Eliza Haywood (1693?-1756)

Erin Schilling

This portrait is Eliza Haywood, created by Georgia Vertue, circa 1700-1725. Source: National Portrait Gallery
Early and personal life

- Little is known about her early life, including discrepancies about her year of birth and family.
- Her father was probably a small shopkeeper, and it is not clear how she was educated.
- There are some discrepancies on her marriage, but it is confirmed she left her husband around the 1720s and supported herself and her two children by her personal literary pursuits.
Haywood’s literary career

- Started acting in Dublin around 1715, transitioned into playwriting
- Wrote romance and adventure novels which evolved into more conservative, developed novels at the end of her career; influenced Jane Austen
- Translated other works to support herself and kids
- Audience of middle-class women
- Produced more than 60 romances, secret histories and translations, edited two periodicals, composed guide and manner books and wrote essays
The Female Spectator

- Anonymously published this popular monthly journal from 1744-1746
- Purpose to comment on manners and bad practices in society (gambling, lying, etc)
- Topics introduced by conversation or letter followed by story
- Spinoff of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele’s The Spectator

The title page of The Female Spectator reprinted in Selected Works of Eliza Haywood, edited by Alexander Pettit
The Spectator

- 1711-1712
- Bestseller
- Carried news but also commented on manners, morals and literature
- Popular model for showing different perspectives
“I believe I shall easily be understood to mean Marriage, since there is no one Ting, on which the Happiness of Mankind so much depends; it is indeed the Fountain-Head of all the Comforts we can enjoy ourselves, and of those we transmit to our Posterity” (54-55).

In fine, there are no Words to express the Miseries of a loath’d Embrace; and she who sacrifices to Pride or Pique the Pleasures of her Youth, by marrying with the Man she hates, will soon, tho’ too late to repair the irremediable Mischief, repent in the utmost Bitterness of Soul what she has done” (56).
“If those Speeches and Actions, which in their own Nature are indifferent, appear ridiculous when they proceed from a wrong Sex, the Faults and Imperfections of one Sex transplanted into another, appear black and monstrous” (252).

“Women were formed to temper Mankind and sooth them into Tendernesss and Compassion; not to set an Edge upon their Minds, and blow up i them those Passions which are too apt to rise of their own Accord” (252).
III Curielus, by Dryden, to Flatterry.
III Habits from being excuted Flee.

THE FEMALE SPECTATOR.

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