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The Dangerous Women of the Long Eighteenth Century: Exploring the Female Characters in Love in Excess, Roxana, and A Simple Story

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The Dangerous Women of the Long Eighteenth Century: Exploring the Female Characters in *Love in Excess*, *Roxana*, and *A Simple Story*

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ABSTRACT

The Dangerous Women of the Long Eighteenth Century: Exploring the Female Characters in *Love in Excess*, *Roxana*, and *A Simple Story*

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The Long Eighteenth Century was a period in which change was constant and proceeding the Restoration Era; this sense of change continued throughout the era. Charles II created an era in which women were allowed on the theatre stage, and his mistresses accompanied him to court; Charles II set the stage for the proto-feminist ideas of the eighteenth century that would manifest themselves in Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess*, Daniel Defoe's *Roxana*, and Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story*. These novels showcase the enlightenment of women and some of their male contemporaries and the beginning struggles of female agency. The eighteenth century was a time in which the separate sphere mentality grew ever stronger within the patriarchal society, and yet, women began to question their subservient place in this society—although this struggle would continue to intensify throughout the nineteenth century and eventually come to fruition in the late nineteenth century.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth-century birthed the first English novel, and with the creation of the novel literature changed forever. This change included the new wholly female literary scene, and the novel became the most accessible venue for women to voice their complaints and create financial independence. This occurrence also created the genre of women's novels, a genre that was generally written by women but was adapted by men as well, such as in the case of Daniel Defoe. From this genre came *Love in Excess* (1719-20) by Eliza Haywood, *Roxana* (1724) by Daniel Defoe, and *A Simple Story* (1791) by Elizabeth Inchbald; and in their novels are "dangerous" female characters who contributed proto-feminism in the eighteenth century where women began to focus on their rights and privileges.

The Restoration had been a time of great luxury, and with the restoration of Charles II to the throne, a time of both jubilee and resentment. The long eighteenth century begins with the restoration of Charles II; and as such, it is often debated whether or not the Restoration impacted the proto-feminism of the eighteenth century. Although some scholarship argues the Restoration created a time of further female repression, this seems unfounded. Charles II allowing women on the theatre stage, including female authors like Aphra Behn in his inner circle, and bringing his well-known mistresses, Nell Gwyn, to the royal court, created an era where women rejected the bonds of matrimony and motherhood to create lives of their own. In the opinion of Karl Göller,

> (. . .) the Restoration was far from being the death knell of the feminist movement, as has often been claimed. On the contrary, it had a stimulating and beneficial effect. Not only libertine courtiers accompanied King Charles when he

> returned to England, but also philosophers, poets, and serious writers familiar with what had been written on the feminist question. (78)

This early pre-feminist movement continued into the eighteenth century and is prevalent in the writings of many of the popular authors of the time; this is especially true of Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess*, Daniel Defoe's *Roxana*, and Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* that are dangerous to the established patriarchy.

Women in the eighteenth century were considered as lesser when compared to their male counterparts, not because of proven physiological or psychological differences, but because the patriarchy deemed them the weaker sex. The term "dangerous woman" refers to the women (literary and otherwise) who contested the patriarchy and their diminished status within this system. These women are considered dangerous based on the standards and rules of the patriarchal society wherein women are relegated to the private sphere and disallowed from partaking in an area that falls outside of this private home space, and other women who were widows or never married lived partially or wholly outside of these rules. These women are often given the eighteenth-century characteristics of evil women, as explained by Paula Backscheider in her discussion of *Roxana*: "First, the reader is given numerous, conventional signals that she is one of the newly fascinating evil women" (Backsheider 186). This "evil" female character is a characteristic of "women's fiction," and as further evidenced by Eliza Haywood's writing, these characters are created explicitly for a female readership. These novels about women characters had a dual nature that provided a surface romance and hidden feminist propaganda. Characters in these stories are often angered by the patriarchy, and this emotionalism must be punished by their authors; however, in cases in which these characters are not overly emotional or attempt to accept certain rules of society, the characters create a space where they can secure the agency,

independence, and economics denied them and where they are the possession of husbands, fathers, or guardians. As elucidated by these texts, there are few instances in which women are given freedom, and the reactions of these women create dangerous female characters.

To be considered a "lady," a woman was held to extreme regulations to be virginal, virtuous, and moral. These are three terms that dangerous women disregard in her search for equality. Many intelligent eighteenth-century women did not want to be "ladies," and they did not want to be "protected" by the patriarchy—this protection came at a cost more dire than most would be willing to pay, including the desertion and poverty Roxana faces when the men in her life fail her. Many women of the eighteenth century wanted, like Roxana, to be "*Man-[Women]*; for as I was born free, I wou'd die so" (Defoe 171). These women were empowered by authors who wrote for women and provided them the option to have a life outside of their domestic one. Among these dangerous women are the women novelists of the eighteenth century. Although controlled by the separate spheres and regulated by the conduct books, women began to edge their ways from this control, and one semi-acceptable avenue for this was to become a woman novelist. This being a semi-acceptable profession for women did not mean to undermine the fact that women were overly criticized for their partaking in any form of monetary exchange. By becoming an authoress, women became "man-[women]," and were able to gain monetary freedom.

The women of the eighteenth-century were expected to be almost mythological in their ability to be wife, mother, and housekeeper without outside stimulation for their mental growth. This mentality of the mythical female is supplemented by separate spheres in which women are relegated to the private sphere—anything within the home, excluding the futures of their children—these children being a means for furthering the husbands economic or social standing.

The public sphere is the male arena and included everything outside of the home: business, politics, and any monetary activity. Women were disallowed from partaking in the family business, and if their husbands bankrupted the family, wives were either ignored or disallowed from comment (as exampled in *Roxana*). The regulations women were expected to uphold were generally included in the conduct manuals (although this is not the only place for women to learn this value system). Conduct manuals specifically targeted the middles classes and their servant and created a standard for women's lives, which becomes especially important in the discussion of *A Simple Story*, but women characters in *Roxana* and *Love in Excess* were held within these bounds of conduct as well. According to Jo Alyson Parker, "Miss Milner's very real faults make her a poor model of femininity according to the conduct-book standards of the late eighteenth century. Quick-tempered, extravagant, given over to frivolous pleasure, she lacks the essential qualities of feminine propriety" (258). These books of conduct discussed every area of a woman's life and were reinforced by the patriarchal male. In a further rejection of society, Eliza Haywood wrote her own conduct manual, *A Present for the Serving Maid. Or The Sure Means of gaining Love and Esteem*. This conduct guide gave directions for the servant maid and continues to discuss what happens when a maid lives with a master or master's son who lusts after her. According to the conduct manual,

> (. . .) As soon as he gives you the least intimation of his Design, either by Word or Action, you ought to keep as much as possible out of his Way, in order to prevent his declaring himself more plainly; and if, inspite of all your Care, he find an Opportunity of telling you his Mind, you must remonstrate the Wrong he would do to his Wife (. . .). (46)

Through this manual, Haywood creates a dialogue against conduct manuals written by men and the the power of men over women. This servant maid is at the mercy of her master not because she is a maid but because she is a woman.

Eliza Haywood, the author of *Love in Excess* wrote novels that included some of the most dangerous female characters in the canon of eighteenth-century literature. *Love in* Excess is an important novel when discussing dangerous women because it was the first novel written about these dangerous women, because it sold as many copies as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson* Crusoe, and because Haywood herself was a dangerous woman. She deserted her husband and in a form of illegal divorce separated herself from him both maritally and financially. She supported herself and her two children through her literary endeavors and created characters who voiced hatred and disdain for the patriarchy. In a time when women were institutionalized for numerous reasons, including their husbands having them committed, Haywood created overly emotional characters; and through their anger, she voices her own anger at a society where women are punished and dismissed without legal ramifications or the option of divorce. Her most dangerous character, Alovisa, personifies this rage; however, Alovisa is unable to control this rage and betrays her female friendships. Haywood's novel is filled with female characters who together create a statement about the unattainable standards set for women. These women prove that women enjoy sex and seek out sexual partners based upon attraction and enjoyment and demonstrate that women can be both sexual and virtuous. Through the double standard revealed in Haywood's novel, rakish men with treat women are their possession.

Daniel Defoe, the author of *Roxana*, is the only male author discussed in my thesis, and as such his position as a "women's author" is often circumstantial to the understanding of *Roxana*. Despite sometimes contradictory criticism, *Roxana* is a feminist text that allows women

to read beneath the surface. Defoe concentrates on the desertion of wives without consequence and the disallowing of women from economics because of a perceived weakness in the field of business. Roxana is abandoned by her husband and left to starve with their five children; but, instead, she rejects the role of wife and mother and becomes a mistress. She becomes a dangerous woman not because she is a mistress but because she has shed the contrived roles meant to keep her as a lesser person. By adopting the role of mistress, Roxana becomes the mistress of her own fortune and is equal to men. *Roxana* is important in the discussion of dangerous women because Defoe is a male author and because Roxana as a character embodies many of the tendencies that created this dangerous character.

This inability to live outside of the home and apart a male figure, was a struggle for most women of the eighteenth century, with the exception of widows and women who never married. This struggle is exemplified in Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story*, whose heroines are both trapped in the same patriarchal structure exemplified by Elmwood Manor. Miss Milner and her daughter Matilda are the heroines of Inchbald's two-part novel. In the first half of the novel, Milner rejects the patriarchal control of her life; but because of her education, which provides her with the rules of how to be an eighteenth-century woman of marriageable quality, she is unable to separate herself from her desire for freedom and her perceived need of a husband, and as such she is punished with misery and death. Until Milner's death, Matilda has been exiled with her mother; she has been taught by Sandford to respect and honor the patriarchy, and as such, she honors her father despite his disregard for her. Her eventual punishment comes in the form of a potential loveless marriage pushed on her by her father. Inchbald's final statement about Milner's proper education does not refer to the "proper" education given to Matilda by Sandford. Milner should have been educated in a way that would have protected her from the patriarchal society

and as such, her daughter would have been educated as well. They are punished by the author because they are used as examples of the outcome of men's control over women. Milner's story is one against the conduct manuals, and Matilda's is the outcome of a woman who is raised by the manuals; this creates a novel that outlines the issues with society and the manuals, and thus an anti-manual is created in which her female readership would have understood the implications. The use of multiple female characters, the direct contradiction of the conduct manuals, and the psychological nature of Inchbald's novel disallow this novel from the consideration of dangerous women in eighteenth century literature.

I supplement my consideration of these novels and their feminist messages with readings from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Beauvoir's text argues the illusion of the feminine myth and why women are seen as a "second sex," and thus fits well with the beliefs of the eighteenth-century men who were in control. Wollstonecraft's manifesto is included in this discussion because she created the first manifesto for the rights of women at the end of the eighteenth century. As such, I pose that the ideas of Wollstonecraft were present throughout the eighteenth century before she brought her text to fruition.

In analyzing the dangerous women of these novels, I discuss the authors who created these novels and their right to be considered as feminist authors. I study why these female characters are considered dangerous and expand this question to contemplate how these characters are not the evil women the patriarchy would have a reader believe. I reflect on the punishment of these women and what punishment means to the overall feminist message of the novels; I explore why some characters are punished and others, who seem to be more "dangerous," are not. I prove that these women are in fact not dangerous but are made dangerous

because they reject the patriarchal codes and their restricted place as women. They refuse to be lesser than men and are considered dangerous because their authors are angry, and their rage fills the pages of their novels.

CHAPTER 2

LOVE IN EXCESS

Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess; or, the Fatal Enquiry* (1719-20) is one of the most risqué novels of the eighteenth century. Because of its exploration of the taboo subject of female sexuality, the novel was wildly famous and sold as many copies as Defoe's Robinson Crusoe; however, this novel was suppressed for centuries because of the frankness with which Haywood explored sexuality. The women in *Love in Excess* are dangerous women who showcase feminine desire and pose a threat to social decorum. The female characters are numerous, and each elucidates the treatment of women in different ways. When examining the feminist message presented through *Love in Excess*, it is equally interesting to consider the punishment of her characters, or lack thereof, and the societal meaning of this punishment. However, through an examination of these women, it becomes evident that they are considered "dangerous" because they refuse to have their sexuality and sexual pleasure controlled by their male counterparts.

Eliza Haywood was a very public figure, but little is known about her private life because of "her own self-imposed secrecy about her life" (Schofield). Haywood was liberally educated and married Reverend Valentine Haywood, and until 1719, when *Love in Excess* was published, there is very little known about Haywood other than her being an actress in 1715 (Schofield). After the publication of *Love in Excess*, there is another gap in her narrative, until 1721 when she deserted her husband and the following entry was published in the *Post Boy*:

> Whereas Elizabeth Haywood, Wife of the Reverend Mr. Valentine Haywood, eloped from him her Husband on Saturday the 26th of November last past, and went away without his Knowledge and Consent: This is to give Notice to all Persons in general, That if any one shall trust her either with Money or Good, or if

she shall contract Debts of any kind whatsoever, the said Mr. Haywood will not pay the same. (qtd. by Schofield pg. 2)

Haywood was a dangerous woman for numerous reasons, but perhaps most important was because she essentially secured a divorce before women could divorce their husbands and supported herself and her two children until her death. She made her living through her literary works and wrote mainly novels, and more amazing is that she wrote these novels about and for women. Although the eighteenth century restricted women to the private sphere, created an environment in which women were controlled, and diminished the presence of women in the public world, the birth of the novel created a space where women could read about worlds and fantasy lives of desire. According to Mary Schofield, "What women wanted to read and believe was that their dull, despairing lives, which enslaved them to men legally, financially, and intellectually, were actually the testing grounds of extraordinary heroism" (5). Eliza Haywood's novels answer this need and more, and, according to Ros Ballaster, "consistently addresses an exclusively female audience . . . the figure of the female reader occupies a central place" (40). In addressing a female audience, Haywood like other women writers of the eighteenth century made use of dual writing where they wrote cover stories to obscure their true intent. This use of a dual meaning created a safe space where women could voice their hostility at their positions in society.

From these assertions, certain assumptions can be drawn about Haywood's work. One such assumption is that Haywood did not believe in the place the patriarchy allotted for an eighteenth-century woman. Haywood was a prominent author of her day and greatly respected among her male counterparts, and her novels won her acclaim as the "Great Arbitress of Passion!" (qtd. in David Oakleaf 9). Many of her works, especially *Love in Excess*, are risqué

and present sex and passion without censorship or apology; this is in direct opposition to many of the popular novels of the time such as Daniel Defoe's *Roxana*, whose main character is a woman of pleasure, and yet pleasure is not discussed in the novel nor witnessed by the reader. When Roxana has sex, the narrator turns a blind eye and provides an obscure statement to insinuate the act of intercourse. Meanwhile, Haywood's female characters not only enjoy sex, but they plot to have sex. *Love in Excess* is a novel written because Haywood knew her audience and knew that sex would sell.

Love in Excess was not only published around the same time as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, often considered the first English novel, but it was very popular, and Haywood "became the decade's most popular and prolific novelist" (Oakleaf 7). Despite the popularity of *Love in Excess*, however, the novel and its author were neglected until the late twentieth century; it is hard to believe this was not because of the explicit sexual nature of the novel. Haywood herself began writing more moral novels toward the end of her career because of the transitioning of the literary needs; "Haywood's career, divided between her role as 'arbitress of passion' and that of stern moralizer, is emblematic of the eighteenth century. The age was one of contradictions and dialectics" (Schofield 8). Paralleling her choice of a sexual romance for her first novel, Haywood changed her literary genre based upon the profit margin. In addition to the changing literary scene of the eighteenth century, *Love in Excess* is not a novel that would have been accepted by the audiences of Victorian England, who so shunned the idea of premarital sex that young women knew very little about sex, or their own sexual organs and functions, nor did they understand the male body. The acceptance of such literature would not happen until the twentieth century, so, these dangerous women and their dangerous author would be disremembered. This

intentional removal from the important literature of the eighteenth century makes this novel even more important for the discussion of women's roles in the eighteenth century.

Love in Excess is important because it allows women characters to experience sexual pleasure. This sexual pleasure is found outside of the unrealistic behavior that has previously been assigned to women. The free sexual nature and erotic nature is discussed by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*,

> The erotic experience is one that most poignantly reveals to human beings their ambiguous condition; they experience it as flesh and as spirit, as the other and as subject. Woman experiences this conflict as its most dramatic because she assumes herself first as object and does not immediately find a confident autonomy of pleasure (. . .). (416)

Haywood's characters are unique in this way because many of these women seek the pleasure of sex, and others abstain from sex despite the pleasure they desire. However, the key element of this is that these characters *do* find pleasure in sex and do not merely see sex as a duty to their husbands. The female characters of Haywood's novel although exaggerated are realistic and represent feelings and emotions of her readership.

Modesty and virtue are both extremely important topics when discussing *Love in Excess* and how it relates to women seen as dangerous in the fluctuating eighteenth century. Modesty, virtue, and virginity are tied together in the eighteenth century mind, and yet these characteristics apply only to women; male counterparts were admired for being sexually informed, and their lack of virginity did not impede their marriageability, this is exemplified by Count D'elmont who unabashedly has sex or sexual relationships with most of the women in the novel. D'elmont plays the role of the seventeenth-century rake (modernized for Haywood's purpose), and his

rakish behavior makes him more attractive in some ways. Women of the eighteenth century were expected to remain chaste, and if they did not, they were scorned or lost their reputations, whereas men who were the vehicle of this transgression and were not punished. According to Ballaster:

> Haywood's heroines are both indulged and punished for succumbing to sexual desire. Through this paradoxical movement Haywood's fiction sets about constructing the modern female reader of romance fiction. Erotic fantasy on the part of the woman reader, a heterosexual fantasy of subjugation and self-abandonment, is encouraged in the secure knowledge that ultimately female sexual pleasure will be punished or tamed. This seeming contradiction is the ideology of the text and through Haywood's representation of a 'hystericized' female body. (170)

This punishment of characters is part of Haywood's dual writing; she comments on the position of women and the patriarchy, the female characters she punishes, and thus the type of punishment is decided by how they control their passions in other sects of life.

The characters of *Love in Excess* are interesting for numerous reasons, and their character types and the ways in which they push the boundaries of these types creates the beginning of Haywood's dual message. The male characters Brillian and D'elmont are rakes and are pushed from these traditional male roles because of the women around them. Brillian is at the mercy of Ansellina and, as an extension, Alovisa, and D'elmont is at the mercy of Melliora and Melantha. Brillian is quickly reformed as he seeks the hand of a woman who is allowed choice in partner because of her financial stability. D'elmont, on the other hand, is a rakish character who often attempts to rape female characters. Until D'elmont loses Melliora, he maintains his rakish

attitude. By saving Melliora, he becomes redeemed. The female characters of the novel are more difficult to typify; however, each female is in some way the opposite of the other.

Haywood explores modesty and virtue in comparison to the unreasonable standards expected of women. Through her sense of justice, Haywood doles out punishment based upon the actions which she deems truly inexcusable—this includes the duplicity of friends and other women, and although Haywood must work within the confines of the eighteenth century and some of the characters' fates seem unjust, true punishment is dealt to those who are malicious and dangerous, and this is exampled by Alovisa's punishment versus that of Amena. Haywood respects goodness more than modesty, and because of this her characters are more than the dangerous women they are portraying—*Love in Excess* juxtaposes her sexually dangerous women against the true inequality of societal codes.

The struggle of modesty and virtue is best exemplified by Mary Wollstonecraft in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in which she takes the long-held beliefs of the patriarchy and disqualifies the very foundation of these beliefs. When referring to the virtue of women, Wollstonecraft exposes the fundamental inaccuracy of female modesty:

> modesty must heartily disclaim, and refuse to disclaim, and refuse to dwell with that debauchery of mind, which leads a man coolly to bring forward, without a blush, indecent allusions, or obscene witticisms, in the presence of a fellow-creature, women are now out of the question, for them it is brutality.
>
> This is one of the many instances in which the sexual distinction respecting modesty has proved fatal to virtue and happiness. It is, however, carried still further, and woman — weak woman — made by her education the slave of

> sensibility, is required, on the most trying occasions, to resist that sensibility. (Wollstonecraft 236)

These inaccuracies are explored by Haywood much earlier; she does not equate her female characters as dangerous because of their lack of chastity. She, in fact, allows each woman to experience sexual pleasure as she sees fit; this is Haywood allowing her readership the opportunity to have romantic and sexual lives.

When objectification is combined with modesty and virtue, the issue then has to do with the flesh of women. According to Karen Harvey in "Sexuality and the Body," "the flesh has been a greater burden for women than for men . . . women's bodies were considered responsible for conditions of both a physiological and psychological nature" (78). Women have dealt with this burden of the flesh for centuries, and it has been used by men as a means to control the physiology of woman. Further discussed by Harvey, "even after 1850, the female body was still seen as determining not just women's state of mind, but the activities deemed suitable for them to perform" (78). Men would use this belief of the weakness of female flesh to encourage these feelings towards women, and Haywood would not only use these ideals but prove them wrong and show that women could not only control their flesh but could also control their sexuality. Haywood presents this through both her virtuous character of Melliora and her volatile character of Alovisa.

Haywood's characters are dangerous because they are sexual creatures, and because they enjoy their sexuality. Harvey explains that during the seventeenth century the idea that women could enjoy sex began to disappear; this theory had all but vanished during the eighteenth century, and the theory that prevailed by the end of the century was that "an idea of 'passionlessness' existed which maintained that 'women lacked sexual aggressiveness, that their

sexual appetites contributed a very minor part (if any at all to their motivations, that lustfulness was uncharacteristic'" (qtd. in Harvey 84). The patriarchy feared this equality of male and female forms, women were additionally classified as not being "sexual agents" and thus could be seduced into the act of sex by depraved men (Harvey 84). Alovisa and Amena both reject this idea of restricted female sexuality and are foils of one another in their disproval. Alovisa reacts in jealousy and rage that harms herself and others. When she discovers D'elmont, who has shown no interest in her, has mistaken her letters for Amena's hand, she burns Amena's house so Amena will be caught with a man. Later, when she suspects her husband of cheating, she has a fit of rage in which she harms herself and must be treated like a child; "Alovysa was to apt to give a loose to her passions on every occasion, to the destruction of her own peace . . ." (Haywood 100). In contrast, Amena is betrayed by Alovisa and sent to a nunnery because of her loss of honor and writes to D'elmont saying, "Let Alovysa know I am no more her rival, Heaven has my soul, and I forgive you both" (Haywood 103). Alovisa is given to fits of rage because she is angry about the strictures placed upon her, and Amena has accepted her fate as a woman who was caught defying the patriarchy.

In *Love in Excess* the aforementioned attitudes toward women contribute to their threatening status, but most significant is the objectification of women. The female characters of Haywood's novel either fall prey to their objectification, refute the objectification, or work within the confines of this objectification to make the status of object work to their advantage. The female characters discussed below each use this objectification in numerous ways, and their fate is changed decidedly depending upon this and numerous other circumstances. This objectification is accepted, if not outright encouraged, resulting in rape and abuse. These are not passionless women; these are women who take what they want and disprove the eighteenth-

century feminine ideal. Haywood's treatment of women characters and the presentation of objectification and the reaction was one of the factors in creating the persona of these women as dangerous.

When discussing the dangerous women in the novel, it is important that one starts with Alovisa, the most dangerous of the women. She has a number of flaws, including, her scorn for women whom she perceives as threatening; she openly lusts for a man who has not declared feelings for her, and she coerces a man to marry her for money and to ensure his brother's happiness. Alovisa is conniving in ways that seem inexcusable, and yet she can be seen as the character with the most agency and the most modern woman among her cohort of female characters. For these characteristics, she may have been forgiven all her faults if she had not betrayed other females to better her own life. Alovisa is wealthy and passionate, and she believes herself madly in love with Count D'elmont. It is because of this blind love that she composes an anonymous letter in which she professes love for D'elmont, and from this, the entire novel unfolds.

This letter is where the discussion of Alovisa's modesty and virtue begins. The letter is a symbol of her immodesty for numerous reasons. First, there is the virtue of Alovisa who cannot reveal her love to a man who has not declared himself to her, and yet she sends the fated anonymous letters which are the catalyst for the plot of the novel. This letter reads, "Resistless as you are in war, you are much more so in love. Here you conquer without making an attack, and we surrender before your summons; the law of arms obliges you to show mercy . . ." (Haywood 43). This brazen statement of love serves several purposes and would have allowed Alovisa to be the center of judgment had she been discovered as the letters' author. Alovisa declares her love and charges D'elmont with the fault for this love she cannot control and obliges him to show

mercy to her feelings and to her virtue by not disclosing the contents when he discovers the writer. However, Alovisa has more freedom to write this note because she is rich; and despite the declaring of emotions threatening her virtue, she will not be left destitute without this societal construct of modesty.

The novel goes on to question Alovisa's honor in other ways which deepen beyond herself, and she is given the opportunity to protect or betray Amena. Thus, comes Alovsia's most punishable act in regarding *Love in Excess* as a feminist text—Alovisa is so obsessed with the competition of gaining the count that she betrays Amena, who believes her to be her friend. Unfortunately for Amena, Alovisa is too jealous and too obsessed with competition for the best marriage to focus on creating homosocial bonds. Simone de Beauvoir would further extrapolate the difficulties in female forming lasting bonds in *The Second Sex* saying,

> It is nonetheless rare for feminine complicity to reach true friendship; women feel more spontaneous solidarity with each other than men do, but from within this solidarity they do not transcend toward each other together they are turned toward the masculine world, whose values each hopes to monopolize for herself. Their relations are not built on their singularity, but are lived immediately in their generality: and from there, the element of hostility comes into play. (. . .) Women's mutual understanding lies in the fact that they identify with each other: but then each one competes with her companion. (587)

Women do not inherently hate each other, but in response to a patriarchal society, and perhaps as a result of it, women are pitted against each other and often disallow themselves from forming bonds with other females. Because of Alovisa's obsession with D'elmont, Amena is sacrificed and sentenced to the life of a nun. Because of this betrayal of her own sex, Alovisa marries

D'elmont, who will never care for her, and brings her a life of unhappiness; however, this is not the final punishment of Alovisa as she becomes a worse person as the novel progresses. Alovisa is killed as her final punishment because she cannot control her passionate nature.

Amena is the opposite of Alovisa and her character functions as presenting the 'proper' lady in comparison to Alovisa. However, she is not blameless and is punished for her adultery; however, Haywood's intervention and sense of justice do not allow Alovisa to live happily unscathed. Being sent to the convent is punishment for Amena's sexuality and an extension of the patriarchy—the nunnery is confined by the patriarchally controlled religion, and although women are grouped together, they are not at risk of questioning the patriarchy—it is the perfect confinement for a dangerous woman. Alovisa is married to the unchanged D'elmont and forever unhappy in her earthly life; Alovisa is punished in the only plausible way a woman of means could have been punished. The dichotomy between Alovia and Amena is why the relationship between the two is so important—they are opposites of each other in every way, and their destinies are quite interwoven. Amena's reputation is ruined by D'elmont and Alovisa's betrayal, and she is left in unhappy but with hope for a future separate from men.

Another character, Melliora, is complicated in consideration of the discussion of dangerous female characters—she is innocent and dangerous at once because she is the model of an eighteenth-century woman. She wants D'elmont, and yet her sense of honor keeps her from acting on these urges and keeps her safe from D'elmont's rape. Melliora is perhaps the most dangerous woman because she understands her passion and restricts it, so she does not betray her fellow woman. Despite being the "perfect" eighteenth-century paragon, Melliora is the most feminist character. She accepts her sexual attraction to D'elmont and yet she abstains from acting on this urge because of her understanding of the consequences of betraying a fellow woman and

of being a mistress and when D'elmont is at the point of raping her she "unmans" D'elmont with her tears and says, "O! D'elmont . . . cruel D'elmont! Will you then take advantage of my weakness? I confess I feel for you, a passion far beyond all, that yet, ever bore the name of love, that I no longer can withstand . . . but leave my honour free!" (Haywood 129). Melliora is the only character able to control her sexual urges.

Melantha, on the other hand, is unashamedly sexual and is the female counterpart of D'elmont. Her character as a female rake is quite extraordinary—she is not only a rake, but she is a woman of title. Melantha is both the most likable and most dangerous woman of the novel—she is funny, quirky and malicious, and the danger of Melantha is easily forgiven because she transcends any questionable actions through of her usage of D'elmont who has almost made it his profession to objectify young women. While D'elmont and party stay at Baron Espernay's estate, D'elmont has planned to bed Melloria through deception; and unbeknownst to him, Espernay plans to bed Alovisa. However, Melantha in need of revenge and wanting D'elmont switches the rooms of the intended parties and tricks D'elmont into having sex with her. Once the plot has been exposed, her brother condemns her as "shame of thy sex, and everlasting blot and scandal of the noble house" (Haywood 151). In this scene, Melantha conquers D'elmont and switches the narrative of female subjugation, she is a character who meticulously plots to have sex with a man in the way D'elmont plots to rape Melliora. Despite what should be her greatest shame, the loss of her virtue and modesty, Melantha controls her own modesty and self by revealing herself, and though frightened, she belittles her brother saying:

> "I vow I do not know what you mean by all this bustle, neither am I guilty of any crime. I was vext indeed to be made a property of and changed beds with Melliora

> for a little innocent revenge; for I always designed to discover my self to the Count time enough to prevent much mischief." (Haywood 151)

This is, of course, a lie, but the reader can believe this message is provided from Haywood herself as she does not punish Melantha and in fact allows her to be married with a good fortune and is never suspected although, "she brought him a child in seven months after her wedding" (Haywood 165). Melantha is not punished because she is a woman who has courage, her own agency, and can navigate her way in a man's world.

Violetta is another interesting character, especially in the discussion of dangerous women—she is virtuous overall and one of the most moral people in the novel, male or female. She is introduced in book three and warns Frankville and D'elmont of plots made against them. Although breaking the confidence of Camilla, she does so in hopes of helping her and righting all wrongs. Violetta's need to help the others, mixed with her feelings for D'elmont, combine and she disguises herself as a page boy to accompany him in his quest to save Mellioria. Violetta's eventual death is the result of her pretending to be the page boy and being exposed to the elements. Her death is the one that at first glance seems to make the least sense, and yet in this fictional world only the dangerous women who know how to live within the confines of the eighteenth century can survive. Violetta is kind and caring and appears to be the perfect "angel in the house" who would serve a husband happily, but she cannot survive to be compared the other women characters. Additionally, for the novel to have a happy-ever-after ending, true love must prevail.

Love in Excess appears to be the story of Count D'elmont, and yet this does not detract from the feminist message of these women. The appearance of Haywood's novel being about the rakish male lead is merely a façade for the story of these women. D'elmont cannot be forgotten

because his character unites the numerous female characters who would have otherwise never have crossed paths, and there is no sexual story without the handsome rake. D'elmont transforms as he comes in contact with the different type of women throughout the novel, and this transformation is almost as important as the characteristics of the dangerous women. He begins the novel as the rake who targets the young and unsuspecting Amena without remorse and forever changes the course of her life. Amena allows him to see the cruelty and vindictive nature of his wife, Alovisa, who ensured Amena trapped in a monastery. Alovisa is jealous, temper-driven and a horrible friend. When she is killed, D'elmont feels horror and sorrow, and yet he yearns for Melliora.

Melliora is the catalyst for D'elmont's change. Numerous aspects account for this change, but none is more important than his attempted rape of her. However, her tears stop him, "wound me no more with such untimely sorrows. I cannot bear thy tears, by Heaven they sink in to my soul, and quite unman me . . ." (129). This unmanning of D'elmont is the unmanning of his physiological self, and because of this he can no longer see women in the way that he has. When he learns of Violetta's admiration, he vows to stay away from her and not cause her pain; and when he learns she has been with him throughout his journey, he mourns for her and is unable to even enjoy Melloria. D'elmont becomes the man who does not objectify women and appreciates them as human beings. He finds joy in giving joy to Melloria, and because of this, he and Melloria are given their happily ever after. By creating this transformed rake, the duality of the novel is complete, men are the cause of women's problems and women cannot condone these misogynistic ideas.

Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* breaks most social conventions of the eighteenth century. Through this erotic novel, Haywood presents a feminist message for a world that had

not yet found the equality and worth of women. Through the frank exploration of female sexuality, the meaning of dangerous women is extracted, and these women are presented not as dangerous but as wanting—wanting agency, wanting sexuality, and wanting equality. These female characters threaten the feminine ideal of the eighteenth century through the dual nature of Haywood's novel—while the surface story is a romance, the underlying meaning is purely feminist. The punishment of characters coincides with the meaning of their actions and not the actions themselves—a character is not punished for having sex with a married man; however, a character is punished for having no value for others. Through this examination it becomes clear that these women are not dangerous; they are trailblazers for the future feminist movement.

CHAPTER 3

ROXANA

Daniel Defoe's *Roxana; the Fortunate Mistress* (1724) is an interesting novel that seems filled with contradictions, especially when related to the novel's namesake. Roxana is a self-serving woman who is classified as a dangerous because she is a vain mistress who abandons her children. Despite these qualms with her character, Roxana is without options when she loses her "virtue." *Roxana* presents a woman who is left in poverty because of her dependence on her husband for financial stability. Roxana is a destitute woman who must become a woman of pleasure. The heroine becomes a "Man-Woman," and because of this she is dangerous to the patriarchy; she becomes the "protestant whore" because she can no longer be a woman who adheres to middle-class morality. *Roxana* is a proto-feminist novel in which the heroine becomes a dangerous woman in order to survive.

Daniel Defoe's first novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, was published the same year as Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess*; however, Defoe's first novel was not a woman's story as *Roxana* would be. According to Paula Backscheider, "Defoe intended *Roxana* to be a 'woman's novel" (182). This can be seen in numerous ways, most importantly by Defoe's having Roxana be her own narrator (excepting the sometimes damning interventions of his own that are disguised as her qualms). Additionally, he "join[ed] Dryden and other writers in extending the idea of literature beyond the narrow confines of the classical conception—to include periodical essays, history, biography, memoirs, and travel books, all forms of that every era since the Renaissance has found troublesome" (Backscheider 5). This, coupled with Defoe's desire to create a "woman's novel," creates a space for him as the writer of a text that debates the rights of women and the patriarchal society, despite, and perhaps aided by, his being male.

In consideration of dangerous women in eighteenth-century novels, Roxana is probably the *most* dangerous. She is "The Fortunate Mistress" and with this comes numerous connotations. Roxana is fortunate when compared with women of her class and according to Shawn Lisa Maurer, she is "the securer of her own economic and emotional stability" (373). According to Roxana, "I was a Whore, yet I was a Protestant Whore" (Defoe 69). Through this admission come many revelations. First Roxana calls herself a whore, which can result in certain judgments: but continuing to call herself a Protestant whore raises many images—most important for the discussion of dangerous women is the image of Nell Gwyn, one of Charles II's mistresses. Nell Gwyn declared she was a protestant whore so she would not be aligned with the Catholic religion of Charles II's brother who would become James II. Using the image of Nell Gwyn, Roxana calls herself a whore and a mistress. This admission, coupled with Defoe's reference to her as "the fortunate mistress," creates a female character who becomes a mistress not only to survive, but also to thrive.

The long eighteenth century was a period in which the women were still controlled and dependent on their husbands. The late eighteenth-century feminist text, *Vindications of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft, best summarizes the separation of men and women during the century saying,

> In the middle rank of life . . . men, in their youth, are prepared for professions, and marriage is not considered as the grand feature of their lives; whilst women, on the contrary, have no other scheme to sharpen their faculties. It is not business, extensive plans, or any of the excursive flights of ambition, that engross their attention; no, their thoughts are not employed in rearing such noble structures. To rise in the world, and have the liberty of running from pleasure to pleasure, they

> must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their person often legally prostituted. (152)

This is exemplified by *Roxana* in which the heroine's husband bankrupts the brewery that is the source of all their income. Before this inevitable bankruptcy, Roxana begs her husband to change his ways: "[she] attempted several times to perswade him to apply himself to his Business; I put him in Mind how his Customers complain'd of the Neglect of his Servant on one hand, and how abundance broke in his Debt . . ." (Defoe 10). This is one of Roxana's numerous attempts to convince her husband to be more business-savvy, and he discounts her because a man cannot listen to a woman about business, despite "brewing being one of the trades previously dominated by women that had been turned over to men in the course of the later seventeenth century and early eighteenth centuries" (Maurer 371). This removal of women from the workforce created a sphere in which middle-class women were relegated solely to the private sector. As a result, intelligent women like Roxana suffered for their husband's inadequacies because they were under his care and supervision. Roxana proves later in the text that she is a competent businesswoman who handles her finances and makes investments in a way that assures they will always be replenished regardless of her status as a mistress.

Further, according to Wollstonecraft's criticism, Roxana is already prostituted before she becomes a mistress. The practice of marriage prostituted young women to the highest bidder and most advantageous man; in this Roxana is even failed—her husband is a failure. However, with this in mind, it becomes clear that Roxana is given two options in her life—be a good wife and hope her husband doesn't abandon her and bankrupt them or turn to her own ingenuity. Young women in Roxana's class were trained to dance, sing, do needlepoint, and other activities that could be completed in the private sphere, but they were not shown how to live without a man;

however, Roxana shows knowledge for running a brewery and for managing her money when she is independent.

Roxana is presented to the audience as a strong, independent woman who must become a dangerous woman because of the situation forced upon her. For the first portion of the novel, Roxana follows the prescribed life plan of a woman of her time—she is a dutiful daughter, she marries a wealthy man, and she has five children and a home that she cares for. Roxana, however, can no longer fulfill these roles when her husband wastes all of their money and abandons her. Her father has left her money to a brother who has lost his fortune and hers as well, and her husband's family will not provide for her and her children. Roxana is destitute because she has followed the prescribed path for women. All of Roxana's problems revolve around marriage and a man's control; Roxana describes the unfortunate match with her husband saying,

> . . .like other young People of our Sex, I chose him for being a handsome, jolly Fellow, as I have said; for he was otherwise a weak, empty-headed, untaught Creature, as any Woman could ever desire to be coupled with: And here I must take the Liberty, whatever I have to reproach myself with in my after-Conduct, to turn to my Fellow-Creatures, the Young Ladies of this Country, and speak to them, by way of Precaution, If you have any Regard for your future Happiness; any View of living comfortably with a Husband; any Hope of preserving your Fortunes, or restoring them after any Disaster; Never, Ladies, marry a Fool; any Husband rather than a Fool; with some other Husbands you may be unhappy, but with a Fool you will be miserable; with another Husband you *may*, I say, be unhappy, but with a Fool you *must* . . .

> be even an Old Maid, the worst of Nature's Curses, rather than take up with a Fool. (Defoe 7-8)

Roxana knows that because of her foolish choice in a husband based upon his looks and ability to dance are the cause of her downfall. Additionally, the suggestion lingers that if Roxana were given agency and control of her own money she would not have fallen into ruin, and throughout the rest of the novel, that is proved. According to Mona Scheurmann in *Her Bread to Earn*,

> she [Roxana] tries to warn him [her husband] into better methods. Clearly, if Roxana were in charge, the business would not fail. (. . .) These accounts set up the dynamics of the novel, focusing the reader's attention on Roxana's helplessness even in the face of her own good business sense" (36).

Roxana's true ruin is not because her husband is a fool, but because she is not given control of her own life and the fortune that was her namesake. Roxana is forced into being an independent woman because of her husband's failure.

Roxana is at her husband's mercy while they are married, but when he leaves her and their five children to starve, she is free of his rule. She sends her children to relatives of her husbands and sheds the role of wife and mother and as such becomes free of the bondage placed upon her from birth. She is no longer beholden to any man—her father is dead, her husband deserted, and her brother is imprisoned because of debt. According to Simone de Beauvoir, "Since the cause of women's oppression is found in the resolve to perpetuate the family and keep the patrimony intact, if she escapes the family, she escapes this total dependence as well . . ." (96). Through this path, Roxana becomes almost reborn—she sheds the status of wife and mother and is only a young, beautiful woman in need of money.

This need for money creates a space for the landlord, who has been ruthless and removed Roxana's property for payment of rent, to come to dine with her and her maid. He is obviously enamored with Roxana, but he cannot marry her because he is married but separated from his wife. Before he has made an actual offer to Roxana, Amy encourages her mistress not to deny the landlord if he should ask, and Roxana, still deceived in thinking that virtue is available to a woman destitute in the eighteenth century, continues her discussion with Amy:

> No, I'd starve first.
>
> I hope not, Madam, I hope you would be wiser; I'm sure if he will set you up, as he talks of, you ought to deny him nothing; and you will starve if you do not consent, that's certain
>
> What consent to lye with him for Brea? *Amy*, said I, How can you talk so?
>
> Nay, Madam, *says Amy*, I don't think you would for any thing else; it would not be Lawful for any thing else, but for Bread, Madam; why nobody can starve, there's no bearing that, I'm sure. (Defoe 28)

This exchange continues, and Amy states, "Honesty is out of the Question, when Starving is the Case; are not we almost starv'd to Death?" (Defoe 28). Amy, unlike her mistress, recognizes both the severity of their position and the incomprehensible and unobtainable notion of female virtue. She knows that neither of them has the option of virtue so long as they are at risk of being poor or dead; and as an abandoned woman, Roxana will forever be at risk of this, no matter the amount of money she amasses, because she has no legal standing in the society.

The complexity of virtue is at the heart of the *Roxana* and the reason why Roxana is considered a dangerous woman and "one of the newly fascinating evil women" characters (Backsheider 186). This question and losing of virtue is the main tenet of being a dangerous

woman; this question links *Love in Excess*, *Roxana* and *A Simple Story*. Roxana yields her virtue to the landlord, and from this point forward she has found a way to be independent and possess her own money because the merchant promises her in their "marriage contract" that

> he engag'd himself to me [her]; to cohabit constantly with me [her]; to provide for me in all Respects as a Wife; and repeating in the Preamble, a long Account of the Nature and Reason of our living together, and an Obligation in the Penalty of 7000 l. never to abandon me; and at last, shew'd me a Bond for 500 l. to be paid to me, or to my Assigns, within three Months after his Death. (Defoe 42)

Through this contract, Roxana is forever changed and is given a taste of the financial freedom that women of the eighteenth century, except for widows and spinsters, did not know. This is a notion highly supported by Defoe, who wrote in his *Complete English Tradesman*, "Those who are unkind, haughty, and imperious, who will not trust their wives, because they will not make them useful, that they may not value themselves upon it, and make themselves, as it were, equal to their husbands" and "those who are afraid their wives should be let into the grand secret of all—namely to know they're bankrupt and undone, and worth nothing" (qtd. by Maurer 370). In this passage, Defoe assigns to women the intelligence to understand and assist in the public sphere and denounces those husbands who would keep their wives beholden for control.

Although one cannot assume that Defoe supports Roxana's becoming a prostitute, this is the best and, often, the only option for women abandoned by their husbands. Roxana is made economically affluent by divorcing herself from her previous self, and Maurer contends that Roxana's greatest transgression is her

> desire for an economic existence independent of men, whether they be fools, such as her brewer husband, or exemplars like the Dutch merchant. By attacking

> marriage as a form of servitude and failing to marry in order to make an 'honest woman' of herself, Roxana both challenges and ominously threatens a developing order based on women's supposedly inherent difference from men, a difference embodied 'naturally' in both their sexual vulnerability and financial dependence. (364)

This financial dependence is forced upon the women under the patriarchy by the transfer of money and land to the sons or closest male heir. In eighteenth-century England, women were disallowed from being more than the angel of the house, and beauty was more important than other aspects of personhood; because of this Roxana chooses a fool for a husband.

Unlike the sexual female characters in *Love in Excess*, who are dangerous because they expressly exhibit their sexuality, Roxana never actually has *obvious* sex in the novel (although children are born), for just before any sexual activity occurs, the narrator cuts the scene and the reader wonders if the characters have had intercourse. Because of this, it becomes quite clear that Roxana's interest is in money rather than sex and in safeguarding herself from the ways the patriarchy failed her. Roxana is a character who purports agency for her fellow women and challenges them to make their own way in the world. And yet this is a vision which Roxana understands cannot happen yet, because even her own livelihood is always precarious.

The true issue of Roxana's being an abandoned wife that she is still a wife and "the laws if England do not allow for divorce in cases of desertion . . ." (Scheuermann 38-39). As such, it seems that Roxana additionally champions granting divorce to deserted women who may otherwise suffer her own fate. According to Shirlene Mason in *Daniel Defoe and the Status of Women*, "Although Defoe does not approve of divorce, his fictional characters would indicate that he at least sympathizes with the plight of those who had irreparably bad marriages. He uses

marital highjinks of his heroes and heroines to illustrate the fault laws of the time," (78). Roxana, although free of her wifely and motherly duties, must avoid her husband and children because if she's discovered, she will lose her fortune. She may lose her fortune because her husband chooses to reclaim her, because she is his property under eighteenth-century marriage laws, or because she will be exposed as a mistress or prostitute and she most likely be jailed, or at the least shunned because her "refusal to remain within the sphere of 'proper'—which is to say chaste and dependent—sexual and economic behavior poses a similar threat to emerging eighteenth-century beliefs about women's proscribed domestic roles" (Maurer 365). By becoming independent and mistress of her own fortune, Roxana is a threat to the establishment.

Roxana's courtships are monogamous and dependent on monetary necessity, and although she has sex as an act of earning money and not for her own pleasure, she is mistress to only one man at a time, unlike a true prostitute who would sleep with any cull[1] offering her the price for sex. Roxana again threatens the patriarchal society by exposing another level of inadequacy of the century's marriage practices. Roxana chooses and accepts these relationships of her own will, and these relationships more aptly safeguard her from calamity than the legal marriage accepted by the government. Although Roxana is monogamous to these men, both her landlord/jeweler and her prince are married. The jeweler's wife is a non-issue because she has rejected her husband; however, the Princess has not rejected her husband, and her character is the opposite of Roxana's and echoes *A Simple Story* and the dichotomy of Miss Milner and Matilda. Additionally, where Matilda proves the problematic outcome of a girl raised by the conduct manuals, the Princess is "Beauty, Wit, and a thousand good Qualities, superior not to most Women, but even to all her Sex" (Defoe 107). Maurer reiterates this: "If the Princess, a paragon

[1] A cull being the British harlot's customer. This is the eighteenth-century equivalent to a "john" in modern day vernacular.

of virtue . . . cannot reform her husband except through her early death, then what are less endowed women to hope for? Indeed the Princess functions here as a caricature of the patient and passive wife, whose good behavior, rather than criticism, supposedly turns a profligate rake into an 'ideal husband'" (376). Roxana's being a mistress is not the issue; the issue is the ownership of women and the broken system in which men can abuse and neglect their wives without repercussions or the possibility of being divorced—women are forced into servitude by a system that is meant to "protect" them.

During Roxana's time with her prince, she encounters her first husband, and this changes many of her actions throughout the rest of the novel. Before, Roxana had wished she could marry the jeweler for the continued protection and income; however, when Amy inquires after the husband, she discovers that he is a scoundrel who lies to steal money from people whom he never plans to reimburse. When this information is imparted to Roxana, she muses saying,

> satisfied that he was the same worthless Thing he had ever been, I threw off all Thoughts of him; whereas, had he been a Man of and Sence, and of any Principle of Honour, I had it in my Thoughts to retire to *England* again, send for him over, and have liv'd honestly with him: But as *a Fool* is the worst of Husbands to a Woman Good, so *a Fool* is the worst Husband a Woman can do Good to: I wou'd willingly have done him Good, but he was not qualified to receive it, or make the best Use of it; had I sent him ten Thousand Crowns, instead of eight Thousand Livres, and sent it with express Condition, that he should immediately have bought himself the Commission he talk'd of, with Part of the Money, and have sent some of it to relieve the Necessities of his poor miserable Wife at *London*, and to prevent his Children to be kept at the Parish, it was evident, he wou'd have

> been still but a private Tropper, and his Wife and Children should still have starved . . . (Defoe 93-94)

This meeting with her first husband creates in Roxana a character whom Defoe can forgive for her trespasses and who is thus not punished for her crimes, despite it often appearing she will be punished. Roxana wishes to control her money and her life but will not do so at the hands of the foolish man who did not care if she and her their children starved and died.

Roxana's finances are a large portion of the novel's focus, and as Defoe himself was a merchant, this is to be expected; however, it cannot be overlooked that Roxana is in control of these finances and from the time she becomes mistress of her own life and fortunes she "does not merely worry about keeping her money safe she actively works at the investment of her fortune" (Scheueramann 44). These finances and her need to keep all her money and remain free and in charge of these finances brings the reader to Roxana's meeting with the Dutch Merchant. This first encounter with the Dutch merchant comes very soon after Roxana spies her husband, and as such after she becomes pregnant with the merchant's child she refuses to marry him. She argues that she cannot give up her freedom, and although he offers her terms of freedom in their marriage, she knows that

> in contemporary law, of course, gender and marital status determine a person's legal profile, for the fact of being a woman and married effectively eliminates the person's status as an individual under the law—legally, the married woman essentially loses her right to own and control property. Having experiences marriage, Roxana has no desire to be married (. . .). (Scheuermann 46)

Roxana will not marry the Dutch merchant, despite the fact that their finances combined would leave them both well off, because she has been married and knows that despite his pretty words,

once she is legally his wife, he will control her fortune and what she does with the money. This is a life that the once starving Roxana cannot accept. This is the reason why Roxana continues to be a mistress well after she is rich; she cannot accept the idea of ever being destitute again.

The merchant offers Roxana a marriage that he says will allow her to rule her money as her own and have no control over such. Roxana is impressed by his offer of "equal" marriage, but she understands that despite his words and good intentions, the only way for a woman to be equal to a man is to be single. There are several issues with the merchant offering Roxana equality; the first is that this is an offer that should not be made. Roxana should be free because she is equal to a man. Second, because under the law of the land the merchant can revoke these terms of marriage whenever he so chooses because Roxana and her money would become his property.

Her refusal of marriage continues when Roxana's good friend Sir Robert Clayton proposes that the merchant wishes to marry her. Roxana allows him to discuss the merchant and what he can bring to her and then replies saying:

> I knew no State of Matrimony, but what was, at best, a State of Inferiority, if not of Bondage; that I had no Notion of it; that I liv'd a Life of absolute Liberty now; was free as a I was born, and having a plentiful Fortune, I did not understand what Coherence the words *Honour* and *Obey* had with the Liberty of a Free *Woman*; that I knew no Reason the Men had to engross the whole Liberty of the Race, and make the Women, notwithstanding any desparity of Fortune, be sunject to the Laws of Marriage, of their own making; that it was my Misfortune to be a Woman, but I was resolv'd it shou'd not be made worse by the Sex; and seeing

> Liberty seem'd to be the Men's Property, I would be a *Man-Woman*; for as I was born free, I wou'd die so. (Defoe 171)

To this Clayton smiles and says that she talks "a kind of *Amazonian* language" (Defoe 171). This connotation of an Amazonian describes Roxana well and enhances the feminist ideals of this novel. Roxana is now more than a mistress; she is aligned with the mighty Amazonian warriors who rejected men except for childbearing and ruled themselves.

Just before Roxana moves in with the Quaker she contemplates, "*Why am I a Whore now?*" (Defoe 202). The answer to this question is important because of what it means. Roxana has plenty of money and has the ability to live well without being a mistress. She responds to herself saying, ". . .as Necessity first debauch'd me, and Poverty made me a whore at the beginning; so excess of Avarice for getting Money, and excess Vanity, continued me in Crime . . ." (Defoe 202). Roxana is still a mistress because necessity and poverty are still her fear—nothing is certain for an independent woman. She cannot allow herself to stop because she is scared that she will sink back to poverty.

Roxana is a feminist work in which the heroine becomes a mistress and through her loss of virtue gains the financial security and freedom unavailable to women during the era. Roxana is not dangerous because of her being mistress, because she abandoned her children, or because she relinquishes her virtue for money—Roxana is dangerous because she threatens the patriarchy and establishes the ineptitude of the system and proves that women can understand finances and the public sphere as well as men. Roxana is dangerous because she shatters the separate sphere mentality and the marriage system of the century. Roxana is a dangerous woman because she demands rights the patriarchal society refused her and other women.

CHAPTER 4

A SIMPLE STORY

A Simple Story (1791) by Elizabeth Inchbald is a novel with two distinct parts and two heroines. The first half of the novel is the story of Miss Milner, a rich heiress whose father has left her the inheritor of his estate. The first half of the novel presents a heroine reacting against the conduct manuals of the era. The second half of the novel is the story of Milner's daughter, Matilda Elmwood, whose story is the opposite of her mother's. Unlike her mother, Matilda follows the prescribed rules of conduct. Miss Milner's situation puts her above many women of the eighteenth century, who were left destitute if a parent died before a daughter was married or if her father's property was willed to his closest male kin. Milner lives a life of luxury before and after her father's death and is unable to conform to Dorriforth's (Lord Elmwood) view of the proper place and discipline of women when he becomes her guardian. Milner's fight for power and agency is the major factor in her fall from grace and for her reputation as a dangerous woman. This struggle for power creates the dichotomy between herself and her daughter where her daughter must suffer the repercussions of wanting to be her mother's opposite.

Elizabeth Inchbald herself challenged the societal norms of the eighteenth century and angered many of the men who felt threatened by her education and sensibility. She was an actress, a playwright, a novelist and critic. Quoted in "Sexual Politics in Elizabeth Inchbald," James Boaden explains, "There is something unfeminine . . . in a lady's placing herself in the seat of judgment . . . [the essay] added but little to her fortune and nothing whatever to her fame" (qtd. by Anna Lott 635). According to Lott, "Inchbald's entire corpus of work was radical, and her defiant stance toward social norms distressed readers like Boaden" (635). Inchbald had a prominent feminist stance, and it is not a stretch for *A Simple Story* to be read as such. Inchbald

wanted equality and agency for herself, and she wanted other women to demand these rights as well.

Reading and understanding *A Simple Story* as a feminist text can seem convoluted because of the nature of the novel and the outcome for the women. However, when the two halves are read as connected sections with a shared message, Miss Milner and Matilda Elmwood become characters who form a statement against the treatment and place of women in the eighteenth century. This novel creates a shift in the dialogue of what it means to be a dangerous woman character. Milner searches to find a way to live outside of the bounds of societal rules and her daughter chooses to live within these bounds. The first half is the story of Miss Milner and a reaction against conduct manuals and the societal norms of the century. Milner reacts against the patriarchy by ignoring the conduct manuals while simultaneously attempting to live within the patriarchal structure by marrying a man who has already been given control of her. The second half is the story of Milner and Dorriforth's daughter, Matilda. Matilda Elmwood has been educated by Sandford, a priest and Dorriforth's friend, and the conduct manuals, and unlike her mother has been taught from a young age to accept the commandments from those who control her. By understanding how these halves are different and related, one can read the novel as an entirely feminist text, whereas other critical readings create a large disconnect between the two stories and the two heroines.

Milner's half of the novel is a reaction against conduct manuals and their growing popularity in the eighteenth century. This popularity was in response to the rising middle class (although they were used for some upper-class women as well) to combat the formation of early feminist ideas. These societal changes created a class of women who were beginning to revolt against the treatment of women in large numbers. According to Kathryn Sutherland, the position

of being a woman and of belonging to the middle class "was to be in a position of agency and influence in the formation of social relations" (25). Conduct manuals were frequent during the eighteenth-century and

> the growing fashion for these conduct books in Britain in the course of the eighteenth-century provided a transitional aristocratic-to-bourgeois culture with a new language in which to conceptualise and articulate its changing institutional relations. In such books, a set of 'rules for sexual exchange', derived from a 'grammar' of female subjectivity, are invoked in order to establish the desired domestic relations and practices of an apparently non-political, private sphere. (Sutherland 26)

Miss Milner refuses to live by these "assumptions of 'natural' gender difference with . . . 'proper' or 'suitable' behavior" (Sutherland 26). By Milner being a member of the gentry who refuses to live by these codes, she sends a message to the upper and newly emerging middle classes. Studying the novel as an anti-conduct manual, the reader is able to fully appreciate this as being an early feminist text. Using a member of the aristocratic class provides a wider-arching message in which the aristocracy is allowed to rebel against these societal codes and expectations, and the blossoming middle-class is given the impactful message that they should not follow the conduct manuals aimed at them.

Miss Milner, however, is unlike the female characters in *Love in Excess* and in *Roxana*. She is not a dangerous woman because she manipulates men for sex and/or love, nor does she manipulate to survive. Milner is not inherently manipulative; she does not plan to fall in love with her guardian (who is a priest); she does not plan her actions to attract him, nor does she even plan to be adulterous after he marries her. There are times when she plans to create

jealousy, but they are ill-conceived plans that have an adverse effect. Her only true form of manipulation is when she writes the letter to be given to Lord Elmwood on her death, and that is to save her daughter Matilda. Milner, unlike other dangerous female characters, is a character who proves her feminist agenda without being more flawed or dangerous than other women; her only dangerous act is wanting to be a woman free from subjugation.

Milner's subjugation begins at her first introduction to the reader. She is known only by her surname, first Miss Milner and then as Lady Elmwood. This gives her only the minimal appearance of being a person and foreshadows her total objectification. By not giving her a forename, she is stripped of her identity as a woman and is given identity only as it pertains to the men in her life (first her father and then her husband). This removal of person foreshadows what will become of Milner; despite her resistance, she is never equal to the men in her life, and after her marriage, she will become the property of Dorriforth (later Lord Elmwood). Milner chooses to resist the patriarchy while benefiting from it, and this is her downfall. Milner attempts to change the system from within and following the rules as she chooses; this cannot work, and as evidenced by *Roxana*, women often must forsake or ignore the role of wife and mother before they can live outside the structure of society. Milner who inherited her father's fortune could have rejected marriage and continued to live her life in contempt of the rules of a male-dominated society; however, by marrying she becomes the property of Elmwood and cannot live outside of these bounds.

Before Dorriforth meets Miss Milner, he inquires about her character, presumably hoping she is a woman who lives by the established rules of conduct and exhibits the behavior of the angel of the house. He is instead informed this dangerous woman is "a young, idle, indiscreet, giddy girl, with half a dozen lovers in her suite. . ." (Inchbald 9). Mrs. Horton, who wants

Dorriforth to have this disconcerting impression of his young ward, reassures him saying, "you (Dorriforth) will soon convert her from all her evil ways" (Inchbald 10). This first picture of Milner shapes the outcome of the story and the overall feelings about her; she is damned to being fixed and converted. These other women in the household dislike her because she is freer than they could ever hope to be, and because of this envy they begin to sabotage her.

Society made it difficult for women to form lasting female friendships. They were seldom given the option to have freedoms their husbands did not allow. Milner displaces this expectation by befriending Miss Woodley; but even then, she can only befriend Woodley because she is not competition. Woodley is a spinster with no hope of marriage. An interesting circumstance of Woodley's character, however, is that she is free and could become a model for Milner on how to live in the world without a husband. But Miss Milner, raised to believe she was meant for marriage (her education and training being to make her more attractive to men) cannot forsake the idea of being a wife, despite her need for independence and freedom. Women were outside of the public sphere, were seen as a second-sex, and other-worldly. This otherworldly ideal and myth is described by Simone de Beauvoir as "the myth of woman, sublimating an immutable aspect of the human condition—namely, the "division" of humanity into two classes of individuals" (1265). Women are dangerous because they are other, and because they contradict the idea of man by being "flesh-and-blood" (Beauvoir 1265). This myth is the reason for the "angel in the house" and the separate sphere mentality: "Few myths have been more advantageous to the ruling caste than the myth of woman: it justifies all privileges and even authorizes their abuse" (Beauvoir 1267). Milner is dangerous because she discredits the idea of women being mythical; she discards her place and says, "As my guardian, I certainly did obey him; and I could obey him as my husband; but as lover, I will not" (Inchbald 154). This will be

Milner's downfall; she is unable to understand that being a wife makes her the possession of her husband and thus unable to have the freedom of an unattached woman.

The morning after Milner meets her guardian, the reader is introduced to the true Milner. The narrator insists that although Milner is beautiful and virtuous, she is flawed because she is human; and as to not mislead the reader, she is a "frail mortal . . . [and] if Miss Milner had more faults than generally belong to others, she had likewise more temptations" (Inchbald 14). Thus the feminine myth begins to crumble. Miss Milner cannot be mythical because she is human. The narrator insists upon this fact and assumes that the female readership of the eighteenth century would have thought of themselves at this point. This begins to discredit the forming impression of Milner as a dangerous woman; she is a flawed human, but she is not evil. This is an important and pivotal moment as the modern reader is never deceived about Milner, but in the eighteenth-century Milner (as a real woman or character) would have been the object of gossip, like Inchbald. This is what makes Milner, the character, and Inchbald, the author, dangerous eighteenth-century women.

Miss Milner, although a force against the conduct books and the standards for women, embraces some of the popular tenets of womanhood and femininity. Milner refuses to be less lavish because of her relationship with Dorriforth, she refuses to head the command of her guardian/fiancé and as such she defies the codes she would be expected to follow. Additionally, as the novel continues and she commits adultery, it becomes certain that Milner was unable to relegate her own whims despite the conduct manuals and her subservience as a wife. She takes pity on Dorriforth's nephew Rushbrook, and she forgives Sandford; this morality and her other virtuous traits, redeem her in the eyes of Sandford who eventually becomes her champion when he sees she is not the frivolous coquette of her youth. By not entirely discounting the standards of

womanhood, Inchbald's text would have been more readily accepted by the readership of its time and would have made Milner's flaws more pardonable.

Milner's less virtuous traits of vanity and frivolity were actions and feelings for which the contemporary readership would have decided made Milner a dangerous woman for Elmwood to marry. Most, especially the older readership, would have cheered for Elmwood when he calls off their engagement because she has been at a party he forbade her to attend. This is when Milner makes her proclamation about when she will and will not obey Dorriforth, and there would have been some women readers who agreed. Miss Milner demands to spend her money how she wants, attend the parties she chooses to attend, and talk with the men she wants to talk with.

Milner and Elmwood's marriage is ordained by Sandford in the last pages of volume two and is made possible by each being brought to the fear of losing the other. After the end of the engagement, Milner looks "deathly by her countenance" and is unable to eat or drink (Inchbald 182). This look does not leave her, nor does she contain the same gaiety or hope for Elmwood to love her as before; she is no longer testing his love, nor does she believe herself the person who should be allowed happiness. On seeing this countenance of Milner and Elmwood, Sandford declares they should be wed or never see each other again. During the nuptials Elmwood places a ring from his hand on hers, and "looking on the ring Lord Elmwood had put upon her finger, in haste, when he married her, she perceived it was a—MOURNING RING" (Inchbald 193). This ring is a foreshadowing of the death of their love, or it can be read as the death of Milner, both literally and figuratively. Through this marriage, Milner's claim to being her own person dies, and she will die as well.

On further examining Milner's marriage, it is important to notice how Milner is able to marry Elmwood because she is penitent, and her dangerous self has been seemingly crushed by

the loss of her beloved. This, according to Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, is Miss Milner's true folly and the cause of her downfall; she is too sentimental:

> Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings, and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (Wollstonecraft 313)

Because Milner is taught that a man is a necessity for her future worth, she cannot find her other duties in life. She is not given the option to contribute politically, nor is she given the option to be a self-serving woman as Elmwood never truly envisions; she will marry, and marriage takes away her agency to give way to happiness. This seems to be the end for Miss Milner and her dangerous ways, until the second half of the novel when the reader finds her on her deathbed and learns of her adultery. This surprise turn of events makes way for her daughter's story and for the demise of a woman who only wanted to please the men in her life but was broken from the start. The outcome of Milner creates in the novel a reversal of the conduct manuals in which Milner becomes the victim of her limited knowledge of the finer workings of the patriarchy and is unable to survive. Milner is a feminist martyr, and she dies because she has not been educated on how to be more than a wife.

In self-banishment and on her deathbed, Milner refuses to write a will concerning her daughter or her fortune. This is not her penitence and final submission to Elmwood; it is, in fact, her last stand against him. She knows he will provide for Matilda, as he has Rushbrook, but never love her, so she leaves "everything to be as you [Elmwood] willed" along with a letter (Inchbald 207). Each part of this transaction is meticulously planned because Milner is no longer

the young girl who believes true love conquers all, and she has learned from past mistakes. She instructs Sandford to deliver the letter in her father's name, knowing Elmwood will not refuse. Before opening the letter, he laments, "For Mr. Milner's sake I will do much—nay, any thing . . . no other motive than respect for him, prevented my divorcing her" (Inchbald 209). This reinforces the power struggle between Milner and Elmwood as ongoing because the divorce, though detrimental to her standing as a lady, would have freed her from his rule. Many women of the age hoped for a divorce that could never be granted to them, and Elmwood mocks them because as the man he has the power. By writing this letter, it becomes evident that banishment has taught Milner how to play within the system. Milner's punishment is not her death; her punishment is an unhappy life in which she is forever tethered to her husband—her death becomes her empathetic victory where she is granted freedom through death.

The letter is strategically planned to manipulate Elmwood on many levels. First, Lady Elmwood separates herself from her daughter, because when she is dead, she knows Elmwood will not care for her child unless he's made to feel that she separated from her mother. She presents Matilda as "the grand-daughter of Mr. Milner. —Oh! do not refuse asylum even in your own house, to the destitute offspring of your friend; the last, and only remaining branch of his family" (Inchbald 210-211). Milner knows honor and masculinity are what matter most to Elmwood, and she plays upon this. She does not stop with his love for her father but continues by addressing the love he held for his ward Miss Milner as well. She reminds him of the years past and the girl he once loved, "It is Miss Milner your ward, to who you never refused a request, supplicated you—not now for your nephew Rushbrook, but for one so much more dear" (Inchbald 211). This final request ends with a reminder that she loved and loves him and that she is no longer the person who hurt him but a corpse in the ground. This manipulative person is

more dangerous than young Miss Milner ever was. At her death, she has suffered her self-banishment because of her youthful impetuousness and has learned that love and beauty do not suffice. She has learned that she must force the hands for her will to be done, and she works Elmwood in a way that will work to her advantage, even after death.

The second half of the novel is the story of Matilda Elmwood, and the differences between her section and her mother's are vast. There is no longer the distinct feeling of her section of the novel being against the conduct manuals; instead, she embraces the manuals and the education provided to her by Sandford, she is much the perfect daughter and perfect eighteenth-century lady. She hangs on her father's every word and hopes to please him enough for him to accept her. Although she does not have her mother's dangerous tendencies, she is the product of a broken woman and an uncaring father who feels women should be compliant as children. She becomes the compliant puppet for her puppet-master father. By not being dangerous to the patriarchy Matilda becomes dangerous to women; she proves that women can be broken and made into the angel of the house once more but illustrates the outcome of this reversal. In this comes the most damning portion of the novel because it is evident women cannot live by these manuals and they cannot accept parts of the patriarchy; women must find a way to create rules and a space for themselves.

Matilda is introduced at Milner's death and is then transported to Elmwood Manor and trapped. After Milner's letter, Elmwood has consented for his daughter to live in the manor, but this will not come without a price. Matilda will be allowed to live in his estate and under his protection as long as she stays hidden while he is around, and he is never made to think of her; he continues saying, "if she obeys me in this, I will certainly provide for her as my daughter during my life, and leave her a fortune at my death…" (Inchbald 214). In this the manor becomes

a symbol of the patriarchal society; women are imprisoned and at the mercy of the men who control them. The women who follow the manuals and play within the rules become trapped and are at the mercy of all men. Matilda is literally trapped by her father within his manor and when he is home she must stay within her chamber to be unseen and unheard. This protection comes at a great cost to Matilda, and as an abandoned child she develops an obsession with her father in hopes of somehow trapping an ounce of filial love.

This contract is broken accidentally, and although Elmwood is the cause of this breach, Matilda is turned from Elmwood's home and his protection. She is left in a worse position than her mother because she has attracted the attention of Viscount Margrave, who has been obsessed with her since before her mother's death; and once she is banished, he is more adamant about his feelings and returns to the farm despite Matilda's refusal. On his second visit, he says he will continue his "courtship" of Matilda because one cannot trust "the mere resolution of a lady," to which Woodley replies that no lady could rightly marry him because of his lack of respect for women (Inchbald 300). Margrave no longer wants Matilda as his wife but as his mistress. He is not hindered by her refusal and plans to kidnap and rape Matilda so she will be forced to be his mistress. Margrave is the personification of the dangers to women in this society—he illuminates the danger posed to women as possessions which men can use at will. Similar to Matilda at the mercy of her father, she is also at the mercy of this man who believes he can make use of her because she is only a woman.

After she is kidnapped, Matilda can once more be her father's daughter because his paternal bond has been threatened. According to Michelle O'Connell, Elmwood "chooses the patriarchal role of fatherhood, which is, fortunately at this point in the novel, reconcilable with his wish to reclaim his daughter" (577). The reunion is a joyous one but does not last as

Elmwood cannot be father/guardian and instead manipulates his daughter into marrying Rushbrook, whom she loved "as a friend, her cousin, her softer brother, but not as a lover (Inchbald 334). This idea of love is not important to Elmwood as he still equates mother and daughter and the danger of a woman being allowed choice. Love is a choice for no woman in the eighteenth century because women are dominated and used as pawns by the men in their lives. Matilda is now and forevermore the puppet of the men in her life and is given only imitation freedom in which duty denies any but the "right" choice. Matilda accepted and played the role of the perfect daughter for her father, and although she is she will forever be unhappy, and this is her punishment for living by the rules; whereas her mother was punished to a lifetime tethered to a man she thought she needed, Matilda is punished with a loveless marriage because she thought she needed to obey her father without question.

Inchbald ends this saga in a melancholy way which perhaps was her own outlook on being a woman. To Inchbald the moral of the novel is that:

> And Mr. Milner, Matilda's grandfather, had better have given his fortune to a distant branch of his family—as Matilda's father once meant to do—so he had bestowed upon his daughter
>
> A PROPER EDUCATION. (Inchbald 338)

The education of each woman is lacking according to this—Milner is educated in the ways of attracting men and fooled into believing she could live within the structure of the patriarchy while still free and independent. Matilda, although given a "proper" education, is made a puppet because her education has taught her to be whatever the patriarchy desires of her. These are the reasons these women are punished, which reveals the ways in which eighteenth-century society failed these women. This ending to the novel is confusing as there seems to be nothing to suggest

this has been the theme throughout, but Wollstonecraft would probably agree with the conclusion as she also believed a woman's true problems began with an improper education leaving her unable to understand the consequences of being a proper lady.

A Simple Story is not a simple story at all; it is a feminist novel in which Elizabeth Inchbald presents two sides of the conduct manuals through her two heroines. Miss Milner is unable to live by the standards set for eighteenth-century women; she is a dangerous woman because of her inability to accept the patriarchy and her resulting lack of agency. This struggle for power affects her daughter's future and creates a woman who, in the second half of the novel, is the dutiful daughter and puppet of her father. Through a close reading, *A Simple Story* becomes a novel that reverses the ideas of the conduct manuals and then plays the rules to exemplify the outcome for women—there is no outcome in this novel that gives its heroines a fulfilled and happy life. Women like Miss Milner and her daughter are dangerous because they elucidate the problems with society and the treatment of women and proves that neither being rebellious or subservient works for them in the end.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The dangerous women of *Love in Excess*, *Roxana*, and *A Simple Story* are diverse, and their motives and actions vary. What links these women is their rejection of their societal roles. though much of this rejection is accomplished by using sex, the women are not as concerned with sex as with equality. These novels span a time span of almost a hundred years and as such the writing style of each author differs, but what links these novels is the aggression the authors have regarding the position of women. The eighteenth century was the beginning of the ideals that would develop into the feminist movement; although this term would not appear until the late nineteenth century. These early ideas persisted, and through the dual nature of these novels, women were given the means to voice their anger. These novels end in numerous ways, but the endings of these characters impact their positions as dangerous women.

Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* ends with the rakes, D'elmont and Brillian changing their rakish ways. D'elmont is no longer the character who wishes to use innocent women, nor does he plot to assault these women. According to the novel, this change is because of him losing Melliora, and Brillian changes because of his love for Ansellina. Although this story creates a good romance and would have sold numerous copies, the true ending of this novel is much more empowering and allows for the women and the men to be happy. In this ending, the characters are made equals; D'elmont has not overpowered Melliora to win her body, and Brillian has forsaken his ways for Ansellina. Melliora unmans the Count, and after she leaves for the convent, he loses interest in other women. This dual ending is made happier by the equality of the characters. This is the ending that women should hope for, not just for romance or money but for equality.

Daniel Defoe's *Roxana* ends bleaker with Roxana and Amy's futures uncertain, but the same concepts are introduced throughout much of the novel. Roxana does not want to marry because once married she loses agency over her money and, each of her lovers after he husband leaves treats her as their equal and allow her free access to money and treasures that become her own. By becoming a mistress, these men do not own her and are her equals. When the Dutch merchant offers her a marriage agreement where her money will remain hers the subject of equality is reinforced. This offering is vital to the argument of women being equals, and although Roxana declines his offer (when first made), the argument is made that a woman should be allowed her own financial security. This coupled with the fact that Roxana was left destitute by her first husband creates the undeniable fact that women left penniless are liabilities to themselves. Just before the novel ends with Roxana having married the merchant, and it appears this has become a marriage of equality. Roxana's marriage is the true ending of the novel. By continuing to punish Roxana and leaving her future in a bleak uncertainty Defoe's moralizing has perverted Roxana's ending and discounter her struggles as an abandoned woman.

Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* does not offer an ending of equality. An ending where the women of the novel are seen as equal could have never been because of the conduct manuals. The conduct manuals and societal norms demanded the marriage of women, and when Milner accepts this role of wife, she relinquishes her role of Miss Milner. She becomes Dorriforths possession, and although it appears she is left with access to her money, her adultery insinuates that marriage has not brought her happiness. Matilda's story is more interesting in the discussion of equality because Matilda wants to be the perfect daughter and follow the conduct manuals. She is not worried about her inequality or her loss of freedom. Matilda Elmwood's forced to marriage is the true tragedy of the novel. She has been raised to believe she should

follow the rules of society and the wishes of men, especially her father, and because of this she must marry the cousin whom she will never love. This forced marriage solidifies the inequality that is her future. Her cousin does not ask if she wishes to marry him and because of their familial relationship, their fortune will come from the same source and as such, she will never be free. This is the bleak outcome of a woman who lived by the societal codes.

This idea of the equality of women is the true ending of these novels. This equality is achieved and unachieved in numerous ways, but the underlying reason for the inequality is ever present. Women are treated as possessions and are not allowed agency in any aspect of their lives from birth until the death of themselves, their husbands, or their fathers. Widowhood or spinsterhood were the only options for a woman to become equal to her male counterparts, and by these authors discussing the effects of women's equality, the novels create the dangerous women characters. These characters are not inherently dangerous (although they at times break the law), they are considered dangerous by society because of their need for equality. By providing these respective endings for these novels, the outcome of each creates a dialogue for equality and the dissolution of the separate spheres that kept women separate.

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