



## ELIZA HAYWOOD'S INTRUSIVE PRACTICES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FEMINIST NARRATOLOGY

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**Abstract:** This article aims to interpret intrusive narrative passages in works of Eliza Haywood (1693-1756), one of the most prolific eighteenth-century British novelists, in terms of a new postclassical narratological project that came into being in the 1990s – feminist narratology. Employing the notion of the engaging narrator that was suggested by Robin Warhol (1986) enables us to trace dynamics of Haywood's creative literary experiments with intrusive digressions intended to reduce the narrator's distance to the extradiegetic narratee and establish intimate relations with him/her.

**Keywords:** eliza haywood, feminist narratology, feminism, English literature, british fiction, woman writer.

### Introduction

Most major discussions of eighteenth-century British fiction are now featuring Eliza Haywood as a successful playwright, translator, actress, bookseller, publisher, journalist and a prominent lady novelist whose career coincides with the professionalization of authorship in England and the rise of the English novel. This woman writer impresses a researcher by her 72 individual works presented by numerous generic categories – prose fiction, drama, poetry, translation, and periodical writing with the exception of autobiography that "... was almost the only form of writing not attempted by Eliza Haywood" (Whicher, 1915).

Despite the undisputed popularity in the new literary industry Haywood's works and their psychologically deep, complex and sophisticated narrative models have been excluded from critical debates over the rise of the English novel for more than two hundred years. It is only in the 1990s that the author's innovative mode of narration became the subject of thorough academic research and large scale literary studies began to highlight the importance of Eliza Haywood's powerful narrative voice in the beginnings of the English novel. Such literary critics as Nestor (1994), Wilputte (1995) and others initiated discussing different aspects of Haywood's experiments with narration ranging from the narratorial figures that the writer utilizes in her novels and stories to cross-gendered narration and perspective with its speech presentation. Unlike E. Wilson (2003) who studies Haywood's later fiction and analyzes plot events and thematic areas mostly mirroring the story-level, J. Fowler (2010) uses structuralist narratological terminology to interpret Haywood's discourse and promote conceptual understanding of the author's narrative strategies in Genette's terms.

### Results

This article takes on a previously uncovered area as it focuses on the analysis of Haywood's intrusive narrative practices from the perspective of feminist narratology – a new postclassical project that assimilated the work of not only French feminist theory (Kate Millett, Elaine Showalter, Ellen Moers, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray) but the concepts of male critics (Bakhtin, Genette) as well. Early in the 1980s a number of researchers began to emphasize in their critical readings the importance of the productive interaction between gender and narratological models. In her study of direct address to readers *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel* Robyn Warhol points out that "nothing prohibits us from asking, among other questions about the role of social factors in shaping narrative strategies, what part the writer's gender plays in the kinds of interventions he or she uses in narrative" (1989).

Basing on G.Prince's definition of an intrusive narrator "as (a distancing or engaging, ironic or earnest) narrator commenting in his or her own voice on the situations and events presented, their presentation, or its context; a narrator relying on and characterized by commentarial excursions or intrusions" (2003), R. Warhol

(1986) develops the notions of the “engaging” and “distancing” narrators that are characteristic of feminine and male nineteenth-century texts respectively. The differences between the narrative strategies employed by women and men writers are based on the degree they involve the actual reader in the reading process and related to such changing elements as ironic references and the frequency of direct address to the reader, the names by which the reader is addressed, the narrator’s stance towards the characters and the narrator’s implicit or explicit attitude towards the act of narration.

It is essential to note that most contemporary literary critics see Haywood’s literary career as divided into the amatory and the domestic phases attributing the author’s adaptability to her changing publishing practice, her preferences for moral fiction (Todd, 1987) and a dominating sentimental tendency (Staves). Summarizing different points of view on the basic stages in Eliza Haywood’s literary career Deborah J. Nestor states, that “we can see a definite shift in the author's narrative style and mode of representation, a shift that corresponds to the changes the novel as a genre undergoes in its own development”(1994).

There is no doubt that throughout the literary career spanning more than 40 years in the Augustan period Eliza Haywood considered her most crucial duty as a woman writer to engage the reader in the narrative, thus experimenting with intrusive digressions that range from a few lines in her amatory fiction to multiple long passages in the author’s later works associated with didactic moral literature. Meager and short is Haywood’s abrupt intrusion in the anomalous first person narrative voice in the most enthusiastically debated early novella “Fantomina” that expresses the author’s anger and frustration at the female plight. The reader is introduced to a young beautiful lady with wits and spirit who suddenly finds herself free from her parents’ control and guidance and decides to exercise her own will and talents in an adventurous intrigue with Beauplaisir. She begins masquerading adopting a succession of disguises and skillfully performs roles of Celia, Fantomina, the Widow of Bloomer and Incognita, the Lady of Quantity. The story ends with the main character’s discovery that she is pregnant and her mother’s packing her off to a convent in France. Only once throughout the narration does the intrusive narrator interrupt a series of exciting events to admire Fantomina’s “...Art of feigning...Power of putting on almost what Face she pleas’d” (Haywood, 2004a) reminding a careful reader of Haywood’s own theatrical experience.

In one of her finest early works “Idalia; or, The Unfortunate Mistress” (1723) the writer presents the story of a Venetian young girl Idalia whose great beauty attracts several suitors. One of them, Florez, is more insistent than others but Idalia’s father forbids her contact with him. Her vanity, together with lack of education and a burning desire of search for love, leads Idalia to numerous escapades all over Italy. Being forced to become “a wretched wanderer thro’ pitiless World” (Haywood, 2004b), the girl frantically tries to survive in a world of villains but in the end justice, virtue and order die with her.

In accordance with the criteria put forward by R. Warhol the narrator of the novel “Idalia” can be identified as the engaging one. Though in few intrusive digressions she does not address the extradiegetic narratee openly, yet providing an interior view of the main character and indirectly inviting the reader to experience the heroine’s romantic dilemmas and learn from them. Perceiving the reader as an understanding and sensitive interlocutor, the engaging narrator expects him/her to feel sympathy for Idalia and manages to generate strong emotions in his/her mind (“The Reader’s Imagination here can only form an Idea of that Confusion, that mingled Rage and Horror, which, at this dreadful Exigence, fill’d the Soul of the unhappy Idalia!” (Haywood, 2004b).

From time to time the engaging narrator sends a dramatized message to the reader by uttering emotionally colored remarks and identifying herself as an inseparable part of the audience (“We hear, indeed, daily Complaints of the Cruelty of Fate” (Haywood, 2004b). She encourages the reader to ponder over the universal and existential problems that are common for both him/her and the narrator (“BUT what Miseries sometimes does one rash Action bring on the whole Series of Life?” (Haywood, 2004b). So numerous in the novel are the cases when the engaging narrator shows her sympathy towards Idalia (“What Words, can represent, what Heart conceive what hers endured at this so unexpected, so shocking a View!” (Haywood, 2004b). She sincerely doubts if Idalia’s beauty will help the girl survive in this harsh world, so her prediction is it will play a fatal role in her life: “But, alas! to what End serv’d all this Beauty, these uncommon Qualifications, but to make her more remarkably unhappy?” (Haywood, 2004b).

Apart from an emotional message and sympathy another criterion that helps us to identify the signs of employing the engaging narrator strategy in the novel “Idalia” is the narrator’s insistence on telling the reader a true story. Unlike the distancing narrator who intervenes in the narrative to inform the reader that it is only a

fictional world, the engaging narrator intervenes to remind the reader that the fiction reflects “real-world conditions for which the reader should take active responsibility after putting aside a book” (Warhol 1986, p815). The “real world” effect is achieved by way of using metalepsis that locates the reader on the same plane with Idalia: “HERE was now an Alteration in the Fate of this distracted Lady” (Haywood, 2004b); “Repentance, and a sudden Abhorrence of that Vanity which had led her into this Snare, were now in vain” (Haywood, 2004b).

The strategy of the engaging narrator becomes more sophisticated and varied in Eliza Haywood’s later fiction that started in 1744 with the novel “Fortunate Foundlings” when the basic guidelines of the day were charity and generosity causing a change in the narrative tonality of fiction. M. Schofield states that after publishing Richardson’s “Pamela” “...moral instruction, good works, and the triumph of extraordinary good over incredible evil became the dominant tone of all literary productions (1985). Thus, the “foundling” theme appears in such works as the anonymous “Foundling Hospital for Wit and Humor” (1743), Moore’s comedy “The Foundling” (1748), and Fielding’s “The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling” (1749). Haywood’s contribution to this eighteenth-century tradition was a history about Luisa and Horatio, twin brother and sister who, abandoned at an early age, are brought up by the benevolent Dorilaus. From the very beginning of the novel the narrator engages the reader in a discourse on the value of upbringing, education and courtship providing him/her with instruction and entertainment for “both Sexes”. The engaging narrator initiates an informal talk in which she is not domineering. Being respectful and courteous to the reader, she becomes an interlocutor and a partner who belongs to the same audience as the reader does (“We ... think it highly necessary to assure the Reader” (Haywood, 2005). While referring to Luisa and Horatio as “our prisoners”, “our captives”, “our passionate lovers”, the engaging narrator displays her intention to move the reader to the intradiegetic level where the characters are located. Once and again the engaging narrator’s particular concern is delivering a truthful story which is why she offers a history based on “Original Letters, Private Memorandums, and the Accounts we have been favored with from the Mouths of Persons too deeply concerned in many of the chief Transactions not to be perfectly acquainted with the Truth, and of too much Honor and Integrity to put any false Colors upon it” (Haywood, 2005).

The narrative code in “Fortunate Foundlings” becomes more intimate and the degree of the reader’s involvement increases as the engaging narrator offers the extradiegetic narratee to immediately experience the same feelings which the main characters are (“Let anyone form, if they can, an idea suitable to the present situation of Horatio’s mind at so astonishing an incident” (Haywood, 2005). Combined with the metaleptical element her direct appeal helps the reader break the boundary between an interior and exterior views of the narrative space. So the engaging narrator offers to see the events happening in progress “here and now” without any narratorial mediation (“But let us now see in what manner his beautiful sister Louisa, whom we left at Vienna, was all this while engaged (Haywood, 2005).

Haywood’s, by common consent, best novel in which the writer reaches her narrative mastery is “The History of Betsy Thoughtless” (1751). It represents a typical eighteenth-century heroine whose curiosity combined with vanity and vivacity causes a number of follies and embarrassments when she finds herself in the middle of fashionable life in London. The story is both instructive and entertaining and traces Betsy’s moral development from a coquette to a reasonable woman. The engaging narrator in “The History of Betsy Thoughtless” widens her focus and sends a message to a comparatively wider audience appealing to “whoever considers Miss Betsy Thoughtless in her maiden character...” (Haywood, 1998) or “...anyone who may judge what a heart, possessed of so sincere and honorable a flame as that of Mr. Truworth’s, must feel...” (Haywood, 1998). As it can be seen the reader does not have any clearly delimited ideological position or show any signs of his/her class, race, gender, sexual preferences. In other words, the reader is perceived by the engaging narrator as the one who does not have any specifiable identity. With the distance being minimized the degree of generalization in the narration reaches its height in those numerous moral maxims uttered on behalf of the community to which both the engaging narrator and the reader belong: “We often see the love of grandeur prevails over persons of the ripest years and knowledge” (Haywood, 1998). Adopting the strategy of approaching the reader more nearly the engaging narrator invites the reader to share the “narrative” responsibility, participate in narrating events on an equal basis, and eventually enjoy the power of creativity (“At these serious reflections let us leave her (miss Flora) for a time, to see in what situation Mr. Saving was after being denied access to his mistress” (Haywood, 1998); “In order to do this, we must relate an incident in Miss Betsy’s life not hitherto mentioned (Haywood, 1998).

## Discussion

This brief description of the engaging narrator strategy identified in Eliza Haywood's fiction allows us to trace dynamics in the untrusive practices employed by the the author to open the narrative space for the extradiegetic narratee and minimize the narrative distance with him/her by way of frequent appeal to the reader, the engaging narrator's emotional involvement into the story and her attitude toward the characters as well as using the rhetorical figure of metalepsis producing a realistic effect.

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