



## İM/POSSIBILITY OF FEMALE EMPOWERMENT IN ELIZA HAYWOOD'S NOVEL *LOVE IN EXCESS OR, THE FATAL ENQUIRY* AND ELIZABETH INCHBALD'S NOVEL *A SIMPLE STORY*

ELIZA HAYWOOD'UN "*LOVE IN EXCESS OR, THE FATAL ENQUIRY*" VE ELIZABETH INCHBALD'UN "*A SIMPLE STORY*" ROMANLARINDA KADIN GÜCÜNÜN İMKÂN(SIZLIĞI)

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### Abstract

*Eliza Haywood's Love in Excess or, The Fatal Enquiry (1719) and Elizabeth Inchbald's A Simple Story (1791) speculate the validity of female voice as opposed to women's suppression and passivity or female conformity as an attitude in-between by presenting various female characters in the patriarchal backdrop of the eighteenth century England through male characters. Employing a male protagonist, D'Elmont and reflecting his transformation along with his eventual maturation through his love affairs with several female characters including Alovysa and Amena, Love in Excess pictures the eighteenth century social, cultural, and economic reality about women who are mostly defined according to their relationship with men. Likewise, A Simple Story recounts different stories of a mother, Millner and her daughter, Matilda. Millner is a woman of challenge and courage while Matilda is lost in a life of submission and silence conducted by her father, Dorriforth. Nevertheless, female characters are not altogether depicted as submissive and oppressed individuals in those novels as some of them still possess female agency to speak their minds while their acts trigger change in male characters, which proves their transgression. On the other hand, other female characters who transgress the boundaries are punished by death or unhappiness, which amounts the idea of female conformity that is most presumably chosen as a safe ground to stand in their novels by Haywood and Inchbald. The aim of this study is to discuss the possibility of female empowerment through transgression pictured with the characters of Alovysa, Ciamara, Violetta and Millner as countered with Amena and Matilda's silence and passivity, and Melliora's conformity in the novels, Love in Excess and A Simple Story that represent the social and cultural background of eighteenth century England.*

### Öz

*Eliza Haywood ve Elizabeth Inchbald'un onsekizinci yüzyıl İngiltere'si ataerki zemininde erkek karakterler aracılığıyla çeşitli kadın karakterler tanıtan Love in Excess or, The Fatal Enquiry (1719) ve A Simple Story (1791) romanları, kadın sesinin geçerliliğine karşılık kadınlara uygulanan baskı ve bu iki tutum arasında kadınların kurallara biat etmesi konularını tartışmaktadır. Love in Excess, erkek karakter D'Elmont aracılığıyla, onun Alovysa ve Amena gibi çeşitli kadın karakterlerle olan aşk ilişkileri sonucunda değişimini yansıtarak, erkeklerle olan ilişkilerine göre tanımlanan kadınlarla ilgili onsekizinci yüzyıl sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik gerçekliklerini betimler. Aynı şekilde, A Simple Story, Millner ile kızı Matilda'nın birbirinden farklı hikayesini aktarır. Millner, meydan okuyan ve cesaretli bir kadinken, Matilda babası Dorriforth'un yönettiği itaat ve sessizlik dolu bir hayat içerisinde kaybolmuştur. Yine de, bu romanlarda kadın karakterler bütünüyle itaatkar veya baskı altında resmedilmemiştir, çünkü bazıları halen fikirlerini ifade edebilecek kadınsal bir güce sahiptir ve hareketleri erkeklerde değişimi başlatır. Bu durum ise, kadınların kurallara boyun eğmediğinin kanıtıdır. Öte yandan, kuralları ihlal eden diğer kadın karakterler ölüm veya mutsuzlukla cezalandırılır, ki bu da Haywood ve Inchbald'un romanlarında, büyük olasılıkla güvenli bir zemin olarak kurallara boyun eğme yolunu seçmiş olabileceğini ifade eder. Bu çalışmanın amacı, onsekizinci yüzyıl İngiltere'sinin sosyal ve kültürel zeminini temsil eden Love in Excess ve A Simple Story romanlarında, Amena ve Matilda karakterlerinin sessizliği ve pasifliğine ve Melliora'nın kurallara uygun hareket etmesine karşılık Alovysa, Ciamara, Violetta ve Millner karakterlerinde resmedildiği gibi, kadınların kuralları ihlal etme yoluyla güç kazanmasının mümkün olup olmadığını tartışmaktır.*

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Eliza Haywood is an early eighteenth century English novelist and also an actress who is generally referred along with Daniel Defoe as an early practitioner of the English novel. She is likewise confined to the group with Aphra Behn and Delavière Manley as one of the "female writers of erotic fiction," which suggests that in this period women writers are able to earn themselves a place among male

writers like Defoe and Charles Johnstone aside from “*the female ghetto to which they are customarily consigned*” (Spacks, *Novel Beginnings...* 25). Haywood’s popularity as a woman novelist along with Behn and Manley also reflects the inclusiveness of the literary market at the beginning of the age for allowing woman writers to share their works with the public. Her success as a women writer evidences that “*women were relatively conspicuous in the fiction market*” (Turner 31) at the time. Haywood displays the qualities of formal realism in her novel, *Love in Excess* through her removing her “*authorial presence*” (Kjelland 33) from the text in some parts to give the effect of realism to readers. Using a common technique of the eighteenth century novels, she indeed experiments on her debut as a novel writer (Bruening v).

However, as a woman novelist Haywood receives positive and negative commentary on her writing. While she is flattered by “*several prefatory poems*” (Luhning 100) in *Love in Excess*, she becomes the subject of mockery by “Henry Fielding in his play *The Author’s Farce* [through] Mrs. Novel” and by “Pope’s *Dunciad* undisguised as ‘Eliza,’ where she is the prize for a (literal) pissing contest between booksellers” (“Excessive Women”). Likewise, Haywood is a marginal character in the literary circles at the time for she is a woman novelist reciting her “*autobiographical tale*” (Downie 363) which pictures amorous women trying to express their love and sexual desires. Moreover, according to the ethics of the time, novel writing is regarded as an immoral act for ladies as no honourable lady can possibly have a tale to share with the public. Their private thoughts are to be confined within domestic boundaries, otherwise they are criticised as “*even in the sympathetic critical texts, women and their writing are described in gendered, and of the sexually charged terms*” (Jones 141). In the early years of eighteenth century when Haywood takes the pen, the concept of woman novelist is still new to the English public when novel itself is yet to be established as a canonical genre (Turner 10). Finally, *Love in Excess* reflects Haywood’s own experiences as a woman living in the early eighteenth century and bears a “new and more persuasive” tone in which she tries to warn “*women and men alike to the dangers of the sexual double standard, and the politics of sex, love, and marriage*” (Dowd 7).

Similarly, Elizabeth Inchbald is an accomplished woman novelist of the late eighteenth century England. She settles her success as a novelist with her two novels, *A Simple Story* and *Nature and Art*. In fact, *A Simple Story* is so popular at the time that “*a second edition [...] [i]s ordered less than three months after the first*”

(Turner 115). Likewise, Inchbald is an extraordinary woman taking active part in politics as she is mentioned among other successful writers of the period showing great interest in Jacobin politics. Called within this group of “*philosopher novelists*” like Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, “*who had an accessible market for their work amongst individuals and organizations sympathetic to English Jacobinism and the French Revolution,*” Inchbald has strong connection to “the Dissenting intelligentsia centred in Norwich” (Turner 132). Furthermore, she is famous as a playwright and actress. For her, “*acting and writing seem to have been of similar significance*” and she “*sustain[s] a moderately successful career as an actress for well over a decade whilst attempting to supplement her income by writing comedies*” (Turner 80). Due to her experience on the stage similar to that of Eliza Haywood and Charlotte Lennox, Inchbald finds the inspiration to write novels and plays. She marries a man with a huge age difference to solve her financial problems “*while [she is] still in her teens*” (“Excessive Women”), which inspires the character of Millner in *A Simple Story*, who is a flirtatious young woman passionately desiring the love of a priest. In the same way, Inchbald is in the same line with Haywood through “*inheriting the tradition of amatory fiction*” and using “*the topos of female desire*” (Lee 198).

Haywood’s *Love in Excess* is a novel focusing on extreme desires and passions both in women and men and the tragic consequences of those unrestricted and uncontrolled feelings. Plot construction of the novel circles around Count D’Elmont’s love affairs and his final discovery of real love at the expense of the life of his wife, Alovysa and those of his former lovers Ciamara and Violetta and the victimisation of Amena. The novel follows a three-part pattern reflecting D’elmont, Alovysa, Amena and Melliora’s story along with subplots about other male and female characters in pursuit of extreme and passionate aspect of love. The first part starts with D’Elmont’s return to Paris after his military duty and Alovysa’s sudden passion for him pushing her towards writing a love letter to him confessing her love signed by “*a beautiful and worthy woman*” (Getz 24). However, it gets complicated when D’elmont mistakes Alovysa for her friend, Amena as the writer of the letter and gets involved in a love affair with Amena, a beauty with no dowry, which instantly fires Alovysa’s anger and desire of revenge towards Amena. Informing Amena’s father about the affair, Alovysa contributes to Amena’s eventual confinement to a convent as a punishment, which is followed by her marriage to D’Elmont whose main interest is in Alovysa’s substantial dowry (Rottiers 63).

The second part begins with D'elmont and Melliora's relationship as guardian and ward after Melliora's father, Monsieur Frankville's death. Although they are attracted to one another, Melliora succeeds in keeping her feelings in control, which fuels D'Elmont's passion more and pushes him towards making plans to seduce her. Meanwhile, Alovysa gets involved with Baron D'Espernay in the hope of getting information about D'Elmont. However, the part ends with Alovysa's accidental death as she falls upon D'Elmont's sword. In the third part, D'elmont is in Rome trying to find the meaning of life as Melliora lives in a convent. He encounters with Ciamara and Violetta and this encounter serves for Frankville (Melliora's brother) and Camilla's union. However, after the incidents unfold, Ciamara, who previously fell for D'Elmont's charms and openly declared her love for him, commits suicide by poison and Violetta dies of a broken heart upon hearing about her father's death assuming it happened because she left the house dressed as a boy. In this context, Ciamara and Violetta's death functions as *"the narrately endorsed fate of the passionate woman"* (McGuire), or the punishment of transgressive women as designed by Haywood in a conformist style. In the end, the order is restored for D'Elmont and Melliora are united in marriage just like Frankville and Camilla and Marques de D'Saguiller and his loyal beloved, Charlotta (Getz 25). The happy ending is narrated as follows: *"[b]oth he [D'elmont] and Frankville, are still living, blest with a numerous and hopeful issue, and continue, with their fair wives, great and lovely examples of conjugal affection"* (266).

On the other hand, Inchbald's *A Simple Story* recounts Millner and Dorriforth's love story, her betrayal to him and his taking revenge on their daughter, Matilda. The plot is divided into two parts, which mostly confuses modern critics (Walker 5) who detect the similarity of this structure with the general pattern of *Wuthering Heights* (Spacks, *Desire and Truth...* 196). The first half depicts a vivid and romantic atmosphere through the courageous and challenging figure of Miss Millner, whereas the second half adopts a more serious and gothic atmosphere with the victimised and submissive figure of Matilda. Millner is a strong character who falls in love with her guardian, a Catholic priest called Dorriforth and converts him into a lover through a process of mutual resistance and defiance, at the end of which they both yield to love. After Dorriforth's brother dies, he adopts the title Elmwood and gets freed from his dutiful celibacy. However, he plans to marry another lady, Miss Fenton, a candidate successfully eliminated by Millner's wit and *"proximity"* (*"Excessive Women"*) of knowing Dorriforth's character and getting to love him since he is her guardian living in the same house. Thus, Dorriforth and

Millner marry and become Lord and Lady Elmwood at the end of the first half. At the beginning of the second half, they have a daughter, Matilda and then, Millner cheats on Dorriforth in his absence with her former suitor, Lord Frederick. Thus, the following part of the second half, with seventeen years of time gap, adopts a gloomy and serious tone with Millner's death in remorse. The middle part of the plot covering many years is found subtle and displeasing by several eighteenth century reviewers (Robertson 127) when compared to the romantic plot of the first part and the gothic atmosphere of the last part. The middle part tells about Millner's life and death in exile and her economic deprivation along with her daughter, Matilda. This section "*adopts the purposeful narrative technique of telling rather than showing that we have seen before, especially in sentimental fiction. The narrator reports events of high drama in a distant tone of summary*" (Spacks, *Novel Beginnings...* 178). Hence, in the remainder part of the second half, Matilda is depicted as a lonely young woman who is silenced and oppressed because it is what her father, Dorriforth sees fitting for her after his wife, Millner's tragic mistake. Thus, the second part mainly reflects Matilda's relationship with her father and his treatment of her, which defines her position as a silent and invisible woman in the household. In other words, the novel projects social and political perspective of the age reflecting women's state in the society through "*the stark realism of its characters*" (Walker 1).

With a similar perspective, the position of women in the society is mostly defined by a patriarchal figure. This discourse is most apparent in the eighteenth century and immensely felt even until the end of the twentieth century. In other words, "*[m]odern women's subordinate status [i]s deemed the consequence of continuous historical oppression that stemmed from, and [i]s replicated by, the personalized and institutionalized domination of men over women in patriarchal society*" (Barker and Chalus 4). Gender politics of the eighteenth century encourages the oppression of women by the closest patriarchal figures personally while the state suppresses women within the patriarchal system. In the gender-conscious English society, men and women represent two different categories of values as "*public set against private, political against familial, [and] rational against emotional,*" (Maurer 25) which apparently leaves women in a disadvantaged position that confines them to the domestic sphere and in the hands of their patriarchal guardians. In addition, from an economic perspective, McKeon explains the domination of men in the "*realm of economy [that] separates the sexes by encompassing almost exclusively men in the eighteenth century,*" (299) which elevates men above women and makes women dependent on men. Women's social



connection to the outside world and likewise their involvement in life are made possible through the dominance of a male relative. They are restricted by their father, or if there are no parents, they are left into the care of a male guardian, as in Melliora and Millner's case in *Love in Excess* and *A Simple Story* respectively. After marriage, however, the control over women is handled by the husband. As for the situation of widowhood, the women are responsible for their honour and stance in the society but they still need the monitoring advice of a male relative. Finally, in the case of single women, "*there was no honourable place for unwed women- unless they chose to take on the veil- and most of the time they were seen as licentious or blemished in their virtue*" (Tiago 20) as reflected through Melliora, who tries to protect her virtue in a convent.

It can be gathered from all these examples that women in both early and late eighteenth century England experience social and cultural oppression by the patriarchal system in domestic and public spheres of their lives through state policy and conduct books teaching them how to behave, live and think while establishing their inferior position in the society as "*the fair sex*" and their "*duty*" categorising them as virgins, wives and widows" (Read 4, 19, 20). In addition, the female body is turned into a battleground for the practice of patriarchal power as it leaves its biologically neutral state and gets feminised through patriarchal state discourse. In relation to this, the impact of social conduct and patriarchal discourse on women produces a different type of woman by the end of eighteenth century as "*female bodies differed materially from male bodies in the way they grew, the way they worked, the way they lived, and the way they mattered*" (Youngquist 132). With this in mind, Judith Butler's ideas on the materiality of the body and the construction of gender illuminate the way how traditional patriarchal practice functions in the two novels as follows: "*the regulatory norms of "sex" work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative*" (*Bodies That Matter...* 2). In other words, with their sexualised bodies, women become subjected to the patriarchal agenda of heterosexual marriage propagation which involves procreation of a new generation, managing household economy, thus contributing to the state economy and achieving "*emotional stability*" rather than going after their emotions (Sweet 129) which is illustrated with Melliora and Matilda's conformity to the social order sealed with marriage signalling they will fulfil all their wifely duties in the future.

Exemplifying the way how social conduct determines certain choices in women's lives which are marriage, convent, death or being labelled as a fallen woman, Melantha in *Love in Excess* chooses a quick marriage to avoid public discrimination because she is pregnant. She is "married in a short time, and ha[s] the good fortune not to be suspected by her husband, though she br[ings] him a child in seven months after her wedding" (159). She benefits from the safety of marriage to save her name and honour after she has an affair with D'Elmont as an unwed woman and gets pregnant. She is forced to choose among the limited options presented for women in the age as her brother D'Espenay assaults her for her immorality: "shame of thy sex, and everlasting blot and scandal of the noble house thou art descended from" (144). Likewise, Millner in *A Simple Story* runs away after she cheats on her husband since she has no other choice in the patriarchal society. She is welcomed only by a woman who can understand her situation, Miss. Woodley, her true friend:

Guilty, but not hardened in her guilt, her pangs, her shame were the more excessive. She fled from the place at his approach; fled from his house, never again to return to a habitation where he was the master. She did not, however, elope with her paramour, but escaped to shelter herself in the most dreary retreat; where she partook of no one comfort from society, or from life, but the still unremitting friendship of Miss Woodley. (175-176).

Similarly, as the practitioners of the eighteenth century patriarchal discourse, fathers have a direct effect on their daughters in both novels. Although there are not central father figures in *Love in Excess*, several fathers are presented in relation to their daughters. To start with, Amena's father who forbids Amena from seeing D'Elmont and sends her to a convent is one such example, causing a feeling of helplessness and inferiority in his daughter, Amena. Furthermore, Melliora's father, Monsieur Frankville places D'elmont into the position of guardian for his daughter entrusting her virtue to him, which complicates the matters as D'Elmont is infatuated with Melliora. Through his confused mind and heart, at first he desires to exploit her innocence and causes her escape into the convent. Yet, he understands his true feelings for her towards the end of the novel and marries her after his adventures with several women. A similar case is observed in Violetta's father. He commands her to marry Frankville but neither she nor Frankville love one another, which is explicated through Violetta's love and death for D'Elmont and Frankville's eventual marriage to Camilla. Hence, "[i]n each case, the fathers try to

*negotiate a passage to marriage through the volatile passions of their daughters and the men they love*" (Getz 25). However, they fail most of the time because *"the novel revolves around the dangerously attractive Count D'elmont and the women who fall prey to excessive love for him"* (Getz 26). He is a highly sexual character going after his physical urges and seeing women as playthings so much so that he desires to have innocent Melliora just for the sake of possessing her body even after he brings unhappiness to Alovysa and Amena after they fall in love with him. Hence, through D'Elmont's character and eventual maturation, Haywood exploits *"the possibilities of sexual conflict"* (Turner 46).

In the same manner, *A Simple Story* depicts the importance of an affectionate father and daughter relationship and the way it influences the daughter's way of life. As a result of Millner's betrayal to him in his three years of absence, Dorriforth rejects admitting Matilda into his house when Millner abandons her in her escape. However, after Millner's death, he feels obliged to accept her on the condition that she will *"remain forgotten and ostracized"* (Csengei) triggering a change of attitude in household servants to *"take no notice whatever that she lived among them"* (*A Simple Story* 196). Dorriforth's attitude towards Matilda impacts her personality permanently for she grows up as an obedient and silent daughter who is able to earn his love only after she gets abducted. Moreover, after the incident of abduction, she desires to have Dorriforth's permanent blessing by accepting her cousin's marriage proposal upon her return home. Within this context, Matilda's character in contrast with her mother, Millner, is criticised by Mary Wollstonecraft for its weakness and she expresses her disappointment that *"the author was not able to provide a more empowering model for women readers"* (Csengei). Thus, Matilda turns out to be an obedient young woman after years of seclusion and silence conducted by the restrictive attitude of her father, Dorriforth and accepts to continue performing her duty as an obedient wife by marrying her cousin in the end.

In a similar fashion, men's arrogant attitude towards women based on the social conduct and their efforts in performing the male gender roles are other elements that add to the inferiority of women in both novels. In *Love in Excess*, the role of male characters as practitioners of patriarchal authority emerges as a major restrictive force upon female desires. As David Oakleaf explains, Amena's father's ambition to have a respectable and honourable stance in the society victimises Amena and similarly, D'elmont's careless attitude in addition to Baron D'Espenay's



intimidating approach towards Alovysa reinforce women's silence and victimisation (13). Likewise in *A Simple Story*, Dorriforth rejects to see his only child, Matilda, due to his patriarchal pride until Millner dies: "*Upon these principles he formed the unshaken resolution, never to acknowledge Lady Matilda as his child—or acknowledging her as such—never to see, to hear of, or take one concern whatever in her fate and fortune*" (180). As an outcome of patriarchal authority, endeavouring to keep social station intact through a prospective marriage and dowry is another critical issue urging men towards marriage of convenience and places them into an unhappy togetherness. D'Elmont considers marriage with Alovysa because she is a "*co-heiress (with her sister [Ansellina]) of a vast estate*" (38). His decision shows "*how Alovysa's subjecthood is thoroughly enmeshed in a patriarchal system based on patrilineal notions of property*" (Bruening 4). Underpinned as a political and social practice of the aristocratic class, patriarchal arrogance and pride also create the image of women easily exploited, manipulated and disposable. D'Elmont's attitude towards Melliora in the first phase of their relationship is that he sees her as "*a toy*" (78) and his treatment of his wife, Alovysa is a "*damned indifference [...] worse than the most vile abuse*" as Alovysa expresses (131). With D'Elmont's growing interest in Melliora, Alovysa has become "*distasteful to his fancy*" (90).

Furthermore, in line with the eighteenth century social conduct, an ideal type of woman is depicted in the novels which idealises women's obedience and inferiority in the patriarchal society. Melliora is one such woman who manages to repress her passionate feelings and decide to live in a convent to prevent any possibility of an affair with D'Elmont. She complies with the social norm of the age and as a result of "*her tenacity in achieving her goals, her perseverance is rewarded with conjugal happiness*" (Tiago 22). Hence, Melliora performs her gendered role quite consciously acting within the boundaries drawn for women in the patriarchal system and is able to receive a happy ending. Of all D'elmont's lovers presented in the novel, Melliora is the wittiest one making use of the "*discourse*" of the age effectively (Fowler 36) as she tries to persuade D'Elmont not to initiate into an affair with her: "*[y]et think what 'tis that you would do, nor for a moments joy, hazard your peace for ever*" (*Love in Excess* 117). This way, she not only protects her virtue but also underlines her status as a virgin, which affects D'Elmont's subsequent treatment of her positively as he falls in love with her and marries her at the end of the novel. In the same way, Camilla, who refuses her suitor and follows the desire of her heart "*without losing her head*" is rewarded with marriage with her lover in the end (Tiago 25). In fact, at the beginning of the novel, Alovysa is also described as a

worthy woman whose *“virtue and pride [are] the guardians of her honour”* (38). However, she gets into a conflict with the conduct of the age when she falls in love with D’elmont. Furthermore, Alovysa expresses her love not even verbally but in written form as an author, which is strictly transgressing for any woman of gentle nature: *“[c]ustom required a woman to attract and marry an eligible man, but the same custom forbade her to show her interest in a man until he had formally declared his love for her”* (43). Similarly, Matilda is the epitome of ideal woman in *A Simple Story* with her virtue and total submission to Dorriforth’s will: *“with an excellent understanding (a sedateness above her years, [...]) [Matilda] was perfectly acquainted with the whole fatal history of her mother; and was, by her, taught the respect and admiration of her father's virtues which they justly merited”* (192). Adopting her father’s merits as a woman and in a way to prove herself as the ideal type of lady as opposed to her mother’s figure, Matilda is ready to marry her cousin, Mr. Rushbrook even heart-broken if Dorriforth wishes so: *“[s]he would scarce permit him to finish the period, before she replied, ‘This is the last time, Sir, we shall ever meet, depend upon it—unless, indeed, Lord Elmwood should delegate to you the control of me--- his commands I never dispute.’ And here she burst into tears”* (212).

From another perspective, sexual inequality is a significant matter employed in both novels. While sexual freedom and fulfilment is already accessible to male characters, it is problematic for female characters as it defines their status in the society in terms of honour and worthiness. In other words, *“[t]he double standard does not operate because of major sexual differences, but because of socially imposed gender roles confining women’s emotions but liberating male passions”* (Rottiers 62). The gendered difference in social and cultural practice displays the double standard of the eighteenth century. So, it inevitably *“[...] becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained”* (Butler, *Gender Trouble...* 6). Taking women away from their inherently neutral stance and fitting them into a socially and politically constructed image, in Sue-Ellen Case’s words, gender is *“an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts”* (270 *emphasis original*). Institutionalising the ideal type of woman until the end of the eighteenth century, patriarchal discourse actually produces this gendered form of meek and obedient or conformist woman as can be detected in both novels. In this context, both Haywood and Inchbald speculate on the presence of an alternative space for female desires and passions to be expressed and fulfilled. Seeking for freedom and unable to find it in her life, Alovysa, who is a woman with strong desires has to repress her feelings in the way the conduct of the society

requires of worthy women when she hears about D'Elmont's affair with her friend, Amena. Thus, Alovysa succumbs into "a kind of seizure that drew her close to the image of the hysterical woman who has been repeatedly portrayed in many literary works" (Tiago 21). She goes into hysteria as "she rave[s], she t[ears] her hair and face, and in the extremity of her anguish [i]s ready to lay violent hands on her own life" (*Love in Excess* 43). Unable to keep her interior conflict and confused mind in check, Alovysa's body reacts to the patriarchal oppression through the outburst of a psychological crisis. Having failed in performing her gendered role, Alovysa gets beyond the social and cultural boundaries of eighteenth century through hysteria and unchecked passion she feels for D'Elmont which shatters her image as an ideal gentlewoman.

A parallel case is exhibited in Millner. When she is informed about the duel between Dorriforth and Sir Frederick, she faints "speechless on the floor" (60) as she has no words to interfere into this patriarchal act. By social conduct, she is not allowed to express her feelings for Dorriforth and "by losing consciousness, [she is] forced into an inactivity that hinders the fulfilment of the very desire uncovered by [her] fainting" (Csengei). Thus, despite their powerful stance in the face of patriarchal characters, both Alovysa and Millner are exposed to certain subjection and censoring in terms of declaring their true feelings. Likewise, silence and gaps initiated both by Millner and Matilda in *A Simple Story* serve to reflect the "absences and silences, making the novel's discourse convey what can be said in lieu of blocked, forbidden and thus unutterable affective elements" (Csengei). All of these examples yet display the huge difference between the lives of men and women in the eighteenth century leaving women disadvantaged based on their gendered roles and fixed duties.

However, as an alternative to the ideal type of woman, Haywood and Inchbald present strong women characters that reflect their own opinions and succeed in transgressing the patriarchal boundaries. Focusing on the way how women trigger change in men, *Love in Excess* and *A Simple Story* are similar in terms of the relationships of courageous women with their guardians. In other words, "Millner's scandalous love for her guardian [in *A Simple Story*] is anticipated by Melliora's love for her married guardian, D'elmont, in Haywood's *Love in Excess*" (Lee 198). The potency of these characters touches upon the issue of "an equal relationship between the sexes a realistic possibility" (Rottiers 34). However, these strong women characters who disobey the social conduct are somehow punished, which most

presumably displays the challenging yet conforming voice of the women writers, namely Haywood and Inchbald. As Craft-Fairchild remarks, both early and late eighteenth century women novelists employ a “*masquerade*” of their female characters who manage repressing their desires and achieving domestic happiness by conforming their gendered roles at “*some costs*” rather than “*advantages*” (173). To illustrate, Haywood and Inchbald introduce female characters like Melliora and Matilda who receive their ‘so-called’ happy ending by repressing their true feelings and identities in the patriarchal society. Writing a novel of amatory fiction in which “*a young, inexperienced heroine [...] falls into sexual misconduct due to the predatory nature of an older man who is unwilling to control his lust for her*” (Creel 36), Haywood warns the readers to be careful about their passions and uncontrolled feelings. At the same time, she constructs female characters who follow their feelings through the description of highly sexual scenes that reflect “*the presumption of the equality of desire in women and men*” (“Excessive Women”) and liberation of women from “*the claustrophobic notions of femininity, constructed by the patriarchal mind-set*” (Ghosh 42). Exemplified in D’Elmont’s seduction of Amena, an explicit sexual scene is displayed as follows: “[...] *all nature seemed to favour his design... [Amena] had only a thin silk night gown on, which flying open as he caught her in his arms, he found her panting heart beat measures of consent, her heaving breast swell to be pressed by his, and every pulse confess a wish to yield*” (44). Likewise, Haywood’s dilemma between restricting or freeing passionate desires can be seen through her words in the novel. She calls those who know nothing of passionate love and who are in favour of restriction of feelings “*insipids who know nothing of the matter, tell us very gravely, that we ought to love with moderation and discretion, - and take care that it is for our interest, - that we should never place our affections, but where duty leads, or at least, where neither religion, reputation, or law, may be a hindrance to our wishes*” (186).

Furthermore, Inchbald’s *A Simple Story* exhibits her own dilemma as a woman novelist depicting either a highly pro-active woman character, Millner or an ideal submissive type of woman, Matilda. The very sentence uttered by Millner displays the challenging voice of the novelist, Inchbald as a woman of the eighteenth century: “*Oh, Miss Woodley!*” exclaims Miss Milner, forced at last to confess to her friend what she feels towards Dorriforth “*I love him with all the passion of a mistress, and with all the tenderness of a wife*” (64). As far as the dominant discourse of the century extends, no honourable young lady could “*ever gave utterance to such a sentence*” (Strachey V), which demonstrates Inchbald’s dilemma

between female transgression and conformity. Her highly individualised character, Millner is a woman living for only her own happiness and vanity, as opposed to the ideal notion of women (Matilda) living by the conduct and contentment of a patriarchal figure. However, her betrayal to Dorriforth may emerge as her tragic flaw which results in loneliness and death in remorse:

Miss Milner observed, but observed with indifference, the sensations of both—there was but one passion which then held a place in her bosom, and that was vanity; vanity denned into all the species of pride, vain-glory, self-approbation— an inordinate desire of admiration, and an immoderate enjoyment of the art of pleasing, for her own individual happiness, and not for the happiness of others. (19).

Thus, in terms of female empowerment which is countered with female subjection to the patriarchal rule in the atmosphere of gothic, *A Simple Story* is called “the precursor of *Jane Eyre*” (Novakova 163). Furthermore, the shifting mood of narration in *A Simple Story* from romantic to dark as observed in the first and second half of the novel bears similarity to Jane’s dark romantic story with Rochester and the gothic mood in *Jane Eyre*.

Besides, female characters who transgress the social norms in both novels are punished according to the social conduct of the age in line with Haywood and Inchbald’s tendency towards female conformity. In other words, even though they initially give credit to strong female characters in their novels, Haywood and Inchbald conform to the social conduct of the age and reward female characters fitting the image of ideal woman that is virtuous, obedient and conformer both for literary and economic reasons. Trying to establish a respectable literary position among male authors of the eighteenth century and make a living out of it, Haywood and Inchbald feel under pressure to draw “*characters who learn to agree to their own victimization,*” (Freeman 78) and display not only the conformity of their characters but also of their own. For instance, Haywood who earns her popularity “*with the immorality of her early writing*” is able to make money only after the “*moralizing edification*” of her work, which explains her title, the “*chameleon*” novelist (Göller 96). Within this context, Alovysa is initially presented in a strong stance because she is “*a lady descended (by the father’s side) from the noble family of D’La Tours formerly Lord of Beujej, and (by her mother’s) the equally illustrious house of Montmorency*” (37-38), which marks her economic power as a woman with an honourable title. Furthermore, the very act of Alovysa’s letter writing indicates a



kind of freedom and protest against the patriarchal restrictions. However, quite aware of the social boundaries and afraid to overstep them, Alovysa regrets after writing it for a second time while she is about to sign her name as the 'author' of the letter: "[t]o pieces then...with this shameful witness of my folly" (44). From a different perspective, Alovysa becomes subjected to D'Elmont's cold treatment because he misreads her letter which primarily establishes her stance as a transgressive woman in the eyes of her future husband, D'Elmont. Furthermore, when she writes a letter to D'Elmont, she "*materializ[es] her desire in physical, textual form, [and] she makes herself vulnerable to reading/interpretation by whoever gets the letter*" (Bruening 8) and receives D'Elmont's negative reaction. Likewise, acting as a disobedient and questioning wife who constantly tries to learn about D'Elmont's motives and affairs with other women, Alovysa indeed pushes her husband away. As the social norm of the age requires, it is the undutiful and envious wife who sends the husband away and it is not the husband's fault if he becomes estranged with his wife:

Man is too arbitrary a creature to bear the least contradiction, where he pretends an absolute authority, and that wife who thinks by ill humour and perpetual taunts, to make him weary of what she would reclaim him from, only renders herself more hateful, and makes that justifiable which before was blameable in him. (96-97).

Likewise, Violetta transgresses the boundaries through disguise which masks her true identity in the public. She earns power in disguise though limited and thus, she breaks down the gender-biased social restrictions, even temporarily. As D'Elmont shows no interest in her as a woman, she disguises as a young man prepared to be D'Elmont's page and travels with him wherever he goes. Thus, "*the temporary use of a mask [disguise] gave the woman a chance to enter circles that otherwise would have been totally inaccessible*" (Tiago 26), which eventually causes her death. Finally, as previously stated, Melliora is a strong character, who is able to moderate her passion and use her mind, which rewards her with a happy ending which may be interpreted as the voice of Haywood as a women novelist of the age conforming to the norms. She reads Ovid's *Epistles* and when her opinion of the work is asked, she displays her knowledge (108) and also gives voice to Haywood's intentions in writing *Love in Excess*. She is not motivated to be involved in inappropriate behaviour by reading Ovid, proving Haywood's conformation and explaining that one cannot be misled by her novel for immorality as it is not "*a harmful text*" (Tiago 24) for young ladies.

Similarly, Inchbald's Miss Milner is strikingly introduced as a strong person. She is "*a young, idle, indiscreet, giddy girl, with half a dozen lovers in her suite*" (11) at the beginning of the novel. However, she is also described as "coquettish, confusing and unintelligible" because her "*unreadability*" is the direct result of her being a woman devoid of "*linguistic expression*" (Csengei) in the first place. Dorriforth has a hard time interpreting the unconventional character of Millner for she is Protestant and he is Catholic, a priest and also a father figure for her. Furthermore, he is celibate restricted with "*that barrier which divides a sister from a brother*" (66) and that keeps him away from Millner. Still, Millner starts loving him once he asks her decision about marriage and her opinion of her suitors. Thus, as a beautiful and vain girl, despite all his titles she manages to seduce Dorriforth, who is encircled with "*prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance*" (5). She attains agency in "*a male-dominated society by using a language based on gesture, physical performance, and visibility,*" (Walker 1) which triggers change in Dorriforth. In addition, as a rather "*witty and vivacious*" character, Millner "*not only passionately loves doubly forbidden Dorriforth [...] but also confronts the masculine tyranny of Sandford, Dorriforth's mentor*" and fights against "*patriarchal authoritarianism*" (Lee 197) as a woman highly conscious of her sexuality and gender limitations, which distinguishes her from various sentimental heroines of the time. Despite Sandford's huge patriarchal power on Dorriforth putting pressure on him to stay away from Millner, she surpasses Sandford and makes Dorriforth fall in love with her through her firm resistance and strong will. Moreover, Millner wants to attain freedom on both individual and societal level as she is after marriage for love, rather than of convenience. Millner desires to be able to choose her own husband (Nanda 3) and it is what she does in the case of Dorriforth. As she openly declares once she would never "*marry from obedience*" (85), Millner sets her mind to marry only for love as this is the path leading to her happiness and satisfaction. Nevertheless, once realising her true feelings for Dorriforth and his likewise infatuation for her, Millner demonstrates disobedience and puts a distance between herself and Dorriforth. As they are about to part, however, they decide to remain together for the rest of their lives as husband and wife. Hence, a hasty marriage ceremony is initiated by Sandford: "*[n]ever was there a more rapid change from despair to happiness—to happiness most supreme—than was that, which Miss Milner, and Lord Elmwood experienced within one single hour*" (170). Nonetheless, wedding ceremony is not a completely happy occasion for Millner as it is for Dorriforth. She calls her wedding ring "*a—mourning ring*" (170), which foreshadows her future discontentment with

her marriage and infidelity. Through her transgressive acts, Millner shows her distaste towards patriarchal restrictions imposed by the institution of marriage which conducts loyalty and total submission of a wife.

In conclusion, Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* and Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* demonstrate different portraits of women loving and trying to survive in the eighteenth century patriarchal English society, when women are fitted into an ideal image to perform their expected roles. Haywood presents the possibility of displaying female desires though in a limited way and in a conforming stance through the model of Melliora, the symbol of conformity and finding a way in-between total transgression and submission. Likewise, Inchbald constructs two female characters, Millner and Matilda, the female protagonists in *A Simple Story* who are in perfect harmony with the romantic and energetic mood of the first part and gloomy and passive atmosphere of the second half respectively. The first part is in a rather protesting and transgressing tone whereas the second part is affirming and reinforcing female invalidity as in the Gothic novel victimising Matilda into a submissive life which is most likely Inchbald's own conforming voice. Thus, it is clearly observed that throughout the eighteenth century, only a degree of female agency is attained through the characters of Alovysa, Melliora, Violetta and Millner. However, female power is once again taken back to the confines of the patriarchal sphere of social conduct and conformity with Alovysa's death by the patriarchal sword after her excessive passion and transgression in *Love in Excess or, the Fatal Inquiry* and Matilda's quick marriage restoring the patriarchal order in *A Simple Story*. Thus, as depicted with these novels, female empowerment is made possible only through conformity to the patriarchal discourse of the eighteenth century England.

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