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**CONSTRUCTIONS OF IDENTITY IN
ELIZA HAYWOOD'S NOVELS**

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Key-words: eighteenth-century British literature, Eliza Haywood, feminine identity, masculine identity, double standard, the self, novel, performance, *the patchwork technique*, *emotion-in-the-double*, masque, *the body-mind-soul continuum*.

Summary:

My first encounter with Eliza Haywood was about four years ago when diving in the literary sea of Haywood's production, I inevitably started reading her intriguing *Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze Being a Secret History of an Amour between Two Persons of Condition*. Masquerade, power relations, inverted gender roles, disguise, female empowerment, moral regulations, subversive discourse, gender identity, social identity, all crafted in a few pages and all crowded in a captivating but elusive title that hints, somehow, at acting and invites you either to enjoy the play, or stay amazed by the mysterious apparition. Therefore, to study the performer, to analyse the mask, to read the writer, to write about the performer, reader and writer, announces a demanding journey on a brisk and thorny road which might be endless! Inevitably, as I am about to start, questions populate my existence and inexorably I wonder: how far should I go, what aspects have remained uncovered, what approach would be the most suitable? Who is this woman whose works I'm reading?

A lot has been done in returning Haywood's literary production the value and place that have been for too long neglected and a lot needs to be further studied and investigated. Although Haywood's writings and person benefited of popularity during her time, her work and name simply disappeared in the nineteenth century.

The publication of Whicher's *The Life and Romances of Mrs. Eliza Haywood* (1915) brought the authoress back to the scholars' attention. The 1980's represented a crucial moment for the revival of Haywood's work, with feminist specialists assuming the painstaking process of excavating for her writings.

Most of the specialist literature is devoted either to Haywood's amatory fiction produced in the 1720's, or to her domestic novels written in the 1750's. Haywood's literary production is impressive and many of her works have not been analysed.

Although Haywood's productions after 1740 had been regarded as a shift from her early novels, a move from the amorous fiction to domestic literature, I argue that Haywood's later novels show only a change in tone, for she continued to explore the themes of gender, human relations and power relations, just as she had done in the first part of her career. In "The Story of Eliza Haywood's Novels: Caveats and Questions", Paula R. Backscheider launched a challenge regarding the possibility of connecting Haywood's 1720's novels to her 1750's texts which has prompted several scholars in this direction.

My thesis aims to be a response to Backscheider's call and, undoubtedly, an attempt to rally to other scholars' effort of giving a more coherent approach to Eliza Haywood's writings. In my attempt to demonstrate the unity and continuity of Haywood's work, I pursue the constructions of female and masculine identity in works selected from her entire literary activity and divided in decades. I start from the premise that identity is not fixed and, following

Haywood's work from her first to the last novel I aim to observe the manner in which her own identity is also constructed along with those of her characters, in close relation with the social, historical, political and cultural context of her time. I investigate the identity formation process from a double perspective, feminine and masculine, in five of the novels and only the feminine identity in *Idalia* and the masculine identity in *Life's Progress*. This study provides an extended critical account of a wide corpus of text comprised in seven novels: *Love in Excess* (1719-1720), *Idalia* (1723), *Adventures of Eovaai* (1736), *The Fortunate Foundlings* (1744), *Life's Progress through the Passions* (1748), *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753). With one exception, the 1730's, two novels were selected for each decade in the interval 1719-1756. The choice of the novels was mainly dictated by my attempt to demonstrate that the dichotomous approach to Haywood's oeuvre needs to be replaced with a more homogeneous view over her literary canon.

As a method of proceeding in my examination of the above mentioned seven novels produced by Haywood's 'rebellious pen', I have chosen close reading. The complexity of the topic (constructions of identity), the profound historical, social, cultural, and literary transformations that marked the eighteenth-century Britain, the Romanian reading public's lack of familiarity with Haywood's texts, Haywood's return to mask as the act of performing and her display of several personae impose a blending of literature, history, religion, gender studies, and psychology.

My choice of close reading in analysing the construction of identity is grounded in Dan P. McAdams's **life story model of identity** in which he argues that "identity itself takes the form of a story, complete with particular settings, scenes, characters, plot and theme" (101), but with an eye on Haywood's background whose concepts of identity internalize John Locke's theory of the

self, some of the principles formulated by Descartes and Thomas Hobbes, and not least Mary Astell's view on feminine identity. Notably, Haywood's characters resist stereotypes and prove that identity is not a fixed but a fluid concept and its construction can be viewed as a lifelong process. Therefore, my analysis is chronological and I consider a wide range of aspects that contribute to the construction of the central characters' identity, such as the familial background, the social class, the life events and encounters, and the character's gender.

In the INTRODUCTION, I focus on Eliza Haywood's complex background. I observe the blended influence The Age of Reason and The Age of Disguise exerted on Haywood's personal and public life, as well as on her literary production.

THE 1720's, THE DECADE OF PASSION AND CREATIVITY, the second chapter of my thesis, is devoted to the analysis of *Love in Excess* and *Idalia*, two of the many novels written during the most productive writing phase of this voluminous writer.

1719 was the year when two novels competed for gaining the attention of the British reading public, *Robinson Crusoe* and Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess; or The Fatal Enquiry, A Novel*, which marked the authoress' impressive debut on the eighteenth-century literary scene.

Although *Love in Excess* follows the destiny of the libertine Count D'Elmont, it became famous for the way in which Haywood empowered her female subjects and created through the printed matter a public space for the female sexual desire.

Subject to various feminine conversations, D'Elmont's evolution will involve a great number of enamoured women (love in excess), but his personal love experience revolves around Melliora, the central female character Haywood introduces in the second part. Melliora, whose name resonates with the French *meilleur*, meaning, according to the context, better or the best, will prove to be, indeed, the best of her sex. Haywood endows Melliora with all the qualities that

reside in her name and makes it quite clear that she aims her to be D'Elmont's equal. However, in order to empower her female characters the author returns to the mask as performance offering them the possibility to act out their various personae.

Through this novel, Haywood transforms the body of the amatory fiction regarded as promiscuous and designed solely for seduction, into an informing and didactic text intended for the reader's instruction. Melliora, who reads philosophy, too, is the living proof that reading scandalous fiction does not necessarily attract immoral behaviour. The educated female can use reason, form judgements and draw personal conclusions.

The second novel that I investigate in this thesis is *Idalia*, which appeared in 1723. As Patrick Spedding notes in *A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood*, the fifth edition of the novel came out in 1742. The novel was translated into French in 1770 and was followed by a German translation of the French version in 1772. Despite its success and popularity in the eighteenth century, *Idalia*, as many of Haywood's novels, was dubbed immoral and un-English and was excluded from the literary tradition.

I envision the analysis of this novel as a complex perspective over feminine identity and I investigate the manner in which Haywood exposes the negative influence of untamed and uneducated passions. Another aspect that I analyse is Haywood's construction of the rape victim identity in which the major consequence of the abuse is the captivity of the self and the permanent quest for a personal identity.

In an attempt to instruct while entertaining, Haywood narrates the story of this beautiful Venetian who, being vain by nature, stubborn and inconsiderate cannot overcome the emotional traumas of a sexual abuse. Blocked somewhere between her self-righteous, fraudulent past and

her hazy, volatile future, living amongst mixed feelings of love, abuse and pride, Idalia's identity will remain captive under the multitude of masks she has never learnt to use.

THE 1730's, THE LULL IN THE NOVEL PRODUCTION

The second decade of Eliza Haywood's literary career was less fruitful in terms of the novelistic production than the 1720's, mainly due to her interest in other projects. The theatre became the most notable of her preoccupations of that period. The 1730's probably represented the time of her greatest involvement also in the political life of her society. Haywood's political implication as a Robert Walpole opponent can be observed in her activity as a writer in *Adventures of Eovaai* (1736) but also in her stage activity.

My reading of *Adventures of Eovaai* follows in certain directions the existent literature, aligning mainly with Kathryn King's work, *A Political Biography of Eliza Haywood*, one of the most informed critical efforts in recent Haywood scholarship, predominantly with regards to the author's political views and implications. Although I consider these aspects in my analysis, I focus mainly on the personal identity of the central female character and I observe the manner in which the *body-mind-soul-continuum* has an active role in the construction of the feminine self.

Adventures of Eovaai, this blend of romance, Oriental tale, and political satire accounts the feminine struggles for political and social authority in a patriarchal order; it stands for a feminist manifesto which claims a balanced female education and states that the *body-mind-soul-continuum* ensures a sane and complex feminine identity.

THE 1740's, THE TIME OF INNOVATION

Although for more than four years Haywood simply disappeared from public life, it seems that as a follow up to *Adventures of Eovaai* (1736), the 1740's represented a period when Haywood's works attested her political implications. Important to mention in this respect are her

periodicals *The Female Spectator* that appeared in the interval 1744-1746, *The Parrot* published for only six months in 1746, and *Epistles for the Ladies* (1748-1750). She also published *The Fortunate Foundlings* (1744) and *Life's Progress through the Passions* (1748), and the political pamphlet *A Letter from Henry Goring* (1749), which attracted Haywood's arrest.

The *Fortunate Foundlings* appeared anonymously in 1744, was very successful, and had an interesting itinerary in the eighteenth century. "It was translated into French by Claude-Prosper Crébillon under the title *Les Heureux Orphelins* in 1754 and was translated back into English under the title *The Happy Orphans* in 1758" (Spedding, 415).

My approach to the novel follows mainly the gender-determined construction of identity of the twin foundlings, Louisa and Horatio, but my reading is also informed with respect to the political identity that can be attributed to the characters by Rachel Carnell and Carol Stewart's studies. For methodological reasons I follow the construction of the twins' identities in a chronological manner.

It is interesting that, although the twins' adventures are gender determined, the source of their initiation journey is a quest for their true self, for their personal identity which involves love. Love, in Haywood's view, is crucial for self-definition, even if it is 'clothed' in gender differentiated apparels.

The last part of the novel functions as a sort of reminder that although the world is dominated by masculine rules, the feminine instincts and values restore order. This last part of the novel is a daring statement in defence of the female writer, too. As the artisan of the written pages that tell the story of the twin foundlings Horatio and Louisa, she has the supreme authority over the text. It is the authority of a woman writer who borrows the courage and autonomy from her male counterparts and crafts the identity of her characters with the gentleness, love and intuition of a

female, offering a double perspective on the self in a voice that can speak the same language both in the feminine and in the masculine.

Eliza Haywood's novel *Life's Progress through the Passions: or, The Adventures of Natura* was published in 1748 with the mention that it was by the same author as *The Fortunate Foundlings*.

As with the other novels that make the object of my analysis, I follow the construction of the protagonist's identity providing arguments that, apart from some constant elements that are invariable, identity is a fluid concept which may gain fresh aspects or layers with every new experience. The result is that, by the end of the novel, we witness the hero's reformation through the feminine discourse. This novel is the only one in which Haywood follows her character chronologically from birth to death and probably it suits best McAdams's life-story model of identity.

Following the life of a masculine feminized character, named Natura, Haywood empowers women, setting directions and trends for her readers. Though her reading public was widely known to be mostly feminine, she addresses the reader in the masculine. Intentionally she blurs the gender distinction, thus making use of a new facet of the mask understood as the act of performing.

Ending Natura's story in this androgynous tone, the authoress restates the imperative of an equal, unbiased, complex, and contextualized education of the modern human being, the new self-aware individual of the eighteenth-century Britain, be it man or woman.

THE 1750's, REVISITING THE PAST WITH MATURITY

The 1750's, the last decade of Haywood's literary career, had quite a tempestuous debut with her arrest for the political pamphlet *A Letter from Henry Goring*, published at the end of 1749. To what length this affected her personal life it is difficult to assume, but it did not interrupt her literary activity which actually ended only at her death in 1756.

This period was marked by the publication of two remarkable novels: *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753). Another noteworthy work is *The Invisible Spy* in which Haywood makes use of spying, a device she used before in one of her early writings, *A Spy upon the Conjuror* (1724). *The Young Lady*, Haywood's last periodical, appeared for a very short time January 6, 1756 to February 17, 1756. Two more works were ready for the press at the beginning of 1756: *The Wife* and *The Husband*, published soon after her death.

The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless, one of Haywood's most appreciated novels, appeared in October 1751. It was translated into French, German, Dutch and Swedish and it was well received by the reading public.

If in her *The Progress of Romance*, Clara Reeve characterised *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* as instructive and praised it for its moral conversion features, nowadays it is coined as rather subversive. Many scholars view Haywood's texts as seditious and one can surely state that the authoress always constructed her narrative discourse in a manner that implies double, or sometimes multiple reading.

My reading of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* goes in the more modern direction. I also consider it a subversive text of social criticism of the emerging bourgeoisie and the new

promoted feminine identity. Haywood involves Betsy in the construction of her own identity, teaches her to reflect and gain self-awareness and, ultimately, educates her at the school of love which she uses as a vehicle of reintegration in society.

The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless is the story of a young girl's sore road through teenage, courtship, and a first painful marriage. Betsy's metamorphosis from the a-sexual girl who cannot love and has no knowledge of emotions to the radiant female that loves with her soul and body, and is equally loved by Truworth is, indeed, a reform, but not the one required by the moral norms of her society.

Haywood's aim has always been that of instructing while entertaining. With her novel she tried to shape her reader's identity. Not only does she teach women how to find 'Mr. Right', how to construct and accept their matrimonial identity, she also instructs them how to become part of the patriarchal society and operate as subjects from within the system. *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* is another proof of Haywood's innovative spirit.

The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy (1753) the second novel published by Eliza Haywood in the 1750's, was concerned, as most of the literature of the time, with marriage and domestic life. It follows the destinies of two cousins Jemmy, the son of a rich gentleman and Jenny, the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Their parents' greatest desire was to see them married, provided that they also had an inclination in respect.

My examination, based on close reading, follows the identity construction process of the two central characters, observing Haywood's mature approach to courtship, marriage and human behaviour. My aim is to demonstrate that Haywood envisions the feminine and masculine

identity as marked both by sameness as well as difference, aspect suggested by the very similar, slightly-differentiated-by-a-double-consonant names of the title characters (**Jemmy/ Jenny**).

In this novel, Haywood states and confirms the necessity of a double approach to the issue of marriage and of the need to provide readers with the double gendered perspective on matrimony and human relationships.

The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy can be inscribed in Haywood's lifelong effort of identity formation in the spirit of equality and mutual respect and affection that can be experienced primarily in matrimony based on genuine love.

The closing part of my thesis comprises the CONCLUSIONS where I focus once more on Haywood's creative effort of constructing the modern individual's identity. Writing, using the pen, Eliza Haywood attempted to recuperate the life of women, to give them a sense of identity. Through fiction, she negotiated women's personal identity in the public sphere, deliberately blurring the line between private and public. Circulating women's stories, as well as male life stories in a feminized, more personal and authorized way, Eliza Haywood contributed to women's inclusion in the literary profession, in the world of the written words.

The continuity and unity of Eliza Haywood's literary production can be traced in several identifiable unifying elements:

- Her main interests are the same all along her literary career. From her first amatory fiction production to the more serious, formative genre, the novel of the 1740's and 1750's, Haywood focuses on gender relations, emotions management, power positions of men and women in private and public spheres, domination and control.

- Central to all the novels comprised in the present study is love, which functions not only as the plot catalyst, but also as the unifying element of her characters' personal identity. Companionate marriage is the ideal of a mutual love relationship which I named *emotion-in-the-double*.
- All her literary productions negotiate with form and genre, intersect, intertwine and often overlap the amatory with the didactic, seduction with virtue, providing the author with a background that affords the construction of complex, unbounded identities.
- In almost all her novels Haywood makes use of parallel minor stock characters, of particular scenes, plots, sub-plots and settings in the construction of her feminine or masculine central characters' identity. I have termed this *the patchwork technique*.
- With variations, and most certainly in a more modern manner, some elements used in the early novels can be recognized in the texts of the 1750's. Facets of identity of her first characters are crafted in her more mature novels.
- Her manner of constructing the identity of her feminine and masculine characters in agreement with the McAdams's life story model of identity demonstrates that identity is not fixed and can be conceived as a lifelong, dynamic and fluid process.

With a literary career spanning over more than thirty-six years, time in which she produced around eighty writings ranging from plays, dramaturgical adaptations, novels, conduct books to periodicals, essays or political pamphlets, Eliza Haywood's life and work cannot be easily summarized in a nutshell, not even one the size of a dissertation.

To my knowledge, *Constructions of Identity in Eliza Haywood's Novels* is the primary study that covers all the decades in which Haywood developed her literary activity, the first extensive

reading of Haywood's *oeuvre* by a non-native English speaker, and the only lengthy examination of Eliza Haywood by a Romanian scholar.

I believe, though, that a great accomplishment of this study, besides drawing the Romanian reading public's attention to Eliza Haywood's work, is the analysis of Haywood's and her characters' religiosity, an aspect that has not been previously studied at length and which I investigate in all the seven novels included in this thesis.

The following chapter comprises the BIBLIOGRAPHY and the ENDNOTE contains a list of all the works by Haywood, as they appear in Spedding's *A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood*.

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