Amatory Fiction of Eliza Haywood: A Study of Protofeminism in Her Select Novels

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This is to certify that Amrita Ghosh has written her thesis *Amatory Fiction of Eliza Haywood: A Study of Protofeminism in Her Select Novels* under my direct supervision; and that she has fulfilled the statutory requirements relating to the submission of her thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts of the University of Burdwan as envisaged in the University Ordinances.

This is also to certify that the research work embodies the results of an original investigation made by Amrita Ghosh and has not been submitted before, in this or in any other form, by her for any degree whatever of any institution.

(Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay)
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I must mention here that I have followed the norms of citation and documentation as prescribed by the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Seventh Edition).

Amrita Ghosh (signature)
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Chapter-1: Introduction
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Introduction

Historicist and feminist accounts of the ‘rise of the novel’ have ignored the phenomenon of the rise of Eliza Haywood as one of the professional women writers of amatory fiction prior to the advent of the sentimental novel in 1740s. But along with the ‘acknowledged’ fathers of the English novel, the most widely read novelist of the period, from 1720s to 1750s, was Eliza Haywood, one of the three, ‘unacknowledged’ mothers of amatory fiction, who were popularly known as ‘the Fair Triumvirate of Wit’. This Tory woman novelist of the early eighteenth century, indeed, challenged and reworked both the contemporary gender ideologies and the generic convention through the ‘seductive power’ of her pen. Keeping the changing scenario of the emergence of female readership in her mind, Haywood, for the first time, presents the notion of radical, pro-active heroine, who decides to circulate her sexuality as a form of her empowerment. Thus, the amatory fictions of Haywood much before the rise of the term ‘feminism’, in its representation of woman as the engineer and weaver of the plot and the game of seduction, revolt against the patriarchal convention of the fiction of seduction, diminish the claustrophobic notions of femininity, and attain the status of the proto-feminist text. By criss-crossing the hypersexualised language of desire with the language of power and control, Haywood is creating for the burgeoning female readers a utopia of power and a zone, where women could have agency to invert the gender hierarchies of the patriarchal mindset. Such hypersensitive, proto-feminist narratives of Haywood meet not only their superficial goals of titillation and profitable amusement, but most significantly throw a challenge to the androcentrism of literary discourse, that endeavoured to keep language formalised, spheres separate and women’s position liminal.

Eliza Haywood exploits the form of amatory fiction with new possibilities in order to express the latent, proto-feminist ideas and to establish a degree of female ‘agency’ and a
form of female empowerment. Ros Ballaster defines amatory fiction in *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*:

The equation between the female ‘form’, or body, and female forms, or amatory fictions, is the subject of this chapter, which explores the established modes of love fiction available to English women novelists of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, and the role of the female reader inscribed in their making. The term ‘amatory’ is employed here as a means of distinguishing a particular body of narrative fiction by women which was explicitly erotic in its concentration on the representation of sentimental love. (31)

Amatory fiction of the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century was developed from the seventeenth century French heroic romances and the shorter novella. It apparently seems to be the sensationalized version of the romance tradition’s fusion of heroic feats and amatory liaison. With its surging popularity in the marketplace, amatory fiction had undergone metamorphosis regarding the ethos of love and sexuality. It served the dual purpose of the presentation of the erotic fantasy and an escape from the mundane existence to the amorous, transcendent world of fiction. About the characteristic features of this genre of amatory fiction John Richetti writes in *The English Novel in History 1700-1780*:

Derived from the seventeenth-century French heroic romances and the shorter novella, the amatory novella of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century in England looks at first like nothing more than a simplification and often crudely sensationalized version of the romance
tradition’s intertwining of heroic action and amatory complexity. But as it
develops in the literary marketplace of the early eighteenth century in
England, amatory fiction eventually transforms its sources and along with
them the ethos of love and honour that supported the tradition of romance . . .
in English amatory fiction as it emerges at the end of the seventeenth
and into the early decades of the eighteenth century, heroic identity and
amatory delicacy are largely displaced by a melodramatic or libertine
sexuality, and “romance” begins to acquire its modern meaning of
amorous (and somewhat unreal or impractical) encountering. Underneath
its stylistic extravagance, preposterous actions, and carelessly formulaic
approach to characterization, this new “romance” asserts a continuity
between narrative and ordinary life. Quotidian reality is represented as an
active impediment to immediate and spontaneous attraction . . . Amatory
fiction in England would seem to have served precisely as an escapist
distraction from mundane existence . . . The novella’s deliberate unreality
and its opportunities for readers’ romantic or erotic fantasy were probably
the two main reasons for its enduring popularity . . . (18-21)

The form of amatory fiction attained burgeoning popularity with the emergence of Eliza
Haywood as one of the popular writers of amatory fiction during the 1720s to 1750s. As one
of the ‘Fair Triumvirate of Wit’ Haywood inherited the heritage of Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley, who were “living by the pen”. At the hand of Haywood amatory fictions became a vehicle for expression of gender inequality and the latent female desire, that were hitherto suppressed in literature as well as in the society by the constrains of the patriarchal mindset. Under the facade of the feminist fantasy Haywood projects a utopian mode of female emancipation and empowerment, that were absent in the quotidian reality. But such new kinds of writing and heroine-centred fantasies by Haywood gave the women readers a new outlook as well as a new confidence in thinking about their lives from female subject position and female point-of-view. This study endeavours to explore the causes, that contributed enormously to the rise of Eliza Haywood as one of the popular writers of amatory fiction at the crucial juncture of such a whirling socio-cultural paradigm, and how these amatory fictions of Haywood bear testimony to be addressed as the precursor of feminist texts.

By the end of the seventeenth century England itself was experiencing a certain degree of economic prosperity, which in turn was brought about by its relatively stable political condition. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 had led to social as well as constitutional changes. Along with a Whig constitutional ruler on the Dutch pattern the country inherited a Whig oligarchy on Dutch lines. With the rapid advancement in the field of trade and commerce and the rise of the ‘middle class’, society was experiencing an embourgeoisement, which contributed tremendously to the increase of the public literacy rate. Through the next two centuries the “middle class” became a powerful class, and they tried to let their voice be heard in the domains of entertainment, art as well as literature. The rise of the novel in the eighteenth century as a manifestation of the aims and aspirations of the “middle class”, and its establishment as the dominant literary form of the next centuries bears testimony to this change. At this period the mercantile interest began to rival the aristocratic interest. This shift
in power resulted in the growth of the cities which became the seats of financial and business transactions as well as the centres of dissemination of culture. The economic and cultural heart of England was London. In the eighteenth century its population grew from 5,00,000 to 9,00,000. London at this time was a significant centre for literature and culture. London was the world of church, theatre, publication centre, print shop, market, pleasure garden, taverns, and coffee houses, which played a significant role in the genesis of the reading public.

Between 1650 to 1850 almost two thousand coffee houses existed in London. These coffee houses were the places, where social energy circulated most freely. The function of the coffee houses were to provide rallying points. People congregated, exchanged views, formed groups in such “public sphere”. The formation of public bodies like clubs and coffee-houses provided an effective ‘public sphere’ for debate and discussion of these burgeoning reading public. There was a large demand for prose works such as pamphlets, sermons, periodical essays and of course fiction. The position as well as the condition of the eighteenth century writers were changing. This period witnessed alternations in the law of copyright, the decline of the aristocratic patronage, the rise of different influential publishers and increase of the numbers of the reading public. All these issues again generated more commercial relation between the author and the bookseller. The thriving book business at this period also indicates the emergence of a large number of reading public, who made the literary market feasible. But condition of the women before the eighteenth century was miserable. They got hardly little options for education, and they had to depend on their husband, father or brother for their living. They did not get any opportunity to participate in the world of male “public sphere”. In this context Katharine M. Rogers writes in Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England:

Despite some improvement in attitudes toward the family, eighteenth-century Englishwomen lived in a traditional patriarchal society, male-centered and
male-dominated. It is true that many women acquired education, confident articulateness, and satisfying lives; and that many men genuinely respected women as well as treating them considerately in personal relationships. Nevertheless, all the social institutions supported the interpretation of woman’s role voiced by Richard Steele: “All she has to do in this world, is contained within the Duties of a Daughter, a Sister, a Wife, and a Mother.” For women are “no other than an additional Part of the Species,” and to realise this is “for their own Happiness and Comfort, as well as that of those for whom they were born.” . . . (7)

Under the constraint of marriage the life of the women of the early eighteenth century became almost miserable. They had neither any political right nor any right to property. Through marriage they were turned into objects and their lives became accumulation of same, repetitive house-work without any sort of creativity. About the condition of the eighteenth century women Pat Rogers writes in *The Augustan Vision*:

For the most part, female authors were safely channelled and fettered within domestic subjects. Few women had the experience of life which major creative writing presupposes; and fewer still the ambition which is born of independence. One of the obstacles lay in the fact that women were exposed in an especially acute form to the stultifying influences visible at large. As Dorothy Marshall has written: ‘Men may leap over class barriers. It is only when women do not
find them an impediment to social intercourse that they lose importance.’

That moment had certainly not come in 1688. Of course, women themselves were often the most jealous guardians of distinctions in rank and position.

But there were other factors at work: for instance, women had no sort of entrée into the professions, let alone the armed services, and these were the areas of life where social mobility was most apparent... But women could not be lawyers or dons or prelates or sailors. All right, many such careers were open to talent. But women did not have careers. (88-89)

At this period the lives of the women were controlled by the wishes of their fathers or husbands or brothers. Woman had no freedom to take decision for herself by herself. There was always the demand for chastity of women. But the same concepts were not applied in the case of men. Katharine M. Rogers narrates the wretched condition of the eighteenth century women through the experience of Hannah More in *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*:

As she saw, freedom for most women could only be apparent. Even in a benign, cultured home like her own, women were loaded with meaningless social obligations and inhibited from committing themselves to serious work.

And always a woman’s comfort, fulfilment, and self-respect depended on the good will of the men around her. She could be educated if her father or brother was an educated man who took an interest in her mind; her
wishes and judgment could influence her manner of living if her husband permitted them to; she could marry a congenial man if one came into her social circle and her parents approved him; she could have money to spend or give to others if her father or husband had it and would share it with her . . .

Since every woman’s fate depended on others, every woman was liable to oppression. Woolstonecraft recognised this when she made independence her primary claim in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. But most people refused to see the dangers and intrinsic humiliations of dependency. Rather, they rationalised that it was good for woman because suited to her Nature . . .

Chastity and all the other qualities were differently interpreted according to the assumed differing needs of women and men. Women were expected to show altruism that no one would have presumed to demand from men . . .

Defined in relationship to men, women tended to be seen as a homogeneous group separate from humanity in general. They were evaluated in terms of their limited role in society, and hence expected to conform to a uniform standard for wife and motherhood, while men were free to manifest excellence in different ways . . . (35-37)
Yet this period observed a new trend of the spread of education. With the spread of education, the number of female readers was also increasing day by day. Along with this, the number of female writers was also growing rapidly. The production of mass-market book first becomes possible during this period. Besides, the late seventeenth century witnessed a widespread development of ‘circulating libraries’ and ‘public libraries’. The earliest English public libraries were established at Norwich in 1608 and at Bristol in 1613. All these issues contributed enormously to the emergence of a large number of ‘female readership’, who made the literary market feasible. In this context Katharine M. Rogers writes in *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*:

... The most practical way toward this goal was private reading, and women became an increasingly important element in the reading public. As more lower class women became literate and more upper-class ones interested in reading, more books and periodicals were directed to them, often with a specific aim of education. (30)

The thriving book-business during this period also bears testimony to this exceptional event of the rise of female readers. The significance of the figure of the ‘new’ female readers can be observed in the contemporary periodicals like “The Tatler”, “The Spectator”, where Addison and Steele address the ‘fair sex’ as their readers. Cheryl Turner writes about this importance of the emerging female readers in *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*:

Middle- and upper-class women( mainly from London and fashionable provincial centres like Bath) have been viewed as an important part of the
growing readership which was cultivated assiduously by the increasing ‘tribe’
of novelists. This development is attributed to an increase in female leisure
arising from the impact of industrial production on domestic tasks and from
the employment of the more servants. This was itself a result of growing affluence
and social aspirations within the middle ranks. Women from this stratum, it is
argued, were consigned by their narrow social and economic role to inactive lives
filled with voracious novel reading. Improvements in education produced literature
but inadequately educated young women for whom the novel was a potent mixture
of romantic escapism and moral guidance. . . These were the circumstances that led
women to take up the pen for money. (15)

Though the publication industry bears evidence to this issue of the emergence of the
female readers as well as the female writers during this period, their importance in the history
of the literary production was belittled. Cheryl Turner writes about the marginalisation of the
women writers of the eighteenth century like Haywood in *Living by the Pen: Women Writers
in the Eighteenth Century*:

> Why has this general outline failed to expose the role of women novelists?

This is not because their existence has been ignored entirely, although there
are scholars, like Watt, who managed to eliminate them from their accounts.

As we have seen, even the selective vision that prevailed amongst historians
before the 1970s encompassed some individual women novelists in its scope
and there has been a long-standing association between the domestic
sentimentality of contemporary romances and the domestic orientation of
the women who wrote as well as read them. It is more a matter of historical
perspectives and priorities. As writers, women’s contribution to the upward
trajectory of the novel has been widely regarded as marginal (with specific exceptions). On the other hand, there is a broad consensus that women readers
were central to the expansion of popular literature (including but not confined
to the novel) and the cultural flexing of the middle ranks. . . . Subsequent advances
in our knowledge of the women writers of this period have now placed their
professionalism on the agenda for proper consideration. Biographical studies of
individuals like Manley, Haywood, Scott, and Smith have revealed much
about the social, economic, and legal plight of such women, whilst general
studies of the novelists of the period have also ranged over such factors as
the composition of the readership and the financial rewards of publication . . .

Recent critics of eighteenth-century women’s fiction have engaged to differing extents in a discussion of that environment and of the contemporary condition
of women. Between them they have identified several major factors: the changing
role and status of women within public ideology; the effect of this upon familial
relations; the impact of limited employment opportunities in the context of
economic dependence for women from the middle stratum; increasing access
to education for certain women; and the character of the curriculum. (15-17)

At such a crucial juncture there was an urgent need to create a distinctive identity for
the female ‘author’ as well as the female ‘reader’. While the rising middle class was in quest
of reading as a source of information, illumination and entertainment, middle class women
were looking for affirmation and amplification of their own new lifestyles. Here Eliza
Haywood came into her own. Haywood was able to exploit the form of this new genre in
order to provide such representations for the middle class society, especially for the women
and she was also able to take advantage of the new trends in the publishing industry.
Haywood became immensely popular among the contemporary readers as she proceeded self-
consciously in the middle class direction. About the emergence of women writers of novel at
this period like Haywood Pat Rogers writes in *The Augustan Vision*:

> It was only in the course of time, after women were theoretically in a position
to produce important work, that suitable vehicles presented themselves. Forms
such as epic were encrusted with a long tradition of male supremacy. It required
a new form, a *tabula rasa*, if women writers were genuinely to create on an
equal footing. This chance came with the novel, which had strong tentacular
roots in the romance as this had evolved in the hands of Mlle de Scudery and,
on a more serious level, Mme de La Fayette. The novel was adapted from the
outset to a domestic framework. (92)
Haywood tried to present this new genre of fiction as an instrument, which would cater to all these issues apart from being a vehicle for delight as well as instruction. Haywood was perhaps the first female writer, who asserted the validity of middle class experience. Hence she introduced a new type of villain – from the aristocracy and a new heroine as well – from the middle class. Thus the stage was set out for the dual drama of the conflict of class interest, worked out through the battle of the sexes of the amatory fiction. Haywood’s narration concentrates on the matter of assertion of the female self, and her special credit lies in finding a language for the female to articulate her passion. Despite the vituperative attack of Alexander Pope and stringent criticism of other moralists, Haywood’s works remained extremely popular in her own time. One reason for her sustained popularity was that she represented the middle class, that was becoming the backbone of the publishing industry. The middle class found in Haywood a spokeswoman for its concerns. In the backdrop of such a changing milieu Eliza Haywood, through the erotic magnetism of her pen, reinvent the literary form of amatory fiction, that challenges both the established notions of female self and the political representations of the female, both gendered and class-based.

Very little can be known about Eliza Haywood’s life. She was born in 1693 in London. She was proud for her education, that was unusual for a girl at about her time. She began her stage career against the wishes of her family. She left her house in order to continue the stage career and to marry. There is great controversy about the identity of her husband. After a brief married life her husband left her with two children. Now she was bound to earn her ‘living by the pen’. Her experience in her life and versatility were expressed in her oeuvre of writing. Her works include genres, that seem amazing in their combinations. She wrote novellas, amatory fictions, short stories, short novels, scandal chronicles, periodicals, poetry, political satire, plays, theatre criticism, translations, advice manuals, musical comedy and so
on. Dale Spender remarks in *Mothers of the Novel: Hundred Good Women Writers before Jane Austen*:

To have been capable of writing in so many styles and so many forms,

to have been able to adapt, shift, progress, to have modified and experimented,

to have consolidated and innovated as Eliza Haywood did, was in itself a

literary achievement of great merit. One cannot help but think that if

these had been the characteristics of a male author, the novels would

have been hailed as those of a genius. But it was a woman whose

writing showed such remarkable versatility and the work has faded

and been forgotten. (90)

As a result Haywood ultimately emerged as the spectacular novelist of the period. George Whicher (1915) listed sixty seven works and more “possibles” by Haywood. Walter and Clare Jerrold (1929) attributed ninety three publications to Haywood. She emerged as a professional woman writer, who lived by her pen. She set up as a publisher, started newspapers for women, wrote plays and acted there. Haywood’s first novel *Love in Excess* was along with Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* one of the two best-selling novels of the early eighteenth century (Beasley 162). By the end of the first decade of her career Haywood was so identified with fiction that she was generally recognised as the “Mrs. Novel” of Henry Fielding play *The Author’s Farce* (1730)\(^1\).

In spite of being immensely popular as the versatile writer of amatory fiction in her own time, Haywood was stringently denounced by her contemporary writers and moralists.
On this point Dale Spender remarks in *Mothers of the Novel: Hundred Good Women Writers before Jane Austen*:

‘The female Defoe’ and ‘the forerunner of Richardson’ are comments which have been used to describe Eliza Haywood (1693-1756) by the very few critics who have allowed her a place in the literary tradition . . . And Eliza Haywood was among the first with every experiment, and among the few who could claim success. . . And yet in the history of letters it is almost as if she had never existed.(81)

As Haywood was self-consciously writing against the traditional, patriarchal mindset with an aim to break the stereotyped, claustrophobic notions of femininity in her proto-feminist text, she was vilified or damned with faint praise. Alexander Pope blatantly satirised Haywood as one of the ‘shameless Scribblers’:

In this game is expos’d in the most contemptuous manner, the profligate licentiousness of those shameless Scribblers ( for the most part of That sex, which ought least to be capable of such malice or impudence) who in libellous Memoirs and Novels, reveal the faults and misfortunes of both sexes, to the ruin or disturbance, of publick fame or private happiness.

(*The Dunciad*,ii,149n).

Richard Savage severely criticised Haywood for bringing the issue of female sexuality in public. Critics of the later period could, however, detect her contribution in the development
of ‘proto-feminist fiction’. Hence they tried to re-locate, re-analyse and re-discover the works of Haywood, with more and more sympathy than their forebears did, for the ‘unacknowledged’ feats of this British woman writer, who could envisage a utopian zone of female emancipation and female ‘agency’ as a role-model to the burgeoning female readership. James Sterling wrote a complimentary poem to give her the due credit. Haywood receives serious attention and critical reading, in histories of the rise of novel, in Bridget MacCarthy’s book *Women Writers: Their Contribution to the English novel* (1944). MacCarthy almost eulogizes Haywood as “the most prolific writer among Aphra Behn’s female followers”(233). MacCarthy finds that Haywood inherited the tradition of amatory fiction from her predecessors with the sentimentalised picture of the innocent as well as self-willed heroines in the backdrop of the luscious scenes, where man appears as the ‘suave lechers’ or as ‘too amorous beaux’(239), but her treatment of the theme was ingenious. In some of her novels Haywood “sinned against the improved artistic and moral standards of a later age, but she was well in touch with the fictional demands of her own period”(241). She had, to a very considerable extent, the power of adapting herself to a varying aspects of fiction and “it is to this opportunism that her only notable achievements are due”(241). She responded also to tendencies, which constituted the growing point of fiction. So MacCarthy exalts Haywood as “the chameleon of English novelists”(241). Haywood continually adapted herself to the present demands of her reading-public. Hence from the excessive sentimentality and eroticism of *Love in Excess* and *Idalia* she ventured to abandon the old, romantic extravagances and depict real emotions, motives and characters in *The Fortunate Foundlings*. MacCarthy thinks that *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* “is by far the best of all Eliza Haywood’s novels “(244) for the energy and the vivacity of the narrative. The novel was extremely popular with the English reading public and was translated into French. And this
success made it possible for Mrs Haywood “to snap her fingers at critics who were less kind”(247).

John Richetti, in his book *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739* (1969), considers this early woman novelist of amatory fiction as playing a distinctive and separate role in the making of early modern prose fiction. He attributes Haywood’s popularity to her ability to exploit latent sexual and social antagonism in the same narrative form of the ‘scandal chronicle’ (124). He asserts that Haywood, Defoe and Penelope Aubin dominated prose fiction in the decade of the 1720s and Haywood “may have done more than the other two to set the course of the English novel”(154). He emphasises on the ‘seductive’ capacity of the narratives of Haywood’s popular fiction, and describes these popular forms of fiction as ‘fantasy-machines’(9), satisfying readers’ voyeuristic, erotic desires and their moral expectations simultaneously. He thinks that Haywood’s “novels are for that reader a supplement to life rather than a coherent comment on it”(183). Richetti acclaims Haywood as “the female prophet of an oppressed and maligned sex against an organised male conspiracy”(181). As a writer of popular fiction she wanted to provoke erotic fantasy within the “mythology of persecuted female virtue”(182). Haywood’s use of a ‘myth of persecuted innocence’ to drive narrative structure is interpreted as a sign of an eighteenth- century feminism, not yet a political movement, of course, but a set of apparently stirring moral and emotional affirmations’ (181), and a form of nascent feminism. The amatory fictions of Haywood, in the words of John Richetti, convey the message that “The world cannot be changed, but it can be escaped and the tragic female condition transcended”(208). Hence in the scenes of seduction of the amatory fictions of Haywood, the male protagonist is presented, in the words of Haywood, “to serve rather than to master”(187). The major works of feminist literary history in the 1970s were inclined to see women’s amatory fiction in the eighteenth century as nothing more than a few sporadic
attempts to depict female experience faithfully. Even Elaine Showalter in her *A Literature of their Own* (1976) diminishes eighteenth century women writers of amatory fiction with the opinion that “they refused to deal with a professional role, or had a negative orientation toward it . . . they did not see their writing as an aspect of female experience, or as an expression of it” (18-19).

Contemporary feminist critics have pointed out, more prominently, Haywood’s contributions to the rise of the novel, and offered new ways of analysing her texts. For example Dale Spender in *Mothers of the Novel: 100 good women writers before Jane Austen* (1986) almost bemoans the fact that in spite of being the first to experiment with the new genre of novel Eliza Haywood “has never been given the credit for her contribution” (83), and “in the history of letters it is almost as if she had never existed” (81). Hence with the denial of her achievement it has been possible to locate the origins of the novel in the writing of men. Spender proclaims that the growth and development of the novel can be illustrated with reference to the writing of Haywood, “who reveals an extraordinary creative ability, who freely experiments with form and style, and produces an unprecedented and perhaps unparalleled range of novels” (83). Jane Spencer’s *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (1986) presents a meticulous history of women’s relationship to literary authority from the mid-seventeenth to the late eighteenth century. In her introduction she asserts that “the rise of the novel cannot be understood fully without considering how its conventions were shaped by the contributions of a large number of women, their writing deeply marked by the ‘femininity’ insistently demanded of them by the culture to which they belonged” (vii). Spencer credits Haywood with the introduction of interior monologues and with an ability to portray growing self-knowledge that is better developed in her novels than in Richardson’s and Fielding’s. In this context Spencer points out that Haywood is primarily responsible for the genesis of a sub-genre, one “begun by
women and almost exclusive to them: the mistaken heroine who reforms”(141). Spencer concludes with the assertion that Haywood “truly anticipates the moral art of Jane Austen”(14).

Ros Ballaster in *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (1992) dwells on the narrative ambiguity and explicit eroticism of the female-authored amatory fiction of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. Ballaster explores the means by which Eliza Haywood challenged and reworked both contemporary gender ideologies and generic convention. The seduction plot provided the female writers of amatory fiction, especially Haywood a means of dramatising her own appropriation of the “masculine” power of fiction-making. Seduction is employed in the amatory novels of Haywood as a metaphor for both novelistic production (the seduction of the reader by the writer) and partly political machination (the seduction of the public by the politician). Ballaster joins the other recent critics in finding Haywood a revisionary, path-breaking contributor to the history of the rise of novel. She argues that Haywood’s amatory novels “mark the beginnings of an autonomous tradition in romantic fiction”(158). She reminds us that “Haywood’s name...was synonymous with the most extreme excesses of romance”(158). Ballaster thinks that “Haywood’s greatest innovation in the field of amatory fiction was to revitalize the representation of a desiring conflict into social, rather than party political, myth”(157).

John Richetti in *The English Novel in History 1700-1780* (1999) appreciates Eliza Haywood for her immense versatility, which enabled her to reformulate the amatory fiction with multifarious aspects and was the reason behind its “enduring popularity”(21). Richetti admits, “Beginning with the best-selling *Love in Excess* (1719), Eliza Haywood played just about every variation possible on the formulae of amatory narrative through the 1920s and 1930s, as she and her publishers sought to market her as the queen of fictional passion. . .” (22). Richetti thinks that in her amatory fictions Haywood presents herself as a woman writer,
not by her mastery of literary language and learning, but by her spontaneous, uncultivated ability to imagine passion and its effects. In these novels Haywood makes intelligence and verbal ability subordinate to “emotional sublimity”(24), which is beyond words. Richetti points out “the especially hectic quality of Haywood’s style”(25), which only evokes “those central or climactic moments” of consummation, rather than stating it in a controlled, focused way. Richetti identifies this sign of emphasis on emotional evocation of female sensibility in the amatory novels of Haywood as a mode of “authentic self-expression”(26), which is an antithesis to the speech, that stands for the “sign of fraudulent and manipulative self-invention” and “a sign of masculine self-seeking”(26). Richetti addresses these moments of emotional inexpressibility of the heroines as the “essentially female moment, not just for the women that it represents but for the female narrator herself . . .”(26). Richetti points out that Haywood’s novels are also notable for providing the readers the opportunity of “voyeuristic thrill”(32) of being the privileged onlookers to observe and feel with the heroine. Finally Richetti also thinks that Haywood’s amatory fiction inaugurates a new era of amatory fiction by discarding the former tradition of the lingering resonances, nostalgia and ironic disparagement of the present, and by radically promoting “the present, the here and the now with a new immediacy”(32).

Eliza Haywood exploits the form of amatory fiction for the purpose of manifesting ‘women’s rights and position’ in an oblique manner. Her texts focus on the proto-feminist assertion of the female ‘body’ and projection of female subjectivity. The theoretical models of protofeminism, second wave feminism and French Feminism are, by and large, followed in this research to analyse the ‘feminist’ perspectives of these texts. The term protofeminism is used to define the feminist philosophical tradition, anticipated pre-eminently by the women writers, who were the precursors of the modern feminist concepts, yet lived in a time when the term ‘feminism’ was unknown. Haywood’s amatory fictions do not contain the explicit
feminist demands on a socio-political level for women’s rights, which is characteristic of the feminism of the early modern period. Yet she anticipates the modern feminist concepts in an embryonic form in her proto-feminist texts. About the emergence of the new concepts of female rights and female emancipation in the writings of the women writers of the eighteenth century Alice Browne writes in *The Eighteenth century Feminist Mind*:

> At the end of the eighteenth century, a reviewer commented on the number of women writers calling for an improvement in women’s position, and summed up their perception of the three areas where change was needed.

> The first point on this feminist agenda was a call for women’s education to be equal to men’s and a denial that men were intellectually superior to women. The second point concerned the legal and economic weaknesses of women’s position, especially if they were married . . . The third point was an attack on the double standard in sexual morality; for men to demand chastity of women, but not of themselves, was immoral, absurd and damaging to men as well as to women . . .

> Much of this had been discussed throughout the eighteenth century and even earlier, but the combination of these three topics is characteristic of discussions of women’s place at the end of the century. (1-2)

Haywood’s proto-feminist texts are also no exception to this burgeoning concepts of protofeminism. The representation of women in the novels of Haywood is the basis of the
radical feminist texts of the subsequent periods. These amatory fictions adumbrate certain traits of ‘écriture feminine’ in its assertion of the female ‘body’ and in the representation of the unique female experiences. In the 1970s French feminists approached feminism with the concept of ‘écriture feminine’. The French feminists including Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva generally concentrated on theories of the ‘body’, and its representation in the form of ‘écriture feminine’. Helene Cixous in her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1976) propagates the concept of ‘écriture feminine’. ‘Écriture feminine’ is described as a uniquely female style of writing, marked by gaps, silences, puns, rhythms, new female images. It is eccentric, inconsistent and non-linear as opposed to the rational, consistent and linear novel of the patriarchal literary tradition. Although ‘écriture feminine’ is available to both sexes, Cixous clearly shows women as the most able practitioners of this mode of writing. She beckons women to speak about their ‘bodies’ and physical experiences into their writing so that it can be called a unique form of ‘women’s writing’. To write from the ‘body’ is necessary to write as a woman, who is the ‘other’, since the ‘body’ in traditional philosophy is rejected in the formation of ‘rational’ thought of patriarchal mindset. Cixous writes in “The Laugh of the Medusa”:

Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth. Our naphtha will spread, throughout the world, without dollars-black or gold - nonassessed values that will change the rules of the old game.

To write. An act which will not only "realize" the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; . . . A woman without a body, dumb, blind, can't possibly be a good fighter. She
is reduced to being the servant of the militant male, his shadow. We must
kill the false woman who is preventing the live one from breathing. Inscribe
the breath of the whole woman. (880)

Cixous argues that within a male paradigm of writing, woman has no voice. So in order to
write as a woman, women in general must reclaim their sexuality, which is female-centred
and which celebrates their own sources of pleasure, different from the men. Cixous believes
that women’s writing must issue from this site of ‘jouissance’ or pleasure. The disruption of
the order and the law of language in ‘écriture féminine’ is symbolic here of the writer’s denial
of the patriarchal domination. And Cixous believes that this form of ‘écriture féminine’ can
only erase all those binaries of man and woman, rational and emotional of traditional thought.
Furthermore, by l’écriture féminine, the language expressed through the medusa image,
Cixous encourages women to celebrate themselves, to write and live in a deconstructed world
without restriction:

... Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously,
violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to
mobilize their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants
of their virile needs. They have made for women an antinarcissism! A
narcissism which loves itself only to be loved for what women haven't
got! They have constructed the infamous logic of antilove.

We the precocious, we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouths
gagged with pollen, our wind knocked out of us, we the labyrinths, the
ladders, the trampled spaces, the bevies-we are black and we are beautiful.
We're stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation. Our glances, our smiles, are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we're not afraid of lacking . . .

It is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her- by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the Old without delay, by going out ahead of what the New Woman will be, as an arrow quits the bow with a movement that gathers and separates the vibrations musically, in order to be more than herself. . . . It is well known that the number of women writers (while having increased very slightly from the nineteenth century on) has always been ridiculously small. This is a useless and deceptive fact unless from their species of female writers we do not first deduct the immense majority whose workmanship is in no way different from male writing, and which either obscures women or reproduces the classic representations of women . . . .(878)

Similarly Julia Kristeva too defines ‘écriture feminine’ as an ‘anti-phallic’ writing, which is fragmentary rather than unified. She compares its form to the pre-oedipal ‘babble’ of the child, who is governed by only impulses, and not by the dictates of the patriarchal norms
of society. But at one point she disagrees with Cixous’s essentialist notion. She suggests that it is poetry that comes closest to breaking the notions of hierarchy and linear logic, and this poetry can also be written by men. Luce Irigaray too in *This Sex which is not One* (1977) shows how women have existed as the ‘other’ self or the mirror image of a man from time immemorial. She offers a penetrating critique of the phallogocentric traditions of psychoanalysis, philosophy and literature, and offers an alternative writing mode of the female. Her text is repudiation of Freudian interpretation of human sexuality. In phallogocentric thought, maleness is the norm against which women’s sexuality and anatomy are judged as necessarily abnormal. As women do not possess penis, their sexuality is characterised by a ‘lack’ or absence, which not only affects the women physically but psychologically as well. To oppose Freud’s analysis Irigaray presents a ‘vulva-centric’ model of female sexuality. Rejecting the singularity of phallogocentric tradition she focuses on the plural nature on female sexuality as well as the multiple facets of the female writing. She adds that women can never say what ‘they’ mean because their meaning can not be understood within a male-defined tradition of thought. Irigaray explains:

> It is therefore useless to trap women into giving an exact definition of what they mean, to make them repeat (themselves) so the meaning will be clear . . . They do not experience the same interiority that you do and which perhaps you mistakenly presume they share. ‘Within yourself’ means in the privacy of this silent, diffuse tact. If you ask them insistently what they are thinking about, they can only reply: nothing. Everything. (*New French Feminisms* 103)

Here she develops the idea of the radical ‘otherness’ of women’s eroticism. For Luce Irigaray, women's sexual pleasure jouissance cannot be expressed by the dominant, ordered,
"logical," masculine language because according to Kristeva, feminine language is derived from the pre-oedipal period of fusion between mother and child. Associated with the maternal, feminine language is not only a threat to culture, which is patriarchal, but also a medium through which women may be creative in new ways. She thinks that only the celebration of female ‘body’, subjectivity and ‘otherness’ can demolish the patriarchal representation of women. She pleads for its complete manifestation in the form of female writing.

Eliza Haywood’s amatory fictions as the form of ‘écriture feminine’ as well as proto-feminist texts prioritise, for the first time, female voice, female point-of-view, female gaze, female jouissance and female sensibility in the matrix of the eighteenth century literature. Haywood presents the world through women’s eyes and sees in men, what they do not ordinarily see in themselves. In the dedication to The Fatal Secret (1724) Haywood complains that as a woman she is “depriv’d of those Advantages of Education which the other Sex enjoy”, and that she can write only about love, “that which Nature is not negligent to teach us”. But under the matrix of sentimental love her texts focus more and more on ‘women’s rights and position’. The amatory fiction, according to John Richetti, “sought to depict an interiorized equivalent of that life of public honour peculiar to the elites of antiquity that survived in attenuated forms”(20). These amatory fictions were latently egalitarian in its representations of the social atmosphere. Through the independent assertion of the female subjectivity of the heroines, amatory fictions enable their heroines to emerge from the ‘passive’ role-model of the remote world of courtly romance, where women are idealised as vulnerable, reticent, decorous objects of male ‘desire’. Thus they also provide their female readers with a sense of female power and agency, that were denied to them in their social sphere. About the prevalence of a double standard of the concepts of morality and ideology in the eighteenth century society Pat Rogers writes in The Augustan Vision:
... The Augustans were ready enough to enjoy sex, but they thought it
had less to do with the deepest areas of the human personality than had
religion, say, or filial duty, or friendship. The result is that though women
were admired, respected, teased, patronized and cajoled by men, they were
not intellectualized. (89-91)

Haywood interrogates such contemporary socio-political representations of women’s
intellectual abilities as well as their capacity for action in her proto-feminist texts. She also
questions the sexual ideologies of her time in her writings. She went on to revise, reformulate
and exploit the form of amatory fiction with new possibilities in order to create a female,
utopian zone. She was writing for a specific readership in a specific literary scenario, which
involved proliferation of women readers and opportunities for both middle class and lower
class women. Keeping the changing scenario of burgeoning female readership in mind
Haywood, for the first time, presents the notion of radical, pro-active heroine, who decides to
circulate her sexuality and control the game of seduction as a form of empowerment, and
accepts the consequences of her desperate venture nonchalantly, showing least sign of shame.
These uncompromising heroines, who are often considered to be a shadow of Haywood’s
self-reliant personality, are endowed with a sort of female ‘agency’, which is the testimony of
a typical proto-feminist text. Her great contribution lies in her construction of a female
reader position, from which male perspective as well as patriarchal ideology can be
challenged. She demonstrates the novel’s potential to be a new hegemonic apparatus along
with being a serious site for political, moral and social inquiry. For Ros Ballaster these
amatory fictions inscribe “a competition between men and women for control of the means of
seduction . . . ”(40). By the extravagant rhetoric of desire, Haywood is, indeed, creating here
for her burgeoning female readers a utopia of power and a zone, where women could have agency to invert the gender hierarchies of the patriarchal mindset.

In the subsequent pages, Chapter Two provides a critical assessment of Haywood’s first novel *Love in Excess or The Fatal Enquiry* (1720) from the point-of-view of female eroticism. It highlights the need of education for women and touches on themes of marriage too. The plot concerns Count D’Elmonte, a mixture of hero and determined rake, who moves from one seduction or near seduction to another. Here the amatory representations of women are described with Haywood’s distinctive erotic language, suffused with the fervour of fashion-magazine glamour. Amorous intrigue and counter intrigue interweave until the hero is reformed and marriage is his final destiny. Chapter Three highlights the issue of female gaze from the proto-feminist viewpoint as reflected in the amatory fiction *The British Recluse: or, Secret History of Cleomira, suppos’d Dead*. By presenting the female gaze as an agent of the female ‘agency’ Haywood invents ingenious method to objectify the male protagonists. In Chapter Four the aspect of female hysteria is analysed from the proto-feminist point-of-view in the context of the novel *Idalia: or, The Unfortunate Mistress*. Here the energy of the novel comes from the adventurous episodes of its headstrong heroine Idalia, who hovers from one place to another. In Chapter Five we get the metaphorical use of the concept of masquerade in the context of Haywood’s two popular novels like *Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze* (1725) and *The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity: being the Secret History of a Late Amour*. Haywood utilizes to the full, the strategy of using the masquerade as a vehicle for the empowerment of women. Using masquerade as a veil for controlling the game of seduction, Fantomina and Philecta both invert the traditional, patriarchal concept of seduction as a prerogative and symbol of male dominance.

Chapter Six concerns a critical discussion regarding Haywood’s multi-plot novel *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), which bears the germs of female bildungsroman.
In this novel she takes up the contemporary issue of the crucial problem of dissatisfactions with marriage. It inscribes the story of the slow metamorphosis of the heroine from thoughtless coquette to thoughtful wife. Betsy Thoughtless is innocent and stays innocent throughout, despite the treacherous currents of the world in which she moves. Her fault is that she does not think. Only after miserable trials of male dominance, miserliness and infidelity on the part of her husband, she is able to marry Mr. Trueworth, the man of her desire. Virtue triumphs in the end. Betsy, the coquette, learns from her experiences and becomes a reformed character. This novel is a delightful medley, where certain proto-feminist ideas on love and marriage criss-cross. But there is a more serious side of this novel that has given a lasting importance to the work. Haywood, herself a victim of an unhappy marriage, vividly portrays here the repression of eighteenth-century women within the bounds of wedlock. Finally Chapter Seven or the Conclusion offers a brief analysis of the amatory fictions of Haywood as the significant documents of the real condition of the eighteenth-century women, as well as the marker of the écriture feminine as well as the proto-feminist texts. This chapter highlights the importance of these proto-feminist texts in providing a radical vision of female liberation and empowerment. Haywood’s texts provide a female point-of-view, from which the patriarchal ideology and the male perspective can be challenged.

Thus, much before the rise of the term ‘feminism’, Eliza Haywood incorporates certain mind-blowing, feminocentric issues within the matrix of her proto-feminist texts and dehistoricizes and mythologizes the ‘public sphere’ in order to provide the female readers with a sense of feminine power and female ‘agency’ in a world, usually closed to their participation. In her amatory fictions Eliza Haywood makes strong statements on the status of the contemporary women in their resistances to the dictates of phallocentrism Thus her works have an appeal for almost all generations of readers and writers. Her female character transcend the time. Here Haywood, indeed, succeeds in demonstrating the novel’s potential to
be a new hegemonic apparatus along with being a serious site for political, moral and social inquiry. In its representation of woman as the dilator of the plot and the game of seduction, these iconoclastic amatory fictions of Haywood reverse the patriarchal tradition of the fiction of seduction, and mow down the claustrophobic notions of femininity. Behind the facade of sentimental love and eroticism, these proto-feminist texts thus manifest elements of latent feminism, which was hitherto unheard in the androcentric literary tradition. By criss-crossing the hypersexualised language of desire with the language of power and control Haywood here, indeed, succeeds to create an alternative identity for the female readers, as well as, the female authors, and envisages the vision of an alternative, female utopian zone, which brings womanly interiority to the limelight.

**Note**

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Chapter-2: A Room of Female Desire: Securing a Space for Female Jouissance in *Love in Excess, or, The Fatal Enquiry*
Chapter-2

A Room of Female Desire: Securing a Space for Female Jouissance in *Love in Excess, or, The Fatal Enquiry*

*Love in Excess, or, The Fatal Enquiry* (1719), the first groundbreaking novel of Eliza Haywood, is characteristically unique in its presentation of the feminocentric issues, that were hitherto unheard in the domain of the eighteenth century literature. Even emerging at the traditional, patriarchal paradigm of the eighteenth-century Haywood’s texts focus more and more on ‘women’s rights and position’. Haywood provides her female readers with a sense of female power and agency through the presentation of woman as the mouthpiece of her proto-feminist proclamation of love and the dilator of the game of seduction. Haywood attempts to revise, reformulate and exploit the form of amatory fiction with new possibilities in order to create a female, utopian zone. Indeed, Haywood gains praise in *Love in Excess, or, The Fatal Enquiry* precisely for finding, for the first time, a language for the female to articulate her passion. Though society expected a woman to attract and marry an eligible man, it forbade her to show interest in a man before he formally declared his wish to marry her. This constraint is an important theme in eighteenth-century novels by women. But this novel of Haywood is iconoclastic for its presentation of the pro-active heroines as they are able to make a positive assertion of their female ‘desire’. The text is supersaturated with semblances of female eroticism. At the hand of Haywood the heroines here, almost for the first time in the androcentric literary discourse, venture to voice their views and emerge out of the claustrophobic notions of femininity, constructed by the patriarchal mindset.

In “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Hélène Cixous proposes *l’écriture feminine* as a model that employs the feminine desire and the language of the body to reconstitute female
expression as a revolutionary movement against the masculine rhetorical structure, that has defined language over time. In “The Laugh of the Medusa” Cixous writes:

I shall speak about women’s writing: about what it will do. Women must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Women must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement.

The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural. Anticipation is imperative.

Since these reflections are taking shape in an area just on the point of being discovered, they necessarily bear the mark of our time—a time during which the new breaks away from the old, and, more precisely, the (feminine) new from the old (la nouvelle de l’ancien). Thus, as there are no grounds for establishing a discourse, but rather an arid millennial ground to break, what I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project.

(875)

By employing the medusa image, Cixous deconstructs Jacques Lacan’s concept of
phallocentrism. She counters Freud’s model of passivity for women with one, that offers uninhibited freedom through the body and the mind. Cixous seeks to free all of the suppressed desires and all sorts of sexual impulses of the female through the form of the female writing. The medusa image, which functions as a metaphor for woman’s multiplicity, provides a new rhetorical matrix, that opposes the hierarchical rules of patriarchy, imposing restrictions on the female voice and body. Like the many serpents writhing on the medusa’s head, woman expresses a multifaceted sexuality that defies structure. Woman, as the medusa in the argument of Cixous, does not participate in a fixed worldview, that demarcates masculine and female roles. She does not enter into the traditional symbolic order as the unseen, unheard other. Rather, her fluid approach seeks to free women from any idea of structured, stereotyped social or linguistic positions as executor for desire or expression. As a medusa, she enters into the realm of the language through the many locations of feminine desire, uninhibited by sexual, historical, or linguistic roles that reduce and efface her. While at first appearing as an essentialist argument, that separates women from men, l’écriture feminine actually represents the other voice of libidinal feminine sexuality that gives the world creativity and a sense of otherness, separate from the structural positions that locate desire and expression through anatomical division. As another contemporary French feminist Luce Irigaray has suggested, the act of writing remains attached to the expression and manifestation of woman’s many desires. Irigaray, like Cixous, invites woman to explore her sexuality as “plural” and located “everywhere” so that she may release herself and her many selves from a system that objectifies women as sexual and linguistic commodities fixed by, written about, and traded among men.

By using female sexuality as a new feminine rhetoric, Cixous seeks to project expression through the image of the medusa, which symbolizes both feminine writing and feminism as a cultural, political, and linguistic movement. Just as the serpents on the
medusa’s head reject the Freudian location of heterosexual feminine desires as active to passive sexual desire, similarly the many female selves spread in diverse directions for fluid, feminine expression. She, who possesses many desires, possesses many modes for these desires and many channels through which her inner, individual, subjected passions may mature, or rather, unfold. In “The Laugh of the Medusa” Cixous further writes:

. . . I didn’t open my mouth, I didn’t repaint my half of the world.

I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear.

I said to myself: You are mad! What’s the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naivete, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental – conjugal phallocentrism, hasn’t been ashamed if of her strength? Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a . . . divine composure), hasn’t accused herself of being a monster? Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring out something new), hasn’t thought she was sick? Well, her ashamed sickness is that she resists death, that she makes trouble. (876)

Cixous believes that women’s writing must issue from this site of ‘jouissance’ or pleasure.
According to Clara Juncker Cixous’s method invites woman to “write her body in order to discover herself. She must explore her jouissance, her sexual pleasure, so as to bring down phallogocentric discourse and, ultimately, change the world” (426). Cixous invites woman to think of the self as another kind of metaphorical medusa, able to express the self in a myriad of regenerative forms. Furthermore, l’ecriture feminine, the language expressed through the medusa image, encourages women to celebrate themselves, to write and live in a deconstructed world without restriction.

Similarly Eliza Haywood’s amatory fiction Love in Excess, or, The Fatal Enquiry bears several traits of the “ecriture feminine”. Using the rhetoric of desire Haywood here unravels the realm of female desire, female eroticism as well as female jouissance, that were hitherto unknown in the realm of patriarchal literary tradition. This fiction is replete with multiple feminist aspects. The plot begins with Count D’elmont, a man of marshal valour, who as a rake with infinite charms leads a licentious life. Alovisa falls prey to the charms and the fatal magnetism of this rake. Alovisa broods within herself about D’elmont:

Alovisa, if her passion was not greater than the rest, her pride, and the good opinion she had of her self, made her the less able to support it; she sighed, she burned, she raged, when she perceived the charming D’ Elmont behaved himself toward her with no mark of a distinguishing affection. “What”, said she, “have I beheld without concern a thousand lovers at my feet, and shall the only man I ever endeavoured or wished to charm, regard me with indifference? Wherefore has the agreeing world joined with my deceitful glass to flatter me into a vain belief I had invincible attractions? D’elmont sees ‘em not, D’elmont is insensible”. Then would
she fall into ravings, sometimes cursing her own want of power, sometimes the
coldness of D’elmont many days she passed in these inquietudes, and every time
she saw him (which was very frequently either at Court, at church, or publick
meetings,) she found fresh matter for her troubled thoughts to work upon. When
on any occation she happened to speak to her, it was with that softness ‘in his eyes,
and that engaging tenderness in his voice, as would half persuade her that, that
god had touched his heart, which so powerfully had influenced hers; but if a
glimmering of such a hope gave her a pleasure inconceivable, how great were
the ensuing torments. . . .( i, 37-38)

Being unable to conceal her irresistible passion for this man she writes an ambiguous,
unsigned letter, inviting D’Elmont to a ball at night:

Resistless as you are in war, you are much more so in love. Here you conquer
without making an attack, and we surrender before you summons; the law of arms
obliges you to show mercy to an yielding enemy, and sure the Court cannot inspire
less generous sentiments than the field. The little god lays down his arrows at your
feet, confesses your superior power, and begs a friendly treatment; he will appear to
you tomorrow night at the ball, in the eyes of the most passionate of all his
voteresses; search therefore for him in her, in whom ( amongst that bright assembly)
you would most desire to find him; I am confident you have too much penetration to
miss of him, if not byassed by a former inclination, and in that hope, I shall ( as patiently as my expectations will let me) support till then, the tedious hours.

Farewell. (i,39)

Here we find this amatory fiction of Haywood as exceptionally unique in the representation of woman as the weaver of the game of seduction. As opposed to the androcentric literary tradition of the fiction of seduction, where the male protagonist invites the heroine, here the lady, Alovisa invites D’elmont at the rendezvous. She beckons him to be engaged in the game of seduction at the ball. This letter highlights the heroine’s assertion of her female eroticism as well as female subjectivity as a seductress. As opposed to the male, here the female persona chooses her partner for herself. In such amatory fiction Haywood, almost for the first time, ventures to highlight the fact of female physicality and sexuality amidst the constraints of morality and the notion of feminine chastity of the eighteenth century society. Here Alovisa’s act of self-proclamation through her letter highlights her female “agency”. Going against the tradition of the eighteenth-century society Haywood takes the radical attempt to create such a heroine, who can take her own decisions devoid of her father or any guardian unlike the contemporary women.

D’Elmont receives the letter of Alovisa and gets perplexed. He conjectures different possibilities of writing of this letter by different persons. But ultimately he attends the ball to find out the real seductress. Being stimulated by the amorous letter of Alovisa he searches for the partner of his supposed liaison and by mistake finds out Amena as his partner. At such misconception Alovisa got enraged. She, indeed, “enraved, she tore her hair and face, and in the extremity of her anguish was ready to lay violent hands on her own life (43)” Then she employs her servant to bring the news of D’Elmont. Finally she ventures, “I will write once more to this undiscerning man and let him know,
‘tis not Amena that is worthy of him(45)”. Out of the fear of Amena’s father, the pair started to meet via subterfuge. They made attempts at their rendezvous with the help of Anaret, Amena's maid servant. When D’Elmont comes to meet with Amena, Haywood employs her characteristic rhetoric of desire to describe the depth and intensity of her female gaze:

As he came down the walk Amena saw him thro’ the glass, and the sight of that beloved object, bringing thousand past endearments to her memory, made her incapable of retiring from the window, and she remained in a languishing and immovable posture, leaning her head against the shutter, ’till he drew near enough to discern she saw him.( i ,56)

Here, in her candid representation of the female desire of Amena, Haywood echoes the concept of female desire, expressed by Helene Cixous in “The Laugh of the Medusa”:

I wished that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might claim : I, too, overflow ; my desires have invented new desires , my body know unheard - of songs. Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst – burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinking fortune. And I, too, said nothing, showed nothing; I didn’t open my mouth, I didn’t repaint my half of the world . I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and
my fear. I said to myself: You are mad! What’s the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? (876)

Then again Amena and D’Elmont plan for a second meeting in Tuileries at night. Just before the moment of losing her virginity Amena oscillates between her traditional notion of chastity and her irresistible passion for the “inhuman and tyrannick charmer” (57) D’Elmont. Haywood brilliantly uses the nature imagery to suggest this condition of the lovers:

All nature seemed to favour his design, the pleasantness of the place, the silence of the night, the sweetness of the air, perfumed with a thousand various odours wafted by gentle breezes from adjacent gardens completed the most delightful scene that ever was, to offer up a sacrifice to love; not a breath but flew winged with desire, and send off thrilling wishes to the soul; Cynthia her self, cold as she is reported, assisted in the inspiration, and sometimes shone with all her brightness, as it were to feast their ravished eyes with gazing on each others beauty; then veiled her beams in clouds, to give the lover boldness, and hide the virgins blushes. What now could poor Amena do, surrounded with so many powers, attacked by such a charming force without, betrayed by tenderness within? Virtue and pride, the guardians of her honour fled from her breast, and left her to her foe, only a modest bashfulness remained, which for a time made some defence, but with such weakness as a
lover less impatient than D’Elmont would have little regarded. (i, 58)

Here Nature appears not as the background of the scene of seduction, but it appears as the counterpart of the masculine self and as the shadow of the female self. Here we can get traces of eco-feminism. Nature here reflects the female sensibility and female interiority of Amena. The waxing and the waning of the classical moon goddess Cynthia is symbolic of the inward dilemma of Amena on the verge of losing her chastity.

In Haywood’s amatory fiction *Love in Excess, or, The Fatal Enquiry* we also discern another aspect of the rhetoric of fashion-magazine glamour. Haywood was writing at the changing era, which involved proliferation of female readership. In order to cater to the interest of the burgeoning female readers, she describes another erotic spectacle of Amena at the consummation scene in the light of the fashion-magazine glamour:

The heat of the weather, and her confinement having hindered her from dressing that day she had only a thin silk night gown on, which flying open as he caught her in his arms, he found her panting heart beat measures of consent, her heaving breast swell to be pressed by his, and every pulse confess a wish to yield; her spirits all dissolved sunk in a lethargy of love, her snowy arms unknowing grasped his neck, her lips met his halfway, and trembled at the touch; in fine, there was but a moment betwixt her and ruine; when the tread of somebody coming . . . (i, 58)

What is noteworthy about this scene of consummation is that Haywood never depicts the woman in the role of the passive sex. On the contrary her proto-feminist text manifests that
both of the male and female are equally eloquent as well as active in expressing their words of love to each other. Haywood’s text adumbrates, for the first time in the eighteenth century world, the concept of female desire as well as sexuality through the expression of the reciprocity of passion and eroticism. In this context John Richetti comments in *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700 –1739*:

> We notice all that only Amena’s palpitations are described. She vibrates, he controls. But his pleasure, even though he is the aggressor, is irrelevant to Mrs. Haywood’s readers. He is, in fact, there to serve rather than to master.

> Mrs Haywood knows what to omit. (187)

When Amena’s father came to know of this intrigue of his daughter he refuses to allow his daughter to continue meeting with D’Elmont without a proposal of marriage. At such a point Alovisa appoints her servant Charlo to invent some stratagem to separate these lovers. The two are compromised by the intervention of Charlo, who awakens Amena’s household. Amena is eventually conducted by D’Elmont to Alovisa’s residence. Alovisa feigns to help the pair by allowing them to meet in her apartment. However, in order to get back her beloved D’Elmont within her grasp Alovisa agrees with Amena’s father to help him to send Amena abroad by a ship to a convent in the countryside. Amena suddenly discovers Alovisa’s designs for ruining Amena due to Alovisa’s earlier affection for D’Elmont. At such discovery Amena departs for ever with her departing words, “I go from a false lover, and a falser friend . . . (66). D’Elmont, in the meanwhile, went to receive his friend, Chevalier Brillian. During the course of their conversation, it is revealed that the Chevalier has fallen in love with Alovisa’s sister Ansellina, who resides in Amien. D’Elmont too discovers at this point that Alovisa is the unknown admirer, who had written him the unsigned letters. The first
part concludes with a mutual decision by Brillian and D’Elmont to marry the sister-pair Alovisa and Ansellina with love, status, and wealth.

The second part depicts the gradual metamorphosis of D’Elmont from a flirtatious rake to a true lover, who ultimately falls in deep, passionate love with “the matchless Melliora”(85), who is entrusted in his care. At the sudden death of Melliora’s father she is despatched to D’Elmont according to the wish of her father. Thus D’Elmont is made the guardian of this lady. They fall in love with each other at first sight. Haywood brilliantly depicts the scene of their first meeting. On the part of Melliora:

... the softness of his voice, and graceful manner with which he delivered himself (always the inseparable companions of his discourse, but now more particularly so) made her cast her eyes upon him; but alas, he was not an object to be safely gazed at and in spite of the grief she was in, she found something in his form which dissipated it; a kind of painful pleasure, a mixture of surprise, and joy, and doubt ran thro’ her in an instant; her fathers words suggested to her imagination, that she was in a possibility of calling the charming person that stood before her ,by a name more tender than that of guardian.( ii,86)

On the other hand, for D’Elmont “

the first sight of Melliora gave him a discomposure he had never felt before, he sympathized in all her sorrows, and was ready to joyn his tears with hers, but
when her eyes met his, the god of love seemed there to have united all his
lightenings for one effectual blaze; their admiration of each others’ perfections
was mutual . . . and it was hard to say whose passion was the strongest . . . (86)

Laura Mulvy writes in her famous article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” on the
role of “gaze” as an agent of enkindling the pleasure of the readers or the spectators:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split
between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects
its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their
traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed,
with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can
be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.(10)

This purpose of “gaze” is wonderfully utilized by Haywood throughout this amatory fiction.
So D’Elmont too gets enamoured at the sight of Melliora, lying before his male “gaze” as an
object of male ‘desire’:

He found her lying on a couch in a most charming dishabille; she had but newly
come from bathing, and her hair unbraided, hung down upon her shoulders with
a negligence more beautiful than all the aids of art could form in the most exact
decorum of dress, part of it fell upon her neck and breast, and with it’s lovely
shadyness, being of a delicate dark brown, set off to vast advantage, the matchless
whiteness of her skin: Her Gown and the rest of her Garments were white,
and all ungirt, and loosely flowing, discover’d a Thousand beauties, which
modish formalities conceal. (ii,107)

This erotic portrait of Melliora, tinged with the flavour of the fashion-magazine glamour, is
obviously an object of desire of the D’Elmont as well as of the readers. Thus such amatory
fiction of Haywood fulfils the readers’ desire to know the ‘desire’. The pleasure, attained
from this voyeuristic gaze, is much akin to the Freudian concept of ‘scopophilia’. Scopophilia
is a Freudian term that means the love of gazing, or the pleasure in seeing. The term
scopophilia is related to voyeurism, the objectification and fetishism. In Freudian theory there
are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure. In his “Three Essays on
Sexuality”, Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which
exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones. At this point he associated
scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious
gaze. In this context Laura Mulvey writes in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”:

The cinema offers a number of possible pleasures. One is scopophilia. There
are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in
the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at. Originally, in his
“Three Essays on Sexuality”, Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the
component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently
of the erotogenic zones. At this point he associated scopophilia with taking
other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. (8)

Haywood’s amatory fictions are peerless for her use of multifarious psychoanalytic techniques to unravel the undiscovered realm of female psyche, tinged with the unfathomed sensibility and deep desire. Sometimes dream is used as the vehicle of wish-fulfilment of the lovers. Dream acts as an agent of consummation of love, which can not be achieved under the restraints of the patriarchal society. In a scene D’Elmont comes to visit Melliora and finds her as fast asleep. Gazing upon “her thousand charms”(116) his mind was ignited with “various emotions”. Unconsciously he went much nearer to her and within her dream she spoke out her love for the ‘married’ D’Elmont, which he could not believe to his ears. Dream here acts as the agent of Melliora’s expression or the outcome of the repressed ‘desire’. So within her dream she had thrown her arm about D’Elmont’s neck, and in a soft and languishing voice, cried out, “Oh D’Elmont, cease, cease to charm, to such a height . . . life cannot bear these ruptures. . . . And then again, embracing him yet closer, . . . O! too, too lovely Count . . . extatick ruiner!(116)”. Here dream is used aptly by Haywood in order to manifest the latent desire of the woman in a Freudian manner. According to Freud, dream is a disguised fulfilment of a repressed wish. In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* Sigmund Freud first argued that the motivation of all dream content is wish-fulfilment, and that the instigation of a dream is often to be found in the events of the day preceding. On the role of unconscious behind wish-fulfilling dreams Freud writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

. . . That source is the Unconscious. I imagine that the conscious wish becomes the initiator of a dream only if it succeeds in wakening an unconscious wish consonant with it, and drawing reinforcement from this. Following indications from the psychoanalysis of neurosis, I consider that these unconscious wishes are always
alive, ready at all times to seek out expression if the opportunity offers, always ready to allay themselves with some impulse from the conscious, and to transfer their own great intensity to the less intense charge of the conscious impulse. It is then bound to appear as if the conscious wish alone were realized in the dream; however, one striking little thing about the form taken by the dream will act as a pointer to the track of the powerful accomplice from the Unconscious. These wishes of our Unconscious, ever stirring, never dying – immortal . . . (362)

Similarly Haywood uses here such a dream of wish-fulfilment. The source of the dream of Melliora is her unconscious. Her deep love for D’Elmont was preserved in her unconscious. Like the Freudian theory of wish-fulfilment in dream, the unconscious, repressed wishes of Melliora are reflected in her dream. What she could not express through her own mouth at the broad daylight, she unconsciously speaks out within her dream. Like the Freudian theory Haywood too uses dream as a vehicle for wish fulfilment of the heroine, restrained by the norms of morality of the patriarchal society.

What Melliora’s subconscious mind says in her dream, enkindles the repressed passion of D’Elmont. Hence at this point the gap between dream and reality is erased, and D’Elmont mingles his eroticism with her passionate desire:

That he did, is most certain, for he tore open his waistcoat, and joined his panting breast to hers, with such a tumultuous eagerness! Seized her with such a rapidity of transported, hope-crowned passion, as immediately waked her from an
imaginary felicity, to the approaches of the said one.” Where have I been?” said she, just opening her eyes, “Where am I? . . . And then coming more perfectly to her self, “Heaven! What is this?” (ii, 117)

Due to the restraints of the patriarchal society Melliora, as a woman, could not express her erotic desire for D’Elmont. Hence through the matrix of dream Haywood provides her a female utopian zone to express her desire independently. Thus, Haywood indeed provides the “agency” of courtship to Melliora, who can now invite D’Elmont to the game of seduction. When Melliora dreams of her love for D’Elmont, he turns his life into a dream by expressing his erotic fantasy. Thus dream becomes a vehicle that replaces the “reality principle” in the lives of the lovers under the “pleasure principle”.

But their dream is broken as “a loud knocking at the chamber door” (118) is heard. They depart at this moment and decide to meet again at the garden. This scene of the passionate lovers amidst the garden is reminiscent of the Lawrencian scene of Miriam and Paul Morel amidst the rose-bush in *Sons and Lovers*. Here the Nature imagery reflects the inscape of the human world:

As they were passing thro’ a walk with trees on each side, whose intermingling boughs made a friendly darkness, and everything undistinguishable, the amorous D’Elmont throwing his eager arms round the wast of his (no less transported)

Melliora, and printing kisses on her neck, reaped painful pleasure, and created in her, a racking kind of extasie, which might perhaps, had they now been alone, proved her
desires were little different from his. (Haywood ii, 122)

The lovers, walking together with their ‘intermingling’ hands, are represented here through the symbolic manifestation of the “intermingling boughs” of the Nature. Here Haywood uses the nature imagery to show that there is no distinction of the sensation of love between the male or the female sex. This scene is reminiscent of the famous nature imagery of D.H.Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers*, where the erotic desire of Paul and Miriam is reflected in the mirror of nature.

One evening in the summer Miriam and he went over the fields by Herod’s Farm . . . She wanted to show him a certain wild-rose bush she had discovered.

She knew it was wonderful. And yet, till he had seen it, she felt it had not come into her soul. Only he could make it her own, immortal . . . By the time they came to the pine-trees Miriam was getting very eager, and very tense. Her bush might be gone. She might not be able to find it. And she wanted it so much. Almost passionately, she wanted to be with him when she stood before the flowers. They were going to have a communion together, something that thrilled her, something holy. He was walking beside her in silence. They were very near to each other.

She trembled, and he listened, vaguely anxious.

Coming to the edge of the wood they saw the sky in front like mother-of-pearl, and the earth going dark. Somewhere on the outermost branches of the pine-wood the honeysuckle was streaming scent. (178-79)
The pervasive aura of eroticism, manifested in the nature, symbolises the desire for consummation and fertility in the minds of Paul and Miriam. Amidst the amorous rhythm of nature Melliora cannot but confess her irresistible passion for D'Elmont. What she had expressed in her dreams earlier, now she expresses directly to her lover:

I confess I feel for you, a passion far beyond all, that yet, ever bore the name of love, that I no longer can withstand the too powerful magick of your eyes, nor deny anything that charming tongue can ask, but now’s the time to prove your self the heroe, subdue your self, as you have conquered me, be satisfied with vanquishing my soul, fix there your throne . . . (ii, 123-24)

In the meantime, D'Elmont’s friend, the Baron, falls in love with D'Elmont’s wife Alovisa. The Baron arranges for a masquerade ball and requests his friend D'Elmont to come. The Baron plans to execute the intrigue. But when the Baron had left her “all D’Elmont’s charms came fresh into her mind . . .”(155). Ultimately amidst the sudden confusion Alovisa and the Baron both are killed accidentally. This sudden tragedy brings a abrupt break to the amatory liaison of D'Elmont and Melliora. D'Elmont goes to Italy as a form of self-exile. Melliora takes refuge in a monastery. The second part ends with the sense of vacuum like the Senecan tragedy.

The third part shows the self-exile of D'Elmont in Italy, where he continually mourns for the loss of Melliora. Haywood exploits the amorous site of Italy for providing so many seductresses, who try to enchant D'Elmont by artistically presenting themselves as an object of male desire. In this part, the self-willed seductresses of Italy with their female ‘agency’ stand for another form of the self-willed, headstrong women. Haywood here gives minute description of D'Elmont through the female ‘gaze’ of these enamoured women of Italy. Here
an unknown woman, gazing on the masculine beauty of D’Elmont, exclaims, “. . . if e’re thy eyes are blest to see this charmer of my soul, thou wilt cease to wonder at my passion . . . He is more than ruptured poets feign, or fancy can invent! . . . But thou hast never heard his voice, nor seen his eyes . . .” (iii, 174). Here D’Elmont almost appears as the “man of feeling”, constantly bewailing the loss of his beloved Melliora. Then D’Elmont suddenly meets Frankville, Melliora’s brother. Franlville tells him the story of his deep passion for his forbidden love Camilla. In order to help him D’Elmont decides to carry the letter of Frankville to Camilla. Going to despatch the amorous letter D’Elmont finds himself within a luxurious palace, which appeared to him as the “palace of the Queen of Love”. The walls were decorated with the tapestry, in which the amorous stories of Venus and Adonis, Jupiter and Leda, Diana and Endimion, Cupid and Psyche were intertwined with silk, gold and silver. At the upper end of this magnificent Chamber “there was a canopy of crimson velvet, richly embroidered, and trimmed with silver, the corners of which were supported by two golden Cupids. . . ”(206). Amidst the sensational, visual effects of such titillating, amorous scenes D’Elmont encounters “the dazzling owner of this sumptuous apartment” (207), who is the wealthy Italian widow Ciamara, who was enamoured by the charms of D’Elmont. Here Ciamara, a woman of wealth, appears with her female “agency”, who can even transform herself into an object of art in order to seduce the young lover. Ciamara as a seductress tries to draw the male ‘gaze’ on her. Thus she here acts as a dilator as well as the controller of the male “gaze’. Gazing on her D’Elmont exclaims:

. . . nothing could be more glorious than her appearance; she was by nature, a woman of most excellent shape, to which, her desire of pleasing, had made her add all the aids of art; she was drest in a gold and silver stuff petticoat, and a
waistcoat of plain blue satin, set round the neck and sieves and down the
Seams with Diamonds, and fastened on the Breast, with jewels of prodigious
largeness and lustre; a girdle of the same encompassed her waste; her
hair, of which she had great quantity, was black as jet, and with a studied
negligence, fell part of it on her neck in careless ringlets, and the other was
turned up, and fastened here and there with bodkins, which had pendant
diamonds hanging to ‘em and as she moved, glittering with a quivering blaze,
like stars darting their fires from out a sable sky . . . . (iii, 207)

The appearance of Ciamara with the grandeur of her studied art seems to be a portrait,
parallel of the scene of the first appearance of Cleopatra to captivate Antony in William
Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. Enobarbus describes this scene to others:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,

Burned on the water; the poop was beaten gold;

Purple the sails, and so perfumed that

The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,

Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made

The water which they beat to follow faster,

As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggared all description: she did lie

In her pavilion, cloth of gold tissue,

O'er picturing that Venus where we see

The fancy outwork nature. On each side her

Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling cupids,

With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem

To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,

And what they undid did. (ii, ii, 200-214)

Just like Cleopatra, Ciamara presents herself as the “Queen of Love” to the eyes of D'Elmont. Here in her attempt to obtain the power to control the game of seduction Ciamara gains her female “agency”. D’Elmont becomes so much perplexed that he thinks Ciamara as Camilla, and returning to his home warns his friend Frankville against the promiscuity and licentiousness of his beloved Camilla. But a passionate love-letter from Ciamara to D’Elmont proves the mistake of D’Elmont in recognising Camilla. Hence he agrees to meet for a second time with Ciamara in order to provide Frankville with an opportunity to be reconciled with Camilla. But Ciamara violently advances towards him. When D’Elmont talks of his true love for Melliora, and tries to remind Ciamara of the lessons of virtue, she cries out like a hedonist:

. . . are then my charms so mean, my darts so weak, that near, they cannot

intercept those, shot at such a distance? And are you that dull, cold Platonist
which can prefer the visionary pleasures of an absent mistress, to the warm
transports of the substantial present? . . . Is this an hour to preach of virtue? –

Married, betrothed, engaged by love or law, what hinders but this moment
you may be mine, this moment, well improved, might give us joys to baffle
a whole age of woe, make us, at once, forget our troubles past, and by
its sweet remembrance, scorn those to come; . . . (224)

In spite of D’Elmont’s continuous refusal she grows wild and “sunk supinely on D’Elmont’s
breast”(iii,224). Ciamara’s this concept of momentary pleasure and hedonism is, indeed,
radical in the context of the eighteenth century novel, which has prioritised always female
virtue instead of female jouissance.

Then the “femme fatale” lady of Italy, Ciamara adopts a new persona of a “hysterical”
lady, lying on the couch. When D’Elmont tries to ward off her, she uses her female “agency”,
and advances to forcibly seduce this “man of desire”:

Lost to all sense of honour, pride or shame, and wild to gratify her furious wishes,
she spoke, without reserve, all they suggested to her, and lying on his breast,
beheld, without concern, her robes fly open, and all the beauties of her own
exposed, and naked to his view. Mad at his insensibility, at last she grew more
bold, she kissed his eyes, his lips, a thousand times, then pressed him in her arms
with strenuous embraces, . . . and snatching his hand and putting it to her heart,
which fiercely bounded at his touch, bid him to be witness of his mighty influence there. (iii, 225)

Haywood equates Ciamara’s passion for her partner with ‘masculine’ passion as Ciamara’s passion is of the fleeting nature. Haywood criticizes this sort of end-directed passion, “which aims chiefly at enjoyment, in enjoyment ends” (224). Here Ciamara’s forcible advance to seduce D’Elmont is indeed radical in the context of the eighteenth-century notion of femininity. She uses her sexuality to control the game of seduction, and thus acquires the female “agency”.

Ultimately D’Elmont escapes from this entrapment. Being annihilated in her self-destructive lust and despair Ciamara takes poison and dies. With the help of D’Elmont Frankville reconciles with Camilla, and flees from Italy. Then D’Elmont comes to Paris to enquire after Melliora, who in the meantime has been kidnapped from the convent, to which she was sent after the death of Alovisa. Here D’Elmont suddenly meets Melliora, who comes to his bed at night. To describe such a scene of reunion of the genuine lovers after the separation of such a long time, Haywood employs her characteristic rhetoric of conjugal love:

. . . he heard, - he saw, -’twas she, that very she, whose loss he had so much deplored, and began almost to despair of ever being able to retrieve ! Forgetting all decorum, he flew out of the bed, catched her in his arms, and almost stifled her with kisses; . . . (iii, 250)

Here again Haywood erases the border between dream and real life, wish and its fulfilment. Melliora then ruminates the story of her misfortune after she entered into the monastery. She
narrates how she was kidnapped by Marquese D’Saguillier. When D’Elmont and Melliora are about to marry, Fidelio, a page, who has come with D’Elmont from Rome, is found dying. This page is found to be Violetta, a chaste lady who loved D’Elmont in Rome and followed him in disguise. Violetta dies of her unrequited love in D’Elmont’s arms. Finally D'Elmont and Melliora, Frankville and Camilla, Melliora’s kidnapper and Charlotta, a girl he loved before Melliora - all marry. Thus the amatory fiction has the dual ending - a tragic sacrifice, followed by the fructification of love. At the very moment of the marriage of D'Elmont and Melliora, the death of Violetta symbolically suggests the optimal moment ofconsummation of the lovers. The novel ends with this moment of the orgasmic jouissance, which was never shown before within the novel, and for which the readers were eagerly waiting. About this “richness” of the ending of *Love in Excess* John Richetti remarks in *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739*:

> We have had, in effect, a double ending- a tragic apotheosis, followed by a glorious conjugal consummation, the two kinds of beatitude recognized within the fable of persecuted innocence. Death and marriage transport the worthy heroine to suitable heavens. Both bring release from the heroic tribulations of love, but both, of course, are beyond description.

The erotic and pathetic tension which keeps our interest can no longer be maintained. Mrs Haywood must stop here, for love has run its course and the rest (heaven or domesticity, no matter how blissful) is silence.

This double ending is the last reminder of the ‘richness’( redundancy from
a critical point-of-view) possible in the complicated amatory narrative such as

*Love in Excess...* Violetta is brought on stage to expire in happy tears. Her death is, in a sense, an orgasm, a suitably violent and spectacular end to the story. It is the orgasm we have been waiting for, the one we have approached so often throughout the story in the many near-consummations. . . Mrs Haywood’s ending is, thus, a fine piece of engineering which allows us to have the poetic justice of marriage with the erotic-pathetic climax we deserve. She is to the end a magnificent technician in her extraordinarily popular act. (206-7)

*L*ove *i*n *E*xcess, or, *The Fatal Enquiry* shows Haywood’s enormous contribution to the metamorphosis of the new genre of fiction as well as to the germination of the proto-feminist text. After going through the trials, tribulations and temptations of love Melliora reaches at the seventh heaven of love. In this proto-feminist text Melliora acts as the pivotal force for growth and development of the events of the fiction. Her influence is so all-engrossing that she, from the beginning to the end, controls the action of D’Elmont, who metamorphoses from the flirtatious rake to the pure votary of love under her influence. Here Haywood, almost for the first time in androcentric literary tradition, adumbrates the stage for manifestation of female voice, female sexuality and female agency. This is perhaps her first attempt to look at the every aspect of love and languishment from the female point-of-view. At the stage of the rising of the new genre of fiction she offers a bold, proto-feminist model of amatory fiction. Dale Spender eulogizes Haywood in *Mothers of the Novel: Hundred Good Women Writers before Jane Austen*:
She was as much an active force (and arguably a greater force) in shaping the novel as were Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, and she was as good and as great a social commentator as were Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. She helped to ‘create’ the reading public while she responded to the needs of that same public, and any evaluation of her which does not grant her a prominent place in the birth of the novel – or which excludes her completely from consideration – can only be based on her sex. (107)

Thus, *Love in Excess, or, The Fatal Enquiry* is indeed marked by Haywood’s extraordinary creative ability. Though, this amatory fiction ends with the traditional schematization of the happy reunion of D’Elmont and Melliora, it is notable for its radical demonstration of the concept of female desire, female pleasure and female eroticism, which were considered as taboo in the realm of eighteenth century literature. In order to manifest the multiple facets of the female sensibility Haywood brilliantly introduces the multiple characters of women. This technique provides her the avenue to foreground the multifarious aspects of female desire, female pleasure, and female eroticism. In this iconoclastic novel she does not hesitate to invert the gender roles and gender stereotype in order to anticipate a new, imaginary world of female transcendence. It is thus imbued with the spirit of ‘écriture féminine’ even at the stage of the germination of the novel. This novel remarkably pleads from feminist standpoint on behalf of the deserted women and presents an unusual positive portrait of the ‘fallen women’ by rationalising them as the accidental victim of circumstances. It works within the eighteenth century cultural paradigm of self-activating bourgeois identity, while it articulates the related cultural shift toward a companionate model of marriage.
Indeed, Haywood won praise here precisely for finding, for the first time, a language for the female to articulate her passion. Here Haywood’s tremendous contribution to the development of a radical proto-feminist strain in the new genre of fiction is indeed noteworthy as well as commendable.
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Chapter-3: A New Facet of Female Gaze in *The British Recluse: or, Secret History of Cleomira supposed Dead*
Chapter-3

A New Facet of Female Gaze in *The British Recluse: or, Secret History of Cleomira supposed Dead*

Eliza Haywood blends elements of titillating romance with the facets of latent feminism in her radical novel *The British Recluse: or, Secret History of Cleomira supposed Dead* (1722). In this amatory fiction Haywood uses her ingenious strategy of using the female ‘gaze’ as the mode of acquiring the female ‘agency’ of her heroines. Haywood experiments with different facets of the female “gaze” in this fiction. According to the androcentric literary tradition the female body was always considered as an object of the male gaze. But in this proto-feminist novel Haywood inverts this tradition by her iconoclastic representation of the female “gaze” of her heroines, that asserts the female subjectivity and presents the male partner as an object. Through the independent assertion of the female subjectivity of the heroines, Haywood enables her heroines to emerge from the ‘passive’ role-model of the remote world of courtly romance, where women are idealised as vulnerable, reticent, decorous objects of male ‘desire’ and male “gaze”. The amatory fictions of Eliza Haywood were latently egalitarian in their representation of the gender roles. In order to complete this circuit of gender equality, Haywood provides her female readers with a sense of female power and agency through the ingenious form of the female “gaze”, that acts as a prop of female emancipation and gender indiscrimination. It becomes here an effective means to objectify the male protagonist, and thus to assert the female subjectivity of the pro-active heroines. Haywood attempts to revise, reformulate and exploit the form of amatory fiction with new possibilities in order to create a female, utopian zone. She demonstrates the novel’s potential to be a new hegemonic apparatus along with being a serious site for political, moral and social inquiry. For Ros Ballaster these amatory fictions inscribe “a competition between
men and women for control of the means of seduction. . .”(40). By the extravagant rhetoric of female desire and the exercise of the female “gaze”, Haywood is, indeed, creating here for her burgeoning female readers a utopia of power and a zone, where women could have agency to invert the gender hierarchies of the patriarchal mindset.

The women in the eighteenth century got hardly little options for education, and they had to depend on their husband, father or brother for their living. They did not get any opportunity to participate in the world of male “public sphere”. The women of the eighteenth-century had really no proper profession for living their lives. Even writing was not considered as a respectful profession for woman. Female writers like Eliza Haywood, who were ‘living by the pen’, had to face much obstacles to compete with the existing male writers. Katharine M. Rogers writes further in this context in Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England:

Despite this increasing recognition that women had to have better opportunities for supporting themselves, the only profession that actually developed for them was writing. In the 1670s Aphra Behn, the first professional woman author in England, successfully competed with male playwrights. She was followed by Susannah Centlivre, another comic playwright and Mary de la Riviere Manley And Eliza Haywood, writers of salacious romances and scandal chronicles. They all made an independent living by their writing, but unfortunately contemporaries were less impressed by their professionalism than by the immodesty of their works and the unchastity of their lives. . . .

These lapses were magnified by prejudice against women who
aggressively competed with men . . . The women were attacked as if they
supported themselves by prostitution (which would have been an easier way
than writing). Thus it become customary to associate unchastity with professional
competition with men, and these writers did not set a useful precedent for women
who had a reputation to lose. (21)

Yet at this time with the spread of education, the number of female readers was
increasing day by day. Haywood’s amatory fictions, addressed principally towards the
emerging female readers, capture the socio-cultural scenario of the eighteenth-century society
from the aspect of female insurgence. Apart from being best-selling fictions of sentimental
love, her texts are important documents of the condition of women in the contemporary
society. Along with this increase of the female readers the number of female writers was also
growing rapidly at this period. In this context Katharine M. Rogers writes:

An important reason for the increasing number and competence of women writers
was improved education . . . Certainly more women were becoming better
educated, but the clearest evidence of progress is the wider recognition that the
education of women is important to society. For some time individuals had
argued for better education for woman – Bathsua Makin in 1673, Mary Astell
But by the end of the century, most literary women, as well as many men,
seriously considered the subject. (27-29)
At such a changing socio-cultural scenario Eliza Haywood emerged as one of the most prolific writer of amatory fiction. While the emerging middle class was in general looking more to reading as a source of information, enlightenment and entertainment, middle class women in particular were looking for confirmation and clarification of their own new lifestyles. Here Eliza Haywood was able to provide such representations for women and to take advantage of the developments in the publishing industry. Haywood came with her radical proto-feminist texts in order to defy that notion, and wrote her novels that are filled with heroines, who being ravaged by their own desires attempt to exercise the power of female sexuality over the ‘other sex’. In her amatory fiction Haywood embraces the form of feminine desire, protesting against confinement of women in the eighteenth century. In her amatory fictions she wanted to provide an essence of utopian omnipotence to her female readers, though it was denied to them in the real world. Through the agency of her “pen” she tried to create a fantasy-zone of female empowerment in her fiction. Hence in her amatory fiction like *The British Recluse: or, Secret History of Cleomira supposed Dead* she radically presents the notion of the female ‘gaze’, which is different from that of the male experience, and becomes symbolic of attaining of the female ‘agency’. About such presentation of the essentially female experience in the ecriture feminine Helene Cixous writes in “Conversations”:

> ... I believe there is a bodily relationship between reader and text. We work very close to the text, as close to the body of the text as possible; ... We work on the mystery of human being, including the fact that humans are sexed beings, that there is sexual difference, and that these differences manifest themselves in texts. The differences inscribe themselves in whatever is born from us. ...
This fundamental difference of the female experience is the crucial thing, which Haywood attempts to inscribe in her text.

Laura Mulvey’s germinal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) expands the conception of the “male gaze” and the passive role of women in cinema. She argues that film provides visual pleasure to the spectator through ‘scopophilia’, and through the spectator’s self-identification with the on-screen male actor. Scopophilia is a Freudian term that means the love of gazing, or the pleasure in seeing. The term scopophilia is related to voyeurism, the objectification and fetishism. In Freudian analysis “scopophilia” is associated with the anal stage of development. Voyeurism involves deriving sexual gratification from observing others in secret. The key factor in voyeurism is that the voyeur does not interact personally with the person being observed. The act of staring or gazing implies a visual focus, where the subject of the gaze is objectified. Mulvey asserts that in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance, coded for strong visual and erotic impact, and as a result in film a woman is the "bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning"(McHugh 1205-07). Mulvey argues that Freud’s psychoanalytic theory is the key to understanding how film creates such a space for female sexual objectification and exploitation through the combination of the patriarchal order of society, and how “looking” in itself act as a pleasurable form of voyeurism. Mulvey identifies three "looks" or perspectives that occur in film which serve to sexually objectify women. The first is the perspective of the male character on screen and how he perceives the female character. The second is the perspective of the spectator as they see the female character on screen. The third "look" joins the first two looks together and it is the male audience members’ perspective of the female character in the film. This third perspective allows the male audience to take the female character as his own personal sex object because he can relate himself, through looking, to the male character in the film. Mulvey also asserts
that the male dominance persists because women exist. Without a woman a man and his supremacy as the controller of visual pleasure are insignificant. For Mulvey, it is the presence of the female that defines the patriarchal order of society as well as the male psychology of thought. Mulvey calls for an eradication of female sexual objectivity in order to align herself with the second-wave feminism. She argues that for the equality and emancipation of women at the house as well as at the workplace, women must be portrayed as men are - as lacking sexual objectification.

Eliza Haywood, much before the rise of the radical concepts of feminism, attempts to provide the proto-feminist ideology of gender equality and emancipation of women in her literary domain by denying the traditional, patriarchal role of sexual objectification to her heroines. She presents the world through women’s eyes and sees in men, what they do not generally see in themselves. In the dedication to The Fatal Secret (1724) Haywood complains that as a woman she is “depriv’d of those Advantages of Education which the other Sex enjoy”, and that she can write only about love, “that which Nature is not negligent to teach us”. As a result Eliza Haywood anticipates the concept of the “female gaze” as an alternative to female objectification in her popular amatory fiction The British Recluse: or, Secret History of Cleomira supposed Dead. She exploits the form of amatory fiction with new possibilities in order to express the latent, proto-feminist ideas and to establish a degree of female ‘agency’ and a form of female empowerment. For such experimentation with the new genre of novel with different new literary devices Dale Spender opines about Eliza Haywood in Mothers of the Novel: Hundred Good Women Writers before Jane Austen:

The growth and development of the novel can be illustrated with reference to the writing of this one woman, who reveals an extraordinary creative ability, who freely experiments with form and style, and who produces an unprecedented and perhaps
unparalleled range of novels. Every enduring and exemplary feature of the new genre
is to be found in her writing, and yet she has never been given the credit for her
contribution. And with the denial of her achievement it has been possible to locate
the origins of the novel in the writing of men. So to Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding,
and Samuel Richardson go the laurels; not because they were necessarily first, foremost
or fundamental, but because with the removal of Eliza Haywood, there is no female
challenge to their pre-eminence.(83)

Such multifaceted amatory fiction like The British Recluse indeed manifests the interiority of
girls desire as well as of female sensibility of its pro-active heroines. Haywood, almost for
the first time in English literature, prioritises here the female gaze, the female desire and
female ‘scopophilia’. In The British Recluse: or, Secret History of Cleomira supposed Dead
Haywood narrates two different stories of ruin of the two young ladies, which are
marvellously connected in the end in a preposterous as well as improbable manner. Two
beautiful young ladies, Cleomira and Belinda, being tormented by the vicissitudes of life,
take refuge in the same boarding house, where they share their melancholy stories of love and
despair. One important aspect of such amatory fiction of Haywood is that she presents such
commonplace experiences of betrayal of her heroines, with which the female readers can
identify their own vulnerable condition. Such narratives of male infidelity performs the role
of “catharsis” for the female readers. In this context Ros Ballaster comments in Seductive
Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740:

The business of Haywood’s amatory plots is to engage the female reader’s
sympathy and erotic pleasure, rather than stimulate intellectual judgement.
These texts explicitly call upon the female reader to identify with the troubled heroine, yet paradoxically enjoin her to interpret the tale as moral admonition. To this purpose, Haywood frequently employs the novelistic convention of the interjected narrative of seduction delivered by one woman to another . . . (170)

Cleomira, who is addressed as the British Recluse due to her retirement from all human interaction, tells her story first. Cleomira lived a very retired life with her mother in the country. One evening, going to attend a ball in the town, she meets Lysander, whose beauty entangles her. Haywood brilliantly describes the masculine charm of Lysander through the point of view of Cleomira’s “female gaze”. In the middle of a Ball she first observes Lysander as:

a Lady of my Acquaintance whisper'd me, and said, There's the fine young Lord.

---- (I will not call him by any other Name than that of Lysander) He is lately (continued my Friend) come from his Travels, and but this Moment enter'd; it will be an envy'd Gallantry, if you lead him out. While she was speaking, I directed my Eyes where I perceiv'd she look'd, and saw a Form which appear'd more than Man, and nothing inferior to those Idea's we conceive of Angels: His Air! his Shape! His Face! were more than human! ----Miriads of light'ning Glories darted from his Eyes, as he cast them round the Room, yet temper'd with such a streaming Sweetness, such a descending Softness, as seem'd to entreat the Admiration he commanded! A thousand times have I attempted since to speak what 'twas I felt at this first fatal Interview; but words cou'd never do Justice to the Wonders of his Charms, or half describe the Effect they wrought on me . . . (15)
Returning to home she languishes for Lysander, and finally carries on an illicit liaison with him. Here Haywood’s characteristic rhetoric of desire to describe the intensity of female passion is noteworthy. It reaches at the zenith of perfection, when Haywood advances to describe the masculine beauty of Lysander through the ‘female gaze’ of Cleomira, when he rides by Cleomira’s window:

At length he came, and with a Mien and Air, so soft, so sweet, so graceful
that Painters might have copied an Adonis from him, fit indeed to charm the Queen of Beauty. He was dress’d in a straight Jockey-coat of Green Velvet richly embroider’d at the Seams with Silver; the Buttons were Brilliants, neatly set in Fashion of Roses; his Hair, which is as black as Jet, was ty’d with a green Ribband, but not so straitly but that a thousand little Ringlets stray’d ov’r his lovely Cheeks and wanton’d in the Air; a crimson Feather in his hat, set off to vast Advantage the dazzling Whiteness of his skin. In fine he was all over Charms! all over glorious! and I believe it impossible for the most insensible to have beheld him without adoring him! (25)

The traditional description of the male gaze is here radically reversed by the representation of the female gazer. Laura Mulvy writes in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”:

According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative
supports the man's role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen. The man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralise the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify. As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence. (12)

But, in the amatory fiction of Haywood, this traditional concept of male as the active gazer and female as the passive object of gazing is traversed. The act of gazing here becomes symbolic of power and control. And, in this way by controlling the act of gazing, the proactive heroines of Haywood gain the female ‘agency’ in a way. Though this sort of power as well as agency to control the gender relation was denied to the eighteenth century women in reality, here by presenting women as the gazer and the dilator of the game of seduction Haywood tries to present a proto-feminist model of female empowerment.

Cleomira’s mother confines her to her room when she comes to know of this secret love affair of Cleomira. She weeps for a long time. But she can not resist herself from Lysander’s magnetism. Cleomira, who falls prey to the alluring personality as well as the ravishing beauty of Lysander, ultimately succumbs to Lysander going against all the vicissitudes of her
life. Haywood describes the climactic moment of their consummation from the point-of-view of her female sensibility and female eroticism:

These Words, and the Accent of his Voice, always dear and charming to my Ears, soon told me it was Lysander, and oblig'd me to endeavour to rise; but he had thrown himself down by me while he was speaking, and seizing both my Hands, and gently forcing them to circle his Waste, join'd his Lips to mine with too strenuous a Pressure to suffer me to reproach the Liberties he took. ---What could I do! surpris'd in this unguarded Moment! ---Full of Desires and tender Languishment before, his glowing Touch now dissolv'd my very Soul, and melted every thought to soft compliance! ---In short, I suffer'd,---or, rather let me say, I cou'd not resist his proceeding from one Freedom to another, till there was nothing left for him to ask, or me to grant. The guilty Transport pass'd, a thousand Apprehensions all at once invaded me! Remorse and Shame supply'd the Place of Exstacy! ---Tears fill'd my Eyes,---cold tremblings seiz'd my Limbs,---and my Breast heav'd no more with Joy, but Horror! (38)

This sort of juxtaposition of ecstatic joy and consequent horror within the heroine is symptomatic of the hysterical patients of Freudian theory. According to Freudian theory these “amatory signs” anticipate a sort of hysterical illness, which is beyond the control of the desire-stricken women. Here Haywood’s texts use popular, contemporary theories of hysteria and
madness to represent and justify female desire. In this context Simone de Beauvoir has written in *The Second Sex*:

> The body of a woman – particularly that of a young girl – is a ‘hysterical’ body, in the sense that there is, so to speak, no distance between the psychic life and its physiological realization. . . It is in great part the anxiety of being a woman that devastates the feminine body.(356)

Then suddenly Cleomira discovers Lysander’s secret love for another woman. He gradually comes to visit her after a long gap of time. When he feigns of his great business as an excuse for not being able to meet her, she cries out in utter distress:

> Ungrateful Man!( said I) when watchful for my Ruin, no business had the Power to hold you; all day, and every day, each flying minute was Witness of your Vows: . . . But now, . . . now, when I have given up all my soul! am lost to all the world but you ! I may alone, unpity’d, mourn my fate, and curse the Fondness that betray’d me to your Scorn. . . .(41)

To add to this misery Cleomira finds herself pregnant. But Lysander avoids her. When Lysander came to know this condition of Cleomira, he told her for going to the country out of his fear of infamy. He also promised her for visit to that place. But he did not come. She also receives the news of his frequent visit to the plays with a lady of the name of Melissa. Finally with a decision of committing suicide she writes a letter to Lysander:

> . . .O most ungrateful, cruel, barbarous, of all that ever was call’d Man! . . .

What have I done that can deserve such Usage? . . . Is it because I have
forsook the Ties of Duty, Interest, Honour, . . . given up my innocence, . . .

my Peace, and everlasting Hopes, that you despise me? . . . Monster, for whom

have I done this? . . . But tho’ I live unworthily of your love, my Death must

farely give you some concern, . . . at least, the Manner of it, when you shall

know it was for you died: . . . That my last Breath form’d nothing but your

Name; . . .(49-50)

But this letter left no impressi on on the mind of Lysander. In the meantime she received the news of the death of her mother. In utmost grief she gave birth to a dead child. Lysander married another woman Semanthe. Cleomira writes a final letter to Lysander, and then takes the poison. But she survived fortunately as she had taken an opiate by mistake. When Lysander got the news of her death he remained indifferent. From this incident Cleomira took her lesson, and resolved, “Now I will live, and Love alone shall die(73)”. When Cleomira is deserted thus by this rake, she comes to live at the secluded place, where she meets another jilted woman, Belinda.

Then Belinda narrates the story of her frustration in love with a baronet, named Sir Thomas Courtal, whose first glance enslaved her heart to poison all the peace of her future days and her heart oscillated between the indescribable sense of “Delight and Pain, a kind of raking Joy, and pleasing Anguish”(79). Belinda’s father had arranged for her marriage with Mr. Worthly before his death. But going to a visit with Worthly she encountered the charming Sir Thomas Courtal. She was enslaved by the intoxicating charm of this man in such a blind ecstasy that she could only think, “Oh! He is all angel, divinely charming in Soul as well as Body! . . .”(91). She gradually succumbs to the advances of this man. This man
easily captures the whole attention of Belinda’s “female gaze” and “female erotic impulses”.

She thinks:

All his Gestures were so humble and beseeching, yet withal so graceful; all

his Looks were accustom'd with such a piercing Softness; all his Words

express'd so real a Tenderness, so perfect a Sincerity, and so pure a Zeal, that even

you, too sadly skill'd in the vile Arts of false deceiving Man, must have believ'd

and trusted him! I walk'd with him, heedless of the swift passing Hours, till Day

was almost spent; and it was not till the Want of Light depriv'd me of the

Pleasure of gazing on him . . . .(92)

Here Haywood highlights the erotic impulses of the female desire as well as pleasure through the metaphor of ‘gaze’, that was denied to the women in the patriarchal society. In this context Simone de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*:

It is not admitted that she, like a man, can have desires of her own: she is

the prey of desire. It is understood that man has made the specific forces

a part of his personality, whereas woman is the slave of the species.(699)

But this reality is overturned in the imaginary world of female emancipation, created by Haywood in her proto-feminist text. Hence the ‘desire’ of the female protagonists is prioritised in this text. After going through the formality of wooing by letters Belinda and Courtal meet in the wood. Here Haywood depicts a beautiful natural imagery to describe the nocturnal rendezvous of Belinda and Courtal:

Never was a Night more delectable, more aiding to a Lover's Wishes! the arching
trees form'd a Canopy over our Heads, while through the gently shaking Boughs
soft Breezes play'd in lulling Murmurings, and fann'd us with delicious Gales! A
thousand Nightingals sung amorous Ditties, and the billing Doves coo'd out their
tender Transports! . . . Everything was soothing, . . . everything inspiring! The very
Soul of Love seem'd to inform the Place, and reign throughout the Whole. A little
tir'd with walking, my too—dear Companion had prevail'd on me to rest myself
on a fine grassy Bank, which was at the foot of a great Tree. (93)

This natural imagery foregrounds the forthcoming scene of conjugal love of the lovers. The
‘shaking boughs’ symbolises the congregated hands of the lovers. The murmuring breezes
signify the whispering words of love. Here the pastoral setting manifests the interiority of
Belinda, who oscillates between her infuriating desire and reason. The symbolic use of the
‘archetype’ of Nightingale foreshadows that the heroine, like the myth of Philomela, is going
to be the tragic victim of rape. One of the most important aspects of the amatory fictions of
Haywood is also her use of the characteristic imagery and rhetoric to manifest the climactic
moments of erotic communion of the lovers through the point-of-view of feminine
sensibility. Belinda narrates here such a moment of their reciprocal love:

. . . He took the licenced freedom to place himself by me; and methought, we
sat with all the Sweets of Nature blooming round us, like the first happy Pair
while bless'd with Innocence, they knew not Shame, nor Fear. But he, alas! had
other Notions, and aiming only at my Ruin, believ'd he cou'd not chuse a fitter
season, and perhaps never shou'd have so favourable an Opportunity as this: He
now began to mingle Kisses and embraces with his Vows: My Hands were the
first Victims of his fiery Pressures; then my Lips, my Neck, my Breast; and
perceiving that, quite lost in Extasy, I but faintly resisted what he did, far greater
Boldness ensued! . . . My soul dissolv'd! its Faculties o’erpowers ! . . . and
Reason, Pride, and Shame, and Fear, and every Foe to soft Desire, charm'd to
Forgetfulness! (93)

This passionate moment is depicted intensely from the point-of-view of the female desire. It highlights the interiority of Belinda, who oscillates between her infuriating desire and reason. But finally her everything gets fused into only one sense of desire. Haywood is noteworthy here for foregrounding the female desire and female sexuality in this proto-feminist text.

Being unable to resist her erotic impulses at the beckoning of the determined rake Belinda utters:

My trembling Limbs refus’d to oppose the lovely Tyrant’s will! And, if my faltering Tongue entreated him to desist, or my weak Hands attempted to repulse the approaching Liberty of his, it serv’d but, as he said the more to inflame his Wishes, and raise his Passion to a higher pitch of fury. (93)

Here Haywood brilliantly manifests Belinda’s submission to the advances of her seducer. Belinda becomes incapable of preventing her ‘body’ from manifesting her ‘desire’. This is symptomatic of her hysterical manifestation of her unconscious desires through her body.

About such representation of the female physicality through the “trembling limbs” of Belinda Ros Ballaster comments in Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740:

Through this paradoxical movement Haywood’s fiction sets about constructing the modern female reader of romance fiction. Erotic fantasy on the part of the woman reader, a heterosexual fantasy of subjugation and self-abandonment, is encouraged in the secure knowledge that ultimately female sexual pleasure will be punished or tamed. This seeming contradiction is maintained through the specific
metaphysics of love that structure the ideology of the text and through Haywood’s representation of a ‘hystericized’ female body.

Haywood’s heroines, though ruined, are ‘innocent’ because of their inability to resist sexual passion. . . . The Belinda of The British Recluse describes her submission to the advances of Sir Thomas Courtal (who, unbeknownst to her is also the seducer of Cleomira, the friend to whom she is narrating her story) in terms of a hysterical inability to control her unconscious desires from being manifested through her body . . . (170)

These moments, which bring female sexuality and female desire to the limelight, are indeed innovative as well as rare in respect of the eighteenth-century literary paradigm. These are the peerless scenes of the amatory fictions of Haywood, that made her immensely popular among her female readers. Haywood here appears as the pioneer proto-feminist writer, who dared to depict the candid expression of the sexual passion of her female protagonists. Her amatory fictions are really remarkable for providing her female readers this voice for manifestation of their libido, that was repressed for so long by the patriarchal literary tradition.

But fortunately before the ruin of Belinda Mr Worthly intervenes, and fights a duel with Courtal. Worthly is fatally injured in the duel. Out of her grief Belinda flees to the town, and there she finds out her seducer Courtal with his wife and mistress. She came to know there that his real name is Lord Bellamy. On hearing this, Cleomira exclaims that her deceiver and that of Belinda are one and the same:

. . . how strangely has Fortune brought together two Wretches, fit only for
the Society of each other? We are, indeed, too nearly ally’d in our Misfortunes, and to one Fatal source owe both our Woes! I might from the very Beginning of your Story have imagin’d it, . . . might have known such prodigious charms, and such prodigious villainy, were no where blended but in my perfidious, but still dear Lysander. . . Your Courtal, . . . my Lysander are the same; and both are found only in the person of the too-lovely faithless Bellamy. (111-12)

At this discovery these two women resolves to pass their time “bewailing their several Misfortunes, sometimes exclaiming against the Vices, sometimes praising the Beauties of their common Betrayer”(112). Finally they take decision:

. . . of abandoning the World continuing, the Recluse and she took a House about Seventy miles distant from London, where they still live in a perfect Tranquillity . . . And where a solitary life is the effect of choice, it certainly yields more solid comfort, than all the public diversions which those who are the greatest pursuers can find. (114)

This ending is remarkable in the context of amatory fiction. These two women, being betrayed in their love, take the common decision to resign from this world of male treachery by confining themselves into solitude. Haywood here provides a new model of denouement, that would be an alternative female form of denying the male suppression. In this context John Richetti in *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739* opines:

The ending has, however, perfect justification; for the monastic calm and
religious insights which our heroines achieve are quite consistent with the

religious decoration which is a traditional part of amatory rhetoric and which

Mrs. Haywood always makes the most of. Mrs. Haywood here contrives to use
the generalised spirituality cum eroticism of love as a bridge towards a mere
orthodox and specific spirituality. . . Only love can provide such a perspective
on earthly things, for love, like Christian withdrawal, requires that its devotees
stand deliberately outside the world of selfish lust and avarice.(210)

Thus through the ending Haywood ushers a new way of life for the love-stricken, deserted
women in this proto-feminist text. The two jilted women decide to resign from the terrestrial
pleasure, and accept the celestial solitude for the rest of their lives. As the votaries of love
they accept spiritual resignation, and a life devoid of the male, which is in a sense a replica of
the Amazonian world of female self-sufficiency.

This amatory fiction is really noteworthy in its narrative process and the plot-structure
as the story of Cleomira is in a way a replication of the story of Belinda. And by this way
Haywood as a proto-feminist writer tries to suggest that each and every story of female
subjugation is actually an imitation of the same story of humiliation of her female
predecessor. But Haywood’s amatory tale is different from any other tale of patriarchal
mindset by her innovative treatment of the traditional theme. Belinda and Cleomira both are
betrayed by their common seducer, but they do not try to convince the rake to marry them in
order to rescue them from their ruins like the patriarchal tradition of the fiction of seduction.
Here Haywood, as the precursor of the feminist literary tradition, does not admit her heroines
to ‘reward’ their ‘virtue’ through the mercy of their rapist like Samuel Richardson’s Pamela.
Haywood’s heroines have the “agency” to act at their own wishes, and the tenacity to bear the consequences of their desperate adventures nonchalantly. Throughout *The British Recluse* Haywood minutely manifests the interiority of female “desire”, reflected through the female “gaze” of both of the heroines like Cleomira and Belinda. Here the self-reliant heroines attain female “agency” as well as subjectivity by positing the rakish hero as an object of female “desire” as well as the female “gaze”.

Haywood thus tumbles down the conventions of the androcentric literary tradition, which always denied subjectivity to the female characters and objectified them by reserving the privileged role of “gazing” only for the male protagonist. This novel is indeed marked by Haywood’s extraordinary creative ability. Here she not only experiments with the form and the style of the novel, but also experiments with the concept of female sensibility. In this proto-feminist text Haywood envisages a utopian zone of female empowerment, where woman attains the female ‘agency’ to subvert gender hierarchies by objectifying the male partner through her “female gaze”. In the paper "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Laura Mulvey, after highlighting the mode of female objectification, calls for an annihilation of modern film structure as the only way to free women from their sexual objectification in film. Mulvey argues that the only way to do so, is by the removal of the element of voyeurism and "the invisible guest". In this amatory fiction too Haywood denies the role of passive objectification of women to her heroines under the “male gaze”. Diminishing all sorts of claustrophobic notions of femininity of the patriarchal mindset Haywood presents a radical, pro-active heroine, who can circulate her female “gaze” as well as sexuality through the use of her “agency” at her own wishes.
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Chapter-4: An Experimentation with the Form of Female Hysteria in Idalia

: or, The Unfortunate Mistress
Chapter-4

An Experimentation with the Form of Female Hysteria in *Idalia : or, The Unfortunate Mistress*

Eliza Haywood’s spectacular amatory fiction *Idalia : or, The Unfortunate Mistress* (1723) is really notable for Haywood’s experimentation with the form of female eccentricity and female hysteria, that ruin the life of the erotic heroine Idalia. Idalia is also one of those self-willed heroines of Haywood, who romps from one adventurous episode of love to another. She is the pivotal force, around whom all the other characters of the novel revolve. She wants to live her life freely at her own wishes. But going to do this she is assaulted, sexually abused and even raped by her several male admirers. Escaping from one sexual molestation to another she comes on the verge of being a hysteric woman. Like the hysteric patients of the Freudian theory of hysteria, she is a victim of sexual exploitation. Even in her domain of literature Haywood introduces this innovative theme of female hysteria in order to unravel another important aspect of female subjugation under the male masochism. But at the same time it also reflects the repercussion of the extreme hedonism of a self-willed woman in this patriarchal society. Haywood’s special credit lies here in finding the distinctive rhetoric of the hysteric woman. This amatory fiction is important for Haywood’s experimentation with the concept of female liberation and female independence, which takes the form of hysteric eccentricity being abused by the society. The whole novel is, in a sense, a metaphorical representation of the condition of the libertine heroine Idalia, who is the pivotal force for the development of the novel. Her hysteric condition as a victim of male maltreatment brings vacuum in her life. This sense of vacuum ultimately engulfs the novel. As a result of this, the hysteric woman not only brings tragedy to her own romantic life, but
also becomes the cause of ruin of all the other male protagonists around her. So the novel ends with the total sense of void like the Senecan tragedy.

Idalia, the daughter of the nobleman Don Bernardo, is introduced in the text as a “wonder of her sex”:

Don Bernardo de Bellsache, a Nobleman of Venice, had a Daughter whom he esteem'd the Blessing of his Age; and had her Conduct been such as might have been expected from the Elegance of her Genius, and the Improvements of Education, which his Fondness had indulg'd her in, she had indeed been the Wonder of her Sex. Imagination cannot form a Face more exquisitely lovely; such Majesty, such Sweetness, such a Regularity in all her Features, accompany'd with an Air at once so soft, so striking, that while she commanded she allur'd, and forc'd what she entreated. Nor was her Shape and Mien less worthy Admiration; it was impossible for any Thing to be more exactly proportion'd than the former; and for the latter, it had a Grace peculiar to itself: The least and most careless Motion of her Head or Hand, was sufficient to captivate a Heart. In fine, her Charms were so infinitely above Description, that it was necessary to see her, to have any just Notion of her. (1-2)

Due to her unparallel beauty she attracted so many young men of Venice. Though at the flourishing of her youth she was overjoyed at this situation, gradually it became the cause of
her ruin. Haywood describes her charms to the young Venetians, who gathered around her house like the votaries of love:

... Idalia (for that was the Name of this lovely Inconsiderate) had no sooner arriv'd at her fourteenth Year, than she attracted the Eyes of all the young Noblemen of Venice; scarce a Heart but sigh'd for her: The Shrine of our Blessed Lady of Loretto was never throng'd with greater Numbers of Religious Devotees than Don Bernardo's House was by those of the Young and Gay; and happy did they think themselves, whose Birth or Fortune gave them any just Cause to hope the Pretensions they brought would be an Offering worth Acceptance. (2-3)

Idalia is Haywood’s headstrong heroine, whose rash actions provide the pivotal force of this amatory fiction. She is such a wilful heroine, who wants to live her life ignoring all the circumference of a virgin woman. Actually it is through the character of Idalia Haywood wants to show the essential value of the female jouissance to the female readers. By presenting Idalia as a heroine, who can circulate her sexuality at her own wishes, Haywood actually wants to inscribe, almost for the first time in the domain of literature, the imprints of the female pleasure and female desire, which is characteristically different from the persons of the opposite sex. In this context Helene Cixous has written in her “Conversations”:

I don’t believe a man and woman are identical. The fact that men and women have the whole of humanity in common and that at the same time there is something slightly different, I consider a benediction. Our differences have to do with the way we experience pleasure, with our bodily experiences, which
are not the same. Our different experiences necessarily leave different marks, different memories. The way we make love – because it isn’t the same – produces different sensations and recollections. And these are transmitted through the text. . . .

As a writer, I regret we cannot go from one side to the other, from one body to another. I regret not being Tiresias. In ancient times Tiresias was possible. Perhaps he will not be again. But I’m not Tiresias. I can write about feminine pleasure, but I can’t write about the masculine experience of it. There is a block. (230)

Haywood is notable here for articulating such characteristic features of distinct female eroticism in this proto-feminist text. Thus this text of Haywood bears the features of écriture féminine for Haywood’s presentation of different distinctive female impulses. Finally among the train of her lovers Idalia encourages a young rake Florez. But he deceives her. At the time of their rendezvous he sends his patron Don Ferdinand in his own place. At the clutch of this man she went on the verge of her ruin:

——The Reader's Imagination here can only form an Idea of that Confusion, that mingled Rage and Horror, which, at this dreadful Exigence, fill’d the Soul of the unhappy Idalia! 'Tis not in Words to represent it!——Sometimes, disdainful of the injurious Attempt, her stormy Anger vented itself in Curses; but then remembering how little she had the Power of resisting whatever his wild Desires might prompt
him to commit, she sunk to milder Treatment, wept, begg'd him to desist:—

Prayers,—Threat'nings,—Entreaties, and Revilings, alternately succeeded, as the different Agitations rose in her Breast, till at last she had no Breath to utter either.

Her Spirits, fatigued with this unusual Hurry, and all her Limbs tir'd in the Struggle with such unequal Strength, she fainted as he held her in his Arms.(11)

Finally Don Ferdinand abducted Idalia and raped her:

What was now the Distraction of this unhappy Lady, waked from her Dream of Vanity to certain Ruin! unavoidable Destruction! She rav'd, she tore, did all that Women could; but all in vain!——In the midst of Shrieks and Tremblings, Cries, Curses, Swoonings, the impatient Ferdinand perpetrated his Intent, and finish'd her Undoing.(17)

This is the first striking event of sexual harassment that came as a shock to this adolescent heroine. Haywood here artistically weaves the motif behind the successive impulsive actions of this hysteric heroine. Freud in his theories of hysteria had stated that generally the source of hysteria is a traumatic experience that is uniformly of a sexual nature. In a very innovative way Haywood obliquely blends here the motif of the hysteria with the motif of unrestrained sexuality, that ruins the life of the heroine.

The word "hysteria" has come from Greek word “hystera”, meaning "womb." Originally "hysteria" designated a link between certain nervous disorders and diseases of the female sexual and reproductive organs. It was thought that there was a direct connection between these physical pathologies localized in the female organs and certain nervous
symptoms. Hysteria was defined in Webster's dictionary as "a psychiatric condition variously characterized by emotional excitability, excessive anxiety, sensory and motor disturbances, or the unconscious simulation of organic disorders." Freud's teacher, the famous French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot concluded about hysteria that it derives from a particular hereditary disposition. According to him certain people are genetically pre-programmed to develop hysteria. But Freud, after his long study and elaborate observation, commented in his “Studies on Hysteria” and “The Aetiology of Hysteria” that generally the source of hysteria is a traumatic experience in childhood that is uniformly of a sexual nature. Freud applied the practice of his friend and colleague Josef Breuer to dig into his patients' memories in order to reveal the traumatic childhood experience that is the cause of the hysterical symptoms.

Freud's procedure here, as elsewhere, is empirical. In this instance his conclusions were drawn from 18 case studies. Of these 18 cases, 6 are male, 12 are female. Freud searches in these 18 cases for a single cause that all of them have in common. Then this would be their uniform basis and would hence point to the general aetiology of hysteria. Freud acknowledged the difficulty of penetrating through to the origin, or the primal cause of the hysteria. Following the patients' trains of association, which will often lead to other memories that are related to the cause of the hysteria, Freud concluded that a sexual event experienced during infancy or childhood is the sole origin of hysterical symptoms. Freud and Bruer write in *Studies on Hysteria* in this context:

> . . . that external events determine the pathology of hysteria to an extent far greater than is known and recognized. It is of course obvious that in cases of “traumatic” hysteria what provokes the symptoms is the accident. The causal connection is equally evident in hysterical attacks when it is possible
to gather from the patient’s utterances that in each attack he is hallucinating
the same event which provoked the first one. The situation is more obscure
in the case of other phenomena.

Our experiences have shown us, however, that the most various
symptoms, which are ostensibly spontaneous and, as one might say,
idiopathic products of hysteria, are just as strictly related to the precipitating
trauma as the phenomena to which we have just alluded and which exhibit the
connection quite clearly. The symptoms which we have been able to trace back
to precipitating factors of this sort include neuralgias and anaesthesias of very
various kinds, many of which had persisted for years, contractures and paralyses,
hysterical attacks and epileptoid convulsions, which every observer regarded as
true epilepsy, petit mat and disorders in the nature of tic, chronic vomiting and
anorexia, carried to the pitch of rejection of all nourishment, various forms of
disturbance of vision, constantly recurrent visual hallucinations, etc. The
disproportion between the many years’ duration of the hysterical symptom and
the single occurrence which provoked it is what we are accustomed invariably
to find in traumatic neuroses. Quite frequently it is some event in childhood
that sets up a more or less severe symptom which persists during the years that
follow. (53-54)

Freud concluded that the aetiology of hysteria is situational, not physiological or genetic.
Apart from these qualitative distinctions, Freud also stressed on a quantitative factor, and said
that the severity of hysterical symptoms is directly proportional to the number of such sexual
encounters or acts of sexual abuse that one experiences as a child. The “trigger” that initiates
the latent hysterical symptoms, is according to Freud usually the sexual encounters one has
after puberty. Later on these “permissible” sexual acts recall or re-invoke the “inadmissible” acts, the hysterics's moral “shame”, associated with childhood sexual abuse and activate the latent hysteria. Then Freud introduced his “seduction theory”, which was a hypothesis posited in the mid-1890s. Freud told in his “seduction theory” that hysteria stems from a real act of seduction during childhood. According to the theory, a repressed memory of an early childhood sexual abuse or molestation experience was the essential precondition for the emergence of the hysterical or obsessive symptoms in the future. In the traditional account of development of seduction theory, Freud initially thought that his patients were relating more or less factual stories of sexual mistreatment, and that the sexual abuse was responsible for many of his patients' neuroses and other mental health problems. In 1897 Freud abandoned this theory, concluding that the memories of sexual abuse were in fact imaginary fantasies. Psychic disorders are a direct consequence of experiences that cannot be assimilated. He then argued that the traumatic sexual event may not be real to have a lasting pathological effect. He ultimately concluded that the traumatic experience of sexual abuse can either be real or may be merely imagined, and simply the product of fantasy.

The incident of rape by Don Ferdinand also came as a sudden shock to Idalia’s adolescent mind. It acted as a powerful agent for generating hysterical eccentricities within her. Hence her subsequent frenzied actions were the outcome of her such psychological cataclysm. When Idalia’s father came running after Don Ferdinand in search of his daughter, Don Ferdinand had sent her to Padua with his friend Don Henriquez. During their journey towards Padua, Idalia became so much remorseful in her frustration that she tried to commit suicide. Here Haywood uses the characteristic rhetoric of depression in order the unravel this hysterics maid’s psychological condition:

That wretched Lady was so bent on Death, that there requir'd the utmost Caution
to prevent the Mischief which her Fury threaten'd; a hundred Times, in that one
Day she remain'd in his House, had she attempted on her Life; and when he had
put her into a Gondula, which he had order'd to be made ready for that purpose, he
was obliged to hold her the whole Time of their little Voyage in his Arms, or the
River Brent had been her Grave. O cruel, barbarous Man! said she, why will you
deny me the only Relief for Miseries like mine?——But think not to disappoint me
always:——Not all the Powers of Heaven and Earth combined shall force me long
to drag this Load of Infamy and Woe! I cannot,——will not live!—— With such
like Speeches, which were still accompany'd with tearing of her Hair, her
Garments, and sometimes her very Flesh, did she express the bitter Anguish of
her Soul, whenever he attempted to divert her Desperation . . . (22)

Here Idalia’s eccentric behaviour in her depression and her tearing of her own hair, flesh and
garments indeed manifest the symptoms of hysteria due to sudden shock of sexual abuse by
Don Ferdinand. This sort of juxtaposition of ecstatic joy and consequent horror within the
heroine is symptomatic of the hysterical patients of Freudian theory. According to Freudian
theory these “amatory signs” anticipate a sort of hysterical illness, which is beyond the control
of the desire-stricken women. Here Haywood’s texts use popular, contemporary theories of
hysteria and madness to represent and justify female desire. In this context Simone de
Beauvoir has written in The Second Sex:

The body of a woman – particularly that of a young girl – is a ‘hysterical’ body,
in the sense that there is, so to speak, no distance between the psychic life and
its physiological realization. . . It is in great part the anxiety of being a woman
that devastates the feminine body.(356)

But unfortunately Don Henriquez too had fallen in love with Idalia during this journey. So he refused to surrender Idalia to his friend. They subsequently killed each other in a duel. The news of this death was brought to Idalia by Henriquez’s brother Don Myrtano. He is also attracted by her ravishing beauty. He instantly declared his love to her:

. . . Wonder not then, adorable Idalia, (continu'd he, soft'ning his Voice,) that I was fir'd with Impatience to behold a Beauty, whose Charms had given such a Proof of their prodigious Influence!——I come (cry'd he, growing more tender) to satisfy a Curiosity which, I fear, will cost me dear. (39)

Idalia was also so much impressed by this young man at his first sight. Haywood here employs her exquisite language of desire for expressing the erotic intensity of Idalia’s female gaze. Concentrating her female gaze over Myrtano Idalia fancied:

. . . There was something so very graceful and engaging in the Air and Address of this young Gentleman, that it was almost impossible to see or hear him, without confessing a Sensibility of Perfections which very few, if any, could equal. Idalia, who had a Soul too capable of soft Impressions, full of warm Desires, and tender Languishments, tho' yet unfix'd, gaz'd on him with a Pleasure which as yet she knew not the Meaning of . . . and a thousand other different nameless Graces, which seem'd united in the lovely Myrtano, inspir'd her, at the first Sight of him,
with a Passion which she had neither Strength to repel, nor Artifice to conceal.

——She now found in good Earnest what it was to love, and felt in reality those

Emotions, which before she fancy’d to have done. (39-40)

Haywood’s valiant rhetoric of desire in order to express the depth of female sensuality and female jouissance for the opposite sex is peerless. This kind of celebration of the female physicality in her écriture feminine really marks this amatory fiction as one of the pioneering proto-feminist texts, that unravels such feminocentric issues within its matrix of sentimental love. In this context Luce Irigaray writes in “The Bodily encounter with the mother”:

This rebirth is necessary for women too. It cannot take place unless it is freed from man’s archaic on to her and unless an autonomous and positive representation of her sexuality exists in culture. . . we must not once more kill the mother who was sacrificed to the origins of our culture. We must give her new life, new life to that mother, to our mother within us and between us. We must give her the right to pleasure, to jouissance, to passion, restore her right to speech, and sometimes to cries and anger. . .

Throughout all this, what we have to do (not that we necessarily have to do one thing before the other) is discover our sexual identity, the singularity of our desires, of our auto-eroticism, of our narcissism, of our heterosexuality and of our homosexuality. . . It is important that we discover the singularity of our jouissance. (420-422)
This uniqueness of female experience of pleasure as well as passion, which is the mark of an ecriture feminine, is expressed in this fiction. After the exchange of the words of love through the letters Idalia and Don Myrtano got engaged in love. Haywood uses the erotic language in order to express the optimal moment of their consummation of love:

There are Times when even the most Prudent are not Masters of their Actions; how then could it be expected that the Young, Gay, Enflamed Myrtano should have always the Power of commanding his, in Opportunities such as he enjoy'd:

As yet, indeed, he never had transgressed the strictest Rules of Decency; but Desire becoming, by Restraint, more fierce, at last grew wild, and would no longer endure to be controll'd by dull Respect . . . As they were entertaining each other on the usual Theme, and mingling Kisses with their Vows of Passion, by some Accident his Sleeve catching hold of a Corner of a Table on which the Lights were set, he threw it down: What Lover is not fond of Darkness? The impatient Myrtano bless'd the happy Chance; and thinking this the lucky Moment ordain'd to give him all his Soul at present long'd for, he snatch'd the trembling Fair, and easily finding his Way into the next Room, bore her to the Bed, and was pretty near the Accomplishment of his Desires . . . (49-50)

During such period of their mutual love Idalia receives an anonymous letter, which informs her that Myrtano is married. This news again comes to hysterical Idalia as a great shock. She finds nothing but despair and an all-embracing vacuum all around her. She now decides to go
to a monastery at Verona. On the road her guide threatens to kill her. But then he gets melted by the grief of Idalia. He agrees to inform her father of her present condition. But she suddenly realized that this murderer has also fatally fallen in love with her destructive beauty. She then escapes to Ancona, and decides to go to Naples by a ship. Unfortunately the ship’s captain also attempts to molest her. Here Haywood employs her popular rhetoric of fashion-magazine glamour in order to present her heroine Idalia, the epitome of beauty, from a different look:

The Power of Beauty is the same in all Degrees; the plain Country Habit which
disguis’d the Daughter of a Grandee, could not deprive Idalia of her wonted Charms:
She appear'd so lovely in the Eyes of Rickamboll, the Captain of the Ship, that from
the first Moment he beheld her, he thought of nothing but the Means to posses her.
He conceal'd his Intentions, however, till she was come on Board; but he no sooner
had her in his Power, than he let her know he would make use of it for the
Gratification of his Passion, if she consented not to yield to his Persuasions.

. . . Trembling, fainting, and almost dying with her Fears, she was on her
Knees in her Cabin imploring Heaven's Protection, when the Monster, resolved to
perpetrate his horrid Wishes, came in to know her last Resolve. . .In vain she
endeavour'd to set forth the Baseness of the Deed; —— in vain she wept,
entreated, threaten'd; the Villain harden'd in such Crimes, but laugh'd at her
Despair . . . (73-74)
But Idalia is so unfortunate that her destructive beauty always attracts the persons and
beckons their evil intention. Thus the hysteric heroine Idalia time and again becomes the
victim of sexual harassment, which destabilizes the equilibrium of her psychic condition.
Haywood artistically interweaves the motif of sexual abuse with the extreme form of female
licentiousness in order to create the motif of hysteria in the life of the heroine. At the crucial
moment of her rape by the captain another pirate ship overwhelms the crew, and Idalia is
captured by this pirate group of Abdomer and his bride Princess Bellraiza. When their pirate
ship is drowned, Idalia is luckily saved by a coastal dweller. She sells her diamonds and sets
off for Rome being disguised in man’s dress. Haywood introduces here the technique of
cross-dressing in order to signify the danger of a lonely woman to roam about freely under
her female persona. She has to adopt the facade of masculinity in order to shelter herself from
the male treachery:

How little are those blest with a paternal Protection, able to comprehend the

thousand Dangers which attend a wandring and unguarded State of Life! The

unhappy Idalia, accompany'd by that honest good-natur'd poor Fellow, who had

preserved her from the Sea, had gone above half her Journey to Rome . . . Her

Men’s Clothes, which she became exceeding well, she thought was Security enough

from any of those Insults she had of late been so terrify'd with, and the Company of

these Gentlemen from the Danger of losing her Way, or any other Inconvenience.

But, alas! as much as she imagined she knew of the World, and as great a Variety

of Adventures as she had gone through, she was now entering into a Misfortune she

had not the least Notion of . . . (109-10)
Here the cross-dressing of Idalia brings another twist to the theme. Idalia here dresses herself as a man in order to evade the maltreatment of the male sex, that sends her on the verge of hysteria. Haywood here sends the message that this world, guided by the male chauvinism, is almost as dangerous as the animal world to the female sex, who does not have any security amidst this ferocious world of men. This idea of Haywood to present this world as an hostile “space” to the women of the society caters to the interest of her female readers. Hence there were more dangers, waiting for Idalia. On the way Idalia falls at the clutches of the robbers, who beat her and leave her almost dead. But Myrtano’s wife Antonia falls in love with Idalia as a disguised youth. Haywood uses unparallel rhetoric of female eroticism to describe the female gaze of Antonia:

It was in this Love and Pity-moving Posture she was discovered by a Lady; who passing by in her Chariot had seen something lie at that Distance, and had Curiosity enough to alight and walk to the Place where she was.——But when she beheld the Features of the beautiful Idalia, which neither the Fatigue, nor Fright, nor Grief she had endured could render unlovely, she began to feel a Trembling at her Heart, which she was too well acquainted with, not to comprehend: But not being of a Humour to constrain her Inclinations, indulged the growing Flame by gazing on, . . . had such an additional Charm to what her sleeping Graces wore, that the already enflamed Lady, taking her for what her Dress bespoke her, was now half mad with wild Desires; but endeavouring to conceal her Sentiments from the Observation of her Servants, she turned to them, and being of a ready
Invention, presently told them, that lovely Youth was one of her near Relations

. . . (112-13)

Falling in love of disguised Idalia Antonia brings Idalia to her home, and nurses her. Even in her cross-dressing Idalia ignites the wild passion within another lady, which becomes a fatal omen for her. Coming to her senses Idalia finds to her astonishment that the husband of Antonia is her adorable Don Myrtano. Haywood remarkably presents this moment of inner oscillation of Idalia in her cross dressing:

—how, in an Instant, was all the Sedateness she had assum'd chang'd into

Confusion, Shame, Horror, Distraction, when the Moment they enter'd the

Room she saw the Husband of Antonia was no other than Myrtano!

What Words, can represent, what Heart conceive what hers endured at this

so unexpected, so shocking a View! A thousand Furies all at once possess'd

her, chill Fear and burning Rage, wild Jealousy and mad Despair, and Thought-
disjointing Amazement, with all the black Ideas they could raise, crow'd into

her Soul.—Of all the surprising Accidents of her unhappy Life, nothing is more

to be wondered at, than that she survived this dreadful Moment, or at least did

not by some Extravagance discover both her Sex, and the Cause of her

Distraction: But though her Eyes shot perfect Fires, and seem'd to start from

forth their glowing Orbs,—her Lips trembled, her Hair stood at an end as though

some Spectre had met her Sight, and every Limb was shook with inward
Agonies, yet she neither spoke, not acted any Thing . . . Had they stay'd longer,
‘tis probably indeed she might not have had the Power of preserving herself
undiscovered; for it was not to any Presence of Mind that her Reserve was owing,
but to the too great Multitude of various Emotions, which, warning with each
other in her Bosom, would not suffer her to utter any.—She fell into a Swoon
the Moment they left the Room . . . (118-119)

Due to her cross-dressing, Idalia’s reverberated emotions for her lost love Myrtano cannot be
read by others. But the readers enjoy the voyeuristic thrill of being the privileged onlookers
of her emotions. John Richetti comments in this context in *The English Novel in History 1700*
-1780:

This might be said of all of Haywood’s beleaguered heroines, whose
sufferings exist within this public and private divide where readers are privy to
interior intensities and hidden shames in the bedrooms of the leisured rich. And
readers are more like privileged onlookers, not in dialogue with the narrator
but accepting her invitation to observe and to feel with the heroine. Thus
the voyeuristic thrill is an exclusive view of what is otherwise secret and
hidden. (32)

When Myrtano too discovers her he is also overwhelmed with momentary, ecstatic passion.
After going through her rebuffs he again falls in love with her:

The Air, the Features, and the Voice of Idalia were too deeply imprinted in his
Memory not to be distinguish'd thro' all Disguises. Immediately he knew her,
and regardless of his Wife's Presence, flew to her, and caught her in his Arms,
and cried in an Extasy which no false Lover could feign It is, it is Idalia my
only everlasting Charmer. It was impossible for a Woman, who lov'd with that
Transcendency of Passion, to be thus clasp'd yet feel no Satisfaction in the tender
Pressure: Not all the Resentment she had against him for his marrying another,
had Power to made her resist his Embraces . . . (122-23)

Now at the discovery of this affair of both of Myrtano and Idalia, Antonia plans to poison
both of Myrtano and Idalia. Then the Pope intervenes. He gives the order that Antonia and
Myrtano both should live separately and the lovers should not see each other again. Being
detached from her lover Myrtano Idalia was spending her days in deep remorse:

The living in the Manner she had done with Myrtano, his Wife's Desperation,
and the Pope's decree, had made too great a Noise in Rome not to made her be
publickly remark'd; and embolden'd by the Knowledge that she had been a
Mistress, brought all the young and gay Part of the Town to sollicite for the
same Favour; nay, some of them used so little Ceremony as to make her
acquainted with their Designs on the first Visit, and others, treating her as a
Courtezan, demanded to know her Price. Some would agree with her for a
Month, others for a Week; all the Insults that Women of that Possession are
liable to, she met with; which, considering that Haughtiness of her Disposition, could not be expected but to drive her to Extreams. She writ daily to Myrtaio, conjuring him to made what Expedition he could to leave Rome; and he continu'd to assure her, he was as impatient as herself. But Things not being ready to lay violent Hands on her own Life, rather than endure them longer: She began to curse the Cause which had reduc'd her to a Condition, such as could give room for Liberties so contrary to what she had been us'd to receive, and could so ill bear:—She wanted Revenge on all who durst to use her in this Manner; —and not having it in her Power, was ready to burst with inward Spleen, and stifled Indignation. (159-60)

In such a deserted and defamed condition Idalia sees Florez in the street and her desire for revenge gets enkindled at his fatal sight:

In this enrag'd Temper, happening to look out of her Window, she saw a young Chevalier pass by, whom imagining she had seen before, she look'd more earnestly at, and soon discover'd it to be Florez, the Villain who had first betray'd her from her Father's House, and been the Cause of all her Woe. A sudden Thought came into her Head at Sight of him: To be reveng'd on him for all, she sent a Servant after immediately, to watch where he went; which being inform'd of, she sat down, and disguising her Hand as much as possible, writ to
him in this Manner . . . (160)

She wrote a letter to Florez with her design for revenge. But her servant had taken the invitation of Florez to Myrtano. Myrtano came to meet her in the place of Florez in order to test Idalia’s fidelity towards him. When he comes for the meeting she stabs him mistakenly. When she realises her mistake she violently bewails:

. . . and now I give a Present such as your Villany deserves. She had Opportunity to say no more, he falling, immediately cry'd out, O Idalia! what have you done?

—These Words, the Voice, and a closer Observation, made her know to whom she had given the Blow; but all that can be conceiv'd of distracting Grief, of Horror without a Name, was short of what she felt at this amasing Sight: She tore her Hair and Face, rav'd, stamp'd, curs'd Fate, and scarce spar'd Heaven in the Extremity of her Anguish: She threw herself upon his bleeding Body, and kiss'd a thousand Times the Wound she had made.—But this affording but little Satisfaction to the Racks of Thought, which at this shocking Moment hurry'd her wild Brain, she started up, and snatching the dagger, plung'd it thro' her Heart . . . (162)

Being overwhelmed with grief she plunges the dagger into her own heart. Later on Florez is also executed for a murder he committed in Venice. Thus this amatory fiction ends with the death of almost all of the characters like a Senecan tragedy. Here the hysteric heroine brings death and destruction not only to herself but also to all the others around her.

Through the character of Idalia Haywood presents her radical vision of an independent as well as an inconsistent heroine, who attracts the male gaze and initiates all of the
onrushing incidents of this amatory fiction. Thus falling victim to the consecutive male assaults she goes on the verge of hysteria. Haywood here presents another dark aspect of the inconsistent male love, that drives the profound female love on the edge of self-destruction. In this context Ros Ballaster opines in *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*:

Haywood’s novels then, in the main, present their female readers with a thoroughly melancholy view of the world of heterosexual romance. Male desire is, with rare exceptions, short-lived and end-directed, constituting a series of metonymical displacements of woman for woman in search of an impossible and unattainable satisfaction. Female desire is masochistic, self-destructive and hysterical . . . (175)

Though the hysteric heroine Idalia brings death and disaster towards herself, Haywood is notable here for her innovative effort to present such a sense of vacuum like the Senecan tragedy by the agency of the female vigour. *Idalia : or , The Unfortunate Mistress* is noteworthy for Haywood’s characteristic representation of her headstrong heroine as the pivotal force for the development of the novel. Haywood was perhaps trying to create a new paradigm of novel writing, whereby the female agency would be considered both as creative as well as destructive force. In this context John Richetti remarks about *Idalia : or , The Unfortunate Mistress* in *The English Novel in History 1700 -1780*:

Unrelentingly inventive in its sequence of calamities for Idalia, the novel overbalances this tide of onrushing incidents with regular outbursts of emotional and erotic intensity, operatic moments of crisis, surging and swelling rehearsals of the formulas of sex and pathos . . . Idalia herself projects an
interesting incoherence, at once an opportunity for cautionary lessons about the
dangers of female vanity and an eloquent enunciator of high heroic female virtue.

As Haywood herself remarks at one point, incoherence and inconsistency are
Idalia’s strengths as a character; she needs them to survive for as long as she
does. The reader’s pleasure, after all, comes first, and Haywood is profoundly
opportunistic and even improvisatory as a narrator in her presentation of
character. (46-47)

Though Idalia is presented as the chaste virgin, this novel has the fervour of a female
picaresque as the heroine adventures from one place to another. The chaste heroine Idalia is
not actually a “picaro” or a “rogue”. But in this world of male treachery her chastity is tainted
by the consecutive molestation by her ‘fake’ lovers. Like a picaresque narrative the novel is
also realistic in manner, and episodic in structure. Like a picaresque novel here also “the
heroine attempts to become an agent in her own history (fleeing from the in fact worthy
Honorious, disguising herself as a man, planning to murder her betrayer)” (Ballaster174). As
an exemplary instance of her proto-feminist venture this text exhibits the nadir of female
liberation. Haywood here tried to highlight the multifarious aspects of the female potentiality,
which can be turned to a malevolent force due to the maltreatment of the female
resourcefulness by the patriarchal chauvinism. In *Idalia : or , The Unfortunate Mistress*
Haywood fuses both the concepts of female hedonism and female self-annihilation within its
hysteric heroine. In her various amatory fictions Haywood experimented with different facets
of female sensibility, and *Idalia : or , The Unfortunate Mistress* is indeed remarkable as
Haywood’s successful experimentation with the emerging concepts of the hysteric, eccentric
woman, which ushers another aspect of the radical feminism. Haywood’s radical attribution
lies in her valiant attempt of embracing the form of feminine desire, protesting against confinement of women in the eighteenth century. In this radical proto-feminist text Haywood tries to defy the traditional notion of femininity, and presents such radical heroine, who being ravaged by her own desire attempts to exercise the power of female sexuality over the ‘other sex’. In this amatory fiction Haywood’s portrayal of the ‘eccentric’ heroine is emblematic of the repressed female sexuality. The symptom of hysteria is also here symbolic of the subdued sexuality of women for the ages. And in her proto-feminist novel Haywood provides an outlet for emergence of this repressed female life-force.
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Chapter-5: Masquerade as a Strategy in *Fantomina or, Love in a Maze*,
*being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition* and in
*The Masqueraders or The Fatal Curiosity: being the secret history of a late*  
amour
Chapter-5

Masquerade as a Strategy in Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition and in The Masqueraders or The Fatal Curiosity: being the secret history of a late amour

Eliza Haywood, the “Great Arbitress of Passion”, attempts to establish a degree of female agency and a form of female empowerment through the masquerades, disguises and semi-epistolary narrative form of her proto-feminist, amatory fictions like Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition (1724) and The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity: being the secret history of a late amour (1724). In Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition Haywood presents the notion of a radical, pro-active heroine, who decides to circulate her sexuality as a form of empowerment and accepts the consequences of her desperate venture with bravery, showing the least sign of shame. Thus, Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition, much before the rise of the term ‘feminism’, in its representation of woman as the engineer and weaver of the plot and the game of seduction, revolts against the patriarchal convention of the fiction of seduction, diminishes the claustrophobic notions of femininity, and attains the status of a proto-feminist text. By criss-crossing the hypersexualised, titillating language of desire with the language of power and control, Haywood is creating for her burgeoning female readers a utopia of power and a zone, where women could have agency to invert the gender hierarchies of the patriarchal mindset. Such hypersensitive narratives of Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition meet not only their superficial goals of titillation and profitable amusement, but most
significantly throw a challenge to the androcentrism of literary discourse, that endeavoured to keep language formalised, spheres separate and women’s position liminal.

Although popular with her reading public during this early period of the 1720s, Haywood was berated by some of her literary contemporaries as she was self-consciously writing against the traditional, patriarchal mindset with an aim to break the stereotyped, claustrophobic notions of femininity in her proto-feminist texts. But critics and scholars of the later period could, however, detect her contribution to the development of amatory fiction as the precursor of feminist texts. John Richetti, in his book *Popular Fiction before Richardson* (1969) interprets Haywood’s use of a “myth of persecuted innocence” to drive narrative structure as a sign of “an eighteenth-century feminism, not yet a political movement . . .”, but a form of nascent feminism(181). In her amatory fiction like *Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition* Haywood uses the metaphor of seduction with a feminist point-of-view. With the rise of the number of the female readership and increase in the opportunities for the middle class and the upper middle class women in the eighteenth century, there was a high need to stress on the concept of female emancipation, that would cater to the interest of the burgeoning female readers. Hence Haywood came with the notion of her pro-active heroine, and she embellished them with the ability to challenge the patriarchal set of values in the fictional, imaginary realm of female liberation. Hence seduction is used in this text as a trope, which signify the gender conflict. In the amatory fiction by gaining control over this metaphorical game of seduction women achieve her triumph over the opposite sex. For such employment of the metaphor of seduction and use of the rhetoric of titillating desire Haywood was denounced as “the prostitute of the pen”. But this was the fruitful means by which she not only pleaded successfully for the gender equality in her proto-feminist texts, but also established herself as the writer of the equal status of her male contemporaries. Ros Ballaster, who considers these
sorts of amatory fictions as “seductive forms”, comments in this regard in Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740:

. . . the early woman writer was very far from the modest and amateur lady of letters most histories would have her be. She was rather a prostitute of the pen, trafficking in desire for profit and, in this respect, no different from many of her male contemporaries. Behn, Manley, and Haywood reveal themselves to be far from subjected by the imposition of an emergent philosophy of ‘separate spheres’ (politics and romance, masculine and feminine, the coffee-house and the boudoir). Indeed, they exploit this division in order to construct, against a short history of literary models, a specifically female writing identity for themselves. Their experimental texts dramatise the seduction of the female reader by amatory fiction, exploring alternatives that offer models for the female victim to come to ‘mastery’ of or resistance to the fictional text through the figure of the heroinized female writer. (29-30)

In Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition Haywood exploits to the full the possibilities of the masquerade as a strategy for replication of the seduction scene, delineated by the woman for her own empowerment. In this amatory fiction a “young Lady of distinguished Birth, Beauty, Wit, and Spirit” in her quest to attain Beauplaisir, a young rake, uses a string of personae that are carefully construed and will easily seduce him. During her visit to the theatre, intrigued by the dalliance between the aristocratic men and the prostitutes in the pit, the heroine, under the
veil of masquerade, determines to transgress her original position and disguises herself as a prostitute under the name of Fantomina, to the charming Beauplaisir:

All the charms of Beauplaisir came fresh into her mind; she languish’d, she almost dy’d for another opportunity of conversing with him; and not all the admonitions of her Discretion were effectual to oblige her to deny laying hold of that which offer’d itself the next Night.-She depended on the Strength of her Virtue, to bear her fate thro’ Tryals more dangerous than she apprehended this to be, and never having been address’d by him as Lady, -was resolv’d to receive his Devoirs as a Town-Mistress, imagining a world of Satisfaction to herself in engaging him in the Character.(260)

Now Fantomina assumes the role of the executor of the game of courtship and attains her female ‘agency’ unlike the patriarchal tradition of the fiction of seduction, as here she herself chooses the site of her rendezvous with Beauplaisir and finally keeps the appointment through her own constructed plot:

Bent, however, on meeting him, whatever shou’d be the Consequence , she went out some Hours before the Time of going to the Playhouse, and took lodgings in a House not very far from it, intending, that if he shou’d insist on passing some Part of the Night with her, to carry him there . . . ( 261)
During this first disguise Fantomina, till the moment of losing her chastity, wrestles between her traditional honour and passionate desire, but finally surrenders to Beauplaisir. Haywood employs the characteristic rhetoric of victim and victor to describe the scene:

He was bold- he was resolute: she fearful, -confus’d . . . In fine, she was undone; and he gained a Victory, so highly rapturous, that had he known over whom, scarce could he have triumphed more.(263-64)

This scene conceals Haywood’s sense of poignant irony as in this process of attaining the ‘agency’ of courtship Fantomina beguiles Beauplaisir with the illusion that he is the dilator of the game of seduction and the victor. Ultimately, Beauplaisir, of course, varies “not so much from his Sex, as to be able to prolong Desire, to any great length after possession”(267). As a consequence “the rifled charms of Fantomina soon lost their Poinancy and grew tasteless and insipid . . .” (267).

But, on the part of Fantomina,

. . . with her Sex’s Modesty, she had not also thrown off another Virtue equally valuable, tho’ generally unfortunate, Constancy: She loved Beauplaisir, it was only he whose Solicitations could give her Pleasure; . . . Her Design was once more to engage him, to hear him sigh, to see him languish, to feel the Strenuous Pressures of his eager Arms, to be compelled, to be Sweetly forc’d to what she wished with equal Ardour, was what she wanted, and what she had form’d a Stratagem to obtain, in which she promis’d herself Success. (268)
Here Haywood suggests that Fantomina’s desire is not driven by her licentiousness, but by her ‘constant’ love for the ‘inconstant’ Beauplaisir. Realising that Beauplaisir is losing interest in her Fantomina decides to adopt a new persona of the chamber-maid Celia in order to engage Beauplaisir once more during his visit to the city of Bath and thus to ‘re-enact’ the scene of seduction to return to the momentary power that the woman experiences during courtship. Here the dress of Celia is again guided by the trend of fashion magazine:

The dress she was in, was a round-ear’d Cap, a short Red petticoat, and a little Jacket of Grey Stuff; all the rest of her Accoutrements were answerable to these, and join’d with a broad Country Dialect, a rude unpolish’d Air, which she, having been bred in these Parts, knew very well how to imitate, with her Hair and Eye-brows black’d, made it impossible for her to be known . . . (268)

The sartorial magnetism of Celia titillates the erotic desire within the man of her desire. “Fired with the first sight”(270) of Celia, dressed in a red petticoat, Beauplaisir gets engaged in the same game once again with her. Haywood employs here again her characteristic rhetoric of wild desire to describe Beauplaisir’s passion:

His wild Desires burst out in all his Words and Actions: he call’d her little Angel, Cherubim, swore he must enjoy her, though Death were to be the Consequence, Devour’d her lips, her breasts with greedy Kisses, held to his burning Bosom her half-yielding, half-reluctant body, nor suffered her to get loose, till he had ravaged all, and glutted each rapacious Sense with the sweet Beauties of the pretty Celia . . . (269-70)
But ultimately Beauplaisir grows “more weary of her than he had been of Fantomina”(271). Having exhausted the libidinal possibilities of working class identity, Fantomina adopts the personae of bourgeois “Widow Bloomer”, dressed in sober black, in order to “renew his twice decayed Ardours”. This time she encounters Beauplaisir’s coach during his return journey to London. And Beauplaisir “could not avoid perceiving there were Seeds of Fire, not yet extinguish’d . . .(274)” . This time during their overnight coach-stop she allows herself to be ravished by him and enjoys the pleasures of ravishment in a semi-conscious state:

. . . she counterfeited a fainting, and fell motionless upon his breast.- He had no great Notion that she was in a real Fit, and the Room they supp’d in happening to have a Bed in it, he took her in his Arms and laid her on it, believing that whatever her distemper was, that was the most proper Place to convey her to. – He laid himself down by her, and endeavour’d to bring her to herself; . . . they passed the time of their journey in as much happiness as the most luxurious Gratification of wild Desires could make them; and when they came to the end of it, parted not without a mutual Promise of seeing each other often.(275)

Then Beauplaisir starts to keep contact with both of Fantomina and Widow Bloomer with letters, suffused with almost the same words of love. Reading those letters Fantomina cries out her proto-feminist protestation:

TRAYTOR! (cry’d she) as soon as she had read them, ’tis thus our silly, fond, believing Sex are serv’d when they put Faith in Man . . . How do some Women, (continued she) make their life a Hell, burning in fruitless Expectations, and
Dreaming out their Days in Hopes and Fears, then wake at last to all the Horror
Of Dispair? – But I have outwitted even the most Subtle of the deceiving kind?
And while he thinks to fool me, is himself the only beguiled Person. (277)

Here through her train of disguises Fantomina succeeds to befoul Beauplaisir. Thus she gains her female ‘agency’ by controlling this game of seduction. John Richetti comments about Fantomina’s repetitive effort to entangle the same person in *The English Novel in History 1700-1780* that “her subsequent disguises and aggressive enjoyment of her lover, in which he becomes in effect a sex object, are her clear improvisations but they are still directed by her ‘wild and incoherent’ desires”(85). Through her string of disguises, rejecting her own class identity, Fantomina is challenging here the set conduct of behaviour that patriarchal society lays down for her. Finally Fantomina adopts the role of an aristocratic, mysterious woman, Incognita, and thus she literally steps out of all social boundaries of identity. In this role of the unanimous woman Incognita, she solicits Beauplaisir by letter, makes a rendezvous at a rented house and adopts the disguise of the domino^1^ of the masquerade. Here her adaptation of the disguise of the domino appears to mark the end of the heroine’s masquerading. In fact, as Incognita, Haywood’s heroine presents the nadir of feminine representation as she writes to Beauplaisir:

I imagine not that 'tis a new thing to you, to be told, you are the greatest Charm in Nature to our Sex: I shall therefore, not to fill up my Letter with any impertinent Praises on your Wit or Person, only tell you, that I am infinite in Love with both, and if you have a Heart not too deeply engag’d, should think myself the happiest of my Sex in being capable of inspiring it with some Tenderness. - There is but
one thing in my Power to refuse you, which is the Knowledge of my Name . . . (281)

Beauplaisir answers her with a letter, expressing his desire to meet her. Now Incognita rejoices at the thought of constantly misguiding the inconstant Beauplaisir with the varied representation of the same woman:

. . . Had he been faithful to me, (said she, to herself,) either as Fantomina, or Celia, or the Widow Bloomer, the most violent Passion, if it does not changes its Object, in time will wither : Possession naturally abates the Vigour of desire, and I should have had, at best, but a cold, insipid, husband-like Lover in my Arms but by these arts of passing on him as a new Mistress whenever the ardour, which alone makes Love a Blessing, begins to diminish, for the former one, I have him always raving, wild, impatient, longing, dying. – O that all neglected wives, and fond abandon’d Nymphs would take this Method !- Men would be caught in their own Snare, and have no Cause to scorn our easy, weeping, wailing Sex! (283)

When Beauplaisir thinks of his new masquerading adventures with ‘new’ woman, she continuously goes on befooling Beauplaisir. In this role of the unanimous woman Incognita, she adopts the disguise of the domino of the masquerade. Here her adaptation of the disguise of the domino appears to mark the end of the heroine’s masquerading. Finally Incognita meets Beauplaisir in the dark room that literalises the social confusion and they once again consummate their relationship:

She came, but came in the Dark; which being no more than he expected by the
former Part of her proceedings, he said nothing of; but as much Satisfaction as he found in her Embraces, nothing ever long’d for the Approach of day with more Impatience than he did. At last it came; but how great was his Disappointment, when by the Noises he heard in the Street, the hurry of the Coaches, and the cries of Penny-Merchants, he was convinc’d it was night no where but with him? He was still in the same darkness as before . . . . (285)

While Beauplaisir is indulging in fond fantasies of unmasking his latest conquest, Incognita has already crept from the room under the veil of darkness, revealing that Beauplaisir is the one with a degraded identity as he is proved unworthy of the insight into her character that he craves. In effect he is not worthy to enter the public sphere, she has created. The darkness of the room is here symbolic of the masquerading veil of Fantomina, that was used to conceal her identity from the very beginning. As a proto-feminist writer Haywood here attempts to use masquerade as a bifurcated strategy for expressing the female ‘agency’ of her heroine while concealing her real identity under the veil of masquerade. Haywood does not allow her heroine to accept the traditional female subjugation as a woman, rather here she wants to present woman as a complete being, full of equal eroticism and passion like her male partner. This proto-feminist boldness of thinking in the matter of expression of female sexual desire is not only new but also radical in respect of the eighteenth-century socio-cultural context. John Richetti comments about Fantomina in The English Novel in History 1700-1780:

With this unconventional heroine bent on her own frankly sexual pleasure,

Fantomina looks back to Aphra Behn, although in its brisk brevity Haywood’s novella lacks space to develop her predecessor’s subversive proto-feminism. . . .
Fantomina explores how a woman might value control as much as actual sexual pleasure (for the novella suggests that control is inseparable from sexuality), but Haywood operates within the artificial space of the masquerade where social privilege (economic self-sufficiency and leisured idleness) is a given . . . (86)

Thus, Fantomina, through her varied personae, enjoys different kinds of courtship and different ways of seduction. She changes the mode and taste of seduction every time. Through her variation of sartorial guise, she actually plays on the kinkiness of male desire and male fetish. In this game of seduction, Beauplaisir is always under the illusive impression that he is controlling this game of desire, while Fantomina is actually planning, executing and thus controlling each scene of seduction. Using masquerade as a veil for controlling the game of seduction, Fantomina inverts the traditional, patriarchal concept of seduction as a prerogative and symbol of male dominance. In this process of attaining the ‘agency’ of courtship of ‘masculine’ status by continuously beguiling Beauplaisir with illusion, Fantomina almost uses her ‘womanliness as a masquerade’ like the concept of Joan Riviere, who argues in the essay “Womanliness as a Masquerade” that “women who wish for masculinity may put on a masque of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men”(35). One thing is important to be mentioned here that Fantomina, in her sequence of masquerades as a pit prostitute, a servant maid, a middle class widow and finally the aristocratic Incognita, is gradually moving up the class ladder. Fantomina’s disguise, signifying her ascension through social hierarchy, is notable with regards to her innovative way to control of the game of seduction as a form of attaining female ‘agency’. Ros Ballaster perceives that Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition depicts “a gendered struggle” as “a competition between men and women for control of the means of seduction”(40).
In fact, Fantomina’s masquerading ventures are curtailed by the fact that she is pregnant. Pregnancy as the irrefutable sign of female defiance calls a halt to the woman’s ‘mimicry’ of femininity. Finally Fantomina is dispatched to a monastery in France, showing hardly any sign of repentance. Haywood’s intention is deeply ambivalent in the apparently moral ending of this amatory fiction. Apparently in showing some semblance of morality and a gesture of obedience to patriarchy in the ending, Haywood actually asserts patriarchal power, subverting female authority. But the term ‘monastery’, in the eighteenth century French context, signified a private saloon and a centre of learned, fashionable, cultured, single and independent women. In another sense, the monastery becomes a seat and a sort of special zone for those rebellious women, who voluntarily reject patriarchy. Thus Fantomina is withdrawn not into penance, but into a community of the likeminded, independent women. There is no sense of shame, no abjection or hysterical submission in Fantomina, rather she bears the consequences of her hedonistic, female venture non-chalantly. Fantomina refuses to accept the dictates of patriarchy, and through Fantomina Haywood refuses her fictional women to be the subject to male dominance. Haywood here almost envisages the vision of a feminist utopian zone, where women have ‘agency’ to take decisions for themselves by themselves, and thus Haywood ushers a proto-feminist venture to subvert patriarchal restrictions, imposed upon women for the ages. Hence, the ending, which apparently satisfies the moral codes and the claustrophobic notion of femininity, creates in reality a deep sense of ambiguity, tinged with feminist ardour. John Richetti comments in The English Novel in History 1700-1780:

. . . in its ahistorical gender essentialism, Fantomina encounters the sociohistorical realm in the spirit of the masquerade that is its main conceit. The only history that Haywood (and the popular amatory
tradition) acknowledges is the recurrent history of passion as embodied in particular and often enough varied but completely interchangeable stock characters. (87)

Thus, Haywood’s amatory fiction *Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition*, where the heroine as an everywoman figure uses her physicality and sexuality as a means of liberation and attaining her female ‘agency’, offers a vision of an alternative, utopian, female society and almost ushers the beginning of the history of feminism in the fictional domain. Behind the facade of sentimental love, *Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition* contains elements of latent feminism, which was hitherto unheard in the androcentric literary tradition. Through the epistolary form of this proto-feminist narrative of *Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition*, Haywood brings in eroticism, and jouissance in the female domain of fiction, that were hitherto unknown in the patriarchal literary tradition.

Haywood’s deployment of the trope of masquerade is minutely manifested in her another amatory fiction *The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity: being the secret history of a late amour* (1724). In the amatory fictions of Haywood the trope of masquerade emerges as a mode of empowering the women, especially the heroines of her novels. Through the feminist strain of her novel Haywood endeavours to bestow her heroines the female ‘agency’ through the form of masquerade. Masquerade provides the independent heroines of Haywood the avenue to circulate their sexuality at their wishes without any fear of infamy. Through the seductive pen of Haywood masquerade becomes the site for blurring of the erotic desire of the persons of the both sexes. In her amatory fiction masquerade acts as a vehicle for empowering women with the status of the engineer and the regulator of the plot of seduction
under the veil of femininity. For such ingenious use of the technique of masquerade in the
masquerade novels of Haywood Ros Ballaster comments in *Seductive Forms: Women’s
Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*:

... I would suggest that in this early fiction, Haywood glimpses a means of
empowering the female within amatory conflict, of making her a weaver and
dilator of her own amatory plot, through the elaboration of a familiar
concept-metaphor of the early eighteenth century, that of the masquerade.

Here the masquerade functions as a site in which gender inversion and amatory
activity is licensed under the sanction of organised ‘secrecy’. (179)

In this masquerade novel of Haywood the female protagonist triumphs in the gender conflict
by attaining the controlling power of the game of seduction. About the significant role of
masquerade in the English fiction Terry Castle writes:

... the masquerade was also an indispensable plot catalyst, the mysterious
scene out of which the essential drama of the fiction emerged. All the
ambivalence that the masquerade aroused in English public life – where it was
at once the sign of depravity and freedom, corruption and delight – was thus
replicated in its fictional representation. (ix)

Through the seductive pen of Haywood masquerade becomes the site for blurring of the
erotic desire of the persons of the both sexes. Actually masquerade in the eighteenth-century
context is a privileged place for transgressing all the barriers of sexual, gender and class
distinction. At the hand of Haywood Masquerade also becomes a utopian zone for providing
her headstrong heroines the female ‘agency’. Under the veil of masquerade the heroines can control the game of seduction in this proto-feminist novel of Haywood.

Her amatory fiction *The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity: being the secret history of a late amour* opens with a generalised comment on masquerade:

Great Britain has no Assembly which affords such variety of Characters as the Masquerade; there are scarce any Degrees of People, of what Religion, or Principle soever, that sometime or other are not willing to embrace an opportunity of partaking this Diversion. But among the number of those who pretty often frequented it, was a Gentleman, whose real Name, for some reasons, I shall conceal under that of Dorimenus. He is young handsome, gay, gallant, has an affluence of Fortune and of Wit, is a passionate Lover of Intrigue, and ’tis not to be doubted but that with all these Accomplishments, he found a great many among the Fair sex to encourage that disposition: He seldom went there without his appointment . . . (1-2)

About the universal role of the eighteenth-century masquerade as a mode of female experimentation with the “amatory codes” Ros Ballaster remarks in *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*:

*The Masqueraders* (1724; *SH* iv. separately numbered) employs the masquerade as a controlled space of mimicry of amatory conventions, revealing in its course the extent to which representation, far from being the adjunct to desire,
is its source. This novel, I will argue, along with her *Fantomina*  

(*SH* iii. 257-92), published a year after it, marks Haywood’s attempt to ‘plot’ a way out of the negative opposition of the unfortunate mistress and the mistress of artifice, proffering in its place the model of a female experimentation with amatory codes in order to defer closure of heterosexual romance without falling into hysteria. The novel opens by establishing the masquerade as, like sexual passion, a universal and levelling experience . . . (181-82)

During such a masquerade Dorimenus encounters the young widow Dalinda, who had concealed her identity under the costume of a shepherdess. But suddenly she gets fainted and Dorimenus gets the opportunity of visualising her face removing the mask. Dalinda’s first sight overwhelmed his male gaze:

Nature never form’d Features more completely lovely than those of this Fair indisposed,- all the Graces seem’d assembled in her Countenance,- a thousand dimpled Charms play’d round her lovely Mouth,- a thousand little Loves laughed in her shining eyes,- the Delicacy of her Complexion exceeded all comparison,- her Neck, her Breasts, her fine proportion’d Hands and Arms,- there was no part of her exposed to view, that did not discover a Beauty peculiar to itself,- The little Confusion and those modest Blushes which attended it, added somewhat to the Lustre of her native Charms; she thanked all those who had been aiding to her recovery,
with a Voice so full of Harmony, and a look so sweetly innocent, that it had a

wonderful effect on all; but Dorimenus whose Heart was easily set on fire by the sight

of the least kindling Beauty, cou’d not behold Perfection, such as hers, without feeling

an excess of that passion it was created to inspire . . . (3-4)

As Dorimenus was a trained rake in the art of flirting, he mesmerised this lady with his

passionate male gaze:

He entreated her with so much Wit and Gallantry, and the appearance of so violent

a Passion, that she, who was by nature pretty, amorous and easy to receive

an impression, cou’d not fail a susceptibility of Charms, which there are very few

in the world to equalize. She had often heard of Dorimenus, had seen him at a
distance, and ’tis probable wish’d to be address’d by him in the manner she now

was: she had not artifice enough to disguise the pleasure she took in his

Conversation, from a penetration to nice, and so experienced as his. He made

his advantage of those experienced glances which she could not refrain, and

desirous of being inform’d of what Character and Circumstances she was, made

use of all his Eloquence to persuade her to permit him to accompany her home:

(4-5)

After coming to her home Dorimenus and Dalinda both are captivated by each other’s

magnetism:
'Tis certain that for a time they had for each other, Charms which they imagined were not to be found elsewhere; she really doated on him with a Transcendency of passion, and he, tho’ ever accounted the most roving and inconstant of his sex, prefer’d the Conquest of her Heart to all the others he had made, not only because it was the last, but also that when he consulted his judgment, he knew of none that had the thousandth part of her merit ... (7-8)

By their mutual love they consummate their relationship. Dalinda cannot but tell the story of seduction to her friend Philecta. Dalinda’s female erotic impulses are revealed here in her narration:

... she no sooner parted from his Embraces, than she flew to her fair Friend, gave her the whole History of what had pass’d between them – repeated every tender word he spoke - not the least fond endearment was forgot – described his Looks- his melting pressures- his Ardours! – his Impatiencies!- his Extasies- his languishments!

- endeavour’d to make her sensible how different he was from other Lovers!- how much beyond his Sex!- with what a Godlike sublimity of Passion he ador’d her – and, what was more prodigious than the rest, assured her, that each Enjoyment but increased Desire.(8-9)

Here Haywood’s characteristic rhetoric of desire, expressed through the voice of Dalinda, enkindles the latent desire of Philecta. As Philecta was previously betrayed by her lover, she could never think of constancy of man. So Philecta made a stratagem to test the constancy of
Dorimenus. She told Dalinda to wear the costume of an Indian slave for the next masquerade, and she herself goes to the masquerade replicating the same costume of Dalinda. Being deceived by her stratagem Dorimenus runs after Philecta. But by unmasking her face he discovers another face than Dalinda. In the meantime Dalinda too appears on the scene and Philecta quits the place increasing Dorimenus’s sexual curiosity. Now Dorimenus, who considered himself as the master of the amatory codes of the masquerade, is befooled by the female agency of Philecta, that the masquerade provided her. Going to deceive Dorimenus Philecta too falls in love with him:

On the part of Philecta returning to her home she ruminated over her latest victory over Dorimenus. But going to beguile him she herself was enamoured by his charm: . . . In fine, she was in Love,- was charm’d with him to an infinite degree, without being sensible that she was so, - and while she languished for a second Interview, believ’d the Uneasiness she felt, no more than the effect of a Curiosity ungratified- Small was the repose she took that Night, and to add to the Perturbations of her Mind . . .(17)

Being smitten by Dorimenus’s charm Philecta tried to replicate the same scene of affection. So in order to satisfy her female passion she again invented another stratagem of forging the handwriting of Dalinda for arranging the rendezvous with him once again. Misleading Dorimenus again with the forged handwriting Philecta beckons him to convene at the appointed place for a tryst. Here Haywood again uses her characteristic rhetoric of the fashion-magazine glamour in order to describe Philecta, arming herself with the ammunitions of her cosmetics as the crafty seductress:
. . . a thousand and a thousand times were the Patches plac’d, alter’d, and replac’d,—the Position of the curls as often chang’d,—now this, anon that Fashion she thought most becoming—sometimes one sort of Glance, then its contrary seemed the likeliest to attract—and she remain’d unfix’d in Determination, how she shou’d Look, or Speak, or Act when she was told he was enquiring for her.(20)

Her sexual conquest of Dorimenus provides her the erotic pleasure. But still now Philecta was using her female agency for seducing the lover under the veil of the identity of her friend Dalinda. During the scene of seduction Philecta has the upper hand over her male partner and here she strikingly differs from Dalinda. Hence the narrator comments over this female dominance, “But Dorimenus was not always to triumph at first sight, he could not find a Dalinda in Philecta: as she knew better how to love, she also knew better how to govern it . . .”(24). In this proto-feminist fiction of Haywood seduction becomes another name for the gender struggle. And during this gender scuffle the self-willed heroine Philecta triumphs over her male partner.

But this encounter with Dorimenus heightens Philecta’s female desire. In this proto-feminist amatory fiction Haywood employs her characteristic rhetoric of desire to describe her female passion, which is explicitly erotic, impulsive and vocal like her male partner:

She found she lov’d him with an extravagance of Dotage,—lov’d him to a degree beyond what she had felt before, even tho’ the breaking it off had very near cost her her Life, and trembled to think what the consequences might be of this second, and more violent Inclination—she was not sure she should always be
able to refuse the melting pressures of this dangerous Charmer. – She fear’d the

Effects of a Desire so wild and ungovernable – and justly doubted the Force of

Reason. (25)

After this ambiguous tryst, realizing her growing passion for Dorimenus, Philecta resolves that she will not meet him in future. Here Philecta’s overt expression of her desire for the opposite sex is not only unique but also novel feminist venture in respect of the traditional, androcentric literary tradition:

She at last determined never to see him more – No, said she to herself, all charming
as he is, tho’ my eyes can know no Joy but looking on him, nor my Ears but in
Attention to his harmonious Tongue; tho’ every sense is full of his perfections
and have no taste for any other pleasure, they shall no more be trusted with the
fatal Transport.- Virtue, Honour, Religion, Reputation are at stake, and all cry out,
No more indulge the ruinous Desire!- Fly the destructive Graces of the lovely,
the too engaging Dorimenus – rather let me die than give a loose to a passion
so pernicious to everything that ought to be dear or valuable.(25)

When Dorimenus came to her house in the next day to enquire after her, her servant told him that she was abroad. Now Dorimenus came to know the real identity of Philecta, and was very much depressed with the apprehension of losing his new conquest Philecta. Dorimenus wrote several letters to Philecta for the purpose of meeting once again. Then Philecta visited Dalinda and told her of her fraudulence to win Dorimenus. She even persuaded Dalinda to win him back for herself, and promised to avoid him further.
When Dalinda wrote to Dorimenus for seeing him, he artfully denied her request. Then Dalinda wrote him everything, that Philecta told her and despatched him his own letter to Philecta as a proof. Being betrayed and deserted by Philecta he decided to meet again Dalinda. And from this innocent lady he once again came to know of Philecta’s overwhelming passion for him. Dorimenus was swayed over by the spirit of reciprocal love:

All the charms of Philecta now rise to his Idea, with greater force than ever – he could not help loving her, for the force of Passion for him; but he perfectly ador’d her, for the strength of a resolution so uncommon – he found Charms in her refusals . . .(40)

Indeed Haywood here manifests her mastery of the art of seduction. Her amatory fiction here inscribes her bold assertion of the reciprocity of love and sexual desire in the both of the sexes. Dorimenus had made a stratagem, and broke into Philecta’s bedroom in the early morning of the next day. Then he found her in the dream-state, typical of Haywood’s hysterical suffering virgins:

. . . She was not yet risen, and had but that moment waked from a most pleasing Dream, of which he was the Subject : Imagination, always a Friend to Love, had given her, in Sleep a full ildea of those Joys, which, when Awake, she durst not allow herself to think of. . . the agreeable Posture in which she lay, and which disclosed to him the Beauties, which her Dress had conceal’d, gave him Agitations too violent to permit him to continue long at the distance he then was,- he made but one step to the Bed-side , and throwing himself on his knees, by that beseeching
Posture endeavour’d to assure her he came not on any dishonourable Design . . .(41)

Here Haywood employs her characteristic rhetoric to manifest Philecta’s female desire dissolving it on the border of dream and wakefulness. The dream becomes true when she opens her eyes and the real world becomes dreamy under the charm of love. In the amatory fiction of Haywood dream becomes an important instrument for expression of the latent sexual desire of the female psyche. Dream becomes the female utopian zone for liberal expression of female libido. Here Philecta was so much overwhelmed with desire in her dream that her latent desire mingled with him when she opened her eyes:

. . . – she cou’d not hinder him from kissing and embracing her, - from feasting his impatient Eyes with every naked Charm about her,- from roving o’er them with his glowing Hands, with all the unlimited Freedom of Luxurious fondness, and at amidst delight and pain, a rack of ecstasy on both sides, she more faintly denying, he more vigorously pressing, half yielding, half reluctant, she was wholly lost,- all her boasted Reason,- all her forceful Resolution,- all the precautions of so many days, in one tumultuous Moment were overcome,-

Love triumph’d over all, . . .(42-43)

Philecta ultimately came out of her psychological dilemma and they consummated their relationship. Even amidst the constricted condition of the eighteenth-century patriarchal society, Haywood ventured to create such an egalitarian aspect of seduction, where the female protagonist retains her female ‘agency’ from the beginning to the end. Philecta’s submission to Dorimenus does not symbolise Dorimenus’s triumph, but it is the triumph of “love” in the words of Haywood. Here Haywood could triumph over the contemporary
constrained notion of femininity by her manifestation of the female sexual liberation in her proto-feminist literary domain. After their fructification of love they were so much immersed within each other that “Dorimenus cou’d not live without Philecta, nor Philecta without Dorimenus; both abandon’d all other Conversation, and found nothing Agreeable, nothing Charming, but in each other . . .”(44).

Haywood’s amatory fiction is also characterised by her employment of the narrative technique of voyeuristic gaze. Hence the poor, deserted Dalinda now appears as the voyeur of the amorous scenes of Philecta and Dorimenus:

... they were in a place so remote from any other Company; she now found them in an Arbour, he lying carelessly down on a Carpet spread on the Floor, with his Head on her Lap as she was sitting by him, she had one of her hands fast grasped in his, and with the other she seem’d to toy, and stroke his Face and breast. . . . The lovers lost in the pleasing contemplation of each other’s Charms, nor saw, nor heard her . . . (45)

This narrative technique of voyeuristic intervention within the private, secluded domain of the lovers provides the readers the pleasure to be the privileged onlookers in accepting the narrator’s invitation to observe, and to feel the voyeuristic thrill of the secret scene.

As a result of this relationship Philecta becomes pregnant, and becomes the butt of universal disdain. But Dorimenus does not differ much from the other heroes of Haywood’s novels. Due to the general tendency of inconsistency of his sex, Dorimenus ultimately abandons both of these women in order to marry a wealthy heiress, Lysimena. Pregnancy, as an irrefutable sign for her secret sexual desire, brings a halt to the masquerading adventures
of Philecta. Thus Philecta’s fatal curiosity ruins her. Out of the sense of utter grief, shame and desolation Philecta dies. Here the corporeal death of Philecta does not suggest her defeat. It symbolises very significantly a transcendental vision of the amatory fiction. The concept of “dying” has certain erotic connotation in the context of the eighteenth-century literary scenario. Haywood here bases her argument on the pun of the concept of “die”, which meant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to experience the consummation of the act of love. According to that idea orgasm meant the temporal death of lovers because of the loss of vitality and energy. Hence the self-willed heroine of Haywood also dies physically after experiencing the sexual death through her sexual consummation with Dorimenus. Her death here has the erotic connotation of copulation. By Philecta’s symbolic death Haywood wants to suggest that the female desire consumes herself. The self-annihilating aspect of the female desire ruins Philecta. Ros Ballaster comments on this context in Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740:

Applied to my reading of The Masqueraders, Riviere’s comments would suggest that Philecta’s ruin is not brought about by the transformation of her masquerade performance into ‘genuine womanliness’, so much as her inability to perceive the latter as nothing more than another fictional identity that she can turn to serve her purpose. Riviere adds that the ‘weak point’ of her subject’s masquerade activity was the ‘megalomaniac character, under all the disguises, of the necessity for supremacy. When this supremacy was seriously disturbed during analysis, she fell into an abyss of anxiety, rage and abject depression . . .’(42).

This returns us to Haywood’s repeated commentary on the difficulties for the
intellectual woman of admitting defeat in amatory conflict. Such conflict is, it is clear, a struggle for power.

It is the inability to see beyond the dichotomy of victor and victim that entraps Philecta. When her creative resources dry up, she succumbs to the position of hysterics, the ‘abyss of anxiety, rage and abject depression’. (186-87)

Thus the death of Philecta brings out a sense of ‘catharsis’ within the female readers, who identify themselves with the troubled heroine of Haywood. Haywood’s amatory tale is different from any other tale of patriarchal mindset due to her innovative treatment of the traditional theme. In her amatory fiction masquerade acts as a vehicle for empowering women with the status of the engineer and the regulator of the plot of seduction under the veil of femininity. In this context Joan Riviere’s comment in her famous article “Womanliness as a Masquerade” is applicable. Riviere here analyses the strategy of the professional women to conceal their “masculine” desire of holding the “agency” under the veil of “womanliness”. Here Riviere highlights the fact that the intellectual women, the professional women and above all any woman with her masculine desire to attain the “agency”, were always tagged with the label of masculinity. Hence they have had tried to conceal their masculine desire ‘to act and control’ by outwardly following the model of the traditional concept of womanliness. Riviere writes in “Womanliness as a Masquerade”:

It is with a particular type of intellectual woman that I have to deal. Not long ago intellectual pursuits for women were associated almost exclusively with an overtly masculine type of woman, who in pronounced cases made no secret of her wish or claim to be a man. This has now changed. Of all the women
engaged in professional work today, it would be hard to say whether the greater number are more feminine than masculine in their mode of life and character. I shall attempt to show that women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men. (35)

Later on Riviere provides the psycho-sexual explanation to show the reason, that creates anxiety within the mind of the female, who wants to be equal with the men in the capacity of their performance:

... Analyses then revealed that the explanation of her compulsive ogling and coquetting – which actually she was herself hardly aware of till analyses made it manifest – was as follows: it was an unconscious attempt to ward off the anxiety which would ensue on account of the reprisals she anticipated from the father-figures after her intellectual performance. The exhibition in public of her intellectual proficiency, which was in itself carried through successfully, signified an exhibition of herself in possession of the father’s penis, having castrated him. (37)

Riviere suggests that the professional or the intellectual woman gains the masculine ‘agency’ by ‘castrating’ the symbolic ‘father-figure’. But in order to hide her act of the emasculation she wears the mask of feminine subjugation. In both of these novels of Fantomina or, Love in a Maze, being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition and in The
Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity: being the secret history of a late amour Haywood also uses masquerade as the strategy for attaining the female “agency”. Masquerade is used here as the veil of “womanliness” that conceals the heroine’s masculine desire to gain the “agency” of seduction. Both Fantomina and Philecta, who are stimulated here with the ‘masculine’ role of sexual aggressiveness, are trying to satisfy their masculine sexual desire by arranging for every means of the seduction, and also by controlling it. But these two women like those of the professional women are trying to conceal their ‘male’ desire. So they adopt the veil of submissive femininity under the shade of masquerade, and thus they disguise their active masculine eroticism. After analysing the professional women’s fear of male derision Riviere goes on to analyse how she can wear the mask of womanliness:

Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it – much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not the stolen goods . . . As the primal scene the talisman which both parents possess and which she lacks is the father’s penis; hence her rage, also her dread and helplessness. By depriving the father of it and possessing it herself she obtains the talisman – the invincible sword, the “organ of sadism”; he becomes powerless and helpless (her gentle husband), but she still guards herself from attack by wearing towards his the mask of womanly subservience, and under the screen, performing many of his masculine functions herself – ‘for him’ – (her practical ability and
management) . . . (38-42).

Here Riviere’s analysis illustrates the condition of the female sexuality in Haywood’s amatory fictions. Hence Fantomina befools Beauplaisir by continuously adopting different masks of femininity under her different persona, while Philecta beguiles Dorimenus by assuming the identity of her friend Dalinda under the cover of the masquerade. Riviere opines that due to such active participation in the ‘masculine’ activities these women always suffer from the anxiety of being blamed of castrating their father-figure. Hence from a sadistic need they adopt this mask of womanliness more effectively with the desire to triumph over both sexes. But the ultimate fate of Philecta as a hysteric woman can be explained through the psycho-sexual analysis of Stephen Heath in his essay “Joan Riviere and the Masquerade”:

Hysteria is what? Failed masquerade. The hysteric will not play the game, misses her identity as a woman. . . the masquerade is a representation of femininity but then femininity is representation, the representation of the woman: ‘images and symbols of the woman’s cannot be isolated from images and symbols of the woman’ . . . (51-53)

Thus in Eliza Haywood’s amatory fiction masquerade acts as a vehicle for empowering women with the status of the engineer and the regulator of the plot of seduction under the veil of femininity. Actually masquerade in the eighteenth-century context is a privileged place for transgressing all the barriers of sexual, gender and class distinction. At the hand of Haywood Masquerade also becomes a utopian zone for providing her headstrong heroines the female ‘agency’. Masquerade not only erases the distinction of class hierarchy, but also demolishes the gap between male and female desire. In this process of attaining the ‘agency’ of courtship of ‘masculine’ status Fantomina and Philecta both use their ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’
like the concept of Joan Riviere by beguiling both Beauplaisir and Dorimenus with the
illusion. This egalitarian site of masquerade provides the heroines the means to control the
game of seduction in this proto-feminist text of Haywood. Haywood here appears as the
pioneer proto-feminist writer, who dared to depict the candid expression of the sexual passion
of her female protagonists amidst the contemporary torpid concept of femininity. These
amatory fictions of Haywood are really remarkable for providing her heroines as well as her
female readers this voice for manifestation of their libido, that was repressed for so long time
by the patriarchal literary tradition.

Note

1. Domino is a concealing habit and mask that completely obscures the wearer, transforming

her or him into a cipher. For more information on different facets of the issue, see Castle

58-59.
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Chapter-6: From ‘Innocence’ to ‘Experience’ : The History of Miss Betsy

*Thoughtless* as the Precursor of Female Bildungsroman
Chapter-6

From ‘Innocence’ to ‘Experience’ : The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless as the Precursor of Female Bildungsroman

Eliza Haywood is almost pioneer in introducing the characteristic form of female bildungsroman or the novel of the development of the female protagonist in her outstanding novel The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless (1751), which is also Haywood's most important novel in terms of its influence on women's literary history. Haywood’s ability to use her writing to motivate and empower the voice of feminine desire during this time period was a revolution for all women. Haywood believed that women should be given equal opportunities with men for education. “Eighteenth century society associated female authorship with inappropriate public display, sexual transgression, and the production of inferior texts” (Saxton 8). Haywood defended the treatment of her texts as inferior with the charge that women were not properly educated and, therefore, should not be expected to write about subjects beyond their general knowledge. In this iconoclastic fiction she writes about much more than just love and desire; she was making a statement about female sexuality and gender inequality. Here Haywood makes important comments upon the position and role of women during the eighteenth century. In her radical proto-feminist text Haywood tries to defy the traditional notion of femininity, and writes her novels that are filled with heroines, who being ravaged by their own desires attempt to exercise the power of female sexuality over the ‘other sex’. In her amatory fiction Haywood embraces the form of feminine desire, protesting against confinement of women in the eighteenth century.

Under the constrain of marriage the life of the eighteenth century women became almost miserable. They had neither any political right nor any right to property. Through marriage they were turned into objects and their lives became accumulation of same, repetitive house-
work without any sort of creativity. Katharine M. Rogers writes in this context in *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*:

Marriage was more or less forced on women, as their only way to a recognised position in society... For marriage ranged from mild subjection to virtual slavery.

Legally, man and wife were considered one person – in effect, of course, the man.

This meant that a wife could not sue or make a contract or, more important, control any of the family property: anything she had, inherited, or earned could be spent or wasted as her husband chose...

A husband controlled his wife’s children, her residence, and her way of life. Even after his death, his widow had no rights over their children unless he had made her the guardian... Chastity, narrowly defined, was the all-important factor in determining how a woman was valued, by herself as well.

It was equated with virtue or honour in women; and, once lost, it was assumed to be irrecoverable...

Here we see how the sexual double standard extended from chastity to other virtues as well. It was always the wife’s obligation to maintain harmony in the marriage, through whatever degree of sweetness, compliance, and self-sacrifice might be necessary.(7-10)
Hence Haywood also introduced marriage and the treatment of women in marriage as an important theme in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*. But here Haywood does not merely show the impact of her era in treating marriage, rather she advances to present a self-willed heroine, who has the ‘agency’ to think as well as act of herself, for herself, and by herself. It is the first major English novel to focus on the plot of female education or the "reformed heroine plot," which Jane Spencer identifies as the "central female tradition in the eighteenth-century novel."(7) The roots of this tradition lay in woman's role as educator, as teaching was becoming one of the few respectable professions, open to women during the eighteenth century. Woman's role as novelist similarly gains respectability at this era when Haywood’s texts serve as tools of moral didacticism. Keeping this growing demand of the flourishing “middle class” for didacticism in her mind, Haywood here incorporates latent wave of protofeminism under the facade of moral didacticism. In *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* Haywood calls attention to the novel's potential benefits as instructive literature by dramatizing the process by which popular literature acts as the agent of reform. This fiction is indeed her pathbreaking attempt to portray a novel of development of its female protagonist Miss Betsy Thoughtless. This is completely narrated from her female point-of-view. This text, in its presentation of the female sensibility as well as female desire of its female protagonist, bears the marks of ecriture feminine indeed. About the presentation of the essentially feminine experience of the body and mind, which is different from the male experience, in the female writing Helene Cixous writes in “Conversations”:

. . . I don’t believe that a man and a woman are identical. The fact that men and women have the whole of humanity in common and that at the same time there is something slightly different, I consider a benediction. Our differences have to do with the way we experience pleasure, with our bodily experiences, which are not the same. Our
different experiences necessarily leave different marks, different memories. The way
we make love – because it isn’t the same – produces different sensations and
recollections. And these are transmitted through the text. . .

As a writer, I regret we cannot go from one side to the other, from one body
to another. I regret not being Tiresias. In ancient times, Tiresias was possible. Perhaps
he will be again. But I am not Tiresias. I can write about feminine pleasure, but I can’t
write about the masculine experience of it. There is a block.(230)

In her amatory fiction The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless Haywood too presents the
essentially feminine experience of its female protagonist Betsy Thoughtless like the ecriture
feminine. This amatory fiction shows the development of its rakish heroine Betsy from her
childhood to maturity. Labovitz lists a number of characteristics of the female
bildungsroman or the female novel of development in The Myth of the Heroine: the Female
Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century like self-realization, inner and outer directedness,
education, career, sex roles, attitude toward marriage, philosophical questions, religious crisis
and autobiographical elements, which testify to the “different developmental process” of the
female protagonist (8). Although there are common themes in the male and female
bildungsroman, such as relationships to family and friends, formal or informal education,
sexuality or love and the final goal of self-development, there is a marked gender difference
between the aims of the quest of the male hero and the female heroine respectively in the
bildungsroman genre. By Haywood’s representation of the female experience of the
development of the female protagonist Betsy, this fiction becomes a pioneer female
bildungsroman or almost the precursor of the novel of female development. From the very
beginning of the novel Haywood empowers the genteel heroine Betsy with the form of
female ‘agency’ in her ability to circulate female beauty, erotic sensibility as well as female sexuality in the society in respect of choosing her mate. In her ‘desire’ to choose her ‘true’ partner she romps from one suitor to another by the power of her female agency. It was almost her hobby to collect suitors as much as possible. In doing so she was directed not by love but by her ‘vanity’. Hence Haywood begins her novel with the aphoristic comment: “It was always my opinion, that fewer women were undone by love, than vanity; . . .” (27,i). On the death of the mother of Betsy at her age of ten she was sent to a boarding school by her father. The governess Miss Forward was the beloved of a young lad Master Sparkish, and Betsy acted almost as a mediator of their love affair. As a result, from her very childhood “. . . this gave her an early light into the art and mystery of courtship, and, consequently a relish for admiration” (28, i). At her tender age Betsy had not the ability to differentiate between good and bad in the matter of relationship with the person of the opposite sex. At this stage Haywood narrates Betsy’s condition as:

She was, indeed, as yet too young to consider of the justice of the other’s reasoning, and her future conduct shewed, also, she was not of a humour to give herself much pains in examining, or weighing in the balance of judgment, the merit of the arguments she heard urged, whether for or against any point whatsoever. She had a great deal of wit, but was too volatile for reflection, and as a ship, without sufficient ballast, is tossed about at the pleasure of every wind that blows, so was she hurried thro’ the ocean of life, just as each predominant passion directed. (31-32, i)

When her father died Betsy was entrusted to the care of Mr Ralph Trusty and Mr Goodman. Betsy started her career of intrigue at the age fourteen, when she entrapped the only son of a rich alderman. Betsy enjoys this new game of love without being involved at it with her mind. Then she falls prey to the gaze of a unscrupulous gentleman Gayland, who was “a man
Betsy grows indignant at his proposal, and avoids him. Though many persons started to fall in love with Betsy, on the part of her:

Miss Betsy had now no person that professed a serious passion for her; but as she had yet never seen the man capable of inspiring her with the least emotions of tenderness, she was quite easy as to that point, and wished nothing beyond what she enjoyed, the pleasure of being told she was very handsome, and gallanted about by a great number of those who go by the name of the very pretty fellows. pleased with the praise, she regarded not the condition or merits of the praiser, and suffered herself to be treated, presented, and squired about to all public places, either by the rake, the man of honour, the wit, or the fool, the married, as well as the unmarried, without distinction, and just as either fell in her way.

When she even goes to London with Miss Flora, the daughter of her guardian Mr Goodman, Betsy catches the wicked gaze of a Gentleman-Commoner. This man tried to molest her forcefully as “he stopped her mouth kisses, and forced her to sit down in a chair, where holding her fast, her ruin had certainly been completed,” if her brother did not arrive on time to vanquish this design. Betsy was actually an innocent maiden, who was fond of indulging in the fantasies of love and romance. But she was not aware of the fake rakes, who wanted to satisfy their lust for ruining girls by projecting it in the name of love. She was never serious of any of her love affair, and she only enjoyed the thought of collecting more and more number of lovers, being negligent about their real worth. Being guided by her vanity she directly plunged herself in action without thinking of its pros and cons. In this context the author comments about her:

Certain it is, that tho’ she was as far removed, as innocence itself, from all intent or wish of committing a real ill, yet she paid too little regard to the appearances of it, and said and did many things, which the actually criminal would be more
cautious to avoid. Hurried by an excess of vanity, and that love of pleasure so natural to youth, she indulged herself in liberties, of which she foresaw not the consequences. (56, i)

Betsy’s next conquest was Mr Staple, who came to dine with Mr Goodman. Mr Goodman informed her that he was very much in love with her. On the other hand her brother Frank Thoughtless had written her of Mr Trueworth, who was deeply in love with her and wanted to marry her. Now the emergence of the two lovers at the same time ignited the idea of indulging in the game of love in the mind of Betsy:

Miss Betsy had now her head, though not her heart, full of the two new conquests she had made: Mr Trueworth was strongly recommended by her brother, Mr Staple by her guardian; yet all the idea she had of either of them, served only to excite in her the pleasing imagination how, when they both came to address her, she should play the one against the other, and give herself a constant round of diversion, by their alternate contentment or disquiet. As the barometer said she to herself, is governed by the weather, so is the man in love governed by the woman he admires: he is a mere machine,- acts nothing of himself,- has no will or power of his own, but is lifted up or depressed, just as the charmer of his heart is in the humour. (101,i)

This thought of Betsy to regard her two new lovers as “two new conquests” is indeed radical. Here going against the androcentric literary tradition of the fiction of seduction Haywood presents the notion of a self-willed heroine, who has her “subjectivity” to choose her partner and, who can address those lovers as her “conquests” like the male protagonists of the fiction of patriarchal tradition. It gives her the female “agency” to assert her identity, as well as to control the game of desire.
Haywood not only stops by proving Betsy the female “agency”, but also equates her desire of acquiring the multiplicity of lovers with the ‘male desire’. Through the character of Betsy, Haywood actually presents a new dimension of narrating the female experience of the development of the female protagonist though the point-of-view of the female author. Here Haywood obviously conforms to the idea of ecriture feminine of Hele Cixous, who writes in “The Laugh of the Medusa”:

I write this as a woman, toward women. When I say “woman”, I’m speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history. But first it must be said that in spite of the enormity of the repression that has kept them in the “dark” – that dark which people have been trying to make them accept as their attribute – there is, at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman. What they have in common I will say. But what strikes me is the infinite richness of their individual constitution: you can’t talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogenous, classifiable into codes – any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women’s imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible.

I have been amazed more than once by a description, a woman gave me of a world all her own, which she had been secretly haunting since early childhood. A world of searching, the elaboration of a knowledge, on the basis of a systematic experimentation with the bodily functions, a passionate and precise interrogation in her erotogeneity. This practice, extraordinarily rich and inventive, in particular as concerns masturbation, is prolonged or accompanied by a production of forms, a veritable aesthetic activity, each
stage of rapture inscribing a resonant vision, a composition, something beautiful. Beauty will no longer be forbidden. (875-76)

Haywood highlights this “new” domain of female pleasure in this amatory fiction. Hence unlike the feminine heroines of the sentimental novels of 1740s Betsy does not confine herself to the concept of fidelity towards the single lover. But she always aspires for a new lover. Haywood writes:

. . . she imagined herself secure of the hearts of both Trueworth and Staple, but was vexed to the heart to have lost the address of a third admirer . . . she did not want a husband ;- that all men were alike to her; - but added, that it seemed strange to her, that a young woman who had her fortune to make might not be allowed to hear all the different proposals should be offered o her on that score . . . (126, i)

Here in this proto-feminist text Haywood suggests that Betsy’s desire to accumulate multiple lovers with her female ‘agency’ objectifies the male lovers. Betsy’s lack of constancy in love is also here characteristically equated with the male desire. Thus in this ecriture feminine Haywood indeed manifests her proto-feminist assertion of presenting a female protagonist, who does not differ from the male in either her thought or in her act of love. And Haywood humorously describes this objectification of Betsy’s male lovers as “this young lady was full of meditations on her new conquest, and the manner in which she should receive the victim, who was so shortly to prostrate himself at the shrine of her beauty . . .” (94, i).

Then suddenly another gentleman Captain J.Hysom proposed his love to Betsy through a letter. Mr Goodman was surprised to find such a man of property and position as the suitor of Betsy. But this Captain made so much hurry in settling his marriage with Betsy that he almost became a butt of ridicule. So Betsy had to dismiss him from the row of her suitors by denying his offer of marriage. Now Mr Staple thought that there is only one rival in the way of his love affair with Betsy. So he had written a letter to Mr Trueworth, summoning
him to a duel of sword. He had also written that who would live after this duel would get Betsy as his prize. This was a tradition of eighteenth century to fight a duel for any insignificant reason. No one could deny the beckoning to the duel due to the fear of being regarded as coward. Thus in the eighteenth century many persons died of duel. To fight in duel for simple causes became the craze of the foolish rakes of the eighteenth century. In this context Haywood obliquely comments that “... may the god of love be painted blind,- those devoted to his influence are seldom capable of seeing things as they truly are . . .”(167,i). Hence as a blind, emotional lover, Mr Staple writes to Trueworth:

Both our wishes tend to the possession of one beautiful object;- both cannot be happy in the accomplishment;- it is fit therefore the sword should decide the difference between us, and put an end to those pretensions on the one side or the other, which it is not probable either of us will otherwise recede from.(167,i)

During this duel both were heavily injured. And Trueworth got the victory. But he did not kill Mr Staple. The news of this duel reaches at the house of Betsy by Goodman’s friend Mr Chatfree, who witnessed this dreadful duel. When he comes to the house of Betsy gives the news of this duel, Goodman becomes very much angry with her for being the cause of duel between these two men of honour. But Betsy wants to avoid her responsibility in this matter by saying, “what would you have me do? – I do not want the men to love me,- and if they will play the fool and fight, and kill one another, it is none of my fault”(177,i). But Mr Goodman could only realize “the great error she was guilty of, in encouraging a plurality of lovers at the same time”(176,i). Hence Mr Goodman advises her on the importance of female reputation:

I doubt not of your innocence, but would have you consider, that reputation is also of some value;- that the honour of a young maid like you, is a flower of so tender and delicate a nature, that the least breath of scandal withers and
In fine, that it is not enough to be good, without behaving in such a manner as shall make others acknowledge us to be so. (174, i)

Here Goodman suggests that it is not enough for a woman to be innocent at heart. It is also important what people know of her. Her reputation is more important than the actual reality, that is known to no one else but herself. Mr Goodman’s admonitions become true very soon in the life of Miss Betsy. Her reputation is spoilt at the eyes of Trueworth due to her mixing with a defamed woman.

Mr Trueworth goes with his friend Sir Bazil Loveit to the house of Miss Forward, who was known as a prostitute. Though Mr Trueworth is deeply in love with Betsy, he is much surprised to find Miss Betsy as the friend of the prostitute:

Any one may judge what a heart, possessed of so sincere and honourable a flame, as that of Mr Trueworth’s, must feel, to see the beloved object so intimate with a common prostitute; it shall suffice therefore to say, that his were such as prevented him from being able to recover himself enough to speak to Miss Betsy on that subject, as he would do; he forbore mentioning it at all, and said very little to her on any other, while they were on the coach, and having seen her safe into Mr Goodman’s house, took his leave, and went home, where he passed a night of more vexation than he ever had before experienced. (229, ii)

Next day Trueworth immediately came to the house of Betsy. She was then dressing in her chamber. Here Haywood employs the characteristic rhetoric of the fashion-magazine-glamour in order to describe the appearance of Betsy like the model of the fashion-magazine, that would cater to the interest of the female readers:

... she came down, and appeared more lovely and dazzling in his eyes than ever.

-This happened to be the first day of her putting on a very rich, and extremely well-Fancied gown, and either because it was more becoming than any of those he had
Seen her in before, or because of the pleasure ladies of her age and humour generally
Feel on such occasions, a more than useful brightness shone in her eyes, and was
diffused through all her air; and after having made her some compliments on the
elegance of her taste in dress . . . (231, ii)

Betsy informed Trueworth that she is going to Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields to see a new play with
Miss Forward. He warns her that a lady must be cautious in mixing with other as “reputation
in you once lost, is never to be retrieved” (232, ii). He warns her that her intimacy with Miss
Forward can lead her to great difficulty and infamy. But Betsy became very much angry due
to his interference in the matter of her keeping of company. But Trueworth requests her,

. . . I beseech you, do not think of going to the play with a woman of her class:- do
not expose yourself in a place where so many eyes will be upon you :- reflect, for
heaven’s sake, what your modesty will suffer, in seeing yourself gazed and pointed
at, by those to whom she sells her favours; and reflect yet farther, what they will
judge of you. (234, ii)

But being blind with her vanity she denounces him, and denies all his requests. At this
Trueworth thinks, “who knows, but that very pride, which seems to be her defence, may have
contributed to her fall? – She has vanity enough to imagine she may act with impunity what
she would condemn in others”(280, ii). At this he goes away , “resolving in his mind never to
see her more”(234, ii). Thus Betsy’s thoughtlessness causes this irreparable harm to her
future as for being such ignorant of preserving her reputation, and for losing the most perfect
suitor being guided by her blind vanity at this catastrophic moment.

When Betsy goes to the opera with Miss Forward denying the advice of Trueworth she
falls prey to the gaze of two strangers. Here Haywood employs the characteristic rhetoric of
desire in order to describe the male gaze, titillated by her vanquishing beauty.

. . . “Why then have you taken all this pains to empty the whole quiver of Cupid’s
arrows to new point those charms you have received from nature? – Why does the jessamine, and the blooming violet play wanton in your hair? – Why is the patch with so much art placed on the corner of this ruby lip,- and here another to mark out the arched symmetry of the jetty brow?- Why does the glittering solitaire hang pendant on the snowy breast, but to attract, and allure us poor, admiring men, into a pleasing ruin?”(237, ii)

Observing Betsy as a companion of the prostitute Miss Forward, one of these men attempts to rape her. But finally at the moment of his final assault he finds her falling into a swoon, and discovers her as a lady of reputation. He then leaves her by reminding her the same warning of Trueworth that “a lady more endangered her reputation, by an acquaintance with one woman of ill fame, than by receiving the visits of twenty men. . .’’(241,ii). In the meantime Miss Flora, daughter of Mr Goodman, writes an unanimous letter to Trueworth defaming Betsy as a mother of an orphan child at Denham. This sort of crooked intervention ruptures their relationship completely. As a consequence Trueworth breaks his marriage with Betsy.

This rejection hurts Betsy’s vanity too much. Being blind with pride she loses her sense of reason and justice. At this time she joins an association for amusement, and there a gentleman named Munden was charmed with Betsy at first sight. In the matter of her love affair Betsy always liked to retain her “agency”. Her passionate desire was never satisfied with one suitor. Like a male lover she liked much to play wanton with her multiple lovers. About the nature of Betsy’s love affairs Haywood ironically comments:

Miss Betsy was indeed a tyrant, but a very gentle one ; she always mingled

Some sweet with the sharpness of her expressions:- if in one breath she menaced Despair, in the next she encouraged hope, and her very repulses were sometimes so equivocal, as that they might be taken for invitations:- she played with her lovers, as she did with her monkey, but expected more obedience from them . . .(296, ii)
Due to such whimsical nature Betsy always gave priority to the “exterior homage” (296, ii) of her lovers, rather than their true love. Being a man of head without heart Mr Munden understood well how to allure such a thoughtless lady, and thus easily entrapped her in the bond of marriage:

Mr Munden, with less love, perhaps, than many, who had addressed her, knew better how to suit himself to her humour; - he could act over all the delicacies of the most tender passion, without being truly sensible of any of them . . . he was the more capable of behaving towards her in the way she liked. He was continually inviting her to some party of pleasure or other, - he gallanted her to all public shews, - he treated her with the most exquisite dainties of the season, and presented her with many curious toys. . . (296, ii).

Amidst this episode of accumulation of a train of lovers by Betsy, as a digression Haywood introduces another story of Miss Flora, who advances to seduce Mr Trueworth being driven by her female desire. Through the character of Miss Flora Haywood again attempts to bring the issue of female desire and female sexuality to the forefront. Being driven by her exquisite passion for Trueworth Miss Flora uses her female “agency’ to arrange the game of seduction at her own wishes. After breaking the marriage of Trueworth and Betsy by her anonymous letter she now writes a letter to Trueworth in the guise of the unknown lady Incognita. As a female seductress she writes letter, chooses the place of rendezvous at the Rosamond’s Pond in St. James Park. Now she assumes the role of the executor of the game of courtship. She attains her female ‘agency’ as here she herself chooses the site of her rendezvous and finally keeps the appointment through her own constructed plot. Miss Flora comes to meet Trueworth in the disguise of a domino, “not only masked, but also close muffled in her hood”(307, ii) so that Trueworth could not discover her identity. Then she departs with the promise of meeting him to a more secret place. At this second
meeting with the veiled Incognita Trueworth grows restless to unravel her identity. Trueworth complained, “the greatest stranger to your heart would be allowed the privilege of a salute, yet I am denied the pleasure of touching those dear lips, which have denounced my happiness”(311, ii). As the “discovery of her face was what he chiefly wanted”(311, ii), Trueworth finally opens her mask, saying “you have no excuse for keeping on this invidious cloud”(311, ii). With the discovery of the face of Incognita as Miss Flora, he gets perplexed. Haywood here inverts the patriarchal tradition of the fiction of seduction by her projection of such a self-assertive woman. Fleeing from that seductress Trueworth gets acquainted with his friend Sir Bazil’s younger sister Miss Harriet Loveit, and after his proximity with her he decides to marry her.

But in the meantime Betsy did not stop with this conquest of the new adorer Munden. She advanced to lure another rich gentleman Mr Frederick Fineer. He was so much impressed by her magnetism that he wrote several letters to her. But on the part of Betsy:

Though she could not love, she was pleased with being loved:- no man, of what degree or circumstance so ever, could offend her by declaring himself her admirer; and as much as she despised Sir Frederick Fineer for his romantic manner of expressing the passion he professed for her, yet to have missed him out of the number of her train of captives, would have been little less mortification to her, than the loss of a favourite lover would have been to some other women.(350,iii)

When Betsy thinks of bringing an end to this courtship with Sir Finner, Sir Finner uses a trick to beckon Betsy to his house and attempts to rape her. At the moment of her ultimate ruin Trueworth comes there to rescue her. Now the brothers of Betsy insist her for her marriage to avoid such accidents again and again. During this horns of dilemma Betsy, without too much love in her heart of hearts, decides to marry Mr Munden. Betsy wanted suitors and an independent life of pleasure. With the desertion of Trueworth Betsy’s brothers demand for
her urgent marriage with Munden, and thus resign her to the fate of most of the women in a patriarchal society. The topic of marriage and the aftermath of marriage are posited here evidently as a problematic issue of discussion with regard to the condition of the eighteenth century women. About the condition of eighteenth century women after marriage Pat Rogers writes in *The Augustan Vision*:

... All women enjoyed minimal legal rights with regard to property and the like. They had few civic opportunities, no professional openings. But if they married, they could exercise a respectable and indeed honoured function in the community. Their social place was secure, or as secure as their husband’s, and it does not seem to have struck them that this was a feebly vicarious hold on status. But a woman without a husband and children had limited hopes of fulfillment, even in a rank which ensured her material comforts and some degree of privilege. ... Regardless of the tactics to be adopted, marriage was the only authentic ‘choice of life’, as it was then termed. ... The Augustans were ready enough to enjoy sex, but they thought it had less to do with the deepest areas of the human personality than had religion, say, or filial duty, or friendship.

The result is that though women were admired, respected, teased, patronized and cajoled by men, they were not intellectualized. (89-91)

Thinking of her imminent loss of independence after marriage Betsy laments:

I wonder what can make the generality of Women so fond of marrying?--Just as if it were not a greater pleasure to be courted, complimented, admired, and addressed by a
number, than be confined to one, who from a slave becomes a master, and perhaps uses his authority in a manner disagreeable enough. (488, iv)

When Betsy goes to sleep, her tumultuous condition of mind is reflected in her nightmare. In her dream she sees:

. . . sometimes she imagined herself standing on the brink of muddy, troubled waters; at others, that she was wandering through deserts, overgrown with thorns and briars, or seeking to find a passage through some ruin’d building, whose tottering roof seemed ready to fall upon her head, and crush her to pieces.(489, iv)

Here Betsy’s nightmare before her marriage with Munden seems to be the premonition of her disastrous post-marital life with the infamous Munden. Sigmund Freud writes in *Interpretation of Dreams* about different symbolic significance of dreams. In the chapter “The Method of Interpreting Dreams” Freud analyses this technique of interpreting dreams through its symbolic significance or through the method of decoding its signs:

. . . So it is that popular opinion has always endeavored to “interpret” dreams, and in doing so has tried two essentially different methods. The first procedure takes the dream-content as a whole and seeks to replace it with a different, intelligible, and in certain respects analogous content. This is symbolic dream-interpretation . . . The view that dreams are mainly concerned with the future, having a premonition of what form it will take – a remnant of the prophetic significance once accorded to dreams-then becomes the motive for transposing the meaning of the dream discovered by symbolic interpretation into the future tense by means of an “it will”.

. . . The other popular method of dream-interpretation is very from making any such claim. It might be called the “decoding method”, as it treats the dream as a kind of secret writing in which every sign is translated by means of a fixed key into
another sign whose significance is known. (78-79)

Betsy too tries to interpret her dream from this symbolic point of view. From this dream she conjectures about her unknown future, and becomes anxious of her post-marital life:

I see I am at the end of all my happiness and that my whole future life is condemned to be a scene of disquiet; - but there is no resisting destiny; - they will have it so: - I have promised, and must submit. (489, iv)

On the eve of her marriage Betsy casts a long lingering look on the picture of Trueworth thinking of his true love for her. But finally with the presence of her guardians she gets married to Mr Munden. Before entering into her new life Lady Trusty gives her advice:

. . . As to your conduct in family affairs I would have you always confine yourself to such things as properly appertain to your own province, never interfering with such as belong to your husband: - be careful to give him all the rights of his place, and, at the same time maintain your own, though without seeming to be too tenacious of them . . . whatever errors he may happen to fall into, as it does not become you to reprimand him, I wish you would never take notice you have observed them . . . those too gaieties of life you have hitherto indulged, which, however, innocent, could not escape censure while in a single state, will now have a much worse aspect in a married one . . . (494-95, iv)

Here Lady Trusty’s advice on Betsy reflects the stereotypical notion of marriage, imposed on women by the patriarchal society. Each and every norms of marital life here tries to confine women to the claustrophobic notion of femininity. Here marriage becomes the other name of bondage for women. Haywood presents marriage as a means to control the women by the patriarchy. Under the veil of moral didacticism of Lady Trusty Haywood here obliquely highlights how marriage curtails the freedom of a woman. Betsy will step into this marriage
with the advice and blessing of Lady Trusty, and the results demonstrate the inconsistency of marital advice and conduct-book didacticism. *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* interrogates the patriarchal code of conduct of marital life and ultimately offers an alternative model of blissful, conjugal marital life that characterizes this novel. Through her skillful manipulation of generic expectations Haywood not only offers a critique of the novel's increasing didacticism, but also of the ideology implicit in that genre.

Through the marriage of Betsy and Munden Haywood wants to show the miserable condition of women in the eighteenth century society. After the marriage all sorts of responsibilities to keep the home perfect falls upon the wife. So all sorts of useless didacticism like that of Lady Trusty was inculcated only amidst the wives. It was thought that housekeeping was the only duty of women. It was also considered that to keep the peace of the home was the duty of the wives. Haywood here obliquely criticizes all of these patriarchal concepts of home-making. Haywood shows here that home-making is a reciprocal process, for which the co-operation of both of the wife and the husband is necessary. Reciprocity is needed for creating a happy family. So Haywood here shows the faults of the patriarchal notion of home-making through the example of Betsy. Some times after their marriage the life of Betsy and Munden was swayed over with pleasure. But this condition persisted not for long time:

... the gaudy scene vanished at once, and soon a darkening gloom overspread the late enchanting prospect.- Mr Munden’s fortune could not support this constant expenses;- he was obliged to retrench somewhere, and not being of a humour to deny himself any of those amusements he was accustomed to abroad, he became excessively parsimonious at home, in so much that the scanty allowance she received from him for housekeeping would scarce furnish out a table fit for a gentleman of an estate far inferior to that he was in possession of to sit down to
himself, much less to ask any friend, who would casually came in to visit him . . . Nothing can be more galling to a woman of any spirit, than to see herself at the head of a family without sufficient means to support her character as such in a handsome manner . . . she complained of it to Mr Munden . . . he told her, that he feared she was a bad economist, and that as she was a wife, she ought to understand, that it was one of the main duties of her place to be frugal of her husband’s money, and be content with such things as were suitable to his circumstances. (498-99, iv)

Betsy’s post-marital life thus becomes a sort of repetition of the same work. And continuous, repetitive quarrel over the same problem makes her life tedious. Her such futile engagement with useless house-work, which gives a woman neither identity nor individuality, without any sort of applause on the part of her husband echoes the feminist protestation of Simone de Beauvoir about the futility of house-work in *The Second Sex:*

In domestic work, with or without the aid of servants, woman makes her home her own, finds social justification, and provides herself with an occupation, an activity, that deals usefully and satisfyingly with material objects – shining stoves, fresh, clean cloths, bright copper, polished furniture – but provides no escape from immanence and little affirmation of individuality. Such work has a negative basis: cleaning is getting rid of dirt, tidying up is eliminating disorder . . . Legions of women have only this endless struggle without victory over the dirt. And for even the most privileged the victory is never final.
Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than house work, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present. She never senses conquest of a positive good, but rather indefinite struggle against negative Evil. Eating, sleeping, cleaning – the years no longer rise up towards heaven, they lie spread out ahead, grey and identical.

The battle against dust and dirt is never won. (470)

Due to the continuous pressure of Munden Betsy cries out in agony:

Good heavens! To what have I reduced myself? – Is this to be a wife? - Is this the state of wedlock? Call it rather an Egyptian bondage; - the cruel task masters of the Israelites could exact no more. – Ungrateful man! Is this the love, - the tenderness you vowed? (501, iv)

In spite of so much torture Lady Trusty comes to Betsy with her eternal advice of submission of Betsy to her husband. This condition of Betsy, and Lady Trusty’s advice as a traditional well-wisher highlights that the patriarchal society needs from a woman her total submission to her male partner. Hence the result of marriage is for a woman the loss of her freedom, loss of her identity and selfless subjugation to the male. Lady Trusty here acts as the ‘looking glass’ in the words of Virginia Woolf. In A Room of One’s Own Woolf propagates the notion that women, who are the victims of men, also contribute in their own domestic and
professional victimization by acting as a ‘looking glass’ for reflecting back to men of their desired image. Lady Trusty’s advice to Betsy is nothing more than the reflection of the patriarchal dictates to the wives for their complete subjugation to the male. But such advice here fails completely to reunite the couple. Thus Haywood makes her proto-feminist assertion that a perfect family can be created by the conjugal love and assistance of the partners, not by the male chauvinism. This is indeed a radical proto-feminist assertion of Haywood in the context of the eighteenth century paradigm, which demanded the strictest sense of morality and chastity from the women being totally oblivious of the concept of morality and reciprocity of the men.

And this sort of censure of the eighteenth century patriarchal concept of marriage reaches at the zenith when Haywood presents the patriarchal notion of marriage through the voice of the chauvinist husband Munden:

Mr Munden’s notions of marriage had always been extremely unfavourable to the ladies;—he considered a wife no more than an upper servant, bound to study and obey, in all things, the will of him to whom she had given her hand;—and how obsequious and submissive so ever he appeared when a lover, had fixed his resolution to render himself absolute master when he became a husband. (507, iv)

Thus Munden metamorphoses from a servant to the master after his marriage. Haywood here ironically shows how a lover woos as a servant and then becomes the master of his beloved after their marriage. About such situation after marriage Simone de Beauvoir has commented
in *The Second Sex*, “In marrying, woman gets some share in the world as her own; legal guarantees protect her against capricious action by man; but she becomes his vassal”(449). Here Beauvoir actually alludes to the reality of marriage, that snatches a woman of her independence and turns a woman not only into a ‘wife’ but also into ‘a maid’. But Haywood does not allow her independent heroine Betsy, the mouthpiece of her proto-feminist assertion, to accept this subjugation silently. Rather Betsy vehemently protests like a radical feminist:

> When a husband is ignorant of the regard he ought to have for his wife, or
>
> forgets to put it in practice, he can expect neither affection nor obedience,
>
> unless the woman he has married happens to be an idiot.(510, iv)

As a radical proto-feminist writer Haywood does not show the problem from the superficial level. Rather Haywood steps into the post-marital life of Betsy in order to detect the real causes. All attempts of Lady Trusty and Ralph Trusty fails to reunite the couple as earlier. In the meantime a woman of ill reputation takes refuse in Betsy’s house and Munden gets engaged in a liaison with her. This fact annoys Betsy so much that she finally leaves her house, and comes to leave in a secluded place at the countryside. Now she comes know of the fact of the death of Harriet Loveit, the wife of Trueworth. And here on a divine morning she meets the man of her desire Trueworth. At the heart of the novel *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* lies the inevitability of marriage, which so often proved to be an unhappy one in the socio-cultural context of the eighteenth century, when women had no right to get equal opportunity of the men either at their home or by the law. Perhaps this incident is also common to the experience of the personal life of Haywood. But even amidst the claustrophobic atmosphere of the eighteenth century Haywood as a radical proto-feminist writer envisages the vision of a female utopian zone, where Betsy can have the power as well
as the female ‘agency’ to correct the choice of her partner through her second marriage with Trueworth.

In the meantime Trueworth had discovered how Miss Flora’s wickedness defamed Betsy to separate them. Here Haywood again employs the characteristic rhetoric of fashion-magazine to describe Betsy or Mrs Munden through the male gaze of Trueworth, who again starts to fall in love with his first love once again:

. . . he saw Mrs Munden while at too great a distance to know who she was,

yet did her air and motion as she walked, strike him with something, which

made him willing to see what sort of face belonged to so genteel a form. . .

Though she was in the most negligent night-dress that could be, she seemed as

lovely to him as ever; all his first flames rekindled in his heart, while gazing on

her with this uninterrupted freedom . . .(607, iv)

But Haywood here does not leave her readers languishing over this ruptured relationship of Betsy and Trueworth. Though Haywood is here critical of the eighteenth century concept of female subjugation after marriage, she does not allow her female readers to be plunged in despair. Hence going against the eighteenth century notion of female chastity and morality, Haywood radically presents her ingenious notion of female emancipation for the purpose of providing her heroine her desired life with the man of her desire. She does not allow her heroine to lament throughout her life for her single fault, which could be corrected. Hence Haywood uses a unique strategy to reunite the old lovers in this life, even though it may be once after their marriage. In order to provide a utopian zone of fulfilment of the female desire
Haywood here challenges the traditional notion of femininity. Finally Munden dies paving the way for union of the old lovers.

Due to such radical thinking of Haywood in the female utopian zone of her novel Trueworth can again aspire for the widow Betsy with the same warmth and passion as earlier:

... the fondness and artful blandishments of Miss Flora served to wean his heart from the once darling object, but there demanded no less than the amiable person, and more amiable temper of Miss Harriet to drive thence an idea so accustomed to preside.- All this, however, as it appeared, did not wholly extinguish the first flame:- the innocence of the charming Miss Betsy fully cleared, all the errors of her conduct reformed, rekindled in him an esteem ;- the sight of her after so many months absence made the seemingly dead embers of desire begin to glow, and on the discovery of her sentiments in his favour, burst forth into a blaze . . .(618-19, iv)

This is indeed the characteristic rhetoric of desire, that Haywood can employ to describe the passion of the true lover for a widow even in the eighteenth century scenario. Hence ultimately both of them express their love and affection for each other, and vow to get reunited by marriage. Betsy, getting out of the shock of the sudden death of her atrocious husband, succeeds to utter to her former lover Trueworth, “you know you have my heart, and cannot doubt my hand” (631, iv). John Richetti comments about the ending of Betsy Thoughtless in The English Novel in History 1700-1780:

Betsy Thoughtless is a rollicking romp through high life, with a heroine whose
only fault is that consumerist curiosity for new experiences that readers of the novel enjoy sharing. So Haywood’s superficial tracing of Betsy’s moral development from coquette to grimly faithful wife to blushing widow/bride is entirely adequate.

Within its world of genteel privilege, Haywood’s novel celebrates individual if delayed moral agency, marking with appropriate condemnation the schemes for power and pleasure of its interesting villains and with satisfied approbation the achievement of moral integrity and happiness by its central couple. The novel is a fantasy of leisure-class independence in which society’s moral balance is unthreatened by the various male and female profligates who inhabit it. The painful, deep cultural contradictions that define the intersection of the novel and the woman writer at mid-century are subordinated to Haywood’s easy rehearsals of melodramatic and comic tableaux. (204-05)

It was indeed radical in the context of the eighteenth century to put forth such a story of reunion of the lovers after their first marriage in the pages of a fiction, written by a female writer. So Betsy enters into her new marital life with the best partner after going through so many errors, resulting from her thoughtlessness. Her disastrous marriage with Munden transcends her from her state of pre-marital “innocence” to the post-marital “experience”. Betsy’s moral evolution from a thoughtless coquette to thoughtful wife is here coincided in a parallel way with concept of necessity of mutual love, affection, and adjustment for a perfect
marital life. And this proto-feminist concept of Haywood is not only radical, but also new in context of the eighteenth century patriarchal mindset and the androcentric literary tradition. Betsy gradually moves from the very childhood through her adolescence to the maturity with her female ‘agency’. One thing is important to be mentioned here that Haywood’s most famous heroine Betsy is not any exceptional female character, but rather through her behaviour she is representative of the eighteenth century women. With her vanity, and flirtatiousness Betsy is not much different from Alexander Pope’s heroine Belinda in The Rape of the Lock, another famous character of eighteenth century. Betsy is almost an everywoman figure in the context of the eighteenth century women.

Dale Spender eulogizes Haywood in Mothers of the Novel: Hundred Good Women Writers before Jane Austen for her tremendous contribution in the history of the novel with reference to her famous novel The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless:

Of all Eliza Haywood’s works, it is The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless (1751) which is accorded the greatest claim to (limited) fame. This was the novel that Fanny Burney credited with being the inspirational source for Evelina more than twenty-five years later, and this in itself indicates how popular and enduring Betsy Thoughtless proved to be. . . It is also a novel of riveting interest where plot, character and dialogue all work to ensure a lively and demanding read . . . Yet neither this remarkable novel, nor its remarkable and prolific author, has any place in the history of literature. If it were desirable to choose but one author to
represent the growth and development of the English novel, sex bias aside, the lot
would undoubtedly fall to Eliza Haywood, whose writing encompasses all the
significant innovations and enduring and exemplary achievements of the early
novel. Through a study of her work the entire range of shifts and changes in style
and content can be readily traced. . . Yet she is virtually never quoted as a pioneer
in the history of the novel.(105-07)

Thus *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* proves to be probably the first novel of
female development in English. In this female bildungsroman Betsy errs with her female
‗agency‘ and she again corrects those errors with her female ‘agency‘. Through Betsy
Haywood ushers the portrait of an emancipated, ‘new’ woman of the next centuries, who
possesses the ‘agency‘ to transcend from error to happiness. Thus Betsy, through so many
errors of her life, ultimately learns who is her perfect partner of this life on earth.

In this novel Haywood uses her feminist voice to unveil the hypocrisy of the patriarchy,
that tortures women very often under the sacred veil of marriage. Haywood almost in an
iconoclastic way peeps into the post-marital life of her heroine Betsy, where angels fear to
tread. Her voyeuristic intervention unravels the fact that Betsy, who was once worshipped as
a goddess by her multiple suitors is now turned into a slave by one of those admirers. As a
radical proto-feminist writer Haywood does not show the problem from the superficial level.
Rather she steps into the post-marital life to detect the real causes. Haywood here overtly
demonstrates how the freedom of the spinster is gradually curtailed after her marriage by the
patriarchal society. Perhaps Haywood’s own disaster in her post-marital life had influenced
her in writing such a novel, warning her female readers against such bad marriage due to the
wrong choice of partner. Bad marriage and how to avoid it, and how to negotiate a good one, constitute the major theme of this fiction. But here neither Haywood nor her heroine Betsy is pessimistic to the concept of love and marriage. John Richetti comments in *The English Novel in History 1700-1780*:

> Betsy’s adventures are a series of hedonistic encounters and excursions in which a woman enjoys her status as a desirable object and postpones her transformation into a financial and biological male asset. (205)

Thus even amidst the claustrophobic atmosphere of the eighteenth century, Haywood presents the notion of an iconoclastic heroine like Betsy, who retains her female ‘agency’ to fulfil her desire and denies the role of being a ‘male asset’. Though Haywood is here critical of the eighteenth century concept of female subjugation after marriage, she does not allow her female readers to be plunged in despair. Hence going against the contemporary patriarchal tradition of female chastity Haywood as a proto-feminist writer provides her heroine Betsy with the female ‘agency’ to choose again the right partner in her life, and thus to correct her former blunder. Here Haywood envisages the vision of a female utopian zone, where under the facade of the didactic, domestic fiction Haywood presents Betsy with the radical proto-feminist notion as she has the power as well as the female ‘agency’ to flirt with so many men, to choose her partner, and to correct the choice of her partner through her second marriage with Trueworth. And this ingenious presentation of this proto-feminist concept in her novel of female development is not only radical, but also new in context of the eighteenth century paradigm and the androcentric literary tradition. Haywood’s such creation of a revolutionary novel of female development, perhaps for the first time, proves her truly as one of those “mothers of the novel”, who will be remembered for ages to come.
Note

1. In order to analyse the real condition of the eighteenth-century women after marriage

Deborah Ross writes in this context in *The Excellence of Falsehood: Romance, Realism and Women's contribution to the Novel*: “Marriage in these novels is every woman’s ship on the Atlantic. Once on board, she cannot leave without her captain’s consent unless she is an amazingly strong swimmer. A wife must receive justice gratefully from her husband as if it were mercy . . . Sometimes the husband even looks forward to marriage as his chance for revenge and takes a perverse pleasure in the legal rape of his wife’s will.” (80)
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- - - . “Politics and Moral Idealism : The Achievement of Some Early Women Novelists”.


Chapter-7: Conclusion
Chapter-7

Conclusion

Eliza Haywood’s novels are important documents not only of women’s history, but also of literary, social, and moral turmoil of the eighteenth century. She was a radical proto-feminist writer, who latently made significant comments upon the position and role of women during the eighteenth century in her amatory fictions. This epoch was a crucial time in the history of women as writers. They had absolutely no rights, no individual existence or identity. The very act of writing, particularly for the female writers, female readers as well as for the female audience was in essence an assertion of individuality and autonomy. Writing by women was often considered as an act of defiance of the women. But to write meant ‘to be’. Writing was a means to create and to exist. It was a way to construct and control a worldview from the female point-of-view without the interference of men. With the rapid advancement in the field of trade and commerce and the rise of the ‘middle class’, eighteenth century society was experiencing a form of embourgeoisement, which contributed tremendously to the increase of the public literacy rate. This period is also marked by the upsurge in the number of female readership. In this context Simone de Beauvoir writes in The Second Sex:

In the eighteenth century woman’s freedom continued to increase. The mores were still strict: the young girl got only a sketchy education; and she was married off or sent into a convent without being consulted. The rising middle class imposed a strict morality upon wives. But the women of the world led extremely licentious lives, and the upper middle class was contaminated by
such examples; neither the convent nor the home could contain woman.

Once again, for the majority this liberty remained abstract and negative: there was little more than the search for pleasure. But the intelligent and ambitious created opportunities. The salon took on new splendour, women protected and inspired the writer and made up his public; they studied philosophy and science and set up laboratories of physics and chemistry.

In politics the names of Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry indicate woman’s power; they really controlled the state . . . It was only in the eighteenth century that a middle-class woman, Mrs Aphra Behn, a widow, earned her living by her pen like a man. Others followed her example . . . (137-38)

Eighteenth century was a crucial period in the history of the female writers. Women writers had to struggle a lot in order to get recognition as “writers” rather than “scribblers”, who are equal in their intellectual ability as well as literary creativity to the contemporary “male” writers. Female writers were despised publicly for professionally competing with men as writers. In order to describe the condition of the female writers of the eighteenth century Katharine M. Rogers writes in *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England*:

Despite this increasing recognition that women had to have better opportunities for supporting themselves, the only profession that actually developed for them was writing. In the 1670s Aphra Behn, the first
professional woman author in England, successfully competed with male playwrights. She was followed by Susannah Centlivre, another comic playwright, and Mary de la Riviere Manley and Eliza Haywood, writers of salacious romances and scandal chronicles. They all made an independent living by their writing, but unfortunately contemporaries were less impressed by their professionalism than by the immodesty of their works and the unchastity of their lives. Behn and Centlivre had lovers, Haywood was separated from her husband, and Manley, after being betrayed into a fraudulent marriage, lived as a kept mistress.

These lapses were magnified by prejudice against women who aggressively competed with men . . . The women were attacked as if they supported themselves by prostitution (which would have been an easier way than writing). Thus it became customary to associate unchastity with professional competition with men . . . (21)

Dale Spender, the author of *The Mothers of the Novel: Hundred Good Women Writers before Jane Austen*, suggests that because early novelists and playwrights came from all walks of life, they were not from one small and privileged class; their experiences within writing were more representative of their sex as a whole (3-4). He also brings up the idea that the majority of novels, that were written in the eighteenth century, were written by women. He suggests that as men “were not amused by the women’s prominence” the women writers were using
female pseudonyms in order to find out a favoured way into print, which was quite the opposite a hundred years previously (4). On the other hand Ros Ballaster in *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* defines the genre of the novel as a “female form”, which was germinated as well as flourished at the hand of the female writers of the eighteenth century (3). But William B. Warner argues in the article “Licensing Pleasure” that the male novelists “disavowed rather than assumed their debt” to the female writers of the eighteenth century, especially Eliza Haywood, and they “absorbed”, “erased”, and “supplanted” the fictions of Haywood and all the other female writers of the eighteenth century (6-7).

If women’s writing is important to the history of the novel, the novel is not less important to the history of women’s search for an identity and a public voice. In the eighteenth century, this new genre of the novel was an important medium for the articulation of women’s concerns. The rise of the novel at the hand of the female writers in the eighteenth century was certainly important in the history of the proto-feminism and to the growth of a female literary voice, acceptable within a patriarchal society. In this context Jane Spencer comments in her book *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*:

> Any study which treats of women writers as a separate group needs to explain the reasoning behind such a procedure. [Women writers] entered a realm of discourse that had long been dominated by men; their work imitated, or counteracted, or influenced the work of their male contemporaries, and it might be argued that they would be better studied alongside those men”. (ix)

Spencer tries to prove within her discourse that writings by women were not different from men’s, in style, theme, or content, and that women actually carried a special position in their
writing because they were able to use their work to influence and counteract stereotypes within their positions as female authors, placing them above their contemporaries. When women writers were accepted, it was on the basis of their presentation of femininity in their writings. Women’s writings were bound to be confined within the circle drawn by prevailing notions of the feminine, and women authors would have to turn away from the examples of those precursors, whose femininity did not fit the fashionable definition (Spencer 75). Even amidst such a restricted literary paradigm the women writers of the eighteenth century tried to highlight different facets of female subjugation under the facade of sentimental romance. At such a changing socio-cultural scenario Eliza Haywood also emerged with the new strategy to highlight the different forms of female humiliation and to usher a utopia of female liberation. While the emerging middle class of the eighteenth century was in general looking more to reading as a source of information, enlightenment and entertainment, middle class women in particular were looking for confirmation and clarification of their own new lifestyles. Here Eliza Haywood came in her own way by balancing entertainment with enlightenment, and juxtaposing stories of sentimental love with the semblance of proto-feminism. She was able to fulfil both of the demands of the burgeoning female readership as well as the middle class society and thus succeeded to take the advantage of the developments in the publishing industry.

About the emergence of the new concepts of women-centred writings by the female writers of the eighteenth century Alice Browne writes in *The Eighteenth century Feminist Mind*:

The notions of woman current in eighteenth century England incorporated many far older ideas, although there were significant changes in beliefs about women and in the genres of writing in which these beliefs were expressed. Middle- and
upper-class women were better read than in earlier periods, and had more access to popularised versions of the ideas about women formulated in the specialized disciplines of theology, law and medicine, as well as in political, historical or ethnographic writing. Moral and didactic literature, designed to tell women what they should be, reflects these notions of what women were, and helps to clarify what was believed to be most crucial about women’s lives, in its emphasis on women’s subordination to their fathers and husbands. The genre in which women wrote and read the most, the novel, also emphasises marriage and family life, but points to their discontents in a way that the descriptive and prescriptive literatures do not. The eighteenth century developed new ways of imagining women, and heroine-centred fantasies are just as important a part of the culture’s view of women as more consciously held beliefs. These women-centred imaginings, like the increase in women writers, gave women new confidence in thinking about their lives; new kinds of writing by, for and about women helped to make feminist discourse possible… (13-14)

Eliza Haywood was also one of those pioneer novelists, who inscribed such “women-centred” writings. Her ability to use her writing to motivate and empower the voice of feminine desire during this period was a revolution for all women. Haywood believed that women should be given equal opportunities with men for education as well as in every sphere of life. “Eighteenth century society associated female authorship with inappropriate public
display, sexual transgression, and the production of inferior texts” (Saxton 8). Haywood defended the treatment of her texts as inferior with the charge that women were not properly educated and, therefore, should not be expected to write about subjects beyond their general knowledge. In her writings, she was writing about much more than just love and desire; she was making a statement about female sexuality and gender inequality. Janet Todd points out “By the middle of the eighteenth century the woman writer who wanted to please the public understood that she must describe sentiment, not sex” (146). But Haywood defies that notion, and writes her novels that are filled with the pro-active heroines, who can sketch their own plots of desire with their female agency in order to seduce and ultimately gain their men of desire. Haywood here embraces the form of feminine desire, protesting against confinement of women that characterizes them in the eighteenth century. She showed the impact of her era in treating the role of women in respect of love as well as marriage. In her amatory fictions Haywood thus overthrows the patriarchal tradition of the fiction of seduction by presenting women as the equal contributor like the men to the game of desire. Due to such overt manifestation of the female desire and sexuality as a form of expression of the female interiority in her amatory fictions, Haywood was criticised with pungent satire by her contemporary writers. As a result Haywood’s name was erased from the “history of the novel” and her works were buried under the debris of amnesia. In this context Ros Ballaster comments in *Seductive Forms: Women’s Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740*:

> It has only been in recent years that this history of the novel has begun to be reassessed and revised, ensuring that Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood be accorded the serious attention their prose writings deserve. (211)
Hence the modern feminist writers and the critics have tried to redefine and reanalyse the proto-feminist texts of Haywood excavating them from the sepulchre of patriarchal conspiracy.

As one of the most prolific writer of amatory fiction Haywood created a distinctive strain of proto-feminism by her presentation of the unique female experiences. Her works aimed at the object of providing identity and individuality to the female readers as well as the female writers. Even emerging at the very period of the genesis of the genre of novel Haywood experimented freely with the form as well as the subject matter of this genre. Being well in touch with the socio-cultural demands of her period she was able to adapt herself to the contemporary requirements of fiction. At the time of the birth of the genre Haywood’s dual contribution lies in her deployment of the novel as a new hegemonic apparatus along with being a serious site for political, moral and social inquiry, and as an avenue for expression of the proto-feminist ideas. B.G. MacCarthy comments in *Women Writers: Their Contribution to the English Novel 1621-1744*:

> Mrs. Haywood sinned against the improved artistic and moral standards of a later age, but she was well in touch with the fictional demands of her own period. She had, to a very considerable extent, the power of adapting herself to varying aspects of fiction, and it is to this opportunism that her only notable achievements are due. (241)

Haywood, along with the other female writers, tried to capture the burgeoning female readers as the target readers of her amatory fictions. Though Haywood tried to portray the contemporary vulnerable condition of women through her amatory fictions, she did not allow her heroines to remain the passive victim of patriarchal whimsicality. Her credit lies in her...
presentation of a utopian form of empowerment for her heroines. And this became a role-model to her female readers, who by reading her amatory fictions tried to achieve this vicarious sense of empowerment, which was actually denied to them in the day-to-day life of the patriarchal society. Due to this reason Haywood’s fictions became immensely popular at that time.

Haywood went on to revise, reformulate and exploit the form of amatory fiction with new possibilities in order to create a utopian zone for her female readers. Through the independent assertion of the female subjectivity of the heroines, the amatory fictions of Haywood enable their heroines to emerge from the ‘passive’ role-model of the remote world of courtly romance, where women are idealised as vulnerable, reticent, decorous objects of male ‘desire’. Thus they also provide their female readers with a sense of female power and agency, that were denied to them in their social sphere. Haywood’s narration concentrated on the matter of assertion of the female self, and her special credit remained in finding a language for the female to articulate her passion. In the dedication to *The Fatal Secret* (1724) Haywood complains:

> But as I am a Woman, and consequently depriv’d of those Advantages of Education which the other Sex enjoy I cannot so far flatter my Desires, as to Imagine it in my Power to soar to any Subject higher than that which Nature is not negligent to teach us. Love is a topick which I believe few are ignorant of . . . a shady Grove and purling Stream are all things that’s necessary to give us an Idea of the tender Passion. This is a Theme, therefore, which while I make choice to write of, frees me from the Imputation of vain or self-sufficient:-
none can tax me with having too great an Opinion of my own Genius, when

I aim at nothing but what the meanest may perform.

At this period Haywood tried to create a definite identity for the female writers as well as the readers. In order to do this Haywood often introduced the proto-feminist, problematic issues of female emancipation, female independence, and female eroticism under the matrix of sentimental love of her fictions. In her amatory fictions she attempted to highlight the subjectivity of her heroines by bestowing them the female ‘agency’. She also offered here a utopian vision of the female zone, which was almost a parallel domain to the male ‘public sphere’. Her presentation of the parallel model of the female public sphere is not only new but also radical. She dehistoricized and mythologized the ‘public sphere’ in order to provide the female reader with a sense of feminine power and female ‘agency’ in a world, usually closed to her participation.

According to John Richetti the motto of the heroines of Haywood is that “The world cannot be changed, but it can be escaped and the tragic female condition transcended” (Popular Fiction before Richardson 208). Hence Haywood presented different unique ways for transcendence of her heroines from the female suppression. While in some of the amatory fictions of Haywood the heroines win the man of her desire after the rigorous penance of both of the man and the woman, in some other cases the heroines have the capacity to go through the aftermath of the male desertion single-handedly. Through each and every unique instance of her novels Haywood presents multifarious ways to deny the patriarchal subjugation to her female heroines as well as the female readers. Haywood’s amatory fictions have an eternal as well as transcendental aspect due to her “exaltation of female passion”. In this context John Richetti comments in The English Novel in History 1700-1780:

But during the 1720s and 1730s the most successful purveyors of amatory
fiction offered other thrills, and in the eyes of some contemporary commentators Eliza Haywood had inherited the mantle of Behn and Manley. She provided an emotional intensity quite distinct from the eroticized political scandal associated with Behn and Manley. Haywood’s fiction shifts from the exposure of moral imbalance in the upper reaches of society and the spectacle of suffering innocence to the exaltation of female passion... Here the narrative focus is obsessively on the articulation of passion itself, most of the time a volcanic and ineffable female emotionality, which sweeps all prudence and caution before it and dwarfs its causes in social or familial or economic relationships. (22)

In her fictional oeuvre Haywood aimed at presenting the irresistible, volcanic aspects of the female emotion, which was hitherto suppressed as the forbidden subject in the androcentric literary tradition. Haywood’s fictional world can be considered as an amatory, utopian zone, that offers the subjectivity as well as the identity to the female writer as well as to the female readers. The independent self as well as the liberated sexuality of the pro-active heroines in Haywood’s amatory fictions are indeed a metaphorical representation of the undaunted creativity of the female writers. Whereas the female eroticism and female sexual desire in her fictions are emblematic of the desire of the female readers to know the unknown.

Haywood’s heroines are notable for their bold assertion of their passionate love, which is essentially feminocentric in nature. Haywood for the first time finds a language and a definite voice for the women to articulate their passion. As a woman she dared and succeeded
to put down the physical and the psychological experiences of the female in the pages of her amatory fiction. Her proto-feminist texts, which are replete with the rhetoric of female desire, female gaze, female eroticism, female point-of-view and female agency, exude the fervour of the ecriture feminine according to the concept of the French Feminist Helene Cixous. Helene Cixous in her polemical essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” exhorts the women writers to write ‘the body’. She argues that woman’s writing will unleash the politics of pleasure, allowing woman to release her many selves. These multiple selves correspond to the metaphoric snakes of the medusa’s head. Cixous undertakes the revolt against oppressive language of patriarchy and the patriarchal system by outlining the primary methods for achieving the liberation by the female expressions, articulated through the form of the female writing. Cixous thinks that a female writer has to reclaim her body first in its distinct role. Once woman reclaims her body, she can reclaim her position in the world, gaining her power through the self-manifestation as she rebels against the age-old suppression, that has bound her as an economic and linguistic commodity. Cixous asks the female readers, who are the promising writers of the future generation:

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven't written. (And why I didn't write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great-that is, for "great men"; and it's "silly." Besides, you've written a little, but in secret. And it wasn't good, because it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for writing, because you didn't go all the way; or because you wrote, irresistibly, as when we would masturbate in secret, not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just ourselves feel guilty-so as to be forgiven; or to forget, to bury it until the next time.
Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relayers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against us and off our backs; and not yourself. Smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don't like the true texts of women-female-sexed texts. That kind scares them.

I write woman: woman must write woman. And man, man. So only an oblique consideration will be found here of man; it's up to him to say where his masculinity and femininity are at: this will concern us once men have opened their eyes and seen themselves clearly . . . (876-877)

Cixous argues that because of the masculine suppression, within woman there remains only the passive self of woman, whose desires are subverted into passivity. By writing of the body the independent female can emerge again as the individual, whose desire exists as separate from the masculine desire. Female writing draws out the subverted female desire, giving a female voice to a forced silence and space for her expression where before this existed no voice, no worth, no room for her “ if she is not a he”(888). Cixous writes again in “The Laugh of the Medusa”:

She must write her self, because this is the invention of a new insurgent writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transforma- tions in her history, first at two levels that cannot be separated.

a)Individually. By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display—the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and
By expressing the self and transgressing fixed lines, Cixous asserts that woman rebels against passivity, forced on her literally, economically, emotionally, and physically. Female writing originates from the body, which pulsates through female love. Woman must write of her own desires, through the channels of her maternal ‘poetic body’. According to Cixous the operations of the maternal body and pregnancy symbolize the reproductive faculty of the female body, which Cixous celebrates literally as the regenerative force of the female mind. Cixous, through her ‘new’ model of writing ushers a ‘new’ era in the history of the feminist writing:

The new history is coming; it's not a dream, though it does extend beyond men's imagination, and for good reason. It's going to deprive them of their conceptual orthopedics, beginning with the destruction of their enticement machine.

It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded-which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate. Hence the necessity to affirm the flourishes of this writing, to give form to its movement, its near and distant byways. (883)

Cixous defies the rules that politics, religion, philosophy, economic systems, and language have placed on the woman, objectifying her as a commodity of the monetary value. In the same way the earlier feminist writer Virginia Woolf challenged woman’s place as an
economic commodity, exchanged among men through marriage in *Three Guineas*. Virginia Woolf writes in *A Room of One’s Own* that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction . . . (6)”. She further writes in *A Room of One’s Own*:

I told you in the course of this paper that Shakespeare had a sister; but do not look for her in Sir Sidney Lee's life of the poet. She died young—alas, she never wrote a word. She lies buried where the omnibuses now stop, opposite the Elephant and Castle. Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the cross-roads still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here to-night, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. . . .and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think . . . if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born. . . .when she is born again she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry, that we cannot expect, for that would be impossible. But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while. (170-172)

Woolf’s metaphorical description of “Shakespeare’s sister” highlights the common plight of woman as a creative writer or artist or even an independent thinker. Woolf makes a plea for economic independence of women as she thinks that it is necessary for complete liberation of
women. In her feminist treatises Virginia Woolf thus pleads for an independent ‘space’ for woman to take decision for herself by herself.

Like Helene Cixous, Virginia Woolf and the other feminist writers Eliza Haywood too wants to endow woman with the form of female empowerment through the language, narrative structure and the theme of her amatory fictions, which provide the female protagonist, the female writer as well as the female reader an identity, a self, and a subject position, that were never available in the masculine language of the patriarchal literary tradition. Even coming much before the emergence of the ideas of literary feminism Haywood tried to create a concept of independent, female ‘space’ in her literary domain. Haywood’s texts are replete with a sense of insurgent wish to replace ‘the woman as object’ with ‘the woman as subject’ by giving her a realized, recognized, definite and a heard voice. Haywood inscribes all these features of ecriture feminine in her amatory fictions. Haywood, almost for the first time in the history of the eighteenth-century literary tradition, articulates the female physicality, female desire and female eroticism in her amatory fictions. She ventures to speak about the interiority of the female ‘body’ even amidst the constrained literary atmosphere of the eighteenth century. Haywood emerges as the pioneer proto-feminist writer, who succeeds to depict the candid expression of the sexual passion of her female protagonists in the pages of her fiction. Her amatory fictions are really remarkable for providing her female readers this voice for manifestation of their libido, that was repressed for so long by the patriarchal literary tradition.

Even emerging amidst the restricted atmosphere of the eighteenth-century society Haywood has applied different innovative devices in order to present the female self as a complete being. On Haywood’s presentation of her female protagonists as other than the
“typical” woman Felicity Nussbaum has remarked in the article “Heteroclites: The Gender of Character in the Scandalous Memoirs”:

Setting out a conflict between moral innocence and erotic fantasy, the seduced maiden novels of Haywood and Manley, according to John Richetti, simultaneously represent sacred religious values, which are centred in woman, and secular values centred in man. The heroines of the autobiographical memoirs defy the boundaries of archetypes familiar from earlier genres. They often refuse to reform or to display remorse, they take on male libertinism, frequently defying themselves as other than typical “woman”.

Going against the contemporary trends of ‘morality’ of the sentimental novels of androcentric literary tradition Eliza Haywood has built a new concept of female identity, and female liberation. Haywood has never allowed her heroines to be the victims of male whimsicality and patriarchal oppression. As an ideal proto-feminist writer Haywood could never think that the “virtue” of the virgin can ever be “rewarded” by her marriage with the rake, who attempted rape on her like the sentimental novels of Richardson.

Haywood invents different literary devices in order to enable her heroines to avoid female subjugation. She empowers her heroines with the form of female ‘agency’. Through their female agency her heroines try to make the plan of the game of seduction, select the place, and execute the process of seduction. The female protagonists thus achieve their authority over their male partner by attaining the power to control the game of seduction. Haywood is notable in the history of the emergence the new genre of novel not only for her manifestation of concepts of female liberation, but also for her application of different
innovative literary stratagem in her amatory fictions. She frequently invites her readers, especially the female readers to assume the role of the judge and assent to the outcome of episodes or conclusions in her fictions. She also beckons the female readers to create statements regarding women’s common feelings and general actions in her amatory fictions. This technique of inviting the female readers to participate in the debate and discussions of her utopian female public sphere in forming protofeminist opinion is not only ingenious but also radical. She very often encourages identification of her female protagonists with herself, and thus presents her female protagonists as an everywoman figure, who is more appealing to her female readers. Very often the female protagonists fall prey to the machinations of the rakes. But Haywood does not allow her female protagonists to submit themselves to the male whimsicality. The female protagonists rise and fall independently in the matter of their love, and thus gain a subject position, which was almost absent in other, contemporary novels of the patriarchal tradition. In this context John Richetti comments in *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739*:

> The heroines of all these novels are the victims of a world which sees them simply as opportunities for lust and avarice, which depersonalises them, in modern jargon. The love by which they are possessed is represented as tragic, since it most often leads to tragedy or at least to severe hardships. But the love which destroys them is really a way for these heroines to assert personality, a desperate alternative to the depersonalization which the masculine world imposes upon them. (208)

Thus, Haywood offers the new concept of identity to her female protagonists. She introduces the concept of female subjectivity in her amatory fictions, which becomes a role
model not only to her contemporary female readers, but also to the feminist writers of the subsequent generation. Due to her immense popularity among the burgeoning female readers she was very often denounced by her male competitors as an ‘immoral’ writer. But her contemporary female readers, and the feminist writers and critics of the later period have discovered that Haywood had projected a ‘new’ concept of morality in order to emancipate the ‘new’ woman from the clutches of the patriarchal megalomaniac ideology. They really commend the enormous contribution of this proto-feminist writer, who ushered such radical feminist ideas even before the rise of the concept of feminism. Haywood’s proto-feminist ideas in her texts remain the perennial source of inspiration for the feminist writers and critics of the subsequent period. In this context John Richetti eulogizes Eliza Haywood in *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739*:

... she is especially the female prophet of an oppressed and maligned sex against an organized male conspiracy.

This image invokes the ideological pattern of male tyranny versus female virtue we have already seen in the scandal chronicles. For the contemporary female reader at whom Mrs. Haywood’s novels are aimed, to read such sentiments is to participate in an exhilarating manner in an eighteenth-century feminism, not yet a political movement, of course, but a set of apparently stirring moral and emotional affirmations. Part of the effect of Mrs. Haywood’s novels, as her reputation became established, doubtless derived from this public personality of feminist champion. (181-82)

For her desperate attempts to secure the female rights in her fictions Haywood is noteworthy among the feminist writers of her next generations. With her recurring themes of protofeminism Haywood creates a space or a site for contestation of ideologies in her fictions. Thus she provides a utopian zone for utterance of the various suppressed voices
breaking the long silence of the ages. In her amatory fictions Eliza Haywood makes strong statements on the status of the contemporary women in their resistances and submissions to the dictates of phallocentrism. Her works have an appeal for almost all generations of readers and writers. Haywood brings out clearly that marriage is not the only option for a woman. From the traditional roles of daughters, sisters, wives and mothers Haywood’s protagonists emerge as individuals in their own right. Her perceptions of woman’s autonomy and independence are deeply entrenched in the woman’s situatedness within the eighteenth century socio-cultural and economic milieu. Haywood provides an alternate vision for the solution of the feminocentric problems and dilemmas, that allow her female protagonists individual freedom and growth even within the orthodox environment. Her great contribution lies in her construction of a female reader position, from which male perspective as well as patriarchal ideology can be challenged. Her female characters transcend the time. They present an inspiration for the contemporary women to think of their life from the female viewpoint. They will inspire the new fiction writers for ages to come. Thus, all of these literary devices of Haywood are the proto-feminist assertions of the female writer to give her female characters identity, subjectivity and authority. This is also a means to usher a glimpse of a forthcoming sense of empowerment to her female readers, that was denied to them in the real life. This proto-feminist vision of female liberation in the amatory fictions is truly Haywood’s successful prediction of the positive future the women. As a precursor of the feminist writers, even amidst the despicable state of the women in the eighteenth century, Eliza Haywood foresees an insurgent, exultant and transcendental condition of the ‘new’ woman.

Note

1. Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One’s Own*, refers to Lady Winchilsea, who had written
poems. Her each and every poem is replete with indignation against the position of women in the society and status of the women writers. Woolf refers to one such poem for demonstrating the real condition of female writers at this period:

Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,

Such a presumptuous creature is esteemed,

The fault can by no virtue be redeemed.

They tell us we mistake our sex and way:

Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play,

Are the accomplishments we should desire:

To write, or read, or think, or to enquire,

We cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time . . . (88-89)
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