Dreaming the Rebellious Dream: 
Reconstruction of the Happy Marriage in Eliza Haywood’s 
*The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* 

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As some critics such as Paula Backscheider and John Richetti have noted, eighteenth-century women writers greatly influenced the advance of what we now call the “British Novel.” 1) Of these women writers, one of the most important is Eliza Haywood. Besides writing over twenty pieces of short fiction, this successful female author wrote more than seventy longer works in six genres over the course of her forty-year career. Despite Haywood’s being a skilled and highly productive writer, it was not until the 1970s, when feminists began rediscovering early

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1) See Paula Backscheider and John Richetti’s introduction to *Popular Fiction by Women 1660-1730.*
women writers, that she started to be known to literary critics. Fortunately, thanks to many scholars who have brought renewed attention to her works, Haywood’s works have begun to enter the canon and enjoy the fame they deserve. Kristen Saxton’s collection of essays on Haywood’s work, *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on her Life and Work* (2000), Patrick Spedding’s *A Bibliography of Eliza Haywood* (2004), Kathryn R. King’s *A Political Biography of Eliza Haywood* 2) (2012) as well as the reissuing of a number of her works in paperback for classroom use prove that Haywood’s works are being established as canonical ones. In addition, we see the evidence of her change in reputation in John Richetti’s totally different attitudes toward Eliza Haywood. He showed a scornful attitude toward Eliza Haywood in his 1969 work, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739*, but he valued Eliza Haywood highly in his 1996 work, *Popular Fiction by Women 1660-1730*. Furthermore, demonstrating further evidence of his change of heart, Richetti published a modern edition of Haywood’s *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* in 2005.

Despite the fact that Haywood’s works have received attention from critics more and more, there is one widespread misunderstanding about her works. That is, her earlier career is deemed the “amatory period” in which she reveals women’s physical desire openly and portrays the inequality and oppression that eighteenth-century women undergo; her later career is the “moral” period in which Haywood addresses women’s decent behaviors adopting a more conservative attitude. 3)

2) In her *Political Biography* King offers new interpretation of Haywood. Unlike other critics who explore Haywood’s works focusing on her amatory novels or conservative ones, King examines Haywood’s works and career from political perspective.

3) In *The Progress of Romance: Through Times, Centuries and Manners*, Eighteenth-century commentator on the novel Clara Reeve saw Eliza Haywood’s career as divided into two distinctive periods: her early period as an amatory writer and her later part as a “moral” writer: “Ms. Haywood once has been seduced into writing some amorous novels in her youth before repenting her faults, and employing the latter part of her life in expiating the offences of the former” (120). Influenced by Clara Reeve’s view, the majority of later