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Eliza Haywood's Feigning Femmes Fatale:
Desirous and Deceptive Women in
"Fantomina," Love in Excess, and
The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of English
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by
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ABSTRACT

Eliza Haywood's Feigning Femmes Fatale:
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The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless

by

Emily Kathryn Booth

Within the pages of Eliza Haywood's novels, masquerade is often used by female characters as a means by which to gain control or power. More specifically, Haywood's female characters often misrepresent themselves as a means by which to achieve sexual power and even to obtain sexual gratification.

Haywood also explores the theme of women's uses of deception and even disguise as methods by which to skirt the confines of a male dominated society and as modes devoted to escaping the boundaries they inflict upon themselves in trying to maintain their virtue.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mary Anne Schofield points out that Eliza Haywood was "fascinated with prevarication as a means to control power" (65). Haywood's female characters often employ "prevarication," self-misrepresentation, or even elements of masquerade in order to gain such power. More specifically, Haywood's female characters often misrepresent themselves as a means by which to achieve sexual control and even to obtain sexual gratification.

If, as Schofield claims of Haywood's novels, "[t]he theme of persecuted virtue is well established, together with questions regarding traditional roles and positions imposed by the male society on the female" (31), then Haywood's works also explore the theme of women's uses of deception and even disguise as methods by which to skirt the confines of "male society" and as modes devoted to escaping the boundaries they inflict upon themselves in trying to maintain their "persecuted virtue."

A look into the lives of unmarried women during the eighteenth century shows that single women who did not conform to the standards set for them suffered treatment as poor examples of their sex and even as immoral and

scandalous women. For example, "The line between a singlewoman [sic] who worked and lived on her own and a prostitute became a [. . .] thin one. Thus, the morality of all singlewomen was called into question" (Froide 240). If a woman did not want to spend her whole life being treated as a possession, she had to find ways to escape the binds of tradition and patriarchy. Through the use of masquerade and deception, many of Eliza Haywood's characters manage to do just that.

Haywood's characters cannot, however, be dismissed as lusty trollops. Even the most virtuous female characters are not bereft of feelings of desire, an interesting twist on the eighteenth-century heroine. The idea of virtue is treated as a burden to women, and some characters freely give up their virtue, while others cling to it with all of their might, even resisting what would actually amount to rape by the very men they provoke into showering them with amorous attentions.

The theme of rape versus consensual sex appears more than once in Haywood's work. Women who feel desire often find themselves fending off the advances of the very men they so desperately crave. Such scenarios build the tension that is to be expected within a well-told story, at the same time allowing the female characters to maintain

the appearance of virtue, albeit slightly tarnished virtue. Haywood's women commit the sin of lust, but, in most cases, they try their best not to act upon their feelings. Some are more successful than others, and, whatever the outcome, it is rare to find a sexual encounter within Haywood's work that does not leave the reader with the feeling that a rape has just been narrowly avoided or (slightly willingly) endured.

It is interesting to note that the strongest and most willful of Haywood's female characters are often punished in the end. Her novels contain the message of women who seek sexual gratification and are powerful enough to pursue it, but they do not completely ignore the fact that Haywood's contemporary audience was not likely to have had much sympathy for a promiscuous woman. Eliza Haywood was not only an independent woman who characterized independent female protagonists, but she was also an eighteenth-century businesswoman. She knew better than to alienate her audience.

On the other hand, it is important to note the difference between punishment and repentance. Haywood's most headstrong characters may suffer through illegitimate childbirth, confinement in monasteries, and hastily arranged marriages, but it is rare to find a thusly

punished character within the pages of Eliza Haywood's work who is at all repentant for her "immoral" actions.

Known even during her own time as "'the Great Arbitress of Passion'" (Saxton 1), Eliza Haywood was certainly much more than just a romance novelist. She was a journalist, an actress, a bookseller and publisher, and a dramatist, as well as a fiction writer. Looking at her fiction in the context of what little is known about her life ["Virginia Woolf once complained that all that was known about Haywood was that 'she married a clergyman and ran away.' Today we know she did neither" (6).] can help shed some more light on stories that might otherwise be dismissed as escapist fiction or "amatory fiction," as some critics are apt to describe Haywood's early work.

The most prolific British woman writer of the eighteenth century, Eliza Haywood was a key player in the history of the British novel, and a leading figure in a brilliant and competitive London literary scene that included Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Richardson. (Saxton 2)

Haywood "was an ardent Tory who located in the monarchy a space for the female independence and freedom that she saw as an impossibility in the more morally strident Whig

party" (3). Her politics were based on her desire for independence, and her writing reflects that independent nature. She was considered scandalous in her own day, and even today her work is often considered merely sexual in nature. Her novels are even seen by some as predecessors of the popular "Harlequin" romances. However, her novels present female sexuality in a more realistic light than do those of any of her contemporaries, and they do so in a highly evocative and extremely entertaining way.

Haywood certainly felt the sting of gender inequality. Despite the fact that she was one of the best-selling authors of her time, she was undoubtedly treated as an inferior writer and as sexually promiscuous by many of her counterparts. She led a highly visible life, herself a "singlewoman," and she suffered criticism for it. It would be negligent to treat her, and her work, simply as promiscuous today. A much more productive approach is to consider Haywood's work in light of what is known about her political and personal beliefs.

Eliza Haywood was a feminist who believed that women should be given equal opportunities with men for education. "Eighteenth-century society associated female authorship with inappropriate public display, sexual transgression, and the production of inferior texts" (Saxton 8). Haywood

defended the treatment of her texts as "inferior" with the charge that women were not properly educated and, therefore, should not be expected to write about subjects beyond their general knowledge. However, she was writing about much more than just love and desire; she was making a statement about female sexuality and gender inequality.

Haywood managed to make a good living from the sales of her novels. She presented her radical ideas in very entertaining ways, and as a result her works were wildly popular. She even seems to have been aware that the harsh criticism she endured from her male contemporaries was largely due to their jealousy. Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, and even Haywood's former lover Richard Savage all publicly scorned her and her work. It is ironic that Haywood's works have been, for the most part, absent from the current literary canon, an absence that can be interpreted as a modern-day continuation of the sexist treatment she undoubtedly endured throughout her life.

If Haywood seems ever to have contradicted her feminine ideals through her actions or her writings, that can almost definitely be attributed to the fact that she was, indeed, earning a living from her pen. As is revealed in two recently uncovered letters written by Haywood, she was not above representing herself in whatever way

necessary to get her work published.

In a letter to an unknown "Sir," Haywood claims that "an unfortunate marriage has reduced me to the melancholly necessity of depending on my Pen for the support of myself and two Children, the eldest of whom is no more than 7 years of age" (Firmager 181). Not only is it doubtful that Haywood's eldest child was actually "no more than 7 years of age" at the time she wrote this letter, but it is also unlikely that she felt a great degree of "melancholly" at being "reduced to the [. . .] necessity of depending on [her] Pen." Any Haywood reader can see that she enjoyed telling a story, and she told a story well. In this letter Haywood bent the truth in order to arouse some sympathy in a patron who was likely in a position to finance the publication of another of her works. She was willing to prevaricate, if necessary, in order to earn her livelihood.

In a second letter to an, again unknown, "Honrd Sir," Haywood claims:

Precarious as the condition of a person in whose only dependance is on the pen, to the name of Author wee are indebted for the privilege of imploring the protection of the great and good [. . .] the Inclinations I ever had for writing be now converted into a Necessity, by the Sudden

Deaths of both a Father, and a Husband, at an age
when I was little prepar'd to stem the tide of
Ill fortune. (Firmager 182)

It appears unlikely that the man Haywood married and from whom she quickly became estranged was actually dead at the time this letter was written. There is also no evidence to back up her claim that her father died while she was still young. It seems that one should not be inclined to give Eliza Haywood the benefit of a doubt where truth is concerned. If scholars have learned nothing more about Haywood, they do know that she was not squeamish about telling lies if they could help her sell her books and make a living.

The mystery surrounding Eliza Haywood's life conjures up images of a story quite as interesting, perhaps even more so, than the stories her novels tell. The little that is known about her is so intriguing that it adds another dimension to her writings. To read Haywood's early fiction with the idea that it is merely "amatory" simply does not suffice. Further, to claim that her later fiction represents her "moral transformation" does not take Haywood herself into consideration. She was a complicated and intelligent woman. She was aware of her audience, but she still managed to present radically feminist ideals within

her novels.

"Fantomina" titillates the reader with the story of a woman so desirous of a man, Beauplaisir, that she masquerades as not one or two, but as four different characters. She first endures what amounts to his raping her while she pretends to be a prostitute. She then dresses as a servant girl in order to receive his advances. Her third disguise is that of a widow. Finally, she resorts simply to masking her face with a veil and dubbing herself "Incognita." The extent of the protagonist's bold behavior and the degree of Beauplaisir's stupidity is alarming, even to a twenty-first century reader.

In *Love in Excess* women lie, manipulate, and masquerade in order to receive the attentions of a fickle, but extremely handsome, man. The pages reveal women who are capable of desire. Some of them succumb easily to the advances of the unmatched D'Elmont; others resist unsuccessfully; the most virtuous manage to avoid his advances but are still wildly attracted to him.

Finally, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, often considered representational of a "moral transformation" by Haywood in her later years, actually remains quite true to the themes apparent throughout Haywood's body of work. Even the most virtuous female characters are filled with

desire, and a number of women deceive, coerce, and even dabble in criminal behavior. The heroine Betsy often misrepresents herself, and she is far from a pillar of virtue.

"Fantomina" and *Love in Excess* are not merely tales of sexual escapades; they are Haywood's attempts at representing women as beings just as capable of desire as are men. Likewise, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* illustrates women capable of passion, who are more than willing to resort to manipulation and deceit in order to get what they want. In her novels Haywood challenges the notion that women are merely the docile recipients of men's natural urges. Her stories also show the disastrous results of desirous women living in a society that expects them to act against their natures. It would be ignorant to assume that Haywood was trying to illustrate that lusty women are vile and should be punished. She was showing that society treats women unfairly. They are men's equals in every way, and if they were only treated as such, things would inevitably run much more smoothly. Women would not have to deceive, and extramarital sexual encounters would not always amount to rape. Women are just as capable of consent as are men of making advances, and acknowledging that fact could serve to improve society as a whole. Eliza

Haywood knew what it was to be treated unfairly based on her gender, and she managed to lament that fact within the pages of her fiction.

CHAPTER 2

FEIGNING FANTOMINA

"[S]he was so admirably skilled
in the art of feigning [. . .]"

(Haywood "Fantomina" 799)

In "Fantomina: Or, Love in a Maze," first published in 1724, Eliza Haywood illustrates her interest in masquerade as a facilitator of sexual gratification to degrees almost reaching the ludicrous. "A Young Lady of distinguished Birth, Beauty, Wit, and Spirit" (786) decides to devote her affection to a fickle, at best, gentleman named Beauplaisir. His name, which translates from the French to "beautiful pleasure," is well suited to his demeanor, for the "distinguished" protagonist finds him quite irresistible. Having been left in the care of her aunt by an absent mother, she occupies herself in going to great lengths to obtain Beauplaisir's affections.

Witnessing the actions and demeanor of a prostitute while at a play, the protagonist develops "a Curiosity in her to know in what Manner these Creatures were addressed" (786), and she decides that she will masquerade as Fantomina, a prostitute, in order to gain access to

Beauplaisir. Although the protagonist is a beautiful young woman, Beauplaisir is not lacking in other admirers. It would be inappropriate for the protagonist to introduce herself to Beauplaisir in her social station, and, noticing that the "Creatures" converse openly with whatever men they choose, she decides that the disguise of a prostitute could be just the way to gain Beauplaisir's attention.

She goes so far as to purchase the use of some lodgings, to which she allows Beauplaisir to accompany her. Her darling Beauplaisir thinks nothing of treating her according to what he assumes to be her true role: "He was bold;--he was resolute: She fearful,--confused, altogether unprepared to resist in such Encounters, and rendered more so, by the extreme Liking she had to him [. . .]. In fine, she was undone" (789). So she escapes her "persecuted virtue," rather to her surprise, but not necessarily to her chagrin. Any pains she has taken thus far to maintain her virginity are no longer of consequence.

It is not surprising that Beauplaisir would take any liberties he likes with a woman he believes to be a prostitute. However, when she reaches the point of being alone with Beauplaisir, the protagonist realizes that she is undoubtedly going to be raped. "Shocked [. . .] at the Apprehension of really losing her Honour, she struggled

all she could [. . .] she told him, that she was a Virgin, and had assumed this Manner of Behaviour only to engage him. But that he little regarded" (789). Essentially, Beauplaisir rapes her. It is no less a rape simply because the lady is, herself, enraptured. She attempts to resist his advances, and he takes her by force. "[T]he heroine learns she cannot simply follow personal desires without regard to the patriarchal social structures that largely define the public arena in which those desires exist" (Croskery 82). However, she also realizes that what is done is done, and she resolves to continue her flirtation with Beauplaisir and, perhaps, to enjoy him more during future encounters.

Haywood's choice of a prostitute for the protagonist's first disguise is significant. "[I]n the eighteenth century [. . . prostitution] was widespread--and increasing [. . .] London alone, it is thought, had over 10,000 prostitutes." Although quite a few "returned 'sooner or later to a more regular course of life,'" prostitution was most certainly rampant. Prostitutes actually had more freedom than single women of a higher social standing, and although they were wage earners, "[e]arnings were almost certainly higher than for most other female occupations" (Hill 173). So it seems that the protagonist, through

performing a masquerade as a prostitute, puts herself in a much more likely position to get what she wants (the naughty attentions of Beauplaisir) than the position she would be in as her true self.

When Beauplaisir's affections toward Fantomina begin to wane after her initial disguise, the protagonist remakes herself as a servant girl, Celia. She adorns herself in dress appropriate to the role, darkens her hair and brows, adopts a country dialect, and then plots to gain employment where Beauplaisir is staying in Bath:

Notwithstanding this Metamorphosis she was still extremely pretty; and the Mistress of the House happening at that Time to want a Maid, was very glad of the Opportunity of taking her. She was presently received into the Family; and had a Post in it [. . .] that of making the Gentlemen's beds, getting them their Breakfasts, and waiting on them in their Chambers. (792)

Beauplaisir is, of course,

fired with the first Sight of her [. . .] His wild Desires burst out in all his Words and Actions: he called her little Angel, Cherubim, swore he must enjoy her [. . .] devoured her Lips, her Breasts with greedy Kisses, held to his

burning Bosom her half-yielding, half-reluctant
Body, nor suffered her to get loose, till he had
ravaged all. (792-3)

The protagonist is once again satisfied, and Beauplaisir is once again fooled.

The significance of the protagonist's second disguise being a servant is that the role actually offers more freedom than that of a "distinguished" young lady. Female servants had the freedom to choose among positions, for service was one of the few professions available to a woman in the eighteenth century that offered a bit of security and "the possibility of social advancement." As a matter of fact, "A number of female servants seem to have married their masters. Indeed, to have served in a household where the wife died seems to have had definite advantages" (Hill 143). Although of a lower social standing, servants did have more individual freedom in regard to behavior. Haywood illustrates that fact when her protagonist chooses to masquerade as a servant rather than return to her appropriate position as "A Young Lady of distinguished Birth."

Although she is no longer a virgin, it would be difficult for "Fantomina" to seduce Beauplaisir as a lady. At the point when she decides to masquerade as "Celia," she

has decided that she wants to be with Beauplaisir again but does not want to go through the masquerade of resistance. Actually, she does not resist at all as Celia, but merely gives herself to him as easily as an amorous servant girl might. She need not carry on the guise of an innocent. As "Fantomina" she is a bit shocked at the outcome of her escapade. At this point, she knows what she wants and pursues it vehemently.

As Margaret Case Croskery points out,

The heroine of [. . .] Fantomina [. . .] indulges her sexual desires with remarkable freedom, creativity, and sensual enjoyment. Instead of insisting [. . .] that 'virtuous' women should repress their sexual desires, Haywood grants the heroine of Fantomina [. . .] urgency of sexual desire. (69)

Of course, she gives the heroine the ability to act upon her desires by also granting her with skills "in the Art of feigning" (795).

The second seduction scene is no 'reenactment' of the first. The political dynamics of seduction have altered considerably. In the first seduction, the heroine struggled [. . .] In the next seduction however,

Beauplaisir's mastery becomes the fantasy created by the fiction of her disguise [. . .]. The heroine is completely in control of both the role she is playing and her own ironic assessment of the situation. (Croskery 83)

Upon learning that Beauplaisir will be leaving Bath, the protagonist comes up with a scheme so she can accompany him on his journey. She dresses as a mourning widow, Mrs. Bloomer: "The Dress she had ordered to be made, was such as Widows wear in their first Mourning, which, together with the most afflicted and penitential Countenance that ever was seen, was no small Alteration to her who used to seem all Gaiety." She is no more "the rude Country Girl"; she is "the sorrowful Widow" (793). When she pretends to need a ride with Beauplaisir, he, of course, takes it upon himself to console the pitiful, yet beautiful, widow: "They passed the Time of their Journey in as much Happiness as the most luxurious Gratification of wild Desires could make them" (795). The protagonist's disguise is successful yet again, and she receives her much-desired reward for the effort. She once again succeeds in seducing Beauplaisir while allowing him to believe he is actually the seducer.

The role of widow is the most blatantly desirable, in regard to the freedom it offers, than what the reader is

led to believe is the protagonist's role in reality.

"[W]idows had more alternatives [than single women] from which to choose [. . .] she became the head of her deceased husband's household" (Froide 238). Widowhood most definitely offered more freedom than wifhood or even being single. As the character Peachum states in John Gay's "The Beggar's Opera," from 1728, "The comfortable state of widowhood is the only hope that keeps up a wife's spirits" (115). "Widows enjoyed the most extensive economic rights and privileges of any working women in the early modern period" (Froide 243). Haywood's protagonist is aware that the role of widow brings with it a certain amount of freedom and ease with which to carry out her plan.

The Widow Bloomer triumphed some Time longer over the Heart of this Inconstant, but at length her Sway was at an End, and she sunk in this Character, to the same Degree of Tastelessness, as she had done before in that of Fantomina and Celia.--She presently perceived it, but bore it as she had always done; it being but what she expected, she had prepared herself for it, and had another Project in embryo, which she soon ripened into Action. (797)

The heroine has triumphed in making love with

Beauplaisir as three different characters, but once again her beloved's affection has begun to wane. She begins to devise yet another plan, for she simply refuses to conform to societal standards. At this point, she still has a great deal of desire for Beauplaisir, but she also does not want to lose at the game she herself has created. "She got over the Difficulty at last, however, by proceeding in a Manner, if possible, more extraordinary than all her former Behaviour" (797).

The protagonist resorts merely to naming herself "Incognita" and tempting Beauplaisir to her, again specially arranged, lodgings. She titillates him with a letter: "To the All-conquering Beauplaisir [. . .] I am infinite in Love [. . .] There is but one Thing in my Power to refuse you, which is the Knowledge of my Name [. . .] Yours, INCOGNITA" (798). She conceals her face completely, "setting forth the others [the parts in which Beauplaisir actually has an interest] with the greatest Care and Exactness. Her fine Shape, and Air, and Neck, appeared to great Advantage" (800). She conquers once again, and it is reasonable to suspect that this time her masquerade touches much more closely upon her true character.

When Beauplaisir "resolved never to make a second

Visit," the protagonist "comforted herself with the Design of forming some other Stratagem, with which to impose on him a fourth time" (801). Did she say "a fourth time?" Of course, that would not be right. Fantomina came first, then Celia, then Mrs. Bloomer, then Incognita. Perhaps Haywood does not simply make a careless mistake in writing "fourth" instead of "fifth." Perhaps the reader is to understand that "Incognita" is the protagonist herself, realizing that which character she chooses for her masquerade is not nearly as important to Beauplaisir as is receiving the affections he desires. Although he swears never to return, the reader knows he is weak and lusty, and he will be back. However, that is not to be.

After painting such a remarkable story of female power and sexual desire, Eliza Haywood strikes her character down: "She was with Child" (801). The reader is led to believe, however, that even that obstacle might have been overcome if not for the return of the protagonist's mother:

[T]hough she would easily have found Means to have screened even this from the Knowledge of the World, had she been at liberty to have acted with the same unquestionable Authority over herself, as she did before the coming of her Mother, yet now all her Invention was at a Loss for a

Stratagem to impose on a Woman of her
Penetration. (801)

She is rendered powerless to control her situation by the return of her mother, who undoubtedly represents the societal standards she has shunned since first succumbing to the loss of her virginity to the forceful Beauplaisir.

Far from eager to end her charade, "[i]t was a great while before she could be brought to confess any Thing, and much longer before she could be prevailed on to name the Man whom she so fatally had loved" (802). The entire story is brought to light, and the bold protagonist is punished. However, the reader is not led to believe that she is in any way repentant. She laments the fact that her mother returned, making it impossible for her to give birth in secret and then get on with her life, but she does not show remorse.

Margaret Case Croskery makes a strong point:

The heroine's flummoxed mother does decide to send her daughter to a monastery, but in so doing she relinquishes the personal control that the narrator has just informed the reader is the only thing capable of containing the heroine. There is no reason to believe she will not evade the monastery's abbess (a personal friend of her

mother) as well as she did her aunt. (91)

As the first three characters, the heroine manages to take on roles that in themselves excuse her behavior, behavior which would be inappropriate and even impossible to act out were she operating under the confines of her own name and position in society. She successfully seduces Beauplaisir while masquerading as each of the three characters and as Incognita. She achieves the sexual gratification she so desperately desires as an answer to her obsessive lust for the easily distracted Beauplaisir.

However, it is the heroine herself who must bear the pains resulting from her shenanigans. Neither Fantomina, Celia, Mrs. Bloomer, nor Incognita can save her from the fact that she becomes pregnant and is sent to a convent by her mother. Why, after representing the protagonist as such a bold and empowered young woman, does Haywood end by punishing her? Perhaps Haywood is simply too aware of her audience to end in favor of a promiscuous woman. Although it appears that "Fantomina" is punished, it is also true that she has no feelings of remorse. Her unfortunate end is only that, a way for Haywood to illustrate that desirous women may experience the disastrous results of their lust, but Haywood's attempt to appease her perhaps indignant audience ends at that. She does not go so far as to give

the impression that the protagonist believes she did anything wrong. After all, Beauplaisir is not held accountable, so why should Haywood's heroine feel repentant?

The heroine's mother,

as soon as her Daughter was in a Condition, sent her to a Monastery in France, the Abbess of which had been her particular Friend. And thus ended an Intrigue, which, considering the Time it lasted, was as full of Variety as any, perhaps, that many Ages has produced. (803)

The reader cannot disregard the fact that France was widely considered a place of debauchery and amoral behavior by eighteenth-century British citizens. Perhaps the story does not end with a naughty girl being sent to her punishment. Perhaps Haywood alludes to the fact that "A Young Lady of distinguished Birth, Beauty, Wit, and Spirit" (786) could get into a lot of trouble in a place such as France; and because she is not remorseful for her actions, she is likely to do just that.

CHAPTER 3

IRRESISTABLE DESIRE

"Love, is what we can neither resist,
expel, nor even alleviate [. . .]"

(Haywood Love in Excess 182)

As David Oakleaf points out, Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess: Or, the Fatal Enquiry*, first published in 1719, "celebrates sexual desire" (8). It represents women who are not afraid to pursue the man they desire. In the case of *Love in Excess*, that man is always and inevitably the irresistible protagonist Count D'Elmont. Throughout the novel a number of women employ a variety of means to seduce the highly desirable count:

More than one takes sexual initiative with D'Elmont, transgressing to an extent that must have scandalized and titillated the novel's original readers. Haywood's desiring women scheme to encounter D'Elmont in secluded places, send him unsolicited love letters, and, when all else fails, even assault him physically. (Bowers 49)

Among the means employed to provoke D'Elmont's attentions,

masquerade, deception, and prevarication rank highly.

First, Alovisa becomes completely and totally enamored with the count, and she is the first to use the power of deception to try to lure D'Elmont into her arms. She reveals her love for him in an anonymous letter: "This she sent by a trusty servant, and so disguised, that it was impossible for him to be known" (42).

Margaret Case Croskery points out that "in almost all of Haywood's narratives, seductions are begun, continued, and discovered in an exchange of letters between the participants or interested spectators" (86). The deception involved in writing an amorous note seems benign enough, but Alovisa's intentions are certainly not innocent. She feels a strong and lusty desire for the count, and, as is obvious throughout the novel, Eliza Haywood takes the stance that desire is a completely overwhelming emotion. Once Alovisa is enamored with the count, there is nothing she can do to stop herself from pursuing him, and her letters become more and more seductive.

Unfortunately for Alovisa, the count believes the original letter to be from Amena, a charming but poor young lady. Of course, Amena cannot resist being pulled towards D'Elmont by the force of his charms, so Alovisa must once again employ deceit in an attempt to draw the count's

attentions to herself. She sends another letter, letting him know that "one, of at least an equal beauty [to Amena], and far superior in every other consideration, would sacrifice all to purchase the glorious trophy [D'Elmont's heart]" (49). Alovisa makes it clear to the count that she is a wealthy woman, and she is willing to put all of her wealth on the line in order to win him.

Alovisa then tells Amena's father that Amena is receiving unannounced attentions, and as a result Amena's father forces her to write a letter to the count letting him know that she may only be courted by gentlemen her father has approved. However, Amena (secretly, of course) encloses a more loving and gentle note of her own. She, too, resorts to deception in order to continue receiving the amorous attentions of D'Elmont. The power her father attempts to wield over her only strengthens Amena's resolve to do what she believes best for herself. Amena resists patriarchal rule in the name of intense passion, so once again, the reader is led to believe that D'Elmont's charm is simply overwhelming. Amena is overcome with desire, and she, like Alovisa, must have him.

With the help of Amena's servant Anaret, D'Elmont and Amena manage to arrange a secret rendezvous: "What now could poor Amena do, surrounded with so many powers,

attacked by such a charming force without, betrayed by tenderness within?" (63). Haywood paints a picture of seduction in which the protagonist is willing to commit rape, and the woman resists although she actually burns with desire herself. This sets up the sexual tension that makes the story so intriguing, but it also makes the point that women are not free to express what they truly desire. Consensual sex appears to be almost an impossible act outside of marriage.

Much as with Beauplaisir and the protagonist in "Fantomina," it is obvious that Amena's impending loss of virtue is actually going to be what amounts to a rape. However, also as in "Fantomina," it is clear that Amena is masking her own rapture beneath a timid facade. She cannot escape what she has been taught: Giving up one's virtue amounts to giving up oneself; the possession of a woman's virginity is equal to the possession of that woman. It is a ridiculous notion, but it is a strong dictum in the eighteenth-century society of which Amena is a part. She feels compelled to resist D'Elmont's advances, although it is she who has invited them in the first place. Haywood is dealing with the contradictory patriarchal notion that women should be desirable but not hold any notions of desire themselves. Haywood is showing a more truthful

representation of female passion and desire.

Ironically, it is Alovisa who interrupts and saves Amena's virtue. She has (again, quite deceptively) had her servant Charlo following the count, so she is able to have him interrupt the passionate encounter. The count must, quickly and quietly, remove himself from the situation in order to avoid a potentially uncomfortable encounter with Amena's father. When the count disposes of Amena at Alovisa's house, Amena realizes that the count's intentions really are not honorable in the least. She asks D'Elmont to return the letter she has most recently sent to him, but he mistakenly gives her Alovisa's anonymous note. Of course, Amena recognizes Alovisa's handwriting and figures out that Alovisa is not her friend at all but a rival for the count's affections. She realizes that Alovisa has been deceiving her in their friendship all along.

Alovisa then decides that she must dispose of Amena, and she arranges with Amena's father for Amena to be sent to a convent. Margaret Case Croskery claims that "in Haywood's works, banishment to convent or monastery was no guarantee of moral transformation, nor was it an effective stopgap to erotic pleasure" (92). Much as in "Fantomina," the fact that a young lady who has engaged in erotic pleasures is sent to a monastery does not in any way mean

that she is repentant. The reader can safely assume that the heroine in "Fantomina" will carry on with her raucous behavior even after being confined to a monastery. The reader can also assume that Amena's being confined to a monastery will not necessarily prevent her from providing a hindrance to Alovisa's plans for D'Elmont.

Alovisa believes that by convincing Amena's father to send his daughter away she has seen the last of Amena's hindrances to her romance with D'Elmont. Before Alovisa is rid of her rival, however, Amena, in a ranting rage, reveals to the count Alovisa's secret amours; and, upon learning that his brother Chevalier Brillian is actually already in love with Alovisa's sister Ansellina, D'Elmont decides to marry Alovisa.

Count D'Elmont's decision to marry, however, is not based at all upon a mutual desire for Alovisa, but he realizes that her proclamation of wealth is bona fide. He, certainly in agreement with the majority of his contemporaries, considers marriage to be more a business transaction than an exchange of vows of love. He also sees the convenience in two brothers marrying two sisters; the wealth will be less divided. So, it would appear that Alovisa wins the count. However, as predicted by Croskery's commentary, Alovisa's troubles have only begun

when she rids herself of Amena and wins the hand of D'Elmont. "Part the First" draws to a satisfactory close: the promise of two weddings for two well-matched couples. However, Haywood's story of devious and manipulative women has just begun.

"Part the Second" begins as Count D'Elmont learns that his guardian, Monsieur Frankville, is quite ill. Frankville asks D'Elmont to look after his daughter Melliora after she is orphaned. She turns out to be "the matchless Melliora" (92), a vision of sheer and utter perfection:

[T]he first sight of Melliora gave him [D'Elmont] a discomposure he had never felt before [. . .] when her eyes met his, the god of love seemed there to have united all his lightnings for one effectual blaze; their admiration of each others perfections was mutual. (93)

Having discovered the perfection embodied by Melliora, the count begins to find Alovisa absolutely abhorrent.

D'Elmont's growing disgust for Alovisa is only heightened when he discovers that his correspondence with the banished Amena, for whose situation he feels some guilt, has been intercepted by his jealous wife. Alovisa has once again employed deceit in an attempt to ascertain her ownership of

D'Elmont's love. She tampers with his answer to a letter from Amena, and as a direct result Amena decides to join the convent in which she has been confined. D'Elmont has written to Amena: "Can I enjoy the pleasures of a court, while you are shut within a cloyster?--Shall I suffer the world to be deprived of such a treasure as Amena?" (102). It is safe to assume that, had she received D'Elmont's letter, Amena would not have decided to spend the rest of her days in a convent. Alovisa intercepts D'Elmont's letter and prevents its ever being delivered, thus successfully managing to rid herself of the threat of rivalry from Amena; however, she is completely unaware that her new husband's affections have already found their way to another.

Desperate for refuge from his marital home, the count begins to spend more time with his neighbor, the Baron D'espernay. The baron, in encouraging Count D'Elmont to act upon his desire for Melliora, vocalizes what appears to be a recurrent idea in Haywood's fiction:

Women are taught by custom to deny what most they covet, and to seem angry when they are best pleased; believe me, D'elmont that the most rigid virtue of 'em all, never yet hated a man for those faults which love occasions. (124)

Again Haywood presents the idea that women do indeed experience desire, but those same women feel compelled to protect their virtue from even the men they most want to love.

The baron's sister Melantha is, of course, quite taken with Count D'Elmont, and she is willing to do just about anything to get her hands on him. On the other hand, it becomes more and more apparent that the baron's encouragement of the blossoming love between the count and Melliora is a result of his own desire for Alovisa. He would like nothing more than to distract the count from his new wife. In letting the reader know that two more characters have their own reasons to interfere in the affairs of Melliora, Alovisa, and D'Elmont, Haywood sets the stage for even more complicated and intriguing scenes. She foreshadows the dramatic end of "Part the Second."

Although the count pursues Melliora, she resists and refuses. She is not immune to D'Elmont's charms; however, she represents the perfect woman, one who is able to feel desire and still maintain her virtue and dignity. Haywood appears to be rejecting the notion of a desirable and yet undesiring woman. At the same time, however, she maintains the ideal of a woman who will stop at nothing to protect her virginity, even in the face of such sexual tension and

desire. It is clear that Melliora wants desperately to be with D'Elmont, but she will not allow herself to admit that fact to her beloved or even, consciously, to herself.

In an ironic twist similar to that of Alovisa saving Amena from ruin, Melantha interrupts D'Elmont as he is about to rape Melliora. Again, the reader understands that a consummation of the relationship between the count and Melliora would be, in effect, a rape. However, "her desires were little different from his" (134). She burns with desire for D'Elmont, but she refuses to act upon that desire. She even resorts to manipulation to prevent him from taking too many liberties, the same liberties for which others have schemed and lied:

"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 the too powerful magick of your eyes, nor deny any thing that charming tongue can ask, but now's the time to prove your self the heroe, subdue your self, as you have conquered me, be satisfied with vanquishing my soul, fix there your throne, but leave my honour free!" (135-6)

The baron sets the stage for more deception and

intrigue when he plans to host a party. He hopes that by revealing to Alovisa the rival for her husband's love he will win Alovisa's appreciation and perhaps her affection, as well. The baron informs the count, "I shall take care to have Melliora placed where no impediment may bar your entrance," very sexually provocative wording, to say the least, all the while knowing that he is going to lead Alovisa to the room and allow her to uncover the secret she so desperately wants to know.

Melantha takes the element of masquerade to the extreme when she exchanges rooms with Melliora and pretends to be the woman D'Elmont most desires in order to have him sexually:

Tho' the Count had been but a very little time in the arms of his supposed Melliora, yet he had made so good use of it, and had taken so much advantage of her complying humour, that [. . .] he now thought himself the most fortunate of all mankind; [. . .] His behaviour to her [Melantha] was all rapture, all killing extacy. (157)

Melantha's deception is a shocking twist. She pretends to be Melliora, and she quite willingly allows the count to ravish her. Perhaps she stands alone as the single female character in the novel truly able to enjoy the affection

she pursues. She is as much the antithesis of Melliora as any woman could be. Once the count believes he finally possesses Melliora's virtue, however, he is extremely surprised when Alovisa bursts in, followed by an awakened Melliora. He realizes he is actually lying in bed with Melantha.

Unable to get a glimpse of who her husband is in bed with, Alovisa tries to provoke the baron into telling her who her rival is. She titillates D'espernay when she tells him, "No price [. . .] can be too dear to buy my peace, nor recompence too great for such a service" (163). She deceives the baron into believing that he may have her if he reveals the name of D'Elmont's sexual partner to her. Her efforts are, however, in vain.

"Part the Second" draws to an exciting close as the count accidentally, yet fatally, stabs Alovisa; Chevalier Brillian duels with, and kills, the Baron D'espernay, then finally marries Ansellina; and Melliora retires to a monastery.

Melantha who was not of a humour to take any thing to heart, was married in a short time, and had the good fortune not to be suspected by her husband, though she brought him a [far from premature, no doubt] child in seven months after

her wedding. (177)

It would be negligent to dismiss the fact that Melantha's story is revealed as the final words of "Part the Second" as nothing more than the wrapping up of an interesting side story on Haywood's part. Haywood manages to slip in the fact that a desirous woman, a trollop even, gets exactly what she wants (D'Elmont), and she is not punished for it in the least. In fact, the reader is left to believe that she flourishes.

As for D'Elmont, his amorous disposition has resulted in yet another woman's confinement in a convent. Of course, the reader can still safely assume that "the matchless Melliora" is far from out of the picture.

The beginning of "The Third and Last Part" finds the count in Italy, mourning the loss of his beloved Melliora. "He wrote to her from every post-town, and waited till he received her answer; by this means his journey was extremely tedious" (182). D'Elmont is not long in Rome when he receives a letter from a secret admirer: "To The Never Enough Admired Count D'Elmont [. . .] [H]ave [you] yet a corner of your heart unprepossessed, and an inclination willing to receive the impression of [. . .] Your Unknown Adorer" (183-4). It seems he has not lost his charms, although his love for Melliora has rendered him

unable to enjoy them as he once did. He replies "methinks my mourning habit, to which my countenance and behaviour are no way unconformable, might inform you, I am little disposed for raillery" (185). Of course, it is safe to assume that D'Elmont's reference to mourning is in regard to the loss of Melliora to a convent, not to the loss of Alovisa's life at his, albeit unwitting, hands. Haywood treats the fact that D'Elmont accidentally kills Alovisa as a lesser crime, in the eyes of society, than the fact that Melliora feels desire for D'Elmont. Perhaps she is trying to convince the reader to examine the values behind such logic.

At any rate, yet another lady, in an entirely different country, resorts to deception to try to win the attention of Count D'Elmont. Upon meeting his beautiful admirer and shunning her affection, the count reflects upon his life:

These reflections gave no small addition to his melancholy; Amena's retirement from the world; Alovysa's jealousy and death; Melliora's peace of mind and reputation, and the despair of several, whom he was sensible, the love of him, had rendered miserable, came fresh into his memory, and he looked on himself as most unhappy, in

being the occasion of making others so. (190)

These reflections lead the reader to believe that D'Elmont is repentant for his actions in the past. He feels guilt over having been so overly amorous at times. The insinuation is that loving such a virtuous woman, Melliora, has changed him.

While wandering through the streets of Rome, D'Elmont becomes involved in a brawl. When a man is murdered, D'Elmont quickly hides himself in a nearby garden. Luckily, the garden is that of his admirer, so she eagerly hides him from questioning officers. In return for her kindness, he feels compelled to agree to meet her again the next night. On the way back to his lodgings, however, he is challenged to a duel, and the offending party turns out to be Melliora's brother Frankville, set on avenging his sister's honor. D'Elmont is forced to do some quick talking: "That I do love your sister is as true, as that you have wronged me--basely wronged me. But that her virtue suffers by that love, is false!" (200). When Frankville discovers that it was D'Elmont who saved him in the street fight the night before, the two become fast friends. The fact that Frankville is willing to kill in the name of his sister's honor is a testament to the fact that Haywood understands the mentality of her eighteenth-

century audience. She also makes the point that whether or not a woman still owns her own virtue is largely a subjective matter.

D'Elmont learns that a letter from a man named Sanseverin is the reason Frankville believes him to have behaved inappropriately toward Melliora; D'Elmont is livid. He also learns that Melliora is no longer in the monastery. As for Frankville, "[He] stood for a good while silently observing him [D'Elmont]; and if before, he were not perfectly assured of his innocence, the agonies he now saw in him, which were too natural to be suspected for counterfeit, entirely convinced him he was so" (204). Of course, the reader knows that D'Elmont is far from innocent. He pursued Melliora vehemently, and it is reasonable to suspect that his continued admiration for her has to do with the fact that he has yet to enjoy her completely.

Frankville and D'Elmont exchange stories, and Frankville is revealed to be a passionate and tormented man himself. A friend of his, Cittolini, wants him to marry his daughter Violetta. Cittolini's sister Ciamara has promised the hand of her stepdaughter Camilla, whose father is dead, to her brother Cittolini. Frankville is, however, in love with Camilla, and Camilla is in love with him. It

is also revealed that the brawl, during which D'Elmont unknowingly saved Frankville's life, was with Cittolini and some of his men. D'Elmont agrees to speak to Camilla on Frankville's behalf, but he has an ulterior motive:

[He] resolved to make use of all his wit and address to perswade Camilla to hazard every thing for love, and was not a little pleased with the imagination, that he should lay so considerable an obligation on Melliora, as this service to her brother would be. (227)

Although "transformed," D'Elmont still has the desire to own Melliora. He wants very much to render her beholden to him.

Upon visiting with Camilla, the count is surprised when she virtually begs him to make love to her. Not only that, but D'Elmont realizes she is the woman who has previously tried to seduce him, the woman who hid him in her garden. When he relays the story to Frankville, both are quite upset until they realize it was actually Ciamara with whom D'Elmont met. However, Frankville has already sent a letter to Camilla: "If vows are any constraint to an inclination so addicted to liberty as yours, I shall make no difficulty to release you, of all you ever made to me!" (239).

D'Elmont and Frankville realize that they must try to use the influence of Ciamara, capitalizing on her admiration for D'Elmont, to make things right with Camilla. D'Elmont is rather unprepared for the fact that Ciamara, a rich widow who is, therefore, unconcerned about the mores regarding virtue, is willing to do just about anything to have D'Elmont:

[S]he had seen the charming Count, was taken with his beauty, and wished no farther than to possess his lovely person, his mind was the least of her thoughts [. . .] Lost to all sense of honour, pride or shame, and wild to gratify her furious wishes, she spoke, without reserve, all they suggested to her, and lying on his breast, beheld, without concern, her robes fly open, and all the beauties of her own exposed, and naked to his view. (250-1)

Much as in "Fantomina," Haywood illustrates that widows are among the very few women in eighteenth-century society who have any amount of freedom to do as they please. Of course, Ciamara is an exaggeration of how far a woman might take such liberties, but it is important to point out that she does not pursue D'Elmont any more vehemently than he pursued Melliora (and others). She is relentless, but

D'Elmont does not succumb to her wild and aggressive advances.

Frankville manages to meet with Camilla while D'Elmont distracts Ciamara, and then later D'Elmont meets with Violetta in order to devise a plan to help Frankville and Camilla. Somewhat predictably, Violetta is enraptured with D'Elmont. However, shortly after learning of Violetta's admiration, D'Elmont receives a letter from his brother Brillian informing him that Melliora has actually been kidnapped from the convent. Camilla and Frankville resolve to run away together, and D'Elmont makes plans to leave and find Melliora. Violetta is kind enough to send along her page, Fidelio, to accompany D'Elmont on his adventure.

Fidelio is not, however, Fidelio; he is Violetta masquerading as a young boy in order to be close to her beloved D'Elmont. Yet again, Haywood takes the element of masquerade to the extreme in having a woman dress in a manner that offers her a great deal more freedom than she could ever have in her true state. What could be more liberating to a woman than becoming, at least externally, a man?

Upon learning that Frankville and Camilla have run off together, Ciamara kills herself and Cittolini dies of a fever, and D'Elmont and "Fidelio" set off to find Melliora.

They happen upon the home of the Marquess De Saguillier, who offers them refuge. Luckily, it is he who has kidnapped Melliora, so she is rescued, and the woman who has loved De Saguillier all along, Charlotta, is happily engaged to him. Unfortunately, just as D'Elmont realizes that Fidelio is actually Violetta herself, posing as a page, Violetta dies, and the story comes to an end.

Frankville is with Camilla; De Saguillier is with Charlotta; and D'Elmont is, finally, with Melliora. Yet another deceptive woman has been punished, but the reader does not believe that Violetta dies with any feelings of regret. Once again, repentance does not figure into the story.

CHAPTER 4

SENSIBLE LOVE

"[I]t is impossible for a man of sense to have any real love for a woman whom he cannot esteem [. . .]"

(Haywood Betsy Thoughtless 313)

One of Haywood's later novels, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, first published in 1751, can also be used to illustrate her message concerning sexually aggressive women. Although this novel is often represented as a departure for Haywood from her earlier, perhaps a bit bawdier, work, *Betsy Thoughtless* remains true to many of Haywood's strongest themes. Women masquerade in order to get what they want, and although virtue is rewarded in the end, it is safe to assume that the ending of the novel is not necessarily the moral of the story.

As the novel begins, Betsy's mother has died, and her father has sent her away to boarding school. Shortly after that her father dies, and she travels to London to live with her appointed guardian Mr. Goodman (appropriately named), his wife Lady Mellasin, and her daughter Flora. Betsy is almost immediately the toast of the town, and she attracts many suitors. However, she is only interested in

teasing and provoking men rather than in finding herself a suitable mate.

Betsy has quite a few close encounters with losing her virtue, but she manages to keep her virginity. She does not feel real desire for any of her beaux, which could explain why she manages to keep her virginity. Her brother Francis sees that, in his opinion, she is floundering. He fears that she is not using her time and energy to find herself an appropriate husband and suggests that she consider the attentions of Mr. Trueworth, who is rather obviously named:

My dear sister, [. . .] I [. . .] have reason to believe, this I now send will meet a double portion of welcome from you. It brings a confirmation of your beauty's power; the intelligence of a new conquest; the offer of a heart, which, if you will trust a brother's recommendation, is well deserving your acceptance: [. . .] you may remember, that the first time I had the pleasure of entertaining you at my rooms, a gentleman called Trueworth was with us [. . .] It would require a volume instead of a letter, to repeat half the tender and passionate expressions he uttered in your

favour. (88-9)

Her new "sister" Flora is completely enamored with Trueworth, while Betsy is her usual noncommittal self.

In the meantime, Betsy realizes that a good friend of hers from boarding school, Miss Forward, again appropriately named, is actually a prostitute; and she learns that a rather boring friend, Mabel, is a true friend. These realizations force Betsy to mature and to realize that people are not always who they first appear to be. Miss Forward presents herself to Betsy in a much different light than that which actually suits her. She hopes to prosper from the perks associated with having a virtuous friend, but her true self is eventually revealed.

As she matures, Betsy realizes that she has deep feelings for Mr. Trueworth, but she also discovers that she has treated him too poorly for too long and that he has moved on. Actually, he is having a clandestine affair with the lusty Flora. The relationship between Flora and Trueworth is short-lived, however, for he quickly leaves her in order to marry a more suitable (virtuous) bride.

Trueworth writes to Flora:

It is with great difficulty I employ my pen to tell you, it is wholly inconvenient for us ever to meet again, in the manner we have lately done;

but I flatter myself you have too much good sense, and too much honour, not to forgive what all laws, both human and divine, oblige me to [. . .] in fine, I am going to be married [. . .]

(397)

It appears that Truworth is, underneath it all, nearly as much the scoundrel as "Fantomina"'s Beauplaisir and Love in Excess's D'Elmont. Of course, he is a man, so within the patriarchal eighteenth-century society in which this novel is set, he can get away with that sort of behavior.

Mary Anne Schofield states that "In Betsy Thoughtless disguises are employed openly and are put on by the characters as protective devices" (97). It is also true that these "disguises" are used to achieve control and, in some cases, sexual power. For example, Flora represents herself as "Incognita" (305) in order to seduce Mr. Truworth, masking herself in order to achieve sexual gratification from the man she most desires. She is successful in his seduction, yet, as the end of the story amply illustrates, her endeavors do not result in a lasting relationship with the man she desires.

As all of this transpires, Haywood reveals that Lady Mellasin has been using Mr. Goodman's wealth to pay off past debts of her own, and she has only married him for his

money in the first place. He is devastated and quickly dies of a fever. Obviously, the element of masquerade is not limited to the character of Flora within the pages of *Betsy Thoughtless*. Symbolically speaking, Lady Mellasin masks herself as a virtuous and caring woman in order to achieve the power derived from having a wealthy husband. She is, of course, punished when her secrets are discovered. When Mr. Goodman dies he leaves her with no wealth at all.

At the urging of her brother, Betsy marries George Munden, a name surely meant to make the reader think "mundane," for he is just that, nowhere near the worldly and remarkable man Mr. Truworth is. Betsy is disillusioned concerning her trust in her brother as well as in the state of marriage in general when she realizes that her brother has been keeping a mistress, but she tries to make the best of her own marriage. However, Munden is extremely cruel, and Betsy is miserable.

While Betsy is in the depths of misery, Truworth reveals to her that he has very deep feelings for her. He actually urges her to commit adultery with him when he finds her gazing upon his picture: "permit me [. . .] vouchsafe me the same favours you bestow on my insensible resemblance" (609). Of course, she refuses. Predictably,

much as with D'Elmont and Melliora, Truworth is only more enamored with Betsy when faced with her virtuousness.

Shortly after Truworth's wife conveniently passes away from smallpox, Munden falls victim to a fever that is only exacerbated by his extreme guilt over having treated Betsy so cruelly throughout their short marriage. Finally, following the appropriate year of mourning, Betsy marries Truworth, and her virtue is rewarded:

He kissed her hand with the most tender transports [. . .];--after which, they all seated themselves, and never was there a joy more perfect and sincere than what each of this worthy company gave demonstrations of in their respective characters. The next morning completed the wishes of the enamoured pair, and the satisfaction of their friends. (634)

The ending of Betsy Thoughtless should not be taken as a proclamation, on Haywood's part, that virtue is the most important aspect of a woman's personality and will always and inevitably be rewarded. Deborah Nestor recognizes that Haywood's endings do not necessarily represent the strongest message within her novels:

By concluding *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) with a marriage that rewards

its heroine's moral reform, Eliza Haywood appears to have written a novel that gives its reader a comforting sense of narrative closure, one that places it firmly in the newly popular didactic tradition. But this closure, like the moral it affirms, involves only the surface narrative of this highly complex, multiplot novel. (579)

In reading Haywood, it is important to recognize that the themes within her novels are just as important, if not more so, than the themes that can be derived from the endings. Her novels are full of messages regarding female power and desire.

On the other hand, Christine Blouch claims that Betsy Thoughtless "provide[s] a survival guide on marriage, sex, and on the commerce of sexual exchange, which [. . .] was a different kind of arena for women than for men" (15). This is quite true in more of Haywood's works than just Betsy Thoughtless. She often depicts sexually aggressive women and concedes that such creatures are an absolute possibility and are capable of sexual domination. However, she also seems to concede that in the world of her eighteenth-century audience, such a woman is unlikely to come to a desirable end.

In many ways, as well, Betsy misrepresents herself.

Is she a flippant and "thoughtless" young girl, or is she a thoughtful and virtuous young woman? Throughout the novel, she presents herself in the light which is of the most value to her at the time. In the end, of course, Haywood can give Betsy her happy ending, for even though she grows into a woman very much aware of sexual desire and of what she wants from Mr. Truworth, Betsy manages to maintain her virtue to the very end.

Finally, as Jane Spencer points out, "The bawdy references and the erotic prose common in earlier work [of the eighteenth century] are shunned by later women novelists" (215). Because Haywood's career as a novelist spans almost four decades, it is clear that her style changes with the times. However, she never abandons her message that women can be strong and have control. She simply conceals that message within whatever type of novel happens to be popular at the time. She understands that in order to survive, she must sell novels, whatever the popular style of the time may be.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

While Eliza Haywood does present themes involving sexually desirous women, she does so covertly. Proper young ladies must first masquerade as prostitutes or, at the very least, as "Incognitas" before they can pursue the men they desire. The fact that powerful women seem to be punished in the end is somewhat misleading, for it would be a fallacy to read Haywood's works only as providing a moral message rather than being filled with many messages. Haywood's endings, in many cases, are likely more representative of her eighteenth-century audience than of her own morality.

In "Fantomina" a young woman masquerades as three different characters to aid in her quest to make love with Beauplaisir, the man she finds simply irresistible. She finally resorts to masking herself and writing as "Incognita." It seems that she is filled with desire so strong that she would resort to any means necessary to fulfill those desires. In the end, she gives birth to a child and is sent to a convent by her disgraced mother. However, her fate is presented almost as an afterthought, and it would be ridiculous to assume that Haywood presents

such a powerful female protagonist only to strike her down in the end and show that she should have behaved herself all along.

In *Love in Excess* the desire for D'Elmont is the road to disaster for many women. However, the ends D'Elmont's lovers suffer are not in themselves the overwhelming messages within the novel. Instead, the novel shows that women can be filled with sexual desire, for even virtuous women like Melliora are drawn to D'Elmont. Virtue does not necessarily equal a chaste mind; that is the overwhelming theme in *Love in Excess*.

Even Haywood's later novel *Betsy Thoughtless*, which is often considered didactic, is not all about the value of virtue and the punishment received for a lack thereof. In *Betsy Thoughtless* Haywood once again shows that even virtuous young ladies are apt to feel desire. Betsy craves Truworth's love, physically and emotionally, quite vehemently. In the end, she is not punished for those passionate feelings; she is rewarded with Truworth himself.

Looking at Haywood's work in light of the little that is known about her life helps to provide a better understanding of the themes within her novels. Haywood herself most certainly felt desire. At least two of her

own children were born out of wedlock, and she was considered quite lascivious in her own day, both in her personal life and in her professional life. Haywood was an independent businesswoman and may not have been above masquerade and manipulation to insure the sale of her work. She even seems to have been willing to adapt her writing style to accommodate the most popular style of the time. She never really strays from feminist ideas and the notion that women are just as entitled to feelings of passion and desire as men are. Unlike men, for the most part, however, they may have to practice masquerade and deception in order to fulfill those desires. Even the most virtuous of women are capable of such feelings.

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