

## Eliza Haywood's Empathy: Creating a Narrative Discourse of Her Own

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### ABSTRACT

*Based on Suzanne Keen's theory of narrative empathy, this article shows a variety of narrative techniques employed by the famous eighteenth century English woman writer, Eliza Haywood, in the amatory novel of intrigue "Idalia, Or, The Unfortunate Mistress" (1723) to evoke the reader's empathy. They include character identification, an excessive conflict paradigm, narrative voice, focalization as well as the narrator's intrusion, known in narratology as metalepsis. The narrative analysis leads to the conclusion that from the addressee-orientated perspective the author creates an ambassadorial emphatic discourse that enables her to communicate thoughts to other members of the women's community with a view to involving them in the experience of the main character who is vulnerable to sexual desire and betrayal. By doing so, Haywood pursues the goals of not only exercising women readers in "fellow-feeling" but acquiring knowledge about themselves through empathizing, and influencing attitudes to a woman's limited role in society as well.*

*Keywords: Eliza Haywood; narrative empathy; character identification; narrative situation; ambassadorial narrative strategy*

### INTRODUCTION

Eliza Haywood (1693-1756) is a successful playwright, translator, actress, bookseller, publisher, journalist and prominent lady novelist who embraced female authorship and argued for the right to work in a literary field mainly ruled by men, in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Together with Aphra Behn (1640-1698) and Delariviere Manley (1672-1724), she was acclaimed in her time as one of the "Triumvirate of Female Wits" (Sterling 1725, p. iv). Yet, she remains best known as the "Great Arbitress of Passion" (Sterling 1725, p. iv) in reference to her infamous early amatory fiction written in the 1720s-1730s. By the time David Hume wrote in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (Hume 1978, p. 415), locating all our motivation in them, Haywood had already preached this philosopher's postulate in her own life. Despite the safety and matrimony offered by married life with a moderately successful clergyman, Valentine Haywood, she escaped from his house to appear on the stage in Dublin and become "a vital player in the heady world of British theatre" (Saxton 2000, p. 6)

Apart from being a successful bohemian actress, Eliza Haywood established herself as "a leading figure in a brilliant and competitive London literary scene that included Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson" (Saxton 2000, p. 2). Haywood's early novel of amorous passion *Love in Access; Or, The Fatal Enquiry* (1719-1720) was in great demand for more than a decade, and of all works of fiction published within this period of time, only *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Gulliver's travel* (1726) enjoyed greater popularity than her pioneering novel (Saxton 2000, p. 2). After publication of *Love in Access* Haywood wrote a novel approximately every three months in the 1720s and turned mainly to non-fiction in the first half of the 1740s, returning to fiction in the latter half of the decade with her 1751 bestselling novel *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*. The majority of the writer's novels anatomises female desires and addresses the problem of women's reality in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By employing the male created virtue-in

distress theme the author presents her own version of the woman's story, actually revealing the exploitation of women, and provoking an emphatic response in the narrative audience.

The present paper studies a set of sophisticated narrative techniques used by the author to invite empathy on the part of the reader in her fictional creations, in particular, the novel *Idalia, Or, The Unfortunate Mistress* (1723), as well as demonstrates Haywood's engagement with an ambassadorial strategic empathy for women as socially disadvantaged and neglected individuals subjected to gender discrimination in the eighteenth century English society.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before considering the subject of this research paper, the empathy concept ought to be addressed first. Empathy has become widely used in politics, business, art, media, and academic disciplines including philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. In the popular language *empathy* is generally understood as a sort of 'I feel your pain' notion. In scientific discourse its implications vary from "deep emotional sharing of others' feelings", and "a cognitive assessment of the other's present conditions" to "an affective and engaged response to attend to their needs and help ameliorate their suffering" (Rifkin 2010, p. 13).

It has always been difficult to give a clear, concise and universally accepted definition of the empathy concept. The problem of defining empathy may arise in part from the frequency and the ease with which this word is employed to denote more than a half dozen phenomena. Numerous nuances in understanding the notion in question are mirrored in the definitions provided, for example, by the psychologist C. Baston:

1. Knowing another person's internal state; including thoughts and feelings;
2. Adopting the posture or matching the neural responses of an observed other;
3. Coming to feel as another person feels;
4. Intuiting or projecting oneself into another's situation;
5. Imagining how another is thinking and feeling;
6. Imagining how one would think and feel in the other's place;
7. Feeling distress at witnessing another's person's suffering;
8. Feeling for another person who is suffering (empathic concern). (2009, pp. 4-9)

These prolific characteristics, together with the overlapping senses of the word "empathy" has caused some degree of confusion in academic circles and contributed to difficulty in finding its clear and unanimous definition.

A further problem with empathy is related to controversial arguments coming from psychologists who take a position against empathy and think that 'fellow-feeling' is not always a reliable moral guide. For instance, Jesse Prinz (2011) argues that "empathy is prone to bias that render it potentially harmful" (p. 214). In his book *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion* (2016) Paul Bloom explains that empathy has a narrow focus since we tend to concentrate on the individual rather than the group, which often leads to indifference and motivates cruelty. However, a large number of contemporary research papers in pedagogy and psychology "prove the fact of altruism and empathy being the most important motive forces of our evolution" (Antonova 2011, p. 97).

The history of the term "empathy" translated from Greek *empathia* "passion, state of emotion" and *pathos* "feeling" is no less complicated, and a significant role in its elaboration belongs to German philosophers and aesthetics theorists. Laura Edwards (2013) states that it was Johann Gottfried Herder who invented *Einfühlung* (from *ein-* "in" and *föhlung* "feeling") as a scholarly method in his philosophy of history in the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Jeremy Rifkin (2010) attributes its authorship to Robert Vischer (1847–1933) who supposedly used the term in 1873. Some sources cite the philosopher and logician Hermann Lotze (1817–

1881) as the first to use *Einfühlung*, while others trace it further back to Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Novalis (1772–1801).

Researching empathy from the perspective of empirical psychology of aesthetic response was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Not surprisingly, other German scientists Johann Herbart (1776–1841) and Karl Kostlin (1819–1894) joined the field and were developing the notion of empathy. Nevertheless, the most important figure associated with the term of *Einfühlung* was Theodor Lipps (1851–1913) who adjusted it for the use in psychology. Today empathy is primarily defined as a psychological process of “feeling what the other person feels, understanding the other from a distance (telepathy), or more generally to understandingly engage in other people’s lives” (Manen 2008, p. 20).

The introduction of the word *Einfühlung* into the English language is generally connected with an American psychologist Edward Titchener (1867 – 1927) who translated Lipps’ *Einfühlung* as “empathy”. In his *Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes* (1909) he remarks: “Not only do I see gravity and modesty and pride and courtesy and stateliness, but I feel or act them in the mind’s muscles. This is, I suppose, a simple case of empathy, if we may coin that term as a rendering of *Einfühlung*” (p. 21). However, by this time the concept of *Einfühlung* had been already used in aesthetics by a British writer and aesthetics theorist Vernon Lee in a lecture given in London in 1895 (Wellek 1970, p. 170). She describes empathy as “that inference from our own inner experience which has shaped all our conceptions of an outer world” (Lee 1913, p. 68).

Another issue for academic discussion is how to distinguish between empathy and sympathy whose meanings are diverse and numerous too, extending from ancient philosophy and including “agreement,” “compassion”, “pity,” “compassion”. In our popular lexicon “empathy” and “sympathy” share key features but these terms are differentiated as they denote two complex psychological states that have their own quite distinct meanings: “empathy” is used in the sense of “feeling with other individuals, “sympathy” denotes “feeling for” another’s person’s suffering (Keen 2007, p. 4-5). In contemporary scholarly literature there have been a number of fruitful attempts to determine essential differences between these notions, for example, by suggesting that “sympathy typically rises at the pre-reflective level [...] whereas empathy presupposes reflexivity to understand another person’s situation” (Switankowsky 2000, p. 88). So, this “before or after” distinction in applying the conscious experience of the individual facilitates a better understanding of the terms “empathy” and “sympathy” and enables us to avoid confusion in their usage or in mistaking one term for the other. In this article the difference between empathy and sympathy is irrelevant considering the fact that in the eighteenth century, when Eliza Haywood wrote her fiction, the meaning of “sympathy” coincided with the modern sense of the word “empathy”.

While elaborating the notion of empathy Titchener (1915) exemplifies it in relation to a reading experience and emphasises that literature extends its reader’s imagination, emotional range and knowledge through encounters with new contextual environments and experiences offered in fictional creations (p. 198). Several contemporary researchers (Mar & Oatley 2008; Mar, Oatley & Peterson 2009), have recently studied links of literature with empathy and provided empirical data that show the interrelationship between them.

One of the key reading genres associated by literary critics with empathy is the novel. Among a number of features which characterise it and include contemporaneity, credibility and probability, familiarity, rejection of traditional plots, tradition-free language, individualism and subjectivity, coherence and unity of design, inclusivity, digressiveness, fragmentation, self-consciousness about innovation, vicariousness and novelty, a famous literary scholar J. Paul Hunter (1992) mentions empathy:

Readers of a novel, especially ‘ordinary’ readers who read for pleasure and not for professional enhancement, regularly report that they ‘identify’ or ‘empathize’ with the heroes and heroines of novels (and anxieties about their conflicts) in ways that suggest a greater closeness between readers and novel characters than between readers and characters in other fictional forms. (Hunter 1992, p. 24)

In his opinion, it is this genre that typically gives readers a sense of what it would be like to be someone else and how another identity would feel, which, consequently, leads to creating a peculiar intimate atmosphere in the novel and allows them to imagine more freely with taking the position of a character.

With its popularity as such, it is hardly surprising that the empathy concept has been appropriated by literary theory, in particular, by narratology. Empathy in this field of literary criticism is defined as “the sharing of feeling and perspective-taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing, or imagining narratives of another’s situation and condition” (Keen 2015, p. 155) and expressed with the help of different narratological categories – actants, narrative situation, matters of pace and duration, and settings. These constituents are central to the narrative mode and essential in making their emotional impact on the reader “through context sensitivity” (Bruner 1986, p. 50).

In her article *A Theory of Narrative Empathy*, Suzanne Keen (2006) introduces the notion of strategic empathy by which authors attempt to direct an emotional transaction through a fictional work aimed at a particular audience, not necessarily including every reader of the text (p. 224). She identifies such types of strategic narrative empathy as *bounded*, *ambassadorial* and *broadcast*, and claims that “bounded strategic empathy operates with an in-group, stemming from experiences of mutuality and leading to feeling with familiar others”; ambassadorial strategic empathy “addresses chosen others with the aim of cultivating their empathy for the in-group, often to a specific end”, broadcast strategic empathy “calls upon every reader to feel with the members of a group, by emphasizing common vulnerabilities and hopes through universalizing representations” (Keen 2006, p. 224).

In the following section I will outline Haywood’s engagement with narrative devices and an ambassadorial emphatic strategy in the text *Idalia, Or, The Unfortunate Mistress* (1723).

## TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The novel *Idalia* is considered to be one of the best works written by Eliza Haywood, who was described by David Erskine Baker (1764) as “perhaps the most voluminous female writer this kingdom ever produced” (p. 319). She would impress any contemporary author by the number of her writings in a variety of genres – prose fiction, drama, poetry, translation, and other fictions, with her only exception being autobiography. It should be noted that in the first descriptive bibliography George Whicher (1915) listed 67 literary works authored by her. Later, Dale Spender (1986) extended this list to 94. An important recent corrective to their bibliographies is presented by Patrick Spedding (2004), according to whom, Haywood’s canon comprises of 72 works. Among the newly discovered books are: *The City Widow* (1728), *Arden of Feversham* (1736), *Sopha: a Moral Tale* (1742), *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Young Man* (1742), *Memoirs of a Man of Honour* (1747), *Dalinda; Or, the Double Marriage* (1749), as well as *The History of Leonora Meadowson*, published posthumously in 1788.

*Idalia, Or, The Unfortunate Mistress* belongs to a formulaic genre traditionally defined in literary criticism as amatory fiction – “a particular body of narrative fiction by women which was explicitly erotic in its concentration on the representation of sentimental

love” (Ballaster 1992, p. 31). Together with Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley, Haywood elaborates the love topic from a voyeuristic perspective of the combined pleasures and ravages of seduction, whereas the authors of pious and didactic love fiction Penelope Aubin, Mary Davys, and Elizabeth Rowe “focus their texts on a woman’s response to sexual experience and betrayal – and were thus particularly relevant to the work of Richardson” (Williams 2010, p. 113).

It is necessary to mention that in the eighteenth century novels about love experience, seduction and betrayal enjoyed great popularity not only among women writers but also among male authors. According to Bowers and Richetti (2010), amatory books were so influential that even “Richardson may well have been drawn to the amatory novel tradition” (p. 13). This point of view is shared by K. Williams (2010) who claims that “the work of 1720s female authors reverberated vividly in his novels” (p. 113). Daniel Defoe is likely to have exploited the popularity of the novel of amorous intrigue as well: the title of his text *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) almost echoes that of Haywood’s.

*Idalia* is an energetically-written novel filled with passion which was the subject of heated eighteenth century debate surrounding the importance and use of passions by a man and a woman. Haywood clearly articulates her opinion towards this issue in her previously published bestseller *Love in Access* (1719 –1720): “Passion is not to be circumscribed...it would be a mere madness, as well as ill-nature, to say a person was blame-worthy for what was unavoidable” (Haywood 1997, p. 205). The writer grants the right to have sexual desires to a woman, contrary to existing beliefs in a patriarchal society. She makes passion a significant thematic element in *Idalia* encouraging the reader to explore the woman character who is dominated by a passionate love and “does the female quest for identity, fulfilment and independence” (Merican 1992, p. 39).

Like most of Haywood’s early novels eliciting sympathy, the novel *Idalia* is based on the fable about “persecuted innocence or virtue” pathetically abandoned as a result of seduction, and ending with a desperate struggle with society in exile or death. This fable became very popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century due to enormous success of *Les Portugaises* (1669) followed by a number of translations, imitations and adaptations. As M. Schofield (1985) remarks, Haywood and other authors vary the pattern of the conflict from tale to tale, which “may have given it a kind of psychological validity for female readers conscious of similar tensions in real life” (p. 17), thus, creating a powerful emphatic discourse in which they are exposed to feelings of familiar others.

In the novel *Idalia* Haywood uses a variety of narrative techniques to guide the reader’s feelings, in particular, character identification. She immediately introduces the main heroine outside the text’s boundaries. The title *Idalia, Or, The Unfortunate Mistress* announces the name of the woman who is likely to suffer hard blows of destiny and makes her emotional experience the locus of attention in the narrative. The epigraph containing four lines from Edmund Waller’s poem “The Maid’s Tragedy” is no less significant for providing an extensive layer of empathy on the part of the reader:

Under how hard a Fate are Women born!  
Priz’d to their Ruin, or expos’d to Scorn:  
If we want Beauty, we of Love despair;  
And are besieg’d, like Frontier Towns if Fair

(Waller 1752, p. 217)

Haywood expresses an interior view of her mind on what it means to be a woman searching for love in a patriarchal society and reminds readers about those misfortunes and miseries awaiting her the moment she dares to yield to such an intense emotion as passion. The writer refers the reading audience to Waller’s emphatic metaphor “Besieged Frontier Towns” that compares all the woman’s confusion and turmoil with a place captured by armed

forces. So, before even presenting the female character in the novel, Haywood initiates the reader's spontaneous sympathy for her which opens the way for character identification.

The plot of the novel focuses on a Venetian beauty, Idalia, whose search of love takes her throughout most of Italy. The young woman is so beautiful that "Imagination cannot form a Face more exquisitely lovely, such Majesty, such Sweetness, such a Regularity of her Features, accompany'd with an air at once so soft, so striking, that while she commanded she allur'd, and forc'd what she entreated" (Haywood 1723, p. 2). The first thing our attention is focused on is a close-up of the girl's attractive physical appearance. The narrator establishes readers' sympathy towards the main character by giving a detailed description of Idalia's beautiful face, "exquisitely lovely" regular features, "exactly proportion'd" shape, mien, and even motion of her head which "was sufficient to captivate a Heart" (Haywood 1723, p. 2), as well as her exceptional personal qualities that include wits and great spirit. At the same time the girl is excessively proud, obstinate and unwilling to listen to other people's advice, which is why the narrator makes an effort to justify Idalia's negative traits and tries to persuade the reader to empathise with her by explaining that one cannot totally blame the heroine for her behaviour and eventual fate since this feature "from her Childhood had been untameable, or was render'd so thro' the too-great indulgence of her doting Parents" (Haywood 1723, p. 2). Such an explanation showing Idalia's proper and caring background ensures the reader's sympathetic identification with her and results in difficulty not to experience an immediate affective response to an undeservedly unhappy ending of her story immediately announced in Haywood's rhetorical question at the very beginning of the story: "But, alas! to what End serv'd all this Beauty, these uncommon Qualifications, but to make her more remarkably unhappy?" (Haywood 1723, p. 2). The author sincerely doubts if the young woman's beauty and virtues will help her survive in this cruel world, and predicts that they will play a fatal role in her life.

In addition to character identification, Eliza Haywood uses conflicts between the characters to exercise readers in 'fellow-feeling'. The basic conflict in *Idalia* centres around the main heroine and the multiplicity of her admirers. Due to her stunning looks, she is pursued by a number of suitors, one of whom is Florez. Idalia disregards her deep father's shock and indignation at this love affair and chooses to follow her desires. However, before Florez fulfils his plan to bring the girl to ruin, his friend, Don Ferdinand, rapes Idalia despite her curses and wild resistance causing severe emotional distress to her.

An excessive conflict paradigm targeted at creating an emphatic discourse in *Idalia* is reflected in further events that form the plot of the novel. Readers learn about Idalia's attempt to find love with another man, Myrtano. But this new love interest brings more misfortunes and turns her into a "wretched Wanderer thro' the pitiless World" (Haywood 1723, p. 26-27). Forcibly separated from her beloved man, Idalia sets off on a voyage to Naples in search of him and falls a victim to the evil plans of a ship's captain, later on she is caught in a shipwreck, rescued by some warm-hearted cottagers and continues her journey to Rome where she sees Florez. Considering him the cause of all her troubles, the woman makes a plan to kill him, but stabs Myrtano who has come to his place, by mistake. Overcome by his death, in despair, Idalia stabs herself and dies as well as justice, virtue and order dying with her in the end. The reader is made to feel sorry for Idalia in the closing scene when she "tore her Hair and Face, rav'd, stamp'd, curs'd Fate, and scarce spar'd Heaven in the Extremity of her Anguish, [...] threw herself upon his bleeding Body, and kiss'd a thousand Times the Wound she had made" (Haywood 1723, p. 162). The narrator shows her sympathetic attitude towards the main heroine and fails to find words really capable of describing to the reader the sufferings of the woman who tries to survive in a world of villains: "What Words, can represent, what Heart conceive what hers endured at this so unexpected, so shocking a View!" (Haywood 1723, p. 119).

Another technique which works for promoting readers' empathy is narrative situation (Keen 2006, p. 219) presented by two aspects: narrative voice (who speaks?) and focalization (who sees?). Following Genette (1980), the terms *homodiegetic narratives* (told by a narrator who is present in the story he relates though not necessarily as a protagonist) and *heterodiegetic narratives* (told by a narrator who is absent from that story) are used in this paper. If the homodiegetic narrator is also the protagonist of the narrative, it is an *autodiegetic* narrator. Genette's term *focalisation* (Genette 1980, p. 189) has been modified by Rimmon-Kennan (1983) who offers such terminological elements as an *external focaliser*, an *internal focaliser* and *character-focaliser*.

Haywood successfully employs both narrative voice and focalization to convey Idalia's mental state and elicit sympathy for her on the part of the reader. The narrative in the following excerpt starts with generalizations (external focalization) about love, in particular, its early beginnings:

THE Infancy of Love is generally the most pleasing Part of it, when new Desires play round the innocent Heart, and gentle Thrillings warm the throbbing Veins, the tender Passion by swift, but unperceiv'd Degrees stealing thro' all the Seats of Life, affords only gay Wishes, pleasing Dreams, and rapturous Images of Joys to come; but in another manner did it enter the Soul of this unquiet Fair. (Haywood 1723, p. 40)

The writer gives a vivid description of feelings which a person experiences when in love – an exciting combination of flushing, trembling, fantasy, obsession and sexual arousal. However, this happy feeling is different for our heroine. With a view to explaining what causes the difference, the heterodiegetic narrative focus changes, and the narration becomes omniscient moving inside the main character:

She no sooner found herself alone, than giving way to her impatient Passion, a thousand widely different Thoughts, all wild and stormy as a troubled Sea, o'erwhelm'd Reflection, and made Reason giddy: She was presently sensible that she lov'd, and lov'd to that prodigious Height, that the least Appearance of an Obstacle to what she wish'd, was worse than Death: Her ruin'd Honour, and her blacken'd Fame seem'd now Misfortunes more terrible by far than ever they had done before. (Haywood 1723, pp. 40-41)

It is becoming obvious to the young woman that no matter how overwhelming Idalia's love for Myrtano might be, she is bound to suffer because of her ruined reputation which develops into an insurmountable hurdle on the way to a happy and harmonic relationship with her beloved man. As the narration unfolds, the reader is presented with strong doubts and misery of the main character described in a narrated monologue to convey her consciousness:

*Oh! 'tis impossible (cry'd she to herself) that Myrtano, the lovely, the accomplish'd Myrtano, can ever think the undone Idalia an Object worthy of his serious Affections! – No, 'twas all Gallantry! – all unmeaning Flattery which dictates the tender Words he spoke! – His Heart despises the Indiscretion of my Conduct! – Pity is the most tender – Sentiment he can regard me with – And, oh! how distant is that from what I would inspire! A Stream of Tears succeeded these Expressions [...]* (Haywood 1723, pp. 40-41)

A sophisticated blend of narrative techniques used by the woman writer in the above extended passage not only helps the story move along effectively and keep it coherent and interesting. Haywood opens Idalia's mind charting her internal thoughts to show an increasing desperation of the woman whose reputation is at stake. Undoubtedly, the main character evokes empathy from readers, especially those who have had actual experience in navigating ruined honour.

Haywood tries to involve the reader in responding to the events which she describes as a true story and makes clear that the story is not imaginary but based on actual events. This acknowledgement, in J. Fowler's opinion, echoes the technique of Aphra Behn whose

narrators presented the reader “with ‘the history’ of a person’s life rather than a simple fictional tale” (Fowler 2010, p. 42). In an attempt to convince us that the story is real and the character is fully “human”, Haywood conflates the borders of the real and fictional worlds and locates the reader on the same plane with Idalia: “HERE was *now* an Alteration in the Fate of this distracted Lady” (Haywood 1723, p. 51); “Repentance, and a sudden Abhorrence of that Vanity which had led her into this Snare, were *now* in vain” (Haywood 1723, p. 10). This “real world” effect achieved by metalepsis enables the heterodiegetic narrator to create an intimate friendly atmosphere of communication, convey Idalia’s emotional state directly to readers and promote compassion in them.

In his influential work *Popular Fiction Before Richardson* (1969), John Richetti introduces his own version of Haywood’s “ideal” reader. According to the researcher, it is a woman who “could be expected to possess a certain imaginative expertise, a sophistication of a sort which required emotional intensity” (p. 168). Supporting Richetti’s assumption, and taking into consideration the fact that in popular culture empathy is often represented as a typically female trait, I argue, that in the novel *Idalia*, Eliza Haywood creates an ambassadorial emphatic discourse in which she appeals via the woman narrator to the women’s community and pursues the goal to help women acquire knowledge about themselves through passions and change attitudes to a woman’s role in society based on the process of self-identification with the main heroine.

It is generally hard to gender the heterodiegetic narrator in novels if it is not indicated grammatically. In this case most researchers follow Susan Lanser’s suggestion to use the pronoun appropriate to the author’s sex; i.e., consider the narrator to be male if the author is male, and that the narrator is female if the author is female, respectively (Lanser 1981, 166-168). So, in the novel *Idalia* the narrator is a female who sends dramatised messages to readers throughout the novel and encourages them to speculate over common problems of the women. For example, she becomes particularly emotional at describing the heroine’s feelings in a shocking rape scene, which makes the reader feel sorry for Idalia who has been victimised as her innocence is betrayed:

What was now the distraction of this unhappy Lady, waked from her Dream of Vanity to certain Ruin! Unavoidable Destruction! She rav’d, she tore, did all that a Woman could do , but all in vain! – In the Midst of Shrieks and Tremblings, Cries, Curses, Swoonings, the impatient Ferdinand perpetrated his Intent , and finish’d her Undoing.

(Haywood 1723, p. 17)

Haywood is almost confident of a sympathetic response which readers may have for the heroine at seeing her distress, shame and outrage as well as Don Ferdinand’s brutal and violent sexual behaviour. She anticipates the way the reader will process this drama that causes the narrator’s predictable lack for words: “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*! Tis not in Words to represent it!” (Haywood 1723, p. 11). One cannot but feel, on the one hand, a growing aversion to the act of rape, on the other – deep concern for Idalia’s sufferings and trauma. In such a way Haywood gives readers food for thought to stimulate their emphatic imagination and ponder on what it would feel like to find themselves in Idalia’s unfortunate circumstances.

From the very beginning of the novel the reading audience is addressed by the employment of the plural pronoun “we”:

IF there were a Possibility that the Warmth and Vigour of Youth cou’d be temper’d with a due Consideration, and the Power of judging rightly, how easy were it to avoid the Ills which most of us endure? How few would be unhappy? With what Serenity might the *Noon* of Life glide on, could we account with Reason for our *Morning* Actions!

(Haywood 1723, p. 1)



Haywood identifies herself as an inseparable part of the women's community. She personally seems to have gone through her own mistakes and pain, which entitles her to speak about women's misfortunes caused by lack of experience in love affairs at a young age.

An important role in creating Haywood's emphatic discourse in the novel belongs to situational empathy. The latter "involves less self-extension in imaginative and more recognition of prior (or current) experience" and "maybe enhanced by particular historical, economical, cultural, or social circumstances" (Keen 2007, p. 80). Readers' knowledge of an eighteenth century woman who was completely controlled by a man, deprived of any form of education and respected jobs and expected to fulfil basically the roles of mother, housekeeper, and worker, contributes to understanding her circumstances and eliciting sympathy for those women who had to live in a high stress environment. Haywood herself was among them. Since her astonishing public activity showed no signs of concordance with all eighteenth century considerations of women, it caused scandal to be attached to her name and reputation for many subsequent years. The author had to suffer from vicious attacks from Alexander Pope who presented her as 'one of those shameless scribblers' in *The Dunciad* (1728); characterisations by Fielding who satirised her as 'Mrs. Novel' in *The Author's Farce* (1730) were unflattering as well; the woman writer was also treated with scorn and ridicule by other leading literature figures. Yet, Haywood survived, adapted to changing popular tastes, and managed to be more widely read over a longer period of time compared to very few other women writers of her day, and even reached a modern generation of readers "to garner an emotional resonant reading" (Keen 2007, p. 214). She became one of those women authors who were engaged in "an open dialogue with the society in order for it to reassess its view of women and consequently acknowledge the strength and abilities of female roles" (Bakar, Yusof & Vengadasamy 2016, p. 99).

## CONCLUSION

This article provides a case study of narrative empathy in the novel *Idalia*, written by Eliza Haywood – the most famous and prolific British woman writer of the eighteenth century. This woman writer makes a good subject for research as her texts are certainly capable of activating empathy throughout the centuries: they were tremendously popular with the reading public in the 1720s, and despite suffering from neglect in the nineteenth century, have found their own readers today. This fact proves the writer's exceptional craft of engaging empathy and opens the door for its thorough research.

I have focused my attention on narrative empathy in one of Haywood's early novels *Idalia*, ranked among her finest works where the author portrays the main heroine in some depth probing the psychological motives for her actions. Human feelings and impulses are essential for the author and contribute to the reader's successful involvement into the narrative. Another important ingredient of Haywood's story is its capacity to move, affect and make the reader feel for *Idalia* whose life has been ruined by passion. The writer saturates her elaboration of the topic of love and passion with empathy employing a variety of narrative techniques that invite the reader's compassion. They include character identification, an excessive conflict paradigm, narrative voice, focalisation, and metaleptical conflating the fictional and real worlds. An important role in creating responsive communication in the novel also belongs to situational empathy.

The novel *Idalia* is a good example of an ambassadorial strategic empathic discourse where the author appeals to each member of the women's community with a view to initiating the process of self-identification with the character. By describing *Idalia* in highly emotional psychological states, Haywood increases readers' empathy and improves their

capacity to understand the mental states of the other better. It is not that the author's storytelling intention is to perform an autopsy on her society and give a step by step analysis of what exactly is wrong with it, each woman reader is merely invited to participate in Haywood's thought-provoking narrative experiment to broaden their consciousness and awareness of gender related issues.

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