



FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Traballo de Fin de Grao

Grao en lingua e Literatura Inglesas

**THE LOST TRADITION: WOMEN NOVEL WRITERS
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND**

Autora: Lorena Arteaga Vilas

Titora: Laura María Lojo Rodríguez

Curso 2021- 2022

USC
UNIVERSIDADE
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DE COMPOSTELA



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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Lorena' with a stylized flourish underneath.

CUBRIR ESTE FORMULARIO ELECTRONICAMENTE

Formulario de delimitación do título e resumo

Traballo de Fin de Grao curso 2021/2022

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Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redacta-lo TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

This dissertation aims to explore the work of women novel writers in eighteenth-century England. Despite the popularity which characterised women's literary production at the time – especially among female readers – many of these authors often lack the critical recognition enjoyed by male eighteenth-century writers, such as Daniel Defoe or Samuel Richardson, thus constituting a "lost tradition" fallen into oblivion. However, these women's contribution to the development and consolidation of the novel form – both in terms of discursive strategies, themes, motifs and ideas – is central to the genre and deserves to be validated by contemporary critical standards. To pursue this aim, this dissertation will examine novels by writers such as Frances Burney and will focus on central notions which prefigure the work of these writers in terms of narrative form and ideology.

This dissertation will thus be informed by the critical work of seminal authors who have delved into these women's narrative strategies and explored major considerations which have contributed to give pre-eminence to their male counterparts, such as Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan's *British Women's Writing in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2005) or María Jesús Lorenzo Modia's *Literatura femenina inglesa del siglo XVIII*, among others.

Santiago de Compostela, 5 de novembro de 2021.

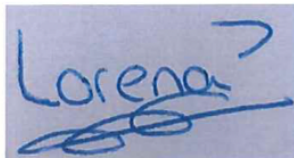
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Introduction

Jane Austen remains one of the most acclaimed women writers to this day. She has brought many twenty and twenty-first century readers closer to the ways of living, manners and behaviour of the nineteenth-century upper middle-class. Austen has made many young girls dream of standing next to Elizabeth Bennet in a ballroom experiencing the pleasures high society could offer and marvel at the variety of *locus amoenus* her novels depict. I am no exception to this rule. I read my first Austen novel when I was nineteen; and in less than six months I had read them all. However, that was not enough, and Austen led me to discover other women writers of her time, such as the Brontë sisters or George Eliot ... But that was it. I wrongly thought that this tradition of women writers was actually exhausted with those women that Elaine Showalter had defined as ‘the happy few’ in her seminal study *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). However, this situation seemed awkward to me when I became a third-year English Literature student. Here my search started; I browsed the internet for more writers and I found immense lists of names and works that I had never heard of. The more I looked, the more it became clear: it was not only me who did not know them; almost nobody did. Wikipedia articles were short and were written in few languages, no scholarly analysis of their novels appeared in any of the most common pages. Nevertheless, these women’s written works were there, so I started reading. To my surprise, when I started tracing patterns, similarities between the canonical works I knew (mostly written by male writers) and these new, forgotten fictions by women writers became evident. The obvious question pounded in my head constantly: why were these works lost? Why aren’t they studied or at least known? It was at that moment that the topic for my dissertation became clear. I was compelled to know more about these women and so does society as a whole.

Women writers have been producing great novels since the genre was started in the eighteenth century. They initially struggled hard to find a place for themselves in an unsympathetic society until the genre and the figure of the female novelist became prestigious and prominent. Therefore, this dissertation aims to understand the historical context that nested a vast number of works by women writers as well as to analyse the reasons why they were excluded from the literary canon, thus serving the purpose of proclaiming the necessity to bring them back and proving their excellence and relevance in the wider context of eighteenth-century women's fiction.

In order to prove such points, this dissertation will be informed by outstanding critical studies focusing on the figure of the woman novelist, the role of twentieth-century male critics and the evolution of the genre along the century, such as *Living by the Pen* (1992) by Cheryl Turner or *Mothers of the novel* (1986) by Dale Spender. Both these works deal with relevant concepts to my purpose, such as *the myth of the isolated achievement* or *the myth of Austen as an initiator*, while also bringing forward the names of many popular writers of the time, their works and their personal struggles as writers and as women. In the same way, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986) by Jane Spencer gives further socio-economical context and makes a classification of the types of fiction that were produced during the century. Such critical works help to understand the background in which authors such as Eliza Haywood or Frances Burney wrote their novels and to critically examine which aspects of their fiction are more relevant and worthy of analysis.

This dissertation has been structured into five chapters: the first one provides an overall understanding of the degree of success these women writers acquired during their time. This is achieved through quotations from the famous literary publication *Monthly Review* and by specific examples of writers which obtained great success, giving also as evidence Jane Austen's v in *Northanger Abbey*, as an example of the wide readership these novels had.

Chapter two provides a chronological evolution of the figure of the female novelist along the eighteenth century, as well as examples of the hardships these women writers had to endure on account of their gender. The chapter also offers an in-depth explanation of the public degradation which female authors suffered at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the socio-economical context that triggered their will to write, the reasons why they were finally accepted and the terms under which this social acceptance was obtained. Furthermore, this section deals with the issue of modesty or the subjugation to their husbands and fathers which these women had to endure.

Chapter three explores male criticism and the construction of the English canon, and it also gives arguments for the reinsertion of female writers on the literary heritage. Terry Eagleton's *Literary History: An Introduction* (1992) is a key work in this section because it provides a deeper understanding of the canon politics; however, this dissertation goes beyond the assumption that a male-dominated society prefers a male-dominated literature and sides with Dale Spender when she claims that men overlook the achievements of women so that they can attribute the said achievements to their male counterparts.

Chapter four establishes a comparison between the two authors that I have chosen to represent eighteenth-century women writers: Eliza Haywood and Frances Burney. The choice of these two authors was based on the completely opposite lives they had, the different opinions they held concerning fiction-writing and the huge success they enjoyed throughout the century. The aim of this section was to clarify that there was not one way to become a successful writer or a specific set of characteristics the author had to fulfil. Instead, the range of authors, topics and novels was rich and diverse.

Finally, chapter five analyses *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and *Camilla* (1796); two novels written by the authors mentioned in section four. The aspects that were

considered most prominent for the analysis were the dangers the heroine encounters once she enters society, the double standard existing in the society of the time regarding sexual behaviour regarding men and women as well as the wide range of secondary characters these authors included in their fiction. All these aspects aim to convey the importance of these novels and the necessity to re-evaluate their worth as relevant contributions to the history of letters.

CHAPTER 1: At The Top Of Their Game

Women novelists in the eighteenth century were capable professionals who met the requirements and exploited the possibilities of the public industry. In contrast to today's common belief that Jane Austen (1775-1817) is the first English novelist worth noting, hundreds of female authors had been making a name for themselves inside the business. As the monthly review states in the quotation below, women were linked with the novel at this time: they wrote more than men and, on some occasions, with better success and higher prices (Turner 1992, 144). So much so, that famous booksellers of the time like William Lane decided to publish mostly works by women (Turner 1992, 40). Circulating libraries advertised themselves with names of credited female authors and as an investigation led at the time by Gentleman's magazine proves, some male novelists wrote under feminine pseudonyms in order to improve their chances of success (Turner, 1992, 144).

Of the various species of composition that in course come before us, there are none in which our writers of the male sex have less excelled, since the days of Richardson and Fielding, than in the arrangement of a novel. Ladies seem to appropriate to themselves an exclusive privilege of this kind of writing; witness the numerous productions of romantic tales to which female authors have given birth. (*Monthly Review*, 537)

Novel writing became during this century a highly competitive trade with an enormous failure rate (Turner 1992, 79). There were many women trying their hand at the trade because it was one of the few fitting ways a lady had to obtain money. As a consequence, many works

were produced by many different authors, more than can be traced up as Jane Spender explains in *Mothers of the novel* (1986, 13) and as proven by this quotation from the *Monthly* reviewer:

Almost every female of sensibility (and we observe it with much regret) is apt to imagine herself a Burney, and to believe that she cannot be better employed than in favouring the public with a pretty novel. (*Monthly Review*, 162)

Such affluence of aspirants and works inevitably caused women to become masters in novel writing. Some of them such as Hannah Moore, Ann Radcliffe or Frances Burney acquired national status. Even the most patriarchal critics of their time had to mention some women novelists on their accounts (Turner 1992, 15). As will be explained in section 2, it was not without opposition that women became accepted as respectable members of the literary sphere of the time; however, by the second half of the century they participated in prestigious literary gatherings like Dr Johnson's circle and even created their own associations like The Bluestockings (Turner 1992, 89). Moreover, they were aware of each other's work and responsive to it: through novels we can find cross-referencing and many authors maintained a correspondence or even a friendship (Turner 1992, 128).

The respectability woman novelists gained as censors of public morality allowed them to address the major issues of their time from a position of power, but what is more important, female heroines brought forward the female worldview for the first time (Spencer 1986, 20-21). Heroines drawn up by women were realistic and psychologically appealing to the

reader (Spender 1986, 93), while heroines depicted by men seemed like sketches without any individual trait. Even renowned authors like Fielding allowed that women were more able to depict heroines than men were (Spencer 1986, 21).

As far as the realms of literacy spread, novels were read. As has been previously stated, women readers preferred works by women and therefore these made up the larger part of the industry. Nevertheless, men read novels as well. Some like James Boswell or Leigh Hunt admitted it publicly, but it was mostly a guilty pleasure they felt ashamed to own (Turner 1992, 131). This issue is also dealt with in *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen when Catherine tells her romantic interest that she thought men despised novels and his answer is: “they read nearly as many as women. I myself have read hundreds and hundreds. Do not imagine that you can cope with me in the knowledge of Julias and Louisas” (Austen 2022, 65).

All in all, the importance of novels and female novelists during the century was unmeasurable. Women writers had an active part in the creation and in the consolidation of the novel as a genre of prestige. Even though nowadays only male authors have made it into the canon, there were hundreds of women who were prolific and successful in the trade and must not be forgotten.

CHAPTER 2: Evolution and Hardships of the Eighteen-century Woman Writer

The eighteenth century fostered many social and cultural changes in England and in the world. However, the one that concerns this dissertation most is the rise of the novel as a genre, accompanied by the rise of the woman novelist and the numerous hardships they had to endure and surmount.

First of all, it is important to take into account that there were women writers before the eighteenth century: as Turner explains in *Living by the Pen* (1992, 19-21), during the seventeenth century we can already see many instances of writing carried out by women in the private sphere with diaries or letters but also in the public one, aiming at publication and professionalism with prophecies, astrological almanacks or conduct books. For example, Hannah Woolley is considered the first woman to commercialise and exploit the market of books about women's domestic role (Turner 1992, 25) and Lady Mary Wroth published *Urania* as early as 1621. On a different note, high rank women usually preferred to write poetry because it had a higher standing but their readership was usually restricted to a closed circle of acquaintance (Turner 1992, 22).

Although writing was seen as an odd activity for women, it was rather tolerated and not disgraceful in itself. Public disgrace came with the act of publication (Spender 1986, 23), which relates to the conception of femininity that predominated at the time. During the eighteenth century it was considered that women were intrinsically different from men; therefore, they had different roles and spheres in society. Women were considered as guardians of the house, possessing high morals and emotional values, obedient and modest companions for men. As long as they remained chaste, virtuous and modest, accusations of being evil corrupters of men were left in the past (Spencer 1986, 15-18). The "angel in the

house”, the ideal proper woman which Coventry Patmore would popularise with his famous eponymous poem a century later, was discreet and shone only in the domestic sphere. As a result, the woman novelist who sought publication and fame was seen as an abominable and unwomanly creature that only deserved shame. They suffered horrible accusations and were linked with prostitutes, uncleanness and any kind of calumny imaginable (Spencer 1986, 5).

Nevertheless, the eighteenth-century socioeconomic context needs also to be considered in order to understand how women writers came to be in vogue. This was also the time of the industrial revolution and of the rise of the bourgeoisie. As Jane Spencer explains (1986, 11-13), industrialisation separated the work sphere from the domestic one and many occupations previously undertaken by young girls, such as spinning, were covered by men, as trade expanded. Therefore, women stopped being in contact with the work environment, the number of widows that continued with the business after the passing of the man of the house lowered significantly in comparison with previous centuries and the leisured wife became a symbol of status for men. This translated into economically dependent women that could easily fall into a precarious situation, should something happen to the man of the house. The range of suitable occupations for women was not large and it included keeping the house, visiting or going to public leisure places such as the theatre. Any profession that was remotely public, such as singing or acting, was seen as a disgrace, apprenticeships were expensive, sewing was paid poorly and being a governess required some level of education which was not always given to women and for high-rank ladies it was seen as a degradation (Turner 1986, 69-73). Hence, many women saw in novel writing a chance to gain some money and improve their economic situation.

Even though publishing was badly reputed, women excused themselves claiming that they wrote out of need, not to acquire fame. Moreover, novel writing had many similarities with other feminine occupations such as writing letters or diaries; therefore, and slowly, it

became more acceptable because people came to understand that there really were no alternatives for them. Additionally, it could be done from home and novels could adopt a didactic-moral tone, like dramatised conduct books for the young ladies that read them and this was seen as something proper (Spencer 1986, 20).

Besides, the issue of women's education was a heated discussion at the time. More women learned how to read and write along with other accomplishments that were aimed at better prospects once they entered the marriage market; notwithstanding the original purpose, it also helped those who wanted to try their hand in writing. Furthermore, relationships between authors and booksellers became more commercial, aristocratic patronage declined and alternative ways such as subscription emerged which made it easier for women to enter the trade while retaining anonymity and privacy (Turner 1992, 13). Pleasure started to be considered as an acceptable human activity so the leisure industry grew and reading became more approachable through circulating libraries or lower prices for fiction. Although there was initially some reluctance in the publishing industry to print women authors when a market for their works was not clearly established (Turner 1992, 85), more and more people started to read novels and these were distributed in fascicles, circulating libraries and magazines. In addition, novels dealt largely with themes related to women, such as the marriage market, emotions, a domestic setting and sexual dangers and behaviours and women excelled at portraying such themes on paper. In short, it was a growing, profitable market that women in need could and knew how to exploit (Turner 1992, 83-84).

By the turn of the century, while the novel endured a bad reputation, the amorous author who wrote scandals was in vogue. This is called by Jane Spencer (1986, 108) the "tradition of protest". This type of woman novelist was already disgraced from a social point of view because of their occupation; hence, they took things one step further and protested against the male view of women. In fact, the novel of seduction acted on many occasions as a satire of

the romantic novel: a young lady believes to have the power over her lover when she is actually falling into the clutches of a male seducer who takes advantage of her and leads her to a tragic ending. These writers were censured as women, not according to the value of their work and, in some cases, anonymous works were praised until they were discovered to have female authorship (Spender 1986, 26) (Turner 1992, 46). Such hostilities made it difficult for women to continue writing, many wrote but sank from publicity, which gave advantage to male authors because they were more visible and accepted while female works got lost easily (Spender 1986, 24). This caused a debate about the reading materials of young ladies. Novels were accused of filling their heads with nonsense because of the low reputation the genre had at this point in time. As a consequence, lists of proper reading materials were published, for example the one written by George Hickes, and as a decent woman could not enter a bookstore, even by the end of the century, it was difficult for them to get hold of these scandalous novels (Spender 198, 92).

In contrast, a virtuous and moral writer appeared in figures like Penelope Aubin or Jane Barker. This kind of writer aimed at uplifting the genre and it became the norm once the novel as a whole gained prestige in the forties. Scandalous affairs went out of fashion and the tradition of protest was submerged as female novelists started to gain respectability. At this point, as Turner (1992, 11) explains, it is crucial to realise that not every instance of women's writing had a feminist meaning: we are dealing with eighteen-century women who shared the values of the time, even though they could protest against specific situations, for the most part they accepted the current patriarchal worldview. Additionally, they were engaging in an activity that was not entirely suitable for females; therefore, in order to obtain society's approval, they acted as censors of morality and strengthened the restrictive definitions of womanhood of the century. This decision is only natural, bearing in mind that they wrote for money and if people did not agree with their views of society, the novels would not sell well.

As a consequence, the contents of their fiction were brought to the accepted realms of women's experience and some rules for good novel writing were established: the characters had to be exemplary; virtue and innocence had to be rewarded while guilty or negative characters had to be punished, the plot required verisimilitude and there had to be purity of style and manners (Turner 1992, 49). This new type of writer encouraged young ladies to write novels, it became an easier target, and the risk of public disgrace was minimum as long as authors complied with those rules. Therefore, as Turner explains (1992, 3), if the so-called "feminine literary style" exists, it is only a product of chauvinism, gender roles and patriarchal censorship over women, not an innate conception of their condition as women. This new style is named by Jane Spencer (1986, 140) the "didactic tradition": from a moralist point of view, novels could be seen as dramatised conduct books in which novelists aimed at educating and reforming their heroines. These heroines could be exemplary or erring; however, the faults displayed could not be too serious because the author was also identified with them. During this time, female authors became real life heroines who had to live up to high ideals of virtue and modesty in order to retain public favour. The most common type of erring heroine was the coquette: a young girl who enjoys the courtship game and delays her choice of husband. She was considered unsteady and vain; nevertheless, this type of behaviour could also be a covert critique of male domination. Given that young girls were first subjected to their fathers and then to their husbands, the period of courtship was the only one on which they held some degree of power; hence, it is reasonable that they wanted to extend that period. Notwithstanding, they were eventually taught to accept male authority as the better choice; for, as has been previously stated, writers who spoke in favour of male dominance found it easier to get their works published (Spencer 1986, 143). Even at this stage, many female writers feared publishing and being singled out as writers. For example,

at the age of fifteen, Burney burnt many of her plays and a novel because she was afraid of social repercussions if her works were found.

In addition, modesty became an ideal both for men and women writers of the time. However, in the case of women it was taken to an extreme. As has previously been stated, the only acceptable reason for publication was to be in financial need, if it was suspected that the author was ambitious or entitled, public opinion would reject her and she would be harshly criticised. The idea entertained at the time was that the power of writing was beyond their control, lady novelists only wrote well if they were modest and unaware of it. In other words, they were only accepted if they did not suppose a threat and if they did not validate their own achievements (Spencer 1986, 80-81). This, combined with the lack of education many women endured, made some authors doubt their skills so much that they stopped writing altogether and others continued with great anxieties and only because their situation required it. Conversely, there were cases in which, most probably, that humbleness that was needed in order to obtain success was no more than an act. This most surely was the case of Eliza Haywood, who always knew how to adapt herself to what the public required, as will be explained in sections 4 and 5 of this dissertation. One might think that as their role became more acceptable, they were allowed to grow in confidence; nothing further from the truth: they kept having to represent themselves as timid and deficient if they wanted to be accepted by society and the reading public (Spencer 1986, 95). As mentioned, a good example of this was Eliza Haywood: she started as an amorous writer, but after the fashion in novels changed, she claimed to be a reformed coquette who wanted to advise young girls against the dangers of a scandalous life. She adapted to the requirements of the public and continued to be one of the most successful writers of her time her whole life (Turner 1992, 50-52).

Another drawback women writers had to endure during this century was the subjugation to their fathers or husbands and to the domestic sphere. On the one hand, it was expected of

women writers that familial, domestic and social duties came before their novel writing. As a consequence, they had a lack of personal time to devote to the task (Spender 1986, 28). One example of this can be seen in the American novel *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, published in 1899, even though it is set in the nineteenth century. Chopin's novel reflects the difficulties of a married woman when she tries to have her own space and interests: she is heavily criticised by her society, her husband thinks her crazy and she is constantly invaded by her children when she tries to produce her work. Such hostilities and much worse were born by many of the popular female writers of the eighteenth century; the only proper solution was to get rid of that image of the perfect housewife, or, as Virginia Woolf put it in "Professions for Women" (1931), with killing the angel in the house. On the other hand, husbands and fathers had a legal claim to women's income and could alter or destroy their works; the novels were the property of the masculine figure these ladies were subjugated to (Turner 1992, 100). Furthermore, in the case of married women, divorce was really expensive and it required an Act of Parliament; hence, there were no legal arrangements to secure their fortunes in a legal separation (Turner 1992, 101).

Eliza Haywood is a perfect example of how men and a patriarchal society could hinder the writing career of a woman in the first years of the century: she was born Eliza Fowler in 1693 and received a liberal education for a woman of the time, she married Reverend Valentine Haywood when she was young and started writing while she was with him; he was also a writer, but unsuccessful. In 1719, she published *Love in Excess*, a scandalous novel in three volumes that became an instant bestseller, this caused jealousy in her husband, and he probably did not allow her to keep writing; so in 1721 she left him. This was an extremely courageous act because she had no one to look up to, she was a pioneer who decided to support herself and her two children with her writing and play-acting (Spender 1986, 87-89). However, as will be further on explained in section four of this dissertation, society judged

her harshly and she never recovered her good name. This, united to William Pope's attack in his novel *The Dunciad*, made her retire into a more private life for some years and when she came back, she wrote under a pseudonym, Miss Penelope Prattle, and never used her own name for publication again (Spender 1986, 102); but in spite of that, she continued to be a popular author whose works were much acclaimed with the general public. In her final years she announced her works with "By the author of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*" because it was her most successful novel.

Frances Burney is another example of the damage men and a chauvinistic society could have upon the writing of a young lady even when the century was more advanced: she was heavily influenced by the fear of bringing disgrace to her family because of her writing; as a consequence, she burnt many of her works when she was fifteen, including a novel that could be considered the prequel of *Evelina*, *The History of Caroline Evelyn*. Even though she wrote from a young age, she did not publish until she was twenty-six and, even then, she did it anonymously. She was unmarried and she admired her father deeply; consequently, she was extremely afraid of his reaction if he found out that she was a writer (Spender 1986, 283). After the good reception *Evelina* got from society, she dared to reveal herself as the author; nevertheless, although her father was pleased by the news, it could be argued that his influence over Burney was the thing that hindered her works the most. He managed her finances horribly and sold her works at low prices, but what's more important; he made Burney abandon her witty and ironic tone in favour of a more serious and moralist one and prevented her from publishing and performing her plays. In summary, as Dale Spender explains, "what she did best, her father liked least and sought to suppress" (1986, 286), she no longer could write what she wanted, but what her male counsellors advised; hence, her playful, vivid tone was lost forever (Spender 1986, 283). In addition, due to her privileged status as a writer, the Queen offered her a position in court that maintained her distant from

literary circles for almost ten years and when she finally would get out (for she never wanted to accept, but her father convinced her to do so), most of her acquaintances were dead and her novels did not gain the same level of praise ever again (Spender 1986, 285). Male advice and society's requirements ended the career of one of the most prominent writers of the century.

Despite all these obstacles, during the last decades of the century, the number of female novelists rose exponentially. Successful writers encouraged new ones and as it was stated in section one, the number of young girls who tried to write novels was extremely high. Even though woman writers are difficult to trace up because they changed names with marriage, some used male pseudonyms or wrote anonymously (Spender 1986, 13); lists of more than a hundred novelists and more than five hundred works can be found as well as some names whose works have been lost such as Jane Tumbury, Anna Meades or Dorothy Kilner (Turner 1992, 134). At this stage, some of them wrote without financial justification, only because they wanted to do so. This was Frances Burney's case, and she became proof of how much the social position of the woman novelist had changed during the century: the prestige she acquired thanks to her novels caused her to be named "Second Keeper of the Robe" by the Queen. Such proliferation of writers also diversified the range of novels women were allowed to produce: Burney was outstanding with socio-historical detail, Anne Radcliffe gained success with the romantic gothic novel, Smith, Inchbald and Edgeworth among others contributed to the development of the regional and Jacobean novel and Mary Wollstonecraft created a philosophical challenge about womanhood with *Mary, A Fiction* (Turner 1992, 6). Moreover, the tradition of protest came back due to the radical ideas of feminism that came into society with the French Revolution. This type of novel focused on the role of women as wives and daughters, sexual behaviours in men and women, the ideal of chastity and lack of sexual desire that society imposed upon women and a new, untrustworthy perspective of men emerged: men were seen as attackers of female purity that led women to tragic endings while

they went unpunished for the same actions. While women's lives and reputation were finished if any sexual transgression took place, men could continue in society with a slight reputation of rakes but, overall, their social standing was not damaged (Spencer 1986, 112).

All these new perspectives that emerged with the novel, furnished society with a new and more complex treatment of female characters who were seen as capable of moral growth and psychological depth. Before this century, women were depicted as sketches, always as side characters and men were the protagonists and the ones who lived adventures (Spender 1986, 93). However, during the eighteenth century women started to be the protagonists of their own stories and young ladies saw themselves and their lifestyle represented in the novels they read for pleasure. In the same way, the success of women writers placed them in a position of power to address the major issues of their time, they consolidated themselves as a respectable cultural figure and their voices were legitimated in literature, facilitating their professional endeavours and their need to earn money with their works (Turner 1992, 30).

All in all, it could be stated that this century witnessed the birth and coming of age of a literary genre and its female writers. From the lowest ranks in public opinion to social prestige and recognition, women writers worked their way up proving their capabilities and value both to critics in high spheres and to the general public and succeeding with each of them. They make up half of the literary heritage of the century and they have earned their rightful place in the history of letters.

CHAPTER 3: Why and When They Were Buried. Dismounting Chauvinistic Criticism and Giving Reasons for their Reinsertion in the Canon.

Despite the popularity and prestige these female authors enjoyed during their lifetime, nowadays many have fallen into oblivion. Most are neither read, nor studied and in the history of letters it is almost as if they had never existed. This section will explain the reasons and moment of their disappearance from the canon and it will also provide arguments to re-insert them.

Twentieth century critics such as Walter Allen in *The English Novel* (1980), Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) or Jim Hunter in *The Modern Novel in English* (1966) give no mention to eighteenth-century women novelists in their works. Even though female writers were so prominent that even the most patriarchal critics of the eighteenth century had to mention some of them in their accounts (Turner 1992, 15), as time went by, it became easier to ignore them, degrade them focusing more on personal affairs than on their works or devalue their accomplishments. This was done by Tompkins who said that after Richardson, Sterne and Fielding stopped writing; the novel was characterised by “its popularity as a form of entertainment and its inferiority as a form of art” (1932, 1). Nevertheless, even though Tompkins fails to appreciate the value of works written by female novelists at the time, he admits a crucial truth: that the public preferred women. Even today, the fact that women, as readers, had a great role in uplifting the novel as a genre is generally accepted. Therefore, the affirmation below has enormous implications:

Women [...] liked to read what women had written, to meet in books with a reflection of their own interests and point of view; it was a new pleasure, and gave such plentiful occupation to ‘your female novel-writers. (Tompkins 1932, 120)

Tompkins accepts that although he considers women’s works inferior; they were preferred at the time. Consequently, women writer’s role in uplifting the genre in the eyes of the general public is equal or even greater than that of their male counterparts. Once this affirmation is established, it seems absurd not to include them in anthologies and academic works about the evolution of the novel. Leaving these women out of the canon gives us a distorted vision of reality where the full literary value of the time is neither acknowledged nor studied. As Mary Wollstonecraft said, there is no good reason for women not to be equally represented unless we take into account male dominance (Spender 1986, 147). Hence, this dissertation will take male dominance into account.

For this purpose, Terry Eagleton’s *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1992) is of much aid. Eagleton considers that there is no constant set of features that we can isolate in what has been considered as “great” literature; instead, he proposes an alternative definition of literature as the kind of writing that is well regarded and considered as “fine writing”. As a consequence, it is not a stable entity, because society’s value-judgements change with time (Eagleton 1992, 9). Furthermore, he defines the canon as a construct fashioned by particular people, for particular reasons at a certain time. Thus, as value is a transitive term, nothing is valuable in itself given that history hasn’t ended. It cannot be known if something will remain eternally charming because social change can make things stop resonating with society and then they will be removed from the canon. Everything, even facts, are influenced by value

judgments given that we consider them worth making; therefore, likings are not private matters but influenced by cultural factors and life experiences as well as ideology. Eagleton claims that the ideology of an individual is the structure of values which informs and underlies the factual statements of said individual and it is connected to the power structures and power relations of society (Eagleton 1992, 10-12). For example: if somebody wants to sound smart in a literary conversation, they know which titles to mention and which to avoid. Therefore, the works that are included in the canon are not intrinsically superior, but only selected by those in power because of their personal value-judgments. Likewise, if the people in charge of creating the canon had a different ideology and set of value-judgments, the works included would vary immensely. Eagleton reinforces this hypothesis by mentioning the experiment done by I A Richards with under-graduate literature students which concluded that the response individuals gave to literature was beyond literary factors. Instead, he came to the conclusion that the specific individual analysing the works was the most significant element: age, gender, ethnicity, social class, degree of education and life experiences among other factors shape each person's value-judgements and each specific individual selected different works as the most fitting to be part of the canon basing themselves on those personal value-judgments (Eagleton 1992, 13-14). Taking this into consideration, it is important to bear in mind the kind of person in charge of creating the canon and institutionalising literature: heterosexual, middle-class, white men.

Bearing in mind these ideological factors, it could be argued that a male-dominated society would prefer a male-dominated literature. In the same way that a female-dominated society would prefer a female-dominated literature. The literary critic Clara Whitmore agrees with this point of view. In the preface to her book *Woman's Work in English Fiction* (2010), she claims that the authors she will analyse have fallen into oblivion despite their intrinsic merit because nearly all the books in literature have been written from a man's standpoint.

Here, we see the use of the word “literature” as a synonym of “fine writing” as Eagleton suggested that it could be used. Afterwards, she makes a harsh critic of men’s fiction in which she states that all plots of men-written novels are alike and uninteresting:

The hero falls in love with a beautiful young lady, not over seventeen, and there is a conflict between lust and chastity. The hero, balked of his prey, travels up and down the world, where he meets with a series of adventures, all very much alike, and all bearing very little on the main plot. At last fate leads the dashing hero to the church door, where he confers a ring on the fair heroine, a paltry piece of gold, the only reward for her fidelity, with the hero thrown in, much the worse for wear, and the curtain falls with the sound of the wedding bells in the distance.

(Whitmore 1910, 24-25)

Whitmore considers these novels as narrow in scope and placing excellence in the ability to describe low scenes like drinking, fighting or swearing. In contrast, she praises stories with male protagonists written by women like *The Adventures of David Simple* by Sarah Fielding as a great social satire (Whitmore 1910, 26). In addition, she makes clear as early as page 2 of her work that women are not imitators of men but pioneers that opened up new paths of fiction such as the epistolary novel or the diary novel and excelled on them. Had she been one of the critics whose opinions were considered in order to create the literary canon, the works we study would be completely different.

In the same way that female critics did not resonate with male-written fiction, there can be found some examples of male critics reviewing female works without much success: on the one hand, because they do not understand the female experience but on the other hand, because they do not make an effort to do so either. For twentieth-century critics, the

adventures of young men entering the world that Whitmore disdains, seem to be much more appealing and universal because the ones judging those books are men. The concerns and experiences young men have in their *bildungsroman* novels never appear as trivial or repetitive for the male critics judging; while the coming into society of young ladies seems to them uninteresting and unimportant from a literary point of view (Spender 1986, 276). In fact, Walter Allen overtly compares the world and adventures of young men with that of young ladies concluding not only that women's world is of less importance but that they were inferior to men.

“The whole world of his time was open to Tom Jones” but “to read Miss Burney is rather like having a mouse's view of cats”. As Dale Spender says, Allen identifies himself with a cat who plays with mice while finding it amusing, but from the perspective of women, being played with at will seems rather cruel (1986, 279). Furthermore, we see the narrowness of his scope analysing female fiction when he writes that women’s was “a world of routs, assemblies, balls and tea parties [...] dominated by the manoeuvring, innocent or otherwise, necessary to place a girl in the way of an eligible young man” (Allen 1980, 94). It seems rather ridiculous that one of the most renowned critics of the twentieth century assumed that because some parts of women’s fiction, specifically Burney’s, took place in assemblies, balls or tea parties, that was the content of their works. As Spender sharply remarks, if we were to assume that Tom Jones or Joseph Andrews were no more than guided tours of the English countryside, the limitations of our view would immediately be pointed out by any critic (Spender 1986, 279). However, his statement about female fiction was accepted without question. This superficial analysis is usually as much as women’s writing can hope for, given that most works are usually simply ignored and assumed as inferior (Spender 1986, 280). He contradicts eighteenth-century critics when he signals the narrowness of her views and topics; he fails to see her wide perception of the world, the way in which she depicts the highest and

lowest ranks of society, her wit and wisdom, how she portrayed the worst and the best of the human soul and the sharp observations of her narrators (Spender 1986, 277). He stayed in the shallowness of the setting and considered himself enough of an authority figure to claim that despite her historical value, she was overrated (Allen 1980, 93) when it was generally agreed among the high literary spheres of her time that she was the second best novelist of all times, just below Richardson. Moreover, going back to the second part of his quotation, it is clear that in the entrance of a young lady into the world, Allen does not see a human being making the greatest decision in her life; nor does he realise that the wrong choice of partner could mean life's disgrace or even death. Young ladies had to look for a husband without overtly doing so and, at the same time, they were prohibited from declaring interest and obliged to guard their reputation from a perilous world in which, should the latter be lost, it was almost impossible to retrieve it. In short, marriage for women was a dangerous business that required as much analysis as possible, even if men mock it (Spender 1986, 2). Female authors tried to give advice to their female readers, but the novels dealt mostly with the hardships of the heroine, marriage was only a happy conclusion after many tests and trials that could have easily ended in tragedy. However, the trivialisation of female topics and the female experience displayed by critics is yet another proof of their interiorised misogyny and disdain against the female sex (Spender 1986, 278).

Another example of such biased and chauvinistic analyses is that which J B Priestley makes of Eliza Haywood's male seducers. While in *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, as well as in her other works, it is easy to identify one example of male harassment and sexual violence after the other; Priestley sees a man enjoying his favourite sport, like one who plays cards, one who hunts or, as Walter Allen would say it, a cat playing with a mouse:

These gentlemen had to pass the day somehow, and if they did not care for hunting, drinking, politics or a literature they had to go seducing out

of sheer boredom. And I suspect that they were careful, like good sportsmen, to choose the most difficult subjects, so that the end would not come too quickly. Mrs Heywood offers us some good specimens of the seducer, but of course she does not understand them. She thinks it is a question of unbridled desire, and does not see that these long pursuits and elaborate stratagems argue an intellectual interest. (Priestley 1929, 13).

Men with such opinions as these were the ones that buried the feminine tradition and the ones whose word and value-judgments today's literary canon has approved of. Nevertheless, Haywood had to endure chauvinistic and degrading treatment from critics even during her lifetime. Her beginning as an amorous writer and the scandals which surrounded her own personal life caused high spheres of writers to disregard her; she was never admitted into the inner circle of highly respectable English ladies who gathered around Richardson, nor did she want to be. She was an adventuress (Whitmore 1910, 36) but even like that she never dared to reply when she was attacked as a person. She knew that whatever she said would retaliate against her because women could only lose once their reputation had been questioned by men. In contrast, no attack against her writing went unanswered: she was a fierce defender of her work and every attempt to lessen the value of her creations had a ready comeback waiting. She was a pioneer in many fields, including journalism: newspapers were not considered suitable materials for women to read; however, she singlehandedly initiated *The Female Spectator* in 1742 where she introduced herself as a reformed coquette and joined the didactic tradition (Turner 1992, 51-52). She tried to warn women against the loss of their reputation and gave sensible advice to her readership. However, while similar moral pieces for gentlemen were praised and their writers, men like Joseph Addison or Richard

Steele, were considered and studied as serious moralists, Haywood's pieces were scorned and considered "rules of etiquette" (Spender 1986, 103-104).

A common critique endured by these authors is the narrowness of their views. There is a stigma that romance was their only topic and therefore, their takes on reality are limited to that subject. This criticism could not be further away from the truth and in devaluing it, several arguments need to be considered: first of all, the society in which these female authors wrote has to be taken into account. As it was explained in section two, they had to restrict their writing to the accepted realms of female experience if they wanted to retain their womanliness and public approval. If they went further on and wrote about unwomanly topics, they would fall into public disgrace and their reputation would be lost forever; something most of them could not or were not willing to endure. Romance, along with emotions, parenthood, or family affection were some of the suitable topics. Eliza Haywood is the perfect example of what happened if women exceeded the limits society had outlined for them: she was criticised as shallow and inconsistent; additionally, she was accused of writing only what the public wanted to read when, actually, she helped shape the likings of the public because she was part of the society she wrote for (Spender 1986, 90). On top of that, many of her inventions have been disregarded and attributed to male writers, calling her an imitator; even when the so-called copy preceded in year of publication to the alleged original (Spender 1986, 92). As Spender affirms, considering Haywood an imitator of men is only consistent with a patriarchal view of men as culture markers. She was as great a novelist as Defoe or Fielding, and as good a social commentator as Steele or Addison, if not more (1986, 107).

Moreover, as has been previously explained, the issue of finding a husband was a pressing concern for young women at the time because the wrong choice could have disastrous consequences in the lives of these young girls. However, although there was a love story framing the narratives, they did not focus on romance most of the time, but on the

dangers young ladies encountered while their search for the right man took place. Seducers, rascals, inappropriate suitors, scams, bad companies, financial problems, too strict or too careless family members, lack of proper guidance, envy from other ladies... The range of situations and issues young women were presented with was unmeasurable. Consequently, authors tried to give advice to young ladies which is in itself moral and didactic writing that should arise interest from a sociocultural point of view but also as philosophical content, given the intricate questions and dilemmas heroines were presented with. For example: the character of Dr Marchmont in *Camilla* has a completely negative opinion of women that causes Edgar to doubt the sincerity of the heroine. There is a duality between Camilla as she appears to others and Camilla as she really is that could open deep and extended conversations about truth and the self. In addition, writers depicted accurate and sometimes ironic portrayals of society to frame the issues they put forward with verisimilitude. A great example is Fanny Burney, who was wrongly called a “miniaturist who is better off ignored” by these twentieth century critics (Spender 1986, 271), who managed to portray in her novels ethical concerns, high ideals and insight to the human condition. She followed psychoanalysis even before psychoanalysis existed: she wanted to explain the depth of human consciousness, get to the bottom of why people act the way they do and explore whether they could change or not. She delved into the doctrine of human responsibility which was a realistic and reflected upon world-view of the time based on the belief that character would overcome their weaknesses and flaws in order to do the right thing (Spender 1986, 272). This simple outline of her topic and concerns already classifies as anything but narrow. However, she was disregarded alleging her strict values and morality while *Pamela* by Richardson, a novel who shared the same, if not more, strict values continued to be praised by these same critics as the greatest work of the century. Given these facts, the suspicion of a double standard when judging men and women writers is bound to arise even in the most conservative of readers.

Nevertheless, if more proof is needed to overcome the stigma of romance as the single topic of females, a quick read of Clara Whitmore's *Woman's Work in English Fiction* (2010) or Dale Spender's *Mothers of the Novel* (1986) will soon bring down that allegation with chapters such as "Lady Morgan and political fiction", "Amelia Opie and the novel of ideas", "Charlotte Lennox and North America" or "Elizabeth Inchbald and real life".

The previous paragraphs of this dissertation aim at giving the idea that there has been a deep study of the eighteenth-century women writers and that they have been discarded after deep consideration and following a list of arguments that some female critics do not agree with. Nevertheless, this idea is no more than an illusion. The criticism that has been counter argued in the pages above is as much as has been said about eighteenth century women writers in the last three centuries. The problem is not that they have been left out with arguments, but that there is no case against them; the detailed evaluation that is given to male writers in order to include them or exclude them from the canon is a privilege these authors did not have. In the majority of cases they have been simply omitted and the worth of their publications was not even considered; the omission of their works facilitated the denial of their achievements (Spender 1986, 93). It is crucial to realise that the reason for their rejection was gender, not capability because, as it was specified in section two, the market was so competitive during the century that the female novelists who lacked talent or skill were already discarded during their lifetimes (Turner 1992, 79). Success was difficult to acquire and the tremendous affluence of writers created a natural filter: the novels who stood out over the rest were the best ones and even a second selection took place overtime; some books sold well even years after their publication while others faded in popularity over the decades. While on their time they were widely read, studied, reviewed and congratulated in literary periodicals of the day, Ian Watt gives them one sentence in his analysis. Their work has been systematically denied making prominent and prestigious women vanish in posterity.

This is not a random quirk of history: there is a pattern and a purpose behind such treatment of women. During history, enough men are retained to form an uninterrupted tradition of male writers, regardless of the time (Spender 1986, 140). However, this is not true for women; a lack of good and bad women writers to go back to in our history can only mean external restraint upon their powers (Turner 1992, 5). They have always been more productive and significant than we have been told. Nevertheless, our current society gets a biased and trimmed view of the literary landscape where men are established as the connecting thread between movements and styles and a reduced number of women appear on the margins as mere imitators with no real influence over the course of the history of letters.

These female novelists who have made it into the canon, commonly known as “the happy few” serve as representatives for women in literary history; they are mainly Jane Austen, the Brönte sisters and George Eliot. They are the exception to the rule according to twentieth-century male critics; however, their accomplishments are diminished as well. A great example of this is Charlotte Brönte, who is known as the writer of *Jane Eyre* or George Eliot who is known as the author of *Middlemarch* and that is all. It takes some degree of interest from a person to come across other titles and realise that these authors wrote more than one single novel in their whole lives. Other titles like *Villette* (1853), *Shirley* (1849), *Silas Marner* (1861), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) are as well worth much praise even if they have been obscured. Taking a deeper look into their works, the influences from these eighteenth century writers and other obscured ones from the nineteen century is obvious. For example: the character of Emma by Jane Austen can be traced up from Betsy Thoughtless by Eliza Haywood and Evelina by Frances Burney (Whitmore 2010, 36). Austen is treated many times as an initiator, the first woman novelist worthy of notice. Nevertheless, she was aware of the whole tradition of writers of the eighteenth century, she was familiar with the works and many of her plots and characters sprung from those of her predecessors. In particular, she

was an admirer of Burney and even mentions some of her works in *Northanger Abbey*. She is not an initiator but an inheritor of the eighteenth-century literary tradition (Spender 1986, 117) However, they were removed from their contemporaries, isolated and then these same critics theorised about their lack of connections and about why there were so few women writers. They created an illusion, the myth of the isolated achievement, when actually these novelists were perfectly surrounded. The diversity of women writers during past centuries has been left out or greatly reduced; hence, the continuum of women writers is erased from the understanding of today's society (Spender 1986, 146).

On top of that, there is another pressing issue that needs to be addressed: the novel gains recognition during the eighteenth century; however, women novelists are not studied until the nineteenth century. Therefore, the underlying assumption that can be extracted from this fact is that which Walter Allen or Ian Watt among other scholars have made society believe; that the rise of the novel was completely a merit of male writers and that women writers only got on board after men had glorified the genre. Obviously, this is a lie. The material from females was countless and some publishers such as William Lane focused only on women writers because they were a profitable market option (Turner 1992, 40). Thus, they have been left out of a history they created themselves. The fact that these novelists existed changes not only the history of women but also that of men and to continue to exclude them, even when their existence is known, gives us a distorted and male-oriented version of reality that is not correct (Spender 1986, 140). The reputation of men is built at the expense of women's; there is a theft of women's creativity and efforts; they have been exploited, overlooked and suppressed. Not because men did not see the achievements of women, but because they preferred to attribute them to their male counterparts. Instead of giving validity to the works and pioneer ideas brought forward by women, they were reduced to the role of copiers (Spender 1986, 141). For example, there is a lot of controversy regarding Pamela

because the same characteristics that were praised in Richardson's novel could be found before in female-written novels. For example, the poor but honest heroine in England does not start with *Pamela* (1740) but with *The Disguised Prince or The Beautiful Parisian* (1728) by Eliza Haywood (Spender 1986, 92). Which leaves us to question whether Pamela would have enjoyed such success had it been written by a woman.

It is important to break down the myth of female inferiority because it is no more than that: a myth. Women have always been there, it is not needed to create a or invent a literary tradition for women, it only has to be put back where it belonged. It is not a one-off achievement that has been lost or left behind, but the eradication of half of the literary output of fiction for more than a century. To give them their rightful place back is not only a question of feminism or caprice; it is a necessity and a question of social justice; the only way to get the whole picture (Spender 1986, 117). As Dale Spender explains in *Mothers of the Novel*, the cultural heritage of a society influences its attitudes and values in the present; therefore, if the cultural heritage mistreats and silences half of humanity while today's society is aware of it but does nothing to change it, that society is predisposed to keep mistreating them (1986, 144). Making the canon more inclusive means making society more inclusive. If the literary tradition represents the views of only a small group of people, they will give recognition only to those similar to them. However, in today's globalised world, one worldview is not enough to provide a complete understanding of the world: the exploited a completely different story from those in power (Spender 1986, 142-143). This is why a discipline called "new women's history" has emerged during the last decades; there has been a growth of historical interest in the life and works of women and some of them have been included in the canon by feminist literary historians (Turner 1992, 1-2). Moreover, the retrieval of the female heritage would help current women writers to validate themselves and their decision to take up the pen. They belong to a continuum of women writers that has

stretched along history, they are not marginal contributors to the history of men or rare exceptions of genius. One final reason why retrieving these women authors to their rightful place is so important is because otherwise nothing prevents this phenomenon from happening again. Today's successful female writers such as Agatha Christie, Sally Rooney or Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie are not exempt from suffering the same fate given that we still live in a patriarchal society. It is possible that no matter how successful they get to be on their lifetimes, once they die, if society continues to listen only to the same voices as figures of authority (heterosexual, middle-class, white men) women's fiction will be buried again (Spender 1986, 140).

All in all, to reclaim and revalue women writers is more than a challenge to a biased literary history. It means to take a stand against discrimination and in favour of a wider and more inclusive worldview (Spender 1986, 144). As this dissertation and many other works by feminist literary historians prove, there was no real reason to exclude female writers. Consequently, a re-evaluation of the novels of these women and a new hierarchy of works has to be produced, taking into consideration both the value-judgments of critics of the eighteenth century and of present-day diverse scholars.

CHAPTER 4: A Dichotomy. Haywood and Burney

There was more than one way to achieve success as a female writer during the eighteenth century and these two authors are excellent proof of it. While one was more prosaic and compliant with the rules of society, the other was defiant and lived under her own terms. However, both of them knew exactly how to put the public at their feet.

On the one hand, Eliza Haywood (1693-1756) wrote in the first part of the century, she faced public disgrace and had a terrible reputation because at this point in time the novel was considered a low genre of literature and the only suitable place for a woman was the home sphere. However, she defied all the rules of her society and made a name for herself out of writing seduction novels in which the protagonist lost her chastity and was led to a tragic ending due to her strong amorous feelings (Spencer 1986, 112). *Love in Excess*, written between 1719-1720 was a bestseller of the time with four editions printed in the six following years; however, it was considered negative for young ladies to indulge in such kind of writing because it was seen as improper.

On the other hand, Frances Burney (1752-1840) started her novelistic career publishing *Evelina* anonymously in 1778 when she was 26 years old. She had a conservative ideology and feared public exposure due to her writing. However, the novel was a genre of prestige at this point in time and she received society's praise and approval. Current literary critics considered *Evelina* the second-best novel ever written, only beneath *Pamela* and novel writing got Burney a position in court as Second Keeper of the Robe; which can be considered as the ultimate honour.

Burney only published works that were socially accepted and she always put her reputation as a woman before her literary achievements. She burnt many of her works, her plays went unpublished and she referred to writing as an inclination at which she blushed

(Spencer 1986, 95-96). Moreover, once she revealed herself as an author in front of her father, she always sought his advice and modulated her novels to his liking, leaving out witty humour or ironic pangs at society in favour of a didactic and moral style (Spender 1986, 286). In contrast, Haywood pursued her career without reservations. She wrote passion novels, plays and acted in them; in spite of the infamous image she created for herself. She left her husband in 1721 and sustained herself and two children through her writing, she had many enemies due to the scandalous novels in which she attacked famous people of the time and her reputation was completely destroyed by Pope when he published *The Dunciad* in 1728. Haywood had to lay low for over a decade after this. However, another of her most salient features is her adaptability: after the novels in which she had made her trade went out of fashion and the didactic novel gained popularity, she came back claiming to be a reformed coquette who had learned her lesson and wanted to warn young ladies against the dangers of the world (Spender 1986, 102-103). Whether Haywood's reformation was honest or only a commercial move we will never know; nevertheless, it worked. She became a prolific author again and her fame was somewhat restored with the general public; even though in high spheres she was always considered, as Jonathan Swift said, "a stupid, infamous, scribbling woman" (Swift 1731, 60). In contrast, Burney could not adapt herself as times changed: after leaving court life in 1791, most people from her circles had died and she went through times of need. She wrote *Camilla* by subscription but afterwards she did not enjoy literary success any longer and her career failed. However, she placed the blame of the lack of success of her last novel on the inflated price the bookseller gave to her novel, two guineas (Turner 1992, 96).

Although the paths followed by these two women writers in the eighteenth-century cannot seem any more different, they had some similarities. It is said that Haywood enjoyed a liberal upbringing for a girl at the time and Burney grew up in a sort of bohemian

environment; his father being an acclaimed musician among scholars, Burney could observe all kinds of personages in her own house when she was a child and she learned from them. Furthermore, both authors believed in the humanity of ordinary people and chose heroines that related to the average reader like Betsy or Camilla (Spender 1986, 91-92). In addition, they portrayed in their writing a wide range of characters from the lower and higher ranks of society, displaying a grand knowledge of the ways of the world and its darker side, with characters such as Mr Munden in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* or Bellamy in *Camilla*. Finally, both Burney and Haywood captured masterfully women's point of view and depicted a new, not very flattering portrait of men.

In conclusion, Eliza Haywood and Frances Burney show how different the world of letters could be for a woman novelist as well as how the profession evolved for the female sex over the century. They experienced in their life as well as in their works many sides of society and both enjoyed tremendous success and recognition. Therefore, it seems only right to use the figure of these two authors as a sample to illustrate the public image, ideals and concerns of the woman writer of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 5: The Eighteenth-century Novel. *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* and *Camilla*.

This dissertation has already proven that the eighteenth century was tremendously prolific in terms of female-written fiction. As the *Monthly Review* stated, almost every female of sensibility thought she could not be better employed than “in favouring the public with a pretty novel” (*Monthly Review*, 162). It has also been clarified that not all this fiction was worthy of praise; however, much of it was: there were many successful authors whose works deserve in-depth studies considering many aspects in which they excel. Charlotte Lennox, Penelope Aubin, Elizabeth Inchbald, Delarivier Manley or Maria Edgeworth among many others are authors whose work represents the achievements of the eighteenth-century novel at its best. Sadly, this dissertation cannot even cover the one percent of all that should be said about such salient works and writers. Nevertheless, it aims at representing a small contribution to the corpus of critical works that has tackled eighteenth-century women’s literature. This section will make a comparison between *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* by Eliza Haywood and *Camilla* by Frances Burney by focusing on some the dangers endured by the protagonist and on the double standard regarding sexual behaviours in men and women and the richness of secondary characters these two authors created in order to portray society faithfully.

Regarding the dangers suffered by the heroines, this analysis will focus on the lack of proper guidance provided by their surroundings to help the heroine distinguish right from wrong, female competition and envy, false appearances leading to society’s judgement and finally, excessive innocence.

The lack of adequate figures of authority to navigate life offers a relevant parallel between these two novels. Both Betsy and Camilla are forced to rely on their own moral compasses to distinguish good and evil. Betsy’s parents died while she was a child; therefore,

that role of caretakers is vacant in her life. Her guardians are Mr. Goodman and Mr. Ralph Trusty, who try to raise her in the best possible way; nevertheless, it is never the same care a parent would give. She is taken out of the boarding school where she was being educated to come live with Mr. Goodman and his new wife in London, a place full of activity that can dazzle a young lady. Also, Mr. Goodman, as his name suggests, is excessively indulgent with the child; therefore, the main part of her education falls into the hands of his wife, Lady Mellasin. This lady and her daughter, Flora, are the most negative influences Betsy has: they are coquettes who take excessive liberties with men, they lie and scheme to achieve their goals and lack the propriety that respectable ladies should have. In contrast, Sir Ralph Trusty and Lady Trusty play the part of deeply moral characters who behave properly and could guide Betsy inside society to avoid negative conducts and dangers. However, as they do not live near Betsy, their influence upon her is slight and easily disregarded by the young flighty adolescent. Consequently, she has to learn from experience and through self-reflection, Lorna Beth Ellis claims this to be the earliest example of a bildungsroman, proving again how ground-breaking Haywood's prose was (Jennings 2014, 40). The fact that her reform is shown through interior monologue was a technique unseen before Haywood, this level of self-knowledge is unparalleled in the fiction of her time and it can be interpreted as a predecessor of Jane Austen's *Emma* (Spencer 1986, 152).

Camilla has parental figures and a close circle of advisers; nevertheless, her mother is removed from the narrative early on to take care of a sick relative and she is left alone with only male advisors which were not up to the task. On the one hand, she goes to live with her uncle Sir Hugh Tyrold, who is comically immature and irresponsible and the only other adult in the house is Miss Margland, a conceited and unsympathetic governess who does not specially like Camilla nor does she know how to protect the young ladies from the dangers of society or how to give them proper advice. On the other hand, her father, who is a highly

moral character, lacks the feminine ability that at the time was thought necessary to understand the concerns of his daughter. As a result, the best he can do is to advise her to be strictly proper and virtuous. Camilla has other advisers such as Mrs Arlbery or Edgar Mandlebert; however, the degree of authority they hold over her is not so great. Moreover, on many occasions the opinions she receives contradict each other; hence, she has to resort to her own judgement. In addition to that, she spends the best part of the novel away with friends, where she has only herself as a moral compass and many times, external forces cause her to act in a way contrary to what she had initially resolved.

Female competition is another common hardship that heroines had to endure. In a society where their main goal was to obtain a suitable husband, it is only logical that other women trying to secure the same match would be seen as rivals or even enemies. Even though virtuous young ladies formed enduring friendships and meaningful relations, the figure of the vain, mischievous young lady was a common resource in literature and probably in real life too. The clearest example is found in *Camilla* with the character of Flora Mellasin. She was Lady Mellasin's daughter and once Betsy came to live at her house, she was demoted to a second position: every suitor came to talk to Betsy while Flora was the second option, if an option at all. Consequently, in her need to attract attention, she allowed men to take liberties with her when the only thing that she wanted was to secure a husband for herself. However, this apparently innocent motivation led her to commit reproachable actions that sank her reputation even more in the eyes of the reader. Her envy against Betsy made her write several anonymous letters to hinder Betsy from succeeding with her lovers. First, she tipped off Mr. Savings' father about his son's intentions with Betsy, which caused the young man to be sent overseas because the father did not consider Betsy a good enough match. Afterwards, she sent a letter to Truworth in which she falsely accused Betsy of having a child; this caused Truworth to discontinue Betsy's courtship. Furthermore, the liberties she

took with men put Betsy into great danger. In Oxford, Flora left Betsy alone with the man that tried to rape her and afterwards, she did not even apologise for it. However, Betsy's sweet disposition made her forgive Flora time and again, proving her virtue and true unselfish nature.

Camilla does not suffer such betrayal from her female friends; nevertheless, Indiana acts as a vain, unlikable character too engrossed with her own appearance. She likes to be flattered to the excess, as this quotation proves: "She now expected an adoration so unremitting, that if she surprised his eyes turned any other way even a moment, she reproached him with abated love, and it was the business of a day to obtain a reconciliation" (812). Therefore, when Edgar Mandlebert stopped his courtship to her in favour of Camilla, she began to treat her with cruelty and contempt. Moreover, her proud and conceited governess, Miss Margland, contributed greatly to that treatment as we can see in the chapter "A Pro and a Con".

False appearances were one of the greatest hardships of heroines. Despite their virtue, they were put in positions that made them look badly. This could become a great issue because if they were thought to have done something disgraceful, even if it was not the case, society would not believe them. Moreover, they ruined the reputation of their family along with their own. Both Camilla and Betsy remain virtuous the whole time. However, Betsy likes to collect admirers which makes people think of her as a coquette; although for such a young girl it was only another form of entertainment. Nevertheless, as Mr. Goodman admonishes her, it is not enough to be good without behaving in such a manner that would make others believe her to be so (Jennings 2014, 46). Further on, her brother also warns her that "a woman brings less dishonour upon a family by twenty private sins, than by one publick indiscretion" (352). However, Betsy as a true virtuous heroine responds she will guard herself against both and Haywood allows her to win many arguments regarding that

point, indicating that she sided with Betsy in such arguments (Spencer, 1986:150). However, as one incident in the novel proves, the mere act of her circulating in public unchaperoned was considered indecent (Jennings 2014, 47). Furthermore, she has no power over her story: after her incident in London with the gentleman-commoner when she was almost raped, people blame her and her entrance in good-reputed houses is forfeited, causing her to leave the city. Afterwards, she is mistaken for a prostitute because she goes to the theatre with a childhood friend who now has fallen into that path; only because she is in company of a non-virtuous woman she immediately seems non-virtuous to the men who accompany them. Furthermore, when after being married, Mr. Munden resorts to excessive cruelty and even kills her squirrel-pet, she is judged for leaving his bed because people could think she has abandoned her wifely duties (473). However, the most salient example of false appearances is portrayed in the letter Flora Mellasin sends to Mr. Trueworth. She accuses Betsy of being a mother and having her child under the care of a lady in the countryside, when actually she was looking after an orphan child with no prospects. Her act of kindness retaliates against her and makes the male protagonist end up marrying a different woman.

Camilla is also deeply affected by false appearances and society's expectations. Even though she is much tamer than Betsy, that she does not dare to contradict her authority figures and that losing propriety is one of the things that worry her the most. False appearances and misunderstandings are still the things that hinder her relationship with Edgar the most. Therefore, a possible argument that false appearances were only a matter of concern for rebellious and self-asserted young girls such as Betsy is out of the question. The main part of the plot is composed of Edgar giving Camilla advice that she tries to follow; however, circumstances do not allow her to do so and Edgar appears in the worst possible moment so that it seems Camilla has disobeyed him on purpose. The clearest example of this is when after confessing their mutual love and getting engaged, Camilla has a proposal from Sir

Sedley Clarendel, who kisses her hand. She had been refusing him all the time, she was steady and faithful to Edgar but he enters the scene in the moment in which Sir Sedley is kissing her hand and he is completely disenchanted with her. Therefore, Camilla disengages herself from Edgar because she believes he does not love her anymore. The lack of plain speaking and trust between the two lovers creates a series of misconceptions that escalates more and more every time. In addition, another false apprehension that wounds Camilla's reputation is related to money. There was a widespread rumour about her being the heiress of her uncle's fortune. Even though this might seem a cause for a better social standing and a false belief that could benefit Camilla, it causes her to be courted by many gentlemen who are only interested in her alleged fortune; but most importantly, it makes lower-class people apply to her for money. Even though she does not have much, her generous nature cannot refuse the pleas of these people once they have related their stories to her; hence, she promises to help them and ends up falling into debt. This is the reason why, eventually, her father is sent to jail.

The final danger that will be addressed in this dissertation and probably the greatest too is the excess of innocence with which these ladies were sent into the world. They made their entrance into society; however, they were clueless regarding the dangers that awaited them or the type of people they could find on it. They always expected honesty and good intentions in everybody; this lack of sagacity led them to perilous situations on many occasions. Haywood herself shares her thoughts on the subject through the narrator of the story in page three "those mistakes the sex are sometimes guilty of, proceed, for the most part, rather from inadvertency, than a vicious inclination". For example, Betsy always thinks that men will respect her and her virtue; however, she is proven wrong many times. At the beginning of the novel, Mr. Gayland is the first who addresses her with low intentions. This shocks Betsy who even questions her own behaviour and wonders if she had done something to provoke such an

ill-conception of herself upon that man. The same happens when she meets the gentleman-commoner at Oxford or when Sir Frederick Fineer fools her into marrying him in his “bed death” when actually he only pretended to be injured to get her to comply and rape her afterwards. She had the false idea of being in power over her suitors; however, they could seize that power whenever they saw fit. On a different note, she trusted her friends Flora and Miss Forward but both ended up proving to be deceitful although in different ways: Flora actively hindered her prospects of finding a suitable match while Miss Forward only concealed some information about herself so her character would appear higher in Betsy’s eyes. Finally, her worst act of excessive innocence was to think that the institution of marriage would save her from the constant attacks she suffered from the male sex when it only made them worse. Her new husband proved to be cruel, unloving and disrespectful in every possible way. He limited her liberties to the excess, both socially and economically, mentally abused her and even got a mistress in the house. The initial expectations she had about the marriage market and men were completely changed by the end of the novel, her many negative experiences made her learn the truth of the world. However, a proper training and advice from an early age could have saved her much trouble.

Camilla suffers from her excessive innocence as much or even more than Betsy. She has been excessively tucked in by her family during her whole life and suddenly, she starts making calls, having leisure trips to the city with friends and slight or rather non surveillance at all. However, aside from a conversation where her family permitted her to go on such diversions, nobody had a serious conversation with her about how to behave, what would be expected of her, what to avoid and which conducts to moderate or be wary of; they expected Camilla to know how to navigate a world that she had never taken part on. This lack of guidance and excessive innocence can be seen in her inexperienced way of managing money; she is allowed to go on a quite lengthy trip to Tunbridge, for that purpose Sir Hugh gives her

twenty pounds; however, he never explains to her what she would need to use that much money for: clothing, paid entertainments, food, coaches or even lodgings. The only advice she gets from her father is completely vague and non-explanatory

She could not, he knew, reside at Tunbridge with the economy and simplicity to which she was accustomed at Etherington; but he charged her to let no temptation make her forget the moderate income of which alone she was certain; assuring her, that where a young woman's expenses exceeded her known expectations, those who were foremost to praise her elegance, would most fear to form any connection with her, and most despise or deride her in any calamity. (376)

Therefore, being true to her modest and timid character she gives the money away to her brother Lionel who comes to her claiming to be in debt, because she, not knowing what awaited her, was resolute not to have any expense of her own and embarks her journey almost without any money. The little she had, she has to part with almost immediately at the milliner: following her party to get some new clothes, she is forced to do the same when "desiring immediately to pay her bill, found it amounted to five guineas; though she had imagined she should have change out of two. She had only six, and some silver; but was ashamed to dispute, or desire any alteration; she paid the money". Afterwards, the distress of being destitute apprehends her in many chapters such as "The accomplished Monkeys" or any of the subsequent ones. Moreover, her excessive innocence is also what leads her to trust doubtful characters such as Mrs. Mitting or fall into embarrassing situations such as being courted by Mr. Dubster, a tinker.

Moving on to another point in the analysis, the double standard regarding sexual behaviour was a controversial topic at the time. While the same puritan values were preached to both men and women, the way in which society reacted to their transgression was completely different. Any breach of chastity was overlooked in men but severely punished in women (Spencer 1986, 109). As Jane Spencer explains, this double standard came from the view of women as pieces of family property. The daughter's purity was traded from the father to a suitable husband; henceforth, her loyalty ensured that the property of the husband was passed only to legitimate sons (1986, 109). This reasoning accounts for the social distinction between men and women; however, many authors continued to oppose it and denounced it in their fiction more or less overtly. Nevertheless, it is vital to bear in mind that they needed to speak in favour of men and the established morals in order to maintain their good reputation and get published. The ideal wife was expected not to have desires of her own and this idea led to the widespread belief on the nineteenth century that proper women did not have sexual desires at all; only a partiality for the men who treated them with kindness. Scholars like John Gregory even dared to explain to the women of England that what they felt for their partners was not love but gratitude. Such opinions caused great commotion in the society of the eighteenth century and female authors rebelled against such ludicrous ideas through their writing. However, instead of openly acknowledging the heroine's sexual desires (which would put both the heroine and the author in a questionable position), they fought for the heroine's right to marry a man of their own choice; not the one their family thought proper (Spencer, 1986:110). The right to choose their own partners was an important topic in female literature, fiction and nonfiction.

By this time, it will be no surprise to say that the always rebellious Eliza Haywood is one of the authors who portrayed this double standard in sexual behaviours most brilliantly. Even though she never articulates value-judgments about the way the characters are treated;

she puts the situations plainly in front of the reader's eyes so they can judge. Although Betsy is considered a coquette, she left her intentions clear to her suitors from the beginning by saying

Rather too soon,[...] both of you equally too soon, admitting his sentiments for me to be as you imagine; for I assure you, Sir, my heart has hitherto been entirely my own, and is not very likely to incline to the reception of any guest of the nature you mean, for yet a long—long time. Whoever thinks to gain me, must not be in a hurry, like Captain Hysom. (123).

She did not want marriage proposals nor a husband and she also states why in a clear manner the following:

He had too much good sense not to know it suited not with the condition of wife to indulge herself in the gaieties she at present did; which though innocent, and, as she thought, becoming enough in the present state she now was, might not be altogether pleasing to one who, if he so thought proper, had the power of restraining them. (68).

She wanted to be her own mistress for a longer time, and considering that at the beginning of the novel she is still fifteen, it seems like a normal desire to have. However, even if these facts were not taken into consideration, her worst fault is to entertain the addresses of four suitors at once (Spencer 1986, 149). She is always virtuous and chaste in act and in thought.

In contrast, Mr. Truworth, the male hero of the novel, who decides to quit his addresses to Betsy partly due to her coquetry, has a sexual affair with Flora Mellasin and never doubts his own honour or virtuousness. He is a proper gentleman even after having broken his chastity and entered in sexual activities with a lady he did not intend to marry (Spencer 1986, 149). Further examples of this double standard can be perceived in the affair between Miss Forward and Mr. Wildly. He seduces her with the habitual jargon this type of men used at the time as Miss Forward relates:

The answers I made to these romantick encomiums were silly enough, I believe, and such as encouraged him to think I was too well pleased to be much offended at any thing he did. He kissed, he clasped me to his bosom, still silencing my rebukes, by telling me how handsome I was, and how much he loved me; and that, as opportunities of speaking to me were so difficult to be obtained, I must not think him too presuming if he made the most of this. (83)

However, after she gets pregnant, she has to abandon her boarding school and fly away to hide the truth from her family. Although he takes care of the baby, once it is born, he deserts Miss Forward and continues with his life as if nothing had ever happened while her life and reputation are lost forever. Her family does not admit her back, she has no money or prospects and is forced to resort to prostitution to sustain herself. Finally, another example of such biased behaviour is the reaction Betsy's circle has when they find out that Betsy's older brother keeps a mistress in the house. He does not descend on anyone's opinion, nor is he told to be lost forever or that he needs to marry to restore his honour. It is seen as something natural.

Burney did not portray so cruelly the double standard between men and women because she always tried to focus on upstanding morals and the doctrine of human responsibility. Therefore, even though she portrayed the worst and best of society, she hides her critique towards sexual matters more than Haywood does. Even like that, the main issue between Edgar and Camilla is her alleged unsteadiness. Even though in her mind she is in love with Edgar from the beginning, he tries to test her love and on many occasions resolves that her affections are not enough or that her behaviour is not that he would desire in a wife as he says:

Is it now the mawkish Major, and now the coxcomb Clarendel? Already is she thus versed in the common dissipation of coquetry?... O, if so, how blest has been my escape! A coquette wife!... His heart swelled, and his eye no longer sought her. (461)

Moreover, the advance Sir Sendley Clanderel makes upon her is considered by Edgar as her doing; what is more, he does not believe Camilla when she tells him otherwise. As was the case with Betsy, neither of the protagonists have the control over their own stories. However, in the beginning of the novel Edgar courted Indiana and afterwards he changed his mind. However, he was not judged by this decision; the blame and the ill-treatment were placed upon Camilla both by her cousin Indiana and by her governess Mrs. Margland. In the same way, Melmond first courts Indiana and afterwards decides he prefers Eugenia and Harry Westwyn marries Lavinia soon after having been rejected by Camilla. Notwithstanding, their unsteadiness and fleetness of mind is not scolded nor even mentioned to them. They always seem to be acting as perfect gentlemen selecting the most suitable woman to create a family. In contrast, women had to remain faithful to their first choice the whole time in order to be

considered virtuous; if they did not, scandal ensued. For example, when Indiana decided to elope with Macadersey while she was being courted by Melmond, everybody was completely outraged. Their reaction to her elopement was even greater than to Lionel revealing that he had been keeping a married lady for a mistress. In men, lustful sins were overlooked, even expected. The common saying “boys will be boys” acted as the mantra adapted by the society of the time. Nonetheless, women could never act in the same way and remain decent.

The last point of this analysis will be to take a look at secondary characters of the novels and how they contributed to enrich the narratives at the same time that they acted as an outlet for the authors to give their opinions of society. The list of secondary characters on both these novels is extensive and so are the angles of study that could be taken. However, this dissertation has dealt widely with the importance of the marriage market on female-written novels. Consequently, the analysis will dwell on those male characters that made up the marriage market choices for the heroines. As it has been previously said, once women started to depict their experience of the world; the portrait they painted of men was not very pleasing. Through novels, society could finally see a catalogue of the many unfitting options, the deceit, sexual harassment and many unsuitable propositions young ladies had to endure. To give a panoramic view of such a range of gentlemen, a joint analysis appears to be the most suitable option.

The first type of figure that arises in these novels is the seducer who tests the virtue of the heroine. On the one hand, as Burney is a more conservative writer and does not like to discuss sexual themes overtly, we only see one example of such men in *Lord Newford*. He comes upon Mrs Berlinton at night and prostrates himself at her feet while she cries out for help; however, the incident is quickly resolved by Camilla and Miss Dennell who come to her rescue. On the other hand, in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* we find more extensive examples. For instance, Mr Gayland, who freely addresses Betsy by letter to secure a meeting

or the gentleman-commoner at Oxford who tries to force her into sexual activities. However, these character were rarely punished due to the double standard that operated when judging sexual behaviours in men and women; even these authors had to make excuses for such behaviours as Haywood does:

It is certain, indeed, that as he professed a friendship for the brother, he ought not, in strict honour, to have proposed any thing to the sister which would be unbecoming her to agree to; but he was young, gay to an excess, and in what he said or did took not always consideration for his guide. (44)

If such excuses were meant to be subtly ironic or not is up to the reader to decide.

The second type of man that commonly appears in fiction is the fortune hunter. Evil and deceitful characters that try to fool the heroines into marriage to take advantage of their fortune or position in life. Sir Frederick Fineer plays this role in *Betsy Thoughtless* while Alphonso Bellamy does the same in *Camilla*. Both men come up with fake names and identities, they profess their love in the most ardent terms and finally scheme to be left alone with the lady in a unsurveilled place to force her into marriage. After the marriage, they reveal their true personality and start acting as monsters towards their unfortunate wife. While Betsy is saved a few minutes after the wedding by Mr. Truworth; Eugenia Tyrold has to endure several months of married life with her kidnapper in which the worst of the psyche of such a character is brilliantly portrayed by the author.

The third type of male role usually portrayed in female works is the old bachelor who marries or tries to marry a young girl. This kind of relationship was common at the time but also quite controversial, given that many people saw it as a disadvantageous match for both parties. Haywood and Burney also gave their opinions on the subject through their novels. On this occasion it was the latter who went a step further: Mrs Berlinton's story is recounted to

Camilla as having been taken directly “from the nursery to the altar” (417). The unhappiness of the girl is easy to see; she is distanced from her husband and even keeps correspondence with a lover; Burney’s deep reflection on the topic was probably meant to dissuade any girl who might read her work from such a fate. In contrast, Haywood took up a more sardonic critique of the topic through the character of Captain Hysom. He is a forty-seven year-old sea captain who addresses Betsy by letter asking her to marry him without any previous courtship. Likewise, he comes to her house three days afterwards and expects an answer without delay or making any pleasantries. Needless to say, such behaviour causes infinite amusement in Betsy and most of her companions, who use the situation to have a laugh at the Captain’s expense. The ridiculousness of his proposition and manner of addressing Betsy results obvious to any reader; however, it is important to bear in mind that Haywood always aimed at verisimilitude; hence, it is more than probable that such circumstances took place in real life.

Aside from the previous identifiable types, there are many other gentlemen in the novel contributing to create an imaginary of men. The most important ones would be Mr Savings, Mr. Munden and Mr. Truworth in *The history of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* and Sir Sedley Clanderel, Lionel Tyrold and Edgar Mandlebert in *Camilla*. Mr. Savings is the first man who addresses Betsy properly; he creates a heavy contrast with the impertinence of Mr. Gayland; nevertheless, he is important because of the reason he stops courting Betsy. While he was in awe of the lady, his father did not consider her a good enough match for his son in financial terms; therefore, he sent him overseas to get over his feelings. Such economic speculations were common in the society of the time; the dowry women had to offer was subject of much consideration when looking for a wife. Next, Mr. Munden is the perfect example of false appearances: outwardly he looks like a perfect gentleman, with an adequate position in life and good enough manners. However, behind closed doors, he mistreats his wife and

diminished the few rights and pleasures married women could enjoy. He shows no respect to her as a person and only cares about what others think of him. Regarding Sir Sedley Clanderel, he is a vain baronet who thinks too much of himself and of his fortune. Surprisingly, he falls in love with Camilla for real; however, when he realises that she is not interested, he tries to take it all away and pretends that he was not being serious in his declaration. Such behaviours are common even in today's society; therefore, seeing that the reaction men have to a wounded pride has not changed much in over three centuries is socially intriguing to say the least. Next, Lionel Tyrold is the definition of what at the time was called a *rake*. A too spirited young boy who spent more than he had, partook in all the entertainments he could find and took excessive liberties with women. He has no morals nor honour and the only thing that seems to scare him a little is the censure of his highly virtuous parents. Even though it is never overtly mentioned by Burney, it does not seem hard to imagine such a character playing the role of the seducer. Finally, Mr. Truworth and Edgar Mandlebert act as the virtuous male protagonist; the only right choice for the heroines in a sea of improper men. Nevertheless, as the reader can easily see, they are far from perfect: they are controlling, easily discouraged and both expect a level of virtue and morality from Betsy and Camilla that they do not reach themselves. Furthermore, after such a quest to find the right man, one can only wonder about the fate of the ladies who finally married the unsuitable men depicted in the novels.

All in all, it is made clear that in the eyes of these female novelists the number of good men was scarce, the dangers to which young girls entering society were exposed were many and that public opinion never had their back. However, authors made a great effort to denounce the injustices endured by these ladies as well as to instruct them by showing them a wider picture of the characters they could encounter, the situations they could find themselves in and a proper way to conduct themselves. The role of the female novelist was that of a

bigger sister to young girls, an entertainer and a social commentator; and they performed the task with excellence.

Conclusion

Once the information provided in the previous chapters is taken into consideration; it is safe to say that the works of female novelists during the eighteenth century have been unfairly excluded from the literary heritage. There is no literary criteria that avails the removal of half the literary input of over a century if we do not take into account male dominance. Especially, taking into account that they had already proven to be worthy of praise in their own time; their posterior elimination only perpetuates the false conception of men as culture markers, an opinion that should have no room for existence in the twenty-first century worldview.

Moreover, the sources consulted to produce this dissertation have provided much valuable information about the conditions under which these women wrote, their concerns and values as well as their opinions of the society of the time. It has been seen how women turned to writing as an outlet for self-expression and as a life jacket against poverty as well as how reading such novels gave young girls much needed advice and information about the world they were entering. In addition, the life of authors such as Eliza Haywood or Frances Burney proves to be almost as interesting as their novels; the hardships they had to endure and the criticism they were subjected to shaped their reality. But most importantly; this dissertation has helped to see how the writers who came before paved the way for those that came after and how a continuum of interrelated women writers was formed over the decades.

After delving into the analysis of *Camilla* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* it is easy to see why these novels were so popular among eighteenth century readers and so praised by the critics. Their appeal to the reader is almost intact. Their social critique, wit and irony as well as their moral and philosophical concerns, and great depiction of the character's

psyche contribute to make of these novels two masterpieces of the history of letters that should be praised by any scholar who reads them as well as by any common reader.

Consequently, as it has been explained in chapter three, it is crucial to realise that the fact that women's fiction is never considered valid is not a random quirk of history. There is a purpose behind the exclusion of hundreds of writers from the history of letters and such removal gives a distorted version of reality which does not coincide with the actual truth. Leaving women out of the process of emergence of the novel and attributing the achievement only to men is a simply a falsehood as well as an insult to the whole feminine sex. Such social injustice cannot be tolerated nowadays, because if today's world allows the marginalisation of women and does nothing to change it, it will continue to happen. Today's successful female writers will be erased from the history of letters in one or two centuries and it will be as if they never existed.

The only possible solution to the problem is to reinsert the tradition of women writers where it belongs. It is not necessary to invent a tradition or to find explanations about why there are not enough female novelists in order to create a continuum; what has to be done is to restore them to the place of excellence they enjoyed during their lifetimes; their rightful place. Besides, as it has been proven by this dissertation and many other critical studies, their literary value is not lacking in any point and they are worthy of the position that I and many other scholars claim for them. The only reason to keep burying their achievements is chauvinism.

On a different note, this dissertation is not, and never aimed to be, a complete analysis of the women writers in the eighteenth century. It is only a brief glimpse of a history which cannot be fitted in one, nor two, nor a hundred academic works. New Women's History is a discipline which needs many more scholars contributing to create a corpus of valuable

academic information about the female side of literature. There are many aspects that could have been the object of study of this dissertation or that could expand it. For example: how the new laws of copyright and the changing relationships between publishers and writers helped women to enter the trade, the ways of publishing and materials that interested William Lane, the role of circulating libraries in the widespread acceptance of the figure of the woman novelist, the works and lives of writers such as Charlotte Lennox or Maria Edgeworth... The list is endless and I encourage anybody to take up the task. Not only because of the amazing literary works that were written during this period and the incredibly interesting data that can be found; but also because it is a question of social justice and establishing the rightful value of females in a society that has always diminished them and continues to do so. The time has come to take a stand against discrimination and to claim our history and literature back.

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