InScriptum: A Journal of Language and Literary Studies
ISSN 2720-2402, 2023, No 4 (4), 11–34

FRANCESCA GUIDOTTI
Università degli studi di Bergamo

Charlotte Lennox's Path to *The Female Quixote*: A Journey Along and Across Borders

Abstract

This paper explores the literary odyssey of Charlotte Lennox through the English cultural scene of the eighteenth century, marked by the rise of the novel and by a resurgence of quixotism. Drawing upon biographical reconstruction, historical context, and textual analysis, it interprets Lennox's multifaceted figure as that of a "frontier writer", set on negotiating societal and literary boundaries by developing a transformative approach to gender and genre dynamics. After discussing the writer's ability to forge alliances and turn perceived weaknesses into strengths, the essay traces her trajectory, from early ventures into poetry to her subsequent engagement in prose fiction. It eventually focuses on her second and most renowned novel, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752), which can be read as a confirmation of the barriers of dominant ideology but also as a thought-provoking critique and a longed-for overcoming of those very barriers. Lennox's work then sheds light on the ideological complexities of the eighteenth-century English novel, meant as a site of both border-raising and border-crossing.

Keywords: *Charlotte Lennox, The Female Quixote, The Art of Coquetry, The Life of Harriot Stuart, rise of the novel, quixotism, Samuel Johnson*

1. The English "Rise of the Novel": Literary Boundaries

The mid-eighteenth century, aptly defined as "the beginning of modernity" (Koselleck 2002: 154), witnessed a remarkable transformation in the literary landscape, particularly in England, where the conventionally termed "rise of the novel" (Watt [1957] 2015) would provide writers with a canvas for exploring the complexities of the psyche and the subtleties of interpersonal relationships. The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and individualism had created a fertile ground for the exploration of human nature and of the individual's place in society; more-

DOI: 10.25951/10568

over, socio-economic transformations such as the increasing urbanization, the rise of the middle-class, and the spread of literacy fostered a demand for a literature in line with the contemporary world.

The rise of the novel was, first and foremost, a commercial enterprise closely intertwined with the growing importance of middle-class sellers and buyers, eager for entertainment and moral education through literature (Guidotti 2019). Unsurprisingly, all subsequent interpretations of the phenomenon have been heavily influenced by the material forces at stake in that original historical context, notably marked by the decline of court patronage and the advent of new forms of artistic talent-scouting, by the expansion of a printing industry which proved more efficient and cost-effective than ever, by the emergence of influential literary periodicals, and by the establishment of copyright laws protecting the intellectual property of authors. The period saw an unprecedented increase in the number of literary professionals who profited from the growing demand for newly conceived works of fiction and, consequently, needed to devise strategies of dissemination and promotion aimed primarily at remarking the supposed "novelty and interest for an expanded audience" (Kvande – Spurgeon 2014: 226, note 14) of their brand new products, although such terms as *novel*, *history* and *romance* were still being used interchangeably.

The romance came to be conceived as "what the novel was not": its "utility […] consisted precisely in its vagueness", and in its becoming "the chaotic negative space outside the novel that determined the outlines of the novel's form" (Langbauer 1984: 29). Novelists insisted on their deliberate break with the romance genre, expressing concern about its potential impact on the moral development and the worldview of young and impressionable readers[1]. The novel, then, openly emerged as a rejection of the romance genre, though nowadays scholars observe that such oversimplified mission statement does no justice whatsoever to

[1] In his *Rambler* essays (Johnson 2011), Dr Johnson argued that romantic narratives portrayed unrealistic and idealized events of love and life, setting up false expectations and encouraging distorted perceptions of reality. He maintained that young readers, who were often impressionable and lacked real-life experience, might confuse the fictional world of romance with the challenges of actual relationships, so that they became unable to tackle the complexities of adulthood. He also argued that romances induced their reading public to indulge in fantasies of unattainable wealth and power, thereby fostering discontentment with real-world circumstances and leading to a neglect of everyday responsibilities and duties. As the romance was allegedly devoid of ethical concerns, impressionable readers might internalize the characters' questionable actions and behaviours. The moral confusion romances engendered could very possibly entail a subsequent disregard of societal norms.

the complex interplay between the two literary forms (Eagleton 2005: 2). Despite its name, the novel was not completely new in so far as it stemmed from a rich tradition of storytelling that predated the eighteenth century and which also included the picaresque and allegory. As for romances, it is now well established that the new genre did not wholly repudiate their model; rather, it absorbed and transformed several of its elements, incorporating them into its own narrative framework (Eagleton 2005: 2-3). Though far from settled, the boundary erected between the novel and the romance fueled literary imagination, providing opportunity for investigating and even for questioning the divide.

It is then no coincidence that Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, "a work which actually takes this clash between romance and realism as its subject-matter, thus turning a formal issue into a thematic one" (Eagleton 2005: 3), has been considered the first modern novel or, at least, regarded as a seminal work in the history of the genre. The story of its eponymous protagonist, an "ingenious Hidalgo" who, being obsessed with tales of chivalry, embarks on imaginary adventures as a self-proclaimed knight-errant, can be read as a satirical illustration of the dangers incurred in an excessive consumption of unrealistic romances, which will ultimately drive people insane. The incongruous merging of novel and romance in Cervantes' timeless masterpiece creates a complex and multilayered narrative which defies conventional borders, encouraging readers to question the limitations set by society and inviting modern writers to break free from established literary conventions by envisioning alternative possibilities for an individual agency rooted in self-reflection and emancipation.

The tradition of quixotism plays an integral part in the rise of the English novel (Staves 1972, Motooka 1998); its impact on the themes, characters, and narrative structures of various literary works is undeniable. In Britain, quixotism took on different forms: from the corrosive satire of the motifs of romance, to the iconic figure of the romanticized leading character and the predilection of either episodic storytelling or metafictional devices. Unsurprisingly, the quixotic model offered opportunities for both reinforcing and blurring boundaries, for reaffirming and challenging conventional norms and cultural expectations; it became a site of ideological imposition as well as resistance. Romantic narratives usually portrayed women as passive recipients of manly acts of heroism, or as mere objects of male desire; however, they also made room for implicit denunciation and prospective subversion of these gendered stereotypes. Eighteenth-century female writers, "spontaneous semioticians, who needed for their own sake to be skilled in deciphering signs of power, symptoms of dissent, and fruitful or dangerous

areas of ambiguity" (Eagleton 2005: 20), found in the Spanish model a vehicle for expressing their resilient responsiveness to the prevailing social preconceptions of the time, which assigned to "the weaker sex" such traits as delicacy, modesty, emotional sensitivity and, at least in literary terms, an increased susceptibility to quixotic madness (Schmid 1997).

The novel, often regarded by its advocates as a frontier space and dismissed by its detractors as "a trashy piece of fiction fit only for servants and females" (Eagleton 2005: 11), offered keen writers a unique opportunity. Through its quixotic embodiment, it enabled these writers to untangle the complexities of women's experiences and express their critical perspective on society in a creative and engaging format. The novel could in fact simultaneously emulate and critique dominant ideologies, constructing and deconstructing literary barriers. Such is the case with Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*, a fascinating exploration of the power of literature to shape perceptions, challenge rules, and push the boundaries of conventions (Kane 2003).

2. Charlotte Lennox: a Woman at the Frontier

Little is known about Lennox's early years. She was born as Charlotte Ramsay in 1730, probably in Gibraltar. By 1739 she moved with her family to colonial New York because her father had been appointed lieutenant-governor at Fort Hunter (Carlile 2004). Though she only lived there for three or four years, the impact of the frontier on her work would prove paramount and everlasting (Kvande – Spurgeon 2014: 216). Frontier life expanded Lennox's horizons by exposing her to a cultural diversity, which sharpened her critical sense; this apprenticeship not only enabled her to recognize potential threats and seize newly developed opportunities, but also allowed her to comment on social and gender issues, which would become recurring themes in her literary works, all marked by the questioning of real and imaginary borders.

Upon the death of her father, she returned to Britain to live with her aunt and, later, went to London as the lady-in-waiting of Lady Cecilia Isabella Finch, a courtier, cousin of the poet Anne Finch. Lady Isabella's house in Berkeley Square was visited by leading figures in the cultural scene such as Mary Wortley Montagu and Horace Walpole, so Lennox came to know London's flourishing literary and social circles (D'Ezio 2018: 196). She wanted to become a courtier but, having married Alexander Lennox, a man without either money or position (Doody

2008: xii), was forced to earn her own living, at first boldly pursuing a career on the stage – in an era when acting was considered a disreputable profession for women – and then writing works of poetry and prose which encompassed gender-sensitive issues.

Lennox's exploration of gender borders challenged and critiqued the prevailing norms and expectations of her time, offering nuanced portrayals of women's experience and indirectly advocating for greater female agency. In 1748 she published one of her most successful poems, *The Art of Coquetry*, a satirical lesson for girls who wanted to learn how to manipulate and tease men in order to gain their love and, consequently, secure material advantages. The ironic stance is easily perceived from the opening lines:

> Ye lovely maids! whose yet unpractis'd hearts
> Ne'er felt the force of Love's resistless darts;
> Who justly set a value on your charms,
> Pow'r all your wish, but beauty all your arms
> Who o'er mankind wou'd fain exert your sway
> And teach the lordly tyrant to obey;
> Attend my rules, to you alone addrest
> Deep let them sink in every female breast. (Lennox 1748)

Lennox describes the coquette as a master manipulator, employing skilful strategies such as affected modesty ("Whene'er he meets your looks, with modest price/And soft confusion turn your eyes aside"), feigned coldness ("But with indifference view the seeming chance,/And let your eyes to seek new conquests range"), coyness, and elusive behaviour to maintain her suitors' interest and devotion – which, incidentally, is not in the least an easy task for, as the poem says: "'Tis harder still to fix than gain a heart;/What's won by beauty must be kept by art" (Lennox 1748). This humorous poetical list of seduction rules, often phrased through playfully contradictory statements ("Avoid disguise, and seem at least sincere"), is designed not "for the tender" and sincerely loving girl, "But for the nymph who liberty can prize,/And vindicate the triumph of her eyes:/Who o'er mankind a haughty rule maintains,/Whose wit can manage what her beauty gains;/Such by these arts their empire may improve,/And unsubdu'd controul the world by love" (Lennox 1748). Lennox's poem highlights the artistry inherent in the coquette's actions; it depicts a woman who, being prevented from venting her rage against social limitations, must find subtle ways of gaining power: "Then let the fair one have recourse to art,/Who cannot storm, may undermine the heart" (Lennox 1748).

While it aligns with the prevalent ideals of the Enlightenment era, such humorous portrayal puzzlingly praises the individual agency of a self-made woman whose conduct – it must be said – was generally deemed immoral and sinful. Lennox's celebration of the coquette, though hilarious, addressed a sensitive issue. Her contemporaries viewed that female type as morally questionable: the coquette's behaviour was seen as frivolous, deceitful, and antithetical to traditional notions of feminine virtue; her ability to manipulate and control men, regarded as the expression of a culture of superficiality and insincerity, was liable to undermine social relationships and, what was worse, to challenge established notions of male authority. The controversy surrounding the coquette reflects broader debates about gender roles, power dynamics, and societal expectations in the eighteenth century. While Lennox's poem should not be interpreted as an explicit endorsement, it is certainly an indirect commentary on the social constraints faced by women and the strategies they employed to navigate the demarcations of patriarchal society without being overwhelmed.

In the incipit to her first novel, *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself* (1751), Lennox reworked the topic of coquetry by turning it into an innate trait of teen-age girls' personality, a flirtatious attitude or, rather, a "propensity to gallantry" which directly sprung from the female instinctive "desire of pleasing" (Lennox 1751 [1995: 65]). Her 11-year-old heroine, in fact, describes herself in these terms: "I was born a coquet, and what would have been art in others, in me was pure nature" (Lennox 1751 [1995: 66]). Harriot's coquettish inclinations emerge as she takes the first steps along the path of courtship, and immediately gets to draw parallels between real-life and her overtly fictional readings: "I compared my adventures with some of those I had read in novels and romances, and found it fully as surprising. In short, I was nothing less than a Clelia or a Statira" (Lennox 1751 [1995: 66]).

Written at the beginning of a remarkably prolific decade, in which Lennox also published drama, translations (D'Ezio 2018) and literary criticism, including the recently reappraised *Shakespear Illustrated* (Doody 2019)[2], the novel laid the foundation for the recovery of the romance model as it contained several of the clichés typical of the genre (Regis 2003), "adding the important difference of […] [its] main character's creolizing experience of the colonial frontier wilderness

[2] Doody notes that *Shakespear Illustrated* deals with the effects of male gaze on reading: in Lennox's opinion, "Shakespeare, like the men in *The Female Quixote*, reads romances badly, or misreads, or bungles, partly or even largely because […] [he] is not interested in doing women justice" (Doody 2019: 303).

and contact with the Native Americans" (Kvande – Spurgeon 2014: 218). Harriot's adventures are in fact primarily set in the New York colony and consist of a series of abductions and imprisonments carried out by men. Throughout the novel, "Lennox links the notion of Indian captivity in the New World to the fundamental conditions of European women's lives"; her critique is directed to "the savagery not of New World Indians but of European patriarchy, especially [to] the developing conception of male ownership of women" (Kvande – Spurgeon 2014: 215).

While Harriot's supposedly more savage captors, the Native American Mohocks and a Spanish pirate, treat her with the utmost respect, her last abductor, an English ship captain, tries to rape her and is then stabbed to death by the girl herself. In a book which can be seen as an "iconoclastic critique of imperialism, colonialism, and patriarchy" as well as a celebration of female agency, Lennox "employs multiple forms of hybridization by bringing together romance and novel as well as American and European" (Kvande – Spurgeon 2014: 224, 216-7), corroding their boundaries to signify the female rejection of masculine restrictions.

Howard maintains that, when Lennox composed *The Life of Harriot Stuart*, she had not yet experienced the full extent of the pressures imposed by the literary marketplace that would later influence her writing style, themes, and overall artistic freedom; therefore, she felt free to sketch out a bald-face heroine who raised harsh criticism among readers and scholars for her supposedly scandalous behaviour (Howard 1995: 16-17). Negative reviews of the novel turned out to be very useful: they had the effect of drawing attention and enhancing the popularity of the book and of its author, leading to increased interest and exposure. To Lennox, this was also a viaticum for understanding what she could do next if she wanted to meet both socio-cultural expectations and the demands of the new market, deferring to the existing boundaries while also playing with them.

She needed to strengthen her authorial reputation by setting the right alliances and by treating more overtly moral subjects. That is exactly what she did when she set out to write her second novel, *The Female Quixote* which, as a result, was born under a lucky star. Lennox had already become a member of Dr Johnson's literary circle[3]. This "provided her with a particularly valuable new ally, who helped her in at least three distinct ways: as a novelist, he gave her literary advise; as a printer, he printed the first edition of *The Female Quixote*; as one of Lon-

[3] Johnson had already arranged a famous all-night party at the Devil Tavern to celebrate the publication of Lennox's first novel (Doody 2019: 73-74).

don's most prominent men of letters, he used his influence in the literary world on her behalf" (Isles 2008: 419). Not only did Johnson endorse this resourceful female writer, but he also connected her with Richardson and Fielding, the latter of whom would then write in *The Covent-Garden Journal*, under the pseudonym Sir Alexander Drawcansir, an extremely favourable review of her novel, which he considered artistically comparable to Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (Drawcansir 1751 [1915]). Positive comments then followed one another: some critics maintain that this was the dawn of modern talent-scouting, a new form of literary patronage suitable for the value-based corporate culture of the time (Hanley 2000).

In terms of gender, the support offered by such outstanding male writers to a promising female colleague can be seen as a form of benevolent paternalism which reinforced an already existing power imbalance: men, usually deemed as the only legitimate gatekeepers of literary recognition, were helping a woman who acknowledged that she needed their validation and guidance to succeed in her creative pursuits. This is certainly true, as Lennox spoke in those terms in her prefatory dedication of the novel "to the Right Honourable the Earl of Middlesex", Charles Sackville, a courter and a poet who has been described as "a lover of learning, and a patron of learned men" (Dalziel 2008: 388):

> The Dread which a Writer feels of the public Censure; the still greater Dread of Neglect; and the eager Wish for Support and Protection, which is impressed by the Consciousness of Imbecility; are unknown to those who have never adventured into the World; and I am afraid, my Lord, equally unknown to those who have always found the World ready to applaud them.
> It is, therefore, not unlikely, that the Design of this Address may be mistaken, and the effects of my Fear imputed to my Vanity: they who see Your Lordship's Name prefixed to my Performance, will rather condemn my Presumption, than compassionate my Anxiety. (Lennox 1752 [2008: 3])

Apart from confirming the author's need for protection and recognizing her own limits, the dedication dwells upon the reasons that might induce the contemporary reading public, as well as scholars, to misjudge Lennox not because of her faults, but because of their misguided expectations. What, at first glance, looks like a statement of humility and an admission of the risk of failure inherent in female literary writing is, ultimately, an act of social criticism and a challenge launched to a hegemonic consortium of men who thwarted women's "adventure […] into the world", and who were not "ready to applaud them" in the same way they would normally champion male accomplished novelists. They were being warned that Lennox was not just an over-confident, "vain" and presumptuous

girl, liable to collapse under the weight of an overweening ambition: being the conscious maker of her own fortune, she was ready to turn all given disadvantages and alleged "imbecilities" into strength.

Even though Lennox maintained a gratefully deferential attitude to her benevolent talent scouts, whose promotion of the novel at the expense of romance provided the very starting point of *The Female Quixote*, she knew that, by acknowledging her skills within their own domain, they had legitimised her entry in the public sphere (Capoferro 2017: 35-53), regardless of gender-role boundaries[4]. Though it would be exaggerated to say that Johnson's support demonstrated a belief in the equal potential of women to contribute to intellectual and artistic endeavours, his words certainly read as a legitimation of Lennox's venturing beyond the edge of social conventions, at a time when most female individuals – and most female workers – were relegated to the confined space of domesticity.

3. *The Female Quixote*: Playing with Boundaries

In *The Female Quixote*, the heroine, Arabella, undertakes the same emancipatory path as her author, though her steps are guided by utter insanity and her deranged conduct leads to lamentable results. This young girl is, in fact, the living proof of the pitfalls of unrestrained romance-reading, especially as a means of unorthodox education (Smith Palo 2006)[5]. Her story also highlights the dangers of unchecked female imagination, much in line with the social stereotypes that defined women as more emotionally driven and prone to fantasy than men who, on the contrary, were supposed to be distinctively rational, reasonable, and level-headed. To contemporary English readers, therefore, a female Quixote was far more credible than a male one (Drawcansir 1751 [1915: 281])[6], and a romantic madness was more plausible than a novelistic one. Both themes echoed the

[4] As Kvande and Spurgeon maintain, "according to Habermas, the public sphere was reconstituted in this period as made up of individuals, but in this scheme the individual became defined as a property-owning head of family and thus, by definition, male" (2014: 226, note 28).

[5] *The Female Quixote* has been read as a novel about the education of both the heroine and the readers since Lennox "demonstrates […] the learning process involved in reading through her treatment of decorum" (Kukkonen 2017: 190).

[6] Fielding wrote in his review: "as we are to grant […] that the Head of a very sensible Person is entirely subverted by reading Romances, this Concession seems to me more easy to be granted in the Case of a young Lady than of an old Gentleman" (Drawcansir 1751 [1915: 281]).

platitudes widely circulating in eighteenth-century Britain and resonated with the highly topical debate that ignited that contemporary cultural scene[7] since, in Lennox's novel, literary genres become "'gendered' by having male and female protagonists embodying realist and romance forms respectively" (Roulston 1995: 27-28).

The story opens with an account of the misfortunes of an unnamed nobleman who, as we'll find out later, happens to be the heroine's father:

> The Marquis of ——, for a long Series of Years, was the first and most distinguished Favourite at Court: he held the most honourable Employments under the Crown, disposed of all Places of Profit as he pleased, presided at the Council, and in a manner governed the whole Kingdom.
> This extensive Authority could not fail of making him many Enemies: He fell at last a Sacrifice to the Plots they were continually forming against him; and was not only removed from all his Employments, but banished the Court for ever. (5)[8]

The events here narrated are not in the least unprecedented, as the chapter's title remarks by announcing, in the style of Cervantes and Fielding (Watson 2011: 40, Kukkonen 2017: 192), that this section "contains a Turn at Court neither new nor surprising" (5); what is unexpected and revealing is the incongruous reaction of this once powerful man who, having been unjustly barred from all court premises and from his royal privileges, decides to withdraw from society, but also from reality, in order to live in a compensatory world of illusion. Instead of tackling head-on the challenges posed by adversity, he conceals "the Pain his undeserved Disgrace […] [gives] him" and behaves "rather like a Man who […] [has] resigned, than been dismissed from his Posts", imagining that, in doing so, "he […] [triumphs] sufficiently over the Malice of his Enemies, while he […] [seems] to be wholly insensible of the Effects it produced" (5). Having experienced "the Baseness and Ingratitude of Mankind", he decides "to quit all Society whatever" (5) and live a secluded life in a remote province, in a castle refashioned according to his tastes: its surroundings being meticulously designed to resemble natural beauty, its interior reflecting the nobleman's wealth and grandeur.

---

7 According to Doody, in the context of eighteenth-century England, "*The Female Quixote*, like Cervantes' great model, […] [was] often […] treated as a very simple work" (Doody 2019: xiv); Richardson, for instance, described *The Female Quixote* as the expression of "Mrs Lennox's desire to ridicule the French heroic romances and to point out their potentially harmful effects on the minds of inexperienced readers" (Isles 2008: 420).

8 From now on, all quotes from Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752 [2008]) will be in parentheses.

Before leaving for this neo-Gothic "Epitome of Arcadia", the Marquis "though […] advanced in Years, […] [casts] his Eyes on a young Lady, greatly inferior to himself in Quality, but whose Beauty and good Sense […] [promise] him an agreeable Companion"; they immediately marry and he takes her with him "into the Country, from whence he absolutely resolved never to Return" (5-6). There they live in absolute retirement, as the man "never […] [admits] any Company whatsoever", being content to divide "his Time between […] his Lady, his Library […], and his Gardens"; the Marchioness, "to soften a Solitude which she […] [finds] very disagreeable", buys and reads a number of badly translated French heroic romances[9] which, when she dies after giving birth to Arabella, will be left to her daughter (6-7).

This preamble sets the stage for the subsequent exploration of the two most prominent themes of the novel: madness and female reclusion. The nobleman's retreat in an artificially fake world is an act of deranged escapism, a way of alleviating his emotional distress by providing a deceptive substitute for what is lacking in real life; it then becomes clear that the disgraced Marquis is no less prone to consolatory folly than his daughter. He is also the living embodiment of a male-dominated society in which the exercise of power is not only fraught with violence, but subject to discretion, precariousness, uncertainty, and to the whims of political intrigue. Though the recall of all his trials and tribulations sounds like a radical critique of a brutish oppression, the nobleman bides to a similar logic when it comes to his family, and to his paternalistically oppressive treatment of women.

In the first pages of her novel, Lennox establishes a power dynamic that is heavily skewed in favour of men. The Marquis wields authority over his wife and, later, over his daughter, exercising full jurisdiction over their lives and, of course, heavily limiting their freedom. By isolating them in the castle, he ensures their dependence on him; the secluded setting is a physical manifestation of the reclusive nature of patriarchy. The premature death of the Marchioness further underscores the tragic consequences of the confinement imposed upon all female characters, as Arabella is left without a motherly figure to guide her, adding to her sense of isolation within the castle walls. Her very birth, if we interpret it in the sign of continuity, becomes a symbol of the perpetuation of the cycle of male dominance and female subjugation as the girl, no less than her mother, is cut off

[9] The authors of these heroic novels are mainly La Calprenède and Scudéry, who had partly innovated the genre "thanks to the feminizing impulse of French salon culture" (Horejsi 2019:99).

from the outside world and confined to a golden cage wherein her only solace lies within the walls of a library filled with the books she enjoys.

At a time when female educational opportunities are heavily curtailed (Smith Palo 2006), and when young girls from affluent families are usually instructed at home by governesses, the Marquis permits his daughter "to receive no Part of her Education from another, which he […] [is] capable of giving her himself" (6). He teaches Arabella "to read and write […], finding in her an uncommon Quickness of Apprehension, and an Understanding capable of great Improvements", in an attempt to "render her Mind as beautiful as her Person […] [is] lovely"; having discovered her "Fondness for Reading", he permits her "the Use of his Library" (6-7). This is the first of a few paternal concessions which break the monotony of a long series of prohibitions and which, invariably, bring about dangerously liberating modes of behaviour.

The granting of access to the library marks a symbolic passing of the torch from one generation of women to the next: it signals the transmission of aspirations and desires for freedom and agency within the confines of an otherwise restricted female condition. In this shared struggle against the limitations imposed by society, Arabella takes a step further than her mother, achieving independence, albeit temporarily. If, on the one hand, her misreading of romances allows her to break free from societal expectations, on the other her understanding of the world is subsequently distorted in so far as she absolutizes the exaggerated and often impractical ideals intrinsic to the books she reads[10]. Arabella then becomes a moral version of the coquette archetype, holding an innocent and idealistic perspective on love[11]; far from being cunning and manipulative, she genuinely believes in the transformative power of feelings and in their impact on people's lives:

> Her Ideas, from the Manner of her Life, and the Objects around her, had taken a romantic Turn; and, supposing Romances were real Pictures of Life, from them she drew all her Notions and Expectations. By them she was taught to believe, that Love was the

[10] This also happens because "Arabella's relation to romance is a form of repetition compulsion; she forever re-enacts the same romance conventions in the face of wildly different experiences. Romance's especial madness is that its rules are so rigid and yet so empty" (Langbauer 1984: 36).

[11] According to Watson, it would be wrong to think that the girl is pretending: "The injustice done to Arabella by most readers comes in assuming that she understands this dissimulation, that she is a coquette who uses her charms to manipulate the men around her" (2011: 39). However, Arabella's "mistake is like the coquette's, the assumption of too great female significance and social power" (Janet Todd 1989: 152).

> ruling Principle of the World; that every other Passion was subordinate to this; and that it caused all the Happiness and Miseries of Life. (7)

The girl believes that she is the protagonist of her own romance story and that she should model her behaviour after the heroines in the books she admires, which leads her to expect extravagant acts of devotion and courtly love from potential suitors. Her gaze acquires a transformative power since "the entire story-world of *The Female Quixote* gets shaped more and more according to the rules of romance": "toward the end of the novel, most characters begin to act as romance characters would" (Kukkonen 2017: 195) and the heroine "effectively controls the terms of […] courtship" (Roulston 1995: 30), thus envisaging the possibility of an unsettling female empowerment and of an equally troublesome male disempowerment (Langbauer 1984, Martin 1997). Yet, despite all her fantasies about the power she believes her beauty possesses, Arabella remains morally conforming to the social expectations and gender roles of her time; she is content to rely on patriarchal conventions and considers the allure of her charms "sufficient to bring a Crowd of Adorers to demand her of her Father" (7-8), thus acknowledging that she is not free to accept her future husband without her father's consent.

If "within eighteenth-century parameters, the time of courtship constitutes the only period of female agency and autonomy" (Roulston 1995: 31), then "the very form of romance, its length as well as (in some cases) its content authorizing the epithet 'interminable' […] [allow] the courtly lady, the heroine […] [to delay] the consummation of her love" (Watson 2011: 36). While experiencing this pleasant state of suspension, Arabella simply makes "use of the Permission[s] the Marquis sometimes […] [allows] her" (8) without deliberately engaging in behaviour that might be deemed inconvenient, or immodest. Only occasionally does she indulge in ridiculous acts not fully in accordance with the current social etiquette, as when she boldly asks her maid Lucy to deliver a letter to her adorer, Mr. Hervey, adding that her "Father can never be offended with […] [her] for doing a charitable Action" (16) – she mistakenly believes the poor man is dying of unrequited love[12] – or when, after making unfounded accusations, she magnanimously decides to set him free: "you are now wholly in my Power; I may, if I please, carry you to my Father, and have you severely punished for your Attempt: But to show

[12] In the novel, Langbauer retraces several "wishful symbol[s] of an ailing patriarchy. […] Although Lennox ridicules Arabella's romantic notion that she is responsible for these illnesses, in a sense, of course, she really is; Lennox weakens the men around Arabella in order to give her strength" (1984: 46).

you, that I am as generous as you are base and designing, I'll give you Freedom, provided you promise me never to appear before me again" (20).

Arabella's wrong interpretations, as well as her consequent actions, often bring about laughable unintended consequences though this is no invitation to laugh at her: "because the characters laugh first, the author and the readers are slightly dissociated from the ridicule" (Langbauer 1984: 33). Her naivety leads her to overlook potential pitfalls or to misunderstand the complexities of human relationships; consequently, she inadvertently hurts others or falls victim to her own unrealistic expectations. The heroine then becomes a challenging figure for all the men in her life, especially for her father and for the only one who sincerely loves her, cousin Glanville. She engages in an eccentric and unconventional conduct that eludes their attempts to understand and control her because it operates outside the framework of their own expectations, since "the languages of romance and the novel are so foreign to each other" (Langbauer 1984: 37).

Her innocent and virtuous nature protects her from being held fully accountable for her actions; nonetheless, her independent and assertive attitude to life, though imputed to her madness and not to an open defiance of the gender system, clashes with the prevailing notions of female docility and subservience, creating a disconnect between her and the male world that tries in vain to exert its influence. Being insane, she is not required to undergo punishment and correction: she just needs to be treated and, at last, restored to sanity through the intervention of a special "spiritual Doctor".

The cure and the healing take place in the penultimate chapter of the novel[13], wittily entitled "Being, in the Author's Opinion, the best Chapter in this History"[14] and sometimes credited to Dr Johnson, due to external and internal evidence (Dalziel 2008: 414-5, Hamilton 2012)[15]. This section seems to reproduce the line of argument of the fourth of Johnson's classic *Rambler* essays (Johnson 1750), with some relevant variations. It contains a dialogue between Arabella and a "good Divine, who […] [has] the cure of […] [her] Mind greatly at Heart" (368),

[13] Doody (2019: xxix) maintains that "Charlotte Lennox's chief problem with her novel was how to bring it to closure. The same problem faced Cervantes, who chose to create disturbing and unhappy endings". The penultimate chapter of *The Female Quixote* also draws inspiration from the episode of the Spanish Don Quixote in which the priest Pedro Pérez, trying to cure the madman, orders a massive book-burning (Book 1, chapter 1).

[14] Book IX, chapter XI.

[15] Brack and Carlile (2003) provide evidence for excluding this chapter from the Johnsonian canon.

a sort of deist theologian who intends to rationally convince the girl of her wrong course of action and to make her realize the falsehood and deception that taint the apparent plausibility of romances. Preparing for his task, the Doctor feels ill-at-ease because, although he has "been accustomed to accommodate his Notions to every Understanding, and […] [has] therefore accumulated a great Variety of Topicks and Illustrations […][, he finds] himself now engag'd in a controversy for which he […] [is] not so well prepar'd as he imagin'd" (368).

The reason for the initial hesitancy of this experienced healer of the soul, who does not know how to address his patient, is never explicitly stated, and must then be inferred. The whole chapter is marked by a conspicuous use of the ellipsis, where something crucial goes unsaid, yet its detection is necessary for a proper interpretation of what is present in the text. The omission pertains to the problems posed by the protagonist's gender, which can ultimately be seen as the underlying reason for both the discomfort felt by the Doctor, and for the lack of experience leading Arabella to a misguided perception of reality. The man does not know how to start because he is not used to reprimanding women; he then dreads "to give Pain to a Delicacy he […] [revers]" (369), which is symptomatic of gender-based bias[16].

An unbiased communication can only take place on equal terms, yet Arabella knows that she will not be treated regardless of gender since, in that context, men and women are neither held to the same standards nor subject to the same consequences for their actions; the conversation will also be asymmetrical, due to the imbalance of authority between speaker and listener. But even so, the girl knows how to play that game: she begins by declaring that she expects the Doctor "will exert the Authority of […] [his] Function" and promises, on her "Part, Sincerity and Submission" (370); after a while, however, she demands an equality of opportunities in the dialogic exchange: "The Laws of Conference require that the Terms of the Question and Answer be the same" (371).

Since her interlocutor is an uncompromising supporter of reason and a convinced advocate of novelistic writing, Arabella asks to be measured by the same yardstick; she then professes her rationality ("It rests upon you to shew, That in giving Way to my Fears, even supposing them groundless, I departed from the Character of a reasonable Person": 371) and her absolute confidence in the superiority of realism ("Prove, therefore, that the Books which I have hitherto read as

[16] As stated in Lennox's dedication to the Earl of Middlesex, gender-based bias also shaped the reception of novels, more or less tacitly.

Copies of Life, and Models of Conduct, are empty Fictions, and from this Hour I deliver them to Moths and Mould": 377).

The Doctor maintains that she has developed delusional fantasies because she has been frighted without reason:

> The Apprehension of any future Evil, […] which is called Terror[17], when the Danger is from natural Causes, and Suspicion, when it proceeds from a moral Agent, must always arise from Comparison.
> We can judge of the Future only by the Past, and have therefore only Reason to fear or suspect, when we see the same Causes in motion which have formerly produc'd Mischief, or the same Measures taken as have before been preparatory to a Crime. (372)

The idea left implicit is that women lack a real experience of the world and, consequently, cannot judge what is plausible. This allusion, no further developed in the story, becomes the subtext of an extended dialogue in which the Doctor makes use of Johnson's essayistic arguments. Arabella, for instance, assumes that she can be placed in a chariot and taken "into the pathless Desart", immured "in a Castle, among Woods and Mountains", hid "in the Caverns of a Rock" or confined "in some island of an immense lake", although "there is no such Castle, Desart, Cavern, or Lake" (372-3). The fact that the heroine's dwelling can be properly described as a castle and a prison makes the latter statement appear highly ironic: the clichés, "machines and expedients of the heroic romance" which, according to Johnson, should have no place in any novel (Johnson 1750: 19), play an integral part in the fictional reality of *The Female Quixote* – a romance more than a novel, in many respects (Langbauer 1984, Martin 1997).

The Doctor then affirms that "It is the Fault of the best Fictions, that they teach young Minds to expect strange Adventures and sudden Vicissitudes, and therefore encourage them often to trust to Chance", while reality proceeds "in a regular Method, and very little Opportunity is left for Sallies or Hazards, for Assault or Rescue" (379). Wrong expectations are then especially aroused in young people to whom, as Johnson had maintained, "the highest degree of reverence should be paid" so that they can be taught to avoid "the snares which are laid by Treachery for Innocence, without infusing any wish for […] superiority […][, to counteract] fraud, without the temptation to practise it […], and to increase prudence without impairing virtue" (Johnson 1750: 21).

---

[17] It is interesting to notice that the noun "terror" will later become a key term in Radcliffe's definition of her female Gothic, studied by feminist scholars as a literary form that, among other things, voiced women's anxieties over their domestic entrapment.

The Doctor also employs the metaphor of painting, taken again from Johnson's essay:

> the Likeness of a Picture can only be determined by a Knowledge of the Original. You have yet had little opportunity of Knowing the ways of Mankind, which cannot be learned but from Experience, and of which the highest Understanding, and the lowest, must enter the World in equal Ignorance. I have lived long in a public Character, and have thought it my Duty to study those whom I have undertaken to admonish or instruct. I have never been so rich as to affright Men into Disguise and Concealment, nor so poor as to be kept at a Distance too great for accurate Observation. (379-80)

While Johnson had described realistic novels as "portraits of which every one knows the original, and can detect any deviation from exactness of resemblance" (Johnson 1750: 20), Lennox satirically focuses on the risk of misrecognition. The lack of the experience required to judge the likeness of a fictional representation is attributed to Arabella's young age and aristocratic status, not to her gendered identity. Though the novel refrains from explicitly stating any connection between the protagonist's deranged behaviour and her being a woman – something clearly alluded to in its title – the ellipsis serves as a literary device that hints at the societal constraints faced by the female world while inviting readers to contemplate the role of gender in shaping individual conducts as well as collective interpretations. The omission creates a sense of unease and suggests the subtle yet pervasive influence of gender boundaries on each and every aspect of contemporary reality; it also reveals "that the real is embedded in a particular ideology of exclusion which denies the possibility of a universal subject position" (Roulston 1995: 413).

4. An Open-Ended Conclusion

In the final part of the chapter, Arabella finds herself facing a crucial decision: she must choose whether to pursue the unconventional lifestyle promoted by romantic literature or to adhere to the guidelines of social conformity. The heroine "is confronted with her own wager: live in a world of romance, in which […] [she] might be responsible for bloodshed, or live in a world of realism, which might seem less attractive but be more reliable and sustainable" (Kukkonen 2017: 199). She is duly informed that "the immediate Tendency of […] [her favourite] Books […] is to give new Fire to the Passions of Revenge and Love; two Passions which, even without such powerful Auxiliaries, it is one of the severest Labours of Reason and Piety to suppress" (380). The evil consequences of bad literature cannot then be limited to the corruption of morals; if Arabella decides to protract her

steadfast belief in the absolute power of love over reason, she should be aware that her choice may even cause an outbreak of violence.

The Doctor advises her to abandon her eccentric ideas and conform to societal conventions; by aligning her future actions with the prescribed limits, she may secure a place within the boundaries assigned to women. Understanding the implications, the girl accepts:

> My Heart yields to the Force of Truth; and I now wonder how the Blaze of Enthusiastic Bravery could hinder me from remarking, with Abhorrence, the Crime of deliberate unnecessary Bloodshed.
> I begin to perceive that I have hitherto at least trifled away my Time, and fear that I have already made some Approaches to the Crime of encouraging Violence and Revenge. (381).

Arabella has eventually made her choice; in the last chapter, after spending "near two Hours […] wholly absorbed in the most disagreeable Reflections on the Absurdity of her past Behaviour", she apologizes to Mr. Glanville and gratefully accepts his proposal with a humble submission[18]:

> To give you myself, […] with all my remaining Imperfections, is making you but a poor Present in return for the Obligations your generous Affection has laid me under to you; yet since I am so happy as to be desired for a Partner for Life by a Man of your Sense and Honour, I will endeavour to make myself as worthy as I am able of such a favourable Distinction. (383)

Modern critics express unanimous dissatisfaction with this conclusion (Ross 1987; Spacks 1990; Levin 1995; Malina 1996; Martin 1997; Gordon 1998; Hamilton 2011); they wonder whether "Arabella's revision of her beliefs [is] a defeat" (Kukkonen 2017: 196)". As Langbauer puts it, "at the end of the book, […] [the heroine] is inaugurated into man's realm"; "she leaves romance by participating in the patriarchal discourse of moral law, and in that discussion loses her voice" (1984: 42). By selecting the route of conformity, the protagonist has confirmed the validity of the dominant ideology and the flaws of romance. However, though the ending prioritizes self-preservation and the pursuit of a relatively stable existence within the prescribed confines, at a deeper level the novel does acknowledge

[18] Kane maintains that "Arabella's conversation with the Devine is not the wholesale conversion that previous scholarship has taken it to be"; therefore, "the story ends with some apologies", but there are "no actual changes in […] [her] behavior". Moreover, as the novel progresses, Glanville "conforms more and more to Arabella's expectations of a romantic hero" (Kane 2003: 62), which suggests that the final marriage may be in line with the expectations of the romance formula.

the artificial and oppressive nature of what can be described as an imposition of boundaries. If we interpret Arabella's madness as a symbol of resistance, and her story as a means for advocating change, her final act of submission can appear not so much as a waiver, but as an unvoiced further denunciation, as the Doctor's speech carried the implication that a sane woman simply had no choice[19].

The same goes for romance: when drawing inspiration from its formula is no longer acceptable, the narrative must stop abruptly, for no other form is possible. Lennox's book has shown that "women and romance are so bound that separating the two ends the story", thus suggesting "a positive, although wistful, alignment of them—if romance were available to women unmediated, it might be a source of power, and a ground from which they could speak" (Langbauer 1984: 31). The novel genre might likewise benefit from a deliberate incorporation of romance: while the novel uses romance to contrastively define itself, there seems to be no reasonable need for such marked opposition. The future of Arabella belongs to the domain of the novel, yet both her future and the related novel will forever remain unwritten, since the restoring of boundaries sets limits to the action. The book we have been left with, *The Female Quixote*, is a novel; yet it is also a parody and a celebration of romance, as well as a hopeful musing about a world where novelistic imagination will break down barriers and discard its own boundaries. With its quixotic combination of parody and satirical humour, Lennox's work creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and fluidity. It presents meanings that are offered, stated, and asserted, yet simultaneously questioned, subverted, and reconstructed – where the reinforcement of boundaries goes hand in hand with an envisioned blurring of borders.

References

Brack, O. M. Jr – S. Carlile

2003 "Samuel Johnson's Contributions to Charlotte Lennox's 'The Female Quixote'", *The Yale University Library Gazette*, 77 (3/4), 166-173.

Capoferro, R.

2017 *Novel: La genesi del romanzo moderno nell'Inghilterra del Settecento*. Roma: Carocci.

[19] The previously quoted reference to "the Crime of encouraging Violence and Revenge" (381), though literally related to love dynamics, can also be interpreted as a metaphorical warning against the consequences of a radical social critique, and a foreshadowing of its transformative iconoclastic potential.

Carlile, S.
2004 "Expanding the Feminine: Reconsidering Charlotte Lennox's Age and *The Life of Harriot Stuart*", *The Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 4: 103-37.

Dalziel, M.
2008 "Explanatory notes". In: Ch. Lennox, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 388-418.

De Michelis, L.
2003 "Unsettling the Cultural Gender Divide: Reading, Writing and Storytelling in *The Female Quixote*", *Textus*, 16 (2): 187-212.

D'Ezio, M.
2018 "'Some employment in the translating Way': Economic Imperatives in Charlotte Lennox's Career as a Translator". In: C. Font Paz et al. (eds), *Economic Imperatives for Women's Writing in Early Modern Europe Book*, Leida (Netherlands): Brill, 192-220.

Doody, M.A.
2008 "Introduction". In: C. Lennox, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*. Oxford: Oxford UP, xi-xxxii.

Doody, M.A.
2019 "Shakespeare's Novels: Charlotte Lennox Illustrated", *Studies in the Novel,* 51 (1), 72-85

Drawcansir, Sir A. (Henry Fielding)
[1751] 1915 "Proceedings at the Court of Censorial Enquiry, &c.", 24 (1). In: Sir. A. Drawcansir, Knt. Censor of Great Britain (Henry Fielding), *The Covent-Garden Journal*, New Haven: Yale UP, 279-282, https://ia904707.us.archive.org/32/items/coventgardenjour01fieluoft/coventgardenjour01fieluoft_bw.pdf, accessed June 2023.

Eagleton, T.
2005 *The English Novel: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Ferrari, R.
2020 "A Portrait of Quixote as a Young Woman: Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*". In C. Dente et al. (eds), *Proteus. The Language of Metamorphosis*, New York (NY): Routledge, 223-33.

Fielding, H.
[1742] 1977 *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*. London: Penguin Books.

Fielding, H.
[1749] 1985 *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. London: Penguin Books.

Gardiner, E.
1996 "Writing Men Reading in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*", *Studies in the Novel*, 28 (1): 1-11.

Gordon, S. P.
1998 "The Space of Romance in Lennox's *Female Quixote*", *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 38 (3): 499–516.

Guidotti, F.
2019 "'Be secret; I charge you, Pamela': il Settecento inglese e i paradossi del realismo", *Elephant & Castle*, 20, 4-25.

Hamilton, P.
2011 "Arabella Unbound: Wit, Judgment, and the Cure of Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*". In S. Carlile (ed), *Masters of the Marketplace: British Women Novelists of the 1750s*, Bethlehem (PA): Lehigh University Press, 108–127.

Hamilton, P.
2012 "'The Only Excellence of Falsehood': Rethinking Samuel Johnson's Role in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*", *The Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 8, 75–108.

Hanley, B.
2000 "Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Richardson, and the Reception of Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* in the Popular Press", *ANQ A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles Notes and Reviews*, 13 (3), 27-32.

Hanlon, A. R.
2014 "Maids, Mistresses, and 'Monstrous Doubles': Gender-Class Kyriarchy in 'The Female Quixote' and 'Female Quixotism'" *The Eighteenth Century*, 55 (1), 77-96.

Hodges, A.
2013 "*Female Quixote* as Promoter of Social Literacy", *BO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830*, 3 (1), https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/abo/vol3/iss1/1/, accessed June 2023.

Horejsi, N.
2019 *Novel Cleopatras Book: Romance Historiography and the Dido Tradition in English Fiction, 1688–1785*. Toronto (Canada): University of Toronto Press.

Howard, S. K.
1995 "Introduction". In: C. Lennox, *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself*. Cranbury, NJ-London-Mississauga (Ontario, Canada): Associated University Presses, 13-58.

Isles, D.
2008 Appendix "Johnson, Richardson, and *The Female Quixote*". In: Ch. Lennox, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 419-428.

Johnson, S.
1750 "Essay No. 4", *The Rambler*. Saturday, 31 March: 19-24, https://anthologydev.lib.virginia.edu/work/Johnson/johnson-rambler-4, accessed June 2023.

Johnston, F.
2011 "Johnson and Fiction". In: G. Clingham (ed), *The New Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 82-93

Kane, J.
2023 "Rewriting the Quixotic Novel in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*", *Style*, 57 (1), 56-69

König, E.
2004 "The Imaginist: Lennox's *The Female Quixote*". In E. König, *The Orphan in Eighteenth-Century Fiction. The Vicissitudes of the Eigteenth-Century Subject*, New York (NY): Palgrave, 90-100.

Koselleck, R.
2002 *The Practice of Conceptual History. Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 154.

Kukkonen, K.
2017 "*The Female Quixote* and the Probability of Romance", In: K. Kukkonen, *A Prehistory of Cognitive Poetics: Neoclassicism and the Novel*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 182-200.

Kvande M. – S. Spurgeon
2014 "The Removes of Harriot Stuart. Charlotte Lennox and the Birth of the Western". In: A. T. Hamilton, T. J. Hillard (ed), *Before the West Was West: Critical Essays on Pre-1800 Literature of the American Frontiers*, Lincoln (NE): University of Nebraska Press, 213-238.

Labbie, E. F.
1998 "History as 'retro': Veiling Inheritance in Lennox's *The Female Quixote*", *Bucknell Review*, 40 (1): 79-97.

Langbauer, L.
1984 "Romance Revised: Charlotte Lennox's 'The Female Quixote'", *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 18 (1), 29-49.

Lennox, C.
[1748] *The Art of Coquetry*, https://allpoetry.com/The-Art-Of-Coquetry, accessed June 2023.

Lennox, C.
[1751] 1995 *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself*. Cranbury, NJ-London--Mississauga (Ontario, Canada): Associated University Presses.

Lennox, C.
[1752] 2008 *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Levin, K.
1995 "'The Cure of Arabellas Mind': Charlotte Lennox and the Disciplining of the Female Reader", *Women's Writing*, 2 (3): 271–290.

Mack, R.
2005 "Quixotic Ethnography: Charlotte Lennox and the Dilemma of Cultural Observation", *New Work on Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 38 (2/3): 193-213.

Malina, D.
1996 "Rereading the Patriarchal Text: *The Female Quixote*, *Northanger Abbey,* and the Trace of the Absent Mother", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 8 (2): 271–292.
Marshall, D.
1993 "Writing Masters and 'Masculine Exercises' in *The Female Quixote*", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 2: 105-35.
Martin, M. P.
1997 "'High and Noble Adventures': Reading the Novel in 'The Female Quixote'", *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Autumn, 31 (1), 45-62.
Motooka, W.
1996 "Coming to a Bad End: Sentimentalism, Hermeneutics, and *The Female Quixote*", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 8: 25 -70.
Motooka, W.
1998 *The Age of Reasons: Quixotism, Sentimentalism, and Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. London and New York: Routledge.
Regis P.
2003 *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Richardson S.
[1740] 2008 *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
Richardson S.
[1748] 1986 *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady*. London: Penguin Books.
Ross, D.
1987 "Mirror, Mirror: The Didactic Dilemma of *The Female Quixote*", *Studies in English Literature*, 1500–1900, 27 (3): 455–473.
Roulston, C.
1995 "Histories of Nothing: Romance and Femininity in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*", *Women's Writing*, 2 (1), 25-42.
Schmid, T.H.
1997 "'My Authority': Hyper-Mimesis and the Discourse of Hysteria in 'The Female Quixote'", *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 51 (1), 21-35.
Smith Palo, S.
2006 "The Good Effects of a Whimsical Study: Romance and Women's Learning in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 18 (2), 203-228.
Spacks, P.
1990 *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels*, Chicago (IL): University of Chicago Press.
Staves, S.
1972 "*Don Quixote* in Eighteenth-Century England", *Comparative Literature*, 24 (3), 193- 215

Thompson, H.
2002 "Charlotte Lennox and the Agency of Romance", *The Eighteenth Century*, 43 (2): 91-114.
Todd, J.
1989 *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction 1660-1800*. London: Virago.
Torralbo Caballero, J. D.
2016 "'Borrowed from Cervantes': Imitatio and Inventio in Lennox's *The Female Quixote*", *Ambigua*, 3: 85-103.
Uddén, A.
2008 "Narratives and Counter-Narratives—Quixotic Hermeneutics in Eighteenth-Century England: Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote*", *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 6 (2): 443-57.
Watson, Z.
2011 "Desire and Genre in *The Female Quixote*", *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 44 (1), 31-46.
Watt I.
[1957] 2015 *The Rise of the Novel* (1957). London: Penguin.
Wyett, J. L.
2015 "Quixotic legacy: *The Female Quixote* and the professional woman writer", *Authorship*, 4 (1): 1-19.
Zimmerman, E.
2000 "Personal Identity, Narrative, and History: *The Female Quixote* and *Redgauntlet*", *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 12 (2-3): 369-90.

FRANCESCA GUIDOTTI

Università degli studi di Bergamo
francesca.guidotti@unibg.it
ORCID code: 0000-0001-9201-6461