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The Literary Year 1719: A Gendered Approach. *Love in Excess* vs. *Robinson Crusoe*

Abstract

This article is meant to challenge the well-known belief – I could even say prejudice – that Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* is the first novel in English literature. The gatekeepers of the literary canon and renown have neglected for a long time the literary activity and pre-eminence of Eliza Haywood. The thorough analysis of the two novels reveals that while *Robinson Crusoe* foreshadows the Victorian virtues, Eliza Haywood's *Love of Excess* is an amatory novel written by a woman. Gender prejudice combined with genre prejudice led to Haywood's continuous effacement from the literary history for a very long time. It is only in the 1960's and 1970's that the new generation of literary critics took serious interest in women writers' works, and in Haywood's work, in particular. The conclusion of this article is that the British novel has two parents: a man, Defoe, and a woman, Haywood.

Keywords: Haywood, Defoe, novel, literary history, gender, the year 1719

In literary history, 1719 is known as the birth year of the English novel. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was published in that year, but this is not the only novel published in 1719. Eliza Haywood (1693–1756) published her novel *Love in Excess* in the very same year. In the present article we want to ask the following question: How did one novel become canonical, while the other was forgotten and rediscovered only in the 1960's when a new generation of literary critics took very serious interest in women writers' works?

Defoe (1660–1731) and Haywood were near contemporaries, but Haywood was thirty years younger than her colleague who became the illustrious father of the English novel. During her lifetime, Haywood was extremely popular, Fielding called her “Mrs Novel” which shows her popularity. The nickname points to some authorial envy and it also shows the atmosphere in the English Republic of Letters; the competition between male and female authors was not based only on aesthetic or literary merit. Pope was one of Haywood's bitterest enemies. “His 1728 epic poem *The Dunciad* famously depicts Haywood as first prize in a urination contest between two booksellers” (Simpson 2017). Haywood was a very prolific writer, author of plays, poems, essays, conduct books, pamphlets, translations, historical writings in favour of the Stuarts, and literary criticism.

In the introduction to his famous *Enlightenment Orientalism*, Srinivas Aravamudan (2012) counteracts Watt's choices of the founders of the English novel:

While the novel did battle with various kinds of romance, the oriental tale was an alternative genre to the domestic novel—as were others before it, such as the lunar voyage, the travel narrative, and the criminal biography. Thus scholars need to reexamine the system of eighteenth-century fictional genres, their circulation, and ways that relative hierarchies have been altered to impose certain outcomes. (6)

Aravamudan exaggerates the supposed battle between the Oriental tale and the Western novel, taking advantage of the impositions of political correctness. In my opinion, a battle of equal importance took place between the (realistic) novel as authored by Defoe and the romance, the amatory novel where one or several libertines try to win women's hearts. *Love in Excess* is such a novel and it lost the battle with *Robinson Crusoe*. The result of this conflict of mentalities and writings has influenced the literary canon for centuries.

The main male character in *Love in Excess* is a Parisian rake, Count D'Elmont, a libertine who looks for pleasure and sexual gratification. Haywood's novel relies on several erotic triangles based on feminine desire. In contrast, the male-authored novel is more chaste, more philosophical. Robinson spends 28 years on his island and he feels no need, nor desire for sex. He prays and works, he prays and works.

Haywood truly follows the title of her novel, the plot is abundant in love, sentiments and desires are in oversupply. The Parisian Count D'Elmont is attracted by both Alovisa, a rich and experienced lady, and Amena, the daughter of Mr Sanseverin. The women's rivalry for D'Elmont is, in fact, the antagonism between two lifestyles, two erotic approaches. Amena is "so little versed in the art of dissimulation so necessary to her sex" (Haywood 1719, 2022: 11) that she needs the assistance of Anaret, her servant. On the other hand, the Count does not want to marry Amena, he only wants to enjoy himself sexually. Amena accepts to meet the Count in spite of her father's interdiction. Charming and naïve, she wonders: "[W]hat is it he requires of me of me?" (Haywood 1719, 2022: 18). The servant, who plays the well-known role of the intelligent servant who outsmarts his master, tells Amena, "what farther he requires, himself shall tell you" (Haywood 1719, 2022: 18).¹ The novelist deftly combines irony and naivety, eroticism and cynical debauch. Indeed, once accepted into Amena's bedroom, D'Elmont "began to press for a greater confirmation of her Affection than Words" (32). He wants sex, "there was but a Moment betwixt her and ruin" (34). The graduality of the erotic gestures makes the novel attractive even to a 21st-century reader.

¹ Henceforth, all quotes from Haywood will be referenced with a page number only.

Alovisa is a very different woman. She enjoys her freedom: "I have nobody to whom I need to be accountable to my Actions" (38). Her servant, Charlo, makes a very interesting parallel with Amena's servant. Both of them are intelligent and they know the ways of the world.

This is the moment when a new character appears: Chevalier Brillan, D'Elmont's brother. Brillan is in love with Ansellina de la Tour, Alovisa's sister. Haywood chooses to create a conflict in the mirror. The two brothers love two sisters. The naïve Amena is eliminated. She withdraws to the monastery whereas Alovisa and D'Elmont get married.

But this does not mean that D'Elmont's libertine nature is satisfied. A new conflict develops. Frankville, the guardian of Count D'Elmont, is on his deathbed. During this difficult and sad moment, Frankville's son is on the grand tour, in Europe, whereas Franville's daughter, Melliora, is at the monastery for education and protection. D'Elmont is by his guardian when he passes away. Melliora is entrusted to the care of D'Elmont by her father. The moment is "a kind of painful Pleasure, a mixture of Surprise, and Joy, and Doubt" (54) for he is love with Melliora. "[H]e found by sad experience what it was to Love and to Despair. He admir'd! Ador'd! And wish'd even to madness!" (58). Haywood combines high knowledge of eroticism with the delicacy of her psychological analysis. The female novelist's wording creates a very impressive sensual crescendo. Amena's desperation and suffering foreshadows Rousseau and his Julie. Although obliged to chastity by the walls of the monastery, Amena passionately writes to D'Elmont: "But your idea and that, not even these consecrated Walls, nor iron Gates keep out; Sleeping or Waking you are ever with me, you mingle with my most solemn Devotions; and while I pray to Heaven that I may think on you no more, a guilty pleasure rises in my soul and contradicts my Vows" (60). The cynical D'Elmont responds with a beautiful neo-classical metaphor that is meant to offer some consolation to Amena. "Happiness is not always an attendant on Hymen" (64). He offers the victim of his lewdness "the love of souls ... such love shall be yours forever" (64). Haywood's witty wording is a pleasant invitation to sophisticated discussions in the tradition of the medieval *cors amoris* where the troubadours and the ladies of the castle used to discuss the ethics of love while the crusaders fought for the Saviour's tomb far away in Jerusalem. Full of remorse, D'Elmont realises: "My crime is my Punishment" (64) and also that "... after Possession it must be only Tenderness and constant Assiduity to please, that can keep up desire, fresh and gay..." (66).

Melliora and D'Elmont debate whether love and reason are compatible. According to Melliora, "where love is kindled in a generous Heart by a just Admiration of the real Merit of the Object beloved, Reason goes Hand in Hand with it, and makes it lasting as our life (91). Consequently, love and reason, "are indeed sometimes united, but how often they are at variance, and where may we not find proofs, History is full of them..." (89).

Baron d'Espernay, accompanied by his sister, Melantha, pays a visit to D'Elmont and Alovisa. D'Espernay encourages D'Elmont to take Melliora's "no" for a "yes". "Have you not confessed that she has looked on you with a tenderness, like that of Love, that she has blushed at your Sight, and trembled at your Touch? What would you do more than she should do, or what indeed, can she do more, in Modesty, to prove her Heart is Yours?... Women are taught by Custom to deny what most they covet..." (94). At the same time, Baron d'Espernay is attracted to Alovisa. It "was that kind of Love, which considers more its own gratification than the interest, or quiet, of the object beloved" (118). Soon, Melliora "should fall a sacrifice to Love" (94). In the best Enlightenment tradition, Haywood wants to convince the reader that reason is much more important than passion because if one can control one's behaviour, then one can control one's passions. Again, the beauty of Haywood's erotic language is impressive. Here is, for instance, D'Elmont trying to talk Melliora into submission: "Love has sent me to charm thee, sweet resister, into yielding" (98). It is no surprise that Haywood, an actress and a playwright herself, offers us a novel where the dialogue is extremely important and it continues, in certain ways, the Restoration comedy. All characters look for sexual gratification, they cheat on one another and the comical situations contribute a lot to the development of the plot and maintaining the readers' interest.

Deceit, death and quid-pro-quo's turn make this second part of the novel much more tragic. Baron d'Espernay wants Alovisa by all means and this is why he encourages D'Elmont to take Melliora by whatever means. Melantha, who has sex with D'Elmont pretending that she is Melliora, marries soon after this adventure. A baby is born seven months later, but nobody suspects anything wrong or immoral. Baron d'Espernay promises Alovisa that he will tell her the name of D'Elmont's mistress but in the confusion of a night of mischief both the Baron and Alovisa are killed.

The denouement of Part II mirrors somehow the end of Part I. Melliora retires in a monastery exactly like Amena. Nuptials balance the plot and foreshadow the happy ending of the novel. Melantha is not the only one to get married; Ansellina, Alovisa's sister, who was visiting her sister, also gets married to Chevalier Brillan, D'Elmont's brother. The virtuous are rewarded and the promiscuous end up broken-hearted.

Part III presents D'Elmont's adventures following his wife's death. He leaves France for Italy while Melliora promises to write to him. The novel becomes much more of an ethical discussion about love, friendship, marriage, and separation. The *cors amoris* dimension increases, and so does the beauty and the refinement of Haywood's verbal expression: "... even talking of the Person we have once loved, and find the least pleasure in the Discourse, it is ridiculous to imagine we are free from that Passion ..." (152). "Love is too jealous, too arbitrary a Monarch to suffer any other Passion to equalize himself in that Heart where he has fixed his Throne (143).

Liking is a flashy Flame, which is to be kept alive only by Ease and Delight. Love needs not this fuel to maintain its Fire, it survives in Absence, and Disappointments, it endures, unchilled, the wintry Blasts of cold Indifference and Neglect, and continues its Blaze, even in a Storm of Hatred and Ingratitude... Liking plays gaily round, feeds on the Sweets in gross, but is wholly insensible of the Thorns which guard the nicer and more refined Delicacies of Desire and can consequently give neither Pain nor Pleasure. Love creates intolerable Torments! Unspeakable Joys! Raises to the highest Heaven of Happiness, or sinks us to the lowest Hell of Misery. (144)

In Rome, D'Elmont pays no attention to the ladies. Still, he receives a love note and is insistently called by a messenger who introduces himself as a gentleman. "I shall defer my own satisfaction till I have procured the Ladies" (148). The ambiguous meaning of the English verb "procure" shows, on the one hand, women's increasing role in the plot, and on the other hand, points to the possibility that sex and erotic freedom will be freely and openly enjoyed. Ciamara, the woman who sent D'Elmont the love note, does not hesitate to express her desires openly even to her servant: "I die, Brionne, if I do not possess him [D'Elmont]" (156). Again, Haywood relies on the servant who is a sort of foil to the master or the mistress. The importance of this kind of character increases. In Part III Brionne is not only Ciamara's helping hand, but also her *confidante*. Haywood overcomes the class ideology of her time and constructs a sorority that foreshadows modern (political) equality among the members of modern society.

Through Mr Frankville, Melliora's brother, who is also present in Rome, Haywood connects the plots of Part II and Part III. Frankville is the fiancé of Violetta, the daughter of Signor Citollini, but he is also attracted by Camilla. On the other hand, Violetta falls in love with D'Elmont and she tries to unite Frankville and Camilla. Melliora is kidnapped from the monastery by Marquess D'Sanguillier although the latter has a fiancée, Charlotta d'Mezray. D'Elmont, Frankville, and Camilla run away from Rome accompanied by Fidelio (Violetta in disguise). Full of courage, Charlotta d'Mezray runs away from the monastery where she has retired, like Amena. Disguise is often a helpful tool for women. Violetta disguises as a page, Charlotta disguises as a servant and is hired at the castle of Sanguillier, her former lover. The journey from Rome to Paris is difficult and the travellers would not have resisted if "the strength of their minds had not by far exceeded that of their Bodies" (236). On their way they are sheltered by the Marquess D'Saguillier who is engaged to Charlotta d'Mezray but is also attracted to Melliora. Violetta dies and three weddings follow: Marquess D' Saguillier and Charlotta's, Frankville and Camilla's, and D'Elmont and Melliora's. In a very traditional way, Melliora gives permission to D'Elmont and Frankville to give her to whoever deserves her. Apparent submission to the old matrimonial patterns combines with the free expression of love and sexual attraction between the two lovers. Nicely dressed, Charlotta, who has disguised as

a servant, falls at Sanguillier's feet, forgives him and begs him to marry her. "I beg you to accept the Pardon which I bring" (258). The beauty of the paradox and the ambiguity of the female position construct a style that Haywood alone possesses. After these matrimonial declarations and the weddings, everybody is happy and "they could now talk of Woes with Pleasure" (259). There follows "a very delightful Conversation" (259). Haywood's discursive pleasures are not only erotic. The D'Elmonts return to Paris where they live happily ever after.

Haywood's characters are often attracted by two partners. The writer's ability to point to the ambiguities of erotic desire is impressive. "D'Elmont felt a concern observing it [Violetta's jealousy], which nothing but that for Melliora could surpass" (234). Female characters feel no shame in crying out their sexual cravings: "And are you that Dull, Cold Platonist, which can prefer the visionary Pleasures of an absent Mistress to the warm Transports of the Substantial Present?" (213), hollers Ciamara. Erotic casuistry is polished and tasteful: "... that Passion which aims chiefly at Enjoyment, in Enjoyment ends, the Fleeting Pleasure is no more remembered, but all the stings of Guilt and Shame remain..." (214). In case of true love, "[p]ossession thus desired, and thus obtained is far from satiating. Reason is not here debased to Sense, but Sense elevates to Reason, the different powers unite, and become pure alike" (214). The art of the prelude is mastered by the male lovers.

Although Sanguillier utters a worrisome generalisation – "all Women can be won by Force or Stratagem..." (256) – Haywood's characters enjoy love reciprocally. Love is not rape. When Melliora and D'Elmont finally find themselves in bed, in the home of the Marquess D'Saguillier, the narrator is not ashamed to tell us almost everything. "A while their lips were cemented! ... and Looks, and Sighs, and straining Grasps were all the Eloquence that either could make use of... Dissolved in Love, and melting in his Arms, at last she found no Words to form Denials, while he, all fire, improved the lucky Moment, a thousand Liberties he took" (254). When Charlotta rings the bell of morality and the two lovers must separate, there is no reference to the body, to sexuality, but it is clear that D'Elmont has an erection. "Oh, you will not, said the Count in a Whisper, and tenderly pressing her Hand, you must not leave me thus!" (254).

The evil characters disappear as in a fairy tale. Ciamara takes her own life. Cittolini dies out of grief because his daughter, Violetta, has left Rome. Violetta herself dies after falling ill on her journey. When D'Elmont realises who the page really was, the narrator presents "... the Count throwing himself on the bed by her" (261). The sensuality of the body does not disappear even in the moment of death. Therefore, Violetta dies "thus happy, in your Sight, ... your touch" (262), D'Elmont's touch, of course. Violetta craves for it even in her final moment. Her last words express her feelings for D'Elmont, her vision of paradise is strikingly material and sensual. "I could wish, methinks, to know no other Paradise than you, to be permitted to hover round you, to Form your Dreams, to fit upon your Lips all Day, to mingle with your breath, and glide in unfelt Air into your Bosom" (262–263).

Female bonding is an important element of the plot. Melliora, for instance, does not suffer because of those “little Jealousies” (262) although she knows that Violetta loves D’Elmont desperately. On the contrary, she proposes friendship to Violetta.

As I have previously mentioned, the novel has a happy ending that reminds one of fairy tales. A discreet element of social critique grafts the fairy tale upon the robust body of the social and realistic novel. After Count D’Elmont’s return to Paris with his beloved wife, “... those who in the Count’s Absence had taken a Liberty of censuring and condemning his Actions, aw’d by his Presence, and in Time, won by his Virtues now swell his Praises with an equal Vehemence” (263). And the D’Elmonts give “great and lovely Examples of conjugal Affection” (263). Haywood tames her open approach to sexuality by creating a sort of modern fairy tale where the happy ending is reinforced numerically – three couples find their happiness – and the social context imposes a note of realism upon the narration.

Daniel Defoe’s novel, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, was also published in 1719, like the first part of Haywood’s novel, but its ethos is different. From the first chapter Defoe makes it very plain that his text praises, even flatters the middle class. Notice that Haywood’s characters are mostly aristocrats. The middle-class merchant Citollini is an evil character. In contrast, with Defoe the middle class is an agent of social progress. Robinson’s father gives his son an eloquent social lesson:

He bade me observe it, and I should always find that the calamities of life were shared among the upper and lower part of mankind, but that the middle station had the fewest disasters, and was not exposed to so many vicissitudes as the higher or lower part of mankind; nay, they were not subjected to so many distempers and uneasinesses, either of body or mind, as those were who, by vicious living, luxury, and extravagances on the one hand, or by hard labour, want of necessities, and mean or insufficient diet on the other hand, bring distemper upon themselves by the natural consequences of their way of living. (Defoe 1719, 1996: 3)

Nature does not exist in Haywood’s novel, except if we consider woman as part of nature, which many rakes and libertines do. Having been shipwrecked on his island, Robinson instantly views nature as his property. The beauty of the island’s natural environment is to be subdued and dominated.

At the end of this march I came to an opening where the country seemed to descend to the west; and a little spring of fresh water, which issued out of the side of the hill by me, ran the other way, that is, due east; and the country appeared so fresh, so green, so flourishing, everything being in a constant

verdure or flourish of spring that it looked like a planted garden. I descended a little on the side of that delicious vale, surveying it with a secret kind of pleasure, though mixed with my other afflicting thoughts, to think that this was all my own; that I was king and lord of all this country indefensibly, and had a right of possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance as completely as any lord of a manor in England. (Defoe 1719, 1996: 44)

Robinson Crusoe does not respect nature. Nature is there to be used and supply human needs. He kills hares and foxes although he does not eat them, they are useful to him. Why does he kill them then? To assert his superiority over nature. Robinson himself concedes: “I found in the low grounds hares (as I thought them to be) and foxes; but they differed greatly from all the other kinds I had met with, nor could I satisfy myself to eat them, though I killed several” (Defoe 1719, 1996: 48).

Work and patience are Robinson Crusoe’s sources of power. He confesses “with patience and labour I got through everything that my circumstances made necessary to me to do, as will appear by what follows”. One must notice that work is not a preoccupation for the main characters in Haywood’s novel. Labour is only for the lower classes, for servants and maids. However, hard work is not enough for Crusoe. He feels the need to communicate although he is also afraid of the Other and he ascribes to the Other the features of a cannibal. Robinson is afraid that he was on “the savage coast between the Spanish country and Brazils, where are found the worst of savages; for they are cannibals or men-eaters, and fail not to murder and devour all the human bodies that fall into their hands” (Defoe 1719, 1996: 48).

For some time Robinson Crusoe’s need to communicate is fulfilled by his parrot: “all the while I was at work I diverted myself with talking to my parrot, and teaching him to speak; and I quickly taught him to know his own name, and at last to speak it out pretty loud, ‘Poll,’ which was the first word I ever heard spoken in the island by any mouth but my own” (Defoe 1719, 1996: 53).

Crusoe’s story is retroactive and amply argued with examples from the Bible, which is not the case with Haywood who follows the adventures of her characters as they develop from the present towards the future. “I looked now upon the world as a thing remote, which I had nothing to do with, no expectations from, and, indeed, no desires about: in a word, I had nothing indeed to do with it, nor was ever likely to have, so I thought it looked, as we may perhaps look upon it hereafter—viz. as a place I had lived in, but was come out of it; and well might I say” (Defoe 1719, 1996: 56). Crusoe understands his loneliness, as described in Luke 16:26: “Between me and thee is a great gulf fixed”.

Robinson’s attitude to nature is productive and not at all respectful or economical. In fact, this desire for more and more hides an emptiness that nobody and nothing can fill. Although Robinson does not question the capitalist ethics, the novel discreetly foreshadows some of its future ecological disruptions. “I had enough to

eat and supply my wants, and what was all the rest to me? If I killed more flesh than I could eat, the dog must eat it, or vermin; if I sowed more corn than I could eat, it must be spoiled; the trees that I cut down were lying to rot on the ground; I could make no more use of them but for fuel..." (Defoe 1719, 1996: 56–57).

In Defoe's story everything goes on according to a (divine) plan and temporal coincidences are meant to teach Robinson a moral lesson. "First, I had observed that the same day that I broke away from my father and friends and ran away to Hull, in order to go to sea, the same day afterwards I was taken by the *Sallee* man-of-war, and made a slave..." (130). A young man who must have had the normal desires of any person his age, Robinson does not even think of a female partner. Still, when his clothes become rags, his thoughts reveal some restrained desires: "yet I could not go quite naked—no, though I had been inclined to it, which I was not—nor could I abide the thought of it, though I was alone" (130). But the sharp sense of social conventions and the internalization of social restrictions prevent Robinson from trying any solitary solutions or pleasures. His parrot dies and he replaces him with two others "which talked pretty well, and would all call 'Robin Crusoe'" (138), but his relationship with them is not the same as with his first winged friend. His longing for human companionship is clear, but there is irony in his destiny. Robinson was an odious slave owner who has no regret for his trade. "[W]hat business had I to leave a settled fortune, a well-stocked plantation, improving and increasing, to turn supercargo to Guinea to fetch negroes, when patience and time would have so increased our stock at home, that we could have bought them at our own door from those whose business it was to fetch them?" (Defoe 1719, 1996: 84). Somewhat mockingly, the companion that God/destiny gives Robinson is exactly one of those savages whom he considers good only for slavery. When he realises that his beloved island is visited periodically by natives, he cannot help experiencing regret: "I had been so near obtaining what I so earnestly longed for—somebody to speak to, and to learn some knowledge from them of the place where I was, and of the probable means of my deliverance" (187).

The encounter with Friday is initially a dream. God sends Robinson this dream and it is obvious, according to Robinson's interpretation, that He, God himself, has sent Robinson this dream because He wanted Friday to be a slave. No wonder then that Robinson interprets Friday's gestures of gratitude for having been saved from his pursuers as acceptance of slavery. "[H]e kneeled down again, kissed the ground, and laid his head upon the ground, and taking me by the foot, set my foot upon his head; this, it seems, was in token of swearing to be my slave for ever" (Defoe 1719, 1996: 87). As for Robinson's teaching Friday to say "Yes, master" – his first English lesson – its meaning is very clear. Friday must learn and submit to a hierarchy. There is nothing like that in Haywood's novel where men and women learn to respect each other (if they are aristocrats) and live in matrimonial harmony and reciprocal love.

Having met Friday and having realised that the island is visited by natives, Robinson forgets about his need for communication. Robinson becomes mercantile again. These natives might mean more slaves for Robinson, the slave merchant. "I was not at first so careful to shun the sight of these savages, and avoid being seen by them, as I was now eager to be upon them. Besides, I fancied myself able to manage one, nay, two or three savages, if I had them, so as to make them entirely slaves to me, to do whatever I should direct them, and to prevent their being able at any time to do me any hurt" (189). Friday is so acculturated by Crusoe, so "tamed" that he refuses to be sent to his own people. You "know God, pray God, and live new life" says he to his master. "[Y]ou teachee me good, you teachee them good" (Defoe 1996: 98) desperately, imploringly says the confused Friday. He wants death or to accompany Crusoe home to Europe. And in fact, Robinson and Friday do experience one last adventure together as they fight with wolves while crossing the Pyrénées during winter.

The irony of the plot is that once he has returned among Europeans, Robinson changes his understanding of God. On the island, God was only God. Robinson prayed to Him, he asked for His help. Once in Europe, God is either Catholic or Protestant, or Anglican and this matters.

I had once a mind to have gone to the Brazil and have settled myself there, for I was, as it were, naturalised to the place; but I had some little scruple in my mind about religion, which insensibly drew me back. However, it was not religion that kept me from going there for the present; and as I had made no scruple of being openly of the religion of the country all the while I was among them, so neither did I yet; only that, now and then, having of late thought more of it than formerly, when I began to think of living and dying among them, I began to regret having professed myself a Papist, and thought it might not be the best religion to die with. (Defoe 1719, 1996: 122)

In conclusion, both 1719 novels, Defoe's and Haywood's, share their authors' pleasure to oblige their characters to experience many adventures and diverse geographies. It is true, Haywood's geography is European, whereas Defoe's characters cross oceans and visit three continents: Europe, Africa and South America. In both novels the idea of equality between humans is fundamental. But while Haywood conceptualizes equality in gendered terms, as equality between (aristocratic) men and women particularly in matrimony, Defoe grapples with the idea of equality when challenged in a colonial situation. Defoe's discussion of equality is influenced by strong ethnic, cultural, economic, and social terms. In both novels there are retirement spaces where characters can meditate on their own destiny and reconstruct, at least to some extent, their identity. In Haywood's novel it is women who choose and use these spaces, and they are monasteries or disguises. In Defoe's novel, the island where Robinson is shipwrecked is the space of such retirement. This location

is not decided by the character but imposed by divinity. In both novels, the idea of reason is fundamental. In Haywood's amatory novel the senses elevate to reason and both the senses and reason become commendable when characters wait to satisfy their desires only after they have been blessed in matrimony. In Defoe's novel reason blessed by divinity helps Robinson survive on his remote island and then reintegrate into European society. The senses are not allowed to take precedence over reason.

It is beyond doubt that both Defoe's and Haywood's novels must be taken into consideration in the contention for the honourable title of "the first novel in English". Haywood's obliteration is another example of women's effacement from history and prestigious memory. The British female novelists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Sarah Fielding, Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Fanny Burney, Frances Sheridan), or the female representatives of Romanticism (Mary Robinson, Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Coleridge), the female Preraphaelites (Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Siddal) – and we interrupt our enumeration here limiting it to the British letters – were appreciated as writers worth canonizing only in the 1960's and the 1970's, when female literary historians realised that the history of literature is not only a long list of gifted males writers. Although often appreciated during their lifetime, after their death most women writers – except for some token appearances² – were first neglected and then forgotten. In this context, where can we situate Defoe and Haywood? Defoe's valorisation must be understood in the context of the Victorian Age whose values Robinson Crusoe foreshadows. On the other hand, it is high time that we recognised the importance of the amatory novel in the history of the British Enlightenment and of modern fiction. 1719 was the year of two important novels: *Robinson Crusoe* and *Love in Excess*. The British novel has two parents: a man, Defoe, and a woman, Haywood.

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² See Jane Austen, George Eliot or the Brontës.