ATLÁNTICAS – Revista Internacional de Estudios Feministas, 2023, 8, 1, 76-99
ISSN: 2530-2736 https://dx.doi.org/10.17979/arief.2023.8.1.8979

A Comparative Study of the British and Spanish Nineteenth-Century Reception of Felicia Hemans[1]

Estudio comparativo de la recepción británica y española de Felicia Hemans en el siglo XIX

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Recibido: 22/02/2022
Aceptado: 24/05/2022

ABSTRACT

The popularity enjoyed by Felicia Hemans (1783–1835) in nineteenth-century Britain was determined by the progressive feminization of her literary work and a critical discourse marked by gender bias which together constructed an image of the author as a model of womanhood. While the reception of her male peers within the Spanish literary system has been widely discussed, Hemans's has been totally neglected. Through a comparative analysis of both receptions, this essay throws light on the singular process through which the encounter with a freshly discovered literary tradition facilitated the unprejudiced inclusion of a female poet in the English Parnassus created by nineteenth-century Spanish authors and critics.

Keywords: *Felicia Hemans, reception, nineteenth century, English Romantic canon, Spanish Romantic canon*

RESUMEN

La fama de Felicia Hemans (1783-1835) en Gran Bretaña está marcada por un proceso de feminización progresivo de su obra literaria y por un discurso crítico condicionado por prejuicios de género sexual a través de los que se construyó una imagen de la autora como ideal femenino. Existen varios estudios sobre la recepción de los románticos ingleses, pero no hay ningún trabajo dedicado al estudio de la fortuna de Hemans en España. Por medio de un análisis comparativo de ambas recepciones, este artículo ilustra la singularidad del fenómeno a través del cual el encuentro con una tradición literaria recién descubierta facilitó la inclusión libre de prejuicios de una poeta en el Parnaso inglés que crearon los autores y críticos españoles del siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: *Felicia Hemans, recepción, siglo XIX, canon romántico inglés, canon romántico español.*

[1] The research for this article has been funded by the Research Project "La literatura hispánica en la prensa periódica británica del romanticismo (1802-1832): Apropiación y reescritura del canon" (Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. Grant ref. RTI2018-097450-B-I00).

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Cómo citar este artículo: Perojo Arronte, María Eugenia (2023). A Comparative Study of the British and Spanish Nineteenth-Century Reception of Felicia Hemans. *Atlánticas. Revista Internacional de Estudios Feministas*, 8 (1), 76-99. doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.17979/arief.2023.8.1.arief.2023.8.1.8979

1. HEMANS IN GREAT BRITAIN

In the following discussion, I compare the Spanish and British reception of Hemans in the nineteenth century. As will be evinced, she was probably the most widely acclaimed foreign female author in mid-nineteenth-century Spain and this raises several questions. What did the British Hemans represent for Spain at a time when the country finally opened its doors to foreign literature other than French without the restriction of censorship? What can the reception of Hemans in Spain tell us about the reception of British literature? Which doors did Spain open for her? Through what paths did she reach them?

Although Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793-1835) figured among the most popular poets in Romantic Britain, her later disappearance from the canon has offered a rich field to gender studies. In her famous essay "Felicia Hemans: The Revolving Doors of Reception", Wolfson offers an illustration of "the forces of reception that come into play in different historic moments for the professional female poet" (1999, p. 215). Writing of Hemans's The Siege of Valencia, a composition about the Spanish revolt against Moorish invasion published in 1823, Wolfson contends that its "challenge to military patriotism in post-Napoleonic Britain" (1999, p. 225) was ignored by nineteenth-century critics, who instead opened other doors of reception for this work through its representation of stereotyped female characters and sentiments. Wolfson (1999) claims that as a result of gender-biased criticism she was widely acclaimed by the arbiters of taste throughout the nineteenth century. The twentieth century brought Hemans oblivion until she was recovered in the 1990s. She has been the subject of steady scholarly attention ever since.

As early critics of Hemans have argued, as for other female writers, she participated in the promotion of an image of the literary woman that fit the standards established for women in post-revolutionary Britain (Morlier, 1993). Stephenson (1993, p. 61) has noted both Hemans's and Letitia Elizabeth Landon's leading roles in the consolidation of this stereotype.2 In this respect, Anne K. Mellor's (1997, p. 262) distinction between the "female poet" and the "poetess"

[2] For an analysis of the aesthetic and ideological connotations of the tradition of the poetess as developed in Romantic poetry, see MacGann (1996) and Mandell (2003).

establishes an insightful historical perspective whereby the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition of female poets, which originated in activities such as preaching, fully belonged to the public sphere, whereas the new Romantic poetesses were soon associated with the domestic. In Wolfson's (2006) words: "Distinct from the man of letters, a poetess radiated sentiments, effortless grace, domestic culture, and the lesser genres" (p. 41). The poetess was created by external agents (critics, reviewers, etc.) but female authors themselves contributed to it through their own self-fashioning as such. In search of approval for their literary activity, they deployed strategies such as improvisation, domesticity, the Burkean beautiful, the affections, and a rejection of public fame that opposed the image of the "poetess" to that of the masculine male "poet". Mellor (1997) has argued that "these poetesses engaged in extremely subtle rhetorical subversions of and resistances to the representation of feminine subjectivity as entirely private and domestic" (p. 261). Wolfson (2014) has also underlined this idea, noting that "[i]n publications from 1812 into the 1830s, Hemans's genius was her bending the cultural ideal of 'feminine' into dark contradictions" (p. 445). This interplay of mirrors and reflections, fashioning, self-fashioning and counter-fashioning can be further explored through the reception of Hemans abroad.

A prolific writer and a savvy negotiator with publishers, Hemans was always alert to the marketplace and the critical reception of her works, ready to adjust or give a new turn to her style and themes when required. This adaptability and her pragmatism secured her a successful publishing career. She outsold Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Feldman, 1997, p. 176) and she also obtained financial benefits from publishing her poems in literary magazines and annuals before compiling them in book volumes (p. 161). She became a regular contributor to The New Monthly Magazine and Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in the 1820s, and she was commissioned to publish poems in the first literary annual published in England, Rudolph Ackermann's Forget Me Not. The success of Ackermann's enterprise drew other publishers to embark on projects with this profitable format. Hemans was a recurrent author in The Keepsake, Literary Souvenir, Amulet, and Winter's Wreath (Feldman, 1997, p. 161). The full list of her works is long and several were reprinted during her lifetime. They

were frequently and often favourably reviewed, and she became a ubiquitous presence in the literary scene, especially in the 1820s, when she published her most popular volumes: The Forest Sanctuary (1825 and second edition in 1829), Records of Woman (1828) and Songs of the Affections (1828).

This was also a fruitful period for her works related to Spain and the Hispanic world, although this was not a new focus in her production. Spain had first sparked the creativity of the young Hemans at the precocious age of fourteen, when, moved by her two brothers' involvement in the Peninsular War, she published England and Spain; or Valour and Patriotism (1809). Her first success, The Domestic Affections and Other Poems (1812), includes several poems inspired by that conflict. In her Tales and Historic Scenes (1819), she included "The Abencerrage", a verse narrative based on Spanish ballads that recounts a love story between Muslims in Granada at the time of the reconquest. It was followed by Songs of the Cid, published in The New Monthly Magazine (1822), the closet drama The Siege of Valencia (1823), mentioned above, and The Forest Sanctuary, where Hemans develops the themes of religious liberty and exile through an extended monologue by a Spanish Protestant, prosecuted by the Inquisition at the time of Philip II, who finally flees to North America.3

It was not only the publications themselves that made Hemans a popular writer; as stated above, her works were widely reviewed in the literary magazines of the time. Contemporary scholars have focused on different aspects of her nineteenth-century reception. Wolfson (1999), for instance, has mainly discussed the gendered criticism in reviews that downplayed Hemans's literary merit, whereas Behrendt (2001) has studied the early criticism in literary magazines which praised the technical perfection and the classicism of her style as well as her elegance and cultivated mind. In 1817, John Murray published her Modern Greece anonymously, which was qualified by The Eclectic Review in 1818 as "the production of a man of genuine talent and feeling" (apud Wolfson, 2000, p. 34); in 1820 The British Review and London Critical Journal praised its author as

[3] The scope of criticism of Hemans's work has been widened by studies on the Anglo-Hispanic exchange in the Romantic period, an area of research that has led to particularly productive analyses of her works. See Saglia (1998, 2000, 2017a), Laspra (2008), Sweet (2010, 2017, 2019)), Sánchez (2014), Benítez-Alonso (2019) and Coletes (2020).

"certainly not a female poet" (apud Wolfson, 2000, p. 532). These and other critics, Behrendt (2001) contends, associated the classicism of her style with a "masculinist poetic and aesthetic", while sentiment was understood as characteristic of female writing (p. 100). In the 1820s, when Hemans herself became aware of the need to redirect her career towards what was becoming the conventional standards for female poets, she decided to feminize her production (Behrendt, 2001, p. 106)4. Close to the end of her life, in a letter to her sister Rose Lawrence dated 13 February 1835, she expressed her dissatisfaction with the circumstances that had obliged her to do so:

> It has ever been one of my regrets that the constant necessity of providing sums of money to meet the exigencies of the boys' education, has obliged me to waste my mind in what I consider mere desultory effusions […] My wish was ever to concentrate all my mental energy in the production of some more noble and complete work; something of pure and holy excellence (if there be not too much presumption in the thought), which might permanently take its place as the work of a British poetess. (qtd. in Wolfson, 2000, p. 521)

Short lyrics characterize the final phase of her career, a shift that seems to have been triggered by the review of the second edition of Records of Woman (1828) and The Forest Sanctuary (1829) penned by Francis Jeffrey for the October 1829 issue of The Edinburgh Review. This review represented Hemans's definitive recognition as a poet, or perhaps it should be said as a poetess. The first paragraph is a catalogue of women's incapacities. It opens with the following derogatory remark: "Women, we fear, cannot do every thing; nor even every thing they attempt." Jeffrey continues: "they are disqualified by the delicacy of their training and habits", although he does add: "This, however, we are persuaded, arises entirely from their being seldom set on such tedious tasks" (1829, p. 32). If not totally convinced of what he was saying, Jeffrey was too sharp to admit a natural limitation in women's intellectual capacities, but his nuanced, not entirely anti-Wollstonecraftian stand endows his ideas with the power of custom and necessity that closes the circle and denies women the chance to evade it: "Their proper and natural business is the practical regulations of private life, in all its bearings, affections, and concerns" (p. 32). Through this manoeuvre, he

4 Wolfson (2006) notes that "[b]efore she had been hailed (not without her bid) into the cult of the "feminine", the gender of Hemans's pen was less settled" (p. 77).

establishes a clear-cut difference between male and female poetry: "Their [women's] business being […] with actual or social life, and the colours it receives from the conduct and dispositions of individuals […they are] instinctively schooled in the deep and dangerous learning of feeling and emotion" (p. 33). His verdict is firm: "We think the poetry of Mrs Hemans a fine exemplification of Female Poetry", which is of a secondary kind, he asserts, since it is neither "the best imaginable poetry" nor indicative of "most commanding genius" (p 35). He acknowledges Hemans's merits: "taste and elegance" as well as "tenderness and loftiness of feeling, and an ethereal purity of sentiment, which could only emanate from the soul of a woman" (p. 47). He finally recommends that she "not venture again on anything so long as the Forest Sanctuary" and instead exercise her talents on short poems: "For we do not hesitate to say, that she is, beyond all comparison, the most touching and accomplished writer of occasional verses that our literature has yet to boast of" (p. 47).5 To illustrate Hemans's artistry, Jeffrey quotes in full "The Palm Tree", "Graves of a Household" and "The Lady of the Castle", all from the volume Records of Woman. The reputation of both the critic and the magazine led editors to reprint this review in Hemans's collected works throughout the nineteenth century. It appeared in volume 5 of The Works of Mrs. Hemans, edited posthumously by her sister Harriet Hughes in 1839 in seven volumes and in the new edition produced by Hughes in 1849 entitled The Poems of Felicia Hemans. Hughes also includes a memoir of her sister's life in both editions where she refers to Jeffrey's praise in the Edinburgh Review and quotes from it. Many other nineteenth-century collections of Hemans's works and editions of Hughes's Memoir, particularly American ones, reproduce Jeffrey's criticism partially or in full.

Victorian criticism underwent a kind of involution by which Hemans became the icon of the Victorian poetess, and by extension of Victorian femininity. I will only mention some very representative instances here. The Athenaeum, one of the most important magazines of the Victorian cultural landscape, initiated a series of "Literary Sketches" in February 1831 with an article on Hemans which has

5 Wolfson (2000) has traced some echoes of Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads and the Preface to his 1815 collected edition of Poems in Jeffrey's criticism of Hemans's work (p. 55, notes 7 and 8).

echoes of Jeffrey's ideas. The article is unsigned but the author was Hemans's friend, the writer Maria J. Jewsbury (Wolfson, 2000, p. 513), who appoints her the "speaker" of an imaginary "feminine literary house of commons"6 (qtd. in Wolfson, 2000, p. 562), asserting that "[t]here will always be a difference between the poetry of men and women", basing her idea in Burkean aesthetics, arguing that "power is the element of man's genius—beauty that of woman's" (p. 564). Jewsbury makes a distinction between the first stage of Hemans's career, characterized by a "classic" style and the later "romantic" one, in which "[s]he writes from and to the heart" (p. 564). Jewsbury appreciates Hemans's "womanliness" and marks her with nationalist traits: "Mrs. Hemans throws herself into her poetry, and the said self is an English gentlewoman" (p. 565). In contrast to Jeffrey, Jewsbury declares that her favourite poem is The Forest Sanctuary. Soon religion and morality became the values for which critics gave Hemans's poetry credit. Hardly two months after her death, the August 1835 number of New Monthly Magazine published an obituary that reveals this shift: "Nothing can be more pure, more feminine and exalted than the spirit which pervades the whole [of Hemans's poetry]" (apud Wolfson, 2000, p. 581). Later, in 1847, the renowned Scottish critic George Gilfilian penned a series of articles on "Female Authors" for Tait's Edinburgh Magazine where, despite making a declaration in favour of women's intellectual capacities, he debases Hemans's literary merits by asserting: "[w]e are reluctantly compelled […] to deny her, in its highest sense, the name of poet […] A maker she is not" (qtd. in Wolfson, 2000, p. 593; italics in the original). Gilfilian refers to Jeffrey's argument to support this idea, commending her "occasional verses" (p. 593; italics in the original). He writes that he has selected her for this series because she is "by far the most feminine writer of the age. All the woman in her shines" (p. 592), thus contributing to foster the image of the poetess as a writer of shorter lyrics. "Mrs Hemans's poems are strictly effusions" (p. 594) he declares, disregarding her extended works. The final verdict is formulated through a gendered comparison: "Mrs Hemans […] was not like Shelley, a vates; she has never reached his heights, nor sounded his depths" (p. 595). Her poetry is consequently only valuable

[6] Unaware who the author of the article was, Hemans expressed her dislike for this assertion in a letter: "I utterly disclaim all wish for the post of 'Speaker to the Femenine Literary House of Commons'" (qtd. in Wolfson, 2000, p. 513).

insofar as it serves to promote the Victorian ideal of femininity. This discourse was pervasive not only in periodicals but also in the biographical notes that were published independently or prefaced the multiple posthumous editions of her works. Hemans's first biographer was her friend Henry F. Chorley. In his Memorials of Mrs. Hemans (1836), published shortly after her death, Chorley tries to be even-handed in his assessment of female authorship, but at times he seems rather to be justifying his own activity as the biographer of a woman writer: "a work which shall trace out the career of a poetess, may not be altogether uninteresting or unseasonable at the present time" (1836, vol. 1, pp. 8-9). Chorley genders Hemans's work not only by referring to her as a "poetess" but by repeating Mary Jameson's dictum that her poems "could not have been written by a man" (1836, vol. 1, p. 138).7 Another influential voice later in the century was William Michael Rossetti, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti's brother, who wrote a "Prefatory Notice" for the Poetical Works of Mrs Hemans published in 1873. The first paragraph of Rossetti's text sets the tone of his criticism by resorting to the identification of the literary work and the author's (feminine) personality. Hemans's compositions become one with her idealized image: they "show as being the outcome of a beautiful life, and in fact they are so" (1873, p. xi). Hemans's literary quality is thus debased when Rossetti discusses the author's weaknesses and declares that her poetry "is not only 'feminine' poetry (which under the circumstances can be no imputation, rather an encomium) but also 'female poetry': besides exhibiting the fineness and charm of womanhood, it has the monotone of mere sex" (p. xxvii). Then he mentions Lamartine as the ideal poet and subtly excludes Hemans from (male-only) Parnassus concluding that "Mrs. Hemans takes a very honourable rank among poetesses" (p. xxvii).

2. HEMANS IN SPAIN

The turning point for Spanish literature in the nineteenth century came thanks to the political exiles, who were forced to leave Spain when the Liberal Triennium (1820-1823) came to an end and Ferdinand VII's absolutist regime was restored through French intervention. Most found refuge in England, where many

[7] Wolfson calls our attention to this sentence (1999, p. 218).

remained at least until the monarch's death in 1834. They got involved in English culture by writing for periodicals, publishing translations, grammars or even original works, teaching Spanish as private tutors or in academic institutions, as Antonio Alcalá Galiano did at London University (University College London) and Pablo Mendíbil at King's College. Their residence in England offered the opportunity to discover older and contemporary English literature, where they sought models to imitate. The peak of Hemans's fame coincided with their arrival in Britain. She was personally acquainted with Joseph Blanco White (José María Blanco y Crespo). Although the exact date of their first contact is unknown, they were both contributors to *The New Monthly Magazine* in the 1820s, where Blanco White published his *Letters from Spain* from April 1821 to April 1822. There seems to have been a long correspondence between them until late in their lives. Three of Hemans's letters from 1826, 1827 and 1829 are reproduced in John Hamilton Thom's edition of *The Life of the Rev. Joseph Blanco White, Written by Himself* (Blanco White, 1845, vol. 1, pp. 435, 437 and 465). In the first, Hemans confesses "the deep interest with which your history and writings have so long inspired me"[8] (Blanco White, 1845, vol. I, p. 435).

It was also in the 1820s that some of Hemans's poems were translated into Spanish. They appeared in the literary annual *No me olvides,* published by Ackermann, the Spanish version of his successful *Forget Me Not*. His intended market was South America since the importation of books into Spain was highly restricted at the time due to heavy censorship. Hemans published seven poems in *Forget Me Not*: "Evening Prayer at a Girl's School" in 1826, "The Cliffs of Dover" and "Night-Blowing Flowers" in 1827, "The Sister's Dream", "Evening Song of the Tyrolese Peasants" and "The Ivy of Kennilworth" in 1828 and "The Sculptured Children" in 1829. Ackermann published six volumes of *No me olvides* from 1824 to 1829. The Spanish exile José Joaquín de Mora was the editor in charge of the volumes for 1824, 1825, 1826 and 1827; those for 1828 and 1829 were edited by Pablo Mendíbil. At least three of Hemans's poems were adapted into Spanish: "The Evening Prayer at a Girl's School", "The Cliffs of Dover" and "The

8 The relevance of the Letters from Spain to Hemans's The Forest Sanctuary has been analysed by Sweet (2010) and Benítez Alonso (2019).

Sister's Dream".[9] However, one of the important differences between the English and the Spanish versions is that whereas the prestige of the authors was one of the main attractions in *Forget Me Not*, in *No me olvides* only the names of well-known authors in the Spanish-speaking context made it into print, the rest remaining anonymous. As a consequence of this, Hemans's authorship of the above poems was not acknowledged and her name was not disseminated in the Hispanic world through this publication. This was not limited to Hemans's work; the female authorship of other poems also disappeared from the publication, as was the case with translations by Maria J. Jewsbury, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, or Mary Russell Mitford. As Medina Calzada (2022) says, this enforced anonymity resulted in a defeminization of the publication (p. 172). But the targeted audience of the literary annuals was women. The feminine delicacy of the illustrations, the considerable number of female authors and female subjects included, and the small, ornate format of the publication were aimed at this readership (Harris, 2015; González Moreno, 2020; Medina Calzada, 2022). Did this suppression of female authorship hinder its success among female readers? Or perhaps the question should be differently formulated: did the publication benefit from wider acceptance thanks to this manoeuvre? Although *No me olvides* did not reach Spanish readers of the time, the question raises an important issue regarding Hemans's reception in nineteenth-century Spain.

A comment by Emilia Pardo Bazán throws some light on this issue. In a debate with a group of women writers, the famous Galician author confronts their scarce literary merits with those of their great foreign peers, mentioning the "Staëles, Ackermanes, Santas Teresas, marquesas de Chatelet, Safod, una nidada, en fin, de eminencias hembras", who stand out in the corresponding fields of criticism, lyrical poetry, sanctity and science (qtd. in Ezama, 2006, p. 95). The use of the Spanish loan word *Ackermanes* reveals that *Forget Me Not* was known in Spain and contributed to the dissemination of English female poets. Pardo Bazán's regard for them is a clear example of the fascination aroused by foreign advances from a socio-literary perspective too, of which Hemans's literary career proved

[9] For a study of these translations, see Llorens (1968), Pajares (2002), Durán López (2015), Medina Calzada (2022).

to be a clear testimony as I shall illustrate in the following discussion.

The editors of *No me olvides* had left Spain in the early 1820s. Although by then some Spanish women writers had published literary works, neither their number nor their notoriety was significant enough to imply a generalized perception of women as potential authors. In his review of the works of Ana María Gálvez in his periodical *Variedades de Ciencia y Literatura y Artes*, Manuel José Quintana, one of the leading literary figures of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, expresses his appreciation but he does so in terms that emphasize the creative woman as an exception to the rule:

> La cuestión de si las mujeres deben o no dedicarse a las letras, nos ha parecido siempre, demás de maliciosa, en algún modo superflua. Los ejemplos son tan raros, y tienen ellas tantas otras ocupaciones a que atender más agradables y más análogas a su naturaleza y costumbres, que no es de temer que el contagio cunda nunca hasta punto de que falten a las atenciones domésticas a que se hallan destinadas, y de que los hombres tengan que partir con ellas el imperio de la reputación literaria. No se ha manifestado bien hasta ahora que tenga de perjudicial ni de ridículo el que algunas pocas den el cultivo de su razón y de su espíritu las horas que otras muchas gastan en disipaciones frívolas; y por último, la lista numerosa de mujeres ilustres que se han distinguido, no sólo en las artes y las letras, sino también en las ciencias, responde victoriosamente a los que les niegan abiertamente la posibilidad de sobresalir, y les cierran el camino de la gloria. (Quintana, 1805, pp. 160-161)

According to Kirkpatrick (1998), the rise of women writers paralleled the explosion of Romanticism in Spain. More recently, scholars such as Palmer (2014, p. 25) have widened the chronological limits to the 1830s. Previously, as Quintana's words attest, women writers were not representative of a trend and often had to face serious individual and institutionalized opposition, as Galván Gonzáles demonstrates (2012). Kirkpatrick (1989) argues that Spanish Romantic women writers "had won a tenuous social acceptance for women's authority – and authorization to write – with regard to the tender emotions […] at the price of ultimately attaching that authority to the bourgeois ideal of domestic womanhood" (p. 288). In the overwhelmingly conservative and arch-Catholic ideology of the reign of Queen Isabella II (1833-1868), female writers were only accepted if they aligned with the deeply religious and moralizing tenets that characterized the institutionalized canon of this time (Sánchez Llama, 2000;

Simón Palmer, 2014; Comellas, 2019). Molina Puertos (2009), however, has noted that rather than submitting to the dominant discourse, women had an active role in the formulation of the feminine ideal.[10] In the 1850s, conservatives and liberals held opposed views regarding female education. Where the former contended that women must remain within the domestic sphere, the latter indirectly accepted their involvement in the public sphere through the education of their children, which required their own intellectual education (Molina Puertos, 2009, p. 186). This polarization is observed in judgements of female writers. For instance, whereas Quintana, an outstanding figure of Spanish liberalism, places women in both private and public spheres at the turn of the nineteenth century and even accepts a woman playwright as María Rosa Gálvez, in 1844, Gustave Deville published an article in the *Revista de Madrid* where he advised women not to write plays or historical novels. Instead, their talents must be applied "tan sólo a las pacíficas investigaciones de la vida íntima, a las nobles y santas emanaciones del corazón y la expresión coloreada y simpática de los sentimientos tiernos y religiosos" (qtd. in Kirkpatrick, 1998, p. 94). In fact, even the two most outstanding women writers of Spanish Romanticism represented opposed feminine models: the Cuban Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda stood for the strong masculine type, often related to the non-conformist and radical image of George Sand – the target of many attacks from conservatives in Spain –whereas Carolina Coronado expressly assumed the role of *poetisa* instead of *poeta*,[11] and wrote for a female readership within the limits established by convention (Comellas, 2019, p. 83).

Given these circumstances, one might think that Hemans's reception in Romantic and post-Romantic Spain was determined by her condition as a woman writer but in the following pages we shall see that it responded to a more complex cultural phenomenon related to a shift in the provenance of literary models. I have found two translations of poems that acknowledge her authorship. The first is a translation of "The Palm Tree" published in 1838 in *Liceo Artístico y Literario*

[10] Although signs of change could be seen in the writings of later authors such as Rosalía de Castro and Emilia Pardo Bazán, the progress of feminist vindications and a feminist literature had "a different shape and timetable from that of England or France" (Kirkpatrick, 1989, p. 297).
[11] In Spanish the distinction is a kind of pun since the grammatical gender of *poeta* is feminine.

Español. The translator is Patricio de la Escosura (1807-1878), a typical literary figure of the time: he was a man of letters, but also a politician and an officer of the Spanish army. He wrote plays, novels and poetry, although he did not consider himself especially suited to the latter genre. Cano Malagón (1988, p. 82) classifies him as a Romantic writer, although Escosura also wrote in the classicist style that he had learnt from his literary master Alberto Lista. Escosura may have become acquainted with Hemans's poetry during his brief exile in England in 1825-1826.[12] Ferrer del Río (1846, p. 190) wrote that he was in contact with other exiles, but did not specify who. Escosura's close relationship with Lista may have led him to the latter's lifelong friend Blanco White while in England. This period was certainly the peak of Hemans's popularity in Britain, and the first Spanish translations of some of her poems were about to appear in *No me olvides*. Whether Escosura's translation of "The Palm Tree" was born of an early knowledge of Hemans's writings at this stage or the consequence of a later discovery is uncertain. "The Palm Tree" was first published in *The New Monthly Magazine* in 1827 and then included in the volume *Records of Woman: With Other Poems* in 1828. As indicated above, it is one of the poems included by Jeffrey in his 1829 review of *Records of Woman*, which may have called the Spanish author's attention to it. The lofty reputation of *The Edinburgh Review* was well known in Spain by this time[13] and Escosura must have become familiar with it while in England, if not earlier. Of course, he may have had access to any of Hemans's collected works in which the poem had been published before 1838. There is a copy of the 1835 edition of *The Poetical Works of Mrs. Hemans*, published in London by Frederick Warne, at the library of the Senado in Madrid, although its provenance is not recorded. Another possibility is that Escosura read a translation in a French periodical, which was common in Spain. Nevertheless, I think that the characteristics of the translation, all the other circumstances mentioned above and the fact that Escosura must have known English from an early age thanks to his English mother Ana Morro[u]gh Walcott and not simply through his year-

[12] He was sent to France by his father in September 1824 because of his involvement in the radical secret society *Los Numantinos*, of which an also young José de Espronceda was a member, who was banned from Madrid to a convent in Guadalajara for this activity.

[13] An article entitled "Situación de la prensa periódica en Escocia", with detailed lists of the periodicals and their political orientation, and also circulation figures, appeared in *El español* on 4 June 1836.

long stay in England, make direct translation from the English plausible.

Escosura titled the piece "La palma. Imitación de la escrita en inglés por Mis [sic][14] Felicia Hemans". The six-line stanzas of octosyllabic couplets of the English are rendered into longer, irregular stanzas of hendecasyllables and heptasyllables. The poem has two distinct parts. The first is focused on the solitude and otherness of the palm tree in the midst of an English garden. The source of the second part, as the author acknowledged, is *Les Jardins, ou l'Art d'embellir le paysage* (1782) by Jacques J. Montanier Abbé Delille (1838-1813), which was translated into English in 1789 as *The Garden; or, The Art of Laying Out Grounds* (Wolfson, 2000, p. 419). Both Delille's verses and Hemans's adaptation deal with the topic of exile[15] filtered through an Orientalist prism. In the second part the fate of the tree is shared by a solitary Indian who cannot join the feast that is being held in the garden and breaks into tears when he encounters the palm tree, which reminds him of home. In the last stanza of "The Palm Tree" there is an exaltation of patriotism. In Escosura's rendering it is expanded into two stanzas where the contained, well-balanced tone of the original disappears and the result is rather bombastic. The Spaniard maintains the rich exotic texture in "The Palm Tree", where the Orient (Arabia and India) and Africa are confronted with Europe, but his version contains some variations. There are some additions that underline the Britishness of the source and reveal the process of cultural transference that this translation entails. In the Spanish version the *locus* of the scene is identified as "Albion", an addition to the English version Hemans probably considered unnecessary. What matters is that Escosura considered it was. A second addition is the figure of the owner of the garden, who is referred to as the "lubrico indiáno" (Escosura, 1838, p. 173). Hemans's poem has a colonialist background, but by 1838 little was left of the Spanish Empire and Escosura transfers Spanish colonialist power to its British equivalent for his readers. Escosura's implicit recognition of this colossal historical shift is

[14] Probably a misprint of "Mrs".

[15] In her 1829 letter to Blanco White, written from Liverpool, Hemans confesses her melancholic mood: "all those *exile* feelings […] by which I am but too frequently visited" (*apud* Blanco White, 1845, vol. 1, p. 466). Hemans explored the topic in *The Forest Sanctuary*. Sweet (2010) has compared its treatment by Blanco White and Hemans. Saglia (2017b, pp. 209-219) studies the figure of the Spanish exile during Romanticism in England and Loyola López (2017, pp. 183-194) analyses the treatment of banishment in *No me olvides.*

tinged with melancholy. He also introduces the image of a girl crying for the lover that is no longer by her side, which can be interpreted as an allegorical representation of Spain crying over her lost colonies. Thus the Spanish writer appropriated Hemans's "The Palm Tree" to express deep personal and patriotic feelings.[16]

The volume in which the translation is included, *El Liceo artístico y literario español*, was the official periodical of the homonymous institution, founded by José Fernández de la Vega in 1838 with the aim of promoting literary and artistic activities. The institution counted with the most eminent writers of the time among its ranks and Escosura was one of its most prominent members. He wrote the general introduction of the publication, which included compositions by Ventura de la Vega, José de Espronceda, Manuel Bretón de los Herreros, Ángel de Saavedra, Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, José de Zorrila and Alberto Lista among others. The review became a kind of Parnassus of Spanish Romanticism canonizing the most significant male writers of the period. The Liceo of Madrid enjoyed the patronage of the Regent Queen María Cristina, who is mentioned in various numbers in both prose and verse dedications. It is possible that, having such a distinguished female patron, Escosura was led to include a woman writer with the intention of pleasing her, but this is only speculation. The fact is that Hemans figures as the only woman writer to enter this contemporary canon thanks to Escosura.[17]

The second translation is that of the sonnet "Flight of the Spirit", composed by Hemans late in life. It was published in the "Thoughts During Sickness" section of volume seven of *The Works of Mrs. Hemans* (1839). The translation came out in the July 1869 number of the recently founded *Revista espiritista, periódico de estudios psicológicos*, a monthly periodical that ran from May 1869 to December

16 Only two years after publication of this translation, Escosura had to exile again to France from 1841 to 1843 on account to his opposition to the Regent Baldomero Espartero. He was later exiled from 1848 to 1849 (Cano Malagón, 1988, pp. 48-49) and from 1851 to 1854 (Baasner & Acero Yus, 2007, p. 311).

17 Female talent other than Hemans's was not entirely excluded. The volume contains a very favourable commentary by José Musso y Valiente of the picture "La pasiega" by the painter Rosario Weiss Zorrila, Francisco de Goya's disciple and friend (p. 100), and some women appear as members of the different sections on a separate list, which seems to be incomplete, published in one of the supplements (p. 151).

1875. It was the official periodical of the Sociedad Barcelonesa Propagadora del Espiritismo, founded by José María Fernández Colavida (1819-1888), who was the translator of the French founder of this doctrine, Allan Kardec, *nom de plume* of the pedagogue Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivai (1804-1869). Each issue contained articles, lectures and experiments related to this topic very much in vogue all over Europe at the time. There was also a section titled *Variedades*, where an unsigned translation of Hemans's sonnet was included in the third issue. It is a prose rendering faithful to the content of the English piece, which deals with the mystery of death and its unknown territories. The only significant change is found in the title, "El invisible", perhaps considered more attractive to the potential readers of this periodical. This translation reveals that Hemans had at least a certain level of fame in Spain: as with Escosura's translation, her name is printed. Moreover, in neither case are her poetic merits undermined or she herself placed below male writers.

Hemans is mentioned in other periodicals, particularly from 1860 onwards. Of minor note is a passing reference in the 2 January 1845 issue of the journal *El clamor público*, where Hemans's name is mentioned within a translation of Georgiana Fullerton's novel *Ellen Middleton*. These narratives (*folletines*) were serially published and inserted in the lower part of the page. The next mention, however, is of particular interest. It comes in 1852 in the short-lived women's weekly magazine *La mujer*, published from 3 March to 17 November 1852 by a women's society.[18] Hemans is mentioned in an article by Anita George (later Madame de Barrera) about Carolina Coronado, who enjoyed great popularity at the time. The terms in which she describes Coronado remind us of contemporary Victorian descriptions of Hemans, where she is made to embody an idealized image of womanhood: "El estilo de la señorita Coronado es decididamente femenino […] Sus poesías son el trasunto fiel de su mente, y en ellas se reflejan su corazon, su gusto, su posicion social […] sus composiciones son de tal temple que solo una verdadera mujer podría escribirlas" (George, 1852, pp. 4, 5). Coronado's patriotism and Spanishness are also addressed. In the concluding

[18] Until the 1840s periodicals for women were written by men but in the 1840s and 1850s female writers begin to contribute partially to these publications, or even take total responsibility for them (Sánchez Llama, 2000, p. 156).

remarks, the comparison with Hemans is made explicit: she is "la Hemans de España, en quien se concentra el Genio de Safo y el alma celestial de Santa Teresa" (George, 1852, p. 6). The similarities are so conspicuous that Anita George, who was undoubtedly acquainted with similar descriptions of Hemans in Britain, seems to be deliberately transferring them to Coronado as the highest praise.

Another comparison, although made for other reasons, is found in a famous article penned by the Spanish author Juan Valera in the reputed periodical *El Contemporáneo* in September 1861. Valera writes in defence of Spanish literature against attacks it received in a review of Fernán Caballero's complete works in the July issue of *The Edinburgh Review*.[19] Valera mentions the Spanish authors of merit at the time and notes that, in terms of female writers, Spain had no reason to envy Great Britain: "[s]i la Gran-Bretaña se jacta de haber dado nacimiento á Felicia Hemans, á lady Blessigton y á Sara Norton, nosotros tenemos, aunque no nos jactemos de ello, á la Avellaneda, á la Coronado y á otras muchas" (1861, n. pag.). Independently of the important fact that Hemans is the name that always comes first when one is writing about British women writers, Valera's presentation of Spanish female authorship as a sign of merit and modernity is ambiguous as it somehow implies its segregation from male writing and the hierarchy established in the poetess-poet differentiation.

The three following cases are different, however. Here there is no gender differentiation and Hemans's name appears next to esteemed male writers. The respected and elitist Barcelona publication *La abeja* (1862-1870), founded with the aim of spreading German culture and science in Spain,[20] published a translation of Franz Anton Nüsslein's *Lehrbuch der Aesthetik* (1837) in 1864 and 1865. Hemans's name is mentioned when the author deals with lyrical poetry referring to the English canon in an anthology published by Thomas Ramsay within which certain names are picked out: "Spenser, Shakespeare, E. Waller, Prior, Landsdown, Shenstone, Ramsey, Burns, Mrs Barbauld, Aikin, Miss Carter, T. Moore, Lord Byron, Watts, Hervey, W. Howitt, Felicia Hemans, María Howitt

19 For this journal, Fernán Caballero appears as the only contemporary Spanish writer worthy of merit.
20 Its full title is La abeja. Revista científica y literaria ilustrada, principalmente extractada de los buenos escritores alemanes por una sociedad literaria.

and Letitia Landon" (Anonymous, 1864, p. 318). It is again through German mediation[21] that Hemans is mentioned in another Spanish periodical. The German Hispanist Juan [Johannes] Fastenrath wrote an obituary of the German author Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876) in a letter addressed to the editor of the *Revista contemporánea* that was published in its April-May 1876 issue. Hemans is mentioned as one of the "muchas flores del Parnaso inglés" (Fastenrath, 1876, p. 119) that Feiligrath had translated into German. The authors mentioned beside Hemans are Robert Burns, Coleridge, Thomas Campbell, and Alfred Tennyson. Another reference is found in an 1883 issue of the same periodical, in an article entitled "El jardín de los poetas" by Vicente de Arana (1847-1890). The Basque writer had studied in England and was well acquainted with English literature, particularly the Romantic poets. In this article he offers a survey of the way in which great writers – classic, Italian and particularly British – used flowers in their writings. He mentions Felicia Hemans among them, noting how she makes of the water-lily an emblem of purity of heart. He briefly paraphrases in Spanish the lines "[…] thus bearing up / To the blue sky that alabaster cup, / As to the shower?" (Hemans, 1839, vol. 7, p. 254): "[…] que alza hacia el cielo azul su copa de alabastro, para recibir en ella su benéfica lluvia" (Arana, 1873, p. 76). This reference indicates a familiarity with the English author by a Spaniard who also admired other Romantic authors such as Byron, William Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley.

3. CONCLUSION

In this essay I have shown that Hemans deserves to be considered as one of the foreign writers of relevance to the nineteenth-century Spanish canon, where she was even better represented than writers such as Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley. Undoubtedly one reason for Hemans's popularity lies in the idealized image of her femininity that the Victorians projected. Thus, Anita George, herself an English writer, does not fail to echo the Victorian *clichés* and a gendered basis of the canon is also found in Juan Valera's assessment. In many cases, Hemans may have served as a safe model among foreign female writers and even as the foil for the bad reputation of some, such as George Sand, whose morality was

21 For the relevance of Hemans in pre-1848 Germany, see Lenckos (2001)

considered scandalous (Kirpatrick, 1989, pp. 80, 88; Aymes, 1997). However, it can be said that her Spanish nineteenth-century reception was more fair than her British one, which progressively diminished her talent as a writer through a gendered critical assessment of her writings. Although female writing was much constrained and definitely gendered in mid-nineteenth century Spain, Hemans was not subjected to a general gendered treatment, as the majority of the instances presented in this essay demonstrate. One reason for this may be the prestige that English literature had acquired in Spain through the exiles' direct contact and which they brought with them on their return after 1834. In their attempt to emulate British culture to modernize Spain,[22] they may have included women writers in their critical writings and canons even if Spain was not yet ready at this early juncture. With his translation of Hemans's poem, Escosura is a clear instance of this phenomenon. His exile in Britain must have allowed him to see the popularity of Hemans and other female writers and led him to his unprejudiced choice of her poem. This also applies to the other non-gendered references mentioned above, which make of nineteenth-century Spain a new field in the history of the reception of Felicia Hemans.

[22] See Medina Calzada (2022).

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