often seeks to impress the reader. Generally Sabiu chooses a middle style for his narration, avoiding both the familiar and the sublime or elegant. But at times he sets aside clear and direct expression to adorn his prose with a more elevated diction. Thus, for example, the Count's home becomes an “asilo del desorden, y teatro de mal entendidos” (pág. 4). Other examples: “la antorcha resplandeciente de la razón” (pág. 10); “flores odoríferas” (pág. 11). He also uses periphrasis for the same pretentious purpose: “se quejó tiernamente a la perturbadora de su sosiego” (pág. 5); “donde había gozado de las caricias del objeto de su pena” (pág. 7); “la desastrada muerte de la que le dio el ser” (pág. 8). One might also note the clumsy similes that he writes to increase the literary tone of his work: “y semejante al enfermo que, acosado de vehementes dolores, no omite los remedios más penosos y repugnantes para conseguir alivio, así el conde...” (pág. 6); “Cual nave que, roto el árbol mayor al ímpetu de una furiosa tempestad, se deja llevar a todos vientos hecha juguete de las olas, se halla la triste Dorotea combatida...” (pág. 8).

4. “En la casa todo era alegría, enhorabuenas y parabienes; la escala parecía enjambre de abejas; gentes de toda clase subían y bajaban continuamente; en la cocina y comedor se veían

advantage. Nevertheless, there is evidence that it was not his lack of ability that kept him from dramatizing certain events, but that he did not want to do so. We see, for example, that the confrontation of Cecilia and Dorotea, when the former vainly insists that her step-daughter form part of the dissolute gatherings, is narrated without a trace of tension; it appears in the driest possible manner:

... levántase colérica, y valiéndose de los fueros de madrastra [sic], le manda con imperio que dé gusto a los espectadores; pero la virtuosa joven resiste con la mayor entereza el precepto de Cecilia... (pág. 13).

He provides no direct expression of their conflict, he gives no account of the acrimony or the anguish of the moment. Even more obvious in the following examples is Sabiu's intention only to allude to the bitter sharp words without quoting them:

... Le reprendió [i.e., el conde a su hija] la acción de desprecio que había cometido la noche antecedente contra la que le había puesto en lugar de su madre [...] hasta que entrando Cecilia, no pudiendo disimular el odio que había concebido contra la inocente doncella, con palabras ásperas llenas de ira la mandó retirar a su cuarto... (pág. 16).

[Dorotea, ignorante de la calumnia contra su virtud escrita por Cecilia, a su padre] le ve con el rostro pálido dirigirse a ella, y con palabras llenas de indignación tratarla con las expresiones más feas! (pág. 18).

With the telling, instead of the dramatizing, of these encounters, the author saves himself from writing numerous pages. But if we have seen some of the means Sabiu used to reduce the length of his novel, there remains the problem of why he did so. Some light is shed on the question by a passage which begins with another example of the allusive manner I mentioned above. This is the episode in which the Count, deeply stirred by the reunion with Sabina and Dorotea, responds to the happiness of wife and daughter:

Las expresiones amorosas de Sabina, y la suspensión de su hija, derramando una y otra copiosas lágrimas, enternecieron el corazón del conde, y viniéndole a la memoria su crueldad [...] se arroja a los pies de su esposa. Asústase al pronto la condesa, pero mirando que es el conde se esfuerza en levantarlo enternecida entre sus brazos, sin acertar a hablarle palabra... (pág. 26).

What exactly are "las expresiones amorosas" of Sabina the author does not explain, but neither does he leave the scene in such flat terms. He begins to add

multitud de criados, unos disponiendo las viandas, otros componiendo las mesas, y otros preparando los licores. [...] Llegada la noche ya estaba todo dispuesto para un magnífico sarao, y acercándose la hora, la multitud de coches de los que concurrían hacía estremecer toda la casa. Las salas estaban adornadas con el mayor primor; las luces se tocaban unas con otras; multitud de flores odoríferas se habían esparcido sirviendo de hermosa alfombra; por el suelo se habían derramado diferentes aguas espirituosas, cuya fragancia era bastante a poner en movimiento los miembros más amortiguados" (pp. 10-11).

an affective coloring with the tears and with the repetition –somewhat clumsy in truth– of *enternecieron* and *enternecida*⁵. Varying the technique of reproducing, or only alluding to, the dialogue of his characters, Sabiu leaves Dorotea and Sabina so seized by violent emotion that they can muster no speech. The novelist then continues:

... pero éste, permaneciendo a los pies de la condesa, le dice: “No, querida esposa, no soy digno de tus brazos, sino merecedor del más cruel castigo. Yo he perseguido tu virtud; ¡ah!, me confundo al acordarme de mis iniquidades”. Pero la condesa, insistiendo en levantarlo, *enternecida* le dice: “Vos, querido esposo, conocéis vuestro delito, y sentís haberlo ejecutado. Basta esto para que yo me olvide de tantos trabajos como me habéis acusado, volviendo a tener en mi pecho la estimación que siempre os he profesado.

This time the novelist provides the very words of his characters; he does so, most likely, because he wants to put in relief the moral teaching. The husband expresses contrition, and his wife responds with her pardon in an exemplary Christian fashion. These virtuous acts gain in their persuasive effectiveness when the exact expression of repentance and absolution can resound in the sensibility of the reader. Moreover, the third introduction of a form of the word *tierno* (“*enternecida* le dice”) reinforces the picture of a magnanimous nature in Sabina.

From the foregoing one may reach the conclusion that the author does not employ sentimentalism with the simple motive of stirring the emotions of the reader, or of providing through sympathy a way to enter the narrative. Its use seems more deliberate, as if the intention was not only to move the emotions but also to move the reader to follow the example of the characters⁶.

It is possible to cite another example of this technique, one that is particularly valuable because at first glance it appears to be nothing more than a trite dramatization of a heroine in distress. I have in mind the episode in which the wicked servant (“el bárbaro conductor”, “el vil verdugo”) carries off Dorotea to the seclusion ordered by her father. Sabiu writes, suppressing what is not needed for his moral purpose:

Con palabras ásperas le hace saber a Dorotea el precepto de su padre; mas sus suspiros, capaces de enternecer el corazón más inhumano, no fueron bastantes a que el cruel ejecutor se compadeciese de la infeliz doncella [...] cerró con ligereza la puerta, dejándola en la mayor aflicción (pág. 19).

5. Other lapses of the same order: “los furiosos huracanes pretenden con sus furiosos bramidos” (pág. 17); “cuando todos estaban enternecidos a vista de lance tan tierno” (pág. 25). Such faults indicate considerable haste in the composition of the novel.

6. Álvarez Barrientos (1991), writing in a different context, came to the conclusion: “a partir de los años sesenta la unión del sentimiento y la razón se entiende como la forma literaria más completa de expresión del ser humano, creo que no debemos separar uno y otro elementos a la hora de analizar y juzgar las novelas” (pág. 226).

Thus far we see only the most commonplace melodrama. Sabiu, however, reveals his strategy in the paragraph that follows directly:

Luego que los primeros ímpetus del dolor dieron lugar a la reflexión, procuró Dorotea aprovecharse de las instrucciones que le dio la hermosa doncella [i.e., the personification of virtue] que había visto en sueños, repitiendo varias veces: “En vano los furiosos huracanes pretenden con sus furiosos bramidos atemorizar a mis alumnos”. Estas expresiones la consolaban, y la hicieron permanecer alegre en medio de sus desgracias, esperando que algún día se apiadaría el Cielo de su inocencia (pág. 19).

The fact that faith in God allows an “infeliz doncella” to become “alegre” in the course of a few lines makes abundantly clear that the novelist is subordinating the sentimental element to his moralizing intentions.

To the same end, Sabiu writes out certain passages of dialogue, and elsewhere severely condenses the narration of the heroines’ fluctuating fortunes. He does not want to show off his gift of invention by extending the account of their adventures; this would have rendered him guilty of the fault of writing fanciful, and therefore corrupting, fictions. The incidents in the novel are only pretexts to lead attention toward the ethical lesson, and this assertion finds oblique support in the way Sabiu pays little mind to verisimilitude in his treatment of time. The novelist has his story jump from Dorotea as a little girl hugging her mother’s knees to her as a nubile young woman in the space of the few months in which we were led to believe the Count became fascinated by the alluring wiles of Cecilia. Nor is it credible that Sabina would have passed – or indeed could have passed – a year alone on a deserted island. But when it serves his purpose, Sabiu will slow the narrative pace and construct more believable episodes. Then he reproduces the words of his characters, allows himself a lengthy descriptive passage about the second marriage of the Count with Cecilia, or spells out the reuniting with Sabina and Dorotea. Doubtlessly this is how we should understand the subtitle the author gave his little work. It is “original” because it is not harmful like the foreign novels in translation, but a novel that is Spanish and “moral”.

If we pause to consider more closely the edification the author hoped to offer in *Sabina y Dorotea*, we quickly see that it should not be dismissed as a simplistic teaching that we all live under divine Providence. Early in the reading of the novel one sees how Sabiu introduces ethical teachings that might be said to bear a Stoic cast. On various occasions he condemns excess. Thus we learn about the debauched Cecilia, “aunque lo ocultaba le amaba [al conde] con exceso” (pág. 5); or later, when she falls into a faint, that it was an “efecto funesto de una pasión desenfadada” (pág. 13). We see Lidoro gently reproving his cousin Dorotea, who has given way to grief on hearing the news of her mother’s supposed death, for “una tristeza tan inmoderada” (pág. 8). After the grand banquet held to celebrate the wedding of Cecilia to the Count, the poor townspeople rush to the mansion “a recoger los despojos de la superfluidad y de la gula” (pág. 11). Eugenio advises Sabina and Dorotea, when finally

reunited, to moderate “los excesos de alegría” that she feels (pág. 31). These several admonitions against indulging extreme emotions constitute a further caution against identifying Sabiu’s work with the developing sentimental novel at the end of the century.

In addition to censuring excess, Sabiu goes so far as to portray virtue as an allegorical figure. So it is that “una hermosa doncella, su ropaje blanco como el arminio”, appears in a dream to the unfortunate Dorotea the night that follows her refusal to comply with Cecilia’s outrageous demands on her. Even so, there is nothing specifically religious in this concept of virtue. It does not teach the imitation of Christ nor does it aid the individual to draw nearer God. What this personification of virtue offers is a kind of vacuous happiness, “la paz sosiego y las delicias”, or “la tranquilidad y conveniencias” (pág. 14). La Virtud does urge Dorotea to follow all the teachings of her mother with constancy because the dangers that surround her will be impotent before her resolve. And, of course, the novelist repeats her words exactly. All of this, however, bears an air of vagueness. Although there is mention of “Dios” (pp. 9, 28, 29), the references to “supremo Gobernador” (pág. 9) “Cielo” (pp. 11, 19) and “Divina Providencia” (pp. 7, 9) convey a diffuse impression of a mysterious divinity. Not once does one find in the novel the name of Jesus or the Virgin Mary, and, notwithstanding two marriages, there is never a word about priest or sacrament.

However, the author does introduce more clearly Christian notes into his story. One can almost hear the advice of a confessor reflected in Sabina’s reaction when she learns of the infidelities of the Count shortly after their marriage; she “procuraba disimular hasta ver si su sufrimiento y halagos retraerían al Conde de su nuevo modo de vida [...] con palabras tiernas, llenas de cariño, le reconvinó de su modo de proceder tan ajeno de un pecho noble” (pág. 4). The pardon that Sabina later concedes so immediately and generously to her repentant husband also serves as an example of Christian charity (even if it does not persuade us in psychological terms). And it should be added that the lessons of avoiding extremes in favor of a prudent moderation and of maintaining faith in divine Providence are teachings that go to the heart of the Catholic faith.

The advocacy of these doctrines without directly invoking the role of the Church suggests a slightly different approach to understanding the novel’s moralizing. It would seem that the work sought to contribute more to inner spirituality than to devout practices, simply because the latter are never mentioned. This novel, like others, appears to address the spiritual anxiety of the time, such as we find exemplified in the confusion of a Tediato, and in the excesses of his grief. In the disorder of the *Noches lúgubres*, God is perceived as remote, vague, and indifferent to the suffering of human beings.

Uncertain in his understanding of the ends of life, Cadalso’s anguished protagonist seems to set aside questions referring to salvation. Instead of seeking the Supreme Good, Tediato changes into a compassionate man who does good, in effect embracing ethical, rather than theological, ends. The

response that *Sabina y Dorotea*, offers, figuratively of course, is to help the reader see that although we do not comprehend His ways, we are all creatures of a God who understands perfectly what most becomes us. Sabiu's virtuous protagonists act fully aware of what they owe God. Lidoro, for example, reminds the tearful Dorotea of the maxims with which Sabina sought to arm her "contra los varios acaecimientos de lo que llaman fortuna" (pág. 8). Instead of a capricious Fortuna, Lidoro explains "cual madre tierna que, teniendo a su hijo en el regazo, le acaricia, libre de los peligros [...] con mayor esmero la Divina Providencia cuida de aquellos que descansan en sus brazos" (pp. 8-9). The beautiful allegorical lady who represents Virtue acknowledges that her attractions are those "dotes con que me ha adornado el Altísimo" (pág. 15). She adds that the joys that emanate from a moral life "serán mayores con los auxilios de la gracia" (pág. 15). Sabina, trying to pacify the anger of Eugenio, when the latter confronts the Count, says to him: "Hermano, nosotros seríamos ingratos a los favores que la Providencia nos dispensa si no depusiésemos los resentimientos que habíamos concebido contra mi esposo" (pág. 26). The heroes of this novel do not bear themselves as self-centered people insistent upon doing their will. Rather, while maintaining their integrity, they surrender to the will of God.

Sabina's phrase that we have just read, "seríamos ingratos a los favores que la Providencia nos dispensa", suggest a jansenist context in which to consider the active cultivation in novels of the providential theme. Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva, one of the outstanding figures in the so-called Jansenist movement in Spain, published in 1783 a translation of the *Poema de San Próspero contra los ingratos*. P. Villanueva makes clear in his prologue how the fifth-century saint from Aquitania wrote against the errors of the Semipelagianos: "no los llama herejes sino ingratos, esto es, no agradecidos al supremo Autor de la gracia, en el mismo sentido en que San Agustín llama ingrata al alma que se atribuye a sí propia lo que tiene de Dios, especialmente la justificación, y se engríe en sus buenas obras como si procediesen de ella y las hubiera adquirido por sí" (pág. xi). A fundamental part of San Próspero's teaching is our acquiescence in divine Providence even though it may be incomprehensible to us: "No osamos pues con desmedido anhelo / romper el sello del eterno libro, / ni a lo oculto correr el sacro velo: / bástamos ver del Todo-poderoso / las obras, al autor reconociendo / de do todos los bienes se derivan, / sin el cual nada bueno el alma emprende" (pág. 103).

In citing P. Villanueva's translation of San Próspero, I do not mean to suggest that *Sabina y Dorotea* is a work directly inspired by Jansenism or that other contemporary novels on the theme of divine Providence should be affiliated with that movement. Rather I propose that one tendency complements the other in a joint effort to strengthen the religious convictions of the Spanish people against the secularizing and atheistic pressures of the epoch. Sabiu is extremely conscious of the contemporary atmosphere, for he makes repeated references to the immoral times, such as: "las borrascas de un siglo tan corrompido en que peligró la juventud" (pág. 5); "los peligros de un siglo tan corrompido" (pág. 7); "las continuas borrascas de unos tiempos tan calamito-

sos” (pág. 8). A tell-tale mark of the last two decades of the eighteenth century is a characteristic with which Sabiu charges Cecilia when he speaks of her “bello rostro, y aire marcial” (pág. 5)⁷. Cecilia in that way represents a part of the noble and upper-bourgeois society with her tertulias, her parties and dances. Sabiu makes very clear that he is treating these social classes when he identifies Sabina as a “dama noble” whom the Count meets when he was at the “casas de distinción” (pág. 3). Later the Count, thinking Sabina dead, plans to marry Cecilia with no objection from his friends “por ser ésta de una de las principales familias de la ciudad” (pág. 10). The author in this way makes more reprehensible the conduct of the wicked characters, a point he strongly emphasizes on showing the repugnance of Dorotea when she witnesses at a gathering how those who previously had shown “el lustre de su nacimiento” came, after much drinking, to “proceder como el hombre de la más baja esfera” (pág. 10). The novelist thus not only addresses the contemporary problem of a vain and useless aristocracy but directs his criticism and counsel to the people most likely to buy his book.

This awareness of class, as we have seen, does not serve some stale plot line about a frustrated marriage between lovers of different social strata. Sabiu writes as a moralist. He advocates the occupied life in retirement in opposition to the socializing at Cecilia’s gatherings, to the point of not having Dorotea marry. At the end, she embraces a rural retreat in the company of her parents. As a novel, this outcome is not satisfying, in part because the daughter does not even follow the example of her mother who finally achieved a tranquil life with her husband. But then, perhaps it would be more judicious not to judge *Sabina y Dorotea* as one would a modern novel, but as an *exemplum*. To do so would have the advantage of studying the work with different criteria. It would no longer be a fictional work with scanty characterization, without lively dialogue or drama, displaying episodes forced into a narrow moralistic mold. The work would come to be instead an account of the test that both virtuous and sinful characters pass through so that at the end the former emerge confirmed in their devotion to a spiritual life, strengthened in their confidence in God. In this way it might be permissible to extend the subtitle of the work to “Novela moral, original y ejemplar”.

7. Since he seems immersed in the end of his century, it is difficult to understand why Sabiu situated his novel so much earlier in time; for the novel begins: “Uno de los comandantes que a los principios de este siglo vinieron con las tropas austriacas a España fue el conde de N...” The author does not seem to gain anything by making his protagonist an Austrian, and therefore perhaps a partisan of the Archduke Carlos. Valencia, to be sure, mostly supported the Hapsburg pretender to the throne, but was this done to make the Count appear in a worse light?

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