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AGGRESSION, SUFFERING, AND AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN ELIZA HAYWOOD'S *THE HISTORY OF MISS BETSY THOUGHTLESS*

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ABSTRACT. ***Aggression, Suffering, and Affective Development in Eliza Haywood's* The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*.*** Published during a period of transition from "the epistemological or cognitive" to the "affective dimension of fiction", to use Catherine Gallagher's conceptualization of the progress of the mid-eighteenth-century novel, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* is often read as a story of development from "thoughtless coquette" to "thoughtful wife". With these two social roles in the background, this paper sets forth to examine the affective and emotional development of Betsy Thoughtless through a close reading of her reactions to scenes of suffering and forms of aggression. The claim of the paper is that Miss Betsy's history progresses as her empathy and capacity to internalize potentially traumatic events grow, which invites sympathetic identification.

Keywords: *Eliza Haywood, The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless, sights of suffering, aggression, affective development, sentimental fiction, the eighteenth-century novel.*

REZUMAT. ***Agresiune, suferință și maturizare afectivă în romanul* The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless *de Eliza Haywood*.** Publicat în timpul unei perioade de tranziție de la dimensiunea „epistemologică sau cognitivă" la „dimensiunea afectivă a ficțiunii" – ca să împrumutăm terminologia utilizată de Catherine Gallagher pentru conceptualizarea schimbărilor din evoluția romanului modern la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea –*The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* este adeseori citit ca roman al devenirii, care urmărește progresul eroinei de la „cochetă necugetată" la „soție grijulie". Păstrând aceste două roluri în fundal,

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acest articol își propune să examineze dezvoltarea afectivă și emoțională a lui Betsy Thoughtless printr-o citire atentă a reacțiilor acesteia la scene de suferință și diverse forme de agresiune. Lucrarea susține că istoria domnișoarei Betsy avansează o dată cu dezvoltarea empatiei și a capacității sale de a interioriza evenimente cu potențial traumatic, ceea ce invită identificarea afectivă din partea cititorului.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Eliza Haywood, The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless, scene de suferință, agresiune, dezvoltare afectivă, ficțiune sentimentală, romanul secolului al XVIII-lea.*

The middle of the eighteenth century witnessed important transformations in the evolution of the modern novel. John Sitter calls it an "interesting, confusing […] time of experiments" (Sitter 1982, 9). Michael McKeon locates the rise of the novel as "an abstract field of narrative possibility" around this time (McKeon 2002, xix). After expanding on McKeon's thesis, which she discussed in relation to Lennard J. Davis's (1983) view on the novel as resulting from a discursive division of fact and fiction, Catherine Gallagher associates the middle of the eighteenth century with the emergence of "pure fiction, properly speaking" (Gallagher 1999, 28). This category, in Gallagher's definition, "[carries] a moral charge", "has no 'intention to be credited'" (29), and assists in retelling the story of the novel as "nobody's story" (31). By being about "nobody *in particular*" – a nobody that avoids real-world reference, but is particularized enough to resist being put to allegorical or symbolical use – the novel can easily encourage sympathetic investment on the part of the reader. The escape from the imperative of the truth-claim and the acceptance of verisimilitude as the marker of fiction engender the transition from "the epistemological or cognitive" to "the affective dimension of fiction" and consequently invite the replacement of the "naïve reader" with the "sentimental reader" (39) who tends to indulge, sometimes excessively, in the gratification of sympathetic connection. Therefore, difficult as it might be to trace the beginning of the sentimental trend in the English novel,[2] the middle of the eighteenth century represents an important period both for the education of reading practices and for the education of moral sentiments in readers.

Mid-eighteenth-century novelists and critics had a similar understanding of the phenomenon. In 1750, Samuel Johnson writes in *The Rambler*:

[2] Geoffrey Sill points out that "[i]t is difficult to fix a date by which sentimentalism became a dominant element in the English novel; in some ways, it has always been part of the genre." (Sill 2016, 426)

> [...] when an adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world, and acts in such scenes of the universal drama, as may be the lot of any other man; young spectators fix their eyes upon him with closer attention, and hope, by observing his behaviour and success, to regulate their own practices, [...]. These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; [...] (Johnson [1750] 2011, 143)

Given the power of fiction to model behaviour, Johnson continues, "it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness" (144). Later in the century, Clara Reeve also observed that mid-century novelists had "tempered the *utile* with the *dulce,* and under the disguise of Novels, gave examples of virtue rewarded, and vice punished" (Reeve [1785] 1970, 41). Therefore, the increasing didactic value of novels seems to have started a trend that would push romance plots out of fashion and would consequently impel writers of amatory fiction to consider the reformation of their characters. Such a shift is visible in the career of Eliza Haywood (1693? – 1756), one of the most prolific and popular novelists of the first half of the eighteenth century, who has been nearly erased from literary history for almost two centuries after her death, until the revision of her contribution to the development of the genre in the 1960's. In David H. Richter's words, Haywood "wrote enormously popular erotic/political romances like *Love in Excess* (1719), but broke off work in this genre after the 1720s, turning instead to the Richardsonian novel with *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751)" (Richter 2016, 474). There might have been some market pressure caused by forces meant to shape the novel's respectability that could have influenced Haywood's writing and she can be said to have modulated her writing to tune in to what must have felt as a new trend in prose writing, given the success of Richardson's novels.[3] However, while it is true that *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* differs from Haywood's previous amatory fiction, the author does not follow the Johnsonian dictum on selectivity, nor the Richardsonian recipe of an almost ostentatious display of virtue[4], which would have been impossible

[3] John Richetti notes: "Haywood turned with the market in the 1740s and early 1750s in *The Fortunate Foundlings* (1744), *Life's Progress Through the Passions: Or, The Adventures of Natura* (1747), *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753) to much longer, more thoughtful and moralistic narratives." (Richetti 2005, 189)

[4] The case can and has been made that Richardson draws much from the tradition of amatory fiction. See, for instance, John Richetti's *The English Novel in History, 1700-1780*, 81-116 or Rebecca Tierney's *Novel Minds*, 141-72.

after her straightforward rejection of the latter in *The Anti-Pamela; or Feign'd Innocence Detected*. Instead, she prefers mixed characters and works toward the respectable educational aim of the novel in more subtle ways.[5] As Shea Stuart noted, Haywood "attempts 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 the world is" (Stuart 2002, 559).

In *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless,* Haywood employs the theme of the reformed coquette for the didactic end of the novel. She uses the scaffold of the novel of development, upon which she engrafts elements of romance and domestic fiction in order to explore the progress of her heroine and the transformative effect of difficult and dangerous situations. Virtue is important in the novel, but not conspicuously paraded, nor seen as prohibitive of enjoyment. Haywood allows Miss Betsy to make mistakes, to have a hand in her own misfortune, and to mature under the pressure of mistreatment, duress, and sights of suffering. Therefore, the claim of this paper is that even if Miss Betsy is still far from the "woman of sensibility" defined, in Geoffrey Sill's view, by "moral sentiments" and an "excessively nervous sensibility" (Sill 2016, 433), the story of her development advances with her growing empathy and capacity to internalize potentially traumatic events, thus inviting compassion and sympathetic investment from the reader.

As Ann Jessie Van Sant points out, the eighteenth century seems to have had a particular interest in the exploration of suffering and the understanding of the mechanisms of pity (Van Sant 1993, 45-59). From scientific experiments on animals, to the study of executions at Tyburn, to the development of the rhetorical ability to generate moving representations of scenes of suffering, this interest is implemental in the blooming of the cult of sensibility in the second half of the century and, implicitly, in the education of empathy and charitable feelings. In Van Sant's words, "[s]cenes of suffering pierce the sensibility, causing pity and leading to sympathetic identification. At the same time the observable sensibility invites curiosity" (56). Ildiko Csengei also noted that "self-interest, cruelty, violence" are "constitutive aspects of the ostensibly benevolent, philanthropist ideology of the eighteenth-century sensibility" (Csengei 2012, 1). Haywood exploits the connection between distressful situations and sympathetic education in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*; without resorting to the representation of excessively emotional scenes, she uses unpleasant, even direful situations to

[5] Haywood had already acknowledged the educational value of novels in her 1725 *The Tea-Table*, *Reflections on the Various Effects of Love*, where she writes: "These kind of Writings are not so trifling as by many People they are thought. — Nor are they design'd, as some imagine, for *Amusement* only, but *Instruction* also, most of them containing Morals, which if well observed would be of no small Service to those that read 'em." (Haywood [1725] 2004, 104-05)

gradually cultivate sympathetic awareness into her heroine, as well as in the reader. Miss Betsy suffers and fortunately gets out of several rape attempts, witnesses the real or feigned suffering of others, and becomes the victim of psychological aggression. All these experiences model and mature her emotional responsiveness and teach her how to own her feelings and manage her behaviour.

Miss Betsy is described by John Richetti as a "technically virtuous heroine narrowly preserved with her honour intact through a series of amorous adventures, some comic and some deeply serious" (Richetti 2005, 193). Such introduction, while valid to some extent, might place her too close to the typical heroine of amatory fiction. Miss Betsy starts off as an orphan teenager, with a good heart, whose impulsiveness, imprudence, and lack of understanding of the etiquette of gender politics place her in potentially ruinous situations. However, she is not looking for amorous adventures, and her encouragement of multiple suitors can be read as a strategy of empowering the powerless stemming from the awareness that courtship is the last period of freedom that a woman can enjoy before "dwindling into a wife" (to borrow William Congreve's illustrative phrase). As Betsy herself wonders, "'what can make the generality of Women so fond of marrying? - It looks to me like an infatuation. – Just as if it were not a greater pleasure to be courted, complimented, admired, and addressed by a number, than be confined to one, who from a slave becomes a master, and perhaps uses his authority in a manner disagreeable enough'" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 488). Moreover, such behaviour also signals emotional unavailability and fear of commitment, which could have rather plausibly grown out of the coping mechanism of a young girl, orphaned at an early age, and left to the care of Mr. Goodman, a trustee of the Thoughtless family's estate, but a stranger to her. As Haywood points out early in the novel, Miss Betsy has little say in what happens to her and had hardly benefitted from any meaningful family connection in the early years of her life. It is no wonder, then, that "[s]he had a great deal of wit, but was too volatile for reflection, and as a ship, without sufficient ballast, is tossed about at the pleasure of every wind that blows, so was she hurried thro' the ocean of life, just as each predominant passion directed" (31-32). Tempting as it might be to hold this description as a fundamental flaw of the character, acknowledging her background allows more substantial approaches to the character and, consequently, more insights into the novel.

Miss Betsy's emotional blockage is first signalled upon her father's death. Kelly McGuire argues that "the text establishes Betsy's inability to mourn as one of the central defects of her character, with the death of her father" (McGuire 2006, 289). Haywood describes the episode as follows: "On the arrival of this melancholy news, Miss Betsy felt as much grief as it was possible for a heart so young and gay as hers to be capable of; but a little time, for the most part, serves to obliterate the memory of misfortunes of this nature, even in

persons of a riper age" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 33). Living in a boarding school for four years before the event might also indicate that Betsy's reaction is not necessarily a "defect of her character," but could have been caused by the lack of paternal connection.

This limitation of emotional investment, empowered by the immediate suppression of any attempts to contemplate the gravity of a situation defines Miss Betsy's reactions for the most part of the novel. This inhibitive strategy marks her reaction to the first rape attempt she has been subject to and from which she is saved by her brother: "'Ask me no questions at present,' replied she, scarce able to speak, so strangely had her late fright seized on her spirits, but see me safe from this cursed house, and that worst of men.' Her speaking in this manner, made Mr. Francis apprehend the whole, and perhaps more than the truth" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 73). The emotional harm that this incident seems to have caused her is only conveyed through silence and remains hidden under the constant levity of Betsy's behaviour. The trope of inexpressibility locks into it and indirectly potentiates a story of suffering.

Miss Betsy is repeatedly subject to various forms of sexual harassment, which progressively shatter her characteristic merriment. It is true that more than half-way through the novel she seems to be only momentarily affected by the danger of these incidents; the protective mechanism that prevents her from acknowledging her feelings allows her to continue to act on impulse, as long as her conscience is clear and her virtue intact. However, rape attempts continue even when Miss Betsy does nothing to expose herself to such behaviour. Repeated exposure to the corruption of the world, the ruin it can bring upon young ladies, and the misery that ensues gradually teaches Miss Betsy prudence. However, the incident involving Sir Frederick occurs after she has already started to show more restraint in her behaviour and is facilitated precisely by her becoming more open to introspective exercises and more attentive to the suffering of others:

> Sweet indeed are the reflections, which flow from a consciousness of having done what virtue, and the duty owing to the character we bear in life, exacted from us, but poor Miss Betsy was not to enjoy, for any long time, so happy a tranquillity; — she was roused out of this serenity of mind, by an adventure of a different kind from all she had ever yet experienced, and which, if she were not properly guarded against, it ought to be imputed rather to the unsuspecting goodness of her heart, than to her vanity, or that inadvertency, which had occasioned her former mistakes. (Haywood [1751] 1998, 420)

As the narrator explains, it was the kindness of her heart that made her vulnerable to the sentimental blackmail of Mrs. Modely and, implicitly, to the complex plot

orchestrated against her by the impostor Sir Frederick. At this point in the story, Betsy's emotional responsiveness has increased, but this exercise in benevolence transforms her into a victim. Fortunately, she is saved again, this time by Mr. Trueworth, but the affair affects her deeply. Haywood writes:

> All her pride, her gaiety, her vanity of attracting admiration; — in fine, all that had composed her former character, seemed now to be lost and swallowed up in the sense of that bitter shame and contempt in which she imagined herself involved, and she wished for nothing but to be unseen, unregarded, and utterly forgotten, by all that had ever known her [...] (Haywood [1751] 1998, 441)

Not even the married status seems to protect her against male predatory behaviour. While it is fairly disturbing to think of the high incidence of rape attempts and sexual harassment episodes in a young woman's life, Andrea Austin proposes an engaging reading of this repetition. After elaborating on the progressively ludicrous, even farcical, quality of each occurrence, Austin points out that "the repetition of the events [functions] as a kind of parodic emphasis" (Austin 2000, 337). However, Austin claims, "Haywood's point is not that rape is funny" (337). On the contrary, rape attempts are used to expose and comment on the behaviour of the aggressor. In Austin's words,

> this juxtaposition thus works to fundamentally redirect our notion of the scene's farcical content – to expose […] that the true sham(e) is belief in Betsy's culpability. In this way, Haywood parodically takes aim at the use of this plot as stock comic theatre and prose farce, suggesting that the spectacle of old men and rakes attempting to ruin vain young girls is by no means a funny one after all. (338)

Miss Betsy's selective sensitivity to the misfortunes and suffering of other characters can be read, for the most part of the novel, in a similarly programmatic manner. The news of the duel between Mr. Staple and Mr. Trueworth, for instance, is met with consternation followed by indignation, rather than genuine concern for the health condition of the wounded party. The other characters react much faster: "Lady Mellasin and Miss Flora seemed very much alarmed; but Mr. Goodman was ready to sink from his chair" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 175). Miss Betsy, on the other hand, is more affected and irritated by the discussion generated by the disturbing news, which blamed her behaviour for the two men attempting to kill each other: "She flew out of the room, ready to cry with vexation" (177). Her reaction reflects lack of compassion for those with whom she refuses to identify (at this point in the novel, at least) because they

are perceived as a threat to her liberty. She accepted both Mr. Staple and Mr. Trueworth as suitors, but refuses to show preference for either, even if the narrator has already started to suggest that she has begun to develop feelings for the latter. It is not that Betsy refrains from publicly declaring the object of her love, but she represses her feelings altogether. She has already made it clear that she feels too young to get married and seems to cherish the freedom of new experiences – be they mistakes – above emotional gratification by reciprocation. Even when reason dictates that Mr. Trueworth's advice might save her from unpleasant situations, her cutting retort reveals the imperative of her need for self-determination: "'Farewell, sir,' said she, as she was going into it, when I want a spy to inspect, or a governor to direct my actions, the choice, perhaps, may fall on you'" (234). The fear of commitment, which would endanger her liberty, prevents her from admitting her feelings for Mr. Trueworth to herself and even forces her into acting contrary to those feelings. She only admits these feelings to herself when it is too late, when he has convinced himself that she is unworthy of his courtship and has decided to marry someone else. This also causes an unfortunate twist in Miss Betsy's story, as she no longer resists being pushed into marrying Mr. Munden.

On the other hand, Miss Betsy is capable of considerable sympathetic investment when it comes to the misfortunes of people she can easily identify with, even if acting upon those feelings triggers her own misfortune. She sympathises with her laundress, a "poor creature […] unhappily married" who "was big with child, and had no support but the labour of her hands" (248). The woman dies soon after birth, and Miss Betsy, together with Miss Mable, decides to take care of the new-born – extending her sympathy to an orphan girl is not at all surprising. But, as the narrator remarks, "[w]ho would imagine, that such a glorious act of benevolence should ever be made a handle to traduce and vilify the author?" (249). Indeed, rumours that the child is Miss Betsy's tarnish her reputation in the eyes of Mr. Trueworth.

Another more complex and more consequential act of sympathetic identification is fuelled by Miss Betsy's relationship with Miss Forward. Miss Forward, Betsy's boarding-school companion and coquette, allows herself to follow the passions of her heart, with little regard for expected virtuous behaviour. She falls victim to a seduction-and-abandonment plot and ends up making a living by selling her favours. With her, Betsy can relate: they spent their formative years in similar environments, predisposition to coquetry and need for self-determination characterizes the behaviour of both, and Miss Forward's fate could have easily been Betsy's. Therefore, Andrea Austin's reading of "the profound ambiguity between the concepts of rape and seduction" leading

to the suggestion that "Betsy's avoidance of ruin is due only to fate" (Austin 2000, 339) can be extended to explain this relationship as well.

Miss Forward's story is accompanied by the most lachrymose fragments in the novel, and Miss Betsy shares in the affect:

> These last words were accompanied with a second flood of tears, which streamed in such abundance down her cheeks, that Miss Betsy was extremely moved: her good-nature made her pity the distress, though her virtue and understanding taught her to detest and despise the ill conduct which occasioned it: she wept, and sighed, in concert with her afflicted friend, and omitted nothing that she thought might contribute to assuage her sorrows. (Haywood [1751] 1998, 110-11)

The compassionate emotional response reflects Miss Betsy's easiness in understanding the misery of her friend's situation and mirroring her suffering. Miss Forward has sinned against virtue, but Miss Betsy would not turn her back on her; on the contrary, she offers both financial aid and friendship. Spending time with Miss Forward, especially in public places, proves detrimental to Miss Betsy's reputation and, coupled with the above-mentioned rumours about Miss Betsy's ward, sets in motion a series of events that ultimately convince Mr. Trueworth that she is not worthy of his courtship. This leads to Miss Betsy's marriage to Mr. Munden, which represents her entrance into a hostile domestic environment. Therefore, Miss Betsy is punished for her reckless allegiance to a fallen woman who, despite Betsy's unarticulated hopes and wishful projections, does not reform.

However, there is more at stake in Miss Forward's tearfully conveyed story than revealing Miss Betsy as capable of emotional responsiveness to others or punishing her for commiserating with the morally undeserving. Even if the narrator makes unflattering allusions to Miss Forward's behaviour, the discourse accompanying her sorrows is meant to subtly cultivate the sympathetic imagination of the reader. The subversive distance between the often-judgemental narratorial reflections and the discourse of sorrow meant to stir sympathetic fellow-feelings even towards the technically undeserving points the satirical underlayer of the text.[6] This is actually consistent with Haywood's understanding of sensibility as a cure against prejudice, as expressed in *The Female Spectator:*

[6] In "A Gender of Opposition. Eliza Haywood's Scandal Fiction," Ros Ballaster (2000) points to the satirical treatment that Haywood gives to her masculine narrators in the earlier novels as part of her engagement both with the political scene of the day and with the politics of gender. Therefore, it is not surprising to note a similarly subversive, albeit more discrete approach to the ungendered narrator of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, whose metanarrative narratorial comments seem to borrow from the respectable moralizing discourse of punishment and reward of the day (see the discussion on Samuel Johnson at the beginning of the paper), only to allow its undermining through the sentimental quality of the novelistic discourse.

> If we could be sensible that strong Liking or Disliking we feel within ourselves was Prejudice, that very Sensibility would go a great Way towards curing us of it; but the Mischief, as I have already observed, but cannot too often repeat, is, that we mistake the most blind Partiality for the most quick-ey'd Judgement, and think every Body in the wrong, who does not see as we do. (Haywood 1999, 281)

Of course, Miss Forward's misery and suffering might serve a didactic purpose as a cautionary tale, but Miss Betsy's sharing of affect invites the reader to similar generosity, since exposing the double standard of gender norms seems to be on Haywood's agenda. Mr. Bazil, who used to purchase Miss Forward's favours, is considered a respectable member of society and is rewarded with a happy marriage to Miss Mabel. However, Miss Forward is forever punished for her transgression and has no way out of her miserable condition. Similarly, little to no damage is done to the reputation of Betsy's elder brother, Thomas, by living unmarriedly with Mademoiselle de Roquelair, but his French mistress has no chance of ever regaining her respectability.

Miss Betsy has often been exposed to suffering and distressful situations through the novel, but nothing compares to her first marriage, to Mr. Munden. Betsy's married life begins under the auspices of hostility and deprivation. It develops into the exact opposite of what she would have wanted and reflects precisely the scenario she had feared for the most part of the novel. As Stuart explains, Haywood uses Betsy's marriage to expose an institution in which a tyrant husband "can legally inflict physical and psychological abuse", while the wife can do nothing but obey (Stuart 2002, 566). Mr. Munden "considered a wife no more than an upper servant, bound to study and obey, in all things the will of him to whom she had given her hand" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 507). No wonder then that he sees no problem in mistreating her or cheating on her, and even scolds her for resisting when Lord ---- wants to rape her, as this last deed could have benefitted him financially. However, his most impactful action against her is the violent killing of the pet squirrel that Betsy had received as a token of love from Mr. Trueworth in the beginning of his courtship. In a domestic quarrel, "almost ready to burst with an inward malice" (507), Mr. Munden smashes the poor animal against the marble chimney. This act of indirect aggression toward her is triggered by the frustration of his own financial impotence, which he unsurprisingly blames on her. In its gratuitousness and brutality, it leaves a deep mark on Betsy:

> All this was done in such an instant, that Mrs. Munden had not time to make any attempt for preventing it, but the sight of so disastrous a fate befalling her little favourite, and the brutality of him who inflicted it, raised emotions in her which she neither endeavoured, nor at that instant could have the power to quell.

> 'Monster!' — cried she, — 'unworthy the name of man; — you needed not have been guilty of this low piece of cruelty, to make me see to what a wretch I am sacrificed.' (Haywood [1751] 1998, 507-08)

John Richetti reads this as "[t]he novel's single most resonant scene", which proves that "Haywood can very effectively descend from the heights of romantic melodrama and conventional conduct book female morality to a startling and significant domestic realism that is much more penetrating than Betsy's merely conventional questioning of male privilege" (Richetti 2000, 321). In his view, it also marks "the climax of Betsy's separation from carefree consumption, of lovers and other toys, and her painful insertion into brutal domestic realism" (322). To this, I would add that killing the squirrel is a site of signification, though it seems to momentarily elude the novelistic discourse. It deeply affects the pattern of Betsy's emotional responses for the rest of the story. When it happened, she could not fully process the event, and her first reaction was an outburst of anger. However, in time, the repeated domestic altercations and psychological abuses that echo this first, climactic, episode of domestic violence corrode her emotional defence mechanism. She allows her inner life and feelings to surface and become the object of her musings. Other characters observe that "she had lost some part of her vivacity, and would frequently fall into very melancholy musings" (Haywood [1751] 1998, 568).[7] She continues to be socially active, but has become more selective in her associations, more careful to avoid inappropriate situations:

> An excess of gaiety when curbed, is apt to degenerate into its contrary extreme: [...] she had lost all relish for the conversation of the Miss Airishes, and those other giddy creatures, which had composed the greatest part of her acquaintance, and too much solitude might have brought on a gloominess of temper equally uneasy to herself and to those about her; but the society of these worthy friends, — the diversions they prepared for her, and the company to which they introduced her, — kept up her native liveliness of mind, and at the same time convinced her that pleasure was no enemy to virtue, or to reputation, when partook with persons of honour and discretion. (Haywood [1751] 1998, 568-69)

By the novel's end, Betsy's affective temperament and powers of reflection have matured. She owns her feelings and allows herself to explore them. She can extend sympathy even to her abusive husband and responds to his death-bed wish to see her:

[7] Kelly McGuire performs an interesting analysis of Haywood's exploration of female melancholia. See Kelly McGuire, "Mourning and Material Culture in Eliza Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*," 299-302.

> Not all the indifference she had for the person of Mr. Munden, - not all the resentment his moroseness and ill-nature had excited in her, could hinder her from feeling an extreme shock on hearing his life was in danger; - she sought for no excuses, either to evade, or delay what he desired of her; she went directly to him, equally inclined to do so by her compassion, as she thought herself obliged to do by her duty. (Haywood [1751] 1998, 614)

The solidity of her sentimental structure makes Betsy worthy of reward. The novel has a happy ending, as Betsy marries Mr. Trueworth. This union is made possible by the death of their spouses, conveniently distant in time for Mr. Trueworth to have completed his work of mourning and be ready to revisit his feelings for Betsy – of course, Haywood deploys a *deus ex machina* strategy, but Betsy seems to have become worthy of such reward.

Miss Betsy's incremental exposure both to the distress of others and to situations harmful to herself help her accrete knowledge of the world, its workings, and the effect it has on the individual. If at the beginning of her story she seems to exhibit a form of emotional blockage that protects her from interiorizing the harshness of the unpleasant situations she finds herself in as a result of her careless behaviour, but also because of the cruelty of the patriarchal society, the repeated confrontation with suffering, distressful personal experiences, and aggression renders her more aware of the importance of correctly navigating the maze of social conventions and expectations. Even so, she can still fall victim to abuse, but her affective responses mature under duress and she gains enough power to explore her mental and emotional processes. Contemplating the landscape of Miss Betsy's affective responses helps understand her journey to emotional maturity and therefore adds important nuances to the previous readings of the novel.

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