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Abstract
This article addresses the ways that recent historians of the novel have construed Eliza Haywood and her first work, Love in Excess (1719). It responds to Paula Backscheider's remark, "Suddenly Haywood is everywhere. Yet the study of her individual works is proceeding much too slowly.... Less generalized comment on Haywood and closer study of her texts is needed." I will look closely at a particular moment in her first novel, a moment unexplained by the current critical paradigms applied to Haywood, and thus one that offers us a chance to be surprised by her. In turning from readings organized by sociological effects to ones organized by narrative effects, we can begin to recognize a Haywood who was not only a woman writer but a woman writer, one who grappled not only with questions of identity but also with issues of form, and who belongs in our histories of the novel because her texts are self-conscious explorations of narrative.

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Scott Black

This article addresses the ways that recent historians of the novel have construed Eliza Haywood and her first work, *Love in Excess* (1719). It responds to Paula Backscheider's remark, "Suddenly Haywood is everywhere. Yet the study of her individual works is proceeding much too slowly. ... Less generalized comment on Haywood and closer study of her texts is needed."[1] I will look closely at a particular moment in her first novel, a moment unexplained by the current critical paradigms applied to Haywood, and thus one that offers us a chance to be surprised by her. In turning from readings organized by sociological effects to ones organized by narrative effects, we can begin to recognize a Haywood who was not only a *woman* writer but a woman *writer*, one who grappled not only with questions of identity but also with issues of form, and who belongs in our histories of the novel because her texts are self-conscious explorations of narrative.

1 Paula R. Backscheider, "The Shadow of an Author: Eliza Haywood," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 11 (1998), 83. More recently Backscheider has explicitly drawn attention to Haywood's "experimentation with form," suggesting that narrative experiments are a continual feature of Haywood's works, beginning with *Love in Excess*. "The Story of Eliza Haywood's Novels: Caveats and Questions," *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood*, ed. Kristen T. Saxton and Rebecca P. Bocchicchio (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), pp. 20, 22–23.

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The current critical debate about *Love in Excess* can be mapped in terms of the ways readers and reading are said to be depicted in the text. For Ros Ballaster, the female reader identifies with the victim of the seduction narrative; for John Richetti, this kind of identification is assimilated to a broader development of subjectivity; and for William Warner, the reader identifies with the seducer, who represents the active seeker of serial pleasures in the print marketplace.[2] I will consider each account in turn, noting that the way in which readers are said to read (their point of entry into the text and what they are imagined to do with it) governs the way in which the novel is imagined to participate in various histories of the novel. Ballaster puts Haywood at the head of a woman's tradition of romance, Richetti places her in a general history of the novel, and Warner has her participating in an even more general history of print media. Each of these histories of the early novel depends on a particular kind of access *to* the text, a particular reader's position that is figured by relationships *in* the text. In looking at a different kind of relationship in the text, I will suggest a different way of understanding the reader's relation to the text. This different exigency of reading points, in turn, to another way to situate the novel in its social context—a context defined not by a choice *between* aesthetics and the market, but by an aesthetics *of* the market that was articulated in terms of the contemporary discourse of "novelty."

Reading Haywood

In the new critical economy of the early novel, sex sells, again. Categories of gender and desire have helped us replot the story of the novel's rise to include the tastes of Eliza Haywood's first readers (who bought her novels in droves), not just the predilections of the first historians of the novel (who kept her earlier salacious novels out of

2 Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); John Richetti, *The English Novel in History 1700–1780* (New York: Routledge, 1999); William Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684–1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

their accounts and collections).[3] Resisting the accretion of later judgments (whether Reeve's in the late eighteenth century, Barbauld's and Scott's in the early nineteenth century, or Ian Watt's in the twentieth) that privileged other kinds of writing and made the early part of the story, and Haywood's place in it, so intractable,[4] our accounts now try to understand not just the development of a formal technology—of moral instruction, realism, complexity, openness to history, or however the genre is understood—but rather the historical moment at which the form developed.

Two particular conditions of exclusion, gender and contemporary conceptions about literature, have made these early works invisible. Reading gender back into the picture has shown us the ways in which eighteenth-century accounts of literary value were structured by it. And recognizing the local, historically specific conditions of reading, which are not necessarily underwritten by the category of literature, has allowed us to see that Haywood's novels evoke experiences not legible in that context. Shifting the ground against which to position the form entails different claims about the function and purpose of novels, and we now understand them to be addressing problems different from the ones that have organized the various stories of the rise of the novel.

The feminist recovery of Haywood's texts has had to overcome her denigration by Pope and the literary history for whom he was a central figure.[5] Thus Ballaster reads Haywood within the social field

3 For discussions of Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance, through Times, Countries, and Manners* (1785), Letitia Barbauld's *The British Novelists* (1810), and Walter Scott's *Ballantyne's Novelist's Library* (1821–24), see J.A. Downie, "The Making of the English Novel," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 9 (1997); J.A. Downie, "Mary Davys' 'Probable Feign'd Stories' and Critical Shibboleths about 'The Rise of the Novel,'" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12 (2000); and Warner, chap. 1, esp. pp. 42–43.

4 See Toni O'Shaughnessy Bowers, "Sex, Lies, and Invisibility: Amatory Fiction from the Restoration to Mid-Century," *Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. John Richetti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

5 Contributions to the recovery of Haywood include Mary Anne Schofield, *Eliza Haywood* (Boston: Twayne, 1985); Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Janet M. Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Marilyn L. Williamson, *Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers, 1650–1750* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990); Christine Blouch, "Eliza Haywood and the Romance of Obscurity," *Studies in English Literature* 31 (1991); and Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1992).

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account is also organized by a gendered division of narrative labour: "speech is marked as masculine, a sign of fraudulent and manipulative self-invention rather than authentic self-expression. Pulp fiction such as Haywood's identifies the heights of emotional inexpressibility as the defining, essentially female, moment not just for the women that it represents but for the female narrator herself as the originating and certifying imaginative experience behind her writing."[15] Given the manifest productivity of the author, assigning the position of inexpressibility to her seems dubious: I see it rather in terms of the standard inexpressibility topos that belongs to the discourse of love.[16] Richetti does note that the texts are "unrelentingly inventive," setting up a potential tension between the productive invention of plot and action and the moments of inexpressible passion, but finally he forecloses this by saying that events are excuses for outbursts of passion.[17]

For both Richetti and Ballaster, reading is a matter of identifying with the seduced innocent, and Haywood's project is understood as a means of provoking an alternative, more authentic, and potentially more critical form of subjectivity—a space in which to feel bad in order to get better—that Richetti describes as a "paradoxical but enabling relationship between an oppressive social world and the compensatory and potentially liberating subjectivity it provokes, if not for the people on the page than for those perusing it."[18] For Ballaster, this inaugurates a separatist tradition in which women talk to each other of the exigencies of their lives under patriarchy. For Richetti, this subject position is taken as a defining feature of the novel as such and Haywood is rewritten into an inclusive history of the novel. For

15 Richetti, p. 42.

16 The struggle to write such a self is registered in the intense and torturous prose, the apostrophes on the impossibility of describing love, and in the novel's epistemological stance that only she who feels it knows it. This correlates with the reader's experience, in which the struggle with the sublime prose provides a rhetorical version of the character's seduction. Here reading is made part of the experience of identification—we know the character's feeling by our experience of the rhetoric. The prose gives us a (rhetorical) version of the character's (emotional) state.

17 According to Richetti, "the novel's disasters are contrived to elicit its moments of operatic intensities" (p. 46). Turner similarly comments, "Her breathless prose led the reader from one melodramatic tableau to another, in which emotional intensity was manufactured through eleventh-hour interruptions and successive denouement where the 'Power of Love' triumphed either by force (sexual assault) or through unknowing, even unconscious (and therefore innocent) female complicity" (pp. 46–47).

18 Richetti, pp. 46–47.

both, the reader is said to identify with the passive experience of the victim in order to learn a particular sociological (female) identity or to learn a (female) mode of subjectivity—one in either case defined by passion and even pain.

Warner challenges this model, and offers an interpretation that emphasizes the other side of seduction, the seducer. Rather than identifying with the victim, he writes, the reader "watches over the shoulder of the intriguer": "The popularity of these novels seems to depend upon turning the empty ego of the central protagonist into a reader's seat from which readers can follow a blatantly self-interested quest for victory on the field of amorous conquest."[19] Warner argues that Ballaster is more interested in the dilemma of the heroine than Haywood, and that she (Ballaster) brings to the novels a concern with determining the female subject position that is not in them.[20] Instead of reading for that kind of gendered identification, he argues that the pleasures of the novels consist in identifying with the plotter. A very different subject position is offered, not one that, on the model of the sublime, realizes a nobler self through suffering, but rather one that is freed through pleasure. Amatory novels such as Haywood's "invent a form of private entertainment that incites desire and promotes the liberation of the reader as a subject of pleasure."[21] This polymorphously desiring subject is what Warner calls the "general reader" who will drive the emerging print marketplace and "media culture."[22] Rather than identifying with the seduced victim to learn about female subject positions or a feminine mode of subjectivity, Warner's reader enters the text via the seducer, who represents the active seeker of serial pleasures in the print marketplace, a form of entertainment that provides an escapist fantasy of control, not powerlessness.

For Ballaster and Richetti, the reader's identification with the innocent victim establishes identity or subjectivity through suffering. For Warner, occupying the seducer's position offers a release from subjectivity/subjection (in becoming a "subject of pleasure," the reader is freed from any subject position at all), as novel reading becomes the occasion of pleasure, not pain, a liberatory experience

19 Warner, pp. 96, 92.

20 Warner, p. 91.

21 Warner, p. 93.

22 Warner, pp. 92, 93; for media culture, see esp. pp. 125–27.

of orgasm, not a passionate experience of subjectivity.[23] Like Ballaster and Richetti, Warner adroitly examines the ways in which reading is figured in the text, recognizing a relationship *in* the text as depicting the relationship of the reader *to* the text—a familiar, sophisticated, and, I think, correct move. There is, however, a wider range of possible responses in—and to—the text. Despite their differences, Ballaster, Richetti, and Warner share an assumption that a single axis of seduction is the organizing structure of the novel, but there is another model of seduction in the text, which offers another model of reading, and so another image for and account of the pleasures of such amatory fiction.

While the critical focus on the preparatives to, and the act of, sex is justified, it is not the whole story and does not exhaust the novel's possibilities. Haywood offers her reader another model of seduction, one that is not organized by a choice between a naïve and innocent victim and a cunning and cruel seducer. One subplot does not fit this pattern, plays a significant variation on it, and suggests another kind of subject position—and so offers another way of engaging the text, another kind of reading, a different pleasure of the text.

Trading Sex for Secrets

The plot of *Love in Excess* consists of a series of variations on the theme of seduction, with part 1 offering a relatively simple layering of stories: the D'Elmont/Alovysa narrative is interrupted at its climax by that of Brillian/Ansellina. The two stories offer parallel versions of a basic plot about overcoming obstacles to achieve love—or at least some semblance of it in D'Elmont's case. Driven by his ambition, he ends up married to Alovysa and is thus set up (we know how these things go) for a fall into true love. It is this story of the revenge of love that drives part 2: D'Elmont falls in love with the innocent Melliora and seduces her. And it is this plot that drives critical accounts of the novel as a whole, grounding the readings of both Ballaster and Warner.

But another plot in part 2 intersects this one and complicates the axis of seduction: Baron D'Espernay (D'Elmont's friend) attempts to

23 By "dissolving particularized subjectivity into automatized bodies, this sort of scene of intense sexual arousal helps to generalize subject positions by blurring identities. The two characters and the reader flow into one scene of polymorphous sexual arousal, where the drive exceeds the subject position through which it operates" (Warner, p. 121).

seduce Alovysa (D'Elmont's wife) by promising to reveal to her the name of D'Elmont's lover. Unlike part 1, however, this is not simply a mirroring of the main plot, but a narrative engine that drives it. The seduction of Alovysa depends on D'Elmont's seduction of Melliora, as it is the Baron who inflames D'Elmont's desire for Melliora in order to seduce Alovysa: "But the Baron, who had designs in his head, which he knew could not by any means be brought to succeed, but by keeping the Count's passion warm, made use of all the artifice he was master of, to embolden this respective lover, to the gratification of his wishes."[24] The Baron is an archetypal figure for the kind of masculine desire Ballaster discusses, a master of "designs" and "artifice," committed only to "the gratification of his wishes." He loves Alovysa "with that sort of love, which considers more its own gratification than the interest, or quiet of the object beloved" (p. 140), using even marital strife to attain his end. Not only does he inflame D'Elmont's desire but he rejoices in Alovysa's sorrow "as the advancement of his designs" (p. 140). But if the man fits the pattern, the seduction does not. Rather than reading the Baron through his gender or even his desire, I suggest we read him as a figure of narrative productivity. D'Elmont's pursuit of Melliora is an effect of the Baron's pursuit of Alovysa, and in the Baron's instigation of this plot, Haywood offers a figure for the author. (It is the Baron, as well, who suggests what Warner calls the novel's—and the reader's—"alibi," that Melliora's "secret inclinations" justify D'Elmont's pursuit, p. 118.)[25] The Baron's orchestration of the D'Elmont/Melliora plot offers a complicating variation on the seduction plot, one that frames the other plot and comments self-consciously on how such stories work.

In the Baron's fostering of D'Elmont's seduction of Melliora, Haywood figures the mechanisms of plotting. Similarly in his own seduction of Alovysa she represents the workings of seduction, showing the Baron's hand—and so *her* hand. The Baron and Alovysa meet: "As soon as the first civilities were over, she began afresh to conjure him to let her know the name of her rival, which he artfully evading, tho' not absolutely denying, made her almost distracted; the Baron carefully observed her every look and motion, and when he

24 Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess*, ed. David Oakleaf (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 1994), p. 118. References are to this edition.

25 Warner discusses the manner in which Haywood represents desire in the novel, and thus the desire stimulated by the novel, as "fateful and natural" (p. 121).

found her impatience was raised to the highest degree," he tells her of his "tortures of neglected love" (p. 153). This embodies the narrative strategy of the whole novel—a structure of timely interruptions, "artful evasions," that keep us distracted with impatience—but here Haywood gives away her trick, suggesting that the effect does not necessarily depend on being taken in by it.[26] I take the "careful observation" of the seduced to figure the author's playing on the reader's own excitement: we know we are being worked, and that awareness becomes part of our pleasure.

This plot, then, does not go the way of the D'Elmont/Melliora seduction, as it is not an innocent victim who is the target, and its effect is neither Richetti's "liberating subjectivity" nor Warner's "liberation of the reader as a subject of pleasure." Rather, this plot depicts (and demands) our awareness of both the Baron's generative narrative and the canniness with which he is met by his intended victim. Alovysa is not an innocent Melliora, and the payoff of this seduction story is not the generalized pleasure or pain of sex. Here the language of "unavoidable impulse" that serves as an alibi for seduction (of the naïve seduced and of the reader) is answered by an equally "artful" and "careful" opponent, one who "carefully observes" him back. Alovysa responds in kind, with an equally sophisticated gamesmanship: she "thought a little condescention was necessary to win him to her purpose," and "forcing herself to look kindly on him," finally "affected ... with a kind of an unwilling willingness" to let him draw her to the bed (pp. 153–54). Alovysa knows the score, and rather than being fooled, she tries to foil the Baron's designs and score herself, though not in the same way. She tries to seduce the secret from the Baron as he tries to seduce her with the secret, answering the Baron's ploy with one of her own.

If the D'Elmont/Melliora plot grounds the various readings considered above, none of them seems adequate to the Baron/Alovysa plot, which entails a battle by a well-matched pair of schemers, the Baron "who had designs in his head" (p. 118) and "the cunning Alovysa who knew his drift well enough" (p. 147). In addition to a seduction of innocence, Haywood offers us this scene of seduction as a battle between an equally matched and equally aware pair who struggle not only on the ground of seduction but also over its grounds, over the very terms of seduction. Alovysa responds to the

26 For examples of interruption and delay at climactic moments, see pp. 123, 130.

Baron by changing the field of the game, not just answering in or playing by the Baron's terms. The payoff here is not realized as passion or pleasure, but rather as frustration—and awareness: "But the Baron was as cunning as she, and seeing thro' her artifice, was resolved to make sure of his reward first" (p. 154). The narrative stalemate draws attention to another set of terms, and while the scene resolves without a victory on either side, the condition of this is a representation of shared canniness: "What will not some women venture to satisfy a jealous curiosity? Alovysa had feigned to consent to his desire (in hope to engage him to a discovery) ... and perceiving she had been outwitted," she accuses him of violence, to which he replies without surprise ("The Baron was not enough deluded by her pretense of kindness to be much surprised at this sudden turn of her behaviour," p.154). Neither can act because both know the game. Both know what the other is up to, and know that the other knows, and rather than a struggle defined by the seducer (with resistance the other's only option), Haywood gives us a struggle between equally scheming agents. Each is aware of, and capable of answering in like terms, the "artifice" and "feigning" of the "cunning" other, as Haywood offers an axis of seduction that is doubled and made self-aware as strategy. Instead of a unidirectional desire or an overwhelming experience of passion, here agency is met by agency, autonomy, and awareness—that is, relations organized by mutual wariness, a conscious war of all against all, a war of conscious alls.

This scene does *not* offer a choice between the Baron and Alovysa, and the reader's position is not construed along an axis of seduction but along an axis of frustration, one that produces awareness instead of passion. The Baron's ploy to withhold a secret for sex (he "did not doubt but for the purchase of this secret he should obtain everything he desired of Alovysa," p. 142), is answered by Alovysa's playing at parlaying the promise of sex into a revelation of the secret. Alovysa's curiosity matches the Baron's lust as the scene hinges on an exchange of sex for secrets. I take this exchange as emblematic of the novel as a whole. Trading sex for secrets—or rather the vacillation between these impulses—defines the experience of reading Haywood. Her novel engages the reader along *two* axes of seduction, stimulating not only the kind of desire that drives D'Elmont (and the Baron) but also the kind that drives Alovysa—not only sexual desire but also epistemological desire, curiosity, a desire that's satisfied not by having but by

knowing (though not in the biblical sense).

If we were to take this kind of seduction, this kind of scene, as a way of configuring the relationship between writer and reader, a different kind of reader—and reading—would emerge. Intertwined with the model of seduction in which reading is depicted as suffering subjectivity or subjectless pleasure, *Love in Excess* offers another kind of seduction, one that makes reading another kind of pleasure. This kind of game played across a shared awareness represents a match between canny readers and a self-conscious writer, the stakes of which are the gratification of a desire not defined exclusively as sexual. Trading sex for secrets characterizes the narrative economy of the text: a canny seduction of a knowing reader, pitting narrative inventiveness against the reader's desire not simply for orgasm but for play.

I take Warner's point that desire in *Love in Excess* is polymorphous, but not just in the sense that it wants many different things. Rather, it is polymorphous in wanting many different *kinds* of things. The critical focus on the drive to seduction obscures one aspect of the text, one of the pleasures of the text—its intricate and "cunning" plot and "artifice." If *Love in Excess* makes us aware of reading as seduction by figuring this in the D'Elmont/Melliora scenes, there are other places where it reminds us that reading offers other pleasures as well, those of suspense and curiosity, the desire not just for physical release but also for epistemological relief. The pleasures of Haywood's novels lie as much in this kind of gratification as in the other, and it may finally be knowing the *rules* of seduction, endlessly taught, performed, and reiterated, that such books depend on. We all know how seduction plots work—if we do not, part 1 reminds us—and part of the pleasure of reading them is to see how they become twisted, how the writer plays variations on the theme. The choice between being seduced and being the seducer obscures the kind of pleasure available to a reader who is not mystified or naïvely seduced by the text, but one who reads knowing full well what one is after—not a naïve reader who experiences the uncanny pleasure of being ravished, but a canny reader who wittingly enjoys the pleasures of curiosity, variety, and variation, and who reads *Love in Excess; Or, The Fatal Enquiry* not just for excessive love or the excesses of love but also to indulge an inquiring mind.

Or, The Fatal Enquiry

Richetti and Ballaster suggest that readers are passive in the face of passion; I suggest they are active in the face of narrative, participating with Haywood in constructing the pleasures of the text.[27] This follows Warner's account of such active participation, but I argue further that the pleasure of the text is as much narrative as sexual, that the reader reads for the gratification of curiosity as much as for the gratification of those other kinds of desires. Haywood's texts (as evidenced by the multiple takes critics offer as "the" reader's point of entry into them) offer multiple subject positions. And as strands of the novel work as sites of the reader's self-awareness as a gendered identity, or a subject of passion, or a pleasure-seeker, so likewise these oblique, perpendicular counterplots offer sites in which readers can indulge in curiosity, and become aware of themselves as curious subjects.

Barbara Benedict and Kathryn King have suggested that curiosity is one of the generic markers of the early novel.[28] King discusses the early novel's "generic propensity ... to regard itself a trespasser in private places," and says the curiosity it incites and indulges "is arguably the name by which the novel knows and addresses its own transgressive desires."[29] In her own reading, however, King divides the labour of curiosity from amatory novels, and locates this other mode of generic self-consciousness in a distinct set of texts exemplified by *A Spy upon the Conjurer* (1724).[30] I think, though, that even the amatory novels have such moments, and they themselves contain the full range of textual effects that King notes across Haywood's oeuvre: The "more self-conscious and perhaps more cynical Eliza Haywood than we are accustomed to encountering," one with "a surprising

27 For a discussion of the dependence of mid-century novels on such active readers, see Liz Bellamy, *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 62–63.

28 Barbara Benedict notes "the generic link in the novel between two kinds of exploration of the unknown for personal gratification—the desire to find something out, curiosity, and the desire to be aroused." "The Curious Genre: Female Inquiry in Amatory Fiction," *Studies in the Novel* 30 (1998), 194–95. She reads *Love in Excess*, though, as collapsing the two: "this female author defines inquiry strictly as the quest for sexual knowledge. ... Haywood employs the rubric of 'Enquiry' specifically to mean sexual curiosity" (p. 203).

29 Kathryn R. King, "Spying upon the Conjurer: Haywood, Curiosity, and the 'Novel' in the 1720s," *Studies in the Novel* 30 (1998), 180, 181.

30 King writes, "it is my contention that this odd fiction [Spy] is interesting precisely because it is so *unlike* anything she [Haywood] wrote during her amatory phase" (p. 184).

comic side ... and a capacity for ironic self-representation," seems as available in *Love in Excess* as elsewhere once we return to our accounts the full range of its narrative dynamics, not just the moments of passion and speechless desire, but also the putatively "masculine" aspects of the novel, the plotting and the manifestly productive use of language that have been selected out by the exigencies of establishing gender as a category.[31] King writes: "Preoccupation with themes of gender has, arguably, so saturated our perception of Haywood as to swamp awareness of other elements of the texts."[32] Similarly, Backscheider has called for a wider reading of her novels: "We need to turn away from [Haywood's] body and engage her texts."[33] I want to extend this to argue that we need to turn away from bodies in her texts as well, to see what other kinds of effects they have, to recognize other kinds of textual effects than those that depend on bodies and identification. Amatory novels such as *Love in Excess* offer several kinds of pleasures, and some of these intersect in unexpected ways with readings that focus on one or another of them.

In fact, when Haywood does offer a moment of narrative self-reflection in her amatory novels, representing scenes of reading (auditing), she does so in terms of curiosity and its attendant desires. For example, *The British Recluse: Or, The Secret History of Cleomira, Suppos'd Dead* (1722) starts with a mystery that "failed not to excite her [Belinda's] Curiosity to a Desire of knowing as much as she could of this Adventure."[34] The next day the Recluse is at first averse to meeting Belinda, but "the Assurances ... that Belinda's Desire of her Society sprung only from a belief that there was a Sympathy in her Afflictions at last prevailed on her to receive a Visit from her" (p.159). Here sympathy and identification are alibis for curiosity (not vice versa), and the two characters share it: Belinda "would have given almost one of her Eyes to have been let in on the Secret of the whole Affair but durst not attempt to ask it, for fear of disobliging her, if the Recluse, who was little behind her in Curiosity, had not, at the next

31 King, pp. 179, 184.

32 King, p. 184.

33 Backscheider, "Shadow," p. 89.

34 Eliza Haywood, *The British Recluse* in *Popular Fiction by Women 1660–1730*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.156. References are to this edition.

Visit, purposely given her an Opportunity" (p.160). Curiosity generates narrative, and when the two have exchanged written statements that announce the roots of their sorrow (surprise: it is love), their curiosity trumps even passion: "In these, and the like Exclamations, they passed some Time, and had, doubtless, given a greater Loose to the over-boiling Passions of their souls, if their mutual curiosity to know each other's Adventures had not obliged them to leave off" (p. 161). Though passion may over-boil, it is no match for curiosity. Here, a novel is introduced and framed by the desire to find out a mystery, to hear a story, and even when the Recluse suggests that sympathy is a motivation ("to the end that the Knowledge of mine may make your own [story] seem less"), Haywood renders the reader's desire as the character's curiosity to know what happened (p.161). We pick up the novel because it promises a "secret" about someone "suppos'd dead" and are introduced to the story by a character who raises the reader's curiosity by performing it. (Similarly, within Belinda's story, her curiosity introduces an embedded story, p. 219.) The novel ends with the two "fair Companions in Affliction" commiserating, but only until the Recluse's curiosity gets the better of her and she asks Belinda to finish her story (p. 223).

Such mixed motives are a regular feature of Haywood's representation of auditing within her works. In *The Distress's Orphan, Or Love in a Mad-House* (1726), Annilia, the heroine, calls her friends to hear her story: "she sent Osephas [a servant] to some of those with whom she had been most intimate of both Sexes, desiring them to come to her immediately at the Place where she then was, bidding him tell them they should hear a story full of Wonder. The Summons being, either out of Love or Curiosity, readily obey'd, she related to them the whole of her Adventure, and the unexampled Barbarity of her Uncle."[35] Here Haywood explicitly depicts her text and her readers as a mixed audience with various desires. Stories of "Wonder," that is, novels—"Wonder" is a synonym for "novelty" in the discourse of the period—are heard by "both Sexes" for several reasons, both out of love (for the teller) and curiosity (about the story). If one kind of reading is dependent on the teller (a kind of identity through friendship), another kind appeals to the reader's curiosity.

In Haywood's representation of the pleasures of her texts, novels

35 Eliza Haywood *The Distress'd Orphan* in *Three Novellas*, ed. Earla A. Wilputte (East Lansing, Mich.: Colleagues Press, 1995), p. 62.

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self-consciously appeal to curiosity, and King is certainly right when she calls curiosity the mark of the novel's generic self-consciousness.[36] But I think one can go even further, and recognize as well that the contemporary category of "novelty" theorized curiosity. At the beginning of the decade, in the "Pleasures of the Imagination" (1711), Addison offered "novelty" as one of three categories—greatness, beauty, and novelty—that outlined kinds of aesthetic pleasure:

> Every thing that is new or uncommon raises a Pleasure in the Imagination, because it fills the Soul with an agreeable Surprise, gratifies its Curiosity, and gives it an Idea of which it was not before possest. ... whatever is new or uncommon contributes a little to vary human Life, and to divert our Minds, for a while, with the Strangeness of its Appearance. ... It is this that recommends Variety, where the Mind is every Instant called off to something new.[37]

Novelty names the pleasures of curiosity and variety, as well as the participatory pleasure of the curious reader in the text.[38] It provides the term that explains the pleasures of serial reading and the conditions of publicity inaugurated by the *Spectator* that organized the print marketplace Haywood enters later in the decade.

In the vernacular of the decade, "novels" shared a root with this category of the emergent discourse of aesthetics. When Haywood calls her book a "novel" it is with reference to a field of signification that contains the possibility of its own self-reflection. That is, the category participates in a contemporary discourse and translates as easily into "novelty" as it does into the "novel." This is also to say that novelties could have had a self-conscious existence (just because they are trivialities does not mean they cannot be self-aware), a self-consciousness that is part of the story of their emergence. I suggest that there was a positive discourse about, if not yet a full-fledged defence of, novelty in the 1710s, one that hypothesized the pleasures of extension

36 King notes that episodes of curiosity in *A Spy* "mark places where we can glimpse a genre-in-the-making looking at itself as it follows its inquisitiveness to sites little explored in better established ... literary forms" (p. 180).

37 Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 3:541.

38 See Scott Black, "Addison's Aesthetics of Novelty," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 30 (2001); and Ronald Paulson, *The Beautiful, Novel, and Strange* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), chap. 3.

and entertainment—the conditions that Warner explains by importing the category of "media culture." Addison provides a category that offers a contemporary horizon of understanding, a *genre*, that is part of the history of those forms as much as their other social effects.

Histories of the Novel

My reading of *Love in Excess* has argued for recognizing another kind of pleasure to put alongside those organized by identity and sexual desire. I take the pleasure of curiosity to supplement Warner's "subject of pleasure," and in these terms it represents an active reader as well as a passive one, an agent of curiosity not just a passionate subject. This reader's position, one organized by active pleasures, is embedded in a social field different from that of current readings of the novel. Ballaster suggests that a struggle in the text for control over bodies figures a struggle for control over texts: "The telling of a story of seduction is also a mode of seduction. The struggle for control over the identification and interpretation of amatory signs between male and female protagonists which is enacted on the level of content can be taken as a metaphorical substitution for the struggle for epistemological authority between male and female readers and writers on the level of form."[39] In these terms, telling a story about seduction is a question of control because that is what seduction is about, but sometimes telling a story of seduction may also be about telling a story. And if not all seduction is finally about bodies in the text, the text may not be all about authority. Replacing bodies with narrative (or desire with curiosity, trading sex for secrets) suggests pleasure, not control, as the social effect of such novels. Ballaster's social field is constituted by a contest that is rendered by seduction in the text (and so by the text), but a different face of the social can be seen by recognizing that not all seduction in the text works like D'Elmont's pursuit of Melliora. If seduction also figures a game, we should see the pleasure of wit as an effect of reading and the text as the space of such pleasures. And if the text is organized (as well) by dynamics other than seduction, it may depict a social field defined by other dynamics than a struggle for epistemological control. The struggle of wit between the Baron and Alovysa suggests a way of understanding the market as a space of wit, play, and game.

39 Ballaster, p. 24.

When we identify with Alovysa's curiosity, we are being trained in one of the modes of subjectivity that the novel depends on, but a kind of subjectivity that is active not passive, dependent on curiosity not passion, and on a kind of pleasure that is canny not unaware—and so perhaps better called agency. Novels train readers to be agents in a textual game, not just subject to textual seduction; they are self-conscious narrative experiments that require self-aware readers for their effects. I am suggesting with Warner that novels enact the rake's pursuit, the pursuit of variety, serial change and continual difference, but also as an epistemological pleasure, not just a physical one. The form of the novel promises any reader what only a few rakes could live: not just a lot of sex, but a lot of chase, a lot of plotting.[40] In such novels we can see how the market enables active reading by agents of curiosity, and recognize that even seduction is a discourse, and pleasure an experience only tentatively dependent on bodies.

Our current critical emphasis on reading Haywood's novels in terms of identity-formation, whether realized as subjectivity or pleasure, has kept our critical focus on the moments of seduction to such a degree that the plots that get the reader from one sex scene to the next become merely incidental. I suggest that those machinations that drive the plot, especially when self-consciously presented as such, are as integral to the project, and the pleasures, of the novel as the moments of seduction. And further I argue that these offer a distinct place for the reader as well, and so a mode of personhood that supplements those defined by abjection, cruel manipulation, or unconscious pleasure, a subjectivity (or agency) organized by wariness and awareness, a mode of readerly pleasure that is conscious and participatory.

Haywood's novels bear reading in terms of events as well as characters, process as well as product, and variation as well as theme. We should recognize the work of her novels as formal too, as Backscheider suggests, spaces of formal innovation.[41] In addition to the social work of the novel, it serves as a formal technology of variation, and its formal work (in which writers expand, conflate, and manipu-

40 It may be that the activity of the rake here becomes assimilated to the modernity of commercial relations. Modernity does not emerge at one time but by updating older forms, and here the print market evolves via a residual vehicle, updating libertine discourse; the pleasures of libertinage suddenly look like activities of consumers: chasing the reified products of the market instead of seductees.

41 Backscheider, "The Story," p. 42.

late received forms as such) is part of its social role as much as those positive statements and positions it is said to hold. Haywood starts with the seduction novel but then complicates it, suggesting that at least she is thinking within that form, and perhaps thinking *with* it as well—a moment of the emerging novel's self-consciousness. Whether Haywood was a morally serious person (and I suggest we at least entertain the possibility that her books were not necessarily *good* and moral books at all, that they may be cruel—and that cruelty has its aesthetic pleasures), she certainly was seriously engaged in narrative experiment and in thinking in, and through, the possibilities of narrative. There certainly seems to be room for some attention to her craft as well as to her art.

At moments such as the Baron/Alovysa seduction, Haywood offers us a self-conscious reflection on a mode of reading that mediates erotic pleasure and curiosity. In *Love in Excess; or, The Fatal Enquiry. A Novel,* the "Novel" is the formal technology that mediates "Love" and "Inquiry," that trades in sex and secrets and understands itself as such. The generic horizon of the early novel may consist in its ability to mediate various conceptions of reading and pleasure. This helps organize a mode of reading defined by social possibilities but not limited by them. The market in novelties, while certainly depending on and inciting sexual desire, cannot be reduced to it. Rather, there seem to be two engines of the market—desire and curiosity, sex and secrets—that the forms that drive the market depend on. In addition to the pleasures of seduction, the market trades on the pleasures of game, providing an amoral space for play and the pleasures that organize the emerging discourse of aesthetics. And at moments when Haywood offers occasions for the reader's self-consciousness as an agent of curiosity, novels could be said to become the self-consciousness of the market, part of the discourse in which the pleasures of novelty are offered not just as objects to be consumed but as terms in which to think, terms with which readers may understand what they do as readers.[42]

The modes of reading we are applying to Haywood do not exhaust the possibilities of her texts, and those texts offer—and even depend

42 See Warner, chap. 4, esp. pp. 128–39, for a review of the extensive work on new reading practices in the period. My claim is that the emergence of aesthetics is a cultural space in which these shifts are thought about, and that the opposition between cultural studies and formalism makes it impossible to see the historical work that formalist thinking does.

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on—pleasures that our models of reading do not fully account for. As well as presenting a new kind of identity, one based on desire, Haywood's text opens new spaces for readerly play. Not, it should be stressed, as a smokescreen obscuring or figuring some other agenda, but as an articulation of such pleasures as the grounds of a new social space. This is to argue that such novels are not excuses for something other than reading, or some other kind of pleasure or identity learned through reading, but rather that they are themselves—as such, as novelties, entertainment, games, and as novels—new social spaces that do not necessarily have any other use than to provide a place in which to exercise that kind of activity and understand that kind of pleasure.

If Haywood's novels offer at once occasions for such play and terms with which to think about it, they belong in a history of these kinds of pleasures as well, a history of wit and play, as they become the objects of specific discourses (aesthetics, histories of modern literature as a part of the history of civil society—the self-consciousness of a modern social space that is defined, partly, by pleasure). Such social spaces, in shorthand the space of reading, in turn create lived possibilities which *cannot* be collapsed back into determinative social fields. And it may be, in fact, these proto-aesthetic modes of reading that give us the desire for "liberation" that underwrites our understanding of both subjectivity and desire. In these terms, if Haywood's novels are transgressive, we are holding them up in our insistence that the aesthetic pleasures of wit and game must have repercussions in terms of a social identity or a social critique. They have already dispensed with the terms we insist they must be criticizing.

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