



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

Master's Degree Programme
in European, American and
Postcolonial Language and
Literature

Final Thesis

**Eliza Haywood's amatory
fiction: *Love in Excess***

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Matriculation number

843409

Academic Year

2018 / 2019

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Introduction

Women writers have traditionally been excluded from accounts of the rise of the English novels, whose fathers have been identified, since Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, as Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Richardson. However, until the publication of Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740, one of the three best-selling works of fiction was Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess*, along with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, also published in 1719, and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). On the one hand, Haywood was praised by James Sterling as part of the "fair Triumvirate of Wit" with Aphra Behn and Delarivière Manley; moreover, she could boast a large readership, and her writings provided her with financial success and independence. On the other, she received several critiques by her male literary contemporaries, which seem to have been less related with her prose than with the sales of her novels and their treatment of genders conditions and issues. Haywood returned to critical attention in the 1970s with the feminist interest in expanding the established literary canon to a larger number of female authors (Saxton & P. 2000).

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the relationship between the themes addressed in Eliza Haywood's early amatory fiction and the development of the novel in the eighteenth-century context. Moreover, this dissertation aims to clarify the didactic function of her production. This thesis examines in particular

Haywood's first novel *Love in Excess*, analysing the text in order to exemplify Haywood's representation of these themes.

This thesis begins with a brief general introduction of Eliza Haywood's life, providing a short overlook of the aspects of her biography which have been analysed in previous studies, and those which are still unknown, such as her date of birth and the identity of her parents and of her husband. Moreover, it briefly delineates Haywood's career as a writer and actress, and the development of her literary production through the years, including her novels, collections of short stories, plays, translations, and periodicals. The first part then gives a short summary of the plot and character structure of Haywood's better known novel, *Love in Excess*.

The second chapter is concerned with the position of Haywood within the broader context of the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century, first looking at different accounts of the development of the novel in order to delineate a definition of its distinctive features, and focusing on the various factors which influenced its progress. It concentrates, on the role of previous literary genres and of social and cultural changes in shaping the part of the reading public which became readers of novels. The chapter then goes on to describe the particular condition of women readers and writers, since especially the latter were faced by contradictory pressures on their works. The focus will furtherly narrow on how the distinction between the novel and romance was defined in terms of gender rather than of genre, resulting in the equation of women writers and readers with romance, while

the novel was defined as a “male” genre. The last section of the chapter emphasises the combination of previous fictional forms as a characteristic of the novel, highlighting how the different narrative forms influencing *Love in Excess* similarly challenged traditional classifications of genres.

The third section of this thesis examines didacticism both as a feature of the novel as a genre and as an important element of Haywood’s *Love in Excess*. Beginning with an overview of the relevance of the didactic purpose in eighteenth-century writings based on the aims of art as profit and delight, this section focuses on eighteenth-century response to moral aspects of Haywood’s fiction. In particular, it analyses the instances of explicit and implicit didacticism present in *Love in Excess*, and the relevance of reading and writing as an alternative source of experience and agency for women in a social context which confined them to the private sphere.

1. Eliza Haywood: life and literary production

Information about the life of Eliza Haywood is scarce, and received accounts of her biography have often been found to be inaccurate because they derived more from reports of Haywood's competitors rather than from neutral records of births, marriages, and business transactions. Haywood's first biography, *Biographia Dramatica* (1764), was written shortly after her death by Davide Erskine Baker, while George Whicher's *The Life and Romances of Mrs. Eliza Haywood* (1915) is often the base for current accounts of Haywood's life. Despite reporting that Haywood was born "probably in 1693", Whicher signals the lack of a "mention of an Eliza Fowler [born] in 1693" (Whicher 1915, p. 2) in London Parish Registers.

The definition of Haywood's date of birth and the identities of her parents still have not been the object of a complete investigation; in any case, Christine Blouch (1991) provides an account of three possible identifications. Firstly, Blouch reports Whicher's suggestion that Elizabeth was the daughter of Robert and Elizabeth Fowler, born in 1689. This possibility seems to be consistent with the assertion that Haywood was the daughter of a London merchant, and with her schooling, which Haywood herself describes as "more liberal than is ordinarily allowed to Persons of my Sex" (Haywood 1745, p. 3). A second possibility is that Elizabeth was the daughter of Francis Fowler and his wife Elizabeth, christened 14 October 1693 in London's St. Sepulchre; despite the lack of other evidence, they are still considered to be possible parents of Haywood because they match the 1793 London birth date indicated by Haywood's early biographers. A third

possibility has been suggested by Haywood herself when, requesting a subscription from an unspecified potential patron, she claimed to be related “to Sir Richard of the Grange”. However, the closeness of Haywood’s relation to Richard Fowler of Harnage Grange, Shropshire has not been proved (Blouch 1991).

Eliza Fowler got married before 1714, as attested by the record of Eliza Haywood playing Chloe in *Timon of Athens; or, the Man-Hater* in Dublin. The identity of her husband is still unknown, since Whicher’s proposition that the conservative cleric Valentine Haywood was Eliza Haywood’s husband seems to be not supported by convincing evidence and to imply a deep contradiction of the cleric’s positions in London and Norfolk with Haywood’s career as an actress. However, Whicher’s assumption has been the base for Haywood’s anecdotal reputation of having “married a clergyman and ran away” as stated by Virginia Woolf in *A Scribbling Dame* (p. 23). The fate of the marriage is unknown as well, since neither the version known by Haywood’s contemporaries of Mr. Haywood leaving his wife, nor the possibility of Haywood becoming a widow are confirmed. Haywood’s own accounts are ambiguous too: in a letter of 1728 she stated that she was a widow

the Inclinations I ever had for writing be now converted into a Necessity, by the Sudden Deaths of both a Father, and a Husband, at an age when I was little prepar'd to Stem the Tide of Ill fortune. (B.M. Add. MS. 4293 f. 81)

However, two years later Haywood described her marriage as “unfortunate” (B.M. Add. MS. 4293 f. 82), which, while not precluding her husband’s death, could hint at several other possibilities (Blouch 1991). Yet, we know that by 1719 her

marriage was over, and Haywood's activity at Smock Alley in Dublin, the most important theatre outside of London, provided her some useful contacts for her later career.

Haywood's first known publication is *Love in Excess* (1719), which was the first of a long series of successful books published by Haywood in the 1720s. Her novels written in this period, for example *The British Recluse* (1722) and *The City Jilt* (1726), are characterised by the double influence of the French romance and of the short novellas from Spain and Portugal, which resulted in the combination of the interpolated incidents of French romance with the tendency of southern European novellas to exercise and at the same time contain a culture's anxieties. Several of the novels written by Haywood during this period share similar characteristics such as the doubling and tripling of characters, couples, and plots, and the use of such retelling as a tool for social commentary. Especially her shorter novels are characterised by the variation of setting: some develop within a city environment based on commercial London, while others use the settings of travel books, pastoral and romances. Similarly, while some of her texts imply that evil derives from traditional sins such as avarice, lust, jealousy, pride, and anger, other narratives focus on society, capitalism, and social forces. Some of her works, such as *The Fruitless Inquiry* (1727) and her translation of Madeleine de Gomez's *La Belle Assemblée* (1724-1726), are structured as collections of short stories which are told by a single narrator or by different narrators belonging to a group in the style of Boccaccio, employing the conventions of mythology, legends, and folktales. Such expansion of possibilities in fictional forms, plot structures, prose

style, and presentation of character and dialogue derived from the habit of translating Continental books, which was common to several eighteenth-century writers.

During this decade, Haywood started writing in the sub-genre of the political “scandalous memoirs” introduced in England by Mary Delarivière Manley. These narratives were generally introduced as authored by a high-ranking servant or confidant, and allegedly offered an account of the private lives of public and influential figures, showing how the public sphere could be influenced by their private agreements and dishonest plans. In *Memoirs, of a Certain Island* (1725) and *The Secret History of the Present Intrigues of the Court of Caramania* (1727), Haywood criticised the social classes which held themselves above the law and which exploited their private sphere for public advantage. She assumed that power and greediness in one sphere is reflected in the other and therefore that the sexual libertine is the corrupt politician, businessmen or trustee.

By 1730s, Haywood had two children, and some of her fiction, in particular *The Rash Resolve* (1724) and *The Force of Nature* (1725), show her positive relationship with motherhood despite her complex treatment of issues that single mothers had to face. For example, in *The Rash Resolve*, Haywood deals with the restrictions to maternal authority when faced with the superior rights of the child’s father. Haywood’s first child seems to have been fathered by Richard Savage, who was part of Haywood’s theatre circle. Savage wrote a poem praising Haywood’s *Love in Excess* and later satirised her in *An Author to be Let* (1729) and in *The Authors of the Town* (1725). The father of her second child seems to have been

William Hunter, although it is not clear how their careers interconnected and how their work was influenced by their relationship (Backscheider 1999). Therefore, Haywood's own writings seem to confirm the existence of the two "babes of love", which were assigned to her by Alexander Pope in the *Dunciad*, in the context of his parallel assault to Haywood's morals and to the literary genre through which she achieved fame. Pope's satire has not been proved to have driven Haywood out of print, despite having often been claimed by critics to have had such influence: a cause-and-effect relationship has often been assumed because the decrease in Haywood's rate of publication followed the publication of the *Dunciad*. However, the decrease in Haywood's publication rate appears to have been more likely influenced by the lack of critical attention and by the period of general transition in the novel market (Blouch 1991 and 2000).

Even if her first play, *A Wife to be Lett*, was performed in 1724, Haywood became more involved in theatre and politics in the 1730s. She seems to have acted at least in six plays and is likely to have written at least three, of which *The Opera of Operas* (1733), adapted from Henry Fielding's *Tragedy of Tragedies* (1731), was the most successful. Moreover, Haywood wrote *The Dramatic Historiographer* (1735): a survey of plays summarising their plots and defining the didactic role of the theatre. Such mediated representation of the theatre became more significant after the Licensing Act in 1737, as Haywood's readers were being illustrated plays that they could not view on the stage.

In the 1740s, Haywood turned to novels that were more conservative than those that she wrote in the 1720s and had provided her with fame. Works such as

The Fortunate Foundlings (1744) and *Life's Progress through the Passions* (1748) demonstrate Haywood's ability to adapt her writing to the changing tastes of the audience. In 1741 she published *Anti-Pamela; or, Feign'd Innocence Detected*, criticising the implausibility and social implications of Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), while in 1743 she published her conduct book *A Present for a Servant-Maid; or, The Sure Means of Gaining Love and Esteem*, thus proving herself able to take advantage from a topic which was popular in that period and to provide both sexes with cautionary advice. Moreover, during this decade Haywood turned to journalism with *The Parrot* and *The Female Spectator*, her best-known periodicals which were published in eight editions between 1747 and 1775. *The Female Spectator* consisted in a record of Haywood's times and of her opinion, and in which she expressed her position on contemporary public issues such as the consequences of the Licensing Act. Haywood published anonymously political works anonymously too, yet one of them was the cause of her arrest in 1749. During this period Haywood became a publisher and had her own shop, which may partially explain the dubious attribution of several of her works. (Blouch 1991; Backscheider 1999)

In the 1750s, Haywood remained a prolific writer: she published *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and *A Wife to Be Lett. The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753). Apparently due to her frequent poor state of health and to her weakening eyesight, Haywood dedicated herself to easier writing, particularly framed collections of short tales such as *The Invisible Spy* (1755) (Backscheider, 1999). Haywood's death in 1756 and her burial in in St. Margaret's

churchyard, Westminster have been generally accepted, and they have been confirmed by William Musgrave's *Obituary Prior to 1800* and Walmsley's bicentenary notice in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 25 February 1956 (Blouch 1991 pp. 544-545).

1.2 *Love in Excess*: a brief overview

The plot of *Love in Excess* follows Count D'Elmont, although inset narratives relate the amorous incidents of his brother Brillan and of Melliora's brother Frankville as well. Throughout the novel D'Elmont routinely receives sexual propositions from women in whom he has no interest, and the narrative follows his progress from complete indifference to suffering passion and eventually to marriage. The elaboration of this basic pattern through various complications and the involvement of the protagonist in a series of women allows Haywood to explore varieties of female sexuality, comparing the choices, personalities and social conduct of her female characters. Accordingly, the conventional categories of women represented in the novel develop from the opposites that are Amena and Alovisa in the first part of the novel, and Melantha and Melliora in the second, to the wider variety in part three of Ciamara, Camilla, Violetta, and more.

In the first part of the novel, D'Elmont is placed between Amena and Alovisa, while at the end of the volume Amena is sent to a convent and D'Elmont marries Alovisa so as to seize her wealth. The second volume places D'Elmont between Melantha and Melliora, whom he loves. After the attempt by D'Espernay,

Melantha's brother, to uncover the identity of her husband's lover to Alovisa in exchange for sexual favours, Alovisa is accidentally killed by D'Elmont and Melliora retires in a convent. The third part is set mainly in Rome, where D'Elmont encounters Melliora's brother Frankville with his love Camilla and his friend Cittolini, Ciamara, an aristocratic widow, and Violetta. Eventually, Melliora and D'Elmont get married after unexpectedly meeting in the house of the Marquess D'Saguillier, who had abducted Melliora from her convent and was giving lodging to D'Elmont, Frankville, and Violetta.

2. The rise of the novel

As is well known, the starting point for the discussion of the emergence and the development of the novel is Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, written in 1957. This book recognised a series of factors related with the shaping and rapid growth of the novel in eighteenth-century Britain, and shaped traditional knowledge in its classification of Defoe, Fielding and Richardson as the innovators of the genre. Watt defined the conventions he identified in the novels of those authors as the conventions of "formal realism": the element of realism is recognised by Watt as the element which differentiates eighteenth-century novels from previous fiction and derived from the influence of the philosophical realism elaborated by Locke and Descartes in the seventeenth century. Modern realism was based on the belief that truth consisted only in individual particulars, and could be discovered through "the study of the particulars of experience by the individual investigator, who, ideally at least, is free from the body of past assumptions and traditional beliefs" (Watt 1957, p. 12). Its overall temper was critical, anti-traditional and innovating, and has given particular relevance to the issue of the correspondence between word and reality. In relating formal realism in the novel to philosophical realism, Watt suggests that they were both rooted in the changing sense of self and of the world which was developing at the time in the experience and viewpoint of the middle class. Therefore, according to Watt, the central principle of the novel is its truth to individual experience, upon which the main features of formal realism are based: the rejection of traditional plots in favour of plots inspired by life rather than by literary model; the presence of characters as "particular people in particular

circumstances rather than, as had been common in the past, by general human types against a background primarily determined by the appropriate literary convention” (Watt 1957, p. 15), therefore, they are given names reflecting those of particular individuals in real life in contemporary social milieu rather than type-names or names which indicate situation and situate the characters in a body of expectations formed from past literature. Moreover, they are described through their consciousness and memory; the character’s present actions are explained through their past experiences to build a narrative of cause and effect in the actions, interactions, experience and consciousness of characters, focussing on their development over time, and in contrast, for example, with the restriction of the action in tragedy to the twenty-four hours required by the unity of time. Similarly, the action is not restricted to a single place, and it is set in an identifiable time and space, rendered through details such as the attention to objects, descriptions of interiors, landscapes, or topographical elements which guarantee spatial and temporal authenticity. Another major change from the traditional fiction was the “adaptation of prose style to give an air of complete authenticity” (Watt 1957, p. 27), and this represents a departure from the previous

implicit assumption of educated writers and readers that an author’s skill was shown, not in the closeness with which he made his words correspond to their objects, but in the literary sensitivity with which his style reflected the linguistic decorum appropriate to the subject. (Watt 1957, p. 28)

Therefore, the language of poetry is rejected as well as any style which attracts attention to itself, because it would weaken the impression of immediacy and

authenticity to individual experience, which is the most representative feature of formal realism. Watt compares the novel to a court of law, as the attitude of the readers is similar to that of a juror towards a witness: both expect to know the details of time, place and identity, and they “expect the witness to tell the story ‘in their own words’” (Watt 1957, p. 31).

The relevance of realism in the emergence of the novel in the eighteenth century has been highlighted also by Riccardo Capoferro, who defines realism as a system aimed at identification based on the simulation of the empirical reality. Empiricism emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth century with Bacon and Locke; however, in order to understand the role of the new science in a broader cultural perspective we need to focus not on the philosophical systems and the scientific development but on the expressive techniques, the social model, and the worldview they implied. Accordingly, Capoferro defines empiricism as a set of rhetorical constructions including both referential expressions and strategies to ensure credibility, which asserts its ability to represent things as they are rejecting traditional beliefs, often seen as superstitions. Modern social imagery is linked to empiricism as it encouraged its development and was influenced by it; the new social imagery is based on the ideal of mutual cooperation and the possibility of beneficial progress, giving value to reason and experience as the resources of the knowledge of the world. From a rhetorical standpoint, at the end of the seventeenth century the empirical discourse spread with the diffusion and theorising of a factual style, rejecting ornaments and expressions of personal inclinations which could alter the representation; it resulted in a language characterised by concrete terms

and chronologic and geographic landmarks, while the use of adjectives which convey emotions was rare. Therefore, the aim of empiricist rhetoric was to convey objective data, finding the balance between the personal experience narrated by an individual to provide evidence for the events narrated, and impersonality in the mode of narration to ensure its impartiality (Capoferro 2017).

In *Before Novels*, J.P. Hunter relates the emergence of the novel to its broader context of cultural history, including the influence of popular thoughts and materials of everyday print to the social and intellectual world in which the novel developed. Between the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, the label of novel was applied to narratives not much different from romance as length was the usual criterion for their distinction, and novels being relatively shorter than romances as the term seems to have developed from the French *nouvelle* or the Italian *novella*. The definitive separation between novel and romance was codified by Clara Reeve in *The Progress of Romance* (1785): an outline of the history of narrative fiction from the classical period to her own times through the fictional report of the debate between three contemporary readers, two women and one man. Reeve's distinction led to the assumption that, since the novel replaced the romance, it descended from it; however, Hunter comments that if the novel had "developed" from romance, it should be possible to describe with a single distinguishing feature. Instead he lists several features that, in combination, are commonly recognised as the characterising features of the novel: the contemporaneity of the stories; the credibility of characters and the probability of their behaviour; the familiarity in the dealing with everyday existence and common characters, which is part of 1785

Reeve's definition of novel as "picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written" (Reeve 1785, p. 111); the refusal of traditional plots and language; subjectivity and emphasis on individuals and their self-consciousness, which allows the reader to empathise with the protagonists and thus offers a form of vicarious experience; coherence of its multiple parts to a single guiding principle building a explicitly ideological narration, and the indirect or complex relatedness of the digressions to the narrative centre allowed by the new habits of readers in reading print; the self-consciousness of the genre about its innovation.

Hunter stresses that an inaccurate understanding of the novel has been promoted by an exclusive attention to distinctive novelistic characteristics which have obscured the features that novels share with romances or other fictional genres, therefore he emphasises nine aspects of the novel which appear to have been overlooked, with the aim of rejecting the ideal notion of the novel in favour of the description of what was actually read and written. As far as the subject matter is concerned, in contrast with the understanding of realism according to which novels tend to be judged qualitatively on their degree of realism, Hunter highlights that novels deal with the strange and the surprising as well, in response to a general taste for wonder, the unfamiliar and the inexplicable and as a modern continuation of a tradition involving the supernatural, without including supernatural agents or violations of natural laws, but dealing with coincidences or events that appear destined but cannot be proved to be so. Likewise, novels involve taboos, inserting the idea of the horrible and the illicit in contexts of everyday reality, along with the concern on the readers' responses to them. This element has occasionally given

a sense of sensationalism and frenzy which accounts for the eighteenth-century tendency to link novels with low tastes, disordered conduct, and inferior characters, although the early novel does not focus on true extremes but on the variety of human nature which goes beyond the norm and challenges the social fabric, without interrupting the reader's sense of immersion among recognizable people in a world they know. Moreover, novels tend to be confessional and exhibitionistic, moved by the will to explore matters formerly neglected or suppressed by fiction. As they explored areas traditionally considered too personal to be shared, they contributed to the development of a new understanding of the relationship between public and private.

Considering the assumptions which have been made about the middle-class audience of the novel, Hunter stresses that isolation was central to the novel as an element that was both part of the novels' reading process and their central subject. The practice of reading in isolation was growing due to the urbanisation and the development of print technology; it was linked to the increasing reputation of the novel in the mid-eighteenth century as a moral and social threat, but it also allowed readers to be sympathetic to the heroes because they were responding alone as individuals to the challenges of a particular case. Novels articulated a sense of isolation by dramatizing the failure of the relationships between individuals, depicting humankind in society but portraying single individuals, and observing and reflecting upon their position in that society. Moreover, the authors of novels were conscious that they were writing for an audience which was composed, at least in part, by people alienated from the older world; particular emphasis was

given to the large part of the novels' readership composed by young people, who could find in the novel characters and situations with which they could identify, as novelists concentrated on the crisis of the decisive moments in adolescence and early adulthood providing potential models or cautionary figures.

Therefore, the first-person narrative in eighteenth-century novels, such as those of Defoe and Richardson, adopted the epistemological style of diaries and spiritual autobiographies pretending that the lives narrated were actual rather than fictional. First-person perspective replaced authority and certitude with speculation, producing an environment of continuous uncertainty and second-questioning, based on the concern of the narrator on how to read signs and decide what they could do of them. The first structural figures highlighted by Hunter are "stories-within": like previous kinds of narrative, eighteenth-century novels frequently included whole stories that were not closely related to the main plot.

Novels, however, give particular relevance to the telling itself, for example in the tone of voice, in the facial expressions and bodily movements, and to the responses it elicits, so that the story becomes part of the development of action although the events narrated may not have later implications for the main plot. Novels are interrupted by non-narrative set pieces of discourse like essays, debates, conversations, or descriptions; elements of such discourse are similarly used in romance and epic to indicate a moral or imply some larger truth, however, in novels such digressive elements interrupting the main narrative are influenced by

the printed medium because it allows any discourse to develop and become a focus of attention for longer periods without compromising the narrative centre.

Finally, Hunter emphasises didacticism as a common and crucial feature to early and late novel, and the rhetoric related to didactic purposes is central to its tone, pace, and efforts. However, despite the features it shares with previous genres, Hunter states that the novel appeared as the most immediate genre to explore the nature of the self, due to its relevance to a sense of individualism and subjectivity, which provides access to the inner world of thought, feeling, and process, often giving equal importance to plot and character, which latter is often analysed through a central consciousness; this aspect is particularly evident in the titles of most eighteenth-century novels, which centre on the life of an individual, or part of it, but rarely expand their interests beyond the story of the titular individual. By contrast, romances and oral literature generally focus on the narrative rather than on the narrator, and represent human life in general. Novels distinctively give importance to both plot and characters, and rely on the lack of clear distinction between fact and fiction they suggest.

Also according to Hunter (1990, pp. 89-135), it is possible to explain the emergence of the novel at the beginning of the eighteenth century through patterns that suggest why readers and books came together in such a distinctive way in that period. Firstly, the attention of the novel to daily life may have been an attractive feature for the eighteenth-century readers because it responded to the demand for information about a recognisable reality and practical facts, providing readers with

a detached and safe version of life information that was particularly valuable at the time because of the social and cultural changes. Thus, novels often developed from premises grounded in the practical curiosity of the young and inexperienced, and for this reason the majority of the protagonists of eighteenth-century novels are young men and women, and their plots tend to deal with the same life choices their readers had to face. Secondly, as by the eighteenth-century London had become the symbolic centre of English life and economy, it assumed an increasing importance as a setting for fiction which mirrored the concerns of an urban community of writers and readers and their perception of urban life (Hunter 1990).

2.1 The Readership

The composition, identity, and habits of the reading public of this new genre is not easy to determine, moreover, the question of what part of the reading public became readers of novels is linked with the question of who were literate in the early eighteenth century. In *Before Novels* (1990), Hunter outlines what is known historically about readers and reading in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, in order to delineate the characteristics of the audience that was addressed by early English novels

The only contemporary estimate of literacy before the nineteenth century was made by Edmund Burke, who assessed that there were about 80,000 readers in England in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Excluding retrospective approximations, this is the only numerical “figure” we have for eighteenth-century

literacy in England. It establishes that only approximately 1.3 percent of the approximately six million population in England could read and write. Because of its “eyewitness” status and the impression of authenticity generated by that number, this figure has influenced later studies of literacy despite its questionable accuracy, as it is not known if it is the result of any relevant calculation. Knowledge of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literacy is based mainly on studies of local records which approximate reading ability from the ability of people to sign such documents, the reliability of these data has been debated as well as the way they have been used and interpreted (Hunter 1990, pp. 62-65). However, according to Hunter, the comparison between these different statistics provides valuable measure of the changes taking place in the culture, confirming that literacy in the English-speaking world raised rapidly between 1600 and 1800, and the daily customs of a modern, print-centred culture were starting to be established. While in 1600 only 25 percent of adult males in England and Wales could read, by 1800 literacy had risen between 60 and 70 percent; likewise, literacy in Scotland is thought to have developed from 15 to 88 percent in the same period of time. By the nineteenth century, reading had become a habit for parts of the population from diverse social and economic status, occupation, and locations. Evidence suggests that the most relevant part of this growth took place at the beginning of the eighteenth century; in particular, as stated by Lawrence Stone, the male literacy rate increased from 25 percent to 45 percent between 1600 and 1675, and scholars agree on a lower rate of increase later in the eighteenth century and through most of the eighteenth century (Hunter 1990, pp. 65-69).

Hunter highlights that such an early increase does not conform to what he calls the “triple rise” thesis, popularized by Ian Watt in his influential account of the emergence and development of the novel. According to Watt, social and cultural conditions were favourable to the development of the novel in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century, because the rise of the middle class caused the rise of the reading public, which produced the rise of the novel. The main issues related to this thesis have to do with timing: if the emergence of the novel was conditioned by the development of an identifiable and sizable middle class, the social advances upon which it depended would be expected to have coincided with or have preceded the literary development. A similar problem has been found in the analysis of the growth of the reading public, as, by the first half of the eighteenth century, most readers of novels were at least third- generation readers. However, they may have been “new” readers in the sense that they came from parts of the population which, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, had little or no access to print, as the increase came almost completely in the classes of artisans, shopkeepers, yeomen, husbandmen, laborers, and servants (Hunter 1990, pp. 65-69; Downie 2016, pp. xvii-xxiv). Variation on those global levels depended on social classes, as, moving down the social scale, we find decreasing levels of literacy, and on geographical location as literacy was at his highest in London for both men and women, lower in other cities and towns, and lower still in rural areas (Hinds 2016).

Hunter (1990, pp. 75-81) identifies the main characteristics of the new readers of the novel in the late seventeenth-century reading public, which was the

potential public of novels too. Firstly, literacy grew unevenly: the main difference in geographical distribution was registered between country and city: as towns and cities – London in particular – increased in size relative to the total population, larger percentages of readers tended to be concentrated there, so that new readers can be identified as mainly urban. Secondly, social ambition was an expected characteristic, as those more likely to learn to read were those more likely to be willing to change their circumstances and the station they were born into. Thirdly, new readers were mobile, a characteristic which is linked to the previous two because social ambition was likely to bring people from the country to the cities, in particular to London; such context involved particular incentives to be a literate as reading was a skill valuable to a variety of professions and provided an alternative kind of companionship. Finally, Hunter identifies a large part of the new readers with young people, whose concerns on choices of career and marriage partner and their outcomes, particularly dominate the actions of novels in seventeenth-century England.

As far as the reading abilities and habits of women in the eighteenth century are concerned, evidence is still insufficient, as most data on male literacy are based on the ability to sign legal documents and before Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753 female signatures were not compulsory in relevant records. According to Hunter (1990, pp. 69-75), the lack of evidence comparable to that available for male literacy led to the uncritical acceptance of two kinds of written sources based on received opinion and generalisation, which caused the misleading belief that female literacy decreased during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both

those sources can be exemplified by the following statement by Lady Louisa Stuart, in the 1820s, quoted as evidence of that supposed trend:

the education of women had then [in the eighteenth century] reached its lowest ebb, and if not coquettes or gossips or diligent card-players, their best praise was to be diligent housewives. (Stone 1977, p. 348)

One more direct source is the writings of women in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, who belonged to a new consciousness, which accorded a wider relevance to the rights and needs of women. Therefore, it can be misleading as moments of progress often make the immediate past appear worse than it was. The second kind of source is the work of eighteenth-century satirists, which seems to have influenced Lady Louisa's definition of eighteenth-century women as "coquettes or gossips or diligent card-players". However, the work of satirists also provides a misleading account of the difference between past and present, because they tended to make the past seem better than the present and because of the radical exaggeration involved in satire.

The parallel use of these sources in reconstructing female literacy, and the social history of women more generally, result in a distorted view of what women were like in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hunter states that female literacy is likely to have grown during the literacy boom in the first three quarters of the seventeenth century, even though not necessarily at the same rate as men, and that female literacy was almost certainly lower than male literacy during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, in almost all regions, classes and categories (Hunter 1990).

Moreover, in the long eighteenth century, novel reading was often seen with disapprobation when performed by women, and serious fears were expressed about the dangers of fiction for girls; such objections could be related with the fact that reading novels might have provided women with an imaginative world of their own that men did not directly have access to, and that also made them “unavailable” to attend to men (Spender 1992 A).

As far as the readers of Haywood’s works are concerned, various critics belonging to different historical periods have been found to share a similar understanding of Haywood’s readership, which was based on the link between the reading of her works and a specific social and economic class. Thus, they opposed the democratisation of Haywood’s reading public, which represented a new class of readers and has been defined with similar terms as with the *nouveau riche*, as experiencing pleasure in acquisition and consumption without a related understanding of the true purpose to which the commodity might be used. This critical discourse developed from Edmund Gosse’s *Gossip in a Library* (1891), an anecdotal account of stumbling across Ann Lang’s library, which consisted entirely of Haywood’s novels of the early 1720s. According to Gosse,

her [Haywood’s] large public consisted almost wholly of people like Ann Lang, Eliza was read by servants on the kitchen, by seamstresses, by basket-women, by ’prentices of all sorts, male and female, but mostly the latter. For girls of all sorts, there was no other reading of a light kind in 1724. It was Eliza Haywood or nothing. (Gosse 1891)

From her handwriting Gosse derives Ann Lang's occupation, class, and reading habit. In *Popular Fiction Before Richardson*, John Richetti speculates about Haywood's ideal readers' lack of expertise and sophistication, as they

[c]ould be expected to possess a certain imaginative expertise, a sophistication of a sort which required emotional intensity rather than documentary paraphernalia in order to accept and participate in the narrative (Richetti 1969, p. 168)

However, Ann Lang, who was a modist daughter, could not have afforded Haywood's books since, as reported in Haywood's early biography by George Whicher, *The City Jilt* (1726) was the only one of Haywood's novels published in cheap form. Therefore, in *Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson*, Robert Adam Day broadens Haywood's reading public to the upper classes, however restricting it to traders' daughters and superficial minds. He states that

people such as servants would more naturally come by novels like Mrs. Haywood's when they were discarded by the gentry, rather than by purchase, for her books were too expensive to be bought outright by those who worked for a living. On the other hand, many women of the upper classes figure in Mrs. Haywood's dedications, and Lady Betty Germain owned a copy of her *Love-Letters on All Occasions*... Doubtless Mrs. Haywood's wares were known to the most frothy minds of the polite world and to the daughters of middle-class trading families. (Day 1966, p. 73)

Comments by Haywood's contemporaries about her readers were part of the mid-century debate on women and the act of reading, based on the claim that young women were more easily influenced by novel than men. This theme was addressed by Charlotte Lennox in *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752) and *Henrietta* (1753), in which she satirised Haywood directly, depicting

her as the representative of negative social and literary class aspiration. Henry Fielding reaffirmed this paradigm of the credulous reader in *The Covent Garden Journal*, writing that

the Head of a very sensible Person is entirely subverted by reading Romances, this Concession seems to me more easy to be granted in in the Case of a young Lady than of an old Gentlemen. (Fielding 1964, p. 281; Blouch 2000)

2.2 Women writers

A unique feature of the novel compared to other literary forms is that every stage of its development involved both men and women writers; however, not many female names can be found in the accounts of the development of the novel. In narrowing discussions of eighteenth-century fiction, in order to establish a “great tradition” of novel-writing, critics and scholars chose to dismiss other vastly popular instances of the genre, clearly contemporary best-sellers for the eighteenth-century reading public. On this view, even though they seem to have sold in their thousands, Delarivière Manley’s *The New Atlantis* and Eliza Haywood’s *Love in Excess* should be excluded from accounts of the making of the English novel. When critics first started ordering novels at the end of the eighteenth century, they omitted most of the early examples to concentrate on the “canonical”, male novelists. The habit of gradually omitting early women writers from the “great tradition” began soon after the appearance of a reissue of Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s *The British Novelists* in 1820, which focused around individual titles and included fifteen novels written by men and ten written by women. After that,

every new generation of women writers has been treated as if they were the first, thus suppressing a tradition of women writers, and so that

each generation of women writers has found itself [...] without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again the consciousness of her sex. (Showalter 1977, pp. 11-12; Downie 2016; Miles 1992)

The expansion of opportunities for women to write as a profession was linked to the increase of the reading public and to the changes in social, political and economic structures (Spender 1992 A). During the development of the English society towards industrialisation, the social and economic position of women was declining due to the disappearance of convents, which were important places of learning for girls, to the traditional occupations for women such as midwifery being appropriated by men, and to the middle-class moral of seclusion of women and the servicing of men, which resulted in the obligatory retreat of women from several public activities. However, those social changes which were asking women to withdraw from paid work and public influence were the same which contributed to the emergence of the novel and the extension of women's opportunities for authorship. In fact, with the growing distance between the public and the private sphere, the wish to know the intimate details of other people's lives began to emerge, so that isolation and privacy became a base for the realistic novel in the domestic background (Spender 1992 A).

Another change allowing the novel to emerge was in the system of patronage: it had acted as a form of control, which had excluded women from writing as a profession, until the aristocratic classes were partially replaced by

wealthy tradespeople, such as publishers and booksellers, in financing authors. As reading became a form of popular entertainment, the opportunities of a literary career became possible to a new variety of writers. The capital to support this new system was often provided by publication through subscription, through which a group of people, sometimes friends and acquaintances of the author, were persuaded to contribute with their money for the publication and so to share its cost and risks. Moreover, subscription gave a role in literary production to women both as writers and as readers, since they became a significant source of funding and a consulted audience. Such cooperation provided women writers as well as readers with a way to cope with isolation, to build a community and a cultural milieu, and with the awareness that women could contribute to the social conversation by addressing the key matters in their lives, and depicting the moral issues of the day in a context where women were lacking direct experience of the world, education, and tutoring in the exercise of moral judgement (Spender 1992 A).

Many women, among whom Aphra Behn, Eliza Haywood and Delarivière Manley, wrote to support themselves:

a novelist would have to write and publish as many as ten novels a year (which even the prolific Haywood only achieved in 1725) or like most other professionals they had to diversify into as many types of literature as possible. (Turner 1985, p. 291)

Therefore, most novelists wrote plays, poems, and translations too, and explored the equally new field of journalism, as well as the associated literary activities

which grew with the development of the literary market such as editing, reviewing and cataloguing (Spender 1992 B).

If novel reading was disapproved for women, writing – and the power of agency it implied – was even more condemned. Firstly, women were not allowed to assert an interest in their financial independence, or in the visibility and recognition of their artistic work, so that they frequently justified their authorship claiming that their writing was motivated by moral zeal or necessity rather than by the desire of fortune or fame. Secondly, they were accused of being new “scribblers”, whose presence in the market was seen as having lowered the standards of literature.

Moreover, in the eighteenth century the novel was recognised as the women’s genre. It has been estimated that women wrote between two-thirds and three-quarters of the novels in the period 1760-1790; as it was a new form, it was flexible enough to be bent to women’s purposes; thus, the shift from letter writing to the epistolary novel did not demand an imaginative leap (Spender 1992 A). The novel, however was accorded a lower status as literary genre, which could be explained by its association with women, by its status as new form whose production arguably did not require a classical education or understanding, and by its popularity, which could have been used to contest its quality. This would help to explain a literary tradition in which exclusively male authors are considered the originators of the novel, and to account for the reason behind the classification of

all women's fiction as romance and the treatment of their works as inferior achievements.

The critical response to individual women's literary production was strongly influenced by the different expectations related to male and female authors. Aphra Behn dealt with this issue in many of her prefaces and prologues, opposing the prejudicial treatment of women writers who sought to write realistically about the world outside the private sphere, to which women were supposed to be confined. Thus, women writers had to fight conflicting pressures, as the knowledge of the world and virtue in a woman are incompatible contraries in a patriarchal logic, and the requirement to be virtuous and to write about the virtuous, to admonish young ladies to do their duty, be subservient, obedient, and deferential was not consistent with the survival strategies used by several of the early women writers. They could preserve their reputation if they treated the mythologised, idealised world of the romance, but this would keep them to a minimal literary status; yet they would be indicated as prostitutes of the pen for exposing the worldly knowledge which was a prerequisite for the text's moral function.

A typical example of such a negative appreciation was Pope's attack on Eliza Haywood that appeared in *The Dunciad*, along with those on other popular writers who were claimed to be lowering the standards of literature. Because she was a woman, Pope's assault on Haywood centred on her sexuality: he portrayed Haywood offering sexual favours as a prize in a urinating competition between

two publishers (Spender, 1992 A; Ballaster, 1992). More broadly, Haywood was used by the Scriblerians as an example of the generic category of novelists; in this sense, she was used by Pope as a scapegoat for the kind of writing she embodied: amorous and political scandal-writing, or “secret history”, considered as merely slightly covert partisan defamation undertaken to satisfy the spite, envy, and lust of its readers. Such representation aimed at differentiating those works from the Scriblerian’s personal satire, which Pope implied to be a “higher” art entirely moved by noble feelings of outrage at the moral and aesthetic crimes of modernity.

Pope employed, as a means of Scriblerian self-definition, the emerging equivalence in the objectification of Haywood and the personification of her work, which had been used in both praising and derogatory terms. Comments on Haywood in the 1720 can be divided in two broad groups: those who appreciated her skill in portraying the sensations of love, and those who agreed with the Scriblerians in viewing her as the embodiment of scandal-writing. The former kind of opinion emerged from the terms upon which Haywood was flattered by the prefatory poems to her collected *Secret Histories, Novels and Poems* (first published in 1725): these poems emphasised that Haywood’s power as arbitress of passion and her own desirability derive from one another, and that her “swelling” language affects the feelings of her readers in a way that is similar to that of the seducers in her work. The Scriblerian revision of what “Haywood” actually meant was initiated by Richard Savage’s *The Authors of the Town* (1725), which redefined her as a “cast-off Dame” who “writes scandal in romance”. As in his previous flattering descriptions of Haywood and her work, written while he was

her lover, Savage linked Haywood's textual production with her body and her private life but redefined her agency. As she formerly derived her near-divine authority concerning love from the desirability of her body, now her actions became only responsive to the men around her, her ability to write "scandal in romance" only resulted from having been rejected by a series of men and having her own life been scandalous as the consequence of a series of lovers. It seems that Savage quite intentionally redefined Haywood as the antithesis of what he formerly claimed her to be. In *The Dunciad Variorum* (1729) Pope appears to have acquired Savage's vindictive attitude towards Haywood and having transformed her representation as a supposed exemplar of an entire category of dunce into a means of Scriblerian self-definition. (Brewer 2000)

The position of Haywood in this debate on the role of women in the literary market is openly discussed in her work, *The Tea Table. Or, A Conversation between Some Polite Person of both Sexes at a Lady's Visiting Day* (1725), in which she redefined the cultural space of the tea table from a place of idle chatter to the site of women's discussion of literary works. This redefinition was based on a construction of gender relation which could produce a new kind of personal and narrative cultural space for women, where relationships between women and new models for literary forms and authorship could be valued. The "tea table" can be seen as representing the typical women's place in the domestic economy of the time: it was simultaneously a source of power and submission, as it facilitated the conversation among women, but restricted it within the domestic space, thus relegating women to gossip and trivial conversation in which they demean one

another, because they are forced into competition by culture's compulsory heterosexuality. Notwithstanding, Haywood described the tea table as an environment which gave women the opportunity to share manuscripts, discuss published texts and explore issues of genre, in a way resembling the male coffee-house within the public sphere. Haywood represented it as a place where women could delineate the connections between the fictional and what is lived, transform their lives into narrative, and identify the need for female authors within the communities of women. In *The Tea Table*, Haywood gave an idealised vision of the female author as an alternative to the dominant model of male authorship. The professional female author stands out as a hybrid between the cultural categories of woman writer and the professional author – categories which, in the early eighteenth century, were explicitly divided, the former facing the belief that her work should remain private and thus considered transgressive and not authorial despite her role in the emerging print trade, and the latter defined by the public, remunerative, and mainly male act of writing as profession.

This can be seen in the figure of Haywood herself, characterised by both professional aspects of authorship and the feminine, which she used to increase her notoriety and marketability. In fact, she received both popular attention within a wider, mostly female, readership as well as resistance and anxieties from her male contemporaries. Moreover, in *The Tea Table* Haywood provided an idealised model of female participatory reading and collaborative authorship, based on an interactive community of readers who engage in conversation, relying on cooperation and mutuality. The aim of the literary experience is then instruction

and comprehension, and Haywood inscribed the illustration of how to read well and then wisely discuss the material in the construction of the professional female author. By contrast, male reading and writing experience were described as hierarchical, competitive, and self-interested, as they aimed at directing attention to themselves from others. For this reason, Haywood accused male novelists of lacking modesty in the same way as the virtue of woman writers was being called into question; thus, Haywood made virtue a prerequisite for all authors and advanced the values culturally attributed to women as those central to authorship, not divergent from it, so that feminine characteristics could promote authorship (Ingrassia 1998).

2.3 Romance, novel and gender

In the early eighteenth century, both the novel and the romance had been rejected as similarly immoral forms of fictional seduction upon young minds and held the same marginal and illegitimate position in literature. Such condition is exemplified by *The Spectator* that warned its

fair readers to be in a particular manner careful how they meddle with Romances, Chocolate, Novels and the like Inflamers; which I look upon as very dangerous to be made use of during this Carnival of Nature (Addison & Steele 1965, p. 374)

It was common for early novelists to avoid the contemporaries' moral strictures by stating that their narrative was fact. This also gave authors more freedom to create implausible events than labelling their narrative as fiction, as it would

require a more careful consistency in their action and characterisation in order to be accepted as believable (Ballaster 1992). In contrast, French romance was charged with improbability and unreliability in a context of concern with the definition of the difference between reality and fiction and of the public value of private experience. Therefore, while the novel illustrated, and attempted to give a solution to, the ideological conflicts and contradictions which characterised its times, the romance came to represent the attachment to tradition not supported by empirical evidence (Capoferro 2017, pp. 53-66). This condemnation of the improbable and the marvellous, and the validation of fiction when it is concerned with issues which are morally relevant to real life, represent the shift in taste resulting in the demise of the heroic romance and the rise of the novella as a respectable narrative (Richetti 1969).

The effort to define the novel as a new genre in the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth century was mainly conducted in terms of gendered oppositions and analogies. Therefore, the romance was associated with female readers and writers, and with fantastical acts performed by fantastical figures in far away or idyllic pastures, while the novel was characterised by its reliance upon facts rather than imaginative idealism, and was based on social and imaginative realism, describing ordinary people, their lives and the places where they lived. As a result, the romance was seen as a reading material for ladies characterised by idealization, and the novel was considered virile, robust and the place of development of a moral and formal realism, identified as the reading matter of the gentlemen. One of the

first attempts at differentiating between the novel and the romance can be found in Willam Congreve's famous preface to *Incognita* (1691):

Romances are generally composed of the Constant Loves and invincible Courages of Hero's, Heroins, Kings and Queens, Mortals of the first Rank, and so forth; where lofty Language, miraculous Contingencies and impossible Performances, elevate and surprize the Reader into a giddy Delight (...) Novels are of a more familiar nature; Come near us, and represent to us Intrigues in practice, delight us with Accidents and odd Events, but not such as are wholly unusual or unpresidented, such which not being so distant from our Belief bring also the pleasure nearer us. Romances give more of Wonder, Novels more Delight. (Congreve 1966, p. 32)

According to Congreve's classification, Behn, Manley and Haywood could be clearly placed on the side of the novel as they deal in intrigue, marital struggle, and bourgeois ethics and manners. Nevertheless, they are steadily repositioned as part of the romance tradition due to the perceived "familiarity" of their novels as regards their subject matter, reader address, and narrative voice. That the difference between novel and romance became a gender distinction not dependent on the content appears also from Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance* (1785), Reeve provides a distinction between romance and novel which echoes Congreve's:

The Romance is a heroic fable which treats of fabulous persons and things –
The Novel is a picture of real life and manners and of the times in which it was written. (Reeve 1785, p. 111)

Moreover, Reeve makes clear that the debate between romance and novel is not only literary, but sexual and political as well, so that formal and sexual contrasts

are paralleled, as the brief exchange, when Euphrasia arrives with dictionaries, shows:

Hort: I see Euphrasia has brought her artillery and is placing them to advantage.

Euph: You know your advantages, and that a woman is your opponent

(Reeve 1785, p. 11)

Such a polar opposition can be summarised in the association between the “literary” and the masculine, and the “popular” and the feminine, to the point where it appears to have been necessary for both male and female authors to reject their relationships with exclusively female genres in order to be approached as “serious” fiction. According to Reeve’s history of romance, the association of femininity and romance is a modern condition resulting from the change in the gender of the romance’s reading public from the 1660s, following the diffusion of the seventeenth-century French romances in Britain. In fact, despite mentioning epic and chivalric poetry as instances of romance, closer to the “original” meaning of romance from the medieval period, a text written in a vernacular tongue derived from the Latin, Reeve starts to classify the gender of the reader as female only when debating seventeenth-century romance.

Reading habits are mentioned too, as the reading of the emergent novel seems to have been a solitary and intimate activity, in contrast with the communal reading of previous centuries. The implications are that women were allowed to read more salacious and erotically charged works as those of Eliza Haywood and Mary Delarivière Manley, and that women were restored to their seclusion in the

home and to a completely private sphere of literary consumption and pleasure (Spender 1992 A; Ballaster 1992). Ros Ballaster relates that the suppression of the romance in favour of the mid-eighteenth century “realist” novel fostered female literary power and reading identification: in romance, love was presented as the only incentive for change behind any key historical event, thus it favoured women as the chief force in culture and civilisation in their power to inspire love in the nations’ heroes, which gave them unlimited influence on the public sphere. Therefore, romance was seen as encouraging young female romance readers to get ideas above their station in life and making them unable to separate fact from fiction. This theme is addressed in Reeve’s *The Progress of Romance*, when Hortensius complains that

a young woman is taught to expect adventures and intrigues – she expects to be addressed in the style of these books, with the language of flattery and adulation. – If a plain man addresses her in rational terms and pays her the greatest of compliments, - that of desiring to spend his life with her, - that is not sufficient, her vanity is disappointed, she expects to meet a Hero in Romance. (Reeve 1785, p. 78)

This alleged issue of romance is also dramatized by Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752), which deals with the contradiction between the reality of female desire and fantasy, and the reality of patriarchal power and social order.

Later in its development, the realist novel was defined as able to prevent the blurring of borders between history and fiction, which is a feature of romance. However, the women writers who started to present their fiction as fact in reaction to the romance were still being classified as writers of romance, even though the

only similarity between the works of these early women writers and their precursors is the use of traditional “romance” names and, occasionally, of exotic locations. Ballaster explains this apparent contradiction in the fact that female desire and fantasy are in and of themselves treated as “unreal” by patriarchal society. The main difference between the French romance and early women’s novel in Britain is that the former located femininity on the side of culture while the latter located femininity on the side of nature. In French romance, female aspirations to fame and glory were acted out through a civilising influence upon a masculine world of military conflict, and were based on a strictly decorous system of *bienscéance* and courtly love ethic, which resulted in the suppression of female sexuality and desire to the point that the possibility of female heroic action and power seemed to derive from their denial of sexual passion and from the subjecting of male lovers to long and protracted postponement of gratification. On the other hand, early women novelists were attempting to satisfy a growing audience of middle-class female readers whose tastes may have been less well-served by the protracted niceties of aristocratic courtship, so that the writings of Behn, Manley and Haywood can be seen as an attempt to portray female desire within the romance’s context of female heroism. The aspirations of romance for women were replaced by the erotic description of natural female sexual desire, which threatened the world of male traditionalism and selfish gratification. These novels commonly imply that the development of female sexuality has been silenced or misdirected by a masculine social order, instead giving value and recognition to the unconscious power of female desire. Yet they also place the feminine on the side

of nature in the commonplace nature-versus-culture opposition of the period. Thus, women are recognised no instrumentality in either sphere: because they are subjected by both the abstract “natural” force of love and the oppressive, controlling power of male culture, and the heroines are victims to the dangers of masculine desire and even of their own. Ballaster believes that the reason for the success of Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1747-8) may have been its restoration of the possibility of a female heroic action with its suffering female heroine who seems to suggest that renunciation of desire, whether in its sentimental or romance form, is the prerequisite for heroism (Ballaster 1992).

According to Dale Spender, the salient feature at the base of the label of the romance attached to most women’s novel may be their frequent focus on relationships, especially on relationships between the sexes, which was the main centre of attention of women’s literary culture when it came into existence, and still illustrates the reality of many literate women nowadays. This conjunction of women, novels, and relationships may derive from necessity, because women are often on the receiving end in a male-dominated society and must manage their lives indirectly by managing relationships, or may derive from the desire to study humankind (Spender 1992 A).

Haywood herself explicitly underlines her commitment to realism in the introduction to *The Disguised Prince, or the Beautiful Parisian* (1728):

Those who undertake to write Romances are always careful to give a high Extraction to their *Heroes* and *Heroines*; because it is certain we are apt to take a Greater interest in the Destiny of a Prince than a *private person*. We

frequently find, however, among those of a middle State, some, who have Souls as elevated, and Sentiments equally noble with those of the most illustrious Birth; Nor do I see any reason to the Contrary; *Nature* confines her blessings not to the Great alone. [...] As the following Sheets therefore, contain only real Matters of Fact, and have, indeed, something so very surprising in themselves, that they stand not in need of any Embellishments from Fiction: I shall take my *Heroine* just as I find her, and believe the reader will easily pass by the Meanness of her Birth, in favour of a thousand other good Qualities she was possessed of. (Haywood 1728, p. 14)

In particular, Haywood's *Love in Excess* diverges from most of the French romances in ways that indicate a development to major types of the English novel: while in romances the obstacles of the lovers derive from chance, misfortune, and important national events. In *Love in Excess* they originate from the lovers' own personalities and relationships; in *Love in Excess*, the hero, D'Elmont, is instructed on women and love and sincerely changes his mind, while the male protagonists of romances do not change and maintain their initial status as good or bad *ethoi*. Moreover, Haywood makes use of mistaken identities, masquerades, and intricate schemes, which are more characteristic of the Southern European novella than of the French romance. Among these elements we find Alovisa's complicated scheme to banish Amena to a monastery, and the use of conventional characters to represent women's sexuality, intelligence, and alleged "nature", which contrasts with the more complicated character of Melliora who introduces complex topics for serious discussion (Backscheider 2000).

The third book of *Love in Excess* could be seen as parenthesis of romance in the broader context of the novel, since the plot develops as an elaborate testing

and purification of the hero. However, such unfolding of the plot through the repetition of similar situations faced differently by various female characters offers a display of multiple representations of possible female action, and can be read as a kind of ironic metafictional commentary on all the possibilities available to a novelist. Haywood offers an array of all the available depictions of women, with the plot endings that are conventionally related to them: Amena is the young, naive girl who ends in a convent; Melantha, represented as the sensual woman who is disillusioned in love, eventually rushes herself into a loveless marriage; Alovisa is portrayed as a woman who is not able to restrain her violent passion and comes to a similarly violent ending; Ciamara embodies the female rake and eventually commits suicide (O'Driscoll 1991).

2.4 Combination of fictional forms: *Love in Excess*

According to Riccardo Capoferro, the elaboration of the new social imagery in the context of the public debate, and the resulting self-awareness of society and of its ideals, created the conditions which allowed the combination of techniques employed in the previous years to form the novel (Capoferro 2017). In *Before Novels*, J. P. Hunter lists the kinds of literary works of entertainment available before the novel, and among those which have been influential on particulars of the novel we can find journalistic texts, didactic texts, private and personal writings, perspective narratives of events unified by some larger philosophical or ideological sense, and the works of imagination which particularly worried moral

guardians of youth such as romances on the continental model, plays and poems. The presence of these texts can help to explain why readers of the late seventeenth century were ready for the new kind of fiction (Hunter 1990, pp. 167-338). According to John Richetti, the success of the amatory novella as a popular form is due to the ability of this genre to answer to the needs a new audience, which is described as unprepared to deal with the complication of heroic romance, but too sophisticated for chap books.

Therefore

[i]ts relative brevity and simplicity are qualities which can be exploited to serve the needs of this new audience, a group eager for the basic pleasures of fiction – identification, projection, vicarious participation, and ideological alignment – and relatively insensitive to the more subtle and specifically ‘literary’ satisfactions provided by the complementary features of style and structure. (Richetti 1969, p. 176)

Moreover, the realism of the novella is only claimed rather than truly achieved or pursued: the description of a reasonable or recognizable world of realistic virtue and good sense is conveyed through the use of local settings and familiar manners and costumes, yet the focus of interest is the nearly allegorical development of the fable of persecuted innocence in a grotesquely evil world, an exotic world of tumultuous passion and strident virtue where mythological straightforwardness prevail. John Richetti exemplifies this accommodation of fiction to popular taste with Manley’s essay preceding her *History of Queen Zarah* (1705). In this essay Manley highlights the role of realistic descriptions based on the objectivity of the author’s observation of specific emotional truth in the portrayal of real

psychological detail. This would allow the involvement of the reader, which is the central aim of fiction and is impeded by the moral generalities and unreal complications and characterisations of the heroic romance (Richetti 1969).

The analysis of Eliza Haywood's experimentation with form allows to see her as part of the development in the English novel since she seems to have used, adapted and combined different genres in her works, introducing new themes, plots, characters, settings, and topics. Among the forms she employs we can find, for example, memoirs, journals and secret histories, which were commonly used as vehicles for political commentary and argument in the French tradition and by authors such as Aphra Behn, Joseph Addison and Daniel Defoe. These texts can be identified as "formula" fictions because they were built through a set of features readers expected to find, such as a specific kind of narrator, a set of characters and scenes, like revelations and confessions, and the "news behind the news", that is to say the narration of the personalities, motives, and machinations causing news events. This form was linked with Southern European novellas which date back to Boccaccio and Cervantes, and which similarly dealt with issues of power and privilege, sex, politics, economic gain, and cultural capital. Another form used by Haywood is the French romance, which, like Southern European novellas, had been published in English translation and contained sensational interpolated tales. A further similarity between these forms is their political purpose, since romances too treated issues of class, gender, power, and cultural capital, even though with a tone which was different to that of the novellas, aiming at providing both moral lessons and social critique.

Moreover, Haywood adds distinctively English elements to her fiction: for example, like Daniel Defoe, she represents the city setting through recognisable London site and topical allusions to people, events, fashions, and pastimes, which portray contemporary culture as one of commodification, capital, credit, crime, and contracts. By the middle of the century a standard novelistic voice would be established, but in Haywood's time prose fiction was still characterised by a variety of discourses, including both the carefully shaped, artificial language of the romance, and the idiomatic, straightforward style of picaresque and criminal tales; they represented different world views, class differences and conflicts. Most novelists before Fielding (1740s) had to produce a distinctively novelistic language that could be functional and respected; in their attempts, Haywood's and Defoe's styles were similarly criticised because they were viewed as strange and transgressive, and because they violated what were considered the limits of the form. They developed what would be recognised by successive generations as characteristic features of the novel.

A further element of Haywood's innovation is her blending of narrative voices: to self-centred male characters who take for granted their rights to do whatever they pleased, Haywood opposes female narrators who abandon female silence and passivity, so that the characters whose outlook we are invited to share may be silent, "ruined" or abandoned women playing the roles of fiction. Thus, the narrative moves from observation to active judgement, including transgressions of expected gender possibilities. Such narrative voice and discursive experience, which goes beyond the individual, is a distinctive characteristic of Haywood and

gives a sense of ironic self-consciousness to her narrative voice that admits near-parody, metacommentary, deconstruction, and ironic double commentary. Through the blending of narrative voices and discourses Haywood combines formulaic fantasy with social realism, thus constructing a symbolic representation of the power structure in the class and gender system of her times, depicting the London environment with contemporary details, and portraying a new order of society (Backscheider 2000). Therefore, Haywood's texts defy traditional schematizations and definitions of genre of historical period as the novel or romance, the female tradition, or the Augustan era due to their formal and ideological complexities: they include aristocratic Tory politics, exoticisation of the East, emphasis on heterosexual romance, self-presentations of female authorship within a frame of seduction, and elements of domestic fiction (Saxton & P. 2000).

Haywood's works of the 1720s generally resist the notion of genre. The difficulty of definition originated with Haywood herself, who commented on her writing with a variety of terms which are now accepted as having been used with relative interchangeability. They are listed by Christine Blouch as

History, Secret History, Amour(s), Secret Amours, Memoir, Secret Memoir, Intrigue, Secret Intrigue, one Historical Novel, a Discourse, Remarks, several Accounts, and a Conversation, among others. (Blouch 2000, p. 302)

Love in Excess is generally termed an early, amatory or pre-1740 novel. It has been noted by Oakleaf how this book has been labelled with inappropriate terms such as romance, love story, implying immature or lower class reading, or

erotic fiction, which suggests the male objectification of female sexuality, opposite to Haywood's attempt to represent its subjectivity. In particular, it resists definition as it can appear as a development of the Ovidian verse epistle from a woman to her absent lover, while also including tales of transgressive sexual desire (Oakleaf, 2000). It is partly centred on women united by a common feeling, thus appearing as a crypto-feminist critique *avant la lettre* of the condition of women; partly centred on the hero, so that the work can be seen as a bildungsroman on his education from rigid ambition to love. David Oakleaf condenses the definition of *Love in Excess* as "a cautionary young-adult novel tracing the love-lives of impressionable young women in a violent, male-dominated, world" (Oakleaf 2000 p. 23). Oakleaf also emphasises how some of Haywood's conventions have demonstrated to be unexpectedly durable. They attracted remarkably different readers, as they aimed to both instruct the newly affective male reader and the reader who comfortably experienced the language of gallantry, and to build the modern female reader of women's romances. (Oakleaf 2000)

In *Love in Excess* we can find both realism in the setting and heroic structuring of characters. Haywood builds her characters employing various male and female stereotypes derived from the scandal chronicles and altering them to make them more complex and fit her format, so that they encounter various obstacles and conflicts as they attempt to act out their conventional roles. For instance, D'Elmont is described by Richetti as a combination of the traditional figures of the hero and the seducer, who does not believe in love and, in fact, refuses it with a language reminding of the determined materialism of freethinking

and religious infidelity. The narrator stresses D'Elmont's attitude towards Amena in these terms at the beginning of the first book:

not that he was in love with her, or at that time believed he could be touched with a passion which he esteemed a trifle in it self, and below the dignity of a man of sense. (Haywood 2000, p. 42)

Likewise, as D'Elmont is about to marry Alovisa, the narrator comments:

The Count had never yet seen a beauty formidable enough to give him an hours uneasiness (purely for the sake of love) and would often say, Cupid's quiver never held an arrow of force to reach his heart; those little delicacies, those trembling aking transports, which every sight of the beloved object occasions, and so visibly distinguishes a real passion from a counterfeit, he looked on as the chimera's of an idle Brain, formed to inspire notions of an imaginary bliss, and make fools lose themselves in seeking; or if they had a being, it was only in weak souls, a kind of disease with which he assured himself he should never be infected. Ambition was certainly the reigning passion in his soul, and Alovisa's quality and vast possessions, promising a full gratification of that, he ne'er so much as wished to know, a farther happiness in marriage (Haywood 2000, p. 75)

However, D'Elmont's later conversion to pure love precludes his complete identification with the scandal chronicles stereotype of the rapacious aggressor. Amena appears, like the heroines of scandal novels, to be a victim of circumstances and of her own passion too, which allows her actions to be controlled by the men around her. In fact, she is similarly affected by her father, who,

in his discourse to her, [he] set the passion the Count had for her in so true a light, that it made a very great alteration in her sentiments, and she began to reflect on the condescension she had given a man who had never so much mentioned marriage to her with so much shame, as almost overwhelmed her

love, and she was now determined never to see him, till he should declare himself to her father in such a manner as it would be for her honour. (Haywood 2000, pp. 54-55)

D'Elmont, a few hours later persuades her to walk into the Tuileries with him:

But this rash action, so contrary to the resolution she thought her self a few moments before so fixed in, made such a confusion in her mind, as rendered her insensible for some time of all he said to her (Haywood 2000, p. 57)

Amena, portrayed as innocent and defenceless, with no money of her own and prepared to receive only a small portion from her father who had “a very small estate,” (Haywood 2000, p. 41) is opposed to Alovisa who is the type of the unnatural aggressive female: Amena is resourceful, clever, and powerful because of her wealth.

However, her position as villainess is made ambiguous by her soliloquies and the commentaries: Amena's independence allows her to write the anonymous letters to D'Elmont which start the narrative. Yet, as she is about to sign one of them, she realises this would make her violate a major restriction:

when she had finished this so full a discovery of her heart, and was about to sign her name to it, not all passion which had inspired her with a resolution to scruple nothing that might advance the compassing her wishes, nor the vanity which assured her of success, were forcible enough to withstand the shock it gave her pride; “No, let me rather die” said she, starting up, and frightened at her own designs, “then be guilty of a meanness which would render me unworthy of my life; Oh! heavens, offer love, and poorly sue for pity! ‘tis insupportable! What bewitched me to harbour such a thought as even the vilest of my sex would blush at? To pieces then,” added she tearing the paper, “to pieces with this shameful witness of my folly, my furious desires may be

the destruction of my peace, but never of my honour, that shall still attend my name when love and life are fled. (Haywood 2000, p. 44)

Alovisa preserves the moral standard of a heroine only from a sense of social property and personal pride, and her interpretation of honour is conveyed in a way that is meant to make the reader reject it as superficial. Eventually she develops into the agent of a world which is accusatory, hypocritical, and which defeats innocence such as Amena's, denying any possibility for love.

Melantha and Melliora are presented as opposites as well, as Melantha represents sexual amorality and emotional triviality, and self-consciously belongs to the "beau-monde" which appears in the following exchange with Melliora after she announces she had been unable to sleep:

And [I] retired to a chamber which they showed me, but I had no inclination to sleep, I remembered my self of five or six billet-doux I had to answer – A lover, that growing foolishly troublesome, I have some thoughts of discharging to morrow – Another that I design to countenance, to pique a third – A new suit of cloaths, and trimmings for the next ball – Half a hundred new songs – and – a thousand other affairs of the most utmost consequence to a young lady, came into my head in a moment. (Haywood 2000, p. 119)

This world of fashion and noble leisure is devalued as worthless promiscuity. Eventually Melantha will achieve none of her desire and will be ridiculed, and banished:

Melantha, who was not of a humour to take any thing to heart, was married in a short time, and had the good fortune not to be suspected by her husband, though she brought him a child in seven months after her wedding. (Haywood 2000, p. 159)

In contrast, Melliora is represented as the embodiment of virtue and innocence, and in general the heroines in *Love in Excess* seem to be able to find love and happiness only by resisting them and trying with heroic determination to suppress them. This contrast can be found not only in the construction of characters but in the plot as well. In particular, in the double ending of the third book, the death of Violetta due to her unrequited love is paralleled with the marriage of D'Elmont and Melliora. The two events are brought together in the last speech of Violetta, in which she describes the bliss into which Melliora is about to enter with D'Elmont:

“this is too kind”, said she, “I know I can feel none of these agonies which render death the king of terrors, and thus, thus happy in your sight, - your touch – your tender pity, I can but be translated from one heaven to another, and yet, forgive me heaven if it be a sin, I could wish methinks, to know no other paradise than you, to be permitted to hover round you, to form your dreams, to sit upon your lip all day, to mingle with your breath, and glide in unfelt air into your bosom.” (Haywood 2000, pp. 225-226)

Haywood modifies the typical fable of persecuted innocence in order to increase its intensity by combining death and marriage as the two kinds of beatitude recognised by the fable of persecuted innocence. Death and marriage are equated as they both bring liberation from the heroic struggles of love and they are both beyond description. Haywood's attempt to describe what is recognised as indescribable is carried out through a style which alternates between solid scenic and dependence on amatory clichés. Richetti identifies this attempt to speak the unspeakable as the characteristic strategy of Haywood's rhetoric, conveyed by the

narrator's comments, who relies on the experience of readers, including them in an élite of people able to understand those mysteries:

This may seem strange to many, even of those who call, and perhaps believe they are lovers, but the few who have delicacy enough to feel what I but imperfectly attempt to speak, will acknowledge it for truth, and pity the distress of Melliora. (Haywood 2000, p. 122)

Similarly, in the dialogues between Melliora and D'Elmont as they attempt to define their feelings do not follow a logical progression, but are built through the repetition of conventional euphemisms and hyperboles, and typographical elements like dashes and exclamation points (Richetti 1969, pp. 200-201).

3. Didactic aim of the novel

As described in the previous chapter, didacticism is indicated by Hunter as a general feature of the novel. Didacticism was particularly central to the early novels, because they were rooted in the didactic assumptions at the base of the non-narrative forms which were popular at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Hunter highlights that modern resistances to the didacticism prevailing in eighteenth-century works might lead to an incomplete definition of the novel. According to Hunter, this resistance was related to

our disbelief and distrust: disbelief in the system of value and dogma that then prevailed, in the rhetorical power of writing to do what it professes, in the whole process of history and change; distrust of piety, moral earnestness, simplicity, directness, confidence, and the zealous tones of intrusion. (Hunter 1990, p. 228)

The cultural relevance of didacticism in eighteenth-century novels and the modern resistance to it can be explained focussing on some of the features of didactic texts. They were based on the acceptance of a clear separation between good and evil, on the traditional Western idea of human life as a manifestation of divine purpose, and on the idea of history as an account of the struggle between the forces of good and evil. Unlike in earlier periods, in the eighteenth-century such confidence in precise binary contrasts was not rooted in theological certainty, but in the belief in the innate human ability to tell the difference between right or wrong, and in the idea that both the well-being of society and the accomplishment of individuals depended on personal choices. As the early novelists were close to that understanding of the world, the representation of elements of everyday reality and

of the complexity of human decisions in their novels was still a secondary aspect to the issues transcending time and place, and their works retained the clear division between good and evil which mirrored the plain choices of popular didacticism. Therefore, they rejected “allegory or representation as a simple mode” but inserted

Garden scenes, satanic and angelic figures, and places with names like Paradise Hall, Millenium Hall, and the Island of Despair, where symbolic actions just below the level of allegory suggest ideas and values that depend on an old system whose authority is still nervously recognised. (Hunter 1990, p. 230)

Didacticism was conveyed in the works of the majority of eighteenth-century novelists such as Defoe and Haywood through a rhetoric of examples clearly presented as either exemplary or cautionary, and through direct comments by narrators and characters. While the didactic tone can appear as veiled by careful ironies in the novels of Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne, all kinds of didacticism relied on the clear meaning of language and on its capacity to influence the behaviour of readers in rational and predictable ways, so that later questioning of language brought about significant issues of trust. A further characteristic of eighteenth-century didactic texts highlighted by Hunter is their “heightened tone and urgent sense of intensity” (1990, p. 233). Such sense of urgency in the judgement of every human action, conveyed through “the imperative mood, the second-person constructions, the exclamation points, and the unrestrained interjections” (1990, p. 233), resulted from deeply-felt worries about contemporary tendencies of behaviour and on the condition of the society’s structure. Due to

these concerns, moral treatises and theological discourses were still the most regularly printed texts until the end of the eighteenth century; for example, Lewis Bayly's *The Practise of Pitie* (1601) had reportedly reached a 58th edition by 1734, and *The Whole Duty of Man*, first published in 1658, appears to have reached over a hundred editions by 1800 (Hunter 1990, p. 235). Like most books written towards the end of the seventeenth century, didactic texts were influenced by the issues of loss of orality, distance from the reader, and unpredictability of the audience. Writers tried to face the distance of print through elements aimed at suggesting the idea of a private relationship between writer and reader; moreover, they attempted to make the individual reader feel part of a community, with which they shared the membership in a specific social group, or the acceptance of a set of political beliefs. For example, readers were addressed by category in the attempt to make the writing appear customised for a particular audience, and the address to specific groups of readers was reinforced by prefatory essays which strengthened the idea of a more personal connection between writer and reader.

The assumption on the purpose of writing at the base of eighteenth-century didactic texts was defined by the imbalanced appropriation of the Horatian ideal to instruct and delight: due to the concerns of their times, eighteenth-century English writers considered their public role to be more utilitarian than what would be supported by a strict understanding of Roman literary theory. Therefore, in didactic treatises, the element of delight was only inserted to convey the instructive content and make it more pleasant, instead of being an end in itself. Accordingly, the didactic elements of prose fiction were related to the general didacticism of the

whole print marketplace. Finally, the authorial prestige in didactic writings encouraged the identification of the individual reader with a single specific group of authors which mirrored the reader's own social, religious, and political standing. Such dogmatic tone demonstrates that the topics that were debated in didactic texts were thought to be part of an imminent cultural decline. Moreover, it implied both a serious concern about the future which was claimed by the moralists themselves, and a distrust of the tendency of things to change, to threaten received values, described as "tradition [...] family coherence, community values, cultural loyalty, shared ethical standards, human dignity, heritage, honor, integrity, continuity" (Hunter 1990, p. 243). Familiar behaviours that previous generations had expected to be normative appeared to be challenged by urban life, which, involving "unfamiliar places, jobs, social structures, human interactions, economic opportunities, temptations" (1990, p. 243), embodied uncertainty and fear; such loss of familiarity was most often articulated as the declining of religious principles. The same concern for the loss of values in the new world can be found in the works of Augustan satirists, who shared this role of cultural guardianship with the authors of didactic texts.

The connection between didactic texts and novels is related to the cultural need to spread practical information about the new urban world and about how to behave according to its rules. In this context of general interest in teaching, subtlety of tone was considered less relevant, resulting in a combination of the pragmatic and the moral function. Therefore, old anxieties for religious salvation and morality and instructions to make things easier in the ordinary world prove difficult

to separate (Hunter 1990, pp. 225-247). The influence of previously established literary genres and their gradual revisions, of narrative experiments, and of theoretical thought on the novel, is remarked by Capoferro too, as a way to identify the roots of the modern novel and to understand its distinctive features. The new interest for the empirical world was mirrored by the increasing need for narratives with an instructional aim. This resulted in the attempt to define criteria which could regulate the relationship between literature and reality, and in a growing emphasis on formal cohesion. The latter was reached through the causal development of the plot and through thematic consistency, which was based on the analysis of the inner world and of the moral struggles of developing characters. The connection between the aesthetic and the didactic functions of the text was rooted in the same ideals that viewed narrative art as instrumental to moral knowledge (Capoferro 2017, pp. 67-80).

The common idea of uniting “instruction with delight” is explicitly discussed by Haywood as a justification of her fiction through the conversation between women in *The Tea Table*. In this work, the reason exercised by women in their discussions, and the relevance of reading in their lives and educations mirror the conventional representation of the ideal middle-class woman in mid-eighteenth-century moral novels. Thus, Haywood employs this fictional debate to portray the most significant stances on fiction and novels at her time (Ingrassia 1998). Accordingly, Amiana complains that

to read of Villany so gross, so monstrous as that we have just now heard in the Character of Beraldus, gives too great a Shock to the soul, and poisons the rest of the Entertainment. (Haywood 1725, p. 47)

She is answered by Billiante:

sometime 'tis necessary [...] to be reminded that there have been Men so base; our Sex is itself so weak, especially when we suffer what little share of Reason we have to be debilitated by Passion, that we stand in need of all the Helps we can procure, to defend us from becoming the Victims of our own Softness. (Haywood 1725, p. 48)

Billante's speech is followed by Philetus' comment:

these kind of Writings are not so trifling as by many People they are thought. Nor are they design'd as some imagine, for Amusement only, but for Instruction also, most of them containing Morals, which if well observed would be no small Service to those that read 'em. Certainly if the Passions are well represented, and the Frailties to which Human Nature is Incident, and cannot avoid falling into, one kind of another, it cannot fail to rouse the sleeping Conscience of the guilty Reader to a just remorse for what is past, and an Endeavour at last of Amendment for the future. (Haywood 1725, p. 48)

Haywood's attempt to appeal to two different popular tastes in her writing, for moral advice on one hand and for scandalous secret histories on the other, results in the recurring representation of the theme of the conflict between the desire for pleasure and the desire for virtue. These apparently contradictory tendencies of Haywood's works are mirrored by the comments of her contemporaries: on the one hand, Haywood's writings were equated with her body both in praising and in derogatory terms; on the other, the tension between the erotic and the didactic aspects of her work was acknowledged. Both contrasting

positions are represented in the prefatory poems to Haywood's *Secret Histories, Novels, and Poems in Four Volumes*, a collected edition of her works published in 1725. The two anonymous poems similarly praise Haywood as being directly inspired by love, viewing her novels not as possible warning but as possible inspiration to her readers. Likewise, Savage's poem praises the harmony, and, indirectly, the sensuousness of Haywood's writing:

Thy Prose in Sweeter Harmony refines,
Than Numbers flowing thro' the Muse's Lines;
What Beauty ne'er cou'd melt, thy Touches fire,
And raise a Musick that can Love inspire. (Haywood 1725, p. 10)

By contrast, Sterling's praise of Haywood, despite still highlighting the pleasure of excitement derived from her fiction, emphasises its moral value. Sterling recognises Haywood's ability in depicting the passions:

Greater arbitress of passion! (wond'rous art)
As the despotick will the limbs, thou mov'st the heart;
Persuasion waits on all your bright designs,
And where you point the varying soul inclines:
See! love and friendship, the fair theme inspires,
We glow with zeal, we melt in soft desires! (Haywood 1725, p. 7)

However, he focuses on Haywood's ability to educate, as he implies that, by reading Haywood's seduction scenes, young people will learn to prevent placing themselves into similar circumstances:

The tender maid here learns man's various wiles,
Rash youth, hence dread the wanton's venal smiles. (Haywood 1725, p. 8)

Sterling's poem appears to be rooted in the eighteenth-century tendency of assessing the value of a novel mainly on the basis of its moral worth, as the last lines furtherly focus on the ability of Haywood's works to instruct and delight:

Born to delight and to reform the Age,
She paints Example thro' the shining page;
Satiric precept warms the moral Tale;
And Causticks burn where milder Balsams fail;
A Task reserv'd for her, to whom 'tis given,
To stand the Proxy of vindicative Heav'n. (Haywood 1725, p. 9)

Haywood's exploitation of the social status as an eighteenth-century commonplace of the promise of art that mixes profit and delight is one of the elements which account for the consistency of the didactic purpose of her fiction throughout her career: this resulted in the employ of an array of themes which were appealing to the contemporary taste. Thus, Haywood included both morality and sensuality in her work, and, due to her consistent concern instruct her readers, she assumed a central role in the eighteenth-century discussion over the moral and pedagogic possibilities of the novel.

However, Haywood's career has been often divided by critics between a scandalous period and a later moral reform, and this view of her career as marked by her moral development was supported by Haywood herself. For example, in presenting her character as the editor of *The Female Spectator*, Haywood writes:

I shall also acknowledge, that I have run through as many Scenes of Vanity and Folly as the greatest Coquet of them all. – Dress, equipage, and flattery, were the idols of my heart. – I should have thought that day lost, which did

not present me with some opportunity of shewing myself. My life, for some years, was a continued round of what I then called pleasure and my whole time engrossed by a hurry of promiscuous diversions. (Haywood 1745, p. 2)

Such narration of Haywood's story as a process of moral reform has been retold by later accounts of her career as well, such as David Erskine Baker's *The Companion to the Play-House* (1764):

Thus much must be granted in her Favor, that whatever liberty she might at first give to her Pen, to the Offence either of Morality or Delicacy, she seem'd to be soon convinced of her Error, and determined not only to reform, but even atone for it; since, in the numerous Volumes which she gave to the World towards the latter Part of her Life, no Author has appear'd more the Votary of Virtue, nor are there any Novels in which a stricter Purity, or a greater Delicacy of Sentiment has been preserv'd. (Baker 1764, p. 215)

And in Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance* (1785) Euphrasia justifies Haywood's amorous novels

because she repented her faults, and employed the latter part of her life in expiating the offences of the former [...] Mrs. Haywood had the singular good fortune to recover a lost reputation, and the yet greater honour to atone for her errors. She devoted the remainder of her life and labours to the service of virtue. (Reeve 1785, pp. 120-121)

However, while introducing herself as the protagonist in her own story of moral reform, and distancing herself from her past behaviour, Haywood claimed that it had made her later writings possible. Since later works such as *The Female Spectator* were based on the observation and on the analysis of contemporary manners and morals, they required the material and the judgement provided by her

past life, along with a deep knowledge of human nature and of the struggle between reason and passion:

But whatever inconveniencies such a manner of conduct has brought upon myself, I have this consolation, to think that the public may reap some benefit from it: – The company I kept was not, indeed, always so well chosen as it ought to have been, for the sake of my own interest or reputation; but then it was general, and by consequence furnished me, not only with the knowledge of many occurrences, which otherwise I had been ignorant of; but also enabled me, when the too great vivacity of my nature became tempered with reflection, to see into the secret springs which gave rise to the actions I had either heard or -been witness of; – to judge of the various passions of the human kind, and distinguish those imperceptible degrees by which they become masters of the heart, and attain the dominion over reason. (Haywood 1745, p. 2; Brown 2006, pp. 62-75)

3.1 Haywood: education by experience and education by precept

Not only the amatory and the didactic element do coexist in Haywood's writing, but the former is instrumental to the latter. In fact, Haywood created the imaginative conditions that were believed to please and instruct in the literary culture of the time, though a strategy that has been defined as "an amatory aesthetic" (Lubey 2006, p. 321). Haywood dealt with this topic in her introduction to *Lasselia: or, the Self-Abandoned* (1724), in which she claimed that her fiction aimed at enhancing the ability of her readers to understand their own inner experiences:

My Design in writing this little Novel (as well as those I have formerly publish'd) being only to remind the unthinking Part of the World, how

dangerous it is to give way to Passion, will, I hope, excuse the too great Warmth, which may perhaps appear in some particular Pages; for without the Expression being invigorated in some measure proportionate to the Subject, 'twould be impossible for a Reader to be sensible how far it touches him, or how probable it is that he is falling into those Inadvertencies which the Examples I relate wou'd caution him to avoid. (Haywood 1724, p. iv)

In Haywood's fiction, aesthetic pleasure was aimed at building an edifying experience through the imagination of self-conscious readers. Reading was believed to be an imaginative experience which could produce a particular aesthetic pleasure because it caused a personal reaction in the readers, and therefore relied on the readers' ability to evaluate and compare to reality the product of their own imagination. This distinction allows Haywood to encourage her readers to both appreciate the fantasy and to blame the "Inadvertencies" of her heroines in reality. In this sense, Haywood's amatory content "functions epistemologically, providing a particularly intense and immediate view into the overlapping activities of the senses, the imagination, and the mind" (Lubey 2006, p. 317). This coexistence of apparently contrasting elements is possible because Haywood considered love as deprived of inherent meaning or worth. She believed that love only made the inherent constitution of the individual more evident, and therefore provided an open display of human "Nature", as she stated in her treatise *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love* (1726):

[l]ove, like the Grape's potent Juice, but heightens Nature, and makes the conceal'd Sparks of Good, or Ill, blaze out, and show themselves to the wond'ring World! It gives an Energy to our Wishes, a Vigour to our Understanding, and adds to the Violence of our Desires, but alters not the Bent of them. (Haywood 1726, p. 10)

Therefore, as a universal and extreme passion, love is thought to provide readers with the opportunity to observe human nature in its more perceptible state, and to compare their own conduct with the narration. Haywood's focus on accounts of women's passions is part of her attempt to sustain the aesthetic engagement of her readers, since women characters were defined by a transparency which allowed to portray the origins and movements of their passions. Due to their restriction to the private sphere, women were thought to experience particularly intense passions because were not obscured by anxieties external to love, and therefore were believed to be more likely to increase the reader's affect. Readers are encouraged to identify in the heroines and to develop an affective response to the novel, but also to interpret meaningful details; that is, they are expected to react to these intense textual moments moderating their passions, and consequently to learn how to control such passions as they arise in their own life. In order to allow this dual involvement, Haywood's prose employs a grammar of eroticism that linguistically and typographically both raises desire and distances the audience, through conventional euphemism and hyperboles, dashes, inverted syntax, and other arrhythmic prosody (Lubey 2006).

This style depends both on amatory clichés and logic, and is constructed as an attempt of both the narrator and the characters to describe what they acknowledge is indescribable (Richetti 1969, pp. 198-201). The narrator highlights the importance of the readers' own experience and sensibility in order to understand and share the emotional state of the characters, and the readers are required "delicacy" of feeling, that is the capacity to recognise the power of desire:

There is nothing more certain than that love, tho' it fills the mind with a thousand charming ideas, which those untouched by that passion, are not capable of conceiving, yet it entirely takes away the power of utterance, and the deeper impression it had made on the soul, the less we are able to express it, when willing to indulge and give a loose to thought; what language can furnish us with words sufficient, all are too poor, all wanting both in sublimity, and softness, and only fancy! a lovers fancy! can reach the exalted soaring of a lovers meaning! But, if so impossible to be described, if so vast, so wonderful a nature as nothing but it's self can comprehend, how much more impossible must it be entirely to conceal it! What strength of boasted reason? What force of resolution? What modest fears, or cunning artifice can correct the fierceness of it's fiery flashes in the eyes, keep down the struggling sighs, command the pulse, and bid the trembling, cease? Honour, and virtue may distance bodies, but there is no power in either of those names, to stop the spring that with a rapid whirl transports us from our selves, and darts out our souls into the bosom of the darling object. This may seem strange to many, even those who call, and perhaps believe they are lovers, but the few who have delicacy enough to feel what but imperfectly attempt to speak, will acknowledge it for truth, and pity the distress of Melliora. (Haywood 2000, p. 122)

The attempts of the characters to talk about what cannot be spoken are carried out though conventional language and typography, and can be exemplified by the following passage from the exchange between D'Elmont and Melliora during their encounter in the garden at night:

“Life of my life,” cry'd he, “wound me no more by such untimely sorrows: I cannot bear thy tears, by Heaven they sink into my soul, and quite unman me, but tell me,” continued he tenderly kissing her,” could'st thou, with all this love, this charming – something more than softness – could'st thou I say, consent to see me pale and dead, stretched at thy feet, consumed with inward burnings, rather than blest, than raised by love, and thee, to all deity in thy

embraces. For O! Believe me when I swear, that 'tis impossible to live without thee.” (Haywood 2000, p. 124)

Most of Haywood’s works, including the early *Love in Excess*, discuss the possible cultural influence of the written word and literature on her characters, and take part in the eighteenth-century recurrent debate on the role of prose fiction in reforming manners. Haywood included the theme of the influence of the written word in several of her works, for example, in *The Mercenary Lover* (1728) Miranda uses the letters found in her sister’s pocketbook to control her husband, and in *The Invisible Spy* (1755) Alinda writes her own history to testify to the wrongs committed against her (Backscheider 2000). Toward the last part of her career, Haywood expanded her portrayal of the influences of the written word including both the public and the private sphere: she dealt with the corrupt usage of periodicals and newspapers, thus inviting her audience to become sceptical consumers conscious of the ways in which publication was used. For example, in *The Invisible Spy* (1755) Haywood employed her experience in fiction, in journalism, and in the capitalistic literary marketplace to discuss the ethical, economical, and political power of print. In this work, Haywood illustrated how in 1753 the attention of the public was diverted from important issues concerning the elections, such as the Jew Bill and the Clandestine Marriage Bill, by the Elizabeth Canning case. Elizabeth Canning was a servant girl who had disappeared for a month and, after various controversy over the reliability of her evidence, and discussion of the facts in newspapers and pamphlets including Henry Fielding’s *A*

Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning (1753), was eventually tried for perjury and sentenced to transportation (Backscheider 1999).

The relevance and influence of writing emerges in Haywood's *Love in Excess* since the first pages. The plot of the novel is initiated by the anonymous letters written by Aloverisa in her attempt to seek D'Elmont's courtship, whose misinterpretation brings about the events that cause the downfall of Amena's reputation by the end of the first part of the novel. Due to Aloverisa's concern in preserving her anonymity, the content of her first letter substantially depends on D'Elmont's ability of interpretation:

[Cupid] will appear to you tomorrow night at the ball, in the eyes of the most passionate of all his votresses; search therefore for him in her, in whom (amongst that bright assembly) you would most desire to find him; I am confident that you have too much penetration to miss him, if not bypassed by a former inclination, and in that hope, I shall (as patiently as my expectations will let me) support till then, the tedious hours. (Haywood 2000, p. 39)

However, before D'Elmont walks in the hall where Aloverisa is waiting, he sees Amena:

he immediately fancied he saw something of that languishment in her eyes, which the obliging mandate had described. Amena was too lovely to make that belief disagreeable, and he resolved on the beginnings of an amour, without giving himself the trouble of considering the consequences. (Haywood 2000, p. 42)

Therefore, D'Elmont's interpretation of the letter relies exclusively on his own disposition, without considering objective elements such as the relation between the writing of the anonymous letter and Amena's character or social status. While

Alovisa can be expected to be confident that her letter will successfully result in D'Elmont's proposal of marriage because of her wealth and nobility, Amena, whose father had "a very small estate, and many children" (p. 41) is in a weaker position and is more exposed to seduction.

Moreover, Alovisa's letters allow Haywood to represent authorship, as we witness her composition of the second letter to D'Elmont, in which she attempts to remedy his misinterpretation of the first. The writing process is described as a combination of intellect and inspiration:

She was no long writing, love and wit, suggested a world of passionate and agreeable expressions to her in a moment; but when she had finished this so full a discovery of her heart, and was about to sign her name to it, not all that passion which had inspired her with a resolution to scruple nothing that might advance the compassing of her wishes, nor the vanity which assured her of success, were forcible enough to withstand the shock it gave her pride. (Haywood 2000, p. 44)

The idea of disclosing her identity is deeply distressing to Alovisa, and she decides not to sign the second letter either:

"No, let me rather die!" said she, starting up, and frightened at her own designs, "then be guilty of a meanness which would render me unworthy of my life; Oh! heavens, to offer love, and poorly sue for pity! 'tis insupportable! What bewitched me to harbour such a thought as even the vilest of my sex would blush at? To pieces then" added she tearing the paper, "to pieces with this shameful witness of my folly, my furious desires may be the destruction of my peace, but never of my honour, that shall still attend my name when love and life are fled." (Haywood 2000, p. 44)

Both letters eventually emphasise the lack of control of the author over a text once it is circulating: the meaning of the first letter is overlooked because of the reader's hasty judgement, and the second letter causes the accidental revelation of Alovisa's identity as it is inadvertently handed to Amena.

The relevance of the interpretation of the reader in the understanding of a text and of its possible moral instruction is furtherly treated in the second part of the novel, in two conversations between D'Elmont and Melliora. The two scenes can be compared as they portray similar conversations in different contexts and the character discuss different books. In the former occurrence, D'Elmont comes across Melliora who is reading Fontenelle's *Discourse Concerning the Plurality of Worlds* while she is in the garden of his estate, that is a relatively public place. After D'Elmont expresses his surprise on finding that Melliora is reading philosophy of science, she emphasises the idea of instructive reading articulating her concern at the idea of being "deprived of so choice of an improvement as this book has given me." (p. 100). In the latter instance, Melliora is found reading Ovid's *Epistles* in her room and "in a most charming dissabillee" (p. 107); in this occasion, D'Elmont's argument on the influential power of such sort of reading mirrors the concern of anti-novel critics:

"Nay, madam," replied the Count, "now you contradict your former argument that was that these sort of books were, as it were, preparatives to love, and by their softening influence melted the soul, and made it fit for amorous impressions." (p. 108)

Melliora sets herself in direct opposition to such argument according to which the reader of romance will be persuaded to experience the situations read about on the page. Despite the previous “arguments she brought against giving way to love, and the danger of all softening amusements” (Haywood 2000, p. 107), Melliora claims:

Not that I can perceive any danger in it, as to my self; the retirement I have always lived in, and the little propensity I find to entertain a thought of that uneasie passion, has hitherto secured me from any prepossession, without which, Ovid’s art is vain. (Haywood 2000, p. 108)

Later on, Melliora emphasises the relevance of the didactic over the poetic, explaining how texts like Ovid’s can be educational, her assertion implies that the same function can be found in Haywood’s writings as well:

I am utterly unambitious of any learning this way, and shall endeavour to retain in memory more of the misfortunes that attended the passion of Sappho, than the tender, tho’ never so elegant expressions it produced. And if all the readers of romances took this method, the votaries of Cupid would be fewer, and the dominion of reason more extensive. (Haywood 2000, p. 108)

Here the readers are identified as responsible for their understanding and interpretation of the text. In particular, Melliora describes the act of reading Ovid as instructive because it is seen as a warning on the possible misfortune deriving from unrestrained desire, and therefore is eventually protective of virtue. By contrast, reading Ovid is dangerous to virtue according to D’Elmont, because he implies a method of reading which is literal and straightforward, and which suggests that the reading of the love story is equivalent to the experience of desire (Brown 2006, pp. 62-93).

For this reason, Haywood's explicit moralising has been seen as superficial as unconvincing, as it has been observed by Whicher, who stated that

[t]o modern readers these pieces seem less successful illustrations of fiction made didactic, than of didacticism dissolved and quite forgot in fiction [...] The pill of improvement supposed to be swallowed along with the sweets of diversion hardly ever consisted of good precepts and praiseworthy actions, but usually of a warning or a horrible example of what to avoid. As a necessary corollary, the more striking and sensational the picture of guilt, the more efficacious it was likely to prove in the cause of virtue. (Whicher 1915, p. 18)

However, Haywood's fiction is characterised by a broader implicit didacticism, which aims at producing in the reader a response of a moral, emotional, and sympathetic kind, rather than a self-conscious acceptance of moral notions. Thus, in Haywood's pursuit of a didactic aim of her writing, openly didactic warnings are less relevant than the immersion of the cooperative reader in a form of vicarious experience; so that her fiction provides an increase in the reader's experience rather than a coherent comment on life (Richetti 1969, pp. 182-3). In this sense, Haywood questions the reforming potential of direct moralising, which resembles the style of conduct-book advice, and expresses doubts on different sources of patriarchal authority such as parents, husbands, guardians, and schools. In contrast, the novel is seen as potentially more instructive to its readers because it is a form of safe and controlled experience, and is believed to be more protective of virtue since it helps readers develop scepticism and critical judgement.

This idea of learning through experience was also supported by Haywood's moral narrative of her own life. As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter,

despite regretting the ill effects of her early life on her reputation, Haywood emphasised how her experience was instrumental in improving her judgement and her understanding of human nature (Brown 2006, pp. 62-75). Moreover, the moral authority of Haywood's literary persona derived from the same relatively powerless position she shared with her woman readers, and this resulted in the rejection of the hierarchical structuring of the reader-writer relationship. Such unconventional rhetorical approach emerges clearly in Haywood's presentation of her character as the editor of *The Female Spectator*, as Haywood declares that the guidance provided to her readers is based on her knowledge which she derived from her own experience in situations of folly and impropriety. Even if she has reformed, she is still identified with her past, so that:

hers is the voice of error rather than propriety, experience rather than innocence [...] By admitting that she had been guilty herself of the conduct she is to criticise, the Female Spectator establishes her authority to address her audience upon her own culpability. Predicating her eidolon's present authority to discuss moral issues upon past follies, Haywood rejected the conventional image of the didactic writer as one possessed of foresight rather than hindsight. (Shevelow 1989, p. 170)

Therefore, according to Haywood, foresight is rarely protective of virtue, while hindsight leads to knowledge and self-improvement (Shevelow 1989, pp. 167-170).

Such position on didacticism results in the coexistence of elements of scandal and of moral instruction in Haywood's fiction as well. In her narratives readers are invited to take part in the world of romantic fantasy, yet that fantasy is

the voice of the narrator who reminds the readers of the possible interrupted by consequences for a woman's reputation and social position. In this case, Haywood uses a traditional tactic of didactic writing, warning her readers on the dangers of seduction. For example, after Amena's seduction is interrupted by Anaret's warning that Amena's absence from her chamber has been discovered, both Amena and D'Elmont are immediately aware of its possible effects, and they shift rapidly from shared extasy to shared repulsion and deep regret:

their sentiments were entirely changed with this alarm; Amena's thoughts were wholly taken up with her approaching shame, and vowed she would rather die than ever come into her father's presence, if it were true that she was missed; the Count who wanted not good nature, seriously reflecting on the misfortunes he was likely to bring on a young lady who tenderly loved him gave him a great deal of real remorse, and the consideration that he should be necessitated, either to own an injurious design, or to come into measures for the clearing of it, which would in no way agree with its ambition, made him extremely pensive, and wish Amena again in her chamber, more earnestly than ever he had done to get her out of it, they both remained in a profound silence. (Haywood 2000, p. 59)

The distress of the two lovers is described in similar terms, as Amena is

trembling and ready to sink with fear and grief at every step; but when they found all fast, and that there was no hopes of getting entrance [to Amena's garden], she fell quite senseless, and without any signs of life at her lover's feet. (Haywood 2000, p. 59)

D'Elmont too realises he is

strangely at loss what to do with her, and made a thousand vows, if he got clear of this adventure, never to embark in another of this nature; he was little skilled in proper means to recover her, and 'twas more to her youth and the

goodness of her constitution that she owed the return of her senses, than his awkward endeavours; when she revived, the piteous lamentations she made, and the perplexity he was in how to dispose of her, was very near reducing him to as bad condition as she had been in. (Haywood 2000, pp. 59-60)

However, the expected warnings on passion coexist with the vicarious experience provided by Haywood's writing. In *Love in Excess*, Haywood demonstrates the weakness of the sole virtuous principle as a defence as most of her young women characters are in love with their would-be-seducers. For example, Melliora, is often characterised in the novel by her innocence and "strength of virtue" (p. 163), however, despite "the strict precepts of virtue she had always professed" (p. 102) she is aware of her vulnerability, and is perceived to be in a position of danger both by herself and by D'Elmont. Her lack of defence can be seen in their exchange as D'Elmont finds Melliora alone in the garden:

[he] seized once more on the unguarded prey. "Blest turn of fortune," said he in a rapture, "happy, happy moment!" – "Lost, lost Melliora," said she, "most unhappy maid!" (Haywood 2000, p. 123)

The narrator emphasises that Melliora's virtue does not make her prepared to resist D'Elmont's seduction:

Honour, and virtue may distance bodies, but there is no power in either of those names, to stop the spring that with a rapid whirl transports us from our selves, and darts our souls into the bosom of the daring object. [...] the few who will have delicacy enough to feel what I but imperfectly attempt to speak, will acknowledge the truth and pity the distress of Melliora. (Haywood 2000, p. 122)

Therefore, Haywood invites the reader to pity Melliora because her principles of "honour and virtue" are only "names", and they are not a sufficient defence from

seduction. Haywood's heroines need to be protected from their seducers but also from themselves and their own passions, and tend to be saved by timing and casual interruption rather than by their own willpower and virtue (Brown 2006, pp. 82-93).

Moreover, in this coexistence of amorous scenes with admonitions about passions, it can be observed how Haywood inserted several warnings about appearance and reality, which is part of the development of the novel toward the psychological. In *Love in Excess*, the themes of illusion and appearance are dealt with as well, since both male and female characters tend to cover reality with what they wish to be true (Backscheider 2000). An example from the first part of the novel is the misreading of Alovisa's first anonymous letter: D'Elmont interprets its meaning only in the light of his own desire, as "Amena was too lovely to make that belief disagreeable" (Haywood 2000, p. 42). The topic is mentioned more directly in the second part of the novel, when Melliora warns D'Elmont that

in a lover's mind illusions seem realities, and what at another time would be looked on as impossible, appears easier then. They indulge, and feed their new-born folly with a prospect of hope, though 'ne're so distant a one, and in the vain pursuit of it, fly consideration, 'till despair starts up in the mid-way, and bars their promised view; whereas if they gave way to due reflection, the vanity of the attempt would presently be shown, and the same cause that bid'em cease to hope, would bid 'em cease to wish. (Haywood 2000, p. 109)

3.2 Female condition in Haywood: experience and agency

In the eighteenth century, the construction of the ideal of feminine virtue as innocence came to be seen as a trap. In fact, the understanding of innocence as chastity, which was especially characteristic of sentimental heroines, resulted in vulnerability to seduction; and when understood as mental purity, innocence implied sensibility but also as lack of a general knowledge of the world, resulting in susceptibility to fraud and deception. Therefore, innocence generally translated into a weaker understanding and knowledge, such that even clear signals of corruption remained undetected, and thus came to be seen as prejudicial to virtue. These diverging views of virtue and innocence were at the base of a contradictory attitude regarding education, which could be seen as explaining the diffusion of pedagogical aims both in the eighteenth-century, texts which had overtly moral purposes, and in the writings which were considered morally transgressive. Eighteenth-century novels frequently included didactic elements which were aimed at instructing readers in how to live their lives, but also in how to read and interpret the meaning their narratives, suggesting a critical reading approach that applied both to life and texts. Thus, innocence was represented as a problematic aspect, a trait which could not be entirely maintained without endangering a heroine's virtue and safety; this representation defended novels and the act of reading as instructive and consequently protective of virtue (Brown 2006). For example, in its preface to *Moll Flanders* (1722), Daniel Defoe claimed that he aimed to display potentially scandalous narratives and themes in a form that was beneficial and explicitly moral, and he emphasised the importance of the reader's

interpretation in the understanding of the narrative as either a moral lesson or a scandalous encouragement to vice:

All possible care, however, has been taken to give no lewd ideas, no immodest turns in the new dressing up of this story; no, not to the worst parts of her expressions. To this purpose some of the vicious part of her life, which could not be modestly told, is quite left out, and several other parts are very much shortened. What is left 'tis hoped will not offend the chastest reader or the modest hearer; and as the best use is made even of the worst story, the moral 'tis hoped will keep the reader serious, even where the story might incline him to be otherwise. [...] But as this work is chiefly recommended to those who know how to read it, and how to make the good uses of it which the story all along recommends to them, so it is to be hoped that such readers will be more pleased with the moral than the fable. (Defoe 1987, pp. 28-29)

A similar awareness that the moral message of his novel may be unclear and an emphasis on the responsibility of the reader in appreciating the didactic function of the story can be found in Defoe's preface to *Roxana*:

If there are any Parts, in her Story, which being oblig'd to relate a wicked Action, seem to describe it too plainly [...] all imaginable Care has been taken to keep clear of Indecencies, and immodest Expressions; and 'tis hop'd you will find nothing to prompt a vicious Mind, but every-where much to discourage and expose it. Scenes of Crime can scarce be represented in such a Manner, but some may make a Criminal Use of them, but when Vice is painted in its Low-priz'd Colours, 'tis not to make People in love with it, but to expose it; and if the Reader makes a wrong Use of the Figures, the Wickedness is his own. [...] The Virtuous Reader has room for so much Improvement, that we make no Question, the Story, however meanly told, will find a Passage to his best Hours; and be read both for Profit and Delight. (Defoe 1964, p. 2)

In this regard, it is interesting to notice that the same kind of apology meant to remedy the impression that the amorous scenes overbalance the larger themes can be found in the prefaces of works by Defoe and by Haywood as well, for example, in her preface to *Lasselia: or, the Self-Abandoned* (1724). However, the aims of the two authors were perceived to be significantly different: while Haywood's apologies and her moral transition to a more modest type of fiction were regarded as a disguise over her sole financial interest in adapting her writing to the changing requests of the market, Defoe was accused of using a hypocritical or ironic narrator, but he was thought to have higher motives than personal gain, and his focus has been most often identified in the prevention of crime or the troubled situation of the poor (Backscheider 2000).

In *Love in Excess*, virtue is most often identified with innocence in the character of Melliora: as Espernay is persuading D'Elmont to plot against her, D'Elmont objects:

“her youth and innocence are daggers to my cool reflections – Would it not be pity Espernay,” continued he with a deep sigh, “even if she should consent, to ruin so much sweetness?” (p. 114)

A few pages later, while entering Melliora's room at night as she is asleep

[D'Elmont] thought it pity even to wake her, but more to wrong such innocence, and he was sometimes prompted to return and leave her as he found her. (p. 116)

Later in the novel, the relevance of this aspect in the definition of her worth is emphasised by Melliora herself, as she states that “'tis better to die in innocence,

than to live in guilt” (p. 124). Melantha ironically refers to Melliora as a “cold, cloistered maid” (p. 128) mentioning the fact that she has been educated in a monastery, and in the third part of the novel, D’Elmont is accused by Frankville, Melliora’s brother, to be “the unfaithful guardian of her injured innocence” (p. 181).

However, despite being such a consistent part of the definition of Melliora’s virtue, innocence is constructed as a contradictory ideal because it causes Melliora to be particularly vulnerable to corruption. This dual notion of innocence is openly addressed by Monsieur Frankville, who places his daughter Melliora under the protection of Count D’Elmont because she is not aware of the possible risks she might encounter. He states:

her education in a monastery has hitherto kept her entirely unacquainted with the gayeties of court, or the conversation of the beau monde, and I have sent for her to Paris purposely to introduce her into company, proper for a young lady, who I never designed for a recluse; I know not whether she will be here time enough to close my eyes, but if you will promise to receive her into your house, and not suffer her artless and unexperienced youth to fall into those snares which are daily laid for innocence, and take so far a care, that neither she, nor the fortune I leave her, be thrown away upon a man unworthy of her, I shall dye well satisfied. (Haywood 2000, p. 85)

Such relevance of instruction is linked to the anxiety in the anti-novel debate about what readers, especially female readers, may learn from fiction. This concern is related to the habit of private reading which developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Despite having resulted from Protestant private devotion, and

therefore implying detailed recommendations on what to read, indicating especially didactic or devotional materials, it allowed a larger power of interpretation to the reader. Therefore, even the novel and the romances which had an allegedly moral message became potentially unruly texts, set between the scandalous and the didactic, and easily misread. For this reason, didacticism was often used in novels to encourage a certain response from readers and to provide the impression of a controlled fictional environment. In this context, even romantic or disturbing episodes were meant to be instruments of a larger educative project, which was accessible to the readers able to read and interpret correctly (Brown 2006, pp. 82-93).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the novel was generally recognised as the main instrument to spread morality. This tradition of novelistic purpose involving calls for social change is consistent with Haywood's employ of plots and themes to dramatize her morals, and with what became the conventional endeavours of women writers. In fact, throughout her career Haywood claimed what during the century would become a common justification for novels, especially when written by women: fiction was meant to be an instrument of vicarious experience which provided women with knowledge of the world without the consequences of mistakes in real life. Haywood acknowledged that women needed new sources of information because they were often dangerously naïve due to the limited possibilities in their lives and their lack of education (Backscheider 2000). Because of this lack of other form of social power or diversion, impressions from what was perceived through the senses were thought to be particularly

enduring in women, despite receiving the same stimulations of the senses and experiencing the same passions as men. Due to their lack of experience in the more varied public life, Haywood's women readers were thought to have fewer opportunities to replace old impressions with new ones. Therefore, their imagination was believed to be stuck in an unhealthy repetition of the past situations in which they were involved, which generated delusion and falsehood instead of the delight and surprise that should be involved in healthy aesthetic discovery. Thus, Haywood emphasised women's need for worldly experience found in either society or books, as it would offer them wider perspectives and varieties of imaginative stimulation (Lubey 2006).

Such a lack of forms of social power and diversion available to women was recognised by Haywood as the cause for their lesser ability to control their passions. By asserting that women were not responsible for their sexual desire, Haywood built an approach aimed at relieving female guilt, providing "a vision of irresponsibility, expressing female sexuality, without being subject to judgement" (Spacks 1974, p. 33). In *Love in Excess* it can be noticed how Amena is described as faced with a "conspiracy to love" (Ballaster 1992, p. 58), in which nature as well appears to participate to D'Elmont's attempt to seduce her:

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 scent soft 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 if 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 virgin blushes. (Haywood 2000, p. 58)

Amena's vague responsibility is emphasised by suggestions that she is not acting upon a conscious intent and that she is not completely aware of what she is doing:

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 arm unknowing grasped his neck. (Haywood 2000, p. 58)

A similar approach can be found later in the novel when D'Elmont enters Melliora's room while she is sleeping. Still asleep, Melliora throws her arms around his neck and pronounces passionate exclamations as "Oh D'elmont, cease to charm, to such a height – Life cannot bear these raptures [...] O! too, too lovely Count – estatick ruiner!" (p. 116). However, as she awakes, she loses the guiltless impulsiveness associated with dreamers, and becomes aware of the situation in which she finds herself and of its implications:

"Oh, all ye saints," resumed the surprised, trembling fair, "ye ministering angels! whose business 'tis to guard the innocent! protect and shield my virtue! [...] hold!," cried she, finding he was proceeding to liberties, which her modesty could not allow of, "forbear, I do conjure you, even by that love you plead, before my honour, I'll resign my life! Therefore, unless you wish to see me dead, a victim to your cruel, fatal passion, I beg you to desist, and leave me." (p. 117)

Thus, love is defined by Haywood as a force which cannot be restrained, accordingly, in *Love in Excess* the narrator explains Melliora's confusion when talking with D'Elmont in these terms:

Ambition, envy, hate, fear, or anger, every other passion that finds entrance in the soul, art and discretion may disguise, but love, tho' it may be feigned, can never be concealed; not only the eyes (those true and most perfect intelligencers of the heart) but every feature, every faculty betrays it! It fills the whole air of the person possess with it; it wanders round the mouth! plays in the voice! trembles in the accent! and shows it self a thousand different, nameless ways! (Haywood 2000, p. 101)

At the beginning of the third part of the novel, as D'Elmont travels to Italy remorseful over his unloved wife, Haywood represents love as excluding all other interests and as being separated from any recognisable human concern. These emotions are described by Haywood with a purity and force that distances the fictional world in which they are set from life:

Those who have the power to apply themselves so seriously to any other consideration as to forget him, tho' but for a moment, are but lovers in conceit, and have entertained desire but as an agreeable amusement, which when attended with any inconvenience, they may without much difficulty shake off. Such a sort of passion may properly enough be called *liking*, but falls widely short of *love*. *Love*, is what we can neither resist, expel, nor even alleviate, if we should never so vigorously attempt it; and tho' some have boasted, "Thus far will I yield and no farther," they have been convinced of the vanity of forming such resolutions by the impossibility of keeping them. *Liking* is a flashy flame, which is to be kept alive only by ease and delight. *Love*, needs not this fuel to maintain its fire, it survives in absence, and disappointments, it endures, unchilled, the wintry blasts of cold indifference and neglect, and continues its blaze, even in a storm of hatred and ingratitude, and reason, pride, or just a sensibility of conscious worth, in vain oppose it. *Liking*, plays gayly round, feeds on the sweets in gross, but is wholly insensible of the thorns which guard the nicer, and more refined delicacies of desire, and can consequently give neither pain, nor pleasure in any superlative degree. *Love*

creates intolerable torments! unspeakable joys! raises us to the highest heaven of happiness, or sinks us to the lowest hell of misery. (Haywood 2000, p. 165)

Similarly, in the third part of the novel of D'Elmont is believed to be innocent because his passion is considered as something which cannot be simulated:

Frankville listened with abundance of attention to the relation [D'Elmont] made him, and could find very little in his conduct to accuse. He was himself too much susceptible of the power of love, not to have compassion for those that suffered by it, and had too great a share of good sense not to know that, that passion is not to be circumscribed; and being not only, not subservient, but absolutely *controller* of the *will*, it would be meer madness, as well as ill nature, to say a person was blame-worthy for what was unavoidable. When love once becomes in our power, it ceases to be worthy of that name; no man really possest with it, *can* be the master of his actions; and whatever effects it may enforce, are no more to be condemned, than poverty, sickness, deformity, or any other misfortune incident of human nature. (Haywood 2000, p. 185)

Moreover, despite its tragic aspect, love is represented by Haywood as a mode for her heroines to assert a personality, and thus it becomes a possible departure from the depersonalisation of her female protagonists, imposed upon them by the masculine world which considers them only as opportunities for lust and avarice. On the other hand, though, Haywood's narrative employs the myth of persecuted innocence, which, being inherently conservative, requires to prevent the subversive possibilities it implies. In this sense, the completely unavoidable nature of passion acts as a system aimed at averting the idea of an active subversion of the male world, since assertiveness and independence of the female characters would oppose the complete powerlessness which is part of the definition of their status as heroines. We can see how also D'Elmont succeeds in love only after

relinquishing his agency and his attempts to control his fate: only when he becomes passive and compensates for his sinful aggression to Amena and his loveless marriage to Alovisa by running away from his desire, he can wait for love to reward him (Richetti 1969, pp. 203-204). D'Elmont's impending punishment is announced by the narrator in the opening of the second part of the novel:

As human happiness is seldom of long continuance, and Alovisa placing the ultimate of her's in the possession of her charming husband, secure of that, despised all future events, 'twas time for Fortune, who long enough had smiled, now to turn her wheel, and punish the presumption that had defied her power. (Haywood 2000, p. 84)

Only a few pages later, D'Elmont is in love with Melliora and finds himself in the same situation in which Amena is found in the first part of the novel:

His reflections were now grown far less pleasing than they used to be; real sighs flew from his breast uncalled. And Melliora's image in dazzling brightness! in terrible array of killing charms! fired him with (impossible to be attained) desires; he found by sad experience what it was to love, and to despair. [...] It was in these racks of thought, that the unfortunate Amena was remembered, and he could not forbear acknowledging the justice of that doom, which inflicted on him, these very torments he had given her. (Haywood 2000, p. 89)

Eventually, at the outset of the third chapter, D'Elmont has converted to love:

Ambition, once his darling passion, was now wholly extinguished in him by these misfortunes, and he no longer thought of making a figure in the world; but his *love* nothing could abate. (Haywood 2000, p. 163)

Therefore, due to its inevitability, desire is not represented as an empowering force in Haywood's fiction because the innocence that characterises her heroines

have no power to defend or preserve their virtue, so that “vertue and pride, the guardians of her honour fled from her breast, and left [Amena] to her foe” (p. 57). The weakness of her heroines’ defence is emphasised by the consistency of their escapes from seduction, which occur merely by chance: as Amena is in the Tuilleries with D’Elmont:

there was but a moment betwixt her and ruine; when the tread of some body coming hastily down the walk, obliged the half- blessed pair to put a stop to farther endearments. (Haywood 2000, p. 58)

Similar interruptions can be found in the second part of the novel as well, in the scenes with Melliora and D’Elmont, both in Melliora’s chamber:

[D’Elmont] was just on the point of making good what he had vowed, when a loud knocking at the chamber door, put a stop to his beginning extasy, and changed the sweet confusion Melliora had been in, to all the horrors of a shame and guilt distracted apprehension. (Haywood 2000, p. 118)

And later in the garden:

D’Elmont at his returning sense, repenting the effects of the violent transport he had been in, now was preparing to take from the resistless Melliora, the last, and only remaining proof that she was all his own, when Melantha [...] was coming towards them. (Haywood 2000, p. 124)

Yet, women are not represented as mere objects of male desire as they succeed in becoming actors in the romance plot (Brown 2006, pp. 88-92). This is presented by Haywood as the only means for women to tackle the oppressive power of romantic delusion, to which all women are subjects regardless of their

determination to avoid it, as she stated in the preface to *Letters from a Lady of Quality to a Chevalier* (1720):

Some indeed there are, who have Solitity enough to weigh the Consequence, to discern the distant Storm before it breaks upon them; but wanting Resoution to take shelter from it, are the most miserable of all, 'tis better in such a case to have no Reason at all, than not to have enough. The happy *Idiot* blest in Security, postpones not her Misfortune, and perhaps for many Years, enjoys a State of Tranquillity; while the *Woman of Wit*, with aking heart, perceives from far, the Ruin she is sure to meet, and fain would fly, but cannot. (Haywood 1721, p. 5)

In this context of compulsive romance, Haywood's heroines are constructed to function as moral exempla, and their behaviour, either chaste and passive or active and disobedient, lead them to be ruined by their own sexual passion and their optimist estimation about the male sex (Lubey 2006). For example, Ciamara is portrayed as regarding pleasure as the chief good and rationally pursuing it, in contrast with D'Elmont's idea of love as faith that obscures pleasure and reason:

"Heavens," cried she, with an air full of resentment, "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 refer the visionary pleasures of an *absent* mistress, to the warm transports of the substantial *present*?" The Count was pretty much surprized at these words, coming from the mouth of a woman of honour, and began now to perceive what her aim was, but willing to be more confirmed, "Madam," said he, "I dare not hope your virtue would permit." – "Is this a time," interrupted she, looking on him with eyes sparkled with wild desires, and left no want of further explanation of her meaning, "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 improves, 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”; in speaking these words, she sunk supinely on D’Elmont’s breast; but tho’ he was not so ill-natured, and unmannerly as to repel her, this sort of treatment made him lose all the esteem, and great part the pity he had conceived for her. (Haywood 2000, p. 224)

However, in *Love in Excess* Haywood represents women who are free to choose in accord with their desire: Amena acts against the will of her father, Melantha behaves like her brother does instead than like he would recommend; both Ansellina and Alovisa are allowed by their wealth to choose for themselves, although Alovisa chooses unhappily and like Ciamara she is marked by moments of anger in reaction to the indifference of D’Elmont. Camilla is allowed to reconsider her love for Frankville when he appears to be unworthy, and Violetta chooses to love through denying her sexuality instead of indulging in it, and eventually leading to the death of her cunning father. In contrast, the representation of Melliora’s agency appears more liminal, as it is asserted while being renounced. She concludes the novel submitting to patriarchal authority, as, while the Marquess De Saguillier is about to marry her, Melliora declares:

This day shall give me to him who best deserves me; but who that is, my brother and Count D’Elmont must determine; since heaven has restored them to me, all power of disposing of my self must cease; ‘tis they must, henceforth, rule the will of Melliora, and only their consent can make me yours. [...] I am still ready to perform my promise, whenever these gentlemen shall command me. – The one my brother, the other my guardian, obtain but their consent, and –” “Mine, he can never have.” Interrupted Frankville hastily, and laying his hand on his sword. “Nor mine,” cried the Count, while I have a breath to form denials, or my arm strength to guard my beauteous charge.” (Haywood 2000, p. 261)

The reader thus becomes aware that Melliora's submission is part of her organisation of a return to a condition of social order which is completely in agreement with her desires, as the guardian who acts in representation of her father and brother is also the lover who can voice both her desire and his own. This arrangement allows even to appease their public honour (Oakleaf 2000, pp. 20-21):

When they came to Paris, they were joyfully received by the Chevalier Brillian and Ansellina, and those who in the Count's absence had taken a liberty of censuring and condemning his actions, awed by his presence, and in time won by his virtues, now swell his praises with an equal vehemence. Both he and Frankville, are still living, blest with a numerous and hopeful issue, and continue, with their fair wives, great and lively examples of conjugal affection. (Haywood 2000, p. 266)

Melliora stands in contrast with the other female protagonists of the novel, who allow Haywood to both indulge in female sexuality and to aptly punish it in order to emphasise the dangers hidden among the apparent pleasures of the fiction of romance. On the other hand, Melliora represents what can be seen as the most effective strategy for successfully dealing with the delusion of romance: the narrative of the woman as victim is interrupted by the heroines who manage to enter the fiction of romance and to control it, acting the various roles available to them and thus becoming the subject of their own romance rather than being subjected by it (Ballaster 1992).

3.3 Mock-romance and satire

Haywood's novels share with modern novels the tendency to demystify other texts or genres through parody. This is recognised more broadly as a mechanism of literary evolution, however in realist novels it is particularly charged with epistemological and moral connotations. In fact, they tend to discredit traditional forms in favour of new ones which are more related with experience, and to suggest that the educational potential of traditional genres is limited, because they reduce the variety of experience to conventional forms. However, novels differ from texts that are more radically satiric and parodic because of their focus on the inner lives of characters and their purposeful narrative structure. Moreover, this development is set within the context of the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns, which represented the loss of prestige of classic models, and in which moral and aesthetic questions were connected. Among the most significant mock-epic works written during the years in which the novel was starting to develop is Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712; 1714; 1717); despite maintaining the superiority of the classics, epic models are recognised to be of no use in an antiheroic world (Capoferro 2017, pp. 81-85). Pope was part of the Scriblerus club, founded in 1713 with Swift, Gay, Parnell, and Arbuthnot with the aim of satirising pedantry and bad writing. Their works supported an aesthetics of heroic masculinity associated with the epic as a system to face the perceived menace of a growing effeminacy, related with the romance and with the novels written by female authors.

In Haywood's fiction, the contradictory pattern of supporting prudential reason and simultaneously accepting the ungovernable nature of passion suggests that rationality, whether performed by women or men, may be self-deluded, as it is influenced by passions that are not necessarily recognised by the characters acting upon them. In this sense, Haywood renders the serious mode of representation of romance as comic, so that some of her works may be classified as mock romance, as Ros Ballaster says:

the feminocentric inverse of Scriblerian mock-epic. If the mock epic identifies a feminised "romance as undercutting the heroic potential of masculine agency associated with epic, Haywood's "mock-romance" identifies a masculine force of "rigid" interpretation as restricting, perverting, and containing the wayward libidinal affections of female romance. (Ballaster 2000, p. 164)

Thus, Haywood criticises the structuring misogyny in the discourses of such satire, which reflects the exclusion of women from the positions within the public sphere (Ballaster 2000). In particular, in *Love in Excess*, it is recognised the lack of power of wives within marriage relationships, and their need to subtly manipulate the situations in which they find themselves. So that, when Alovisa intercepts Amena's letter to her husband,

this sort of carriage she imagined would not only lay him more open and unguarded to the diligent watch she designed to make on all his words and actions, but likewise awaken him to a just sense of her goodness, and his own ingratitude. [...] Man is too arbitrary a creature to bear the least contradiction, where he pretends an absolute authority, and that wife who thinks ill humour and perpetually taunts, to make him weary of what she would reclaim him

from, only renders herself more hateful, and makes that justifiable which before was blameable in him. (Haywood 2000, p. 96)

Conclusion

This thesis has presented some of the major themes addressed by Eliza Haywood in her amatory fiction as exemplified by her first known writing *Love in Excess*, from which emerges the relationship of Haywood and her narrative with the novel developing in the eighteenth century. Defining the position of Haywood's work in her social, cultural and literary context displays how Haywood's close relation to the eighteenth-century literary marketplace accounts for the similarity of her narrative with the novels written in the same years, despite having been classified – and dismissed – as romance.

In particular, both Haywood's amatory fiction and eighteenth-century novels share the combination of different literary forms to adapt older genres to the changing tastes of a new urban readership. For example, *Love in Excess* appears to follow the structure of the French romance, but the representation of the setting and manners mirrors the realist tendencies of the English novel. Moreover, a close reading of *Love in Excess* demonstrates that didacticism is another shared feature of Haywood's amatory fiction and eighteenth-century novels, which provided their readers with examples of behaviour in the new urban social environment. In particular, Haywood defended her writing as an instrument for young women to acquire the necessary knowledge of the world without exposing themselves to the risks of making wrong assumptions and mistakes in real life. In this sense,

Haywood's fiction is characterised by a direct and explicit didacticism, as her readers are warned on the dangers of unrestrained passions through the comments by her narrator and character. However, a more indirect form of didacticism can be found too: the readers are encouraged to identify in the heroines and share their emotions, so that the act of reading replaces real-life experience in procuring judgement and self-improvement.

The contribution of Haywood to the emergence of the novel is especially related to her ability to appeal to very different readers through the attention to various themes and effects of her writings. Among comments of her contemporaries on her writing, the following poem of praise written by Richard Savage and published in a collected edition of Haywood's works is especially relevant. It emphasises both her dedication to love and her mastery of language, which make her deserve a crown of myrtle leaves and of laurel leaves, the first sacred to Venus and the latter sacred to poetry:

For such descriptions thus at once can prove
The force of language and the sweets of love.
The myrtle's leaves with those of fame entwine,
And all the glories of the wreath are thine! (1725, p. 6)

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