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Masquerade Scenes in the Works of the Eighteenth Century Women Authors.

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"I declare that the following MA thesis is my own work for which I used only the resources and literature mentioned."

V Praze, dne 3. 8. 2012

Podpis

Ráda bych poděkovala paní doktorce Soně Novákové za její čas, přístup, užitečné rady a komentáře.

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Introduction

The introduction to this thesis deals with the overall aims of the paper and with the critical theories used in the analyses of the three texts that shall be more specified below. Moreover, it contains brief descriptions of the biographies and professional careers of the authors in question in the context of the development of the eighteenth century female authors. Furthermore, this part of the study offers a historical and cultural background which is perhaps necessary for a better understanding of the chosen texts. Last but not least there also is the outline of the organization of the whole work.

The masquerade, as a social practice, cultural event and a literary theme, has been the topic of several studies. Mary Ann Schofield in *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind: Disguising Romances in Feminine Fiction, 1713-1799* (1990) concentrates on the relationship between female masquerade and romance. Catherine Craft-Fairchild in *Masquerade and Gender* (2004) sees the masquerade critically as conforming to the dominant culture. She disagrees with Terry Castle and her arguments in *Masquerade and Civilization* (1986) claiming that the masked assembly represented a specifically feminine space, where the rules governing the society were subverted. Castle uses Bakhtin's theories of the carnivalesque expressed in *Rabelais and His World* (1965) to analyse the novels of the period. Craft-Fairchild, on the contrary, describes the masquerade as an occasion where women were subjectified and restricted: "The masquerade rather than a narcissistic fantasy seems a painful submission to male scopophilia."¹ She applies the theory of gaze and the psychoanalytic theories in her reading of several eighteenth century texts. This study is ideologically closer to Castle. Nevertheless, not only novels but also a short fiction and a play will be explored. The

¹ Catherine Craft-Fairchild, *Masquerade and Gender-Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth Century Fiction by Women* (Penn State University Press: 2004) 4.

masquerade scenes will be read using the theories of mimicry and performativity by Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler.

The eighteenth century in England was an epoch of profound social, economic and cultural changes. These were often reflected in the fiction and, of course, non-fiction produced by contemporary writers and journalists. Thus, also, the popular entertainment of and specific to the time: the masquerades became a frequent topic appearing not only in the newspapers but also in short stories, theatre plays and novels. The objective of this diploma work is to explore the masquerade scenes, or more specifically, the role they play in the whole of several works of fiction. What shall be discussed is, for example, their effect on the plot, recurrently functioning either as the centre of all the action or as a disruptive, de-stabilizing element and the moment of transformation. Also, attention will be paid to the scenes' impact on the individual characters whose confusion and misunderstanding causes paradoxically their “awakening” and brings them more freedom or, on the contrary, exposes their prejudice and unfavourable characteristic traits. What shall also be elucidated is the effect of the masked soiree depiction on the overall style and “atmosphere” of the text as the nightly gathering often brings in certain carnivalesque, farcically humorous, mimetic and parodic elements as well as the sexual, the unofficial, the anti-didactic, the subversive and also dangerous, which contrast greatly with the rather more expected and “appropriate” moral, instructive or poetic endeavour of the eighteenth century female fiction².

The term "masquerade" is not only used to designate a literary theme in the paper. It is also applied in its broader sense. The way the masked assembly functioned in fiction is interconnected with its role in culture and society. The masquerade in literature, the real event

² Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen-Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 13.

and the metaphorical meaning are seen as parts of one discourse especially when commenting on the social position of the eighteenth-century female writers and women in general. It might be argued that similarly to the masquerade with its topsy-turvy world enabled women to assume roles different to reality and to experience the liberating impulses of the carnival-like disruption of borders defined by class and gender, the producing of articles, books and plays provided the female part of the society with the possibility of not only earning money and supporting themselves in need but also with the rare chance of self-assertion and the assumption of a critical stance in public while being at least partly protected by the authorial mask. For women to have a profession and a voice at that time was no usual thing. As Jeremy Black contends: "The dominant pathos was religious, patriarchal, hierarchical, conservative and male dominated."³

Also, through their work, the female authors were able to change the opinions, be it male or female, on women and to offer a critique of the writings created principally by male authors. Judith Butler claims: "The production of texts can be one way of reconfiguring the world. Because texts do not reflect the entirety of their authors or their worlds, they enter a field of reading as partial provocations, not only requiring a set of prior texts in order to gain legibility, but -at best- initiating a set of appropriations and criticisms that call into question their fundamental premises."⁴ The three chosen works can also be seen as functioning in this manner. The paper will mainly concentrate on Hannah Cowley's play *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780), on Eliza Haywood's novella, or the so-called masquerade tale, *The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity* (1724), and finally on Elizabeth Inchbald's novel *A Simple Story* (1791). These three authors shall be viewed as the representatives of the relatively large number of women who then entered the sphere of professional writing.

³ Jeremy Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century England: A Subject for Taste* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005) XVII.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter-On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 1993) 19.

Their texts have been selected for the study of the masquerade scenes so that these could be explored in three different genres as the textual diversity might contribute to the complexity of the analyses. The fact that the masquerade permeated such varied fields as the theatre, newspaper and the novels attests to its significance as a phenomenon typical for the eighteenth century. Also, the three various works have been singled out to illustrate the range of the eighteenth century female writing and to show how the masquerade topic functioned throughout the period. Haywood, although she established "the conventions of fictional saturnalia"⁵ and rather explicitly, similarly to Aphra Behn, describes intrigues and affairs, was a masquerade critic. The tension is detectable in her text. Cowley's masquerade scene works in a highly theatrical manner, as an emblem of the theatre and society itself, celebrating the then popular event for its revelatory power. Inchbald's late novel may actually be read as an ironic version of the popular sentimental novels where the masked assemblies enabled the author to make the true lovers meet. In fact, the plot is not dissimilar to the one of Cowley's, whose works Inchbald edited,⁶ nevertheless, the masquerade scene eventually has a different impact. The novel also shows the change in values and the decline of the masquerade vogue at the end of the century.

Obviously, the texts vary in structure, length and purpose but they all mirror the features of the masquerade the paper attempts to focus on: the liberty aspect but also a possible threat the nightly gatherings represented, the masquerade fluidity of identities and its ability to make the hidden behavioural and ethical constructs unconcealed. Likewise, all the three texts' conventional moral message seems to be slightly undermined, whether it was the author's intention or not, by the masquerade scene. As Terry Castle notes, "if the role of masquerade is masked, so to speak, behind a textual facade of moralism and ideological

⁵ Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth Century English Culture and Fiction (Stanford University Press: 1986) 161.

⁶ Castle, Masquerade and Civilization 319.

decorum, it is powerfully subversive, nonetheless."⁷ Cowley's, Haywood's and Inchbald's main characters enter the world of masquerade and not only they themselves but also the play, the short story and the novel as a whole are, as it will be seen, changed by it. Moreover, the texts have been included in this paper for their literary quality and their attractiveness also facilitated by the masquerade plot as there is a space for humour, surprise and a critical attitude.

⁷ Terry Castle, "The Carnivalization of the English Narrative," PMLA Vol. 99, No. 5. (Oct., 1984) 903. J-STOR. 14. 12. 2007.

Chapter I

1.0 Context

The eighteenth century has been given several epithets: Georgian, or Hanoverian, the Age of Enlightenment and Reason or the Golden Age. However, rather than only viewing the period as the time of stability, patriotism and 'the good old England,' it is, perhaps, more fruitful in depicting the epoch to concentrate on the transformations it brought with itself. According to Roy Porter, "...the Eighteenth century marked a distinctive moment in the making of modern England."⁸ The country experienced an economic boom, the growth of population and its movement to the cities, the onset of industrial development and progress in general.

Moreover, the habits of the public began to change. Again, as Porter writes: "[England's] society was capitalist, materialist, market-oriented; its temper wordly, pragmatic, responsive to economic forces."⁹ Also, people, especially in the cities, experienced a significant increase in leisure time due to the modernization of labour and were offered numerous pleasure activities. According to Ian Watt, large towns, and London in particular, were rich in entertainment facilities: "during the season there were plays, operas, masquerades, ridottos, assemblies, drums, while the watering places and resort towns catered for the summer months of the idle fair."¹⁰ Gillian Russel in *Women, Sociability and Theatre* (2007) also mentions the Duchess of Northumberland's diary where she lists 134 forms of entertainments available in London, including "puppet shows, pleasure gardens, circuses, model exhibitions, lectures, shows, clubs, learned societies and debating clubs."¹¹ It is

⁸ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 2.

⁹ Porter, *English Society 2*.

¹⁰ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel-Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Pimlico, 2000) 45.

¹¹ Gillian Russel, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge University Press: 2007) 1.

obvious that the English public lived through the times of change and that the change was for the better as far as entertainment was concerned.

Nonetheless, the new trend in the spending of spare time had its admirers but also its critics. For instance, one of the possibilities of amusement was going to Vauxhall and Ranelagh, the Dog and Duck gardens, Almack's, and the Pantheon, popular especially in the middle and later years of the above mentioned era and still fashionable until the 1780's and 1790's. However, the masquerades themselves have been fully established as a city entertainment already since the 1720s.¹² It was possible, for example, to obtain a ticket in a coffee house and to visit the Haymarket Theatre managed by a Swiss man, John James ("Count") Heidegger, an Italian opera and masquerade promoter, who gave public 'Midnight Masques' and was disdained by Henry Fielding and Alexander Pope for his bad and foreign taste.¹³ As Martin C. Battestin notes: "In *Tom Jones* (XIII.vii), for instance, Fielding calls Heidegger "The Great Arbiter Delicaciarum, the great High-Priest of Pleasure,"¹⁴ which is, of course, meant ironically. Pope in his *Dunciad* satirically writes about 'old Dullness' and Lewis Theobald, author and textual editor, who criticized Pope's edition of Shakespeare and was attacked for it in the poem:

The Goddess than, o'er his anointed head
With mystic words, the sacred opium shed.
And lo! her bird (a monster of a fowl
Something betwixt Heidegger and owl)
Perched on his crown...¹⁵

¹² Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 2.

¹³ Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 10.

¹⁴ Martin C Battestin and Ruthe R. Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (London: Routledge, 1990) 62.

¹⁵ Alexander Pope and Valerie Rumbolt, ed. *The Dunciad, in Four Books* (London: Longman, 2009) 1: 243-44.

In this way, scorn is poured on Pope's rival by equating him with the masquerade pointing to his irrationality and lack of proper writing skills. Moreover, masquerades were also seen as a threat to decency. For instance, William Hogarth, a well-known engraver and painter, in his *Harlot's Progress*, which were six engravings depicting Moll Hackabout's life, included a masquerade ticket and a mask in the picture of her chamber on plate II entitled *The Quarrel with her Jew Protector*.¹⁶ Thus, as Sophie Carter notes, "there existed a distinctive relationship between prostitution and the masquerade in the eighteenth-century."¹⁷ The masked assembly was often viewed as an emblem of moral corruption by its detractors. Curiously, the degeneration seems to have concerned women, above all, in the eyes of the masquerade opponents. For instance, Gillian Russell quotes an article criticising the urban pleasures among which the masquerade is accounted, calling these "walks of dissipation" and claiming that "women were particularly susceptible to these pleasures."¹⁸

Another option when seeking entertainment was the attending of a masquerade in an 'a la mode' Carlisle Mansion in Soho Square owned by Madame Cornelys, a courtesan born in Venice or Vienna, Casanova's lover, a soprano singer and an entrepreneur, who organized immensely popular gatherings with card games, dancing, illegal concerts and exceptionally lavish masked assemblies in sumptuously furnished and richly decorated rooms. She herself and the masquerades are mentioned in the texts by several of her contemporaries such as Tobias Smollett, William Thackeray, Charles Dickens or Frances Burney. Laurence Sterne called a visit to Mrs Cornelys' "the best assembly and the best concert I ever had the honour to

¹⁶ Elizabeth Hunt, "A Carnival of Mirrors: The Grotesque Body of the Eighteenth-Century British Masquerade," *Lewd and Notorious*, ed. Katherine Kittredge (Michigan University Press: 2003) 91.

¹⁷ Sophie Carter, "This Female Proteus: Representing Prostitution and Masquerade in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture," *Oxford Art Journal* Vol. 22, No. 1, (1999) Oxford University Press, 59. J-STOR. 20. 12. 2007.

¹⁸ Gillian Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in the Georgian London* (CUP: 2007) 1.

be at."¹⁹ Even the Prince of Monaco, the King of Denmark and the peers used to be invited to the celebrations.²⁰ Therefore, once again, according to its being reflected in writing, it is possible to state that the masquerade was accepted rather ambiguously-as a sign of cultural and moral decay or, on the contrary, as a highly recommendable form of amusement frequented even by significant authors and by the members of aristocracy and even royalty.

Of course, it was not only in the works of fiction, but also in the newspapers, where masquerades occupied a significant position. The notes about the masked assemblies thus suggested what was happening in the society; they mirrored the overall ambience of the era. According to Terry Castle, "In the second half of the century, the newspapers ran columns of 'masquerade intelligence,' lengthy descriptions of particularly elegant masquerades...which are juxtaposed quite unself-consciously to reports of troop movements, Parliamentary sessions, and other more sombre public doings."²¹ Thus, beside other issues concerning politics, religion and manners, *The Spectator*, for instance, features a letter where the masquerades are given an equal importance even if they are disapproved of and viewed as the decline of piety and morality in general. The complaint reads:

Sir,...I have thoroughly examined the Present State of Religion in Great-Britain, and am able to acquaint you with the predominant Vice of every Market Town in the whole Island. ..I must let you know [of] certain irregular Assembly...I mean the Midnight Masque, which has of late been frequently held in one of the most conspicuous Parts of the Town...and I hope you will take effectual Methods to prevent such a promiscuous Multitude of both Sexes from meeting together in such a clandestine a Manner.²²

¹⁹ Teresa Cornelys. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theresa_Cornelys. 3.7. 2011

²⁰ Teresa Cornelys. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theresa_Cornelys. 3.7. 2011

²¹ Castle, Masquerade and Civilisation 3.

²² The Spectator. No. 8, March 9, 1711, <http://tabula.rutgers.edu/spectator/about.html>. 11. 5. 2008

Nevertheless, the occasion is then depicted in fine detail revealing that the annoyed observer must have looked at the gathering for a considerable time and Addison, in a similar manner, publishes such passages believing that he would "give the Reader as good an Entertainment as any that I am able to furnish [him] with, and therefore shall make no Apology for them," plus adding that "I design to visit the next masquerade myself."²³ What seems to be shown is the overt proclamation of purity and order and the covert desire for its disruption. Thus, it is feasible to imagine the masked gathering as a phenomenon accompanying and echoing the developments, declared or undercurrent, of the ethical, socio-political and cultural-literary spheres. Also, due to its influence, the masked assembly could be seen as an important constituent of life of the eighteenth century England which is proved by the fact that it incited so much criticism but also interest and curiosity.

Moreover, the newspaper articles and complaints concerning the masquerades show another facet of the society: they expose the stereotypes of dominance. For instance, another part of the outraged response to the women in masks declares: "As all the members of this lawless Assembly are masqued, we dare not attack any of them in *our Way*..."²⁴ Therefore, the male power and authority, seemingly unquestionable in the eighteenth century, is impossible to exercise in this case. The patriarchal image of a woman as a mother, wife or virgin, as a mere matter formed according to the male view or as a "obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies,"²⁵ as a meagre object denied any intellectual capacity and emotional processes of its own, as it is expressed, for example, in the writing of Irigaray, fails here as the masqueraders can assume any role and image they wish. Or, in Foucaultian terms, the concealed gaze of the authority and the resulting self-discrimination has no power when the masquerade comes into question due to its resistance to any control and application of norms

²³ The Spectator. No. 8, March 9, 1711, <http://tabula.rutgers.edu/spectator/about.html>. 11. 5. 2008

²⁴ The Spectator. No. 8, March 9, 1711, <http://tabula.rutgers.edu/spectator/about.html>. 11. 5. 2008

²⁵ Luce Irigaray, The Sex Which Is Not One, trans. C. Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) 25.

of adequate conduct²⁶ as the scrutinized object is actually not plainly visible due to the disguise and the overall chaos of the masquerade and also because the "supervisor" is himself also the object of the gaze. Moreover, the onlooker's bewilderment may be the result of the disappointment of his usual expectation of the female demeanor. As it is expressed in Simone de Beauvoir's theory, women might act according to the way men gaze at them to present themselves as the objects of their desire.²⁷ However, such conduct is unnecessary here; the masked women do not have to parade themselves in this way to attract male attention. Again, because of the power of the carnivalesque metamorphosis this method of influence is not effective in this instance and the masquerade attendants perform according to their own yearnings.

Moreover, yet another letter published in the newspaper suggests a certain helplessness and passivity (expressed also grammatically) of the male correspondent incited by the masquerade:

Some Time in *February* last I went to the Tuesday's *Masquerade*. Upon my going in I was attacked by half a Dozen female Quakers, who seemed willing to adopt me for a Brother; but, upon a nearer Examination, I found they were a Sisterhood of Coquets. I was soon after taken out to dance, and as I fancied, by a Woman of the first Quality...as soon as the minuet was over, we ogled one another through our Masques...My heart danced in Raptures; but...I have since heard that this fine Lady does not live far from the *Covent Garden*, and that I am not the first Cully whom she has passed herself upon for a Countess.²⁸

Thus, it can be argued that what occurs here is the blurring of the class distinction. Also, and perhaps more importantly, a reversal of roles can be detected in the commentary. It is not only

²⁶ Michel Foucault. *Wikipedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault 14. 5. 2012

²⁷ Simone de Beauvoir. <http://www.stumptuous.com/comps/debeauvoir.html> 25. 5. 2012

²⁸ *The Spectator*. No. 8, March 9, 1711, <http://tabula.rutgers.edu/spectator/about.html>. 11. 5. 2008

an objection to the corruption of particularly female morals as envisaged by men but also an expression of confusion, anxiety or even fear of losing manhood, agency and power which was incited by the mask the women donned together with their altered behaviour. Clearly, the visitor had been made to feel threatened and foolish by the "weaker" sex. His authority and the proclaimed male predisposition to activity appear to have been undermined by the subversive drive of the masquerade and the supremacy it lent to the female attendants for a moment.

Perhaps, it is also feasible to imagine the masked women's comportment as copying the male behaviour in the every day life of the society of the eighteenth century. The "masks" perform the accustomed "activities" but with the usual and conventional sides reversed revealing thus the artificiality of the codes of gender and manners. In this way, the masked dance can function as a seditious element. As Judith Butler claims: "actions...that echo prior actions... accumulate the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices"²⁹ and the masquerade can be viewed as a space making such re-enactment possible.

Women were certainly exposed to the same peril, even an arguably greater one, when in the company of masked men. They could be robbed, beaten up or raped, they could get pregnant and they were much more likely to lose their respectability and social position when caught having masquerade affairs. However, what were women primarily warned against was the breach of decorum and the abandonment of a 'proper' feminine behaviour: adherence to one's class manners, coyness and delicacy. For example in Haywood's *The Female Spectator*, it is written that:

²⁹ Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex 225-227.

In these mercenary entertainments, the most abandoned rake, or low bread fellow, who has wherewithal to purchase a ticket, may take the liberty of uttering the grossest thing to in the chastest ear...But, besides being subjected to the insults of every pert coxcomb...I wonder ladies can reflect what creatures of their own sex they vouchsafe to blend with in these promiscuous assemblies, without blushing.³⁰

Also, what seems rather peculiar is that Haywood forbids men to take their wives and sisters to the balls but not, as one would expect, because of the possible dangers 'waiting' for the females there. On the contrary, she writes that the poor gentlemen might experience difficulties if their mistresses and wives meet at the masquerade.³¹ Men were allowed to entertain themselves but the female presence at the masked parties was the metaphor of infidelity. Therefore, "the same double standards operating in the eighteenth century English culture about male and female sexuality translated into the discourse of those opposed to the masquerade. Although female attendance at the masquerade was viewed as a criminal offence... male attendance was more or less tolerated by the critics of the masked balls."³² Hence the misbalance in the newspaper comments: the women were not to go but not exactly for their own sake. They were seen as shaming their partners and viewed as dangerous to the patriarchal codes when partaking in the masquerade. The aspects the newspaper articles imply: criticism but also interest in the balls in masks, power struggle between the sexes and the double standards, reversal of roles and danger are also a part of the works of fiction.

Apart from the anti-masquerade moods incited by the event's real or imagined threats, it was also its seemingly non-English character that caused the outcry. The masked assembly was viewed as cultural disease spreading from France and Italy and making the English

³⁰ Eliza Fowler Haywood, *The Female Spectator* Vol. 3, fifth edition, book 1, 39. (T. Gardner: London, 1755) http://books.google.cz/books/about/The_female_spectator.html. 3. 6. 2012

³¹ *The Female Spectator* 38.

³² The Anti-Masquerade Movement. http://www.umich.edu/~ece/student_projects/masquerade/anti.html. 3. 6. 2012

society licentious and effeminate.³³ The masquerade's urban vogue image appeared to mirror the carnival celebrations of Venice and the other European cities. Nevertheless, the assemblies were rather a mixture of a variety of cultural elements. It is possible to understand the jamborees as a continuation, albeit transformed, of the seventeenth century theatre masks and even of the carnival of the Renaissance and the medieval times, of the town square gatherings or mock-religious street processions and even the rural celebrations of fertility and death or the turn of the seasons, which were a ubiquitous part of the traditional cultural customs in England.

In the early seventeenth century there were so called 'masques' staged at court, created especially by Inigo Jones, Ben Jonson and Chapman, Beaumont and Middleton. These were musical and dramatic performances accompanied by a satirical anti-mask, which themselves again developed from the medieval masquerade and were highly popular in their theatricalized and refined form.³⁴ However, such royal festivities were recorded even earlier. For example, an article in the *New York Times* published in 1875, attempting to trace the origins of the masked assemblies claims that "Under HENRY VIII. there were masquerades in the [high] English society."³⁵ The public masked gathering of the eighteenth century is then described in the newspaper comment as the remnant of these theatrical celebrations although degenerate and improper as also the lower classes were present and the event was beyond control.³⁶

Nonetheless, it should be admitted that the link between the eighteenth century masquerade and the court masques remains unclear. Castle disagrees with this notion of

³³ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 7-8.

³⁴ Zdeněk Stříbrný, *Dějiny anglické literatury I* (Praha: Academia, 1987) 214-215.

³⁵ Masquerades. *NYT*. http://spiderbites.nytimes.com/free_1875/articles_1875_02_00001.html 4. 8. 2012

³⁶ Masquerades. *NYT*. http://spiderbites.nytimes.com/free_1875/articles_1875_02_00001.html 4. 8. 2012

origin: "Such aristocratic fantasia-the elaborate allegorical productions...probably had little direct impact on the popular resurgence of carnivalesque behaviour in the eighteenth century."³⁷ She sees the masked gatherings as a return to the folk rituals and the carnival. It is true that dancing in costumes, disguise, e.g. such as the blackening of one's face, cross-dressing, the expression of the normally hidden drives and desires, the rule of misrule, the deferral of the standard state and the obscuring of limits can already be discovered, for instance, in the Furry Dance, the Milkmaid's dance, the Morris dances, the Hobby Horse processions, mumming and the May Pole rituals and customs.³⁸ Also, it seems that the 'modern' nocturnal meetings in masks fulfilled the function of emotional relief. The gatherings represented an escape from the real and often complicated or constrained existence of the people of the eighteenth century and the cathartic festivals of reversal had the same significance for the pagan, medieval or the Renaissance people.

The traditional public carnival was actually a 'summary' of the folk festivals. According to Bakhtin, it was the "mobilization of all the celebrations: the gay farewell to winter, to Lent, to the old year, to death; And the gay welcome of spring, to Shrovetide, to the slaughtering of cattle, to weddings, and to the new year....It was the mustering of all the long matured images of change renewal, of growth and abundance."³⁹ Also, during the carnival, the poorer classes were permitted to dress as royalty and the members of the church or to adopt any identity of their fancy. It was an occasion allowing the unprivileged to scorn their rulers, to perform a crude, exaggerated, satirical and threatening display of their pomp. As it is noted in *Rabelais and His World*, "Carnival festivities...mimicked serious rituals...and offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world,

³⁷ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 18-19.

³⁸ Allisa Sorenson, "Dance in the Northern Tradition," <http://www.friggasweb.org/dancetxt.html>, 6.2.2012. 4-9.

³⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 99.

of man and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom."⁴⁰ Furthermore, the carnival had a deeper philosophical meaning. It was also a time when it was possible to derisively laugh at all the hardships of life. The feast was a hilarious show of terrors, which were, according to Bakhtin, "defeated by laughter...and turned into something gay and comic."⁴¹ Thus, a variety of limiting elements were ridiculed, degraded, exposed as false and subverted during the festivity.⁴²

Like their predecessor, the carnival, not only a time of merriment but a defiant rite in fact, the masked assemblies, according to *Eros and Liberty at the English Masquerade*, "represented a kind of institutionalized disorder, one that served both as a voluptuous release from ordinary cultural prescriptions and as a stylized comment upon them."⁴³ The masquerade theme can have a similar function in literature. The scenes seem to bring the carnival spirit into the works. Castle sees the masquerade topic as: "at once diverting and threatening to the implicit taxonomies of the fictional world...and functioning as a discontinuous, estranging, sometimes even hallucinatory event that nonetheless carried with it a powerfully cathartic and disruptive cognitive éclat."⁴⁴

However, although perhaps connected to the festive roots and bearing some of their richness and glee, as it can be glimpsed from the textual sources, the eighteenth century metropolitan and commercial masquerade nevertheless lacks several of their meanings; it is a different social occasion. All the same, what remains preserved is the atmosphere of the unofficial and the subversive, the gay, grotesque but also dangerous, the sexual and the

⁴⁰ Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 5-6.

⁴¹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 39.

⁴² Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 1-58.

⁴³ Terry Castle, "Eros and Liberty at the English Masquerade, 1710-90," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 17, No. 2. (Winter, 1983-1984), 157. J-STORE. 14. 12. 2007.

⁴⁴ Castle, *The Carnivalization of Eighteenth-Century English Narrative* 913.

mysterious and the possibility of metamorphoses, it is still feasible to speak of the air of the reordering of social hierarchy and of freedom behind a mask and costume, and that especially for the female attendants.

In addition, to return to the differences between the masked assemblies of the eighteenth century and the carnival, according to Castle, the masquerade, rather than a community gathering, was in fact a comment on individuality and identity: "From basically simple violations of the sartorial code - the conventional symbolic connections between identity and the trappings of identity - masquerades developed scenes of vertiginous existential recombination. New bodies were superimposed over old; anarchic, theatrical selves displaced supposedly essential ones; masks or personae, obscured persons."⁴⁵ Therefore, the masquerade can be imagined as a special space, where the pragmatic, secular, empirical and scientific attempts at the study of man and the self of the eighteenth century, e.g. the notion of man as a sensible programmed creature concentrating on the self that was one and unique,⁴⁶ were symbolically questioned by the event's impossible to exactly determine, changeable and fantastic, myth-like nature including a playful array of identities.

Moreover, the masquerade with its cross-dressing and the blurring of boundaries can be seen as the site of parody and mimicry or as the means of the assertion of resistance and liberation. The literary masquerade scenes, the characters and even the texts as a whole can be viewed also through the lens of Luce Irigaray's and Judith Butler's theories. Irigaray, although she appears, similarly to Freud, to base her arguments on the bodily differences when writing about her concept of the female position and discourse, is in fact also using the strategy of mimesis, repetition and parody in her writing. According to Ping Xu, "By elaborating the

⁴⁵ Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilization 4.

⁴⁶ Roy Porter, The Enlightenment-Studies in European History (London: Macmillan, 2001) 11-21.

seemingly essentialist "facts" of female sexual specificity covered up by phallogocentric discourse in order to maintain its selfsame system, Irigaray is in fact mimicking the discourse that has always been fabricating essentialist and "sexed" "facts" and "truth" about female (as well as male) sexuality.⁴⁷ Thus, *This Sex Which Is Not One* penned using the strategy of mimicry, is on the one hand attacking the phallogocentric language and its representation of women and it is also enabling its author to prevent being absorbed by it.⁴⁸ The literary works which shall be explored in this diploma paper might also be described as, according to Susan Crane, not only representing "the dominant cultural versions of gender but also what those versions suppress and what might resist them,"⁴⁹ and their female characters may be seen as adopting the mimetic strategies. They are intentionally performing the standard femininity of the male discourse to diminish its domination and to expose its concealed schemes.

According to Butler, gender is non-existent, it is only a construct, artificially produced binary oppositions, created by the reiteration or re-enacting of the heterosexual norm and thus, it is merely performative. Also, as a constructed category, gender can be doubted and ridiculed by a repetition that is exaggerated, similar to but not exactly the same as the norm of the heterosexual concept. To support her argument, she quotes Lacan who claims that a woman is merely the lack and therefore also the affirmation of the phallus which is then imagined as the sign of the norm, power and the universal reference. What follows is the assertion that the "typical" or the "expected" behaviour of women amounts in fact to comedy as they are forced to perform a masquerade, to 'play on appearances.'⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Butler, dismissing the category of the female gender altogether, sees such masquerade in several ways. She asks: "Does it serve primarily to conceal or repress a pre-given femininity..or is

⁴⁷ Ping Xu, "Irigaray's Mimicry and the Problem of Essentialism," *Hypatia* Vol. 10, No. 6 (Autumn, 1995) 47-48

⁴⁸ Ping Xu, 79. J-STOR. 21. 2. 2012.

⁴⁹ Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Princeton University Press: 1994) 57.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble-Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 47.

masquerade the means by which femininity itself is established?"⁵¹ What she suggests in *Gender Trouble*, for instance, is the parodical representation of gender, the performance of the category marked by excess and therefore exposing the limitations and falseness of the concept as such and its social impact of constraint as well. Butler, for instance, states: "The notion of an original or primary gender identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, or an uncritical appropriation of sex-role stereotyping from within the practice of heterosexuality..."⁵² The elements of such performance can also be found in the literary works and Butler's method might be adopted in their study.

According to Mary Ann Schofield, the behaviour of mimicry and the performance of a parodic and subversive gender masquerade is typical especially for women who use these strategies to assert themselves in the society.⁵³ The reason why such conduct has been needed is perhaps also the female status in the world principally defined by men. As Porter states about the eighteenth century, "The basic assumption governing relations between the sexes, underpinning the attitudes and institutions, and backed ultimately by law, was that men and women were naturally different in capacity, and so ought to play distinct social roles. Anatomy determined destiny....Men were intended...to excel in reason, business, action; women's forte lay in being submissive, modest, docile, virtuous, maternal and domestic."⁵⁴

Moreover, the eighteenth century philosophers believed that reason would lead to emancipation. However, their ideals were often not put into practice. According to the studies of the era, "The thinkers of the early Enlightenment were preoccupied with finding ways to check despotism. Locke championed constitutional government, arguing that all legitimate

⁵¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble* 47-48

⁵² Butler, *Gender Trouble* 137.

⁵³ Mary Ann Schofield, *Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind: Disguising Romances in Feminine Fiction, 1713-1799* (London: Associated University Press, 1990) 23.

⁵⁴ Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* 23.

authority was circumscribed by the laws of nature and derived from the consent of the governed...however, he never envisaged political rights for women."⁵⁵ Furthermore, women not only had a limited access to political and legal power but also the possibility for them to own or sell property was rare. In fact, it was usual that the daughter or wife and even her children, not to mention her chance earnings, were considered to be the possessions of the husband and father.⁵⁶ Also, in spite of the 'tabula rasa' idea, which could suggest that the education of both sexes should be identical, girls commonly received much less learning than boys. As Schofield again notes, women's education, if any at all, was rather poor. Young females learned only the basics; they were rather brought up to amuse and to decorate.⁵⁷ As a result of these social conditions, the position of women can be described as dependent on and inferior to men.

Nevertheless, in spite of the situation referred to above, in the eighteenth century women became gradually more involved in the world of politics and culture. For instance, as Tedra Ossel argues, "[the] Enlightenment salons and other 'voluntary associations,' like the Bluestockings circle, freed women from traditional family structures into a more broadly public role."⁵⁸ They began to write newspapers and to publish translations, didactic texts, poetry, travelogues, and reviews, etc. They also worked as actresses and dramatists.⁵⁹ The way to acceptance by the critics and audiences, male and even sometimes female, was difficult but that was also to begin to slowly change during the epoch.

⁵⁵ Porter, Enlightenment-Studies in European History 27.

⁵⁶ Porter, English Society in the Eighteenth Century 24.

⁵⁷ Schofield, 19.

⁵⁸ Tedra Ossel, "Tatling Women in the Public Sphere," Eighteenth-Century Studies, Vol. 38, No. 2, 2005. Pp. 283-300. Project MUSE. 23. 5. 2012.

⁵⁹ Turner, 107-126.

For instance, one of the most notable personalities of the turn of the century and an important predecessor of female authors: Aphra Behn (1640-1689) was, according to Melinda Finberg, "the first woman in England to earn her living through her writing."⁶⁰ She worked as a spy and receiving no payment for her work from the king Charles II., she was sentenced to imprisonment for debts. After she had been released, Behn started to support herself as a writer, translator and a dramatist.⁶¹ Behn became a well-known public figure, she "was a staunch and active Tory all her life and wrote a political propaganda...Behn was also an outspoken proponent of sexual freedom for women and...she became a complicated model for the women playwrights who followed her."⁶² The problematical character of her legacy lies in the fact that Behn, although a skilful writer, was often criticized for immorality and, as Finberg again notes, "many of these moralists objected especially to women writers and exploited Behn's personal and literary licentiousness as examples of what could be expected from a woman let loose in a public forum of the theatre."⁶³ Nevertheless, later on in the following century, there was a number of female dramatists who gained commendation. For example, Elizabeth Inchbald, who will be discussed here mainly as a prose writer, in spite of some initial difficulties and lack of interest, became so popular that she was able to earn six hundred pounds for a single play.⁶⁴

Moreover, according to Turner, there was a significant rise in the number of female professional authors of novels. Due to the influence of factors such as the improvement of transport, growing affluence and less house work,⁶⁵ especially the upper and middleclass women became allowed to write and to read much more than before. The poorer classes,

⁶⁰ Michael Corder and Melinda Finberg, eds. Eighteenth-Century Women Dramatists (OUP: 2001) ix.

⁶¹ Finberg, ix-x.

⁶² Finberg, ix-x.

⁶³ Finberg, x.

⁶⁴ Turner, 124-125.

⁶⁵ Porter, English Society in the Eighteenth Century 223-226.

however, could also obtain books because of the spread of circulating libraries. Furthermore, female writers became more appreciated and their readership, including male readers, grew.⁶⁶ As Turner again says: "The reception given to woman's fiction changed during the eighteenth century as the public persona of female writers altered, and as their literary status was influenced by both the highly regarded work of writers like Fielding, Lennox, Burney, Reeve, Smith, and Radcliff...Women were among the most respected of contemporary novelists, and engaged in the new commercially driven 'manufacture' of words."⁶⁷ Naturally, their careers were varied; nevertheless, it can be asserted that the women authors succeeded in gaining certain acclaim and in leaving a rich bequest of literary tradition for their followers.

⁶⁶ Turner, 13-17.

⁶⁷ Turner, 127.

Chapter I

1.1 Biographies

As an example, the lives and pursuits of Hannah Cowley, Eliza Heywood and Elizabeth Inchbald might be briefly described in the introductory part of this paper. Hannah Parkhouse Cowley (14 March 1743-11 March 1809), a poet and a dramatist whose plays were chiefly concerned with marriage and women setting out to try to win over the various forms of discrimination enforced on them by the combination of the familial and societal habits. She came from an educated book selling family and was supported by her father and later by her husband, Thomas Cowley, a Stamp Office employee and a journalist, in her writing.⁶⁸ Her first play, the *Runaway* (1766), which she sent to the well-known actor, playwright, drama manager and also Cowley's mentor David Garrick, was a great success in his Drury Lane theatre. Nevertheless, after his retirement and under the management of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who was more interested in staging his own dramatic pieces and who was rather unwilling to produce the plays of female playwrights, Cowley's earnings and the frequency of her appearance in the theatre, in spite of her just claims and protests, grew lesser. She wrote another comedy, however, entitled *Who's the Dupe* in 1779. Unfortunately, the play was again mismanaged by Sheridan.⁶⁹ Cowley attempted to organize the staging of another of her pieces, the tragedy *Albina* (1779) in the Drury Lane's rival theatre, the Covent Garden, but with no better result. Moreover, because of this play, Cowley got engaged in a public controversy with another dramatist, Hannah More, who probably copied Cowley's play.

Despite the complications, Cowley remained writing and in 1780, the playwright wrote her most highly praised and well-accepted comedy *The Belle's Stratagem*, which was

⁶⁸ Hannah Cowley. Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah_Cowley 2. 4. 2012.

⁶⁹ Finberg, ed., Eighteenth-Century Women Dramatists xl.

performed one hundred and eighteen times in London before 1800. This play also meant a considerable rise in the family's income.⁷⁰ Another controversy followed when Cowley adopted Behn's comedy *The Lucky Chance* (1686) when writing *A School for Greybeards* (1786). The play was considered scandalous and Cowley was compelled to re-write the piece. The criticism was most probably gender-based and prejudiced. The same as Behn and also Susanna Centlivre, Cowley was attacked for overstepping the border of female decency.⁷¹ Nevertheless, she defended herself in the preface. As the theatrical taste changed and farces became demanded by the theatre managers and the audiences, Cowley ended her professional career. As Finberg holds, she may have been "wearied of the constant necessity of defending [her] talent, but [she] produced some of the century's best and most enduring comedies."⁷² She died in 1809.⁷³ *The Belle's Stratagem* remains her triumph and as the women authors are becoming a part of the literary cannon in recent decades, gaining critical and public attention, Hannah Cowley gets described as one of the most significant playwrights of the late eighteenth century whose "skill in writing fluid, sparkling dialogue and creating a spritely, memorable comic characters compares favourably with her better-known contemporaries, Goldsmith and Sheridan, as well as with her Restoration and Augustan models, Behn, Congreve, Centlivre and Farquar."⁷⁴ The above-mentioned play will be dealt with in the first chapter of the thesis.

Eliza Haywood, born Elizabeth Fowler, was an immensely prolific and popular writer engaging in a variety of genres and her contribution to the eighteenth century literary canon is one of the most significant. For instance, Reverend James Sterling, a poet and a critic, writing a dedicatory poem to her *Secret Histories, Novels, and Poems* (1742) recognized her as one of

⁷⁰ Hannah Cowley. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah_Cowley 2. 4. 2012.

⁷¹ Finberg, xxi.

⁷² Finberg, xxi.

⁷³ Finberg, xl-xlii.

⁷⁴ Finberg, xxxv-xxxvi.

the most important authors of that time: "Pathetic Behn, or Manly's great Name;/ Forget their Sex, and own when Haywood writ,/ She clos'd the Fair triumvirate of Wit."⁷⁵ Despite her fame, Haywood's biographical data remain mostly unknown. She was most probably born in Shropshire in 1693. The earlier assumption that her father was a shopkeeper and lived in London has been refuted by later critical research.⁷⁶ For instance, Christine Blouch argues that Haywood's family were the Fowlers of Harnage Grange, members of gentry, and thus Haywood was able to receive a relatively extensive education including the classics and history. Also, Blouch disagrees with the former claim that Haywood wedded an old clergyman and later escaped from him. Haywood was married but to whom is still unknown. Also, there is no evidence that she was not separated or widowed.⁷⁷ She had two children, one with William Hatchet, a bookseller who was the co-author of some of Haywood's theatre adaptations, the other-her first one- with the poet Richard Savage, who was probably on amicable terms with Alexander Pope⁷⁸ who attacked her rather viciously in *The Dunciad* where in addition to calling her a hack writer a comparing her visage to a cow, he also wrote: "See in the circle next, Eliza plac'd;/ Two babes of love close clinging to her waste;/ Fair as before her work she stands confess'd;/ In flow'r'd brocade by bounteous Kirkall dress'd."⁷⁹ In spite of such criticism, Haywood had a noteworthy professional career. She was an actress, wrote for the theatre, she was also a romance writer, novelist, journalist and an essayist who succeeded in supporting herself and her children by her skill against the odds.

Haywood wrote her first work of fiction in 1719. The themes of her texts were mainly concerned with the female position in the society and especially with education and marriage.

⁷⁵ The Fair Triumvirate of Wit. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_fair_triumvirate_of_wit. 8. 4. 2012

⁷⁶ Eliza Haywood. <http://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-FI-Ka/Haywood-Eliza.html>. 8. 4. 2012

⁷⁷ Kathleen B. Grathwol, "A Questioning of 'Truths' Universally Acknowledged: Gender and Literary Value in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 36, No 1, Fall 2002, pp. 138-144. Project MUSE. 30. 5. 2008.

⁷⁸ Eliza Haywood. <http://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-FI-Ka/Haywood-Eliza.html>. 8. 4. 2012

⁷⁹ Grathwol, 140.

The opinion on wedlock varies, in the early novels it is seen rather as a trap or trick, in the later ones, however, it is viewed as a beneficial institution. Haywood can be marked as controversial. For instance, *Love in Excess; or the Fatal Enquiry* (1719-1720) is one of the earliest romance novels including the topic of a woman with a damaged reputation in printed English literature. Also written in this genre is another novel *Fantomima; or Love in a Maze* (1724) in which the female protagonist seduces a man in four different disguises always changing her behaviour to fulfil his anticipations while in fact enjoying herself and exerting her power.⁸⁰ Haywood wrote *The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity*, a work which will be analyzed in greater detail in the second chapter, in the same year.

Haywood's works should not be seen, however, as centring on romance solely. She was concerned with politics and female education, too. For example, she wrote *The Adventures of Eovaii: A Pre-Adamitical History* (1736) which was a satirical text focusing on Robert Walpole. Furthermore, in 1744 Haywood began publishing her own periodical *The Female Spectator*, the first magazine for women, becoming thus "one of the first agony aunts in British periodical literature,"⁸¹ providing her target group of readers with advice on love and life. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Haywood seems to have adopted contradictory stances and as well as calling for a better education and rights for women, she was also capable of "unflinching realism and common-sense urgings to women to work within the existing patriarchal...system"⁸² professing domesticity⁸³ and this phenomenon becomes arguably more pronounced in the newspaper.

⁸⁰ Eliza Haywood. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eliza_Haywood. 2. 4. 2012

⁸¹ Soňa Nováková, "'Dear Female Sage': Eliza Haywood's *Female Spectator* as a Magazine for Women," *The Tongue is an Eye-Studies Represented to Libuše Dušková* (Charles University: Prague, 2000) 44.

⁸² Grathwol, 141.

⁸³ Nováková, 51.

In 1751 Haywood wrote *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, one of her most admired novels which marked the development of her as a novelist and of the genre as such. The work can still be placed within the category of romance, nonetheless, according to Schofield, "it is a romance that is studied, examined, and thoroughly analyzed."⁸⁴ Betsy evolves from an immature, injudicious girl into a more experienced and wiser woman as she refuses flirtatious suitors, leaves one unhappy marriage and finds a man she has been in love with to finally enjoy a good partnership. Her life can then serve as an educational example for the readers of the novel. As Schofield contends, the protagonist has to leave her practice of adopting physical and also emotional masks, the masquerade she implements when dealing with men and when hiding her genuine, often revolutionary ideas (which are later abandoned, nevertheless, still present in the work functioning perhaps subversively), to be able to settle with Truworth.⁸⁵ The novel is said to be the predecessor of other later marriage novels by Austen and the Bronte sisters.⁸⁶ Clearly, Haywood's was an important role in the establishing of the woman writers tradition. She died in 1756 in London.

Elizabeth Simpson Inchbald was born on the fifteenth of October at Standingfield, Suffolk in 1753. Her parents were Catholics and prospering farmers who were interested in literature and theatre. She was educated at home. There is evidence that she was very intelligent. Annibel Jenkins, the author of Inchbald's biography, quoting from her (Inchbald's) pocket diary, writes: "My brother went to school for seven years, and never could spell. I and two of my sisters, though we never were taught, could spell from our infancy."⁸⁷ In 1772 she decided to become an actress and went to London although she suffered from a severe speech impediment. Getting started was difficult, in spite of the fact that she had already known some

⁸⁴ Schofield, 102.

⁸⁵ Schofield, 106.

⁸⁶ Eliza Haywood. <http://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-FI-Ka/Haywood-Eliza.html>. 8. 4. 2012

⁸⁷ Annibel Jenkins, *I'll Tell You What: The Life of Elizabeth Inchbald* (University Press Kentucky: 2003) 9.

of the actors as her brother also followed a theatrical career. For instance, when she was asking for an assignment, James Dodd, actor and manager, attempted to assault her sexually. Inchbald threw a pail of hot water in his face and escaped.⁸⁸ Later on she married Joseph Inchbald, an actor as well and the couple were engaged in several acting companies, touring Scotland and the North of England, which proved rather demanding. Inchbald continued acting even after her husband's death in order to gain her living. She, for instance, performed Lady Frances in Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* in 1780 and also the role of Hamlet (in benefit), then the most popular of Shakespeare's plays, in the same year. As Jenkins asserts, playing Hamlet was an "important statement of ...independence."⁸⁹ Her acting career was not extremely lucrative, nevertheless, this was to change when Inchbald finally moved to London and started writing.

She wrote and adapted twenty-two or perhaps even twenty-three comedies, sentimental dramas and farces, nineteen of which were performed in London theatres, the Covent Garden and The Haymarket. Her dramatic pieces were well known by the audiences and by other, even later authors, for instance, *Lover's Vows* (1789 adaptation from Augustus von Kotzebue, German playwright) found its way to Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Inchbald also proceeded to write theatre criticism and commentaries. Between 1806 and 1808, she published *Remarks*, the critiques of more than a hundred British plays and she was also asked to write contributions to *The British Theatre*, *The Modern Theatre* and to *A Collection of Farces and other Afterpieces*. According to Jenkins again, Inchbald finally became "the leading authority on drama in the last years of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth."⁹¹ Furthermore, Inchbald wrote two very successful polemical

⁸⁸ Jenkins, 2.

⁸⁹ Jenkins, 65.

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Inchbald. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Inchbald. 2. 4. 2012

⁹¹ Jenkins, 11.

novels in which she subverted several of the contemporary literary traditions and opinions on women. These were *Nature and Art* published in 1796 and *A Simple Story* in 1791. The latter will be analysed in the third chapter of this paper. Elizabeth Inchbald died in London in 1821.⁹²

In conclusion it might be said that the eighteenth century experienced important changes not only in the country's overall situation but also in the cultural and literary sphere. It was the time when female authors began to work as professionals, significantly contributing to the output of books, plays, essays and periodicals and gaining public approval and concern in spite of frequent contradictions. The aim of this thesis is to humbly contribute to the studies of the female authors of the eighteenth century who are still owed a greater critical attention, although the situation has much improved. The theme of masquerade, its connotations and influences shall be studied in the selected works of Cowley, Haywood and Inchbald in the three following chapters.

⁹² Jenkins, 3-78.

Chapter II.

Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*, a comedy conspicuous for its Restoration make-up combined with the late eighteenth century aspects of sensibility and early romanticism, points out the possibility of the self-assertion of women and the theatricality of manners. The play incorporates a carnivalesque gathering whose structural and thematic influences elaborately integrate the play's multiple topics. It reflects the restriction but also the power of disguise. In this way, the social pretence, the theatre, the cultural event of the masked soiree and the dramatic piece itself are all interconnected through the emblematic meanings of the masquerade scene.

The comedy was originally performed in *Covent Garden* in London in 1780. The theatre buildings underwent significant changes since the time of Restoration and these naturally affected the way the plays functioned on the stage. Finberg notes: "In the Restoration theatre, the proscenium was merely the frame that masked the stage curtain, separating the scene from the platform, or forestage...the scene and the platform together provided an extremely versatile playing space...capable of being used to propel actors forward into a more intimate relationship with the audience."⁹³ Therefore, it can be imagined that the actor-spectator and thus also the theatre-society relations were quite explicit. The manners shown on the stage mirrored and therefore either praised or ridiculed the real social conduct of the viewers. As Shepherd and Womack write: "The stage performance interacts with the life on view in the boxes, which themselves resemble little stages."⁹⁴

⁹³ Finberg, li.

⁹⁴ Simon Shepherd and Peter Womack, *English Drama, A Cultural History* (Blackwell Publishers: Oxford, 1996) 124.

However, by the middle of the eighteenth century, this close contact between the audience and the actors had been rendered more difficult. The front part of the stage gradually disappeared to make more space for the seats. Another possible influence causing the alterations was the then popular theory that the actor should be closer to the scenery in order for a convincing illusion to be produced in the play houses.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the loss of the frontal space was at least partly compensated for by the growing depth of the stage, which could be used for spectacular scenes. *The Belle's Stratagem* concentrates on the socio-theatrical interface while also utilising the deep stage as the comedy features not only private dialogues in various chambers but also street encounters, public auction, and, what is more important, the crowded masquerade scene which will be the main concern of this chapter and its textual analysis.

Also, the theatre as a cultural and social practice bore certain similarities to the masquerade ball. It was a place where the various strata of society gathered and where the lines between them were disrupted. The members of the Court, domestic servants, foreign visitors, middle classes, later on the entrepreneurs and so on, all visited one space. Moreover, theatre, according to its critics, such as Jeremy Collier, the author of *A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage* (1698), for instance, was seen similarly to the ball in masks as a site of sexual licence and profanity. The theatres, like the public masquerades, were the places of entertainment but also danger. For example, there are records of "serious attempts to ban masks from the auditorium"⁹⁶ to prevent any undesired and potentially harmful liaisons.⁹⁷ Collier's critique of the theatre could be applied to the masquerade, too: "The Lines of Virtue and Vice are struck out by nature in very legible distinctions...and they that endeavour to blot the Distinction, or rub out the Colours, or change

⁹⁵ Shepherd and Womack, 122-124.

⁹⁶ Shepherd and Womack, 127.

⁹⁷ Shepherd and Womack, 122-150.

the Marks, are extremely to blame."⁹⁸ Elizabeth Hunt, quoting Barbara Maria's Stafford's *Body Criticism* makes the connection between the masquerade and the theatre even more explicit: "Fashion, masquerade, theatre, cross-dressing, emphasized the total disagreement between seeming and being, the deliberately fabricated incongruity between exterior and interior."⁹⁹ What is conspicuous in *The Belle's Stratagem* is the fact that these two forms of entertainment are shown in a positive light and not as the symbols of the universal corruption, foolishness and deceit. On the contrary, their "mundus inversus"¹⁰⁰ aids in the uncovering, criticising and 'healing' of these vices.

Moreover, it is arguably also the masquerade scene what enables Cowley to shift the focus and emphasis of her dramatic piece and thus not only to create a mere adaptation of the Restoration comedy but also an original play. For instance, *Belle's Stratagem* seems to be less sexually explicit, of course sex is present but it is masked so to speak, the villain is perhaps rendered as a parody of the rakes as he is tricked himself because of disguise, and, most importantly, there is a greater highlighting of genuine feelings, which the scene also supports. The marriages are finally based on mutual love and respect rather than on one's desire to get rich, for example. In contrast to the Restoration cynical and witty satire, there is a more pronounced stress on relationships and one's personal worth. It could be said that the concentration on "the heart and soul...places Hannah Cowley squarely in her time as an early English Romantic."¹⁰¹ Clearly, *The Belle's Stratagem* is based on the older comedies but it is already a more modern play.

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, "Theatricality and Cosmopolitanism in Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*," *Comparative Drama* Vol. 35, No. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2001-02) 418.

⁹⁹ Hunt, 91.

¹⁰⁰ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization* 85.

¹⁰¹ Murray Biggs, "The Belle's Stratagem: Looking Before and After," *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research* Vol. 20, Iss. 1/2, Denver: Summer 2005, 45-56. <http://rectjournal.org>. 15. 7. 2007.

Nevertheless, the return to the inspiration of Restoration drama also had its reasons. The sensibility of the epoch and the gender-based demand for demureness in women was also something the playwright had to struggle against and the building upon the crude comedies arguably facilitated a possibility to "test the boundaries of decorous behaviour."¹⁰² Similarly, it is also the masquerade ball and its significance in the play what aids in the expression of the disagreement with the criticism targeted at the female dramatists. The scene with the nocturnal party works especially as a metaphor of the social masks and roles of women. Also, on a more symbolic plane, through her dramatic personae attending the masked ball, Cowley could express her own opinions concerning courtship, marriage and the female position in the society as a whole. To use Finberg's phrase, the masquerade scene in particular makes Cowley "able to emerge from behind her masks and veils"¹⁰³ and celebrate the complexity and agency of her female characters.

Furthermore, although Cowley wrote in the era celebrating sentiments, awe-inspiring, sublime nature or the simplicity and limpidness of the country, the city scenery usually connected with the aristocratic Restoration theatre has an important role in her work. It is not only tightly connected to the masquerade as its usual topos but also, as the concept of setting can "symbolise social groupings or cultural allegiances...and place constraints on or allow freedom in behaviour,"¹⁰⁴ the urban environment is suggestive of the main themes. In Cowley's play it is the space, although perhaps perilous and impure, where the female characters can come out into the public and where their self-affirmation takes place, it is here where they lose their naivety and gain their own position in the society.

¹⁰² Finberg, xxxix.

¹⁰³ Finberg, xlvii.

¹⁰⁴ Michael G. Ketcham, "Setting and Self-Presentation in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol. 23, No. 3, *Restoration and Eighteenth Century* (Summer, 1983) 399. J-STOR. 2. 7. 2012.

Moreover, as the women authors started to publish their plays, there was the need for them to find their own models. In the late eighteenth century "the tradition of female writing for the stage had become well established for female playwrights to look to their female predecessors for inspiration."¹⁰⁵ Cowley, however, did not only use the example of Behn, but also possibly the one of Wycherly and Farquhar.¹⁰⁶ *The Belle's Stratagem* in accordance to its accent on the merging of acting and 'genuine' personality or of actors and 'real people' also abounds in deliberate theatrical and meta-theatrical references to her precursors and even contemporaries. There are direct allusions to Cervantes, Shakespeare, Swift and Sheridan, for instance. Nevertheless, the connection to Farquhar is one of the most obvious. His play *The Beaux's Stratagem* (1707) serves as the foundation which could be seen as the starting point of the attainment of the female playwright's aims.

Cowley's version, as the title suggests, is focused on women rather than on men. Also, the characters are fewer and they gain more 'depth.' There are structural differences, too. The one concerning the masquerade scene's function is the separation and limited number of plots. Jack DeRochi in *Re-Ordering a Formative Hierarchy: Hannah Cowley's Comedy of Manners* compares the play in question the Farquhar's, he writes: "Farquhar's play is built upon a collection of plots ...innumerable, intertwined stories."¹⁰⁷ In contrast to this multiplicity of narrative lines, *The Belle's Stratagem* basically has only a twofold structure. There is the story of Letitia Hardy and Doricourt and the story of Lady Frances and Sir George Touchwood. The plots stand on their own; in spite of several thematic similarities, they do not necessarily have to be interconnected during the play. In fact, to a high degree, they are separated.

¹⁰⁵ Finberg, xxxix.

¹⁰⁶ Finberg, xliii.

¹⁰⁷ Jack DeRochi, "Re-Ordering a Formative Hierarchy: Hannah Cowley's Comedies of Manners," Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research Vol. 20, Iss. 1/2, Denver: Summer 2005, 1-15. Literature Online. 6. 4. 2008.

The first Act introduces Letitia and her father Mr. Hardy. The lady meets her future husband. The marriage was organized when the couple were still in their infancy. To her dismay the woman realises that Doricourt, her fiancé, is not overly attracted to her. She develops a daring plan to change the situation. The second Act shows another couple. Lady Frances and Sir George Touchwood are already married; however, their relationship is under a strain as the husband loves too much and is burning with jealousy. Lady Frances disobeys his orders and ventures to the city to learn about its pleasures. The first part of the third Act is devoted to Letitia and her stratagem again; the second part of the Act shows Lady France's proceedings. The fifth Act presents the end of the Touchwood story and the whole play finishes with Letitia's Hardy success and the epilogue spoken probably by the actress playing the protagonist. Only in the fourth and fifth Acts, where the masquerade takes place, do all the characters meet on the stage. The scene becomes the "dramatic centre"¹⁰⁸ of the whole play without which the meaning of the two plotlines would not fully emerge.

Therefore, Lady Brilliant's masked ball facilitates the dénouement of the two narratives, it is "responsible" for the revelation of the characters' schemes and the changes of their personalities and relationships as it will be illustrated in more detail further on. Also, the older comedies of manners frequently utilised a strike of good fortune, a *deus ex machina*, for the unravelling of the plots.¹⁰⁹ Instead of this theatrical trope, Cowley's play employs the masquerade. It is the smartness of the characters and not some extraneous power what ensures a successful finale, however, the masquerade is a space where their actions are possible. The world up-side-down, the magical, carnival atmosphere, the masks, the humour and the danger of the ball all contribute to the final solution.

¹⁰⁸ Finberg, xlv

¹⁰⁹ DeRochi, 3

Nevertheless, it is even feasible to imagine that the whole play becomes carnivalised through the scene; the masquerade seems to permeate the drama right from the beginning, not just towards the end. The initial scenes can be already seen as bearing the traces of the festive meeting in disguise and gradually the play builds up towards the climax of the masquerade itself. However, even the aftermath is not free of the carnivalesque meanings. It is not merely the fourth Act and the fifth Act where masks appear and the role play becomes crucial. In the words of Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, it had been Cowley's intention to "foreground performance throughout her comedy."¹¹⁰ The characters "play" for most of the time. This play is doubled as there are actors embodying the characters who are pretending to be or to behave as someone else. The masquerade ball with its confused and shifting identities thus becomes a symbol of the whole of *The Belle's Stratagem* itself.

To sum up, the masquerade ball has a significant role in the play. The masked soiree emphasises and summarises the leading themes of the dramatic piece. The scene is the emblem of the society itself and also of the theatre. It enables Cowley to explore the relationships between these two entities. The scene suggests that the enactment of the social codes amounts in fact to putting on appearances: the putting on masks. Social behaviour is exposed as theatrical, as a variety of multiple roles one enacts in the company of others who function as the audience and who themselves also behave like actors. The diverse categories such as nationality, class, the distinction of education and even gender are shown to be performative. The question of true identity is posed by the scene. In fact, the play appears to ask whether such a thing as one genuine identity even exists. Both the theatre and the masquerade paradoxically by the adopting of disguise and role-play have the ability to reveal what is usually concealed under normal circumstances.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, 415.

Already the first scene establishes the mode of the play. Saville searching for Doricourt, meets Courtall. The city environment is immediately presented to the audience, the characters mention different parts of London, and the humorous dialogues are not only full of politics and war, but also of corruption, gossip, fops, divorces, dresses, dinners, concerts, auctions and masquerades. The binary oppositions of the backward country and the fashionable city or the private and the public sphere, a theme which will be elaborated throughout the play in both of the plotlines, are set up. Also, a male view of women is suggested here. For instance, Courtall tells Doricourt about the visit of his female relatives:

Courtall: After waiting thirty minutes, during which there was a violent bustle, in bounced five sallow damsels, four of them maypoles, the fifth, Nature, by way of variety, had bent in the Aesop style. But they all opened...'We want you to go with us to the park, and the plays, and the opera, and Almacks, and all the fine places!'-The devil, thought I, my dears, may attend you, for I am sure I won't...the virgins were all come to town with the hopes of leaving it wives: their heads full of knight-baronights, fops, and adventures.

Saville: Well, how did you get off?

Courtall: Oh, pleaded a million engagements...and then took a sorrowful leave, complaining of my hard, hard fortune that obliged me to set off immediately for Dorsetshire. Ha, ha, ha!¹¹¹

The dialogue is the first instance of the general pretence *The Belle's Stratagem* is abundant in and which is taken as a standard behaviour by the characters. Also, clearly, the women are not exactly highly esteemed by the men. Courtall is eventually praised by Saville for putting on the polite face and then successfully escaping. In fact, the three rustic cousins appear as set characters from a crude comedy. It is almost as if Cowley let the Restoration play types enter

¹¹¹ Hannah Cowley, "The Belle's Stratagem," *Eighteenth-Century Women Dramatists*, ed. M. C. Finberg (OUP: 2001) I, i, 24-42.

her own drama. The very purpose of this may be to emphasise the stereotypical portrayal of female characteristics. The image of the females is important, as they serve as prototypes of a version of femininity, mostly male-created, Letitia Hardy will adopt as one of her masks.

In the second scene, Doricourt is introduced and with him the theme of nationality. He is presented as a fashionable man of the world employing a suit of French servants. Also the young man is still full of experiences from the Grand Tour. According to Porter, such a way of education and amusement was becoming trendy and popular, although very expensive: "...grand tourists flocked to France and Italy, those magnificent museums of history, culture and civility. Grand Tours... gobbled up money, costing up to five thousand pounds for three years."¹¹² This is reflected in the play and it functions as a significant element of Doricourt's characterisation. For example, Doricourt's doorkeeper informs Crowquill, who offers him a bribe if he says something about his master's affairs so that the "journalist" can make them into a slanderous article for the newspapers, that the information concerning his lord's private life would cost him much more since Doricourt is wealthy, has been abroad and thus can be ranked among significant noblemen:

Porter: *We* have travelled, man! My master has been to Italy, and over the whole island of Spain, talked to the queen of France, and danced with her at a masquerade.

Ay, such folks don't go to masquerades for nothing; ...¹¹³

Again, as this speech and the whole scene suggest, masquerade is associated with the continent and thus viewed as alien to England and, perhaps, as effeminate or irrational. Furthermore, on the one hand, the masked ball is seen as an entertainment suitable for royalty; however, on the other hand, the servant's comment may allude to inappropriate relationships. Doricourt's attitude to the continent seems also doubled. He praises the English national

¹¹² Porter, *English Society* 163-228

¹¹³ *The Belle's Stratagem* I, ii, 26-30.

character connecting England with reason, sturdiness and independence; yet he himself does not seem to embody these qualities. Doricourt, for instance, tells Saville:

Doricourt: ...Englishmen make the best soldiers, citizens, artisans, and philosophers in the world...I keep the French fellows and Germans, as the Romans kept slaves...An Englishmen reasons, forms opinions, cogitates and disputes...We travel over France...return to England... the sweet follies of the continent imperceptibly slide away...¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, in spite of his preaching, his own comportment is shown to lack the very characteristics he praises as he still engages in fashion, gallantries and, indeed, folly. Doricourt is initially shown to be immature, unwise and rather unmanly. For instance, he is depicted by Courtall in this manner: "His carriage, his liveries, his dress, himself are the rage of the day! ... [H]is valet is besieged by levees of tailors ... and other ministers of fashion, to ratify the impatience of their customers for becoming *a la mode de Doricourt*."¹¹⁵ Evidently, the character himself is linked rather more to the continental countries than to England by the others.

Furthermore, in spite of exhilarating on being "truly English,"¹¹⁶ Doricourt desires the English women to behave like those whom he encountered during his European travels, that is without the English reserve. Letitia Hardy is depicted as shy, unexciting and dull by him. Doricourt, for example, tells Saville: "Foh! Thou hast no taste! *English* beauty! 'Tis insipidity."¹¹⁷ Such remarks seem rather inconsistent with his patriotism. The mask of thoroughly devoted Englishness falls down when he cannot resist a lady with a performance expected quite outside of England at the masquerade ball. She is the embodiment of the ideal

¹¹⁴ *Belle's Stratagem* I, iii, 14-42.

¹¹⁵ *Belle's Stratagem* I, i, 77-82.

¹¹⁶ *Belle's Stratagem* I, iii, 108.

¹¹⁷ *Belle's Stratagem* I, iii, 69-70.

wife Doricourt prefers: "...She should have spirit! Fire! L'air enjoué! That something, that nothing, which everybody feels, and which nobody can describe, in the resistless charmers of Italy and France."¹¹⁸ Obviously, the masquerade scene eventually shows how wrong he was. In this way, Cowley's dramatic piece represents a carnivalesque parody of the sometimes exaggerated nationalistic discourse of the era. As Shepherd and Womack put it, the eighteenth century was the time of the war with France and "the pursuit of national virtue... [was] its ideological corollary."¹¹⁹ In *The Belle's Stratagem*, hand in hand with the class and gender-based expectations of the conduct of women, the national character is daringly exposed to be, to a certain extent, comprised of performative acts or the citing of discursive gestures.¹²⁰ What is being suggested here is the possibility of the changing of one's nationality as easily as a mask by mimetically reproducing certain conventional stereotypes.

Formulaic representations and their parody versions, not only of national characters, appear throughout the play. For instance, in the following scenes, *The Belle's Stratagem* returns to the exploration of the supposedly typical conduct of both of the sexes. In this manner, the ubiquitous role playing is emphasised again. Moreover, as the play progresses, the masquerade mood seems to be increasingly seeping through the everyday life of the characters. To exemplify this, it can be asserted that the speeches appear to take on a carnivalesque nature and that the festive humour gains on intensity. All of the characters are preparing tricks and getting ready to amuse themselves 'down town;' the bakhtinian spirit of "freedom, frankness and familiarity"¹²¹ permeates the play's interactions. For instance, the dialogues between Flutter, Villers and Mrs Racket are essentially composed of repartees and jokes. Similarly to the carnival and masquerade language in which the masks discuss one

¹¹⁸ *Belle's Stratagem* I, iii, 61-64.

¹¹⁹ Shepherd and Womack, 157.

¹²⁰ Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 225.

¹²¹ Bakhtin, 153.

another's appearance and social position in a comically deprecating manner, the communication between the two gentlemen and the widowed lady features ironic tributes, affronts and a scornful laughter at the way men and women especially are imagined to behave in society. Nonetheless, in contrast to the cynical witticism of the Restoration, feelings are also implied.

For instance, Villers appears rather contemptuous of women; he represents the male opinions which are shown to be typical in the play. He, for example, utters such statements as: "A lady at her toilet is as difficult to be moved as a Quaker..." or "Vanity like murder will out...[no] woman ever praises another unless she thinks herself superior in the very perfections she allows..." and "Give a woman but one stroke of character, off she goes, like a ball from a racket; sees the whole man, marks him down for an angel or a devil, and so exhibits him to her acquaintance..."¹²² When the desperate Letitia Hardy entering the room attempts to stop him from leaving, he quite sarcastically exclaims:

Adieu! I am rejoiced to see you so well, madam! ...You [Miss Hardy and Mrs Racket] are the two most dangerous women in town. Staying here to be cannonaded by four such eyes is equal to a *recontre* with Paul Jones, or midnight march to Omoa! (*Aside*) They'll swallow the nonsense for the sake of the compliment."¹²³

The slanderous clichés suggest that Villers may tend to see women in a manner analogous to Courtall's view of the cousins: as easily flattered nincompoops interested only in amusement, self-decoration, fashion and marriage. Nevertheless, after the masked night, his stance will alter in a way because of Letitia's ingenious idea proving him otherwise. He will express his acknowledgement of women's intelligence and agency, although again with a slight tinge of

¹²² Belle's Stratagem I, iv, 41-58.

¹²³ Belle's Stratagem I, iv, 101-105.

irony, and call her: "the wonder worker...who can...talk a man out of his wits."¹²⁴ Also, in contrast to Courtall, Villers' comments can be perceived as the pronouncements of carnivalesque *débats*¹²⁵ due to the masquerade topos gradually overwhelming the play. As Bakhtin writes about festive dialogues: "Praise and abuse are, so to speak, the two sides of the same coin."¹²⁶ It shall be seen that Viller's detracting comments may have been only a verbal mask.

When Letitia cries out: "Men are all dissemblers! Flatterers! Deceivers!"¹²⁷ and complains of Doricourt's indifference, Mrs Racket gives her a down-to-earth advice to behave like him. Miss Hardy, however, refuses. Her stratagem is to adopt the behaviour of the 'silly' country cousins. In this way she will embody the critical male discourse concerning women and hiding underneath such mimicry she will be able to reveal the falsity of this generalising concept. The following conversation with her father serves as an elucidation of her philosophy. Mr Hardy, too, stereotypically imagines women as helpless, simple creatures only desiring a husband and attracting him through dressing up. Nevertheless, Letitia's replies verify that such generalised ideas are false. Also, her answers emphasise the fact that what she performs later on is only a mask, a deliberate show of the male created image:

Hardy: There you are mistaken...he liked you vastly. ...

Letitia: My dear sir, I am convinced he has not; but if there is spirit or invention in woman, he shall.

Hardy: Right, girl; go to your tioletto-

¹²⁴ *Belle's Stratagem* V, i, 8-10.

¹²⁵ Bakhtin, 153.

¹²⁶ Bakhtin, 165.

¹²⁷ *Belle's Stratagem* I, iv, 118.

Letitia: It is not my toilette that can serve me; but a plan has struck me ... which flatters me with brilliant success. ...¹²⁸

The daughter explains to her father that she will in fact speak and perform in such a way that she will make Doricourt abhor her at first. Then, by another masquerade trick, she will gain his devotion. Also, one of the several reversals of the supposedly traditional roles is presented here. Letitia's diction resembles the one commonly expected from a man. She talks of reason, business, measures and plans. Her father, on the contrary, produces comically confused utterances such as: " Well, 'tis an odd thing-I can't understand it-but I foresee Letty will have her way, and so I shan't give myself the trouble to dispute it."¹²⁹ The woman is the one who is active and assuming the position of a superior in this scene. Thus, the inferiority, meekness and passivity women were presumably designed for is shown as artificially constructed.

Mrs Racket helps Letitia with her show. The young woman tells the widowed lady: "If I comprehend him, awkwardness and bashfulness are the last faults he can pardon in a woman, so expect to see me transformed into the veriest makin."¹³⁰ She leaves the room and lets Mrs Racket introduce her performance. When Doricourt arrives, what unfolds is again an interaction as if taken already from the masquerade scene. They both speak in wordplays and act almost as if flirting. Doricourt learns the shocking 'news,' that his wife-to-be is in reality and ignorant country coquet and that the shyness was only pretended. Which it actually was. When the energetic, brilliant and decision making Letitia from the previous scenes is compared to the one who is painted with her eyes down, as if she was crying or praying and looking: "timid, apprehensive, bashful."¹³¹ in the picture on the wall Doricourt describes when he appears, it becomes apparent that her inhibited and reserved behaviour was also only a

¹²⁸ Belle's Stratagem I, iv, 206-215.

¹²⁹ Belle's Stratagem I, iv, 238-240.

¹³⁰ Belle's Stratagem III, i, 9-11.

¹³¹ Belle's Stratagem III, i, 28.

performance-the one the system of social manners imposed on her. The self-presentation that is in store for Doricourt is again a mask. What he will see is the very opposite of what he expects. Mrs Racket verbally paints another portrayal of Miss Hardy to prepare the way for her entree. The metaphor of painting ones character is not an accidental one. As Shepherd and Womack note, the behavioural code in the eighteenth century used to be usually taught in this way: "Let us imagine ourselves, as so many living pictures drawn by the most excellent masters, exquisitely designed to afford the utmost pleasure to the beholders;..."¹³² Nevertheless, when the young lady finally races into the chamber, pleasure has nothing to do with what she incites:

Letitia: La! Cousin, do you know that our John-oh, dear heart! I didn't see you, sir.

(Hanging down her head, and dropping behind Mrs Racket)

Mrs Racket: Fie, Letitia! Mr Doricourt thinks you a woman of elegant manners. Stand forward and confirm his opinion.

Letitia: No, no; keep before me. He's my sweetheart, and 'tis impudent to look one's sweetheart in the face, you know."¹³³

Clearly, the audience is offered a parody of the desired female restraint as such exaggerated re-enactment renders it ridiculous. The scene continues:

Letitia: Well, hang it, I'll take heart. *(Half apart)* Why, he is but a man, you know, cousin; and I'll let him see I wasn't born in a wood to be scared by an owl.

(Advances and looks at Doricourt through her fingers) He, he, he!¹³⁴

As the scene progresses, she calls her fiancé a "mumchance,"¹³⁵ asks idiotic questions, mispronounces words, stutters, boasts of having affairs with Mr Curate and Parson Dobbins and recites nonsensical adverts from the newspapers. Letitia's skilful performance is all the

¹³² Shepherd and Womack, 124.

¹³³ Belle's Stratagem III, i, 65-71.

¹³⁴ Belle's Stratagem III, i, 74-76.

¹³⁵ Belle's Stratagem III, i, 90.

more difficult for her as her father attempts to persuade her future husband she is only jesting and is in fact very sensible. Doricourt is beside himself. He realises he is to marry the living form of all the unfavourable characteristics men tend to ascribe to women in the play. In other words, his future wife appears to be the summary of the contemptuous formulaic images of the male attitude. Yet, although persuasive, Cowley again reminds the audience that Letitia's conduct is mere acting. Even Doricourt cannot help noticing "an expression in her eye that seemed to satirise the folly of her lips."¹³⁶ Furthermore, her performance can be understood in this way: through the adopting of such discourse, through its theatrical transformation into an alarming image, Letitia can not only remain without its reach-it has no impact on her, she sees through it and uses it as an instrument for manipulation-but she also make obvious how restricting and preposterous these set ideas are. Nonetheless, it shall yet take some time before Doricourt grasps the true meaning of what he has witnessed. He ponders escape or suicide. Mrs Racket, once more aiding in the stratagem, offers him another solution: before he ends his unfortunate living, he might as well entertain himself at the masquerade. He agrees.

The characters of the second plotline too have their own reasons to attend the ball. Moreover, Mrs Racket also plays a significant role in the story. Sir George Touchwood, in contrast to Doricourt, desires his wife to be homely, to spend her life in the country and that solely in his company. Nonetheless, there also are similarities between Touchwood and Doricourt. Like him, he enjoyed himself abroad. For instance, Letitia's fiancé is surprised when he hears of Sir George's marriage: "Married. Ha, ha, ha! You, whom I heard in Paris say such things of the sex, are in London a married man."¹³⁷ It becomes clear, that Touchwood's personality and the reasons why he wedded Lady Frances are a little dubious. He praises the English ladies because he finds them nice and good, chaste and true and undemanding. He

¹³⁶ Belle's Stratagem III, i, 145-146.

¹³⁷ Belle's Stratagem II, i, 1-2.

even admits that he would not have the courage to marry anybody else, especially not somebody independent and fashionable. Lady Frances, it should be mentioned, grew up in Shropshire. Her father was more interested in his hobby of petrifying frogs and collecting beetles than in his daughter's upbringing. Her husband, unfortunately, does not represent a significant change for the better in her life in the sense of self-assertion and entering the society. In spite of his youth, Touchwood is overly conservative, hypocritical and laughable. The masquerade ball will ensure the makeover of both of these characters and their life together.

As Finberg writes in her notes, names in the play are a part of characterisation. Touchwood's association with fire reveals that Sir George is ablaze with jealousy.¹³⁸ He cannot abide his wife's sparing some time on her own. He is afraid the city with its multiplicity of amusements would spoil her innocence and the fact that she gives him her utmost admiration and undiluted attention. He divulges: "I married Lady Frances to engross her to myself."¹³⁹ Mrs. Racket, perhaps to spite him but much more in order to help Lady Frances, tells the audience: "There's a great deal of impertinence in all that. I'll try to make her a fine lady to humble him."¹⁴⁰ The picture of "a fine lady" is crucial here. Touchwood's view of such woman is congruent with the eighteenth century patriarchal image. He tells Mrs Racket that according to him,

It is a being easily described, madam, as she is seen everywhere, but her own house. She sleeps at home, but she lives all over the town. In her mind, every sentiment gives place to the lust of conquest and the vanity of being particular. The feelings of wife and mother are lost in the whirl of dissipation....¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Finberg, 350.

¹³⁹ Belle's Stratagem II, i, 59-60.

¹⁴⁰ Belle's Stratagem II, i, 93-94.

¹⁴¹ Belle's Stratagem II, i, 167-172.

To add to his description, he chastises Mrs Racket for not keeping to her class and station. As a widow, she should be "sedate, matronly and grave...[not] a coquette, a wit, and a fine lady."¹⁴² The re-definition of this concept will be one of the effects the masked ball will have. Mrs Racket, to begin with her stratagem, persuades Lady Frances to accompany her to "an exhibition, and an auction. Afterwards we'll take a turn in the Park, and then drive to Kensington. So we shall be at home by four to dress, and in the evening I'll attend you to Lady Brilliant's masquerade."¹⁴³ Again, Lady Frances agrees.

In the second line of the plot, the notion of a city as a source of corruption, vice and danger is explored. The masquerade is depicted as the symbol of all that. Nevertheless, once more, as the narrative functions in a carnivalesque manner including shifts of meanings, these ideas are presented only half seriously. In fact, they are questioned as the masked ball and the cityscape prove to be beneficiary in spite of the dangers. For instance, when Mrs Racket describes the life in the country as too unruffled and isolated, Sir George replies:

And what is the society of which you boast? A mere chaos, in which all distinction of rank is lost in a ridiculous affectation of ease, and every different order of beings huddled together as they were before creation....'tis one universal masquerade, all disguised in the same habits and manners.¹⁴⁴

Sir George, on the one hand, speaks of the main topic of the play. On the other hand, however, the fact that the pronouncement is delivered by this character, who has been shown as somewhat hysterical, prone to exaggeration and who visits the masked gathering himself in the end, slightly undermines the didactic meaning of the passage.

¹⁴² Belle's Stratagem II, i, 223-228.

¹⁴³ Belle's Stratagem II, i, 125-128.

¹⁴⁴ Belle's Stratagem II, i, 241-247.

Another instant of the masquerade ball being linked to the city, the decline of traditional values and a possible threat occurs at the auction Lady Frances attends. For example, there is a character called 'mask' paid for playing the role of a wealthy buyer to fool others into paying more for the artefacts. Also, a model of a city is offered for sale there. Silvertongue's ironic description of the object includes locked churches, gossiping people, workhouses next to City Halls and a deist parson: "asleep over Toland whilst his lady is putting on rouge for the masquerade."¹⁴⁵ Finally, at the mart, Lady Frances meets Courtall who later tells Saville of his plan of complimenting Sir George's wife and even of abducting her: "And I'll lay my life, under a mask, she'll hear it all without blush or frown....She will! Ney, I'd venture to lay a round sum that I prevail on her to go out with me-only to taste the fresh air, I mean."¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, in spite of the negative connotations the urban masquerade finally also serves as the catalyst of the play enabling Cowley to include not only criticism but also a favourable solution. Saville, hearing of Courtalls scheme, prepares one of his own. Therefore, the disguise and general mayhem of the event will also function in a positive manner.

The masquerade scene is carefully crafted. According to Finberg, Cowley created a "magnificent spectacle, employing a large cast and, probably using the entire depth of *Covent Garden's* stage with all the shutters opened."¹⁴⁷ Therefore, imaginably, the masked gathering's portends were all the more emphasised and made resonant in this 'show-within-a show.' The action is swift, one interaction takes place after another, the plotlines are intermingled: the characters meet one another and mix in with the 'masks,' they loose and find one another in the commotion. The colourful and diversely patterned domino costume worn by some characters can serve as a metaphor for the scene's description: it is rich in miscellaneous

¹⁴⁵ *Belle's Stratagem* II, ii, 57-71.

¹⁴⁶ *Belle's Stratagem* II, ii, 62-67.

¹⁴⁷ Finberg, xliv.

cultural references and allusions to the Bible, the ancient Greece, history, politics and art. There are characters dancing French cottillons, there are mentions of Spanish courantas and fandagos, combined with the English festive traditions of hobby horses and caps and bells.¹⁴⁸ The masquerade blending of everything is, for instance, illustrated on the masks Sir George considers before attending, he can be "a Jew, Turk, or heretic; a Chinese emperor or a ballad singer; a rake or a watchman."¹⁴⁹ The dress he eventually chooses even suggests the merging of genders: it is pink and blue.

The play's themes re-occur. Everything is parodied, meanings are multiplied, and nothing is stable. The language the characters use is interwoven with the carnivalesque innuendo. To exemplify this, Mr Hardy in the costume of Isaac Mendoza, speaking of his 'nation' argues: "Some of us turn Christians, and by degrees grow into all the privileges of Englishmen. In the second generation we are patriots, rebels, courtiers, and husbands."¹⁵⁰ So, the valued positions of the English men are shown to be only a show. The atmosphere is the one of bedazzlement and dream. Mrs Racket, for instance asks: "Well, Lady Frances, is not all this charming? Could you have conceived such a brilliant assemblage of objects? The young wife replies: "Delightful! The days of enchantment are restored! The columns glow with sapphires and rubies. Emperors and fairies, beauties and dwarfs meet me at every stop."¹⁵¹ The Shakespearean undertones of the whole play are even intensified. Letita's song is inciting the "light winged spirits" to "crown the magic of the night," Saville wears the mask of a magician, Doricourt's phrases of an ideal woman turn into a sincere admiration when the lovers meet at the ball and he quotes Hamlet when she disappears. Several boundaries are over-stepped, the social categories are made into a pell-mell: "that figure strutting as an

¹⁴⁸ Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 1-24.

¹⁴⁹ Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 87-89.

¹⁵⁰ Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 32.

¹⁵¹ Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 63-67.

emperor" is the son a man who "retails oranges in Botolph Lane," a "gypsy is a maid of honour" and a "ragman is a physician."¹⁵² The normally forbidden is achievable; opinions are freely expressed behind the masks. Mr Hardy can, for instance, 'tell off' Sir George: "...the eyes of the jealous are not to be trusted. Look to your Lady."¹⁵³ Nevertheless, such lack of the customary restrictions can also be abused and the masquerade can be rather risky, especially for the women. Amidst all this, the main characters' performances are sited.

The instability of identities, falsity of appearances and the impossibility to discern one man or woman, virtuous or not, from another is also presented on Lady Frances' experience of a precarious masquerade trick. Saville's and Courtall's schemes both include disguise. The former brings a prostitute dressed as Mrs Touchwood and the other dons the same costume as Sir George. Due to the masquerade confusion the villain escapes with Kitty and Lady Frances is returned safely to her husband. Courtall is rightfully punished and the hilarious solution functions as a comic relief after the darker undertones and suspense. To elucidate this, the entrance to Courtall's quarters continues as follows:

Flutter: Oh, Gemini! Beg the petticoat's pardon. Just saw a corner of it. ...

Courtall: Upon my soul, I am devilish glad to see you; but you can perceive how I am circumstanced. ...

Second Mask: Tell us who 'tis then. ...

Courtall: I can't upon my honour. Thus far: she's a woman of the first character and rank. ...

Saville: Kitty Willis! Ha, ha, ha! ...

¹⁵² Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 75-79.

¹⁵³ Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 57-58.

Flutter: And, Courtall, before you carry a lady into your bedchamber again, look under her mask, d'ye hear?¹⁵⁴

Courtall finally leaves for Paris, disgraced, ridiculed and abhorred. Nevertheless, the question whether looks and behaviour are not actually taken for the essence, the individual's personality, sex, state and rank, remains hanging in the air. The prostitute could quite easily have been a man, for instance. Again, Kitty and Courtall, both have been able, through the re-enactment of the stereotypically demanded conduct, to reveal that identity, including gender, can be merely performative. Moreover, the outcome of the masquerade situation is profitable. It appears the danger taught the innocent Mrs Touchwood how to enjoy more freedom and still be safe. Her passivity grows less and she is finally able to speak for herself. Sir George comes to respect, love and admire the woman she is. That means the fine lady who: "in her manner she is free, in her morals nice. Her behaviour is undistinguishingly polite to her husband ...[she is] the life of conversation, the spirit of society, the joy of the public...."¹⁵⁵ Cowley's Lady Frances certainly does not follow the example of Margery from *The Country Wife*. She does not become corrupted or unfaithful. Moreover, such brisk reversal of conduct may imply again that Lady Frances had previously been deliberately adopting the manners expected from a dutiful daughter and wife in order to please and to gain protection. In other words, the same as in the case of Letitia's diffidence, the masquerade scene might perhaps disclose that 'Fanny's compliance amounted, to a degree, to the imitation of the desired demeanour.

Letitia's performance at the masquerade leaves Doricourt mesmerised. Suddenly she is bold, witty and eloquent. Aware of her good looks she flirts and dances with other men. One moment she is here, than she disappears the next. He calls her "the most charming being in

¹⁵⁴ *Belle's Stratagem* IV, ii, 22-71.

¹⁵⁵ *Belle's Stratagem* II, i, 178-184.

the world"¹⁵⁶ and admits that "[he] never was charmed until now."¹⁵⁷ Doricourt's emotions are authentic for the first time in the play. There is no aloofness, condescending or mere adhering to the rules as before. And, although apparently deceiving, Letitia too is paradoxically not lying. Her language might be a masquerade jesting, nonetheless, she is in reality speaking the truth. It is also one of the most amusing moments of the play. The humour of the piece comes to the forth. For instance, Doricourt longs to know the mysterious lady's name. She says: "My name has a spell in it...but if revealed the charm is broke."¹⁵⁸ The double meaning, however, escapes the young man, it is only the audience who can understand Letitia's remarks.

Nevertheless, there are other connotations in the dialogue of the two protagonists. Doricourt desires unveiling; he wants to know the true self of Letitia. Her answers imply that she can be whatever the situation demands. Also, very smartly, she combines threats with promises to 'get' her future husband, which would have been impossible had she still been forced to silence and passivity of the social decorum. The roles of courtship are reversed:

Doricourt: An angel! But what will you be when a wife?

Letitia: A woman. If my husband should prove a churl, a fool, or a tyrant, I'd break his heart, ruin his fortune, elope with the first pretty fellow that asked me-and return the contempt of the world with scorn, whilst my feelings prayed upon my life.¹⁵⁹

These are the 'hardest' words spoken in the comedy, apart from the epilogue. Doricourt is astonished to hear such pragmatic speech disclosing nothing. His interest increases. The conversation continues:

Doricourt: What if loved him, and he were worthy of your love?

¹⁵⁶ Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 177.

¹⁵⁷ Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 251.

¹⁵⁸ Belle's Stratagem IV, i,255-257.

¹⁵⁹ Belle's Stratagem IV, i, 271-275.

Letitia: Why, then I'd be anything-and all! Grave, gay, capricious-the soul of whim, the spirit of variety-live with him in the eye of fashion, or in the shade of retirement-change my country, my sex, feast with him in an Eskimo hut, or a Persian pavilion,... or enter the dangerous precincts of the Mogul's seraglio, ... and overturn his empire to restore the husband of my heart to the blessings of liberty and love.

This answer is noteworthy. Not only does Letitia actively seduce the supposedly wise and travelled man, her speech also emphasises again that many of the social categories are dependent on performance and that nothing remains constant. Also, the play's themes are summarised: the city/country oppositions, the masquerade of nationality or the impossibility to ascertain what or who one is genderwise. However, as the final words suggest, what is, rather romantically, most important is freedom and mutual affection.

Nevertheless, although speaking of love, Letitia's scheme offers no easy way to achieve it for Doricourt. The masquerade scene seems to continue. He feigns madness, Mr Hardy fatal illness and Letitia again appears in her costume. Villers, in contrast to his allegedly misogynistic comments, helps with the show and Letitia gratefully dubs him "the divinest man."¹⁶⁰ At last, all the characters, also due to their cathartic experiences at the masquerade, find their contentment. All the same, after the masked ball there usually was an unmasking. After the play, there is the epilogue. The theatrical illusion dissolves and the audience is offered some serious and harsh words of criticism. The 'universal masquerade' theme is invoked once more. Women are blamed for feigning coyness, purity and gentle manners: "Do thoughts too free inform the vestal's eye,/ Or point the glance, or warm the struggling sight?/ Not Dian's brows more rigid looks disclose,/ And virtue's blush appears where passion glows."¹⁶¹ However, as the play implies that "the timidity of the English

¹⁶⁰ Belle's Stratagem V, i, 30.

¹⁶¹ Belle's Stratagem Epilogue, 16-19.

character" is responsible for "throwing veils over" women¹⁶² there remains a question whether the enactment of shyness is not actually socially enforced. Moreover, despite the claims that such performance is the nature of women, Letitia's bedazzling display of all kinds of qualities makes those assertions doubtful. The criticism pointed at the men is worse: "And you my gentle sirs, were vizors too;/ But here I'll strip you and expose to view...That ample forehead and that skin so sleek/ Point out good nature and a generous heart./ Tyrant! Stand forth and, conscious, own thy part."¹⁶³ Therefore, again, it is the power of the theatre or the masquerade to paradoxically unmask the social one.

The Belle's Stratagem is a complex play combining together the Restoration and pre-romantic influences. Through the masquerade scene, which also affects the structure, humour, language and atmosphere of the dramatic piece, social conduct is presented as a deliberate performance. It is suggested that women in particular were required to wear behavioural masks. Ironically, the social masquerade is exposed by the masked ball. In disguise, the protagonists can experience moments of freedom and the turnaround of normative roles, there is a space for a grotesque exaggeration and the parody of the patriarchal codes. Nevertheless, the play's overall implication makes it impossible to say that under the mask during the nightly gathering the characters are themselves. The symbolic meanings of the staged masquerade dance with its instability and constant re-orderings of states may entail that even one's identity, nationality and gender, is either an instant of mimicry or a performative act.

¹⁶² *Belle's Stratagem* V, v, 231,

¹⁶³ *Belle's Stratagem* Epilogue, 20-26.

Chapter III

Eliza Haywood's texts have been accepted with reservations of contradictory kind through her life and also by the modern critics. She was scorned for writing "scandalous and licentious books"¹⁶⁴ when her public writing began. Nowadays her works can often appear didactic and written in support of the eighteenth century patriarchal system demanding female diligence, domesticity and "virtue and obedience."¹⁶⁵ As Craft-Fairchild notes, it is rather difficult to reconcile the eighteenth century female writers' personal 'radicalism' with their more conventional sides and in the case of their works of fiction it is even a more demanding task.¹⁶⁶ Thus, it is either possible to view Haywood's career as split in halves, the first being devoted to themes concerned with libertinage and transgression, the following to moralist comments. Nonetheless, in this chapter her works will be seen as actually always including some amount of didacticism and 'scandal' only with the degree varied. Both approaches will be described as present and providing the double edgedness and tension of the texts. Moreover, her prose fiction, both early and late, can be viewed as mostly concerned with the female position in the society and offering complex and diverse interpretations.

For instance, her later works may be seen as overly instructive, there definitely appear conventional recommendations concerning the 'appropriate' feminine demeanour, yet they also engage in the debate about the head of the family and the head of the state. They tend to favour the shift from the rule by the divine right to the rule by consent. Furthermore, the texts

¹⁶⁴ Ruth Facer, "Eliza Haywood," *Chawton House Library: Library and Early Women's Writing-Woman Writers-Eliza Haywood* <http://www.chawtonhouse.org/library/biographies/haywood.html> 30. 7. 2012

¹⁶⁵ Shea Stuart, "Subversive Didacticism in Eliza Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless*," *SEL* 42, 3(Summer 2002) 559-575, <http://libproxy.smith.edu:2089/search/results>. Project MUSE. 5. 6. 2008

¹⁶⁶ Craff-Fairchild, 163.

also give the impression of critically questioning the conduct books of the age.¹⁶⁷ Also, it is frequently the female characters' behaviour and fate that can imply the falseness of the concepts the protagonists are overtly demanded to adhere to. Anderson in discussion of *Miss Betsy Thoughtless* quotes Tobin: "[Betsy's] thoughtlessness exposes the social institutions and economic conditions that shape women's lives as repressive and hostile to expressions of female power."¹⁶⁸ It seems perhaps feasible to read Haywood's fiction as disclosing the injustice and harm the female role may necessitate although the heroine is literally told to be placid and compliant even with deliberate (marital) tyranny. Therefore, by adopting the male created discourse about women, the author is in reality pointing to the impossibility of the complete fulfilment of the societal exigencies and also revealing the fallacy of the gender-based constructions.¹⁶⁹

It is also in her early novellas or romances where such technique is detectable. Already in her 'amatory fiction' is Haywood able to offer problematic solutions and the re-writings of the male discourse to her audience. The topics of love and conquest are conventional. Nonetheless, as Schofield notes, the texts of the romances are in fact dealing with "female experiences as distinct and separable from male stories and exploits."¹⁷⁰ The work of fiction which will be analysed in this chapter, *The Masqueraders or a Fatal Curiosity: Being the Secret History of a late Amour* (1725), is also a romance but a romance with a twist: there is no happy ending: the marriage never happens. Moreover, the usual activity is reversed in this case as it is a woman, actually two of them, attempting to win the affections of a man and it is the women's point of view that is most important in the story. It is not the pleasing of the heart

¹⁶⁷ Stuart, 560.

¹⁶⁸ Emily Hodgson Anderson, "Performing the Passions in Eliza Haywood's *Fantomima* and *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* (University of Pennsylvania Press) 51. 1/2. (2010) Academic Search Complete. Web. 2 July 2012. 35.

¹⁶⁹ Stuart, 559.

¹⁷⁰ Schofield, 21.

but questionably much more the bodily pleasures that are sought and the striving for loving relationships definitely does not lead to eternal happiness and bliss. On the contrary, the amorous affairs end up with the women's plight.

Also, a great amount of pretence and role acting is needed in the 'quest.' It is no surprise then that Haywood included visits of a masked assembly in the story. The analysis of the masquerade scenes, their functions and meanings will be the main objective of this chapter. Haywood's attitude to the social occasion again appears to be two-fold. She was its critic, and the masked soirée does have some negative connotations; nevertheless, it also has positive effects in the novella. According to Castle, "the masquerade was ripe for fictional exploitation....Because of its classic association with mystification and intrigue, the masquerade scenes provided diverting opportunities for plot development."¹⁷¹ Structurally, too, the masquerade scenes are useful, as they provide the story with two centres. Moreover, the masked event's enjoyment, freedom, evocativeness of licence but also danger facilitate the progress and the dénouement of the narrative.

The scenes, nonetheless, have other roles. For example, they seem to allude to the irrationality and chaos of the behaviour of the characters; they are suitable for the text whose main theme is falling in and out of 'love' and achieving attraction through dissimulation. Also, on a more symbolic level, the masquerade passages suggest that it is not only at the masked gathering where disguise is crucial. Masquerading appears to spread all over the story and thus to imply that all social behaviour is a performance, be it the demanded and enforced one or the deliberately adopted one. Thus, the term of 'masquerade' will be used to denote not only the cultural event but also pretence and the masks women were in fact forced to adopt by the

¹⁷¹ Castle, Masquerade and Civilization 114.

social, usually patriarchal, pressures. It will be implied that the social masquerade can be subverted by consciously donning and discarding certain behavioral 'camouflage.'

Furthermore, the masquerade topic can be seen as intensifying and emblematising the text's shifting character and its ironic and seditious connotations. The text itself becomes a masquerade. The audience is thus perhaps led to understand that there are even textual masks. The novella appears to be a critique of excessively self-assertive, sexually aware, single women. It can be read as an admonition or a negative example, nonetheless, nothing is as it seems and the overall message is rather dubious. It is as if Haywood was engaging in "a textual game,"¹⁷² prompting her readers to unmask the text itself and see beyond the advisory make-up of the 'masquerade tale.'

The text's supposedly warning or moral message is compromised already by its preface. On the title page, Haywood wrote a quotation of Pope:

What guards the Purity of melting Maids,
In courtly Balls, and Mid-night Masquerades;
Safe from treacherous Friend and daring Spark,
The Glance by day, and Whispers in the Dark:
When kind Occasion prompts their warm Desires,
When Musick softens, and when Dancing fires!¹⁷³

Pope certainly disagreed with masquerades; nevertheless he also disagreed with Haywood. As it was previously mentioned, he was her severe critic doubting her reason and ethics. Such allusion to the common nature of their goal of extricating social vices, as Walsh contends,

¹⁷² Rebecca Tierny-Hynes, "Fictional Mechanics: Haywood, Reading, and the Passions," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* (Texas Tech University Press) 46.1 (2005): 1-15/ Academic Search Complete, Web. 2 July 2012.

¹⁷³ Eliza Haywood, *The Masqueraders: OR, Fatal Curiosity: Being the Secret History of a late Amour*. Literature Online-Texts: Full Text. <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/searchFulltext>. 1. 3. 2008

"succeeded in drawing ire from offended moralizer[s]."¹⁷⁴ The 'arbiter's' work was thus directly and deliberately connected with a text where there is no lack of explicitness and where all men are depicted as insipid, unattractive and dim-witted:

Few men, how dull and stupid soever they appear in other things, but have Artifice enough this way:-But Dorimenus, as he had a share of Wit infinitely superior to most of his Sex, so he had also a Face and Person which render'd the Blandishments he made use of more graceful and persuasive: All Eyes become not Love; some instead of the impressive Languishment they would assume, degenerate into a heavy Dullness, rather forbidding, than exciting the Passion they would raise;..."¹⁷⁵

What is more important, Haywood's story thus enters into a dialogue with *The Rape of the Lock*. Pope subverts the epic genre and Haywood, to a certain extent, subverts Pope's text. There are affinities but also discrepancies between the two works of fiction and these facilitate the possibility of the query of Pope's principles. *The Masquerades*, appear to "repeat, represent, and expose the conflicts and contradictions inherent in patriarchal ideological systems."¹⁷⁶

Haywood's characters and plot are, to a certain limited degree, modelled on the poem: there is one man and two women betraying one another. Society is criticised in both works. Men are portrayed as dishonourable, inconsistent, sex-oriented and perceiving women as trophies only. Women, especially the 'Belindas', are represented as superficial and self-centered coquets devoting their entire time to fashionable amusement and primping themselves, perhaps, because their social upbringing did not 'teach them any better.' Clarissa and Philecta embody female treacherousness and but also smartness. Also, Pope's satirical

¹⁷⁴ J. Ann Walsh, *The Development of the Novel in the Prose Fictions of Eliza Haywood* McGill University Libraries. <http://digitool.library.mcgill>. 30. 7. 2012.

¹⁷⁵ Elizabeth Haywood, *The Masqueraders: OR, Fatal Curiosity: Being the Secret History of a Late Amour* Literature Online. <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/searchFulltext> 1. 3. 2008 9-10.

¹⁷⁶ Craft-Fairchild, 164.

heroic couplets promote the necessity of the protection of his Belindas' 'virtue.' Yet, suddenly, when the *Baron* eventually steels the lock of hair, it is not seen as a disaster. On the contrary, a 'good sense' appears much more important and perhaps this state of loss is preferable to being a bitter old maid: "Curl'd or uncurl'd, since Locks will turn to grey/ Since paint'd, or not paint'd, all shade fade,/ And she who scorns a Man, must die a Maid; What then remains, but well our Pow'r to use/ And keep good humour still whatev'r we lose?"¹⁷⁷ In Haywood's story, virtue, arguably, is also not the main objective.

Also, *The Rape of the Lock* is written so as "*She* inspire[s],"¹⁷⁸ and the final moral is to be reconciled with one's fate, to avoid flirt, emotional protests, prudery or grumpiness and to rejoice at the fact that at least one will not die a virgin when assaulted. In other words, what is desired is the return to the role of the domestic, good natured and reasonable, that means unproblematic and compliant, daughter or wife. Belinda's claim to power is seen as foolishness, her cries as bothersome and unnecessary. Female self-assertion is depicted as irrational and rendered ridiculous. It is true that the poem is based on a real event and supposed to stress the preposterousness of certain specific behaviour; nonetheless, as there seems to be a more serious design of a general social critique underneath this surface and as the theft of the lock of hair is equated with a sexual attack, the final advice appears dubious. The theme of double standards concerning respectability and transgression of boundaries is also present, as it shall be seen, in the *Masqueraders*; nevertheless, the outcome and the portent of the story is radically different. In this way, the dominant male discourse and its constructs are imitated but also rendered doubtful.

¹⁷⁷ The Rape of the Lock. <http://poetry.eserver.org/rape-of-the-lock.html> 31. 7. 2012

¹⁷⁸ The Rape of the Lock. <http://poetry.eserver.org/rape-of-the-lock.html> 31. 7. 2012

Moreover, where Pope speaks of 'the lock,' Haywood rather openly speaks of sex. It is as if the rejection of elaborate verses in favour of a realistic narrative of the early novel also entailed the abandonment of symbolic images and the emphasis on calling a 'spade a spade.' Furthermore, Pope's moral is shown as impossible to enact as the social position of women generally prevented them to break the rules of decorum and than to be accepted as the faithful, good-humoured wives. Thus, Haywood may have seemed too explicit or corrupt to this detractor and others; however, she was merely depicting the situation as it was and revealing that the required manners were in fact unrealistic. According to Stuart, Haywood "attempt[ed] to educate her audience through her novels, not in the didactic sense of the way the world should be, but in the sense of the way it [was]."¹⁷⁹

Also, in Pope's mock-heroic epic the heroine is spoken to in condescending tones and depicted as the 'weaker vessel,' apart from the rather brief and comically delivered reversal of roles during the 'battle.' In Haywood's story the men and women are shown to be equal, in particular during the courtship. To exemplify this, in Haywood's novella, there is no anxiety about female emotions, the protagonists are allowed to outbursts and these are fully displayed; moreover, the man is 'hysterical' as well. The 'upshot' of this is eventually different for the two sexes; nevertheless, at least for a time, the restrictive boundary is dismissed. Also, both women appear on par with the young aristocrat as far as sexual desire and the scheming involved in its satisfaction is concerned. Eventually harmful or not, it is especially the masquerade ball that enables the women protagonists to enact their impulses with freedom. In this manner, the patriarchal construct of the pure, passive and domestic femininity is again revealed as imposed.

¹⁷⁹ Stuart, 559.

Furthermore, the depiction of the masquerade party is possibly unintentionally rather enticing in the poem and so is its portrayal in the story. Perhaps also ironically, the novella begins with praising the occasion: 'Great Britain has no Assembly which affords such variety of Characters as the Masquerade; there are scarce any Degrees of People, of what Religion or Principle soever, that some time or other are not willing to embrace an opportunity of partaking this Diversion.'¹⁸⁰ Haywood's texts often begin with some amusement, the theatre, for instance, or the masked gathering here, which are settings promising sex and suspense and thus also possibly attracting the readers, rousing their own curiosity while also creating a space for criticism.

The story is simple. At the masquerade, Belinda meets a man whose nickname is Dorimenes. They start an affair. The young lady repeatedly reports her experiences to her dear friend Philecta who begins to be highly interested. She dons the mask like Belinda, goes to another masked ball and starts dating the very same gentleman. Frankly, they almost immediately also fall in love. Later on, however, Philecta reveals the turn of events to the other woman. There is an exchange of letters, Belinda tries to win Dorimenes back, however he becomes indifferent and disgusted. He and Philecta return to each other. Belinda is lonely and shattered. Nevertheless, Philecta's happiness does not last long. Dorimenes marries a respectable woman elsewhere and leaves her pregnant and disgraced.

It is also the style in which it is written that distinguishes the text from a straightforward story of admonition. The masquerade setting is connected with the changing of masks and the characters' schemes are also depicted by a narrative voice whose tone is changeable and difficult to ascertain. It ranges between seriousness, humour and sarcasm.

¹⁸⁰ Haywood, The Masqueraders 5.

Moreover, the reader's expectations of the development of the plot are often shown as wrong, the illusion of omniscience keeps being cancelled; the sympathy with the characters is constantly altered. It is at times impossible to discern who is good and who is the villain of the story. The genuineness of intentions, emotions and behaviour is questioned. The novella seems to posit that even one's identity is theatrical. Moreover, the elevated language contrast greatly with the mundane and often sordid deeds and happenings it depicts. In this way the story seems to be a satirical reproduction of moralistic diction.

It is through such opacity of the novel's narration and the multifaceted nature of its mode of telling and showing that the interpretation is rendered difficult. On the one hand, it is possible to get a plain message like this: do not go to the masquerades, be controllable and virtuous and you will avoid ignominy and menace. On the other hand, however, as it will be illustrated, the meaning may be altogether different: use the socially imposed masks to your advantage, be clever and you will be allowed to retain your power and even to enjoy yourself.

Dorimenus and Belinda are introduced to the readership during the first masquerade scene. He is described as "young, handsome, gay, [and] gallant."¹⁸¹ He is also wealthy and witty. Although the following qualities are included in an identical list, they are far less favourable and their being aligned with the previous ones creates a sense of irony: "[he] is a passionate Lover of Intrigue, and 'tis not to be doubted but that with all these Accomplishments, he found a great many among the Fair Sex to encourage that Disposition."¹⁸² It becomes clear that women fight over him and that he unscrupulously chooses between them as he likes. The intelligence of the ladies is shown as uncertain in this light, their slave-like behaviour and their frantic letters afterwards do not provide them with

¹⁸¹ Haywood, The Masqueraders 6.

¹⁸² Haywood, The Masqueraders 6.

any success. This situation is the foreshadowing of a later event and its replication will contribute to the subversive reading of the romance.

Also, Haywood's giving Dorimenus the title of a "Gentleman"¹⁸³ is again rather sardonic and so is the depiction of Belinda's entre: "By a very great chance, one evening...a fine Shepherdess, whose Bon Mien had attracted the Eyes and Addresses of a great number of the Assembly...was so overcome that she fell down in a fainting Fit...and he was one of the first that endeavour'd to bring her to herself."¹⁸⁴ Then the 'masquerade within a masquerade' commences: the lady is stripped off her disguise and he is enchanted. Her face is "full of modest blushes,"¹⁸⁵ she looks "sweetly innocent"¹⁸⁶ and he holds her in his arms only so as to assure she gains her strength. Nevertheless, due to the tone of the narrative, the scene becomes highly charged with the very opposite of modesty and virtuousness. Dalinda quickly adopts another mask, the one she is supposed to wear in the society, after her unmasking. Yet, at the same time, her expression mocks it. He does not fail to notice "a thousand little Loves laugh[ing] in her Eyes."¹⁸⁷ He understands the 'game' and continues with the pretence of supporting her and takes her home. The narrator often utters expressions of doubt and leaves it up to the audience to decide the true nature of the happenings; nonetheless the repetition of the words "Charms"¹⁸⁸ and "Designes"¹⁸⁹ make it clear that the manners of the protagonists are only a put on performance. In fact, the mask of the female chastity even works as a seductive element when used with skill. Thus, the demanded decorum is 'turned on its head' so far in the story.

¹⁸³ Haywood, The Masqueraders 6.

¹⁸⁴ Haywood, The Masqueraders 7.

¹⁸⁵ Haywood, The Masqueraders 8.

¹⁸⁶ Haywood, The Masqueraders 8.

¹⁸⁷ Haywood, The Masqueraders 7.

¹⁸⁸ Haywood, The Masqueraders 8.

¹⁸⁹ Haywood, The Masqueraders 10.

At Belinda's house, she felt the 'obligation' to entertain her saviour. Thus, "that very Night he completed his Conquest, and got possessions of all those Joys the glorious Prize could give."¹⁹⁰ Nonetheless; the depicted development appears to ask whether the 'conquest' was solely his. They were 'Both highly satisfi'd with each other'¹⁹¹ according to the narrator. Also, although the narrator doubts it, it was the woman who initiated the affair. Not only Dorimeus but Belinda as well is active in this case. Craft-Fairchild notes that in the early eighteenth century female authors there was the tendency to create women protagonists who were "equally amorous and belligerent."¹⁹² Yet, she perceives this power and liberty as deceptive because finally the female characters end up punished and re-restricted.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, it is also possible to read the story as implying that it is not the moment of freedom and self-expression that leads to punishment such as ostracism or even death but the lack of judgement and the naivety of the female characters. Perhaps, it could be asserted that it is their total and uncritical acceptance of the role of the unquestioning, sentimental and dependent female that causes their predicaments.

Belinda, for instance, makes the mistake of forgetting the overall social pretence and of being overly trusting to both men and women. Instead of masking her pleasure, she regularly visits another woman, single one, and relates the circumstances of her affair with great fervour and artistry. She tells Philecta of "every tender Word he spoke-not the least fond endearment was forgot- describ'd his Looks-his melting Pressures-his Ardours!-his Impatience!-his Extasies!-his Languishments!"¹⁹⁴ Naturally, Belinda's friend's curiosity grew. The word 'curiosity' is noteworthy. The connotations of 'curiosity' serve not only as a means of depicting the personality of Philecta but they also characterise the whole text. Barbara M.

¹⁹⁰ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 11.

¹⁹¹ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 11.

¹⁹² Craft-Fairchild, 10.

¹⁹³ Craft-Fairchild, 10.

¹⁹⁴ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 11.

Benedict lists the term's implications. She includes intellect, imagination, progress but also errors, the original sin, corruption, threat, sexual connotations and last but not least the doubting of the social establishment.¹⁹⁵ Significantly, Haywood was first to use the expression as a title of fiction.¹⁹⁶

Also, the focus of the narrative changes from the pleasures possible to win through beauty to the chances a sound reason has. Belinda sees Philecta as 'ugly,' yet, as the story continues, it becomes clear that the former is rather 'silly' and that the second female protagonist can be as charming as her because of her wits. The readers' 'allegiance' shifts as the narrator concentrates on Philecta's life and her plan to go to the masquerade as well. The fight of the 'sense and sensibility'; however remains finally unresolved, as it will be seen. Philecta's analytic mind fails to interpret her own emotions. In this way, the masquerade scene, with the deliberate shifting of identities, suggests the difficulty of even self-knowledge. The perception of the self expressed in the discourse of the contemporary *philosophes* and the demand to 'know thy self' is subverted.¹⁹⁷ Logically conducted scrutiny is shown as ineffective and almost ridiculous. The masked assembly is the emblem of the protean self in the story. Philecta, thinking she is merely a curious person, fails to recognise that she is in reality interested in sex and even that she has fallen in love.

To illustrate this, the second masquerade scene enables the meeting of all the three characters. In the passage, the confusion provided by the masks aids in the expression of the topics. The knowledge versus ignorance, the willing and unwilling self/deception, pretence, corruption, genuine emotions, sexual tension, the female and male stereotype and power

¹⁹⁵ Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) 1-3.

¹⁹⁶ Benedict, 283.

¹⁹⁷ Porter, *The Enlightenment* 1-11.

struggle between the sexes themes of the fiction come to the forth. Philecta dresses in "a neat *Indian Slave*"¹⁹⁸ habit the unsuspecting Belinda told her she would wear and "soon distinguish[es] the charming *Spaniard*."¹⁹⁹ Immediately they begin an amorous interaction, "the freedom of that Place allowing that familiarity."²⁰⁰ Philecta is pleased, nevertheless, Dorimenus, being allegedly overcome by a sudden uneasiness, very soon desires to leave the masquerade and to carry on in her, that means Dalinda's, house. Philecta unmask herself and very quickly thinks of an excuse telling him it was only to show him how easily he could have made a mistake. He praises her wit and continues kissing her. Dalinda appears and Philecta disappears "thro' the Crowd."²⁰¹ The former hits her darling, the latter succeeds in rousing his curiosity for a change up to such extent that he "would almost have given a Limb to have known who she was."²⁰² Nonetheless, that does not hinder him from accompanying Belinda, who "ask'd all those Questions which this Adventure render'd excusable,"²⁰³ and to pass that "Night as they had done many former ones."²⁰⁴ The narrator suggests that perhaps Dorimenus might have acted in this manner so as to be civil and kind to Belinda a that he suppresses his increasing desire for Philecta, who, finally at home, contemplates her experience and is discontent: "[h]er Curiosity, or at least she yet knew so little of herself, as to imagine, it was that alone which prompted her to take these Measures, was yet unsatisfy'd."²⁰⁵ The unreliability of the narrator, the brisk pace with which this passage is delivered, the speedy interactions and changes of names and the swift masking and unmasking make it difficult to ascertain what and who is contemptible or on the contrary appraisable. Also, it is shown that the characters and human identities in general are interchangeable. Women, through the character of Philecta, are shown to be as witty, active and cunning as the male protagonist.

¹⁹⁸ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 16.

¹⁹⁹ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 16.

²⁰⁰ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 16.

²⁰¹ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 19.

²⁰² Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 19.

²⁰³ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 19.

²⁰⁴ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 19.

²⁰⁵ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 19.

Yet, they can also be deliberately submissive and 'innocent' as Belinda. As the story progresses, possibly, it will be implied that they should be clever and able to exchange both sets of characteristics in order to succeed in the patriarchal world.

Moreover, for the next part of the story, Haywood chose to adopt the form of written messages the characters sent to one another. In England, the epistolary novel as a genre became popular in the eighteenth century. The first author to adopt this approach in her fiction was notably Aphra Behn in *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684-1687) where it served her as a means of intrigue. Also, understandably, as there was the focus on the individual characters' point of view, the central narrative voice ceased to provide the general moral evaluation.²⁰⁶ Similarly, in the *Masqueraders*, Philecta's nasty but rather amusing scheming is carried mainly through letters. It seems that the masquerade ball continues, although the masks are only textual. She pretends to be Belinda, then she reveals the truth, one moment she is inviting, the next she is a prude. The result is that it is Dorimeneus this time who sings himself as the "Everlasting Slave."²⁰⁷ Then she changes her mind, perhaps because of the pangs of conscience or perhaps she gets scared of getting too involved, and goes to visit Belinda. She reveals what has been going on, shows her Dorimeneus' message and, quite unexpectedly, instructs her rival how to regain the man's attention. The suggested possibility of the women uniting and teaching Dorimeneus a lesson never happens. The pretty coquet, nevertheless, fails anyway. She keeps reminding him of her faithfulness, devotion and feelings. These normally demanded qualities, nonetheless, make him abhor her. He suffers missing the mysterious Philecta and she, most probably, really pines for him.

²⁰⁶ Epistolary Novel. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistolary_novel 3. 8. 2012.

²⁰⁷ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 29.

The ending of the novel does not provide the audience with any certainty of the genuineness of emotions either. The betrayed and sad Belinda happens to meet the happily reunited pair. She threatens them with exposal in the newspapers. The formerly begging and melting Dorimenus has only harsh words for her now: "Well Madam, said he to her in an angry Accent, what you suspect, may, if you please, divulge; but I would have you consider well before you talk too much...[that you should be] tender of this Lady's (Philecta's) honour, as you would preserve your own."²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, eventually, the whole affair proves too bothersome or dangerous for the man. One day he simply leaves and gets married to a completely different woman. Nothing happens to him, he remains respectable and unpunished. Philecta finds her self pregnant and "[u]ndone in all which ought to be valuable, she curses the undoing Transport she so lately blest-and is sufficiently convinc'd how infinitely to blame she was, in indulging Curiosity which proved so fatal to her Virtue, her Reputation, and her Peace of mind; and which, 'tis highly probable, will in a short time be found so to her life."²⁰⁹ Yet, it has not been just her sexual curiosity and the curiosity what might happen if one transgresses the borders of assigned roles that was fatal for her and also Belinda. It is true that both of them are disgraced and their future faith is doubtful. Nevertheless, Dorimenus also acted in the same manner-promiscuity, lack of honesty a hard treatment of the women he had enjoyed but lost interest in were described as typical for his character straight at the beginning. In this way the novella reveals the oppressive double standards of the patriarchal codes.

Moreover, the ending is ambiguous. If the fiction was meant to warn women why would it depict freedom and pleasure as attainable? It might appear then that what is covertly suggested is the recommendation for the women to use their reason-the story portrays them as

²⁰⁸ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 45.

²⁰⁹ Haywood, *The Masqueraders* 46.

intelligent as anyone-to 'stick together' and play with the masks to their advantage. If they can adopt disguise and masks at the masquerade, they should also be able of 'masquerading' when dealing with rakes. It is not exactly a moral; nevertheless, it is also implied that it is the male created social prerequisite that is to blame. If Belinda and Philecta behaved similarly to the way they did during the ball when manipulating with Dorimenus, whom they had known as unfaithful and pretending before, even when the masked assembly was over, perhaps their curiosity would not have been fatal.

Haywood's text can be read in several different ways. One of the possibilities is to see it as a subversive answer to the patriarchal codex of behaviour and morals represented initially by the references to *The Rape of the Lock*. The novella employs the masquerade scenes in the expression of its themes and for its structural organisation. To an audience willing to engage in the 'play' it offers a covert critique of the inequality of the positions of men and women in the eighteenth century English society. The fiction can be seen as implying that if the social masquerade is adopted consciously and with wit by the women, they may, despite the social restrictions, experience similar liberty and pleasures possible at the masked ball even when they leave it, and remain safe.

Chapter IV

Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* was first published in 1791. The novel may be read as a reflection and assessment of the shifts of the social and cultural ambience in the final decades of the eighteenth century. In particular, the novel appears to concentrate on the trend of sensibility. According to Ward, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the term 'sensibility' referred to an individual's capability of experiencing profound feelings and it was also connected with empathy and the merit of soul. Nevertheless, by the 1790s, at the time the novel was published, the situation had changed. The man of sensibility came to be viewed as deprived of his masculinity and therefore feeble and powerless. Female sensitivity also ceased to be considered as a desirable quality, it was rather seen as a mark of self-pity, immoderation and licentious behaviour threatening not only the individual men and women but the whole social order.²¹⁰

A Simple Story by its content and structure brings the above-mentioned alterations into focus; nonetheless, it also offers something more to the readers. One of its prominent aspects is its irony and the ensuing ambiguity with which the behaviour of the characters is depicted and commented upon. Read in a certain way, the text provides a seditious view of the then desired models of conduct. Again, the objective of this chapter is to concentrate on the masquerade episode. It will be suggested that the socio-cultural phenomenon of masquerade attendance actually functioned as a subversion of the vogue of sensibility and the reactions of the characters to the dance in masks will be elucidated by the reference to the fashions of the era.

²¹⁰ Candace Ward, "Inordinate Desire: Schooling the Senses in Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story*," Studies in the Novel Vol. 31, No 1, (University of Texas: 1999) 1. High Beam Research-Academic Journals. 21. 12. 2007.

Also, it will be implied that the chapters accentuate the undermining and critical attitude of Inchbald's text and that they also highlight and confirm its style of describing some aspects on the one hand as undesirable and on the other hand implying that they are natural and even recommendable. The masquerade theme also contributes to the reader's understanding of the characters in the novel as more or less exaggerated grotesque types parading their frequently debauched and occasionally fine qualities before the audience. Furthermore, the masked assembly section of the narrative aids in the comprehension of the novel's protagonists' natures as shaped by the diverse and contradictory demands of the paradigms of manners with which they are repeatedly in conflict.

Moreover, Miss Milner's going to the masquerade ball and the occurrences at home could operate as an emblem of the whole novel as they seem to summarise the main topics of the narrative such as the power struggle between the sexes, the social double standards and the problematic issues connected with education. What is more, the scene can be perceived as the climax of Miss Milner's story already alluding to its end. Nevertheless, the masquerade visit, too, serves as a powerful reminder of the possibility of defiance of the behavioural constructs. The masquerade mask Miss Milner dons emphasises the fact that she deliberately plays with the paradigms of male-desired feminine behaviour and character. Her performance throughout most of the first part of the novel amounts to the repetition of the socially imposed manners, creating a powerful parody of the supposedly appropriate femininity. Therefore, the masked ball's scene in the novel with its stress on hidden drives, freedom, masking and unmasking and thus reflecting the ambience of the real cultural event is, to a certain extent, presented as an ironic comment upon the female masquerade amounting to the show women were forced into by the codex of manners. In this way, these two masquerade concepts are interconnected in Inchbald's text.

As it has been asserted above, the novel abounds in ambiguity and doublings. Apart from the one of meaning, there is also the doubling of structure. The text is split in two halves, each telling a different story. The first one deals with the acts of Miss Milner, the other describes the fortunes, or rather misfortunes, of her daughter Matilda. Dorriforth/ the future Lord Elmwood, the husband and father, also plays an important role in both of the parts of the novel. The protagonists can be seen as representing the history of the cult of sensibility. Their personality traits seem to fluctuate and even change relatively abruptly as in the case of Dorriforth who abandons his former feminised and gentle self as soon as he becomes Lord Elmwood and, especially after his wife's committing of adultery, assumes a stern, domineering and cold attitude of a patriarch. Matilda, with her asexuality, acceptance of suffering, meekness, inactivity and absolute obedience can be described as a complete opposite of her mother. She, together with her father, may symbolise the rejection of sensibility and the return to the "traditional" model of society, which occurred at the end of the eighteenth century.

Miss Milner, whose story naturally precedes the one of her daughter's, might be read as a warning example of a young woman whose education in a protestant institute for upper-class ladies had been insufficient and only enhanced her already heightened sensibility, which is demonstrated by her self-indulgent and flirtatious behaviour. As Ward claims: 'The sensibility Miss Milner exhibits is clearly identified with her sexuality.'²¹¹ However, what is also stressed is not only her energy and liveliness but also her inborn kindness and generosity. The reader is again given space to choose his or her own understanding of this character. For example, in chapter two, Lady Evans describes her as "very beautiful...idle, indiscreet, and

²¹¹ Ward, 2.

giddy, with half-a-dozen lovers in her suite;"²¹² nonetheless, in the same section Mrs. Hillgrave speaks of Miss Milner as of her "benefactress" and an "angel"²¹³ whose outer appearance is overshadowed by her inner goodness.

Yet, in spite of helping those in need, such as the poor woman or the child named Rushbrook, it should be added that Miss Milner's treatment of men might seem rather harsh. Well aware of her attractive looks, she displays her sexuality rather openly by movements, sighs and expressions and she thrives on the power it gives her over the opposite sex. She disregards the men's emotions, she makes them lose colour, shiver, act irrationally and even shed tears. For instance, Dorriforth, when about to meet his ward, "turned pale...and had a handkerchief to his face at the time."²¹⁴ The guardian's rather ridiculous behaviour on the initial meeting of his charge already attests to the de-masking and de-masculinising effect Miss Milner can and will have later on.

Nevertheless, the heroine of the first part of the novel is also capable of changing her semblance and demeanour when in contact with men. She succeeds in the winning of her protector's love mostly by appearing below par, subservient, defenceless and therefore sexless. Dorriforth, allowed to feel stronger and authoritative for a time, becomes her suitor and it is exactly the time when she reverses her strategy and reverts to her former self-assertive and ostentatious behaviour. Although overjoyed, she can ponder her achievement, the approaching marriage, from a distance. She does not hesitate to ascribe her victory solely to her skills. She thinks to herself:

²¹² Elizabeth Inchbald, *A Simple Story* (Baudry's European Library: Paris, 1883) 18.

²¹³ Inchbald, 21.

²¹⁴ Inchbald, 22.

Are not my charms even more invincible than I ever believed them to be? Dorriforth, the grave, the pious, the anchorite Dorriforth, by their force is animated to all the ardour of the most impassionate lover; while the proud priest, the austere guardian, is humbled, if I but frown, into the veriest slave of love.... I am the happiest woman in the affection he has proved to me, but I wonder whether it would exist under ill treatment? ²¹⁵

Suddenly, all of her submissiveness is gone, which comes as a shock to her future husband. Nevertheless, he still displays his amiability. Thus, Miss Milner decides to test him further. She wastes his money on trifles, she makes her social life ever busier and spends her nights in the company of which Elmwood disapproves. She even invites her former "lover" Lord Frederick to Elmwood's house. However, her fiancé's slightly anxious reactions are clearly inadequate proofs of his adoration to her. Then she receives an invitation to a masquerade, chooses to attend the event and Elmwood's response is all of a sudden very different.

Why should a ball in masks, of all things, be equated with "something no prudent man *ought* to forgive,"²¹⁶ described as a "dear bought experiment"²¹⁷ or as "one great incident...[which] totally reversed the hope of all future accommodation"²¹⁸? The recalling of the introductory part of the paper dealing with the connotations the masquerade had in the eighteenth century may aid in the understanding of its central space in the plot of the novel. In *A Simple Story*, Miss Milner is sent three tickets and as "she had never been at a masquerade and ...she did not conceive there could be any objection to her going."²¹⁹ Clearly, her mind is not yet burdened with prejudices which she would have gained had her education been more strict. The tickets themselves in the eighteenth century could be done in the form of a picture.

²¹⁵ Inchbald, 123.

²¹⁶ Inchbald, 133.

²¹⁷ Inchbald, 126.

²¹⁸ Inchbald, 136.

²¹⁹ Inchbald, 136.

One such card from 1759, for instance, features a large ballroom, bright from the light of lanterns and fires and with fashionable people dancing together under the 'gaze' of the naked statues of cupids and Venus. Nonetheless, everything appears very symmetrical and 'neat and proper.'²²⁰ Thus, when Miss Milner in the novel, "received them [the tickets] with ecstasy,"²²¹ her pleasure, at least initially, probably did not seem to stem from any indecent or rebellious thoughts. Nevertheless, "the moment she mentioned it to Lord Elmwood, he desired her, somewhat sternly, "not to think of going there."²²²

Inchbald frequently lists the possible emotions and reasons for a certain conduct of her characters. The result amounts to a "conscientious limitation of omniscience, the fostering of the illusion, not of transparency but of opacity."²²³ If one should adopt her 'masquerade-like' style, it would be possible to assert that, conceivably, it is the very inclusiveness of the occasion what is perceived as a threat by the man. Since the Middle Ages, as Bakhtin points out, "[t]he suspension of all hierarchical precedence during carnival time was of particular significance....all were considered equal during carnival."²²⁴ This quality of the festive season was to some extent preserved in the eighteenth century masques as the costumes concealed or mocked the class distinctions. In Henry Fielding's *The Masquerade* the mixture of classes, occupations and nationalities is depicted in this way:

here in one confusion herl'd,
seem all the nations of the world.
Cardinals, quakers, judges dance;
Grim Turks are coy, and nuns advance,

²²⁰ Large Masquerade Ticket. <http://www.cartoonstock.com/vintage/directory/m/masquerade.asp>. 1.1. 2008.

²²¹ Inchbald, 136.

²²² Inchbald, 136.

²²³ Dianne Osland, "Heart-picking in A Simple Story," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* Vol. 16, No. 1, Oct. 2003, 79. <http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vol16/iss1/5> .

²²⁴ Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 10.

Grave churchmen here at hazard play;
So for his ugliness more fell,
Was H-d-g-r toss'd out of hell,
And in return by Satan made
First Minister of maquerade.²²⁵

The possibility of his intended bride's mixing with all the levels of society, be it high or low, appears to cause the unexpectedly snobbish former priest distress. As Castle writes: "[the] masquerade at once highlighted and challenged prevailing social norms."²²⁶ In a way, this is also what the chapters XXV, XXVI and the whole *A Simple Story* does, too, by describing and at the same time rather ridiculing the characters' actions and ideals. Moreover, apart from the rejection and turning round of the social stratification, an issue which feasibly gains on importance in the ex- Dorriforth's view with his newly acquired lordship, his refusal may have been inspired by the excessive, extravagant and lavish character of the occasion which would contribute to and even increase Miss Milner's tendency to disregard the need for frugality. Also, her all too friendly encounters with other men and their potential presence at the masque can be the reason why the future husband experiencing a flash of jealousy assumes a dominant position and explicitly states his denial. Until now, however, Elmwood is still overtly calm and rational, although already different to the kind and indulging individual he used to be.

The fact that the idea of Miss Milner actually daring to overhear his demands and to cross his will never occurs to the man is suggested by his falling silent and later leaving the room. However, his absenting himself is perhaps also indicative of the lord's incapability of truly communicating with his spouse-to-be. What is significant is that Elmwood, although

²²⁵ The Anti-Masquerade Movement. http://www.umich.edu/~ece/student_projects/masquerade/anti.html.
1.1.2008.

²²⁶ Terry Castle, *Eros and Liberty at the English Masquerade, 1710-90* 159.

presented as the paragon of gentlemanly virtues, openly violates the ideals of the sensitive, emphatic and amicable partner in marriage. Furthermore, his severe, unyielding character, his stern approach to life, and to his wife's pleasure in particular, something which will 'loom large' in the second section of the novel, is also revealed by this first and rather brief dialogue about the masquerade. The masked ball in this case appears to function as a catalyst of Elmwood's character development and thus as a major factor in the progress of the plot.

The beginning of the masquerade chapters also emphasises another aspect: the one of language. Although becoming increasingly 'manly,' Elmwood still continues in the usage of the body language, in this particular moment a physical removal, as the main means of his expression. As Anderson notes: "Certain moments in the novel ...seem to describe forms of wordless communication as more effective-more pointed, more forcible, more confirming-than the spoken word."²²⁷ The masquerade episode thus shows that the Dorriford/Lord Elmwood transition is yet not completed but that the 'ideal' form, the one which is approved of by the society, of his behaviour is still in flux. The masked ball itself brings the element of instability and uncertainty into the narrative and thus it can stand for the alterations of characters. In this way the chapters also stress the destabilising effect of the changing demands of the social norms. Moreover, Miss Milner's lover's distancing himself from his future wife and his abrupt refusal of her further speech can be read as the symbol of the ensuing abandonment of the sensibility cult's space for women's expression. Also, the 'gap' that Elmwood creates between himself and Miss Milner can be seen as already alluding to the banishment of the future Lady Elmwood.

²²⁷ Emily Hodgson Anderson, "Revising Theatrical Conventions in A Simple Story," The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies Vol. 6., No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2006) 9. Academic Search Complete. Web. 2 July 2012.

The masquerade, furthermore, may symbolise misrule and the destruction of order. In the *A Simple Story* case, it is the domestic order. Prior to the ball, Elmwood, being in love, did not contradict Miss Milner's choices of entertainment. Now, as it has been already mentioned, he 'puts his foot down.' This works as an incentive of the woman's defiance. She says to her friend: 'As my guardian I certainly did obey him; and I could obey him as a husband: but as a lover I will not.'²²⁸ Her action leads to secrecy, scheming and to emotional upheaval on both sides. The peaceful house, as the day progresses, is turned upside down as if the topsy-turvydom of the masquerade tilted its hierarchical structure. For instance, the until now revered Dorriforth/ Lord Elmwood's priesthood and his position as the arbiter of virtues in the home is questioned. It is done in order to provoke the man and that by "the most dangerous method of all"²²⁹: by laughter. Miss Milner tells her stubbornly silent fiancée that she would dress as a nun and then he, "with all [his] saintliness,"²³⁰ would have no reason to prohibit the masked assembly. The masquerade denoting the possibility of vice hidden underneath a costume of virtue thus not only suggests a social critique but also operates as a way of derision and destabilisation of the established notions and laws.

The fear of ridicule becomes clear to be another of Elmwood's characteristic traits revealed in chapter XXV and XXVI. When Miss Woodley suggests that he could accompany Miss Milner to the masquerade, he cries: "I go, Miss Woodley...Do you imagine I would play the buffoon at a masquerade?"²³¹ He is astounded and disgusted. On the general plain, the man's response is suggestive of the need to confirm the male post of authority, to install an ordered world of rationalism as opposed to the masquerade sphere of unpredictability and "wildness" which renders the official and serious world laughable. Bakhtin asserts that the

²²⁸ Inchbald, 135.

²²⁹ Inchbald, 136.

²³⁰ Inchbald, 136.

²³¹ Inchbald, 137.

carnival laughter is connected with the underworld, the freedom of spirit and the freedom of speech,²³² which is exactly what Elmwood by his behaviour rejects as far as his would-be wife is concerned. Nevertheless, his unwillingness to laugh, and especially to laugh at himself, is making him appear pitiful and comical. The whole masquerade section of the narrative gains on increasingly absurd character as it is not only Elmwood whose mask of sternness and rationality crumbles. For instance, even the severe priest Sandford later on loses his logicity and tells his companion: "Come, my Lord, come to your bedchamber-it is very late-it is morning-it is time to rise."²³³ Perhaps, the carnival topic may be viewed as emphasising the novel's implication of the socio-behavioural paradigms as being merely a 'masquerade' and asserting that underneath the masks there are merely ridiculous, laughable but also pitiable people.

It appears that the emancipation, misbehaviour and intrigue linked to the masked assembly is infectious as not only Miss Milner, but also Miss Woodley and even the chamber maid unite in opposition to the confused men and the prudish Mrs. Horton whose efforts to stop them and later to detect what in reality happened open a theatrical, or rather farcical, space in the narrative. For example, it is unexpected that the docile Miss Woodley would be attending masquerades; however, it becomes clear that she does and even without Miss Milner. The fierce critic of unchaste thoughts now admires her friend's legs showing fancy costume and she herself dresses as a wood nymph. The maid, too, behaves in a surprising way. She actually lies to the master of the house and to his priest companion. When she is sent for the second time, the dialogue develops into a full-blown comedy:

"In what dress did your lady go to the masquerade?" he asked, and with a look so extremely morose it seemed to command the answer in a single word, and that the

²³² Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 70.

²³³ Inchbald, 147.

word of truth...but her reply was: "She went in her own dress, my Lord." "Was it a man's or woman's?"... "Ha, ha, ha, my Lord!" half laughing and half crying; a woman's dress to be sure, my Lord."²³⁴

Later on the serving woman vehemently denies that her Lady wore boots and looking the men in the face she adds: "they were only half boots."²³⁵ Therefore, whether Elmwood desires it or not, he is eventually made into a fool by the masquerade event. As Castle asserts: "By adopting the clothes of the opposite sex, or costume similarly charged with suggestive meanings, masquerades parodied and demystified supposedly natural socioerotic categories. Matters of gender and sexual articulation were theatricalised-treated to displays of exquisite destabilisation and collective irony."²³⁶

The whole discussion about the dress Miss Milner donned furthermore implies the reversal of roles. She is the one who is active now, the one who asserts her power and her right for freedom, whereas it is the man who is left waiting, rather passively, at home and behaving in an increasingly emotion-ridden, almost hysterical, way. Miss Milner oversteps the boundary of the private and the domestic sphere, where she supposedly belongs according to the social patterns, and ventures out not only to the public but also to the forbidden and profane domain of the dance in masks. Also, *A Simple Story*, by the introduction of such behaviour undermines the stress "on the victimisation... and lack of agency"²³⁷ of women in the novel of sensibility. In this manner, too, the ideas of women's place and roles are proved to be constructs. In contrast to this, the masquerade event re-renders Elmwood sensible and 'feminised.' He loses self-control, he "trembles extremely and looks pale."²³⁸ When Sandford,

²³⁴ Inchbald, 112-113.

²³⁵ Inchbald, 113.

²³⁶ Castle, *Eros and Liberty* 159.

²³⁷ Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Oscillations of Sensibility," *New Literary History* Vol. 25. No. 3/1. 505. Summer 1994. J-STOR. 21. 12. 2007.

²³⁸ Inchbald, 144.

ashamed of his friend's behaviour, offers him a glass of wine to restore his physical and mental strength, in other words his masculinity, Elmwood "took it, and for once evinced he was reduced so low as to be *glad* of such a resource."²³⁹ Again, the emphasis on men's power of the final decades of the eighteenth century is shown to be as struggled with by the men themselves.

Moreover, the mentions of the costumes and the horrified and appalled responses these evoke in the Elmwood suite are linked with the connotations of frivolity and sexual liberty the masquerades had in the eighteenth century. According to Castle, "we may connect them [the masked assemblies] with a realm of erotic conspiracy and licence..."²⁴⁰ Therefore, at a certain symbolic level, the mere attendance of the ball may be perceived as a transgression of the laws of purity and fidelity. Also, what is at stake here, for Elmwood the same as for Miss Milner, is their reputation. As Breashears notes, "the contemporary masculine ideals ...linked male honour with female virtue."²⁴¹ Thus, the carnival episode can be already seen as foreshadowing the disintegration of the relationship and Elmwood's reaction to his wife's real adultery.

Moreover, what emerges as conspicuous in the text is the fact that had Elmwood accompanied his fiancé to the dance everything would have been better. Therefore, *A Simple Story* reflects the double standards of the behavioural codes. As it is explained in *Eros and Liberty at the English Masquerade, 1710-90*: "...while male attendance at masquerades is never exactly condoned either, it is somehow less heinous."²⁴² However, apart from the danger of the loss of a good name, there were other risks when a woman, in particular,

²³⁹ Inchbald, 145.

²⁴⁰ Castle, *Eros and Liberty* 156.

²⁴¹ Caroline Breashears, "Defining Masculinity in *A Simple Story*" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* Vol. 16, No. 3 (April 2004) 451.

²⁴² Castle, *Eros and Liberty* 168.

decided to be present at the masquerade at that time. The masked dances used to be sought out by criminals. For instance, in *Gentleman's Magazine* from 1754 there is a note of a certain Matilda who was raped by a man in a mask whom she believed to be her husband. Her real spouse, when he learnt of the incident, banished her to his dismal country house for life.²⁴³ This negative aspect of the masquerade is also concentrated upon in the novel. Elmwood stays awake all night; he is even incapable of sleep. Miss Horton, proving herself, perhaps unconsciously, a vindictive 'old hag' tells him:

“She is in good company, at least, my Lord.”... “She does not know herself what company she is in,” replied he. “How should she,” cried Sandford, “where everyone hides his face.”²⁴⁴

Therefore, the masquerade connotes not only pleasure but also menace. In the context of the novel, Miss Milner's visit to the ball, prefiguring the future development of the plot, amounts to the woman's 'dance macabre' and might be viewed as symbolizing the social changes of the next generation. Matilda never goes to a masquerade in the second part of the novel.

Furthermore, the masquerade theme raises the questions of identity and self-determination. The ball is an occasion which inspires Miss Milner to refuse for a while to be identified only through her relationship to a man. The costume, which simultaneously hides her social status and reveals her figure and thus, arguably, the flamboyant part of herself, appears to provide her with greater freedom. Also, the time preceding the event is devoted, after a lengthy season of thinking solely on Elmwood, to herself only: "She...for the first time in her whole life, appeared careless what he might think of her conduct...Miss Milner, for that night, dreamed less of her guardian than of the masquerade."²⁴⁵ As she primes herself for the affair, she separates herself from Elmwood, the same as he did from her; however, it is done

²⁴³ Castle, *Eros and Liberty* 170.

²⁴⁴ Inchbald, 144.

²⁴⁵ Inchbald, 135.

not because of the demonstration of refusal but to concentrate on her own mind and body. Gone is the paleness, the fainting and the homely dress. The performance of enforced meekness and domesticity is cast away and the woman is 'released' to express herself and to act according to her desires. Miss Milner is "busied in a thousand of preparations for the night."²⁴⁶ She curls her hair and tries on her costume so that it would "display her fine person to the best advantage."²⁴⁷ Despite looking like the goddess of chastity she is also sexually attractive and aware of it. Nevertheless, as the night progresses, all her joy is spoilt. The education given to her by her guardian is one of the incentives of her increasingly low mood at the ball: "the regret at having transgressed his injunctions...weighed upon her spirits."²⁴⁸ Thus, the masquerade episode also appears to function as the predecessor of Lady Elmwood's final flight from a tyrant husband, which also leads to her disgrace, punishment and, more importantly here, to a severe self-hate. However, although ultimately humbled and with her sexuality re-restrained, Miss Milner, by going to the ball succeeds in the fulfilment of her plan to let for the last time "no occasion pass of tasting all those pleasures that were not likely to return"²⁴⁹ in marriage. In contrast to her daughter, rendered flaccid and de-sexed by her severe up-bringing, Miss Milner at least dares to violate the social and behavioural barriers and to find a space for her own enjoyment and self-expression.

Thus, although the two stories abound in parallels, such as the struggling against certain contradictory concepts of behaviour and the loss in such a 'battle' and although they are linked by the character of Lord Elmwood, there are also obvious contrasts. Matilda, 'the maiden in distress,' taught to control her impulses and complying with the norms is finally accepted by her father. Nonetheless, the overall ironic tone of the novel undermines the

²⁴⁶ Inchbald, 135.

²⁴⁷ Inchbald, 135.

²⁴⁸ Inchbald, 144.

²⁴⁹ Inchbald, 127.

positive outcome. When compared to her mother, the daughter's life lacks excitement, agency and self-assertion. Therefore, arguably, the didactic purpose is subverted. Also, Matilda's demeanour makes her a wife, she gains an acknowledged position but her happiness remains doubtful and perhaps dearly paid for. Due to the comparison with the first part, the reader is led to ask: is the daughter's behaviour her own or only a show again? What is the novel's moral then, what is 'good for you'? Masquerading as a puppet of the patriarchal code or self-assertively going to the masquerade and enjoying yourself despite the consequences? And also, is the parody of the desired manners effective, is its critical aim understood and the code changed or is it actually dangerous and harmful? Is the special moment of freedom worth it? The novel may suggest it is. Nevertheless, the answers remain up to the readers. The shifting of meanings and the instability brought into the text by the masquerade scene make the space for a multitude of solutions and diverse interpretations.

The masquerade episode functions as a significant element in *A Simple Story*. It aids in the development of the plot, it casts light on the conduct of the individual characters often suggesting that social behaviour is theatrical and that the categories such as gender are in fact instances of performance, it reflects the socio-cultural changes which occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century and it accentuates the subversive nature of the novel as a whole.

Conclusion.

The objective of this work was to concentrate on eighteenth century female authors. Simultaneously popular and severely criticised during their time, the playwrights, short fiction writers and novelists succeeded in the establishing of the tradition of women's writing and established the foundations for the following generations. Nevertheless, they have usually been omitted from the canon. Only in the recent decades, with the increasing interest in the literary margins and gaps, have they been 'resurrected' and, to some extent, done justice to.

This paper in particular focuses on the talented playwright Hannah Cowley, the prolific and versatile, mostly prose-writer and journalist Eliza Haywood and the renowned critic and a novelist Elisabeth Inchbald and their works. All the three women authors can be said to be innovative and original. They overcame the obstacles of social prejudice and left a rich textual legacy to their adherents.

In particular, the paper attempted to analyse the masquerade scenes in Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*, Haywood's *Masqueraders, or the Fateful Curiosity* and Inchbald's *Simple Story* to attest to the importance of the masquerade and to register its varied textual reflections. The masquerade as a social practice and a cultural event was highly fashionable in the eighteenth century. It appears that, in a way, the vogue was in fact a reaction to the 'Age of Reason' and the overall industrial and economic progress. The masked assemblies offered their attendants the possibility of the reversal of the usual order in a similar way the medieval and Renaissance cathartic carnival rituals did. Nevertheless, the eighteenth century masquerade balls were a mixture of diverse elements; they combined the traditionally English

customs as well as the aspects of the continental carnival. As such, they were often criticised for its foreign nature and seen as a threat to the nationalistic discourse. Not only that, as the nightly gathering enabled the crossing of the borders between classes and even gender, they were seen as destabilising and harmful. The connotations of sexual licence and danger, as well as of freedom and pleasure were often reflected in the newspapers but also in the fiction of the era.

For the female visitors, in particular, the disguise and the universal confusion represented the possibility of self-assertion and liberty normally impossible due to the influences of the patriarchal code of manners. The masquerade ball represented a space where the reversal of usual roles was feasible and where the women, paradoxically, could experience certain liberating and unveiling impulses, when wearing a mask.

In the literary works, the masquerade scenes with their connotations of protean identity, general bewilderment and pretence served as the emblematic summary of the most important themes. As far as the structure of the works is concerned, the masked assembly passages facilitated the meeting of all the characters in one place and at a specific time. The masquerade can be said to frequently function as the centre of the narrative or drama. Its atmosphere influences the overall style of the writing; it is the catalyst of action and an important means of characterisation due to its revelatory purpose. Furthermore, it frequently affects the final solution of the whole work.

Apart from that, the subversive nature of the nightly occasion resonates with the texts' questioning and re-writing with a difference of the dominant male discourse. The theories of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler were applied in the interpretation of the works. The

masquerade topic reinforced the expression of the ideas of mimicry and performative acts. The social masquerade, the female masks and the masquerade ball were seen as interconnected and as parts of one discourse.

Resumé

Cílem této diplomové práce bylo soustředit se na vybrané autorky v Anglii osmnáctého století. Ačkoliv byly značně oblíbené čtenáři i divadelními diváky, musely často čelit tvrdé kritice. Byly obviňovány z přílišné otevřenosti a z porušování dobrých mravů. V této době ženy měly být především poslušnými, pilnými a věrnými dcerami a manželkami. Proto literární hrdinky, které projevovaly vlastní názory, nezávislost a které hledaly naplnění i mimo sňatek a domov, byly nepřijatelné. Až nyní, přesněji v průběhu posledních desetiletí, se změnami v literární teorii, dochází k začleňování ženských autorek do kánonu. Vychází najevo, že jim vděčíme za založení literární tradice ženského psaní a za vliv na vývoj žánrů jako je komedie, romance či novela a hlavně román.

Tato studie se především zaměřila na Hannah Cowley, talentovanou autorku divadelních her, na Elizu Haywood, plodnou spisovatelku a novinářku a na Elizabeth Inchbald, literární a divadelní kritičku a autorku románů. Hlavním cílem bylo analyzovat funkci a tematicko-strukturální vliv scén či pasáží jejich různorodých děl, které se zabývají maškarními plesy. Tyto plesy byly velice populární a pro svoji éru typické. Je možné, že v době osvícenství, době zasvěcené rozumu, nabízely alternativu, změnu řádu a katarzi podobně jako karneval v době středověku a renesance. Jelikož tyto "bály v převleku" znamenaly kombinaci tradičních a kontinentálních vlivů v době války s Francií, konfliktů ve Španělsku a Americe a jelikož umožňovaly zrušení imaginárních, byť v podvědomí pevně zakořeněných, hranic mezi třídami i muži a ženami, byly viděny jako nebezpečné a zkázonosné pro společenský status quo.

Nicméně, jejich celková atmosféra, možnost volnosti a sebeurčení, ale i zmatení a nebezpečí hlavně pro ženy, byly symbolicky významné pro celkové vyznění literárních děl a jejich uspořádání. Často je maškarní ples středem všeho dění, místem, kde se postavy potkávají a kde dochází k nečekaným proměnám. Maškaráda je i prostorem, který hraje zásadní roli v celkovém rozuzlení děje.

Emblematické významy masek jsou v této práci propojeny se společenskou, hlavně tedy ženskou, maškarádou a její schopností poukazovat na pomýlenost a absurditu od žen očekávaného, často poníženého a infantilního chování. V rozboru byly použity teorie Judith Butler a Luce Irigaray, které se zabývají koncepty jako jsou mimikry a performativní akty. Tímto způsobem byly převleky, společenské role a širší významové konotace maškarád v textech ženských autorek propojeny a použity jako součásti jednoho diskursu.

Cowley se v *The Belle's Stratagem* soustředila na divadlo a jeho mimetickou funkci. Ples v maskách se v její hře stává symbolem celé společnosti. Scéna s maškarádou je dramatickým centrem, které umožní změnu vztahů i charakterů postav. Zároveň vyjdou najevo předsudky spojené s postavením žen. Hlavní otázkou zůstává lidská identita a její pojetí jako něčeho neměnného a daného. Letitia Hardy i Lady Frances předvedou, že společenské chování a dokonce i lidská podstata sama má velmi blízko k divadelnímu představení. Paradoxně se hra dobírá toho, že pravá tvář věcí je často viděna, až když jsou nasazeny masky.

Haywood ve své novele *Masqueraders; OR the Fatal Curiosity* popisuje nebezpečné dobrodružství dvou Londýňanek, které se nechají svést stejným mužem na maškarním plese. Pravdou ale je, že i ony jsou schopny přetvářky a manipulace. Nicméně ačkoliv se proti

morálce neprohřeší o nic víc než jejich milenec, jsou nakonec krutě potrestány. Text, který Haywood napsala, se zdá být kritikou takového dvojího společenského metru. Ve hře jsou odkazy na Alexandra Popea a jeho směšnohrdinský epos *The Rape of the Lock* jehož morální a společenské principy jsou tak zpochybněny a zesměšněny.

Román, který napsala Inchbald, *A Simple Story*, se věnuje společenským a kulturním změnám konce osmnáctého století. Ve dvou dílech jsou ironicky porovnány ideály a zážitky matky a dcery. Díky neustálé „karnevalové“ proměnlivosti textu a jeho tónu je složité určit, jestli je lepší submisivnost a nemastný neslaný, byť bezpečný život dcery, nebo matčina asertivita a naplňování vlastních tužeb, jako je například návštěva maškarního bálu, ačkoliv to vede k potrestání. Román může být chápán jako subversivní a je hlavně na čtenáři, co si z tohoto zobrazení celkové společenské maškarády vybere.

Ačkoliv se tyto tři texty samozřejmě liší formou, rozsahem i pojetím, všechny zrcadlí svobodu i nebezpečí maškarád. Jejich napětí, ironie, humor i společenská kritika by mohly být přitažlivé i pro dnešní čtenáře.

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