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DISPLACEMENT, MIGRATION AND FORMS OF ENCOUNTER IN EUROPEAN
WOMEN'S POETRY BETWEEN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH
CENTURY

Presentata da:

Wilmarie Rosado Pérez

Coordinatore Dottorato

Prof.ssa Bruna Conconi

Supervisore

Prof.ssa Lilla Maria Crisafulli (EDGES)

Supervisore

Prof.ssa María José de la Torre (Universidad de Granada)

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation investigates the role of women's poetry in Britain and in other European countries, such as Spain and Italy, between the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Century with particular reference to texts that deal with experiences of displacement and migration. The project explores women's poetical works in relation to the historical period they were produced, and as an important element for considering literature as a cultural product promoting policy of gender equality. The research will demonstrate to what extent the literary corpus under scrutiny enabled European women poets (as travellers, migrants or as observers of various forms of migration) to resist oppression coming from dominant power relationships. Though figuring as excluded subjectivities, women writers gave voice to new ways of expressing social needs in a patriarchal and conservative society. These texts generated new forms of representing migration as means of dislocation but also encounter with new realities. Drawing from feminist theories that move from, Friedman, Scott, Kristeva, and many other literary and feminist scholars, the project will refer to a wide range of poetical texts written by women writers which deal with migration as a multidimensional and multiperspective phenomenon. The aim of this investigation is to shed a new light on the experience of women migrants and how this experience is mediated by and filtered through their eyes and elaborated in their poetics. Finally, the dissertation intends to explore the ways in which the creation and expression of poetry by women also convey a representation of a subject in transit who crosses geographic and symbolic boundaries while questioning gendered roles and rules.

KEYWORDS

women's writings, proto-feminism,
migration, displacement, alienation, citizenship
feminist literary criticism, gender studies,
feminist historiography, English
women's literature, Spanish women's literature,
Italian women's literature.

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As a feminist researcher and a migrant, the transnational dialogue I attempted to produce in this investigation included myself as an interlocutor. The migration and exile metaphors speak to me directly, as a non-European, a Puerto Rican PhD student whose national identity is based upon a complex matrix of colonialism and undefined political status. Growing up in a territorial possession of the United States of America, in which a significant part of the population continuously moves to the mainland, the phenomenon of colonial migration has always been part of my life. All of these aspects converge in my being and continue to be part of my own process of becoming. Therefore, this work is shaped by my personal experiences of displacement, but also by my clear feminist intention of recognising, disseminating and retelling a small part of the history and literary production of four women writers.

I wrote this thesis from a very privileged position, as I had access to resources of various academic institutions across Europe, particularly the University of Bologna in Italy and the University of Granada in Spain. Also, in the course of these three years, I received the emotional and intellectual support of a group of international gender researchers and experts which are part of the GRACE (Gender and Cultures of Equality) and GEMMA Consortium, to whom I am very thankful.

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CHAPTER ONE:

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

1.1 General Overview

This research is an attempt to create transnational dialogues¹ among various women's poetic texts from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries throughout Europe, with a particular emphasis on English poets but also Spanish and Italian² writers. The dialogues are based on the manner in which the selected texts for this investigation deal with themes and tropes related to migration and exile, such as displacement, alienation, citizenship, national identity and belonging, among others.³ The intertextual conversations are between texts written in different languages, particularly English, Spanish, but also Galician and Italian⁴; this multi-linguistic approach resonates with the central themes of migration and exile. By moving from one language to another; the metaphors of mobility that constitute a central topic of this research have also influenced its methodology.

In this investigation, a close reading method⁵ is used to navigate through poetic and prose texts written during the Romantic Period. These texts were penned in three different countries, each with historical particularities, and they failed to exemplify individually or together, a literary corpus that could be classified as pertaining to one specific location. Instead, these texts invite us to rethink the idea of nationalism and to look beyond the limits of the nation-state. As will be discussed later on, these writings can be best described as part of a transnational literary production.

Via a close reading method, this work search for connections among the writers' mode of depicting their poetic personas, their subjectivities, their ideologies, and their textual representation of migrants or people in exile. In a similar vein, the research deals with the ways in which these writers portrayed subjects in transit and how this representation mirrored their own sexual and gender identity politics. The latter tropes and themes are privileged over other aspects that could be found in the selected texts. As secondary sources for the theoretical framework of this work, it was considered a variety of feminist and gender academic literature.

¹ These dialogues surpass the nation-state limits imposed by conventional ideas which defined literature as a local cultural product.

² I use the term Italian writers, although this is not completely accurate considering that at the time what we name today Italy was in the process of becoming a nation-state.

³ I am aware that migration and exile are not strictly synonyms and represent different extraterritorial experiences. Although, as we would see in the following pages, the concept of migration sometimes is used as an umbrella term that covers the experience of mobility of the exiles. To avoid general assumptions in the employment of these terms I will provide a historical background of the literary texts in the following chapters.

⁴ The majority of these texts have been translated into English, but there is no translation into Spanish from the English texts; nor is there evidence of any English translation of the Italian texts.

⁵ I employ close reading as method that transcend a formalist approach to incorporate feminist and gender studies methodological and theoretical concerns (Lukic & Sánchez Espinosa 105).

Supported by this ample theoretical framework, it is possible to identify connections and contrasts not only throughout the poetry produced by these writers but also in other literary genres they employed, such as letters, essays, pamphlets and memoirs.

Notwithstanding the wide range of texts covered in this research, particular attention is placed on poetry as a form of literature that provided these authors with a vehicle to voice some of their main preoccupations concerning the social inequalities that they encountered as women writers. This is of particular relevance if we consider the fact that poetry was historically regarded as a male domain in countries such as Britain during the Romantic era (Mellor, *Gender* 6). Poetry was appraised as a masculine genre mainly because knowledge of the classics was necessary in order to produce it, and since the majority of women did not have access to institutional education, it was deemed to be restricted to male writers. More recently, however, this binary conceptualization of the literary forms into masculine and feminine has been called into question in the light of the publication of several scholarly works on the subject. In fact, as a high number of literary works testify, during the Romantic period many women wrote verses (Mellor, *Gender* 5). Furthermore, according to Stuart Curran (1990), during the Romantic period “339 women published in England between 1780 and 1830 in addition to 82 anonymous female poets” (qtd. in Mellor, *Gender* 7). Many of these women writers even made a living from their literary production.

A similar situation happened in Spain in the middle years of the nineteenth century, when a number of women writers' works were published. After 1841, women writers broke centuries of silence driven by social, cultural and political changes (Kirkpatrick, “Introduction” 1).⁶ Some of these writers expressed their disconformity with the social norms that precluded other women from leaving the domestic space in order to pursue creative endeavours (Kirkpatrick, “Women Writers” 63). Because the work of women poets during the Romantic Era in Italy has been a subject of relatively new scholarship, it is difficult to find information regarding whether an approximate quantity of female poets had the possibility to publish their works. Nevertheless, we have access today to the literary production of Italian women writers who contributed to the national project of unification and were also influenced by the Romantic movement.

Therefore, European women writers' poetic production during the Romantic Era invites a closer examination of these texts using contemporary gender and feminist theories in history

⁶ Susan Kirkpatrick partially attributes to the Romantic movement and the Liberal Reform in Spain the emergence of a large number of women writers (“Introduction” 1).

and literature.⁷ The application of these feminist theories to literary texts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can shed light on the writers' proto-feminist consciousness, but also on how the poetical tropes of migration and exile were employed to convey identity politics. Put briefly, a feminist approach is used to question how the metaphors and tropes typical of the language of migration and exile may have provided the possibility of reacting to issues that concerned these writers directly.

The use of a feminist methodology and framework may also help us to understand how poetry dealing with migration and exile invited these women writers to reflect on political and social matters and to develop a serious criticism of the patriarchal system. Indeed, the themes and tropes of migration and exile occasionally serve as strategic disguises to configure and promote transgressive social and political ideas within very conservative and restrictive contexts. For instance, in the English Romantic Period, the poetic language dealing with mobility was employed to justify the expression of some daring considerations without exposing the writers to legal consequences, and despite the restraints imposed on their freedom of speech (Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 119). Undoubtedly, to write about migration and exile helped women poets to conceal their critical aims during times of high social and political repression.

1.2 Writing emigration and exile: An introduction to the Romantic poets

This research examines the literary production of the English writers Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806) and Mary Darby Robinson (1758-1800), alongside with the work of the Galician author Rosalía de Castro (1837- 1885) and the Italian poet Innocenza Ansuini Tondi (1829-1896). The first two British poets lived during the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century; they dedicated part of their prose and poetry to migrants, wanderers and exiles. Charlotte Smith wrote the long blank verse poem *The Emigrants* (1793), in which, among other things, she depicted the situation of the French emigrants arriving from France to

⁷ In this dissertation I incorporate the definition of “Romanticism” proposed by Michael Ferber: “Romanticism was a European cultural movement, or set of kindred movements, which found in a symbolic and internalised romance plot a vehicle for exploring one’s self and its relationship to others and to nature, which privileged the imagination as a faculty as a higher and more inclusive than reason, which sought solace in or reconciliation with the natural world, which ‘detranscendentalised’ religion by taking God or the divine as inherent in nature or in the soul and replaced theological doctrine with metaphor and feeling, which honoured poetry and all the arts as the highest human creations, and which rebelled against the established canons of neo-classical ethics and against both aristocratic and bourgeois social and political norms in favour of values more individual, inward, and emotional.” (4)

the coast of England in the early aftermath of the French Revolution. As well, Smith's book *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784), includes a few poems dealing with exile and alienation as major themes. The approach to Smith's poetical work takes into consideration some of the letters she wrote to cohort writers or acquaintances, in addition to critical and biographical works that have been published in recent years. As regards Mary Darby Robinson, some texts included in her collection of poems titled *Lyrical Tales* (1800), in which she focuses on the existential theme of alienation by populating her verses with estranged characters are analysed in the following chapters. Also, the proto-feminist pamphlet entitled *A Letter to the Women of England* (1799), and the essay *Present State of the Manners, Society, Etc. Etc. Of the Metropolis of England* (1800). In the analysis of the work of Mary Robinson, autobiographical aspects from *Memoirs of Mary Robinson "Perdita"* (1895) were taken into account together with the aforementioned primary sources in order to offer a glimpse of her personal life, literary career, and to better situate her as a proto-feminist writer during the Romantic Period.

As stated earlier, this work investigates Rosalía De Castro's poetic oeuvre as well among a few of her prose texts. Rosalía de Castro was a Galician writer whose work emerged during the late Spanish Romantic Period. Her writings were deeply influenced by the state of poverty of those days and the significant emigration of Galician people primarily to Central and South America. Moreover, her literary production is nowadays considered pivotal in the Galician literary movement called "Rexurdimento" in which a national literary consciousness was promoted and cultivated (Forneiro 853). This work mainly focuses on poems which come from two different poetry volumes, *Follas Novas* (1880), and *En las orillas del Sar* (1884). Additionally, two proto-feminist pamphlets written by Rosalía de Castro during the first years of her literary career titled *Lieders* (1858) and *Las Literatas. Carta a Eduarda* (1865) are part of the non-poetical text included in this research.

Lastly, the research offers an analysis of the poetic work of the Italian writer Innocenza Ansuini Tondi (1829-1896), who produced her poetic oeuvre during the mid-nineteenth century, a time also marked by the fight for Italian unification. Ansuini Tondi was an exile herself and her collection of poems *Canti dell'Esule* (1910), published posthumously, is dedicated to a patriotic discourse from a Risorgimento perspective and to the exiles from her province Viterbo who struggled significantly at the time of political and social uncertainty. As secondary sources, letters that Ansuini Tondi wrote to acquaintances and family members were consulted as well as a recent edition of her collection of poems titled *Canti dell'Esule*, which contained critical essays published in 2011.

On the personal level, in one way or another, all of these writers had experiences of mobility – whether in their own or in neighbouring countries – that irrefutably affected their writings. This can be observed in the cases of the English poets Smith and Robinson. For example, Smith lived in France for short periods and moved to different parts of England during her life. Smith's personal experiences of mobility are frequently evoked in her long blank verse poem *The Emigrants* and may have been included in her poetry volume *Elegiac Sonnets and other poems*. Additionally, we are able to fully observe Smith's period abroad in France from a biographical standpoint thanks to the work done by the English literary scholar Lorraine Fletcher (1998), whose text is one of the secondary sources of this thesis.

In like manner, the English poet Robinson stayed short periods in France and Germany, although she spent most of her life in England. As in Smith's poetry, feelings of estrangement and alienation are poignantly evoked in her work. As well, Robinson exploited a cosmopolitan language that allowed her to voice her dissatisfaction with the way of living and mentality of English people. In her literary production, Robinson declared her desire to live abroad, mainly in European countries such as France and Italy; above all, in her texts she demonstrated a special attraction to French culture and revolutionary ideas, which also marked her non poetic work, such as the proto-feminist pamphlet *A Letter to the Women of England*. She was described by the public as a Francophile as a consequence of this admiration and loyalty to France. Her attraction to French culture and values of the period also made her the target of much criticism as the tension between the two countries increased over the final decade of the eighteenth century. She even defends Marie Antoinette in her poem *Monody to the Memory of the Late Queen of France* (1793) and advocates in favour of a collective cosmopolitan vision of the world, which was contrary to the prevailing British nationalism (Craciun, "British Women" 12). As will be analysed in more detail in the next chapter, while the eighteenth century was a period of crescent British nationalist fever, Robinson's literary production contributed to a transnational feminist project that imagined other forms of conceiving and sharing the world as a site for solidarity (12).

The prominent woman of letters Rosalía de Castro (De Castro) never left Spain during her life, not even for short periods. However, she experienced local migration by moving from her village in the countryside to metropolitan cities. There is evidence that she lived between Castile and Extremadura, though she resided predominantly in Galicia (Kaminsky 457). De Castro dedicates a significant portion of her verses to the experience of intra and transnational migration of the people of Galicia. In some of her writings, she depicts the sufferings of the people who remained in the country, mainly poor Galician women. In her view, the people who

stayed in Galicia were the real outcasts, struggling to survive extreme poverty while awaiting the return of their loved ones. For example, in a text titled in English *The Galician Bagpipe (A Gaita Galega)* from her volume *Galician Songs (Cantares Gallegos)*, she wrote:

Poor Galicia, Spanish
should never be your name,
Spain has forgotten you
through you're beautiful just the same
[...]
Galicia you have no fatherland,
you live in the world alone,
and your large and fertile family
in scattered throngs they roam.⁸ (qtd in Davies, "Cultural Isolation"189)

In this text, Galicia becomes an orphan foreigner, a land forgotten by Spain. De Castro depicts the Galician population as wanderers with "no fatherland". As we can see, De Castro's presents in this poem a critique of the Spanish imperialism based on feelings of estrangement that are a direct consequence of the unequal treatment received by the people of Galicia from the Spanish government. Besides De Castro's literary commitment to the social condition of the people of Galicia, her literary production also bears an element of transnationalism, not just in terms of the themes she addresses but also regarding the circulation of her work. When her work and her capacity as a writer was questioned by literary elites in Spain, she received support from the other side of the Atlantic, from the Galician people living in exile, so that most of her writings were published and disseminated in Cuba and other parts of South America before being published in Spain.

The writer Innocenza Ansuini Tondi (Ansuini Tondi) also had a personal experience of displacement. She became an exile herself, as for a decade she was obliged to leave her native Viterbo as a consequence of her political ideas and activism. Ansuini Tondi and her husband Ermenegildo Tondi were condemned to permanent exile by the Catholic Pontifical State for their involvement in activities against the domain of the Pope and the Church. She participated actively in the movement for the unification of Italy, and for a social and political improvement of her town Viterbo (Marinucci 209). The fact of being an outcast herself, as well as the exile

⁸ Probe Galicia, non debes
chamarte nunca española
que España de ti se olvida
cando eres, ¡ai tan hermosa [...]
Galicia, ti non tes patria
ti vives no mundo soia,
i a prole fecunda túa
se espalla en errantes hordas. (De Castro qtd. in Davies, "Cultural Isolation"189)

experiences by her family members, acquaintances and friends, deeply impacted on her life and poetic production.

In addition to these writers' personal experiences with displacement, all of them have in common the fact that they were live spectators of the mobility of people in their countries; such a position provided them with a unique opportunity for the elaboration of their literary production. Also, despite the geographical context and different periods within which these writers produced their works – though all categorised as belonging to the Romantic Period – they all lived and wrote during historical conditions marked by political and social unrest. These aspects, as we will see in more detail in the following chapter, undoubtedly shaped their literary works.

In Britain during the Romantic Period, the topic of alienation was a central preoccupation and an iconic trope frequently employed by writers. This trope, along with the personal experiences of exile and migration -- depicted by several authors in their texts---, disrupted prevalent ideas of nationalism during a time marked by revolution and war (Keane, "Exiles and émigrés" 89). Similarly, from the first half of the nineteenth century onwards, an economic crisis together with the political and social centralization of Spain caused the exodus of Galician people. Moreover, the famine of 1853 provoked the migration of more than two million of Galicians to America (Pereira-Muro 119). Thus, the social, economic and political consequences of the continuous arrival and departure of people, along with the inconstancies of the time, marked the lives of the Galician population, its ideologies and therefore even its literary outcomes. Similarly, in Italy the transition to a modern state during the period of the Italian Risorgimento was notably characterised by the phenomena of exile and migration (Isabella, "Introduction"1). From the beginning of the nineteenth century, a number of people living outside the Italian territory orchestrated the national movement for the unification of the country and dedicated significant efforts to the promotion of a collective national identity. In other words, essential political activities directed toward the development of a nation-state occurred outside the Italian states (Isabella, "Introduction"1). Certainly, it was a period characterised by mobility and political turmoil, informed by ideologies and ideas emerging in other parts of the continent – aspects that we can observe in the literature of the time.⁹

⁹ Notwithstanding this, there is a lack of historical and literary studies on the relationship between Romanticism and Risorgimento, some scholars have shown that prevalent ideas pertaining to European Romanticism strongly informed the mass movement ideology during the Italian Risorgimento (Ginsborg, "European Romanticism" 18).

Due to the relevance of understanding the historical significance of the recurrent employment of migration and exile tropes in the poetical texts of these writers, the following chapter includes an overview of the Romantic Period in the three different European countries. More specifically, it is outlined, from an historical and literary point of view, how and why these women writers express feelings of alienation and employ migration and exile allegories that defy, controvert or reproduce certain prevalent tropes of the Romantic Period. It is also interesting to discover through the close reading of these texts how the authors negotiate with or subvert some literary metaphors in order to promote their gender identity politics and ideological beliefs. The way in which women writers conceived exile and migration phenomena in times of high instability and personal vulnerability is fundamental to this research.

It is also important to remark that the feelings of alienation and displacement expressed by these writers through their Romantic-era poetry and prose do not necessarily specifically refer to the mental or spiritual result of relocation from one country to another. Although the representation of the experience of crossing the English Channel or the Atlantic Ocean is described in some of their texts as a source of anxiety and alienation, it is by no means the only cause of these sentiments. The depicted feelings exceed the material experience of mobility, in which the authors incorporate a fluid metaphor of identity, some of the women writers whose work are examined in this investigation felt like outcasts in their own countries, because of their gender condition. Regardless of whether they travelled across or within national borders they were treated as exiles, because as women they were not citizens in the formal definition of the term.¹⁰ They were non-citizens, and their estrangement was not temporary, or one caused by the fact of being distant from their countries of origin.

As it will be proved in the fourth and fifth chapters, in which the close reading of the specific poetic texts is provided, notwithstanding the influence of the flux of migrants as a day-to-day life scenario for these authors, their writings were not mere records of the events that were unfolding. The gaze of these female writers involves more than an explicit description of the condition of the banished populations, or a succinct reflection upon the repercussions of migration in their homelands.¹¹ Instead, they were active eye-witnesses of these displacements,

¹⁰ For Sasha Roseneil argues that the concept of citizenship has always been problematic for feminism because of its limited applicability in practice (1). Since the late eighteenth century in Britain, women hoping for the end of their social subordination aspired to be treated as citizens.

¹¹ The concept of home that I try to incorporate in this research includes a more flexible definition that takes into consideration geopolitical and social aspects, such as the one proposed by Angelika Bammer, in which home is an “indeterminate space: it can mean, almost simultaneously, both the place I have lost and the new place I have taken up, even if only temporarily.” (qtd. in Romero 105)

and were deeply involved in the dynamics and difficulties that such situations were creating for a larger group of people and for the relationships among European countries.

By way of illustration, Smith's long blank verse poem *The Emigrants*, in which she expresses her opinion on the situation of the French émigrés arriving in England after the outbreak of the French Revolution, offers an innovative metaphorical map by which we can reconsider, in a conciliatory mode, the relationship between France and England (Wiley, "The Geography" 55). Rather than pursuing a nationalist approach during a period of great tension in Europe, she proposes a new perspective on the meaning of what constitutes a national space. It is interesting to note how the poetic texts dealing with migration allowed these writers to question predominant political notions and ideologies that affected themselves as well as other discriminated groups, or even the entire population of their respective countries.

Apart from exile and migration metaphors, women writers employed other discourses and tropes for the development of their proto-feminism, such as those offered by the discussions regarding slavery. In Britain, for instance, the abolition of slave trade took place in 1807, but the official ending of slavery occurred in 1834; and much later in other countries such as the United States of America. Therefore, slavery was an important and recurrent issue in political discussions and a common literary theme among English writers. 1790's English proto-feminism borrowed from slavery and abolitionist movement discourses and metaphors to articulate its sexual identity politics. During this period, we can find poetry, as well as other literary genres in which the plight of slaves is depicted to reflect on women's dissatisfaction with the way they were socially subordinated. In other words, and according to some literary scholars of Romanticism, slavery became a motif and literary trope used by women writers to elaborate discourses on their gender position (Ferguson, "Subject" 175-176). For instance, we will see that the strategy of equating the condition of women and the situation of slaves, or the articulation of women's concerns within a discourse in favour of the abolitionist cause, can be found in several of the texts analysed in this research. Smith's poetic production is a case in point: the metaphor of slavery is constantly used, in particular when Smith refers to her own condition of servitude to the pen and booksellers.

Likewise, the Galician writer De Castro in her proto-feminist pamphlet *Lieders*, published in 1858, wrote:

Only songs of independence and liberty have my lips uttered, although all around I have felt, since the cradle, the sound of chains that would imprison me forever, because the patrimony of woman are the shackles of slavery (“Brief prose”28).¹²

As here evidenced, the tropes of slavery and the abolitionist movement should be approached as a broad topic that requires a research of its own. Although the parallels between slavery and gender politics are not the primary focus of this research, some aspects will be discussed in relation to women’s proto-feminist activism.

Another relevant preliminary observation is the fact that some of the texts and the writers were neglected for a considerable amount of time from any intellectual or academic survey related to the cultural history of their period. For example, the works and intellectual contributions by various English women writers of the Romantic Period were invisible until a few decades ago; they were lost in oblivion from collective memory for almost two hundred years before the process of their “resurrection” began in the 1990s. In the case of the Galician writer De Castro, she received literary recognition during her lifetime, but only beyond the confines of the Spanish territory, particularly across the Atlantic. In Spain, her work only began to be properly acknowledged more than two decades after her death (Núñez Seixas, “Rosalia” 288-289). Currently she is celebrated as the founder of modern Galician literature, but her name gained fame first outside Spain, among the people living in the diaspora in Argentina and Cuba (Davies, “Cultural” 181). This is in part because her work was utilized as an instrument for the vindication of Galician identity and a symbol of protest against the Spanish government, a fact that provoked resentment among the promoters of a pure Castilian literature.

Furthermore, with respect to the recognition of women writers’ production that emerged throughout the Risorgimento, it is important to call attention to the fact that a lengthy silence has persisted concerning this matter in literary and historical studies, with the exception of some relatively new contributions made by feminist scholars. According to Soldani, interest in women’s participation and political engagement during the Italian Risorgimento is quite recent (“Risorgimento” 184). If we take a look at historical books from this period, we can easily find a depiction of womanhood informed by traditional conceptions such as women’s passive behaviour, an association with the domestic sphere. While men could travel easily across both spheres. Additionally, historians have placed special emphasis on the contribution of the “founding fathers”, while relegating and undermining women’s involvement in the political

¹² Solos cantos de independencia y libertad han balbucido mis labios, aunque alrededor hubiese sentido, desde la cuna ya, el ruido de las cadenas que debían aprisionarme para siempre, porque el patrimonio de la mujer son los grillos de la esclavitud (De Castro *Lieders*).

struggle for the country's unity (Patriarca & Rial 2). Only since the last decade have studies regarding the intersection of women's emancipation and the political movement for the unification of Italy acquired special attention, thanks in part to the work of feminist and gender scholars.

In line with this effort of recovery of women writings of the Romantic Era, this research is an attempt to continue the process of disseminating women's literary work via a transnational and an interdisciplinary approach. With this intent, biographical aspects of the authors are pertinent to comprehend their individual struggles as women and as writers and how these experiences informed their proto-feminist vision. Biographical information can occasionally be obtained from their own poetical texts, but also in prologues, essays, memoirs, and letters. As an example, Smith, Robinson and Ansuini Tondi all made reference to their personal life in their poetry. This biographical material provides us alternative insights into the difficulties that they confronted as women writers.

Today, literary scholars have expressed their concern of making general assumptions about women's writings without adequate investigations (Miskolcze 206). Thus, for them the process of recovering and disseminating women writers' oeuvre cannot be reduced to their inclusion on a list of exceptional authors in the pages of literary history; it is also fundamental to disrupt and question the postulates that have been made by a fragmented literary history that has frequently obscured women. In this respect, Robin L. Miskolcze (Miskolcze), a British romantic scholar, states that if we do not approach women's writings, such as the ones authored by Mary Robinson, using a critical analysis that takes into consideration the historical particularities of the period, we risk to perpetuate a tendency to look at women as a unified group regardless of their social rank, whereas distinctions should be drawn. For instance, it is necessary to avoid committing the mistake of assuming that all women writers advocated for a better society for women or had a proto-feminist commitment.

Along with pointing out the significance of the rediscovery of these author's literary production, this investigation alludes as well to various practices and discourses in order to offset the effects of men protagonist role in historical accounts. One of these practices, which will be discussed in detail in the third chapter, along with some examples of proto-feminist prose penned by the authors object of this investigation, is the affirmation of women's worthiness. In short, the constant acknowledgement of women's capacity to perform equally to men has been a proto-feminist practice since the Renaissance and is perceivable during the European Romantic period (Ty 193). This practice can be considered as a feminist counter-discourse that has been used to defy dominant discourses underestimating women's intellectual

capacity during different historical periods, including the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England (Hicks 174). This feminist political strategy of proclaiming women's worthiness was intended to demonstrate that women could have held leading roles in history, but that instead they were overlooked by exclusionary politics that prevailed in the way the memory of their time was constructed and carried into the present.

The practice of exalting notable literary women and women's achievements can be observed as a primary objective in some of the prose texts analysed in this research, particularly in the work of Robinson and De Castro. In the third chapter of this thesis, which is dedicated to the feminist pen¹³, we will have the opportunity to explore these practices in some prologues and political pamphlets written by the authors on whom this thesis focuses. It is noteworthy how the use of genealogies of exemplary women as counter discourses was, for these writers in particular, a vital aspect of women's agency to counteract mainstream ideas of their unsuitability for intellectual endeavours. Ironically, they rely on a female collective identity to confront ideologies that excluded them as a group based on their gender identity. The purpose of including this discussion is to achieve a special insight into the gender dynamics of those years from the writers' perspectives and open a space for critical inquiry on their gender awareness. We will answer the question of how these writers envisaged a more egalitarian world in which women's literary production might expect to be acknowledged.

As have been already noted, the process of recovering women's works and the inclusion of women in history as feminist practices, are two main issues addressed in this investigation. In doing so, various questions that have already been approached by feminist theorists in the fields of historiography and literature arise, some of which are related to the many contradictions faced constantly by feminist researchers. How, for example, can we advocate for the inclusion of women in a history full of hegemonic narratives that we are pushing to eradicate? How to utilise the category of "women writers" while at the same time questioning essentialist assumptions assigned to them as a group with a collective identity? These are some of the many paradoxes that feminist historiographers and literary scholars, such as Joan Scott and Susan Stanford Friedman, have addressed in their sustained critical work. Some of these questions will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

¹³ I use the term "feminist pen" to reflect on how writing became a symbol of women's freedom, as it was seen as a transgressive instrument to subvert traditional gender roles which confined almost exclusively women to domestic endeavours.

1.3 Aims of the investigation

This thesis focuses on women's poetry of the Romantic era dealing with exile and migration. It examines literary forms of encounter in poetic texts written in different languages from three diverse European countries. It addresses a variety of issues through a feminist historical and critical literary optic. First, it looks at the geopolitical context in which these texts were produced, from a perspective that considers the biographical voices of the writers. In this respect, the research tackles how these poetic writings overstepped the boundaries of a local cultural product to embrace a more transnational conception of literature. As well, the work concentrates in unravelling how and why these women writers used migration and exile metaphors and tropes to express their subjectivity and to forge the discussion of gender issues that affected them directly. When examining how these writers' subjectivity is reflected in their literary use of migration and exile tropes and themes; it is employed a definition of subjectivity that moves away from a static representation of the self, to one that is closely interwoven to language.

Besides searching for aspects of transnationality in the literature produced by these authors, in the following pages it is explored the ways in which poetry as a form of literature, and more precisely poetic language, depicts and questions these writers' subjectivity. Building on feminist approaches, the work tries to ascertain how women's poetry may still be used to interrogate dominant social, cultural, and political forces, in particular patriarchal and heteronormative discourses that are still prevalent in our day. Thus, as a second aim, this thesis analyses how poetry as a literary form, specifically migration and exile poetry, provided a unique instrument exploited by these authors for ideological purposes. We will be able to examine the proto-feminism of these writers by investigating how they negotiated with the predominant gender discourses of their period. This aim may allow us to witness how these authors articulated their sexual identity politics through a poetic language shaped by the historical scenarios of their time. Some of the primary questions engage in discussions regarding how these texts might be considered part of proto-feminist literary activism, and how they can still influence a gender equality movement today. The searched for proto-feminist ideological messages penned by these Romantic writers may shed light on the gender dynamics of the writers' time, while also providing stimulating ideas for current gender equality activism. Indeed, the ability to delve into the opportunities that poetry afforded for the production of cultures of equality in the past, and what can it may still offer us in the present, is a key aim of this project.

Because the research approach prioritises gender as an analytical category, it focuses on the way these authors found in the figure of the migrant, exile, or wanderer a unique opportunity to address issues that affected women as a discriminated group. After all, the discriminations they suffered resonated with those of foreigners arriving to their countries, deprived as they were of any right of citizenship, or with those experienced by people forced to abandon their homes in search of a better way of life. We may say that in these texts, poetry and politics were not antagonist realms. The literary imagination of these writers performed an essential role in their aim to influence their readers by pointing out the injustices of a society that treated women as non-citizens and caused their alienation.

Regarding the first and second aims of the dissertation, it is important to consider the way in which these texts, as well as the personal accounts of these writers, undoubtedly invite us to navigate outside conventional understanding of literature as an expression that must belong specifically to one nation. These writers certainly toyed with notions of space and mobility that subverted traditional literary conventions. As it will be demonstrated, the European literature of the Romantic Period studied in this research disrupts the idea of a national literature. In fact, these texts were informed by events happening beyond national borders, and in some cases, practical elements such as the dissemination of literary works took place outside the confines of the writers' countries of origin. For example, British Romantic literature was inescapably connected and influenced by the revolutionary events occurring in France at the end of the eighteenth century. As Romantic scholar Michael Wiley states, an investigation of the literature of this period necessarily breaks the national boundaries and demands an extraterritorial analysis (Wiley, "The French" 8). This literature not only touches upon themes of migration, but it was also anything but local, as evidenced by Robinson's and Smith's texts.

Similarly, De Castro's literary production reflects heavily on the historical context of migration in Galicia. A significant part of her literary work emerged during what is considered today the Spanish Post-Romantic period, although her work borrowed much from the European Romantic canon. Her work is also recognised as essential in the cultural Galician movement for national awareness called "Rexurdimento" (Forneiro 853). As previously noted, these years were marked by the constant departure of Galician people to other countries in Central and South America or main cities inside Spain, and this phenomenon of migration was one of the main repercussions of a province battling with economic precarity. Another transnational aspect of De Castro's writing is that a great part of her work was effectively produced from the margins, as the writer situated herself within the struggle of the working-class people, as an active spectator of the injustices of the Spanish central government against Galicia. Moreover,

she employed the Galician language in a great part of her poetic work, which, according to the mainstream male-dominated literary circles of the time, was incongruous with the creation of any kind of literary production (Pullain, "Poesía Gallega" 416).

Very little work has been undertaken on transnational aspects of the Italian Risorgimento, and even less in relation to women's literature. Quite recently, Maurizio Isabella (Isabella) developed the first study in which the relationship between exile and the Risorgimento is addressed within a transnational framework. Thanks to this work we are able to conceive the Risorgimento as a movement built on ideas that surrounded intellectual diasporic circles. The diaspora held a collective identity and an important protagonist role in the articulation of national discourses during the movement for the unification of Italy (Isabella, "Introduction" 1). Regarding the Italian writer Ansuini Tondi, we can say that although she lived within what we know today as the Italian nation, her personal experience with exile and her contact with a society in continuous displacement influenced her poetry deeply. In a similar manner, her commitment to the political cause for the independence of Viterbo from the Catholic Church also played a leading role in the articulation of her poetic work.

As a third aim of this research, and through the close reading of the poetic texts, certain questions related to cosmopolitanism, national belonging and citizenship are faced. For instance, the idea of cosmopolitanism that Kristeva discusses in her works, particularly in *Strangers to Ourselves*, applies to some of Robinson's and Smith's literary production too. Both English poets lived during the emergence of what has been called a "feminist cosmopolitanism", a popular concept used at the time by proto-feminist writers in their strategic attempts to expand the meaning of citizenship to include women (Brekke 39). Cosmopolitanism provided a collective and inclusive vocabulary, which transcended national boundaries to depict and promote a "wider sense of belonging" (39). Moreover, the phrase "citizens of the world" was employed continuously by women writers, a concept borrowed from a male tradition in an attempt to include women as subjects capable of participating in social and political spaces reserved only to men and promote female citizenship based on equality. We will explore this topic more thoroughly in the third chapter in relation to Mary Robinson's proto-feminist pamphlet *A Letter to the Women of England* (1799), in which Robinson advocates for the recognition of women's intellectual capacity and their access to the public sphere.

An examination of the way the themes of migration and exile recurrent in these writings contributed to the rethinking of gender norms, as well as ideas regarding citizenship, belonging, and national identity. Lastly as a fourth aim, the research seeks to acknowledge the contribution

of women writers to a history of transnational literature, and to the relevant feminist movement(s) through the dissemination of their work in an interdisciplinary platform. The idea behind this approach is to invite others, inside and outside academia, to join the conversation, as increased participation could provide different ways to approach this literary and historical context.

1.4 Methods and theories

This research covers different historical timeframes within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the Romantic Period has been defined varyingly in the three countries where the poetic texts were produced. Concerning the Romantic Era, it should be noted that some scholars cannot agree on a specific delimitation of the period, preferring instead to avoid the general obsession with labelling. In any case, we lack a unanimous consensus on how to define the Romantic period in Britain, Spain and Italy.

In the case of British Romanticism, the research covers the period that spans the years 1780 to 1830. This selection is based on the significant emergence of texts penned by women authors during the final decades of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. The texts analysed from Charlotte Smith's (1749-1806) oeuvre were written at the beginning of the 1790's. Regarding Mary Robinson, the selected texts were published from 1799 to 1800, the last years of the writer's life. For the Spanish Romantic era, the period has been generally defined as between the 1810's and the 1850's, the research follows some scholars' lines of thought which prefer to divide the Spanish Romantic Period into Pre-romanticism, Romanticism and Post-romanticism. Within this scheme, De Castro's compositions fall inside of the Post-romanticism period and her late work is considered to be "in the mainstream" of this time (Havard, "Image" 393). As noted in the previous section, her texts – mainly those written in Galician – have been claimed as part of a social and cultural movement to promote a Galician collective identity called Rexurdimento. The works investigated are predominantly from 1863 to 1884. In the case of Italy, it is followed the most traditional time period delimitation, that is to say, between 1815 and 1871. Over the course of these years, Italy was in the process of becoming a state. The work of Ansuini Tondi was composed during the last decade of the Romantic Period, between 1860 and 1870, although it was published for the first time in 1910.

Returning to aspects of the methodological and theoretical framework. Some of the supporting material analysed for this research tackles the poetic and prose writings

individually, while other supporting materials address biographical aspects of the writers or precise theoretical concepts, or the social and historical context of the primary texts. A wealth of feminist theoretical texts, from Braidotti's nomadic subject, Joan Scott's feminist historical criticism, Susan Stanford Friedman's discussion on mappings and planetary modernisms, to Kristeva's work on language and poetry are utilised in the close reading of the poetical texts. In the following sections, it is described succinctly the theories, perspectives and arguments that have informed the close reading of the texts and the transnational textual dialogues.

1.5 Feminist Literary Criticism

During the development of the theoretical framework on literary criticism, two texts penned by the American feminist scholar Susan Stanford Friedman: *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (1998) and *Planetary Modernism: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (2015) have been studied. Her work has given to this research a useful insight on how to analyse literary works with a critical view that delves beyond the category of gender. Also, it provides alternative understandings into predominant feminist methodologies in the literary field.

In her text *Mappings*, Stanford Friedman elaborates substantially on the necessity of shifting our focus from an exclusive gender-based approach, proposing instead to embrace a feminist criticism that draws from various academic fields that would enrich the analysis of the literary texts. She tries to surpass the delimitations of a specific discipline by uncovering the extensively diverse possibilities that gender studies provide to literary and historical research. Beginning with an examination of two traditional literary approaches, gynocriticism and gynesism, Stanford Friedman explores the limits of each in feminist literary studies. She exposes the problematic assumptions underlying these two major feminist approaches that have maintained a central focus on sexual difference and gender, suggesting instead a new multidisciplinary perspective that could be a practical starting point for further configurations of the way we define "identity".

According to Stanford Friedman, gynocriticism is based on the concept of the ongoing historical presence of patriarchy and the necessity that literary criticism conglomerate women from different geographical places and times into the same group (*Mappings* 18). It always places gender in a dominant position of analysis. One of the underlying assumptions of this literary practice is that all women writers share the same difficulties of a social system that works against them. According to this practice, their literary works may be associated by the

general fact that women as a group have historically been victims of a patriarchal system, without any distinction in terms of geographical location or historical period. Although this universal statement of all women being victims of patriarchy is not by any means entirely false, Stanford argues that the complexities of addressing women's literary production should be examined by taking into consideration the writers' individualities and particular circumstances. Thus, a broader and more critical perspective than a mere gender-centered approach is inherently required.

Stanford Friedman also calls attention to the fact that the traditional literary approach gynesis builds from the idea that gender binaries are embedded in language, she also emphasises how language inflects what constitutes the feminine and masculine spheres. She explains, as a mode of illustration, that gynesis is grounded in the binary conception that women's literary language has the intrinsic effect of disputing masculine literary traditions. It highlights the idea that the mere existence of women's writings implies a capacity of transgressing the male dominated field. Contrary to gynecriticism, which concentrates on women's global discrimination, gynesis is more centred on the "textual effects of gender" (*Mappings* 26).

According to Stanford Friedman, both approaches in their standard forms preclude the consideration of other aspects of texts and writers that are not uniquely gender-related. Thus, what makes Stanford's contribution particularly suitable for this thesis is her suggestion of moving beyond gender and sexual difference in feminist research, an assertion sought to be included in this project, by offering an historical analysis of the Romantic Period in three different geographical contexts in which the poetic texts in question were articulated. Also, by considering other elements that are pertinent to the literary works under investigation, we will have some better grounds to further develop profound analytical discussions.

Although Stanford expresses a strong critique of these two feminist approaches, she does not denounce them entirely, nor does she call for the elimination of "gender" as a category of analysis, advocating instead for a study that includes gender among other pertinent axes of difference. One of the expanded critical approaches recommended by Stanford is what she calls "locational feminism". As Stanford Friedman asserts,

A locational approach to feminism incorporates diverse formations because its positional analysis requires a kind of geopolitical literacy built out of a recognition of how different times and places produce different and changing gender systems as these intersect with other different and changing societal stratifications and movements for social justice. Locational feminism thus encourages the study of difference in all its manifestations without being limited to it, without establishing impermeable borders

that inhibit the production and visibility of ongoing intercultural exchange and hybridity (*Mappings* 5).

Stanford Friedman suggests, as an alternative to the gender- and sexual difference-based approaches of gynocriticism and gynesis, the use of a practice she calls “the new geography of identity”. In her opinion, this approach allows us to think in a broader manner unrestricted to the traditional male and female binary, and to focus attention on the complexities of a writer’s identity. She asserts,

The new geography of identity insists that we think about women writers in relation to a fluid matrix instead of a fixed binary of male/female or masculine/feminine. In so doing, the justification for focusing on women loses its cogency. Instead, the interactional, relational, and situational constituents of identity for both male and female writers should be read together. The multiple and contradictory subject positions of writers need to be accounted for, and the very presence of hybridity undermines the gynocritical predisposition to single out gender (*Mappings* 26-27).

Instead of dividing and separating the authors according to their sex, Stanford Friedman proposes a literary criticism that begins with questioning the basic definition of identity. This practice of rethinking identity should take into account its historical dimension, as well as the fact that identity is a place of dynamic interaction with other “different positionalities” of the subject (*Mappings* 19).

Quoting from various post-structuralist and psychoanalyst scholars such as Julia Kristeva, Stanford Friedman borrows the idea of considering identity as an infinite process of construction. She argues that our perception and relation with others influence this continuous process of identity configuration, as it takes place when one identifies or differentiates oneself from a group. In this way, Stanford Friedman explains that identity is intrinsically connected to the idea of sameness and difference. She recommends a turn from the idea of the organic self to a vision that incorporates a subject always on the move or in the process of becoming (*Mappings* 19). She invites us to stop envisioning a static self, and to embrace instead a fluid, fragmented self, intersected by diversely situated knowledges.

From these approaches, Stanford Friedman also stresses a focus on the role of language in the infinite process of making and remaking one’s identity (*Mappings* 187). For instance, she references Kristeva’s view on the phallogocentric aspects of language and its inability to properly represent women as subjects. She explains that according to these theories, women are denied the designation of subject in the symbolic order.

Another aspect that is of great importance in this research is Stanford Friedman’s advice to avoid falling into the trap of certain generalisations that do not critically view the categories of

“male writers or masculinity”, and to avoid regarding them as an organic and static Other (*Mappings* 33). She instead proposes to look at these categories from a “locational feminist criticism” that adopts a “fluid, relational, and situational geography of identity” (34). This is vital to elude generalised assumptions related to women’s and men’s writings by adding an expanded assessment of the different factors that may influence their literary productions. This practice of locational criticism can also be employed in the comparative analysis of different writers, even if they are all categorised as female or male.

Stanford Friedman also provides some interesting general guidelines and advice on the dissemination of feminist academic work within a critical interdisciplinary identity studies framework. She suggests that we should remain aware of our intended audience, as well as of the purpose regarding the politics we want to share, the specific time and in the specific space in which we develop our arguments, while being conscious of the responsibility to remain critical regarding the cultural work we hope to contribute (*Mappings* 34). In short, our work should be shaped according to the audience we would like to approach and in correspondence with the message we want to share.

Moreover, Stanford Friedman provides strategies on how to address several issues related to conducting research from a women and gender studies standpoint, such as the importance of “positionality and situatedness” (*Mappings* 4). She asserts that the latter is crucial to provide the audience at least with a glimpse of how our ideologies and political aims influence our research. Stanford Friedman encourages an inclusion in the design of any academic feminist work of some information on the researcher’s ideological standpoints during the development of the investigation. This exercise may also be useful for maintaining awareness of certain elements that influence our work; however, this will always be a partial operation, as it is impossible to be conscious of all the personal factors that continuously inform a given work. Stanford Friedman’s recommendations are an excellent point of departure towards achieving the investigation aims while maintaining transparency in relation to a person position as a feminist researcher.

Related to the themes of migration and exile preeminent in this project, Stanford Friedman’s discussions of borders and borderlands are also notably pertinent in this project. She uses these metaphors of space and location as critical points to reflect upon identity politics in feminist literary studies, describing how the ‘border’ is a metaphor that can represent paradoxical expressions, such as separation while acknowledging connection. She further uses the image of the ‘bridge’, explaining how it allows the crossing from one point to another while at once reinforcing the concept of distance and separation. She highlights the liminal space in between

borders, declaring it is a “site of interaction, interconnection, and exchange” (Stanford Friedman, *Mappings* 3).

In the context of contemporary feminist critique, Stanford Friedman expresses some apprehension in the employment of a migration language for the elaboration of gender identity politics, arguing that these metaphors may be available exclusively to people in privileged positions, while a high number of individuals are experiencing desperate situations of mobility (*Mappings* 102). On a personal level, she acknowledges that the use of these metaphors has been made available to her due to the privileged position she occupies as a white feminist scholar writing from a recognised university in the United States of America.

In *Mappings*, Stanford Friedman also addresses the issue of women’s inclusion in history and feminist history, which we will discuss more largely in the following section, particularly in the third chapter. She raises a myriad of concerns related to these themes, questioning, for example, how it could be possible to make women’s contribution to the history visible while at once attempting to disrupt the fundamental assumptions on which history itself is based. Stanford also argues that in trying to create feminist history, historians may fall into the trap of reproducing some of the historical master narratives that regularly excluded women (*Mappings* 200). Feminist historians encounter many difficulties when they deal with premises such as the “veracity” of history writing, defined as the process of integrally reconstructing the past (*Mappings* 201). How to negotiate the disrupting act of reinstating women in history while concurrently making use of discourse that tended to efface them? She stresses that even the exercise of trying to dictate the “real history” in which women played a special role is problematic, criticising the positivist epistemology based on the belief that it is possible to construct a story based on real facts.

One of the key scholars that Stanford mentions in her discussion of women’s inclusion in history is Joan Wallach Scott. Stanford fervently advocates Scott’s use of a poststructuralist approach to question objectivist principles of historical discourse. Scott’s project is to gravitate from a focus on accurate reconstruction of the past towards a continuous questioning of how meanings are assigned and built through historical narratives. We will return to Joan Scott in the feminist historiography section below.

Overall, for Stanford Friedman, the process of questioning the basic premise of history must coexist alongside the feminist practice of bringing women back into it. She asserts that one of the primary aims of this process of resurrecting women’s figures and stories is to compensate the lack of records of their presence in history. This affirmation of women’s active existence in history helps to challenge the notion of their supposed inferior status; Stanford Friedman

affirms that these women's stories are an essential "component of resistance and change" (*Mappings* 215). She opts for a criticism that does not preclude the recognition and inclusion of women's contribution to the history of literature, while at once allowing for a constant critique of the general assumptions and dynamics of exclusion that history has and continues to carry out.

In *Mappings*, Stanford Friedman elaborates a discussion of Julia Kristeva's work on language and literature. Kristeva is another scholar whose work has been taken into consideration for the development of the theoretical framework underpinning this research, and to which we will return shortly in the following sections. Stanford dedicates a chapter of her book *Mappings* to examine the connection between poetry practice and feminist theory (Stanford Friedman, *Mappings* 228-242). She discusses Kristeva's views on poetic language, among other theoretical approaches to the topic, analysing the way poetry is conceived by Kristeva and other poststructuralist theorists as a mechanism capable of destabilizing the formal and rigid conception of language, known as the symbolic order. Stanford Friedman, explains that for many feminist poststructuralists, including Kristeva, the "lyrics mode and poetry" are associated with the feminine, maternal and pre-oedipal phase (*Mappings* 229). She states that these scholars tend to reject narrative as a literary expression, as it has traditionally been considered a form of language of the symbolic order, more associated with the "repressive masculine, paternal, and oedipal" (229).

Indeed, Stanford Friedman criticises what she considers to be a "blind spot on race and ethnicity" of many poststructuralist authors, including Kristeva, regarding the lyric over the narrative (*Mappings* 229). She explains how the selection of the narrative is often intrinsically connected to an oral tradition that is very easy to locate, such as in texts penned by writers of colour. For her, the use of narrative over lyric can be related to the necessity of these writers to create counter-stories. Certainly, for this scholar, a feminist perspective in the study of these different literary forms should take into consideration "issues of positionality and marginalization" (239).

In Stanford Friedman's opinion, Kristeva's views in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) managed to come to terms with this apparent mutually exclusive relation between narrative and lyric. According to Stanford Friedman, in Kristeva's text, there is not a complete separation between narrative and lyric, because they are both aspects of a discourse (*Mappings* 243). She explains how Kristeva, by using a psychoanalytical approach and semiotics, considers a text as what she calls a "signifying practice" in which the two "semiotic and symbolic" modalities of language can coexist (231).

The second text taken into account for the development of the theoretical framework was Stanford Friedman more recent work *Planetary Modernism* (2015). In this text, she invites her readers to rethink modernism and modernity through the knowledge we can acquire from “postcolonial studies, the new world literature studies, and the anthropology of travelling cultures” (Stanford, *Planetary* 6). She uses the term ‘Planetary’ as a point of departure, with the intention to begin her critical work by disrupting the conventional ideas concerning “time and space” as they have been traditionally used in literary studies and in historiography. According to Stanford Friedman, the traditional approach of isolating literature in relation to a specific time and location has served the interest of the institutionalization and dissemination of knowledge academically, but it does not necessarily tell the complete story of the literary connections and intersections that have occurred across nations in different times. She argues that periodisation is against the globalisation of modernist studies, and that it fortifies the idea of “the West as the centre, the Rest as periphery” (Stanford, *Planetary* 5). In this way, the traditional approach of periodisation erases the polyvocal significance of periods of colonisation and imperialism to different countries.

In *Planetary Modernism*, Stanford Friedman proposes an alternative theoretical framework accompanied by a “navigational guide” that consists of four recommended critical practices, namely Re-vision, Recovery, Circulation, Collage (76). Stanford first defines re-vision as “the act of looking again, of defamiliarizing the familiar archive by looking anew through a different lens” (76). Rather than looking with western eyes, she suggests to have an expanded vision about modernity, one that includes the effect of transnationalism. Alongside this broader perspective, she suggests the theoretical practice of “recovery”, which she defines as the exercise of opening spaces for creativity in which we can construct archives outside what we have identified as Western. Acts of recovery need to be expanded with a transnational project in mind, one that may incorporate the diversity that is often bypassed under rigid standards of classification (Stanford, *Planetary* 77). The third practice, Stanford mentions is called “circulation”, which she describes as “the archive of mobility” that defies national borders and western assumptions of superiority, searching instead for the commonalities and interconnections between countries (77). Finally, she defines the practice of “collage” as “the archive of radical juxtaposition”, a sort of chaotic comparison, a union of differences and commonalities in a non-hierarchical form (77).

This work draws from various critical literary and historical practices proposed by Stanford and by other mentioned feminist theorists. It utilises a methodology that places special emphasis on how literature dealing with exile and migration can speak beyond the limits of a

nation and act as a vehicle to convey a critique of gender dynamics of the period. Also, although it focuses on the Romantic Period as the time frame for the selection of the literary texts, it did not follow a particularly strict line. The texts are studied together from different geopolitical positions but in which the writers share the common experience of migration and exile.

1.6 Poststructuralist approach to Literary Criticism

Julia Kristeva's works on critical practices in literature have informed the analysis of the primary texts and the discussion concerning the notions of subjectivity, poetry and language, which are part of the theoretical framework. Kristeva's work is very diverse; since she is an intellectual who has been able to cover a variety of subjects, such as exile, foreignness, citizenship and sexual difference, from a philosophical, literary, feminist and psychoanalyst approach. Her production has been described as "crucial for the constellation for understanding oral and written literature, politics and national identity, sexuality, culture, and nature" (Mcafee 1). Indeed, Kristeva's texts often invite to rethink certain basic concepts and helped to raise enriching questions, instead of merely providing specific answers to some of the theoretical inquiries.

As an immigrant herself, the topic of migration has been significant in her work as a literary critic and writer. The originality of her production owes itself in part to her revisitation of philosophical and literary theories while producing her own original perspectives on textual analysis. She also attempts to expose the drawbacks of establishing a single linguistic theory capable of comprehending how language works. For Becker-Leckrone, Kristeva attempts to direct the focus of language study towards a consideration of various practices and factors that converge in what she calls "the signifying process" (6). She also notably places the subject at the centre of her literary analytical practice. Instead of seeing language as something distant from the subject, who can merely make use of it, she focuses on the interactive relation between the two.

Kristeva's analysis proposes new ways of approaching a text that permit us to rethink certain established linguistic theories. For example, she provides alternative guidelines to examine the relationship among author, text, and reader. She continually tries to defy metanarratives of linguistic and literary theories that limit our view on the indefinite possibilities of considering these associations. The effect of the text on the reader and the dynamic interconnections of author, text and reader are aspects which, according to Kristeva, demonstrate dynamic potentialities of literary language that exceed the pragmatic ideals of communication.

Most of Kristeva's textual analysis work focuses on subjectivity and its relationship with language, an aspect that has been essential to this investigation. McAfee states that Kristeva provides us with tools that contribute to a better understanding of the connections between language processes and speaking subjects (9). Kristeva brought attention to an alternative definition of subjectivity, a term that was usually reduced by traditional philosophy to a positivist and essentialist idea of the self. The long-established meaning of subjectivity considers that a person is never subjected to anyone, neither to language. Also, under this scheme, language has a mere pragmatic function of communication, as a tool used by the subject to express fixed ideas (McAfee 1). On the contrary for Kristeva, the subject is dependent on language to exist. Kristeva's analysis considers subjectivity as a process that can never be completed. According to her point of view, the subject exists because of language; without language, there is no subject (McAfee 29). For this reason, language is a signifying process mainly because the subject who uses it is always in the process of becoming (30).

In her work Kristeva describes how subjectivity is constantly produced and never completed. As Becker-Leckrone states, Kristeva opts for an approach in which the subject is the protagonist; "his formation, and his corporeal, linguistic, and social dialectic" are aspects that she considers intrinsically connected to language (Becker-Leckrone 7). In Kristeva's view it is impossible to analyse language without scrutinizing the subject of enunciation, asserting that the subject is perhaps "an effect of linguistic processes" (McAfee 15). The subject is not separated from language as an independent entity but is rather the result of the process of signification that takes place through the vehicle language.

As has been already stated, in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) Kristeva examines avant-garde poetry to reflect on how this form of language exceeds the normative standards of traditional linguistics. For Kristeva this genre of poetry allows us to see nuances and aspects of the unconscious that are impossible to perceive in other forms of language. Kristeva asserts that the relationship between words and meanings is not so ostensive in poetry as in different types of literature that do not contain poetic language.

In the discussion on poetic language practices introduced in the previous section, we mentioned that Stanford Friedman acknowledges Kristeva's conception of poetic language as deeply marked by psychoanalysis and its references to the different parts and processes of the subject. Kristeva associates poetic language to the semiotic aspect of language that is in continual transgression of the symbolic order, in contraposition with what is known as the "Law of the Father" (Stanford, *Mappings* 232). According to Stanford, for Kristeva "poetry tends to foreground the semiotic" while "prose, the symbolic" (231). Consequently, a language

with the capacity to disrupt the patriarchal system could potentially embody experiences that most of the narrative texts are unable to transmit. However, as we discussed before, Kristeva abstains from making a sharp distinction between prose and lyric, refusing to propose a binary explanation that precludes the possibility of detecting semiotic traces in narrative texts.

In *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva states that a text may operate at two levels. First, there is the semiotic-genotext level defined as “a process by which the author organises or manifests semiotic drives and energy”, and the symbolic-phenotext level, a “structured and mappable piece of communication” (McAfee 24-25). In other words, there is one level that can be simply defined as the basic expression of what the texts intend to say, here called the phenotext. Second, the genotext is the level in which is expressed “the semiotic dimension” of the text (24). In his introduction to Kristeva’s 1984 edition of *Revolution of the Poetic Language*, Leon S. Roudiez elaborates that the semiotic disposition that is “spun by drives and woven” essentially defines the genotext, while the phenotext consists of what comes to a text mainly from society, such as grammar and syntactic restrictions (1-10).

As it was discussed before, in *Revolution of Poetic Language*, through some examples taken from avant-garde texts – by James Joyce and Stéphane Mallarme, among others – Kristeva argues how these writings allow us to see the magnitude of those processes of signification that are constrained by the way society restricts the semiotic (88). According to McAfee, Kristeva mentions that poetic language, among other characteristics, has the potential to transgress the “orderly symbolic effort at communication” (McAfee 39). Poetry could be an instrument to express what we are unable to communicate otherwise. The selection of poetry as a literary form to configure gender identity politics and as a mode of expressing an author’s subjectivity is a core aspect that will be addressed through Kristeva’s literary practice, paired with historical analysis.

In *Revolution of Poetic Language*, Kristeva also expresses her views on the subject and its connection to language. She states that the subject is not unitary; rather, she conceives the subject as fragmented, fluid, and continuously changing. Later in her works, she extends these ideas to other texts and forms of communication, but Kristeva’s subject remains “always in process and heterogeneous” (McAfee 41).

Kristeva also argues that literature helps the author and the reader to work through some of the “maladies that afflict their souls” (McAfee 50). For her, literature has the capacity to be cathartic; she refers to this healing characteristic deeply connected to a process of the subject as abjection. Kristeva considers abjection as “the state of abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself—and thereby creating borders of an always tenuous I” (McAfee 46). This noteworthy

attribute of literature is particularly observable in this research through the poetry of Charlotte Smith; for instance, in Smith's text *The Emigrants* (1793), in which this idea of working through the author's own crisis is an overt element. In this long blank verse poem, Smith poignantly exposes herself and her sufferings to her readers by disclosing her feelings completely; her exposure calls to mind a protest and a release of what she had kept hidden over a lifetime.

Although Kristeva's work has been accused of essentialist and sometimes rejected among feminist scholars for that same reason, according to McAfee "she does not locate biological processes prior to, or anterior to, culture and language, so her theory is not, properly speaking, essentialist" (80). As MacAfee argues, "Kristeva's philosophy invokes a metaphysics of process"; she rejects a description of the subject that alludes to a biological or organic entity, thus rendering her writings fundamentally incompatible with essentialism (90).

Returning to Kristeva's proposals on textual analysis, Becker-Leckrone explains that to comprehend Kristeva's ideas on how "signification takes place in a literary work", it is imperative to reflect on what is at stake when one reads and interprets a text (5). She calls to question two main premises generally taken for granted when reading a text. According to Becker-Leckrone, Kristeva rejects:

First, that language generates stable textual objects, clear referents of the world or experience, perspicuously to critical understanding; and, second, that criticism may ever stand as an authoritative meta-discourse on such texts. (5-6)

Becker-Leckrone explains that in Kristeva's work, neither language nor the process of signification is fixed, but are instead a very dynamic and complex set of practices. They together form part of a signifying process and could not be addressed as singular unrelated spheres of practice. This aspect of Kristeva's views is extraordinarily relevant to the work of a literary researcher. It expands our understanding of how a literary analysis could take place beyond the idea of examining a text from a separate theoretical framework that allows us comprehension. In Kristeva's view, the subject is not only always in the process of becoming, but the texts are as well. She takes from Barthes the idea that literature is "a production, always in the process of becoming" (Becker-Leckrone 11).

Moreover, Becker-Leckrone also mentions three components that render Kristeva's perspectives of language and literature unique in comparison to those of her predecessors:

1 a commitment to rigorous and plural interdisciplinarity; 2 an understanding of texts as dynamic "processes" involving forces previously deemed outside the boundaries of the literary work; and 3 a self-consciousness that acknowledges the implication of critical discourse in that which it studies (8)

Kristeva sets forth a vehement critique of linguistics as an instrument that serves only to study language possessing practical, institutional, and social structures while ignoring marginalized discourses. In place of this general perspective of linguistic function, Kristeva urges the employment of critical practices that refuse any claim of objectivity.

Kristeva also jettisons the boundaries separating literary text and theory from critical practice, inviting us to re-think theoretical and meta-discourses as detached instruments to analyse a given text. For Kristeva, whose own work is a fusion of her literary writings and theoretical vision, “critical discourse is itself a text, literature becomes text, so does theory. Theory is also made of language” (Becker-Leckrone 16). Kristeva quotes Barthes as a scholar who recommends us to re-evaluate “the relationship between theory and literature as one not of application, but of implication” (Becker-Leckrone 16).

1.7 Gender, exile and citizenship

Kristeva’s critical practices in literature have underpinned and guided the analysis of the poetic texts, but it has also informed the discussions concerning exile, citizenship and cosmopolitanism. In her book *Stranger to Ourselves* (1991), she pointed out several problems that she encounters within the discourses of cosmopolitanism, citizenship and national belonging. In this work, she is primarily concerned with the relationship between cosmopolitanism and ideas of a collective national belonging and citizenship (Brekke 40). As previously mentioned, these discourses began to appear during the late eighteenth century in the context of the French Revolution (39). In Tone Brekker’s words, Kristeva considers problematic that, whereas in the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen’ (1789) citizenship is proclaimed as a sort of “transcendent category” representing a collective identity, it does so within a restrictive nation’s framework (40). Kristeva prefers instead to imagine a wider and more critical definition of citizenship, one that is not constrained by national borders (*Stranger* 49). For example, in *Stranger to Ourselves* she discusses the binary conception of belonging in the legal framework: *Jus Soli* and *Jus Sanguinis*. She says:

Who is a foreigner?

The one who does not belong to the group, who is not “one of them”, the other.

The foreigner, as it has often been noted, can only be defined in negative fashion (95).

[...]

With the establishment of nation states we come to the only modern, acceptable, and clear definition of foreignness: the foreigner is the one who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have the same nationality (96).

Kristeva instead opts for alternative understandings of cosmopolitanism with which we may critically revisit concepts and categories that have been assumed without being properly put into question, proposing an alternative vision that is similar to Thomas Paine's nomadic life. (Brekke 41). She discloses her concerns that this sort of cosmopolitanism can reinforce notions of national identity, belonging, boundaries, and "sexual difference and foreignness" (40). In Brekke's words, in reference to Kristeva's proposals on cosmopolitanism,

She casts Thomas Paine's nomadic life as a trope that resists national stability, and as an example of an alternative, transnational cosmopolitan praxis. Kristeva's description of Paine is, however, one that perhaps even more accurately encapsulates Williams' life as travel writer, as well as the style of her writing: 'deprived of rest, without conclusion, "cosmopolitan"—in the sense of a permanent shattering. . . '.

According to Kristeva, a dynamic and constant questioning of boundaries and categories is essential to maintaining a model of cosmopolitanism capable of accounting for difference (Brekke 41).

Kristeva's analyses on exile have been also very pertinent and enriching to this work. Her depiction and use of exile tropes and metaphors are profoundly connected to her personal life as a Bulgarian exile in France. Some scholars hold the view that even Kristeva's appropriation of psychoanalysis for her critical and literary works is filtered by her experience as an exile (Lechte 79). Lechte further claims that Kristeva deals with two different types of exile in her work. The first type is informed by her gender identity, "being an exile as a woman", and the second is linked to her intellectual activities, a type of exile that allows to experience "vitality and imaginativeness" (79). Lechte also mentions that regarding the individual psychic structure, "some people choose to be exiles because they have never felt at home anywhere" (79).

In short, Kristeva propounds that exile is not simply social or political, "but can also occur in situ as the result of a particular psychic structure" (79). Living under certain conditions imposed on women by society, in a particular geographical and historical period, can be a form of exile by Kristeva's definition. Likewise, living as an intellectual, particularly as a woman writer, could also be a form of isolation and estrangement. These two types of exile and the notion of being an exile in situ resonates broadly with some of the texts penned by the authors in this research. For instance, in the poem *Estranxeira na súa patria* (Stranger in her own land), part of her poem collection *Follas Novas* (New Leaves), De Castro depicts sentiments of alienation inside one's own country. This poem also reflects on her subjectivity as a woman writer uncomprehended and rejected by the mainstream literary circles of her period.

In her 1977 text *A new type of Intellectual: The dissident*, Kristeva describes what she considers to be a gendered experience of exile, contending that women experience exile both in their own bodies and within the social structure they inhabit. She writes:

A woman is trapped within the frontiers of her body and even of her species, and consequently always feels exiled both by the general clichés that make up a common consensus and by the very powers of generalisation intrinsic to language (qtd. in Lechte 45).

According to Lechte, in Kristeva's opinion a woman is excluded from the hegemonic rationalism of modern society; however, this unique position also provides an understanding of this rationalism allowed only via the occupation of a space in the margins (80). In this way, alienation comes with a certain perceptiveness unavailable to men. Lechte purports that according to Kristeva's text, woman's location is unique because she speaks from a (non) place (80).

Kristeva also brings our attention to the relationship between writing and being in exile. For her, "writing is impossible without some kind of exile". For Kristeva, exile means opening up new possibilities, new challenges, coming to terms with difference and the other. In *Crossing the Borders: An Interview with Julia Kristeva Birgitte Huitfeldt Midttun*, Kristeva argues:

BHM: You have said that one must always be exiled in order to write. How do you explain this in relation to traveling, being in movement?

JK: to me, this is an experience of not belonging. When I write, I stand beside something, never in the middle of it. One keeps a distance. A distance also to oneself as well, a kind of exile from oneself, where one in a sense is a stranger to oneself, in order to be able to write. And the situation for foreigners today has made me see this as an absolute prerequisite for every intellectual effort and especially for literature. But already Augustine realized this with the expression of "In via, in patria." That the journey is your homeland. To be able to think, you cannot stay confined to one place, because then you do not think, you only repeat what is being said around you. To think . . . thought is a question. To be able to ask, you must have a distance, be both on the inside and on the outside of things (Huitfeldt Midttun 165-166).

This perceived liaison between the act of writing and being in exile is a compelling element to incorporate in the analysing the poetic texts. The act of writing necessarily requires a sort of isolation of the author's mind, a feeling of estrangement from the self. Kristeva further purports that reading and writing are activities analogous to a voyage. In a discussion of Kristeva's book *Stranger to Ourselves*, in relation to this aspect of Kristeva's views the scholar Anna Smith mentions:

When we read or write, we inevitably follow the traveller's impulse and steer a course across unknown countries with the help of a map, yet language, and literary language most especially, creates its own ephemeral universe resistant to all that is familiar (11).

The theoretical ideas of exile that Kristeva communicates are echoed in several of the poetical texts included in this research. For instance, the metaphor of exile that Kristeva elects to define her process of writing it is utilised by various writers here studied; an illustrating case in point is the author Charlotte Smith, who mentions in her poetry her social status as an involuntary exile. Smith relates this exile to her melancholic state of being and the various plights she has faced over the course of her life. In several of her texts there is a sort of association between the act of writing and being a foreigner, or more precisely, a cultural exile. In fact, she describes how she wrote in complete exile during the time she spent in debtors' prison with her husband and children. A detailed analysis of this and other aspects of the tropes and themes of exile and migration is presented in the following chapter.

As previously noted, Kristeva mentions different kinds of exiles. Something very interesting that she refers to when dealing with the topic of exile is its identification with early stages of the process of becoming a subject. She explains that the first existential exile that a subject experiments is from the womb, the beginning of the subject according to a psychoanalytical framework. Kristeva states that as consequence of the common experience of every person in very early stages of existence, we can affirm that every individual is internally an exile (Lechte 80).

Kristeva also theorises that the exercise of considering oneself an exile allows for a re-signification of how we regard "others". Being a foreigner implies a separation from one's own origin, from the motherland, the assumption of an orphan status. To Kristeva, there should not be a sole idea of national belonging or even self-belonging. Furthermore, Kristeva's advocates in *Strangers to ourselves* for a sort of cosmopolitanism, specifically for the recognition of universal rights beyond the restriction of a national framework. In Kristeva's view is indispensable to recognize our own individual status as foreigners. Becoming foreigner as a process of signification in itself (Lechte 84).

1.8 Feminist Historiography

Why is research still needed on women's writings? This question presents a unique opportunity to identify some historical practices that may have been instrumental to the effacement of women writers from the records of their time; a discussion that could shed light on the exclusionary dynamics of an imperial literary history in which colonialist strategies

rendered women's participation invisible. A feminist historiographical approach is fundamental for understanding why some of these writers were obscured from history for such long periods, and why we must continue reinstating them in the history of their time. With this aim in mind, this research contributes to a larger project that has dedicated its efforts to recover women writers' productions that have been largely overlooked. It intends to find approaches to unveil the "masculine bias" that have contaminated history and contributed to the invisibility of women writers (Rowbotham 1).

Along with the question posed above, feminist historiographers have also asked why it is continually necessary to study women's role in history. These questions may serve to explain in clearer terms the reasons for choosing to research Romantic women's literary works on migration and exile. The feminist approach to history together with literary study, with a central focus on the category of gender, can contribute to an understanding of the dynamics that have historically silenced women authors.

This research tries to comprehend how these writers resisted and negotiated with the practices of exclusion of the Romantic Period that both affected them individually and involved others in similar marginal social conditions. This directly informed the decision to select the themes of migration and exile within their poetic production, as these specific themes are critical to the elaboration of metaphors and tropes capable of conveying displaced and fragmented subjectivities and the multi-locational positions of women writers.

In practical terms, this research employs a historiographical framework to conduct a comparative analysis of the three different geopolitical contexts from which these authors elaborated their poetic texts. The work addresses some specific concepts that have been used as starting points to the textual discussion and analysis of the selected works, including equality, citizenship, migration and national identity. However, it is necessary to contextualize them by taking into account their meanings through the different time periods and geopolitical locations of the poets, as well as examining how they have since been used, reproduced or subverted.

Besides applying feminist historiographical theories to analyse the poetic and prose texts that constitute the primary sources of the investigation, secondary sources such as non-fictional texts, letters, political pamphlets, and articles written by the poets in question have been employed as a method of historical research. This to better understand the complexities of the time in which emerged these writers' literary production. Moreover, a feminist historical approach opens up the possibility to understand how history in general has been written and disseminated. The feminist lenses allow a deeper examination of the intersections of the written

word and the external world, and consequently allow to identify the obstacles faced by these writers in seeking recognition for their work.

Inevitably, this work attempts to build a bridge between past and present by critically examining the ideological forces and assumptions reinforcing the way historical memory is constructed. This practice of questioning historical memory is unavoidable precisely because the political decision of studying the life and work of these women writers is fundamentally based on the idea of critically rethinking the past in order to interpret the present. Here, once again, feminist literary criticism cannot do without the vital support of feminist historiographers, such as Joan Wallach Scott (Scott).

Scott demonstrates the urgency of avoiding a line of thinking that takes for granted the relationship between past and present, regarding this as a difficult and unsettling continuity and a primary question that must be critically and incessantly explored. To Scott, this exploration is as a quest that may never be completed.

Taking advantage of a psychoanalytic approach in order to dismantle a variety of conventions found in the relationship between past and present within historiography, in particular in feminist historiography, Scott emphasises the contradictions, ambiguities, different meanings contained in categories, and concepts and words used in the practice of writing history. Through psychoanalytic theory and utilising a feminist approach, Scott advocates for new methods of reading and interpreting the past that also incorporate what she calls “fantasy echoes”:

Fantasy echo has a wonderfully complex resonance. Depending on whether the words are both taken as nouns or as an adjective and a noun, the term signifies the repetition of something imagined or an imagined repetition. In either case the repetition is not exact since an echo is an imperfect return of sound (*Fantasy* 287).

Here, Scott argues that a given repetition is not the exact reproduction of the original datum, but rather merely “an imperfect return of the sound” (48). She asserts, for example, that within the history of feminism we should examine the notion of the identity of women as the result of the rhetorical effect of a continuous invocation of an identity that is neither stable nor homogeneous, but that is modified (or “echoed”) according to different times and places.

To demonstrate how the history of feminism is full of paradoxes that call for a revisitation of basic assumptions, Scott looks at the historical nineteenth- and twentieth-century French feminist figures who, according to Scott, challenged the association of masculinity and universalism in republican theories of citizenship and negotiated with paradoxes continuously encountered in central categories such as sexual difference. Scott draws on the discourses of

these proto-feminist figures, focusing in particular on how they manipulated meanings of sexual difference in their favour, asserting that their proto-feminist activism was full of contradictions. For example, when women appealed to notions of equality for all the citizens, sexed bodies were beside the point; while on other occasions, they instead argued that the universal individual was not singular, but included both male and female. According to Scott, it was impossible for these proto-feminists to refute the profound belief that difference of sex precluded genuine equality, remarking how even the right to vote was gained by advocating not directly for gender equality, but based on other practical and logical arguments within a heterosexual traditional frame (Scott, *Fantasy* 55).

Proceeding in this vein, Scott proposes as part of her project to look again with a critical eye to historical categories traditionally considered by historians to be timeless. Such is the case, for example, of the category “women”, an entity perceived as having biological referents and consequently an unquestionable validity for historical research (Scott, *Fantasy* 47). Generally, even feminist historians, with the exception of a rare few, have not yet delved into the implications of the term “women” nor its significance throughout different times and geographical contexts, choosing instead to privilege the revision of other significant feminist notions such as the social meanings of the terms “equality” and “emancipation” (47).

Scott envisions the history of feminism as one that should be depicted as discontinuous and fragmented, as should the category “women” itself. However, the category “women” may still be a useful means to provide communality, a manner of connecting women beyond different geographical locations and chronologically distant contexts. With respect to the strategic use of the category of “women”, Scott asserts,

I offer instead a story of discontinuity that was repeatedly sutured by feminist activists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into a vision of uninterrupted linear succession: women’s activism of behalf of women. The identity of women, I argue, was not so much a self-evident fact of history as it was evidence—from particular discrete moments in time—of someone’s, some group’s effort to identify and thereby mobilize a collectivity (Scott, *Fantasy* 47).

Scott also calls into question the category of gender and the way it has been employed in historical analysis, describing how gender has been generally used to understand “the relationship between women and men” and the meaning of sex and sexualities in different contexts and temporal spaces without questioning its epistemological meanings (Scott, *Fantasy* 4). She explains that, regarding the notion of gender as a cultural construction, and the sex/gender distinction traditionally used in historical analysis, both assume fixed meanings for the categories of women and men, without problematizing them. Scott also argues that

“paradoxically, the history of women kept women outside history” (Scott, *Fantasy* 10). In brief, feminist history or the history of women rests on a biological foundation that feminists, at least in theory, still should contest.

She advocates instead for the idea of considering gender as a mutable concept, calling us to view gender as “the attribution of meaning to something that always eludes definition” (Scott, *Fantasy* 6). It is significant that for Scott, the category of gender can only be useful if employed as a question; that is to say, as an analytical tool able to contain a wider range of relations and interactions, including but not limited to men and women, race, class, social position, etc. According to Scott, the impossibility of giving to the concept of gender a stable meaning is what makes it a very stimulating term for historical analysis (*Fantasy* 5).

Thus, as we have seen, these and other theoretical contradictions that we find when revisiting prevalent historical categories exemplify various dilemmas. Can one contest “women” as an essentialist category while at the same time actively pursuing the visibility of women writers’ production? How to work with the paradoxes adherent to the act of acknowledging “women” as a group identity for purposes of activism, while at the same time critiquing “women” as a category for historical study? Scott quotes the work of Denise Riley (1973) to discuss these and other contradictions of researching from a feminist historical approach. Riley is a pioneer feminist scholar in favour of the practice of historicizing the category of “women” in feminist research. According to Riley, “It is not only that there are different kinds of women assembled under the term, but also that the collective identity means different things at different times” (Scott, *Fantasy* 11). Scott, by quoting the work of Riley, tries to explain that even if “women” is an unstable category requiring constant revision, it does not necessarily imply that women as a group do not exist historically.

Finally, another aspect relevant to this research is Scott’s psychoanalytical views on sexual difference. She claims that in the field of psychoanalysis the primary conundrum of identity revolves around the question of sexual difference, even if this concept does not form part of the terminology of psychoanalysis, as it is a feminist interpretation of Lacan’s theory (Scott *Fantasy* 15). She considers “sexual difference as an unresolved dilemma” (5), quoting Judith Butler, who defines sexual difference as “the site where a question concerning the relation of the biological to the cultural is posed and reposed, where it must and can be posed, but where it cannot, strictly speaking, be answered” (16).

To conclude this section, it can be asserted that Scott’s theoretical discussions on feminist historiography have been beneficial in guiding the close reading and analysis of the literary texts. The ways in which Scott controverts basic historical concepts such as “women”,

“gender” and “sexual difference”, while also pointing out the imperial dynamics of history that have excluded women’s presence in the collective memory of their time, have provided a critical framework for the study of women’s writings. The relationship between women’s presence in history and historical memory is central to this research; Scott’s historical critique helps towards the realization of the research’s aims to contribute to the increased visibility of women’s literary production from a transnational perspective, without having to renounce to the revision of historical views that have usually excluded women.

1.9 National identity and gender politics

The work of Anne K. Mellor and other scholars of the English Romantic Period, including Stuart Curran, Leanne Maunu, Jaqueline Labbe, Adrienne Craciun, Kari E. Lokke, Lorraine Fletcher, Ashley Cross, and Daniel Robinson, among others, has been significant in mapping the liaisons between English women’s writings of the late eighteenth century and discourses of exile, migration, nationalism, citizenship, and gender identity politics. These connections are built from the close reading of the primary texts, alongside the study of the critical literary and historical work of these scholars.

It is not necessary to speak in great lengths about all the contributions gained through the exploration of these secondary sources, but it is important to remark that they have been essential for the comprehension of the primary literary texts. In this section, we will reference briefly to some of the aforementioned scholars who have addressed the theme of English women writers’ employment of nationalistic rhetoric and tropes of exile and migration to express their gender concerns and to elaborate their proto-feminist activism. For example, the significant work done by the English feminist scholar Anne Mellor on gender, romanticism and genre has been cardinal to understand the trajectory of the recovery process regarding English women’s writings, and in questioning certain basic assumptions of the English Romantic canon. Without the efforts of these scholars --including the research group headed by Professor Lilla María Crisafulli in Italy-- the understandings of the literary history of the epoch would still be missing significant pieces.

Likewise, the work of the British Literature scholar Leanne Maunu addresses the topic of nationalism and English Romantic Studies. Maunu acknowledges that when she first published her book *Women Writing the Nation: National Identity, Female Community, And the British-French Connection, 1770-1820*, over ten years ago, she was triggering a new debate on this topic. She explains how the historical tension between France and Britain in the course of the

eighteenth century contributed to the creation of complex national identities, and how these emerging nationalist discourses greatly inspired the proto-feminist activism of women writers of the period (14). Conversely, she points out the way the British citizens, particularly those identified as males, demarcated their national identity by differentiating themselves from the “others” who, during the Romantic Period, were typically the French. Within this scenario, some women writers – such as Charlotte Smith and Mary Robinson – decided to take another path; instead of elaborating their national identity in the same manner as their male cohorts, they chose to shape their identity politics using tropes of exile and estrangement within their own country. Moreover, according to Maunu, various women writers attempted to create bonds of solidarity through gender, aligning beneath the collective “women” identity, rather than the collective national identity, refusing to embrace the ultimate idea of belonging to the English nation as a political strategy to gain social recognition as citizens. Maunu explains that many women writers envisioned a community based on a non-patriarchal model, a plural community open also to the other, in which they could controvert certain national identity values (15). In general, Maunu asserts that the connection and solidarity that can still be found in some literary works between women writers remained for extended periods thanks to their shared gender identity, rather than a shared national identity.

Furthermore, in their critical works the scholars Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke enter debates about British identity and gender politics at the end of the eighteenth century, with particular attention to the intersections between the gender identity politics and the events and discourses of the French Revolution. The interest that writers such as Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith had in the political events occurring in France subverted many stereotypes regarding women’s lack of participation in matters pertaining to the public sphere. Craciun and Lokke describe how unexpectedly several women writers took a political stance in which they supported the French Revolution and questioned the evolving English nationalism. Although these writers moulded their subjectivity and elaborated their gender politics by borrowing extensively from French ideals, their radical political commitment is a topic that has not been adequately addressed in critical work (Craciun & Lokke 4). Likewise, for example, Mary Robinson’s *Francophile* has been described by Craciun as a strategy in favour of the first stages of the French Revolution and against the growing British nationalism (*Mary Robinson* 61). This is particularly relevant to this study, as we will examine the way ideas of cosmopolitanism are present in her poetics as well as her proto-feminist text *A Letter to the Women of England*. Robinson shared with Charlotte Smith a desire to be considered a “citizen of the world”. These

writers never felt at home in England, or at least that was the sentiment they shared with their readers through their poetics, in letters and memoirs.

What is more, the work of English scholars such as Ashley Cross and Daniel Robinson, who have contributed to scholarship with a serious analysis of different facets of Mary Robinson's career, has been valuable to this research. In one of her most recent books, Cross examines several of Robinson's writings together with other works of Romantic authors, demonstrating how Robinson influenced the work of later well-known writers. In one of the chapters, Cross elucidates the connection between Mary Robinson and Mary Wollstonecraft, highlighting the feminist values shared by both contemporary writers. Similarly, the British Romanticism scholar Daniel Robinson analyses the importance of Mary Robinson's literary career after living a life of celebrity, and particularly the way her poetry gave her an opportunity to reinvent herself as an intellectual.

Regarding the Spanish writer Rosalía de Castro, most of the critical work have been produced by the scholars Marina Mayoral and Catherine Davies. The former is a writer and Spanish literary scholar who discusses in various lengthy studies the poetical works of the Galician writer. More precisely, in one of her books *La Poesía de Rosalía de Castro*, she analyses different poetic motifs and social themes in Castro's poetical texts, occasionally even applying a psychoanalytic approach to address her writings. The latter is a scholar in Hispanic and Latin American Studies who has produced several studies on Rosalía de Castro. In her critical literary work Davies has taken into consideration biographical aspects of Castro, and addresses her social status as a woman and intellectual during the late Romantic Spanish period. Davies examines closely De Castro's devotion to Galicia and her interest in telling the stories of the everyday Galician people. Notable are Davies' discussions on De Castro's isolation and marginal status as a woman writer.

Lastly, to examine the historical context in which the work of Innocenza Tondi Anzuini emerged, the work of the historian Maria Teresa Mori on the role of women poets during the Italian Risorgimento has been significant. Mori's text *Figlie d'Italia* is a great starting point from which to understand the cultural dynamics underpinning the illusion of women's inactive roles and invisibility during this historical period. Mori concentrates on nationalist poetry, texts in which women authors demonstrated their affection for their country and their desire for Italy to become a nation-state. According to Mori, poetry was a vehicle through which they were able to assume an active role in the political life and future of their country. The research carried out by the historian Simonetta Soldani of tracing the meaning of the Risorgimento on women, as a group with a particular gender and national identity, has been very useful as well. This

final aspect is essential to comprehend the silence that has accompanied the discussion concerning the political participation of women during the Italian Resurgence. In fact, Innocenza Ansuini Tondi's poetical oeuvre is not as widely known as the other authors that are part of this research; for this reason, finding critical work on Tondi Ansuini's writings and persona was a very difficult task. Fortunately, in 2011 a new edition of her poetic textbook *Canti Dell' Esule*, edited by Bonafede Mancini with a few introductory essays about the life and work of the author, was released. This edition provided biographical insights on the writer and her political participation in the movement for the independence and unification of Italy.

1.10 Nomadic Subjectivity

One of the gender and feminist scholars whose work examines critical issues surrounding identity and mobility, and therefore, has informed the elaboration of this research's theoretical framework is the philosopher and feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti. The nomadic subjectivity project, proposed by Braidotti in 2011, considers the unlimited possibilities of self-representation in a given context characterised by globalisation and mobility. Braidotti proposes a nomadic figuration which, according to her, may be considered part of a feminist tradition of proposing alternative forms of representations. These figurations attempt to subvert the idea of the subject as unitarian and monolithic, characteristics that have prevailed in mainstream philosophical theories (*Nomadic 4*).

The decision to study Braidotti's nomadic subject project relies precisely in the writers' shared metaphorical experience of exile, and their decision to use alternative counter-narratives of migration to elaborate their gender identity politics. As Braidotti contextualised her nomadic subject project within the global and mobile situation of the present time – she describes it as a sort of “cartographic reading of the present” – it prompts discussions on the condition of nomadism and its different varieties in this globalised world (13). She offers new figurations that could be employed in critical theoretical frameworks with which to discuss this new globalised mobility context. Braidotti takes advantage of this “cartographic approach” which, according to her project, provides “analytic and exegetical tools” for feminist theoretical research. From this standpoint, we have the possibility to reflect on the location and standpoint of view from which we are elaborating our analytical work and figurations (4).

In relation to what we have already discussed in the previous sections on subjectivity, Braidotti's view concurs with that of Kristeva, defining subjectivity using terms from the psychoanalytical lexicon. In Braidotti's project, “the subject is a process, made of constant

shifts and negotiations between different levels of power and desire, that is to say, willful choice and unconscious drives” (18).

Something Braidotti shares with various feminist scholars discussed earlier in this introductory chapter, including Julia Kristeva and Susan Stanford Friedman, is her resistance to conventional ideas of nationalism and an advocacy for alternative ways of belonging. She states,

In this respect, my nomadic subject project constitutes an act of resistance against methodological nationalism and a critique of Eurocentrism from within. Both politically and epistemically, nomadic subjectivity provokes and sustains a critique of dominant visions of the subject, identity and knowledge, from within one of the many “centers” that structure the contemporary globalized world (7-8).

To a great extent she reflects upon identity and subjectivity in the current complex context in which nothing is stable. She advocates for a theory of the subject that destabilises the idea of a self as homogenous, to include “multiple belongings” (Braidotti, *Nomadic* 10).

In her text, Braidotti also reflects on the criticisms of other scholars who consider her theoretical project a glorifying vision of the nomad. She is aware that global mobility and the different geographical spaces that people occupy are not just some metaphor for the development of critical thought, but real spaces for migrant people. Like Stanford Friedman, she acknowledges the problem that accompanies the use of these types of metaphors when nowadays there are numerous people who face the urgent necessity to migrate, as is the case for refugees. Nevertheless, these figurations, together with a critical awareness, can become a discursive vehicle to voice aspects related to women’s advocacy in periods of mobility and globalisation. According to Braidotti, the words of the writer Virginia Woolf (1938) “As a woman I have no country. As a woman, I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world” demonstrate how this type of metaphorical language of mobility has long been a part of women’s political vocabulary (55).

Braidotti’s project of nomadism provides an alternative theoretical framework for critical thinking and feminist research. It is within this perspective that leading categories of analysis such as “women” and “feminist”, among others, should be used but in a manner that we can allow their complexities to flourish. Thus, various key concepts that Braidotti employs are essential in order to understand her theoretical proposals, one of these being a “politics of location” defined as cartographies of power that rest on a form of self-criticism, a critical and genealogical self-narrative. Remaining outspoken about the position one occupies ideologically is central to the feminist project of nomadism.

Along with the previously discussed concepts and in the light of Braidotti's critique, the category "women" is defined as a "site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences, determined by overlapping variables such as class, race, age, lifestyle and sexual preference" (*Nomadic* 25). Braidotti's discussions on women's identity politics and sexual difference have been valuable to this research. She considers that the political act of speaking as a woman, together with the aim of empowering other women, does not replicate an essentialist vision of womanhood. Rather, for Braidotti, "[o]ne speaks as a woman in order to empower women, to activate socio-symbolic changes in their condition: this is a radical antiessentialist position" (25). This remark resonates with the political intention of recognising and sharing women's literary work to contribute to a larger project that strives to recognize women's cultural and intellectual participation in history.

Braidotti defines feminism as a movement that must constantly negotiate with two primary political aims; first, "the insertion of women into patriarchal history" and second, "the questioning of personal identity on the basis of power relations, which is the feminism of difference" (*Nomadic* 155). Even though the recognition of the condition of woman as the second sex serves as a starting point for feminist consciousness, it does not mean that all women are the same. To this end, the concept of a politics of location is inherently necessary, as it permits the creation of a dialogue in which we acknowledge individualities while still taking advantage of a collective identity.

Braidotti's analysis of the term "European" has provided critical tools to address issues related to ideas of citizenship, nation, and cosmopolitanism. For Braidotti the term European is intrinsically connected with "issues such as borders and borderlands, cultural mixity, and intercultural conflicts" (*Nomadic* 33). In this context, she references the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Susan Stanford Friedman. She asserts that there are certain types of migration patterns that are not considered to be part of the European national narrative, and stands against the idea of considering the so-called "European identity" as something unitary, as this reproduces dynamics of exclusion commonly found in nationalist discourses. She also refers to the metaphor of the polyglot as a special place where one may possess a "critical distance", maintaining that it provides an opportunity to deconstruct identities.

Likewise, Braidotti uses an approach similar to Joan Scott when she describes "gender" as a fluid category that could have different meanings in different contexts and fields of discipline. For example, in the case of feminist historiography, she "would define gender as a notion that defines multiple social relations" (143). On the other hand, although Braidotti advocates for a flexible definition of this term, she allows that in feminist theory, gender should serve the

principal function of “challenging the universalist tendency of critical language and systems of knowledge as well as scientific discourse at large” (143).

In her nomadic subject project, Braidotti also attempts to blur the lines between theory and activism. Her vision can be summed up as “a movement of critical opposition to the subject’s false universality but also the positive affirmation of women’s desire to enact different forms of subjectivity” (150). Braidotti also quotes Julia Kristeva’s work to discuss the notion of “woman”. She states that woman “refers to a female sexed subject that is constituted, as psychoanalysis convincingly argues, through a process of identification with culturally available positions organized through the dichotomy of gender” (154).

In her book, Braidotti opens space to translate these paradoxes into theoretical terms and discourses, maintaining that the act of creating these figurations is a critical response to the rapidly evolving world in which we live. These figurations are a means to problematize the current paradoxical globalization in which distances are shortened in this apparently technologically borderless society, while the border control’s jurisdiction increases every day. This is why her project of nomadism is based on the idea of considering subjectivity as a process of becoming a nomad.

As a final remark, Braidotti does not consider the nomadic subject a theory of gender, preferring to describe it instead as a myth, something that she views as more useful than a theoretical system. She uses a similar approach to Stanford Friedman, who incorporates fantasy to her discussions on history. Braidotti also shares with Kristeva her preference of discussing critical practices and textual analysis rather than theory. In Braidotti’s figurations, the imagination reigns; it is in this style that she attempts to put into question the operating system of knowledge of our time. She pursues through figurations a freedom of thinking, drawing away from “phallogocentric dogmatism” and the symbolic order (29). Nomadic consciousness, for Braidotti, “is a form of political resistance to hegemonic, fixed, unitary, and exclusionary views of subjectivity” that have maintained a privileged position for centuries (58).

This introduction has given a glimpse into the methodology and theoretical framework of this research. It has been disclosed some biographical aspects of the women writers of this investigation, as well as elements of the primary sources. The theoretical and literary critical work is very diverse, as it combines methodologies stemming from historical, literary and feminist disciplines alike. In a way, this work was intended to follow the interdisciplinary approach that is quite common in feminist research.

In the following chapter it will be discussed the interconnections between the migration and exile metaphors as expressed in three different historical contexts from where these authors

voiced their verses, but also from the personal accounts of the selected authors. It is provided a historical framework to the deployment of a mobility language that populated a myriad of texts written during European Romanticism, with a particular emphasis on the ones penned by the four women writers. Also, the chapter offers some space for the four authors' personal accounts of the period, through the study of a series of fragments of letters relevant to the main questions of this work or written in the same interval of time they produced their poetical texts. It is included some nonpoetical material found in memoirs, essays, and biographies -- to draw a map of these writers' relationships with these themes that became central in their written work. By listening to these women's voices and personal stories, we will have the possibility of analysing the social and political conditions in which these writers' poetical works emerged, including whether and to what extent their personal experiences informed their literature.

CHAPTER TWO:

Foreigners at Home: Recurrent migration and exile themes and tropes in women's Romantic poetry

This investigation brings together four women writers from three different European countries –England, Spain and Italy-- who were active spectators of the displacement of people in geographical contexts and during historical periods distinguished by political and social turmoil. Immersed in unstable scenarios, all of these writers invested their literary imagination to portray the experiences and sentiments associated with the condition of displaced people, including foreigners, migrants, exiles, and people living in the diaspora. As their poetical works manifest, they exploited tropes and metaphors of migration and exile coming from the concrete historical circumstances that were unfolding around them. This language of mobility they employed poetically was flexible enough, not only to depict the status of a discriminated or persecuted group they supported --as it was the case for outsiders, fugitives and migrants--- but also to tackle several issues connected to these authors’ own engendered social position as women writers. Also, this poetic language drive a reflection on how they conceived and envisaged their relationship with their nations.

If we take a closer look at the characteristics that, according to scholars in the field, have distinguished what is known today as the European Romantic Era¹⁴ we will notice that it was indeed a time that witnessed a continuous transit of people across nations and within local borders. These Romantic Migrations¹⁵ were a phenomenon prompted by --among other causes-- colonisation, war, repression, poverty, and political persecution. The real experiences of displacement that impacted the daily lives of national inhabitants, and the dynamics that emerged as the result of people coming from other countries, also had repercussions on the way national identity was articulated and conceived by the populations of Europe. The country specific histories played a key role in the articulation of a language in which the experience of alienation became collective.

Indeed, during this long period, alienation became a transnational notion that referred to the physical experience of mobility of individuals who felt “uprooted” –away from their place of origin-- but also it denoted "the form of a fragmentation of psychic identity through loss of nationality" (Curran, “Displaced” 637). As Stuart Curran claims in this regard, displacement became a multi-layered experience that covered the physical and emotional condition of the people transiting and living on the whole European continent (“Displaced” 640). These feelings associated with the fragile and fragmented relationship people had with their countries, were

¹⁴ A timeframe that generally covers the last decades of the eighteenth century and great part of the nineteenth century.

¹⁵ *Romantic Migrations: Local, National and Transnational Dispositions* (2008) is the title of a book written by the English scholar Michael Wiley.

portrayed intensely by women writers since their attachment to their place of origin and sense of national belonging, were as well shaped by how their gender was socially and politically defined.

This chapter provides a historical framework to the deployment of a mobility language that populated a myriad of texts written during European Romanticism, with a particular emphasis on the ones penned by the four women writers already introduced in the first chapter. Likewise, as pointed out before, some space for the four authors' personal accounts of the period is provided through the study of a series of letters relevant to the main questions of this work or written in the same interval of time they produced their poetical texts. Some nonpoetical and nonfictional material that was found in memoirs, essays, and biographies – are included to draw a map of these writers' relationships with these themes that became central in their written work. By listening to these women's voices and personal stories, we will have the possibility of analysing the social and political conditions in which these writers' poetical works emerged, including whether and to what extent their personal experiences informed their literature.

Thereby, this chapter seeks to continue the discussion started in the introduction, on how European poetry dealing with migration and exile¹⁶ might have disrupted predominant ideas of national identity and citizenship, while also questioning the gender norms of the period. For this task, the first part – which includes three sub-sections– will be dedicated to the study of how French Emigration in Britain and a climate of political commotion in the late eighteenth century contributed to the propagation of a migration language. Equally, we will have the opportunity to trace De Castro's migration and exile poetry in the contours of the Spanish Romantic Period and the Galician Rexurdimento. Finally, aspects of the Italian Risorgimento and Italian Romanticism during the nineteenth century will be discussed to develop a historical framework which may assist us in approaching the poetic work of Innocenza Ansuini Tondi.¹⁷

With the ambition of offering an alternative critical perspective of their literary outcomes in the next three chapters, the historical framework and context-specific factors, supports the examination of these authors' prose and poetical texts. The personal standpoints of these writers will have a privileged position also in shedding light on these authors' interests in the experience of displaced persons and in the social condition of women. The attention is focused

¹⁶ We will notice in this chapter, that the terms 'exile' and 'migration' terms derived from the phenomena of great transnational mobility that characterized those years.

¹⁷ In the discussion I produced in this chapter I attempted to avoid making general assumptions of the three particular periods in which these texts appeared for the first time, I tried instead to make some references to the concrete circumstances that informed these authors' poetical production.

on how these writers' personal experiences with migration and exile --in the geopolitical settings in which they were living-- impacted their literary works, proto-feminism and shaped their subjectivities as women, citizens, and authors. Further, as underlined in the previous chapter, the inclusion of biographical material is indispensable to produce academic work that could avoid the effacement of these writers' voices from the pages of the literary history of their time.

In what follows, over the next chapters, several questions that are central to this research will be addressed, such as, how these writers subverted notions of gender, citizenship and national identity, through a language that prioritised the condition of people in the move, including exiles and migrants, over other prevalent nationalist discourses. We will deal with the different meanings that the notions of alienation, citizenship, and nationalism acquired for these writers, while trying to answer the question of how these women poets negotiated with ideals of a national belonging that in practice excluded them. Why did these writers decide to elaborate their proto-feminist discourses using migration language and exile metaphors? And how is it that poetry dealing with migration and exile allows the expression of affective feelings linked to their gender alienation? As we might observe throughout this dissertation, more than one hundred years before Virginia Woolf's famous words were uttered¹⁸, several other women writers used metaphors of mobility to talk about their existential and social position in a patriarchal society.

2.1 Mobility writings during the English Romantic Period

In the middle of a war and revolutionary climate, some women writers --such as Charlotte Smith and Mary Robinson-- exhibited in their texts a desire of being finally considered full citizens in their own countries. Britain's national borders with France during the beginning of the Romantic Era were continuously blurred by the crossing of people, moving from one to another as a consequence of conflicts, famine and/or persecution. Such a mass migration gave women writers the chance to articulate transnational metaphors, and to use a mobility language to describe the existential condition of an entire European population who were experiencing a "loss of nationality" or a "split between nationalist identities" (Curran, "Displaced" 637). The scenario of displacement, national instability and continuous radical transformation in Britain and the whole continent, played a leading role in providing these writers with the possibility of imagining a new future in which they could surpass ideologically national borders.

¹⁸ "As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world".

This chaotic scenario also provided opportunities to think a world in which the female subject was able to be entitled with similar opportunities as a white European male. That is, the incorporation of a more extensive definition of citizenship within the framework of a democratic society was a primary objective for some of these intellectuals. The recognition of women's capacity to access the same rights as men, was a premise that accompanied the discourses of various women writers, even before the name *feminism* appeared in the historical picture. As it has been highlighted by scholars, in the European context of the late eighteenth-century ideas of national belonging and citizenship can be found entangled in the proto-feminist discourses developed by some women writers of the period (Brekke 1).

Academics have agreed that during the Romantic era, a period undoubtedly marked by political uncertainty, conflict and dislocation, the idea of a national identity was emerging in Great Britain (Maunu 13). The nation-state project along with the development of British identity took place through a process of comparison and differentiation from their neighbours across the Channel, the French. These two countries had been at war since 1689, but in the eighteenth-century the tensions between them increased to new levels with the Seven Years' War (1753-1763), the French Revolution (1789-1799), the following Napoleonic wars (1803-1815) and the corresponding actions to maintain the power over Britain's colonial territories (14). For Leanne Maunu (Maunu), during this extended period of animosity between the two nations "the people of Britain began to coalesce under the term "Britons," for most historians and political theorists agree that the eighteenth century was the defining moment in the creation of Britain's national identity" (14).

Studies conducted in the last decades have paid particular attention on how the evolving British nationalism during the Romantic era had significant French connections. The constant conflict of Britain with their neighbouring country and the large emigration the nation received with the arrival of the French émigrés, induced a form of insularism and for many a necessity of building a stronger national identity. The British emerging identity was defined among other elements, through a sexual binary model in which the masculinity of the British was contrasted by an effeminate representation of the French nation and its citizens. In respect of this masculine/feminine binary depiction of the two countries, Jan Wellington (Wellington) argues persuasively,

During this half century, English patriots were involved in a struggle for national identity and integrity in which they pitted their nation's character against that of the French; one of the ways they conducted it was to devalue the French character by likening it to that of another group which public discourse on both sides of the Channel typically constructed as 'other' and, in the civic sense, lesser: women. As Linda Colley

observes of the eighteenth century's last decades, "there was a sense at this time in which the British conceived of themselves as an essentially 'masculine' nation . . . caught up in an eternal rivalry with an essentially 'effeminate' France" (34).

As Wellington argues on the subject of British nationalism, the French oppositional narrative from which the national identity model for the people was articulated, represented the French citizens as weaker and inadequate, an image that resonated directly with the stereotypical characteristics attributed to women. To support his theory, Wellington quotes Nira Yuval-Davis --a prominent scholar on nationalism and gender studies-- who states that the "constructions of nationhood usually involve specific notions of both 'manhood' and 'womanhood'" (36). In sum, it seems to be a recurrent aspect of nationalist discourses to have stereotypical gendered ideas present in their patriotic rhetoric.

In the previous discussion on the process of identity configuration --we mentioned Susan Stanford Friedman's theoretical views in regards of how identity is built from our perception and relation with others. It was contended --following Friedman's work-- that individuals tend to oscillate between aspects of sameness and difference that distinguish them or associates them with others. Accordingly, a person always needs to identify or differentiate herself/himself from a group, to be able to construct her/his own identity (Stanford Friedman, *Mappings* 87-88).¹⁹ What is significant for the critical arguments to expand further, is that in the process of developing a national identity in England, several women writers, in contradistinction to the over-masculine nationalist version of Englishness, proposed forms of national belonging in which they identified with the foreigners and the outcasts (Keane, "Exiles and émigrés" 2).

Evidently, the fact that women and migrants were both victims of prejudices and discrimination, treated as non-citizens and in some cases lacking social and financial autonomy --a myriad of exiles at their departure from France were forced to abandon all their properties-- drove women's alliances with the émigrés. As migrants, women were socially, legally, and politically invisible. Consequently, women writers found in the French exiles subjects that suited their political and nationalist counter-discourses, including the ones that could be

¹⁹ [i]dentity means sameness, as in the word identical, and involves the perception of common qualities. A person's identity as a woman, or a Chicana, or Jew, or Japanese, or lesbian—for example—emerges from an identification with others in that group. This requires the foregrounding of one aspect of identity and a backgrounding of others in an emphasis on what is shared with others in that group. On the other hand, identity requires a perception of difference from others in order for the recognition of sameness to come into play. The category woman depends upon the category man for its meaning [...] (Stanford, *Mappings* 87-88)

labelled as proto-feminist, which had the primary aim of disrupting a restrictive idea of citizenship that excluded women.

In the context of a nation-building project and in the process of defining what the new Englishness entailed, the collective social imaginary constructed of the French ---with clearly stereotypical attributes-- helped to establish an idea of an English citizen, marked by xenophobia against the French. Not by chance, in contrast to this form of articulating and exalting an English national sense of identity, the condition and difficulties experienced by the French émigrés were brought to the public attention mainly by women writers, but also with the intention of reflecting about their social position as non-citizens in their own country (Benis 25). Not only several women writers rejected the prevalent model of Englishness, but they chose to publicly identify themselves with the French émigrés who appeared to convey like non-other subjects, womanhood and alienation.

Building on these issues of national identity rhetoric, Angela Keane (Keane) contends that within the creation of a Romantic Englishness, the concept of national belonging was problematic for women because the basic idea of “belonging” refers to owning goods and in the context of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, women were not often proprietors (2). On the contrary, women as individuals were considered to belong to their husbands, fathers, families and ultimately to the nation. In Keane's words, the idea of national belonging evokes “the promise of full and equal participation for all nationals”, that did not in real terms apply to women (2). This scholar also considers that the reason behind why many women writers employed metaphors and figurative language of mobility such as the image of a wanderer woman, could have had the intention of disrupting some hegemonic discourses on womanhood. For example, the wanderer woman might have played the role of a counter-image because women were usually depicted as passive and static beings, placed in the private space of their home. As Keane asserts, the idea of a woman “beyond the home and as a subject whose desires exceed or preclude maternity, divests herself of femininity and erases herself from the familial, heterosexual structure of the nation” (3). The figure of a wanderer woman also questions nationalism's obsession of putting maternity as the central objective of all women and defies the confining of women's subjectivity to the four walls of the domestic space (Keane 5). Thus, the figure of the exiles, migrant, vagrant among others metonymic representations, could be seen as forms of sabotaging the patriarchal system that neglected women's place in the public sphere.

Tone Brekke (Brekke), for her part, paid critical attention to women writers' alternative and counter ways of expressing and imagining nationhood that coexisted with the mainstream

nationalist discourses of the time as well. She argues that within the social imaginaries of the period, these writers promoted a different definition of citizenship in which they shifted from an individual notion of the term to a collective vision characterized by a more inclusive approach that came from the cosmopolitanism of those days (Brekke 40). Brekke affirms,

Cosmopolitanism provided a collectivist vocabulary that moved beyond the individualist limitations of the political categories that dominated the constitutional writings and declarations of rights in this period. For late-eighteenth century feminists, the collective envisioning of political belonging and representation also aimed at a more inclusive stance towards gender and difference. Hence, in the revolutionary era, experimentation with collective and cosmopolitan vocabularies emerged as feminist strategies that intervene in the implicit masculine gendering of the citizen (40).

Thus, various women writers, including Robinson and Smith, were attracted to and politically engaged not only with the events that were taking place in France and their effect on Britain, but they also applied in a climax of adversity, a cosmopolitan view that enabled to imagine a citizenship not restricted by gender or a place of origin. Within this perspective the figure of the émigrés gave them the possibility of demonstrating unprejudiced closeness and sympathy to foreigners and people that did not share their same political views.

As we discussed above, the status of these newcomers was considered by these authors to be more compatible to represent their gendered condition, than the emerging nationalist version of the English that was developing in contraposition to the French citizens. These emerging thoughts and metaphors on migration and nationalism were malleable enough to allow a proto-feminist critique in which women envisioned the possibility of acquiring proper citizenship. Michael Wiley (Wiley) holds out that these “metonymic figures” which the French emigration provided, served to address a series of concerns and gave a multidimensional understanding of national identities and subjectivities (“The French Immersion” 12). In other words, the subject of the emigrants allowed the writers to go beyond the situation of the banished population to address identity issues that concerned the British citizens.

Now, turning back to the specific historical circumstances in which this language of mobility --that Robinson and Smith fervently used—emerged, first, it is essential to remark again that the French Revolution impelled an increase in the displacement of people fleeing from France towards other European neighbouring countries or to other remote destinations such as North America. England for its proximity to France was one of the main landing ports for the emigrants. Staying in England provided the emigrants with the possibility of remaining informed of what was happening in France from the other side of the channel (Davidson 135).

A few years before the events that unleashed what we know as the French Revolution occurred, the first emigrants to leave France did so as a voluntary act that was driven by the instability of the time. Later, in the following years, violence and fear caused by the incidents that characterized the Reign of terror, forced thousands of people to abandon the country (Oliver 1). In the 1790's, emigration constituted a crime punished by law in France, and the perpetrators were exposed to the maximum penalty and to the confiscation of all their belongings (Wolfson, "Forging Connections" 511). Later, not only the emigrants who returned were more likely to face criminal punishment, but also during the year 1793, the ones who left the French territory were considered dead for all purposes by the law of France. However, in spite of the existence of these revolutionary regulations against migration, and although the emigrants had no certainty of the situation that was waiting for them in England, they preferred to leave France (Pestel 9).

Within this context of political and social repression, persecution and displacement, the French Revolution laid out the tenets for a new concept that are still relevant nowadays, the émigrés (Doyle 1). The French Revolution drove a massive migration in which people from all social positions moved within and outside the European continent (Pestel 1). These newcomers generally belonged to three different groups of émigrés, which usually had in common their endorsement of the French monarchy. The first group has been denominated as the *royalistes*, and they were "adherents of the ancienne constitution and the positive antithesis of the revolutionaries of the Ancien Régime" (Pestel, 15). The second group called the *monarchiens*, did not support democracy and believed in the power of the monarchy to safeguard the nation (Furet & Ozouf 370). And lastly, the third group were the so-called *constitutionnels* who subscribed the Constitution of 1791, to determine the nature of a future constitutional monarchy in France (Pestel 15).

There is no consensus among scholars regarding the exact number of emigrants that left France and arrived in England during and after the revolutionary events; some scholars have suggested that the number of emigrants could have reached the amount of 100,000 throughout the last decade of the eighteenth-century (Curran, "Displaced" 642). Others have estimated that from approximately 150,000 displaced people, between 25,000 to 40,000 arrived on the coasts of England. Presumably, it has also been calculated that about 16,500 of the emigrated population that came to England belonged to the nobility (Davison 131-132). Many of these

newcomers were Catholic Refugees²⁰, including members of the clergy and laypersons (Shaw 16). In regard to the number of migrants in England and the social reception of these newcomers, the historian Rosena Davison makes reference to an article published in the Hampshire Chronicle on September 1792 that says:

It is supposed that upwards of 40,000 French emigrants, men, women and children, are at this moment in this country: the hardships they have gone through have been extreme and afflicting, particularly those of the better sort. It is necessary, however, we should guard our countrymen against the arts of many of them, who, under the plausible name of exiled aristocrats, are come over to practise as knaves, thieves, gamblers and sharpers (Davison 132).

As we can presume from the chauvinistic statement of this article, the move to England required many sacrifices from the migrants. Besides leaving all their belongings in France to relocate themselves in a foreign country, the majority came without any economic means of support and the most without relatives waiting for them in England. In addition, the émigrés needed to cope with the social stereotypes and discrimination that pervaded against them in England. Thanks to the compassion of a few English citizens, some of the French exiles felt welcome, while others unwanted in the new diasporic country. In response to the influx of émigrés to Britain, and in the middle of a climate of fervent nationalism, some people tried to demonstrate to be more civilised than other Europeans by showing charity and empathy towards the émigrés (Andrews 17). Yet, this forged camaraderie towards the French was always challenged by a strong xenophobia and anti-Catholic attitude (Garnai, “The Alien Act 103”).

However, some of the reviews dedicated to Smith’s long poem *The Emigrants* lamented the protagonist role of the author’s “I” in the text and found her presence cumbersome in the narration of the French refugee’s crisis (Andrews 18).²¹ Of course, these reviews did not take into consideration the proto-feminist message encoded in the poem. Through the elaboration of a personal story that is disclosed within the poetical verses, she was able to speak of her individual sorrows as a woman writer in patriarchal England in the midst of a scenario of war and violence. Also, the reviewers overlooked that Smith’s presence in the poem offers an organic connection, in which the speaker’s story and identity consent her to convey poetically

²⁰ During the September massacres many prisoners were murdered, including priests who declined to sign the “Civil Constitution of the Clergy” (Shaw 23).

²¹ The review of the Hampshire Chronicle reads as follows “Herself, and not the French emigrant, fills the foreground; begins and ends the piece; and the pity we should naturally feel for those overwhelming and uncommon distresses she describes, is lessened by their being brought into parallel with the inconveniences of a narrow income or a protracted law-suit.” (Critical Review 1792 qtd. in Andrews 18)

the feelings and plight of the emigrants. Smith is able to judge the situation of the émigrés, from her own existential banishment that goes beyond her national place origin to highlight her engendered social position. Besides, the necessity of explaining her attempt to talk from the perspective of the French migrants, is only possible through the construction of a female subject speaker that has experimented similar discrimination in her own country. As well, for Kerri Andrews (Andrews), this personal intromission of Smith in the poem has the aim of evoking in her readers the feelings of empathy that she feels towards this people (19).

To briefly mention another example of a later review, this time one in which Smith was criticized for her liberal politics that were, according to them, clearly out of a woman's reach. The *British Critics* review is dedicated to Smith's latest poem *Beachy Head* on August 1807 – published after the author deceased— contains negative and conservative expressions on Smith's political agenda. The review disagrees with Smith's dissenting voice and commitment to the ideas of the Revolution. A fragment of the review reads as follows,

Most sincerely do we lament the death of Mrs. Charlotte Smith. We acknowledged in her a genuine child of genius, a most vivid fancy, refined taste, and extraordinary sensibility. We could not, indeed, always accord with her in sentiment. With respect to some subjects beyond her line of experience, reading, and indeed talent, she was unfortunately wayward and preposterous; but her poetic feeling and ability have rarely been surpassed by any individual of her sex. (Knowles & Horrocks 257)

Smith as a dispossessed and disenfranchised woman never demonstrated fear to be politically outspoken and to demand changes in the politics in the country she could not unreservedly call home. She managed to be well-recognized for her poetical artistry without renouncing to envision a country without such an antagonist spirit and discriminatory policies.

Now, back to the historical framework, after the French Revolution declined in its original ideals, the tension and a spirit of competition amongst France and Britain increased due to the declaration of war between the two countries in 1793. Undoubtedly, the historical picture was not optimistic for the emergence of a peaceful relationship between the two countries. Some major events marked significantly this antagonistic period; first, the conflict against France and the end of Napoleonic imperialism; Great Britain's dominant status of worldwide supremacy; and the expansion of the British colonial power in Asia and other new territories, along with the reinforcement of its colonial possessions (Crisafulli & Saglia, 182).

These critical circumstances, accompanied by a collective feeling of insecurity and displacement became part of the culture of the Romantic era (Curran, "Displaced" 637). The poetry of Smith and Robinson retells these actual events that impacted England and the whole continent, as sorts of counter-stories of those days. These poetics of exile also serve as a

memory of the feelings of alienation of the people who witnessed and experienced first-hand a volatile moment in history. These writers, indeed, dramatically engaged with the revolution and with the effects that it brought to England. Moreover, by taking an active role in speaking about the revolution while encouraging the peace between the powerful nations, Robinson and Smith disrupted the conventional idea of women's abstention from politics. They affirmed their right to speak through a poetical language and from the viewpoint of the émigrés, and in Robinson's oeuvre from an amalgam of figures that represented sentiments of deep isolation.

On the 7th of January 1793 –the same year in which Smith's *The Emigrants* was first published--the British Parliament passed the *Alien Act*, a bill with the central aim of regulating the transit of people arriving on the coast of Britain. This law was particularly applicable to the French emigrants. Under this act the government was authorized "to order the deportation of any alien at any given time; if the alien refused to leave, he or she was liable to arrest" (Garnai, "The Alien Act" 101). The 'Alien Act', along with other legal dispositions, was promulgated in order to control migration, and to promote a state of surveillance against the emigrants, largely contributing to a climate of social repression. Additionally, a year after the enforcement of the Act, the recourse of *Habeas Corpus* was suspended in 1794, and in 1795-6 two acts were promulgated --*Sedition and Treason Bills*-- that punished political addresses, written and spoken, against the government (Garnai, "The Alien Act" 102).

Nevertheless, Britain as other European Countries that established migration regulations, did not enforce completely her power over expelled foreigners, even though *The Alien Act* of 1793 that remained until 1826 legally authorized them (Fahrmeir 34). Only 671 people were deported in the whole period, and other 1,700 people deportees returned to Britain because they were not accepted by other countries. The deportations were mostly for political reasons, but the lenient manner in which the Act was put into practice caused Britain to be considered as "a place of exile for anti-revolutionary refugees" (Fahrmeir 34).

We will see in more detail in chapter four, that, for example, in her long poem *The Emigrants*, Smith depicts herself as a poet who is able to transmit the collective sorrows of a discriminated group that included the plight of the clergymen, aristocrats and of course, the sufferings of mothers and children. In this text she speaks with great fervour about revolutionary ideals while promoting compassion for the excluded. She even followed a literary trend amongst women writers of the 1790's, which included Mary Robinson, in dedicating some verses to the griefs of the queen of France, Marie Antoinette. Paradoxically, this royal figure is humanized by female writers who underlined her engendered maternal role

to evoke sympathy, without abandoning the revolutionary political aims (Pascoe, “Romantic” 99).

This brief historical overview suggests that in the course of the late eighteenth-century writing about migration not only was a convention, an aesthetic feature, or a trope in literature, it was the reality of those days. Britain was in the process of becoming a modern nation-state, and the influence of the French Revolution and the exiles was inevitable even in the literary outcomes of the time (Wiley, “The French” 27-8). Whether with the intention of subverting the definitions of citizenship and national identity or by proposing explicit or implicitly other forms of being together as a society, Smith and Robinson tackled the themes associated with dislocation in their texts. These authors also tried to improve in their own terms the conflictual relationship between France and Great Britain, by showing sympathy for the émigrés and by proposing a global and inclusive perspective of citizenship that included the female subjects (Benis 26).

2.2 Charlotte Turner Smith: a “wanderer upon Earth”

Charlotte Turner Smith (Smith) in her long blank verse poem written in two books *The Emigrants* declares: “I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known Involuntary exile” (Smith I:155-6). These few words, laying out the tenets for the central message of empathy and common humanity, try to transmit throughout the entirety of the text that only a little distance existed between her afflictions and the pain of the exiles. Smith’s words might not only be referring to a symbolic state of mind or social position she shares with the émigrés, that enable her to voice their plight, but also to a precise moment in 1794 when she travelled with her nine children to Dieppe, France. The purpose of the journey was to meet her husband, who was escaping from his numerous creditors (Wiley, “The French” 9).

The Romantic scholar Loraine Fletcher (Fletcher) has narrated in a biography dedicated to Smith the manifold woes the author faced, along with her children, during her voyage and the short stay in France. Fletcher assigns to the topic of exile a fragment of a letter Smith wrote to a friend, in which she narrates her journey to France, which reads as follows,

My voyage was without accident; but of my subsequent journey, in a dark night of October through the dismal hollows and almost impassable chasms of a Norman crossroad, I could give a most tremendous account. My children, fatigued almost to death, harassed by seasickness, and astonished at the strange noises of the French postillions, whose language they did not understand, crept close to me, while I carefully suppressed the doubts I entertained whether it were possible for us to reach, without some fatal accident, the place of our destination. In the situation I then was [ie, pregnant], it was little short of a miracle that my constitution resisted, not merely

the fatigues of the journey, with so many little beings clinging about me (the youngest, whom I bore in my arms, scarce two years old), but the inconveniences that awaited my arrival at our new abode, in which no accommodation was prepared for my weary charges (Smith qtd. in Fletcher 7).

The description Smith gave to her friend about her voyage serves to connect her own experience of crossing the English Channel towards the coastal city of Dieppe with the accounts she depicted poetically a few years later on the situation of the emigrants. It may well make us understand the commonalities of the author's life of suffering, with the process of poetical writing. This is particularly visible in *The Emigrants*, a text in which the author intimately opens herself to her readers from the very first lines, when she establishes she has learned from her sufferings to feel the misfortunes of others. By populating her text with autobiographical notes, Smith's readers can easily perceive her not only as a writer, but also as a mother, as a suffering wife, and as a woman struggling every day with the injustices of a society who refused to treat her equally due to her sex. She performs with great audacity the role of a woman in hardship and dispossession, who through her own afflictions recognises the pain of others.²²

Not by chance, Smith also accompanies her text with a description of a specific time and place. This disclosure --that constitutes a poetical resource-- lets her readers enter into a private realm of her authorial persona, and consequently follow closely all her displacements (Andrews 14). Smith's constant textual references to her personal life and struggles as a woman and also as a writer, suggest an approach to her work in which we cannot ignore her inner voice. She indeed made a living from her real woes when they were replicated in her literary outcomes (Curran, "The I Altered" 199). In short, one of the manners in which we can approach Smith's poetical texts includes reading them as a translation of her life into words. We will go back to this aspect of Smith's body of work in the fourth chapter.

In the last days of Smith's life, she requested her family and acquaintances to burn all her unpublished work and other personal records. According to Judith Phillips Stanton (Stanton) the decision of destroying part of her writings might have contribute to the author's disappearance, as she decided to leave no trace of her last literary productions (Stanton xiv). Yet, almost five hundred letters survived Smith's demand. These letters offer to contemporary readers of Smith's work an instrument to navigate through the beginning of the English

²² Smith mastered the art of embodying and also performing through her poetry, particularly in her *Elegiac Sonnets*. These aspects of her writings are discussed in large by Jacqueline M. Labbe in *Embodying the author* a chapter in her book *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, poetry and the culture of gender* (2003)

Romantic Period from a woman writer's perspective. They also function as a historical source to establish relations between the writer and her literary production.

Believing that Smith's personal stories are concomitant to her poetry and multiple poetic speakers, to a certain degree means to submit to what Labbe has called Smith's poeticised subjectivity (Labbe, "Introduction" 2). Thus, Smith apart from having been a very good novelist and playwright, was also an outstanding poet who was capable of inhabiting her poetry like no other author of her time. For the accentuation of the poetical "I" some scholars consider Smith to be 'pre-Romantic', and therefore an author that "privileged the personal voice and encouraged the development of subjectivity through poetry" (Labbe, "Culture of gender" 166). For his part, Curran states that "Smith was the first poet in England whom in retrospect we would call Romantic" since she set the tone, in terms of style and literary patterns, for a generation of writers (*The Poems* XIX). Indeed, as Labbe has stated, we can retrace her 'persona' in several poetical texts, her "poetic speaker(s) function as an extension of a thoroughly poeticised subjectivity: that is, a subjectivity both created by and dependent on poetry" (2). Possibly, with her personal tone and humanitarian vision, Smith created verses with a perspective that was not accessible to the typical literary circles around her (Curran, "The I Altered" 205). Hence, poetry became to Smith a device that gave her the possibility of addressing in multifaceted ways a variety of concerns from the private and public spheres, to her personal ones.²³

As mentioned earlier, Smith composed a good number of letters addressing themes related to the process of writing and the publication of *The Emigrants* and *Elegiac Sonnets*, that is to say, the primary texts of this research. These letters reveal the many social factors that conditioned Smith's work. They range from negotiating contracts for publication to financial remunerations or publicity, among other relevant factors linked to the production of her literary work. Other letters shed light on the gender dynamics of the era and the difficulties she endured as a married, middle-class woman and writer. Several of Smith's letters were addressed to editors and publishers, and in them she discussed aspects concerning the retribution for her literary work, but also in various letters she asks for financial assistance or advance payments, for the sustenance of her family. In general terms, these letters are evidence of the numerous

²³ Besides, as Labbe has stressed when dealing with Robinson's and Smith's poetics, these writers might have deployed in their texts her individual sorrows, as a strategy to make her poetry more appealing and marketable to their audience (Labbe, "Selling One's Sorrows" 68).

pitfalls that Smith confronted to make a living from her pen in a literary market dominated and controlled by men.

As the recovered epistles show, Smith's writing process was always accompanied by a great necessity of providing economic means to support her children. Her husband's gambling addiction and his numerous debts obliged Smith to assume the role of the breadwinner of her family. It is believed that Smith's husband was imprisoned for debt in December 1783, and subsequently dismissed in July 1784 (Stanton XI). In fact, the first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* was published a month before her husband left King's Bench Prison thanks in part to her profits from this publication (3). A couple of months later, she wrote to her publishers (15 September 1794), who declined her petition for a second advance of money on the release of the book:

When a person is fallen as I am from quite another rank of life to the necessity of writing for her daily bread, it is fit she should submit to any terms on which it can be earned & be thankful that it is to be had at all (Stanton XVI).

The cause of several of the author's misfortunes had a name, Benjamin Smith. Paradoxically, Smith found in this man a violent and selfish husband who never took care of his offspring, but also, she saw in him the figure of an exile who was unable to live a regular and tranquil family life. Benjamin was always in constant displacement, persecuted for his debts. Unable to stay in England, he turned into a sort of fugitive from his creditors. Following their marriage in 1765, Benjamin started living in Scotland since the end of 1780's; however, once in a while he came back to his home, often with the intention of collecting money from his marriage settlement with Smith, and to steal her literary profits (Stanton XXII). Whereas Benjamin was not living in the country, he always found an occasion to take advantage of the patriarchal laws in England to disrupt Smith's publication earnings and general well-being.

Stanton describes Smith's marriage as a point of no return in her process of becoming "a mother, writer, and, for all practical purposes, an exile from polite society" (Stanton XXI). From the early years of her marriage, Smith regretted vehemently the union to a man that only brought her pain and distress. Later she fully realized the depth of her oppression and the concomitant elements that contributed to her oppression. Smith wrote to an unnamed recipient a letter describing the process of becoming conscious of the position she was assuming as a wife,

No disadvantage could equal those I sustained; the more my mind expanded, the more I became sensible of personal slavery; the more I improved and cultivated my understanding, the farther I was removed from those with whom I was condemned to pass my life; and the more clearly I saw by these newly-acquired lights the horror of the abyss into which I had unconsciously plunged (Stanton 2).

In this letter, Smith highlights that the more she cultivates her mind, her condition of subordination becomes more evident and unsustainable. Besides, the more she develops her intellectual abilities, the more she feels that those who are at her side (her husband) are not able to grow; on the contrary, they do nothing to emancipate themselves. The persona we know from Smith's poetry and the biographical material we have access to today, operates as an archetype of the married women in the English society at the end of the late eighteenth century. During Smith's time, marriage constituted a patriarchal institution that oppressed women and left them without the possibility of acting by themselves as free subjects. The inferior and oppressed social position of a married woman, and the economic privation that many suffered, contributed also to the parallels Smith found between her own state, the condition of women and the metaphoric figures of the émigrés and slaves. The letter above will not be the only moment in which she describes herself as a slave. In various subsequent epistles, Smith portrayed metonymically herself as a slave, always dominated and forcibly submitted to a male figure.

Certainly, Smith, after the marriage arrangement with Benjamin, became her husband's servant, and later, as a result of the severe economic condition her husband reduced her to, she also became the slave of the booksellers, obliged, as she was, to work very hard in order to be able to financially support her children. In a letter written on the 22nd August 1789, to Dr Thomas Shirley --a friend, presumably an Islington surgeon-- she again employs the slavery trope to describe the burdensome circumstances she was living. She states,

But really it is almost too much for me, having the power to live so much otherwise, to be compelled to live only to write & write only to live. While every body seems to think (I mean of the family) that I am bound to do it, forgetting that I was a mere child when they talk'd me into bonds, which I have found most insupportably heavy, & that to provide for them I promis'd what it is wonderful that I have perform'd in any part. But there is a time when the soul rebels against fetters so unjustly imposed and when, if they are not a little lighten'd, they must be wholly thrown off (Stanton 23).

Smith recriminates the way she was sold as a young girl to an unknown man, without having any decision-making power over such a life-changing settlement. In this letter, Smith displays a radical rebellion against the patriarchal social oppression that could lead her to escape if the situation does not improve or even to the fatal decision of committing suicide. Not by chance, in a missive written in 1793, she narrates how her father sold her as a commodity when she was still just a child, "I was not quite fifteen when my father married me to Mr Smith and too childish to know the dismal fate that was preparing for me" (Stanton 80). Smith started rejecting publicly the way people around her reinforced the idea that she was obliged to bear

the marital burden that was imposed on her since she was a kid. We can see through the content of her letters that the intensity of her anguish did not allow her to remain silent about her situation.

To Smith's economic hardship and marital problems, we have to add that she suffered from a condition of rheumatism since at least 1788. Thus, the technicalities of the writing process became for her physically very painful. This illness accompanied her until the end of her lifetime. For instance, in one of the letters to her publisher Thomas Cadell, written in 1794, she declares, "I write with extreme difficulty having lost the use of my right hand" (Stanton XVI). Perhaps, it cannot be coincidental that her poetry at times reflects myriads of sorrows, including her incessant bodily pain. In the fourth chapter we will observe that although the act of writing was aching for Smith, it also served to alleviate her financial distress and functioned, in occasions, as a cathartic coping method to deal with her plight.

Smith's awareness of her own difficult circumstances might have increased by the long lawsuit she faced to obtain the inheritance that her father-in-law left to her children when he died in 1776. As a result of her husband's incapacity to manage the family assets, her father-in-law decided to leave a testament in which he assigned as his main beneficiaries Benjamin's and Charlotte Smith's children. Smith's narration of the struggles she had to endure dealing with judges, lawyers and trusts, gives to us nowadays an idea of women's legal condition of inequality. For the English legal system, Smith, as all married women, was considered a *femme covert*, which meant that she was one person in all senses with her husband (Stanton XV). Women did not have independent power to act in their own capacity in basic situations of daily lives, including in legal matters. Their individual persona was completely absorbed by their husbands. At the time, marriage was considered in juridical terms as "an institution derived from feudal villeinage, in which the wife exists under the "converture" of the husband" (Mellor, "Am I Not A Woman" 317). Describing women's position within the social institution of marriage, Mellor states that during the Romantic era "a wife is [was] not a person in law: she cannot own property, have custody of children, bring legal suits" (317). Thus, although Smith's husband was a spendthrift who ruined the financial stability of his family and was living as an exile in Scotland, Smith was unable to manage her own earnings, nor the family finances, or any other aspect of her life without the intervention of her absent spouse. Even more, the few financial benefits she obtained during her lifetime from her father-in-law's will, were advantageous solely to her husband, who ironically, was not even residing in England (Stanton XV).

Smith's legitimate disconformity with her status as a married woman might have also been one of the reasons why she creates a fictional character of her authorial persona, calling herself "Charlotte Smith of Bignor Park, in Sussex" in *Elegiac Sonnets* (Andrews 24). In reality, Smith was at the time in King's Bench Prison, and not in her childhood home as she tries to make us believe with the description of the location "Bignor Park". Another reason that could have motivated Smith to shape a fictional authorial persona, could have been related to a necessity of acknowledging her former membership of a particular social class, which would make her poetry more appealing to a certain readership. Moreover, as Curran has stated "Smith's desire to write poetry is itself an assertion of a particular class identity", thus her identification with this fictional place serves as a justification for a socially privileged woman with a fervent desire of dedicating her time and efforts to the art of creating poetry (Curran qtd. in Andrews 13).

After giving a glimpse of Smith's marital situation, it should not be so difficult for us to imagine that Smith left her husband in 1787, when she was thirty-eight years old (Fletcher, "Introduction to a Critical" 1). In the absence of a signed formal agreement of separation, even under her new status, Smith had no rights to administer her profits from the literary market. In a letter to Thomas Cadell, written in January 1788, she describes the severe harassment she suffered in those years,

Tho my house is so small & I have eight children at home & am therefore forced to put a tent bed up in my little Book room, he took possession of it & treated me with more than his usual brutality—threatening to sell the furniture, the Books, and every necessary which I have twice saved from the rapacity of his Creditors. [...] he has broke open all my drawers where my papers were, taken away several sign'd receipts for the Sonnets (Of which Heaven knows what use he may make) and foul copies of many things I am writing, all of which he has taken [away] with him; and he openly declared a resolution of demanding of you the money You hold of mine. (Stanton 12-13)

Aside from dealing with economic hardship, Smith needed to cope with her husband's violence and his lack of respect to their children and her literary career. She testifies of being the target of her husband's maltreatment, as he stole money from her, copies of her works, her earnings and family belongings.

After a summary of Smith's personal narratives in regard to what she experienced as an active woman writer, who was also a disappointed wife and a loving mother, we can finally re-focus on Smith's views and accounts on the arrival of the émigrés to England in the aftermath of the French Revolution. It is worth noting that despite Smith's economic instability she opened the doors of her house to host a few French émigrés in a period of increasing migration. According to Stanton, in 1793 Smith's home became, "a refuge to some of the very clerical

and aristocratic refugees whose fate her poem laments” (56). Moreover, Smith also agreed to let her daughter become engaged to a French Catholic refugee and subsequently she gave her blessing for them to marry.

Smith wrote a letter to Joel Barlow (1754–1812)—an American writer and politician who was a supporter of the French Revolution--in which she refers to some of the social reactions she has beheld concerning the emigrants’ new life in England. Smith might have decided to write to Barlow for two main reasons, firstly because she shared his political views and spirit, and secondly because after he came to Europe in 1788, he became an “eyewitness to the beginnings of the French Revolution”, and wrote some influential political tracts on the subject (Stanton 767). Smith's letter to Barlow was written from Brighthelmstone, on the 3rd of November 1792, just a year before the publication of *The Emigrants*. In the first lines, Smith praised two texts penned by Barlow, *Advice to the Privileged Orders* and *A Letter to the National Convention of France*, both published in 1792. Later, she discloses her views on the changing political attitude of some of her friends and cohorts, those who supported the revolution from the early start but who then stopped doing so after the violence in France prompted them with a different reaction. For Smith, these people are “on the wrong side of the question both in Theory and Practice” (Stanton 49). As the quote below shows, Smith also takes the opportunity to make known her sympathetic views on the condition of the exiles, on which she will expand on poetically a year later with the publication of *The Emigrants*. She wrote,

I am however sensibly hurt at the hideous picture which a friend of mine, himself one of the most determined Democrates I know, has given of the situation of the Emigrants. He has follow'd the progress of the retreating Army in their retrog[r]ade motion, **and describes the condition of the French exiles as being more deplorable even than their crimes seem to deserve.** The magnitude of the Revolution is such as ought to make it embrace every great principle of Morals, & even in a Political light (with which I am afraid Morals have but little to do), it seems to me wrong for the Nation entirely to exile and abandon these Unhappy Men. How truly great would it be, could the Convention bring about a reconciliation. They should suffer the loss of a very great part of their property & all their power. But they should still be considered as Men & Frenchmen, and tho I would not kill the fatted Calf, They should still have a plate of Bouille at home if they will take it & not be turnd out indiscriminately to perish in foreign Countries and to carry every where the impression of the injustice and ferocity of the French republic [...]

[...]

Their exile includes too that of a **very great number of Women and Children who must be eventually not only a national loss** but on whom, if the Sins of the Father are visited, it will be more consonant to the doctrine of scripture than of reason (Smith qtd. in Stanton 49).

Evidently, although Smith was a person fully committed to the principles of the revolution and persisted in believing in the cause and in what it represented, she deeply regretted the latter events inflamed with violence. Hence, in her political agenda Smith allows peace and reconciliation to the point of becoming the spokesperson of the plight of the French emigrants, who, as human beings and free citizens, did not deserve the discrimination and maltreatment they were receiving first in France and then in England. Nevertheless, her compassion for the newcomers –depicted by her as a marginalized group-- did not preclude her from continuing to be critical of their responsibility for the situation of France. Her sometimes ambivalent and contradictorily position, which we can read on the above-mentioned letter, will be replicated in *The Emigrants*.

Now we will focus on another letter, this time addressed to the Reverend Joseph Cooper Walker on January 20th of 1794. Cooper Walker was a person to whom she wrote a series of letters in which she reveals intimate aspects of her family life, along with conflicting ideas towards England. In this specific letter, Smith transmits feelings of alienation in her own country. The fragments of the letters discussed before describe the many difficulties Smith underwent in England which contributed to the development of a complicated attachment to the nation. After having been sold as a commodity to a violent man, facing an unjust legal system and victimized by laws that concealed her capacity to act on her behalf, it is not surprising that in this letter Smith once again depicts herself as an exile and manifests a fervent desire to escape from this oppressive land. She details the high costs of accommodation, her lack of financial stability -although she has worked to exhaustion-- while describing her rheumatic physical pain, for which she blames the poor English weather. She sees England as a country that has consumed her in all aspects of her life, including her health. In this respect, she writes,

I dont love England to tell you the truth, & have always meditated flying away from it if my fetters or any part of them should fall off-- Some late circumstances, some bites and scratches I have had from the empoison'd teeth and talons of ingratitude (& I have a skin extremely subject to fester) have occasion'd me to meditate more seriously than ever on quitting it. France is now shut to me & my most belov'd child & her amiable husband, who is indeed jeune homme il n'y en a peu, but I do not see why I should not go to Switzerland (Smith qtd. in Staton 97).

In another epistle addressed to the same friend, Cooper Walker, when she was in Storrington, on March 25th of 1794, Smith continues to share feelings of detachment in relation to the English nation, and further points out the abuses she underwent and blames again her country

for them. This time she is even more specific describing in detail feelings of well-developed estrangement, along with the deception that her native country provokes on her. She expresses,

I assure you that I have neither naturally nor artificially the least partiality for my native Country, which has not protected my property by its boasted Laws, & where, if the Laws are not good [...]. Therefore if Death or Justice or any other decisive personification, should happen to interfere on my poor childrens behalf, so as that I could get their property out of the tenacious talons of the worthy Gentlemen who keep it “All for their good,” I wd not hesitate a moment (that is if I am able to move) to bid to “the Isle Land that from her pushes all the rest” a long & last Adieu! Any intelligence therefore that you can procure for me of the sweet house you describe on the banks of the Lemane Lake or any other as to terms of living in Switzerland or Italy will very much oblige me. I do not mind dying, *but I want to see the Alps & Vesuvius first*, & I feel somehow as if I ought to make haste (Stanton 105).

Smith spent most of her lifetime in England, dying in 1806 in Tilford. The incapacity she affronted during the long years fighting for her children’s well-being fed ultimately her desire to abandon the country. The English legal system disappointed her, and the national law functioned against her. However, Smith remained until the end of her life in and died within the confines of England.

Her melancholic poetry was a reflection of a life marked by pain and sorrow. Also, Smith’s poetics remained very critical with the English government and society, which she found not better than the old monarchical regime in France. When in *The Emigrants* the speaker recalls the past, she does so, not in an idealised manner, but as the only moments in which the author found happiness was during her childhood (Rennhak 582). Her verses, provided to her readership as well the chance of imagining other places to inhabit and new forms of living, distant from the individualist paradigm of the English citizen and the powerful English nation. She envisioned the day in which professing a sense of belonging to a land did not preclude the affection for other individuals who do not necessarily share your same nationality. Therefore through her poetry, Smith concentrates on promoting a climate of sympathy for the French expatriates, while questioning the tenets of citizenship.

2.3 Mary Darby Robinson “An alien from delight, in this dark scene!”

Mary Robinson (Robinson) was a contemporary writer to Charlotte Smith (Smith), and they both concurrently acquired fame for their outstanding literary compositions. However, with the passing of time together with the biased dynamics of historical writing, these two authors fell into oblivion. It was not until the last few decades that they became part of a group of women writers that are no longer overlooked within the Romantic literary canon and whose production

continues to contest the principles of English Romanticism (Daniel Robinson 1). Thanks to the works of literary scholars who have engaged in the study of their legacy, we have access to valuable resources that provide opportunities to critically research their writings.

Smith's and Robinson's lives converged in many aspects. They both met severe difficulties in their respective marriages, experienced economic hardship²⁴, suffered from harsh health conditions from an early age and made a living from the pen. Also, they shared a radical political conscience, admiration for Marie Antoinette and Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, and both commenced their literary life writing in newspapers (Cross, *Illegitimate Influences* 62). Besides, according to Jaqueline Labbe (Labbe), they equally conveyed their sorrows in their texts, while, skilfully, evoking sympathy for marginalised groups and contemporaneously for themselves ("Selling One's Sorrows" 68). Likewise, their political and proto-feminist discourses and strong social critiques focused sympathetically on the French newcomers, and other alienated characters that conveyed the universal condition of estrangement of the population living in a climate of war and censorship (Markley 388).

Concerning their mutual experience with migration or exile, contrary to Smith, Robinson did not migrate voluntarily or was obliged to leave England during her life, though she spent short periods travelling to France and Germany. These journeys were the response to a necessity --as other proto-feminist writers of her time -- to occasionally escape from the dogmatism and national fanaticism of British society (Craciun, "Mary Robinson" 32). The first-hand experience with exile that we can recollect from Robinson's memoirs and some letters penned by the author that are available today, is more connected to the final phase of her short life. In her last days, Robinson remained socially isolated in a cottage in Englefield, while she was impoverished, persecuted by her creditors and suffering from a progressive paralysis --caused by the same condition of rheumatism that affected Smith's health (Brewer 119). It is not perhaps coincidental that Robinson's last collection of poetry *Lyrical Tales* published posthumously the same year of her demise, presents several characters representing alienation not only as a recognised community being physical displaced --as Smith--but also through individuals facing cultural and social estrangement.

Even if we can easily observe several parallels between Smith's and Robinson's personal lives and authorship, putting them together obliged us to move our attention to the many hypotheses concerning the complicated bond they might have had. First, while they both knew

²⁴ They both spent time in debtor's prison. Mary Robinson wrote a poem titled *Captivity* in 1778, describing her experience secluded accompanying her husband to prison (Mellor, "Making an Exhibition" 291).

each other and had several literary acquaintances in common, including William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, they were not friends. Apparently, Robinson was more interested than Smith in cultivating a cordial relationship with the latter. As some letters written by Smith to her publisher evidenced, she clearly did not want it to be linked to Robinson because of the latter's marred social reputation.²⁵

The sonnet Robinson wrote to Smith in September of 1793, under the pseudonym Oberon -- a name that was already unveiled by the author -- can shed light on the complicated relationship between the two poets. The title of the piece Robinson dedicated to Smith was *Sonnet to Mrs Charlotte Smith, on Hearing that Her Son Was Wounded at the Siege of Dunkirk*, and as these words suggest, the text constitutes Robinson's response to the sudden news announcing the misfortune of Smith's son (Cross, "Illegitimate Influences" 62). The use of the pen name Oberon has been interpreted as a strategy used by Robinson to avoid a full declaration of tribute to Smith, who refused to have publicly any connection to Perdita (Robinson)²⁶. Some scholars have paid attention to the fact that throughout the sonnet dedicated to Smith, Robinson tries to connect to the author as a mother, and not as a cohort writer (D. Robinson 27). The first stanza of the poem reads as follows,

Full many an anxious pang, and rending sigh,
Darts, with keen anguish, through a MOTHER'S breast;
Full many graceful TEAR obscures her eye,
While Watchful fondness draws her SOUL from rest.

The emphasis on Smith's maternal identity, instead of her writing capacity, might have functioned as a remark on the type of kinship that prevails between the two women. The lack of references to them as belonging to the same literary circle, but instead, the insistence on their common maternal role implies for some scholars a refusal by Robinson to praise Smith's writing talents (D. Robinson 27). Such a view is supported by another relevant fact, that is, Smith's great fame for reviving the genre of the sonnet after the publication of *Elegiac Sonnets* in 1784 (Cross, "Romantic dialogues" 20). Simply put, Smith was so famous for her writings, particularly for her sonnets, that it was difficult to ignore her place as a central author of the period. Another aspect that further complicates the many interpretations that this poem has brought forward is that, as has been noticed by Labbe (2003), the authorial identity of Smith as a poet was intrinsically connected to her maternal role. Thus, Robinson's stress on Smith as

²⁵ Harriet Guest mentions an episode of Smith's life when she requested her publisher to be careful to circulate an image of herself in the same magazine Robinson's portrait has been publicised (207).

²⁶ Robinson was known as Perdita—a nickname that comes from her role in Garrick's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (D. Robinson 3).

a mother, in contrast to her writing abilities, might also have had the aim of evoking her authorial persona.

The intertextual and affective connections between the authors that we can retrace from the sonnet are several and not conclusive. For instance, Cross points out that in the sonnet, Robinson, beside plainly mentioning the boy's great courage and his mother's pain, also pays tribute to Smith's writing talents when she imitates her style and selects the sonnet as literary genre in the text. The sole act of creating a sonnet can be seen as a subtle declaration of admiration of Smith's prodigious sonnet writing (Cross, "Illegitimate Influences" 62-63). Of course, the act of emulating Smith's poetical artistry could also have had the function of associating Robinson's literary skills to Smith's.²⁷

A noteworthy fact that explains Smith's reservations to be associated to Robinson, and the latter as reluctance to openly praise the other and their mutual constant preoccupation with posterity, is the way the two authors were distinctively and unequally appreciated by the conservative press. The reviews of the authors' latest and posthumously published works, by giving a moral evaluation of the two writers, show the importance the media gave to their personal life. After Smith's death in 1808 –Robinson passed away eight years earlier-- two reviews were released on *The Annual Review and History of Literature* on both Smith's *Beachy Head: With other Poems* and Robinson's *Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Mary Robinson: Including Many Pieces Never Before Published*. The review dedicated to Smith's *Beachy Head* (1807), depicts a talented poet who has an exceptional capacity to transmit poetically and transparently her deepest feelings. A few lines of the review read as follow

Her stile [sic] was clear and flowing, her diction poetical, ornate, and usually pure, and unaffected. Her 'Sonnets' were principally built on individual feeling. They are the breathings of sorrow, disappointment, and complaint (Behrendt, *Charlotte Smith* 191).

Contrastingly, in the review dedicated to Robinson, she is personally attacked for the content of her memoirs, that were included in her latest published work. The reviewers pondered Robinson's accounts in her memoirs to be falsely constructed from the viewpoint of a woman who cannot by any means lament the sufferings she perpetrated against herself. The reviewers judged Robinson's words as "that kind of unmeaning exaggeration and decorated inanity which

²⁷ Apart from these elements and after a detailed analysis, Cross mentions numerous factors that could have played a significant role in Robinson's creation of the poetical piece, such as the decision to publish it in a newspaper -- Robinson's territory at the time--; also, the usage of poetry for consolation in times of sorrow, another common feature of Smith's and Robinson's poetry ("Illegitimate Influences" 62-63).

are the miserable resource of a cold heart, a vitiated taste, and a defective genius” (qtd. in Behrendt, “Charlotte Smith” 190). This negative review was written almost a decade after Robinson’s death. Part of the review read as follow,

Why from these very mistresses of colonels, captains, and ensigns – from that guilty, but much enduring class of women, who rashly bartering away the good opinion of the world, the respect of friends, and the care of legal protectors, receive nothing in exchange but some vague and ineffectual claims on the gratitude, tenderness, or pity, of the most base, selfish, and profligate portion of mankind! Such a one was poor Mrs. Robinson, and as an impressive lesson of the effects of such a course of conduct upon the mind, temper, and fortune, her prolix and querulous effusions, her ‘miserable strain’, may be recommended to the attention of thoughtless and inexperienced youth (Behrendt, “Charlotte Smith” 190).

The above review did not in fact provide a close reading of Robinson’s poetical work; instead, it concentrates on her reputation, violently attacking her for being a free woman, unsubmitted to social control. Behrendt considers the main factors that drove these opposite reviews, on the one hand, Smith’s intact reputation as a suffering wife and mother, and, on the other, Robinson’s visible alliance with the “revolutionary politics”, along with her proto-feminism, and her “eccentric” (out of the norm) sexual life and well-known partners (Behrendt, “Charlotte Smith” 192). This review proves that Robinson’s constant preoccupation with “literary obscurity” was not unfounded after all.

The comparative analysis of the two romantic writers opens a broad space to inquire about the literary and personal associations between Smith and Robinson, but this task will be left for the chapters dedicated to the close reading of their poetical texts. In this section, we are going back to the historical analysis of the author’s era, approaching it from her personal accounts. As in regard to Smith, this section will focus on the author’s views on the topics of alienation, nationalism and gender through biographical material found in critical works together with a few letters which the author composed in the last years of her life.²⁸ Using these sources, it is possible to create links between the historical context, personal accounts of the writer, and her way of handling migration and exile poetic language.

To start, Robinson (1758-1800) was a famous actress before becoming a well-known English writer. Her career as an actress at the Drury Lane Theatre began in 1776, at the age of seventeen, when she debuted in the leading role of Juliet in Shakespeare’s tragedy. Later, she played in theatres a variety of characters – sometimes even more than one role a night – which contributed to her status as a celebrity and a cultural icon. As Robinson herself tells us in the

²⁸ Mary Robinson’s memoirs and an essay titled *Present State of the Manners, Society, Etc, Etc, of the Metropolis of England (Present State of the Manners)*, written in 1800.

Memoirs, she was already married in the early beginnings of her acting career –she wedded at the age of fourteen-- to a man she calls a “mere nominal guardianship of a neglectful and profligate husband” (Robinson, *Memoirs* VI). In these episodes of her life, she underlines her role as a good mother, daughter and provider of her family (Peterson 43).

Robinson attracted the attention of the public, especially of the gossip press, for her extramarital relationship with the Prince of Wales (George IV). This relationship started around 1779 after the Prince of Wales attended one of her performances as Perdita—a nickname that has followed her into the present day-- in Garrick’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* (D. Robinson 3). However, the affair with the Prince of Wales was seen by many as a transgression of the hegemonic social norms of the period, and spoiled her reputation in English patriarchal society. In this phase of her life, when the scandalous relationship with the Prince of Wales began and the attention of the press and public focused on it, Robinson’s actions turned into a real-life performance. In response to this pressure, she spent most of her later literary life addressing the issue of her damaged reputation --an issue that remained central in her oeuvre (D. Robinson 6).

Some scholars reject the idea that Robinson was just a victim of a gossip press, which depicted her as a sexual figure, and prefer to acknowledge that she made use of these images by exploiting them to boost her celebrity status (Brock 107-8). Indeed, Robinson became very early in her life and career a famous artist and a fashion icon as well as a target of the press. She might have been one of the most portrayed women of her time --well-known artists such as George Romney, Joshua Reynolds, and Thomas Gainsborough made portraits of the poet (Mellor, “Making an Exhibition” 278).

As Robinson narrates in the very first lines of her memoirs,

The author of these Memoirs, Mary Robinson, was one of the most prominent and eminently beautiful women of her day. [...] Her beauty, indeed, was such as to attract, amongst others, the attentions of Lords Lyttelton and Northington, Fighting Fitzgerald, Captain Ayscough, and finally the Prince of Wales; whilst her talents and conversation secured her the friendship and interest of David Garrick, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Charles James Fox, Joshua Reynolds, Arthur Murphy, the dramatist, and various other men of distinguished talent (Robinson, “Preface to Memoirs” vii).

Robinson left the stage and England in 1784, and came back four years later with the intention of starting a literary career that lasted until the end of her life in 1800 (D. Robinson 2). In her literary years (1784-1800), Robinson produced works in various genres, such as novels, plays, political pamphlets and even an autobiography. Her great fame as an actress did not prevent

her from achieving fame as a writer²⁹. She also contributed extensively with her poetry to the *Morning Post* alongside with other famous writers of the period, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Her talent in composing poetry gained her the epithet of the “English Sappho”, and it was indeed poetry what gave her the highest recognition (D. Robinson 17). In the last few of years of her life, she wrote a novel *The Natural Daughter* (1799), a collection of poems *Lyrical Tales* (1800); her *Memoirs* (1801) and the feminist pamphlets *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799) and *Present State of the Manners* (1800), which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Robinson started writing her *Memoirs* in 1798, two years before her decease. She knew when she was writing the autobiographical text that it probably “will be read when the hand that writes them moulders in the grave, when that God who judges all hearts will know how innocent I was of the smallest conjugal infidelity” (Robinson, *Memoirs* 83). The *Memoirs* were completed, edited and published by her daughter in 1801. Half of the *Memoirs* was added by her daughter in the final version of the manuscript, including aspects of the artist’s private life and an emphasis on her ability as an *improvisatrice* (Peterson 38).

Robinson’s *Memoirs* present us one of the few examples of women’s autobiographical narratives in the eighteenth century. The absence of woman’s personal accounts can be the result of social gender norms that used to discourage women to show their intimacy publicly. Also, this genre, in its traditional form as it was established by male tradition, did not necessarily fit women’s experiences (Peterson 36). They constituted a literary means by which the author assumed a perspective similar to that of a historian (Ty 25). For Robinson, specifically, this genre also served as a means to re-write her own story, which was at the time the subject of adverse manipulations.

Robinson’s accounts of her life in the memoirs are instructive to their readership on how the author wanted to be remembered. They offer an example of the act of an author exposing her own subjectivity at the final phase of her life and the power of textually constructing an identity (Runge 566). In this life history re-construction, Robinson builds through the recollection of crucial moments of her existence, the authorial persona she wishes to share with her public. Here again, we see a conjuncture between her public and private life, and how she suggests to her readership to have access to the intimacies she has tried to counterbalance, this time, with the intention of re-writing, by her own terms, her story (Runge 565). The first pages of the

²⁹ An edition of her poems in 1791 obtained the support of more that 600 subscribers and the first edition of her very first novel *Vancenza* (1792) became sold out in a day (Arnold 733).

autobiographical text give us an image of the author's early years. Robinson tells us, that "on the 27th of November, 1758, I first opened my eyes to this world of duplicity and sorrow" (Robinson, *Memoirs* 3). These lines led the way for the rest of the story of a woman writer's life and anticipated the myriad of difficulties she had to endure all through her existence.

In a fragment of *Memoirs*, she mentions an event that changed the course of her life. She describes that in 1784 she was "attacked by a malady", "[b]y an imprudent exposure to the night air in travelling" (qtd. in Ty 30). With the passing of time, this illness degenerated into a condition that limited her capacity of mobility, and ultimately caused the complete paralysis of the lower part of her body. In Robinson's *Memoirs*, she informs her readership of the physical fragility and the fatigue which she experienced during the last phase of her lifetime. This inability to be in control of herself, the consequential feeling of dispossession and isolation is accentuated in her personal chronicles under a Gothic framework where she portrays her plight and "confinement" (Arnold 735). The gothic framework of Robinson's narration is appropriate to depict the situation of confinement and social estrangement she was experiencing when writing the *Memoirs* (Arnold 745). As Mellor notes, Robinson's use of such a Gothic style conveyed an image of herself as a "persecuted heroine" fated to suffer from the beginning to the last days of her life ("Making an exhibition" 294)

Alas! How little did I then know either the fatigue or the hazard of mental occupations! How little did I foresee that the day would come, when my health would be impaired, my thought perpetually employed, in so destructive a pursuit! At the moment that I write this page I feel in every fibre of my brain the fatal conviction that it is a destroying labour. (*Memoirs* 197)

Interestingly, Robinson did not use analogous expressions towards the writing career in other texts composed during the same period she started to elaborate her unfinished memoirs, such as *Present State of the Manners* or *A letter* in which she strongly worships literary endeavours even for the purpose of women's emancipation (Arnold 734). It seems that in her autobiographical telling, written in a literary genre that presupposed a recollection of events of an author's life, she attempts to presumably provide a more genuine version of herself, as she expresses, "[t]hese pages are the pages of truth, unadorned by romance and unembellished by the graces of phraseology" (Robinson, *Memoirs* 83). This versatility of Robinson's writings, this fluctuating between different perspectives, tones, styles and genres, might have been the result of adopting a variety of identities all along her career. As a former actress, she was used to camouflaging into a multiplicity of characters on stage and as a writer through numerous pen names and pseudonyms, including Julia, Bridget, Portia, Tabitha Bramble, Laura, Laura

Maria, Sappho, Oberon, Tabitha Bramble, Lesbia, and Portia and Anne Frances Randall (Arnold 737). Mellor stresses that Robinson was a unique romantic writer since she was able to interpose sundry and contradictory versions of her authorial persona (Mellor, *Making an Exhibition* 296).

In terms of the author's narration of the historical events that were unfolding around her, Robinson wrote an episode in *Memoirs* about her short³⁰ but significant visit to France. After the relationship with the Prince of Wales ended, and the settlement in which she claimed the Prince an annuity for resigning her actress career was in the process of litigation, Robinson decided to flee as a "fugitive" to France, because remaining "in England was impracticable" (Robinson, *Memoirs* 190). During her sojourn in France, where Robinson was known by as "*la belle Anglaise*", she had an encounter with Marie Antoinette (Garnai 384). This journey took place around 1783, a few years before the French Revolution, and the description we find in the memoirs gives us a glimpse of Robinson's sympathy for French culture, despite her radical political beliefs and her support to the revolution.

The Queen's friendly invitation to the poet, the colourful preparation and all aspects related to the pleasant gathering between the two women are described in Robinson's accounts. However, the sketch Robinson offers to her readers of this meeting does not include any reference to the conversation they might have had or any other formal aspect of the occasion. Just in one paragraph, she describes a sort of homoerotic exchange of gazes between the two, and the Queen's particular interest in "a miniature of the Prince of Wales" Robinson was wearing³¹. Amy Garnai (Garnai) has drawn attention to one aspect of this chapter of Robinson's memoirs, namely, the representation she does of herself as a stranger, more specifically as the "Anglaise", a name that "reflects a sense of otherness, and an exilic identity that at once recalls the acute persecution and victimization that motivated her departure from England" ("Last

³⁰ According to the accounts of Robinson's memoirs, the author's stay in France was short, "Mrs. Robinson not long after these events quitted Paris, and returned to her native country" (195).

³¹ Part of Robinson's narration of the encounter with the Queen read as follow: "The grand convert, at which the King acquitted himself with more alacrity than grace, afforded a magnificent display of epicurean luxury. The Queen ate nothing. The slender crimson cord, which drew a line of separation between the royal epicures and the gazing plebeians, was at the distance but of a few feet from the table. A small space divided the Queen from Mrs. Robinson, whom the constant observation and loudly whispered encomiums of Her Majesty most oppressively flattered. She appeared to survey, with peculiar attention, a miniature of the Prince of Wales, which Mrs. Robinson wore on her bosom, and of which, on the ensuing day, she commissioned the Duke of Orleans to request the loan. Perceiving Mrs. Robinson gaze with admiration on her white and polished arms, as she drew on her gloves, the Queen again uncovered them, and leaned for a few moments on her hand. The Duke, on returning the picture, gave to the fair owner a purse, netted by the hand of Antoinette, and which she had commissioned him to present, from her, to *la belle Anglaise*. Mrs. Robinson not long after these events quitted Paris, and returned to her native country." (Robinson, *Memoirs* 195)

Despair” 384). By representing herself as the “Anglaise”, she was assuming an identity that obscured the reasons behind her necessity of fleeing her native country in which she had become a “victim to the malice” (Robinson, *Memoirs* 190).

Years after the encounter with the Queen, Robinson wrote three texts in honour of Marie Antoinette, *Impartial Reflections on the Present Situation of the Queen of France* (1791), *Marie Antoinette’s Lamentation* (1793) and *Monody to the Memory of the Late Queen of France* (1793). In all of these texts, she purposely concentrates on her personal connection with the Queen, rather than delivering a plain statement of her ideological views on the revolution (Garnai, “Last Despair” 383). In this respect, Garnai quotes Curran to sustain that these texts dedicated to Maria Antoinette are examples of a common feature visible in Robinson’s poetry, i.e., the special emphasis the author places in the representation of the individual sufferings of subjects socially marginalised and displaced (381-382). Rather than speaking directly about the revolutionary events –since the texts were produced a few years after the French Revolution— she engages with a central figure of the historical events but on a personal and “feminine” level. This strategical form of being political that we find in Robinson’s oeuvre put her in a unique place as a writer. Robinson favoured the individual condition of discriminated people, including the plight of the Queen, and other isolated subjects, even if this desire for collective and individual peace clashes, in some ways, with her radical political views (Garnai, “Last Despair” 382). We will have some examples of this trait of Robinson’s poetry in the fourth chapter.

Unfortunately, we did not find, as in the case of Charlotte Smith, a prose text in which Robinson explicitly expresses her opinions on the condition of the French émigrés. We only found a few lines in the essay *Present State of the Manners* in which Robinson speaks positively of the coexistence of the English people with the new outcasts that came from France and shares her aspirations for an England without such strong prejudices against other nationalities. Still, from Robinson’s poetical texts, we can observe connections between Robinson’s depiction of vagrants, exiles, fugitives, widows, and other characters that could be catalogued within the category of displaced figures. As it will be discussed in greater detail later, Robinson’s identification with the emigrants and her use of migration and exile language, takes a broader perspective, one in which she represents a large group of marginalised people. Besides, Robinson also shares an open desire for women to become citizens of the world. She envisioned a society in which becoming a citizen was not dependent on people’s gender, national origin, religious beliefs, or class privilege, but had rather to be seen as an individual civil right.

Robinson's essay *Present State of the Manners* was published in four parts (August, September, October and November 1800) in the *Monthly Magazine* –a famous, anti-war, radical and cosmopolitan newspaper during the 1790's-- the same year of her premature death, when she was only forty-two years old (Craciun, "Mary Robinson" 23). The essay was signed just with the author's initials, maintaining her identity hidden to her readers (D. Robinson 119). At the time, Robinson was a regular writer on newspapers, she published copiously, both in prose and poetry; thus, it was not hard for her to enter the public arena through this literary means. It was issued in a period when Robinson had already achieved recognition even among well-known cohort writers such as Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. These three writers visibly influenced Robinson's works, and progressively and reciprocally, they became influenced by her (Craciun, "Introduction: Present State" 103).

Throughout her essay, Robinson scrutinises overall England's reaction to the increasing local and foreign cultural production, which necessarily came from the flux of mobility that was invading the country. Robinson's manifesto presents an eager critique of British public culture, and of the ways in which rigid nationalism infected the country's cultural development. To begin with, she describes London as a friendly port where all the valuable cultural, economic and social productions converge; according to the author, London "is the great emporium of commerce, it is also the centre of attraction for the full exercise of talents, and the liberal display of all that can embellish the arts and sciences" (Robinson, "Present State of the Manners" 108). From a positive angle, she narrates exile from the perspective of a cultivated citizen who sees migration as a way of enriching the metropolis. Not only could London host this diversity of cultures and intellectual outcomes, but Robinson also mentions other places in England, denominated as "provincial" --such as Bristol, Exeter and Bath-- in which intellectuals stood out letting the country gain a lot from this "intellectual splendour" (18).

In the manifesto, Robinson concentrates on the exaltation of the capacity of England to share spaces for the expansion of knowledge and culture. This circulation of transnational ideas and cultures is essential for aspiring to a cosmopolitan society that will give light to the country for ages "amidst all the glooms of prejudice or oppression" (Robinson, "Present State of the Manners" 108). As previously said, in *Present State of the Manners* it is possible to trace the author's marked empathy with cosmopolitanism, in which she acknowledged the effect of other European cultures in Britain, such as the French and German ones (Craciun, "Introduction: Present State" 103). Also, cosmopolitanism set the ground for a female solidarity among women writers, and among people no matter of what gender or nationality. The vision proposed

by Robinson in this essay sees culture as the collective production of individuals, man and women alike.

Many fragments of *Present State of the Manners* incorporate Robinson's proto-feminist vision. Her egalitarian politics see women's equality through intellectual egalitarianism. If women are allowed to prove their capacity to think in the same way as men, they should be treated as their equals. These two elements, the democratisation of knowledge and women's liberation always came together in Robinson's viewpoint. For instance, in the first lines of the essay, she praises that "[e]very man, nay, almost every woman, now reads, thinks, projects, and accomplishes" (Robinson, "Present State of the Manners" 108). In this statement we can also find a connection with another pamphlet penned by Robinson and published almost at the same time, *A Letter to the Women of England*, which we will take into consideration in the next chapter. In both tracts, Robinson proclaims knowledge, culture and literature as instruments that should not only be accessible to everyone, but that are also the path for the equality of the sexes, and have the capacity of unshackling³² the mind. For Robinson, "[l]iterature, in all its branches, has claimed the laurel; and the distinctions of fame have not been confined either to rank, sex, or profession" ("Present State of the Manners" 118). Moreover, as happened in *Letters*, Robinson addresses another major problem in her egalitarian project, that is, the inability of British society to acknowledge women writers' high standing published works and women's position amongst other cultural producers. She states:

The women of England have, by their literary labours, reached an altitude of mental excellence, far above those of any other nation. The works, which every year have been published by females, do credit to the very highest walks of literature: to enumerate names, will be unnecessary; their productions will be their passports [sic] to immortality! We have also sculptors, modellers, paintresses, and female artists of every description (Robinson 111).

Robinson also sees the censor of intellectual expression, and rigid national policies against a rich diversity and cultural legacy coming from outside England as another enemy for the equality of the sexes. This shows why the author vehemently criticises the censorship of reason, the rising vigilance against writers at a time of, paradoxically, abundant literary traffic. This climate of restriction did not prevent the existence of libraries containing an increasing number of works penned by living authors, both "male and female". She admonishes that instead of paying homage to the unprecedented spreading of knowledge using the public press, theatres, libraries the British government was more interested in closing the borders and persecuting

³² Here, Robinson deploys the trope of slavery to represent the colonisation of the mind, and the necessity to aspire to an unprejudiced and indiscriminate way of thinking.

people for political reasons. Robinson states, “[w]orks of extensive thought and philosophical research have been watched with more malevolence than justice” (“Present State of the Manners” 109). Specifically, Robinson might have been referring to the intensity of the control over the writers’ literary works that the Libel Act of 1792/93 promoted. Under this statute, “the intent of the author mattered a great deal less than the interpretation of the work by its readers” (Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 119-120).

In *Present State of the Manners* Robinson acclaim the talents of the people of England in wide-ranging areas such as the theatre, philosophy, literature, etc., while she invites the whole population to follow the example of other countries around Europe. She exhorts her readers to emulate France’s passion for public entertainment. Also, she persuades English citizens not only to be open to the arrival of refugees but also to learn the other European languages that were embellishing the streets of London. She blames the maltreatment given to the émigrés and considers them to be essential for the “circulation of knowledge”. On this matter, Robinson declares,

The French and even the Italian languages are now spoken almost universally by our men and women of polished education. The great number of emigrants, who have become our inmates since the French revolution, have contributed to this wide circulation of knowledge (119).

In Robinson’s eyes these French refugees, persecuted in England, were in fact enriching the culture and social landscape of England. The words she employs to refer to the unwelcome attitude of the English towards the French newcomers, gives us a glimpse of the author’s gaze on the social dynamics resulting from the increasing migration. Robinson offers in her pamphlet a discourse against xenophobia, at least, in defiance of discrimination towards other European citizens. Later in the text, she does not develop on the subject directly, but her optimism in making a case for the integration of cultural elements of other countries echoes Smith’s aims for reconciliation in the melancholic verses of *The Emigrants*.

In the discussion on the feminist approach to cosmopolitanism that marked the last decade of the eighteenth century in England, Tone Brekke incorporates Julia Kristeva’s main critiques to this ideological stream to discuss the variety of perspectives that women writers of the period assumed to defy the relationship women were supposed to have with their nation (39). Referring to Kristeva’s work, Brekke calls attention to an element that cannot be avoided in any discussion on cosmopolitanism, which is its sometimes-contradictory effect, that is, the risk of eventually reinforcing national identities. As various scholars have denoted, cosmopolitanism, in its more conventional form, always goes back to its roots, and that is, the

nation. As Brekke asserts, “in spite of its inclusive appearance, cosmopolitanism might actually reinforce national identity and inadvertently stabilize boundaries, differences and exclusion, including sexual difference and foreignness.” (40). For example, Brekke states that even though the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (1789) puts forward a “transcendent category” of citizenship, it confines within the structure of the nation the exercise of political rights (40). However, Smith’s and Robinson’s collective and affective approach to citizenship, in which they rejected an individualist version for a broader notion of the concept neutralise the essentialist idea of belonging to a specific land (Brekke 44). Their feelings of local estrangement allowed them to envision a citizenship that surpassed the gendered and nationalist version prevalent in those days.

In *Present of the Manners*, Robinson strategically presents examples of cultural productions imported from other European countries, which had been neglected at first and later were strongly acclaimed by the public. Italian opera is a case in point. Robinson remarks how Italian opera was repudiated by the citizens when it came to Britain, considered by the public to be “a pernicious species of exotic, only transplanted on a British soil to effeminize the public taste” (“Present State of the Manners” 112). The familiarity Robinson had with theatre led her to deem it essential for the transmission of culture to the population (Craciun, “Mary Robinson” 21). Now, as Robinson states, those “rooted prejudices” are almost over because the people of England have acquired taste in music and art. However, she criticises the people’s lack of support to local artists and that they are no longer contributing to charities, but rather spending large sums of money on gambling (“Present State of the Manners” 113).

Robinson’s statement concerning the declining solidarity towards the less fortunate that is “degrading the humanity of the country” resonates with her critiques on the aristocrats’ way of living (“Present State of the Manners” 119). According to Robinson, aristocrats and nobles have played an impeding role in the promotion of a cosmopolitan ideology by hypocritically talking of practicing equality, but instead making class and sex distinctions by considering themselves superior to others (“Present State of the Manners” 113). This way of condemning the actions of the people raised on privilege, echoes also Smith’s negative appraisals on French aristocrats, specially the Church high hierarchy that benefited from a life of luxury coming from a system of injustice that was “inconsistent with their profession” (Smith, *The Emigrants* 35). Robinson’s position agrees with Smith’s in seeing class and gender inequality as obstacles for a better nation.

Robinson ends her manifesto in a very radical tone, in which she exalts England’s preservation of the pillars of democracy that had been forgotten in the last days of the

revolution. She censures the period of terror that characterized the latest events of the revolution and puts England as an example of reason. She utters,

It does credit, however, to the morals of the people, and to the national spirit which evinces that the brave are always benevolent, when we reflect that at a period when all kingdoms have exhibited the horrors of massacre, and the outrages of anarchy; when blood has contaminated the standard of liberty, and defaced the long established laws of nations, while it sapped and overwhelmed the altars of religions this island has presented the throne of Reason, placed on the fostering soil of GENIUS, VALOUR, and PHILANTHROPY! (119).

After giving us a wide-angle view of the situation in England, that put in the centre the interest of culture in the development of an inclusive society in which women and men could be both leading figures in the field of arts and literature, then Robinson concludes her political manifesto with a positive accent on the British nation (Craciun, “Mary Robinson” 24). In such a political climate of repression and antagonism towards the revolutionary ideals, Robinson cleverly managed conflicting perspectives through a cosmopolitan and proto-feminist viewpoint.

In an unfortunate turn of events, Robinson’s essay suffered direct consequences due to the restrictive atmosphere of the country. Later editions of the *Present State of the Manners* were strongly amended, and some fragments of the manifesto disappeared. This happened to the sections in which she elaborates on the term “Democratic Aristocrats”, and when she deals with the negative repercussions of repressive nationalistic policies, and in fragments in which she acknowledges women’s contributions to the culture of Britain (Craciun, “Mary Robinson” 35).

Now, to conclude this part, it is important to add to this discussion on the historical narration from Robinson’s personal stance, a few lines of what have been found in a series of letters she wrote to an unnamed friend -- a common friend she had with William Godwin. This person was called James Marshal and was at the time a publisher of children’s and street literature (307). The letters were published in 1822, more than twenty years after the writer had passed way, in a journal named *Lady’s Magazine* and were brought to the public attention in 2009 by the scholar Sharon Setzer (Setzer). These letters were written in the last days of Robinson’s life, and reflect the economic and social hardship the author had been experiencing. In this period Robinson felt persecuted by her creditors to the point that she manifested a desire to render herself to King’s Bench Prison (debtor’s prison) to spend her last days working in captivity (Setzer, “Original Letters” 321). She describes herself in this correspondence as a “prisoner and a slave” (316).

What is relevant to our discussion is that these letters do not depict Robinson as the celebrated actress and the famous mistress of the Prince of Wales (later George IV), but as a woman in pain, neglected, isolated from society and obliged to write to sustain herself. Most of the letters are petitions for financial assistance, or full declarations of her state of agony. An illustrative case is a very short letter addressed to Godwin in which she expresses “I must write a line to Mr.-, and I am faint already with the fatigue I have undergone” (Setzer, “Original Letters” 320). In a letter to Marshal dated 10 September of 1800, Robinson declares:

my pride has never been humbled, like my fortune, and I would rather hide in the nooks of a mountain, or in the thickest mazes of an uninhabited forest, to indulge my silent scorn of worldly minds, than obtrude my feelings or my society, where pity or ostentation should be my companions. (Setzer “Original Letters” 331)

The letters mainly disclose the state of physical pain that constrained her to remain isolated. They also inform us on how her economic condition pushed her to write to afford basic needs. This extreme situation also impelled her to generate an extraordinary corpus of works. In fact, the last ten years of Robinson’s life were very productive in terms of the literary outcomes she ingeniously created, including her memoirs that similarly echo her state of distress. In a letter supposedly addressed to William Godwin, she called herself a “secluded scribbler”, a person constrained to write even with an afflicted body (Setzer “Original Letters” 313).

To endure the most unexampled bodily pain, with a mind unsoothed by the consolations of society!—I,—I! who have lived in the very zenith of brilliant pleasures, who have been, perhaps undeservedly, beloved even to idolatry,—to be driven from the world—to labor in undelighted solitude. . . . My darkest cloud is the obscurity to which I have been consigned these four months past (Setzer, *Original Letters* 325; Arnold 744).

Her physical disability and marginalised social position in the last years of her short life, could have intensified her sensibility for discriminated people. We will have the opportunity in the next chapters to read closely some poems of her *Lyrical Tales* dedicated to a hermit, an alien boy, a fugitive, a woman of colour, among other characters, to specifically analyse the themes related to displacement and alienation from the pen of the writer.

2.4 A border writer: Tracing De Castro’s migration and exile poetry in the contours of Spanish Romantic Period and Galician Rexurdimento

In the title of this section, we refer to De Castro as a “border writer” since her innovative, political, and bilingual poetical corpus of work has made difficult the task of literary and historical categorisation. Does De Castro’s oeuvre belong to a national or regional tradition, or

does she encompass both? In addition, does her corpus of work fit into a particular literary movement even if she managed throughout her career to oscillate between different styles and genres? These have been matters of extensive debate. The difficulty of classifying this author also comes from a broader issue linked to the way in which the Spanish Romantic Canon has been defined through the years. What we have denominated as Romanticism arrived in Spain, and in the whole Iberian Peninsula, much later than in other European countries such as Britain, France and Germany. This significant difference in periodisation, along with a hierarchical and unequal treatment received by other literary productions in Europe, makes the comparative analysis of the impact of Romanticism a challenging aspect still to be fully explained (Infante 227).

Because of the relatively less scholarly attention paid to Spanish Romanticism in comparison to a similar movement in other parts of the continent, De Castro's presence as a Romantic writer has been inconsistent. Scholars, with a few exceptions, have preferred to approach European Romanticism without adequately acknowledging the multilingual literary productions that blossomed in the Iberian Peninsula during the nineteenth century including the "Spanish, Portuguese, Galician, Catalan and Basque" (Infante 228). In a nutshell, the Romantic Spanish canon in its different dimensions --including the Galician-- has been avoided by mainstream scholarship which has preferred to neglect its enriching linguistic diversity rather than acknowledge it. Besides, the existence of a multilingual corpus of literary works within the Iberian Peninsula has reinforced hierarchical dynamics inside the Spanish Romantic Canon, leaving aside literary works written in other languages apart from Castilian. The question of periodisation, together with the themes treated in De Castro's poetics, her versatile style, and the deployment of both the Castilian and the Galician languages, had made very problematic to encapsulate De Castro's work in the European context, but also unequivocal in the Spanish and Galician Romantic Canon. In other words, in a rigid definition of what constitute the Spanish Canon --a definition that excludes the multilingual literature of the Iberian Peninsula -- her work is generally overlooked. Likewise, inside that Galician Romantic Canon her Spanish texts are often omitted.

In her exhaustive work dedicated to the Romantic self and the notion of gender during the Romantic movement in Spain, Susan Kirkpatrick (Kirkpatrick), asserts that the Romantic paradigms of the time provided to women's authorship a "feminized language of the self" (2). The liberal reform --after the Napoleonic wars and the gradual loss of the colonies-- that commenced in Spain by the middle of the nineteenth century motivated women writers to openly try to access spaces from which they were traditionally excluded (1). Kirkpatrick argues

that one of the most distinctive aspects of Romanticism is “its grounding in the subjective”, which changed the dynamics on gender difference in Spain in a manner that allowed women to think of themselves “as writing subjects”(29). Kirkpatrick continues by affirming that “[t]he center of the organizing principle is the subject, conceived as an individual self”. This particular feature of Romanticism invites the readers to see authors as the subjects, protagonists of their texts; therefore, the act of writing becomes a sort of Romantic self-figuration (15). The romantic archetype of alienation, “the radical distinction involved in separating an inner subjectivity from an outer world of things”, also contributed to alternative definitions of the self, that included the “[c]onceptualization of the self, as split into a social and a deep self” (Kirkpatrick 17).

This way of depicting the inner self proposed by Romanticism clashed with the traditional ideas of domestic womanhood. However, women writers were in a difficult position because they could not identify completely with the predominantly feminine scripts but neither with the “masculine poetic and creative subject” (Kirkpatrick 23). The solutions women writers tried to apply to this complicated dilemma involved a revision of the Romantic self through the development of a “female Romantic tradition”, an appropriation of the romantic language of the self, while also denouncing the deficiency of the model of femininity in which women should aspire to be “domestic angels” (Kirkpatrick 23).

Some academics have pointed out that De Castro’s poetical works, in both the Spanish and the Galician language, were strongly informed by the European Romantic literary movement, specifically by English authors such as William Wordsworth and John Clare, from whom she seems to replicate poetically “a form of testimonial immediacy” (Infante 230). Similarly, other scholars deem that the embedded idea of awakening a Galician national consciousness which we find in De Castro’s poetics is a standard feature of all Romantic literatures. These Romantic writers took from the oral tradition of their countries and incorporated elements of the folklore culture in their oeuvre (Forneiro 853).

On the other hand, other scholars have classified De Castro as pertaining instead to the Post-Romantic era, because she seems to adopt the literary trends of this period, particularly, in her last collection of poems *En las Orillas del Sar* (Lee 33). De Castro has also been recognised as a Post-romantic writer given the way she innovatively appropriates elements of Romanticism to configure her poetic voice, such as “individualism, the idiosyncrasy of her verse patterns, her concept of poetic inspiration” (Small 291). Sohyun Lee (Lee) also thinks that De Castro’s last work, *Sar*, should be considered Post-Romantic as, in it, she adopted an advanced lyrical subjectivity distinctive from the Romantic. Likewise, other academics have noted that De

Castro's ability to experiment with different genres make her an author who also moves towards future literary tendencies such as modernism and symbolism, which also proves to be an obstacle to the task of categorising her work (Lee 33). Nevertheless, after many years in which she had been labelled negatively as a mere regionalist writer, nowadays, De Castro is considered as a prominent Spanish poet and a Modern Galician author. Yet, in the global picture of European Romanticism, De Castro's name still struggles to be visible. The comparative study of De Castro's oeuvre together with other well-known denominated Romantic writers is an example on how the European Romantic canon can be enriched with other literatures that have been traditionally kept outside its confines (Infante 229-30).

As a woman of letters, De Castro defied the literary conventions of the male-dominated Castilian canon not only through the sole action of taking the pen for the creation of poetical texts, but also for elevating the Galician language to the realm of literature. These transgressions triggered critiques against her works from the literary elites of the period. What is striking about the way De Castro's works were received by the critics, is the fact that her production in both languages, Spanish and Galician, was greatly informed by the work of Spanish and European writers. De Castro's literary knowledge comes from the study of mainly Spanish writers, and she did not follow or mention any pre-existing Galician writer (Carballo Calero 38). This lack of a visible literary lineage in De Castro's Galician poetry makes sense if we take into account that at the time when she was writing, there was a complete absence of Galician contemporary writers to emulate. The Galician language ---spoken in the north-western part of Spain-- reduced to an oral tradition since the Middle Ages, thus, De Castro needed to reinvent a Galician literary tradition anew. In this way, as Carballo asserts, with the work of De Castro, Galician literature became a Spanish literature with a dialectal variant (Carballo Calero 39).

The social exile and ostracism De Castro faced as an author might have also been prompted by her decision of writing from the perspective and in the language of a marginalised population. De Castro's poetics portrayed the condition of Galician people through the voice of a poet who was also a member of this discriminated group. As a poet, she took up the complex task of telling the stories of the Galicians, to share what she had witnessed throughout her entire life. For Erin Moure, the importance that De Castro gives in her work to the ordinary people and the relationship and identity she shares with them, is quite unique even within the Romantic Poetry canon, as other Romantic writers, although not all, did not consider the voices of common people as discourses that deserved to be replicated (Moure 10).

De Castro published thirteen literary works in her life, and only two were written in Galician. *Follas Novas* together with *Cantares Gallegos* constitute the sole works in which De Castro used the language of her origins, the words she had heard since being a parentless little girl. The other eleven works, including the prose texts, were all composed in Spanish, including her latest published work *En las Orillas del Sar* (Carames Martínez 99).

As a bilingual writer, De Castro was treated --from the viewpoint of the literary circles of Madrid -- as an outsider author who decided to elaborate her texts in a tongue understandable only to her people (Davies “Cultural Isolation” 176). It is worth noting that while, during De Castro’s days, the Galician language was widely spoken by most of the population living in the rural areas, it remained unofficial until the late twentieth century (Davies, “Madwoman” 59). Back at the time, the Galician language shared with Portuguese “the same medieval root”, and both tongues were one called Roman Gallecia. Later, the north of Spain became Galicia, and the south turned into a part of Portugal, and ultimately the languages separated and developed on their own (Moure 8). According to Michelle Geoffrion-Vinci (Geoffrion-Vinci), these strong characteristics of De Castro’s work, and her portrayal of Galicia “as a bilingual, bicultural stateless nation continue to influence Spanish poetry and political rhetoric to this day” (4).

Reading De Castro’s poetical works necessarily entails being conscious of the position she assumed by writing from the margins of the Spanish society of the late nineteenth century (Lee 33). Her large corpus of work, including novels, pamphlets, and poetry was marked by the effects of Spanish Imperialism in the precarious situation of the land, that drove the phenomenon of emigration from Galicia towards countries located in America, especially to Latin America and the Caribbean, mainly Argentina and Cuba (Pereira Muro 119). De Castro’s transitions across different literary traditions, languages and national identities ---as a Galician but also a Spanish writer--- makes her an author who gives a unique perspective on the social and historical situation of the period.

De Castro became a central figure in the Galician *Rexurdimento*, a movement that emerged in 1863, the year *Cantares Gallegos* was released (Pereira Muro 121). De Castro’s work portrays the first wave of migration that started in 1853, and *Cantares Gallegos* marked the beginning of “modern Galician literature” and the Galician “Lyric tradition” that is deeply influenced by population displacement (Hooper 40). De Castro, along with her husband Manuel Antonio Martínez Murguía (Martínez Murguía), was condemned by conservative people for their political involvement in movements that denounced the marginal status of

Galicia. During and after the author's life, De Castro suffered discrimination from other cohort writers, all part of an anti-regionalist campaign against her and her husband (Wilcox 44).³³

The connections between what Carmen Blanco calls Galician ethics (*ética galleguista*) and a radical and progressive romantic aesthetic that includes a strong attachment to Galician popular culture, made *Cantares Gallegos* a pioneer book in the cultural, political and social movement (Blanco 179-80). The term *rexurdimento* evokes the idea of rebirth, a "return of the disappeared". It was a movement for the vindication of the Galician tongue as a formal language, which was part of the historical legacy of the land and considered still essential for the cultural development of Galicia. The movement developed in parallel with other movements in the country such as the *Renaixença* in Cataluña, which shared the influence of a strong Romantic ideology (Alonso Valero 68).

De Castro and her husband were involved in the political Left and supported the two revolutions that took place in Spain during De Castro's life (1854 and 1868). Both of them were essential figures in the nationalist movement by seeking the promotion of a collective Galician identity even amongst people living abroad. De Castro as an author turned out to be crucial in the Galician *Rexurdimento* for her capacity of poeticising the Galician language and culture, something that not even her husband was able to achieve as a non-Galician speaker like many left progressives (Davies, "Cultural Isolation" 177).

Throughout De Castro's life, Spain saw the advent of events that increased the tension within the country and between provinces and the central government. The year in which De Castro was born (1837) was a very active year politically speaking. According to Geoffrion-Vinci, during that year a "liberal constitution and a parliamentary monarchy with bicameral legislature" was created, also a "broad male suffrage" was implemented and the separation between the Catholic Church and the Spanish State was declared, causing the "disentail of Church property" (*At the Edge* 19). The conservative supporters tried to counterattack the progressive changes in Spain by fighting with non-stop uprisings and by restricting the suffrage rights of the population. Through the years, this tense scenario brought in the minds of people with liberal ideas, such as De Castro, the creation in Galicia of a political social movement in favour of the use of an "autochthonous language, cultural traditions, and political autonomy and progressive liberals" (Geoffrion-Vinci, *At the Edge* 19).

In 1846 a "political nationalism" emerged with a group of academics and students, as a result of the reactionary policies of Isabel II. This political nationalism took a reformist turn in

³³ One of the writers who criticised fervently De Castro's work was the novelist Emilia Pardo Bazán.

1868 with the overthrow of Isabel II until becoming in the late eighteenth century what we know as “rexionalismo”, which was marked by new theoretical viewpoints on the situation of Galicia (Fernández Prieto 36). This movement in its progressive strand was led by De Castro’s husband Manuel Murguía, who was presumably inspired by prevalent “Romantic notions of the nation” (Fernández Prieto 36).

Halfway through the nineteenth century, when De Castro was an adolescent, Galicia suffered various famines, and the worst one occurred in 1853 and caused the migration to America of approximately two million Galicians (Pereira-Muro 119). The crops’ failure together with the “widespread cases of cholera and typhus” affected badly the Galician people, including De Castro herself who in that period almost died from typhus (Geoffrion-Vinci, *At the Edge* 20; Mayoral, “Introducción En las Orillas”). The government did not tackle at all the crisis in Galicia nor reduce the taxes imposed on basic products for local consumption, deciding to rather augment the export of some local products, which made the picture even worse for the local people (Geoffrion-Vinci, *At the Edge* 20). The Church didn’t support the Galicians either. Through the figure of the Archbishop of León, the Catholic Church considered that the sins committed by the Galician population was the leading cause of the myriad of calamities which they were suffering. In brief, the two dominant powers of Spain, the central government and the Church, witnessed the deterioration of Galicia, and the migration of people, mainly men, within the Spanish borders but also to the continent and abroad, to America (Geoffrion-Vinci, *At the Edge* 20). These circumstances drove De Castro’s protest against the Spanish government and the Catholic Church, complaining about the way they dealt with the economic crisis in Galicia.

Amid the last days of De Castro’s life, and a decade after her decease, the migration of Spanish people to Cuba increased, and a great number of the 224,000 Spaniards were male Galician peasants. This latest migration was the result of the Spanish regulations in Cuba --- which remained a colony of Spain until 1898 --to “whiten” the people in the island in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery in 1886 (Davies, “Cultural Isolation” 183). Once slavery was abolished in Cuba, the Spanish government paid the travel expenses of the Spaniards who wanted to emigrate to the island. De Castro was against the migration of Galician people to Cuba. She criticised the mistreatments the migrants suffered once in Cuba. The situation that was awaiting them in Cuba was unstable because of the increase of racism, violence and militarism against Spanish colonisers provoked by the independence movement (Davies, “Cultural Isolation” 182). This was a complex panorama of different dynamics of colonisation inside Spain and within the colonies for Galician expatriates. On the mainland Galicians were

in a subjugated position in front of the Spanish government, whilst in Cuba, they were at the crossroads of reproducing the role of the coloniser; or contributing to the national-building project of the independence movement in island (Harrington 119). In any case, De Castro rejected the wave of migration mainly because the displacement of the Galicians had negative repercussions on the lives of the women and children who were left behind (Davies, “Cultural Isolation” 184).

Although De Castro was against the migration of Galicians towards Cuba and other parts of the world, her writing project had a unique transnational impact outside the limits of Galicia and Spain. De Castro’s poetry succeeded thanks in part to the political circumstances and scenario of mobility that dominated during her literary career. According to Hooper, De Castro’s second texts written in Galician was fully sponsored by donors belonging to the Galician community in Cuba (“Mapping Migration” 46). Indeed, a significant amount of her works were disseminated through Cuba and South America within the Galician diaspora. She was able to benefit financially and to construct an authorial persona from the migrant readers who saw their lives and destiny reflected in her verses. What is more, the first edition of *Follas Novas* was published in 1880 by *La Propaganda Literaria*, a local publishing house in Cuba. This volume was dedicated to “the gentlemen of the management committee and the individual members of the Havana Society for the Welfare of Galicians”³⁴ (Hooper, “Mapping Migration” 46). The Latin American public, including the Galician migrants, received with great enthusiasm De Castro’s published work and maintained their interest in her work along the years (Geoffrion-Vinci, *At the Edge* 23). These poems that were later included in the second volume of Galician poetry, *Follas Novas*, might have been created in part—although De Castro denies this aspect in the prologue—for a diasporic readership, mainly constituted of men who felt identified with the nostalgic feelings that she portrayed in her verses (Pereira-Muro 121). Also, various poems that later became part of her last poetry collection *En las Orillas del Sar*, were published first in a newspaper in Buenos Aires called *La Nación Española*. Over the years, and without visiting the island, De Castro developed important connections with the literary world in Cuba, and a large Galician ex-patriates community contributed incessantly to the dissemination of her work.

2.5 Rosalía de Castro: “Estranxeira na súa patria”

³⁴ ‘os señores da xunta directiva e máis individuos que compoñen a sociedade de beneficencia dos naturais de Galicia na Habana’.

When De Castro was born in 1837, she was formally registered as the daughter of unknown parents³⁵. She was legally and in simple words, the daughter of no one, but in reality, she was the daughter of a priest and a middle-class unmarried woman (Mayoral, “Introducción En las Orillas” 9). The unprivileged circumstances that surrounded her birth forced the girl to be raised by her father’s sisters, because according to the laws at the time, illegitimate children could not live with either of their biological parents. Later in her life, when De Castro was an adolescent, she re-established a relationship with her biological mother. The profound affection De Castro developed during her life for her mother is evidenced in a collection of poems she wrote after her mother’s sudden decease, *A Mi Madre* in 1863 (Mayoral, “Introducción En las Orillas”12).

De Castro married the historian Manuel Martínez Murguía in 1858 when she was twenty years old and had seven children with him (Mayoral, “Introducción En las Orillas”16). Her husband was very much involved in the process of publishing and circulating her texts. Occasionally, as we will see in *Las Literatas. Carta a Eduarda*, De Castro seemed to regret her husband’s controlling activities, but mostly she complained about the way some people attributed to Martínez Murguía the success of her work.

De Castro had an intense but short life. She passed away in the Galician town Padrón in 1885 when she was only forty-eight years old. Her death was caused by a uterine cancer. Days before De Castro’s demise, she asked her children to burn of all her unpublished work and whispered to one of them to open the window because she wanted to see the sea, and after closing her eyes, she died (“abre esa ventana que quiero ver el mar, y cerrando sus ojos para siempre, expiró”) (“Introducción En las Orillas”16).³⁶

In her life, De Castro wrote novels, essays, political pamphlets and poetry. As we have pointed out, most of her literary production was produced in Spanish, including her first poetic volumes, *La Flor* (1857) and *A mi Madre* (1863). In these texts, she did not address the themes that characterised her latest works, such as migration, regionalism and folklore, nor she dedicated her verses to exalt or to defend the Galician culture. These recurrent themes of De Castro’s poetical texts came out first in *Cantares Gallegos* (1863), *Follas Novas* (1880) and continued, albeit in a less visible manner, in *En las Orillas del Sar* (1884) (Carballo 35). According to Carballo, these popular topics of De Castro’s latest poetry collections, came not only from the historical circumstances she lived through and viewed in Galicia, but also from

³⁵ Hija de padres incógnitos.

³⁶ Mayoral has drawn attention to the fact that in Padrón there is no sea, and how the sea has been in De Castro’s oeuvre a link to a desire of committing suicide (“Introducción En las Orillas” 16).

the influence of the realistic and popular culture of Romanticism, and its emphasis on the Romantic “I” as a collective voice of woes and sorrows (35).

Unfortunately, although many scholars have searched for traces of De Castro’s life everywhere, she did not leave any autobiographical text, and a large number of letters penned by the author were destroyed by her widower Martínez Murguía, who decided that the content should remain private. Martínez Murguía deprived us of some precious material that would have been helpful to look for the connections between De Castro’s authorship and personal life (Mayoral, “Introducción En las Orillas” 13-4). Therefore, to fill this gap of autobiographical material, it is included in this section the analysis of De Castro’s prologues to *Cantares Gallegos* and *Folla Novas*. These prologues have been considered as much personal as poetical manifestos of the writer. Thus, the close reading of these texts can assist us to understand the author’s opinion on the historical situation of Galicia and also can provide useful information on what reasons she had for addressing the themes of migration and exile poetically. Indeed, the prologues she wrote for her Galician poetic texts offer the readers interesting clues to the primary motivations she held for writing these texts. In the prologues, she defined herself as an observer of her land and its people, watching them from a point of view that gives two opposite perspectives, one of a Spanish author and the other as a Galician fellow citizen (Caramés Martínez, 101). This paradoxical double identity is even more complicated if we add that she constructed her authorial persona as a female spectator who is also an exile in her own country.

De Castro’s first poetry collection written in the Galician language, *Cantares Gallegos*, might be considered as the most memorable text in the history of Galician literature, as she fills a historical lineage that had been interrupted since the medieval ages (Feal Deibe 307-8). The author begins the prologue of this text with a humble apology for her bold act of giving birth to a book dedicated to the popular Galician verses and to “people whom many have called stupid and have judged to be insensitive, foreign to the divine art of poetry” (De Castro, *Prologue Cantares* 23). De Castro deploys a defensive tone to point out the unjust manner in which Galician people, language and culture have been treated by the rest of Spain. According to the prologue of *Cantares Gallegos*, her defence is informed by what she has learned from her infancy around villagers, from all the sayings and popular songs she has kept in her heart as valuable heritage.

Contradictorily, in the prologue of *Cantares Gallegos* De Castro declares to have received inspiration from Antonio de Trueba’s book *El Libro de los cantares* (1851), which contains fifty-four ballads and folksongs (Wilcox 48-9). So, even though De Castro supposedly in

Cantares Gallegos affirms to be unable to write gracefully as a poet, she claims to be imitating a recognized writer. Some scholars have pointed out that De Castro was indeed superior in its originality to De Trueba. Further, some even state that De Trueba's works present a stereotypical and conservative model of womanhood that De Castro does not replicate in her poetics (Wilcox 49). Besides, De Trueba's book only includes men poetic speakers and did not challenge, as De Castro, the cultural and social gender dynamics inside Galicia (52).

Erín Moure (Moure) asserts that De Castro in writing *Cantares Gallegos* did something very radical at her time, since she incorporated "popular verses, chants, ditties, proverbs and sayings in rhyme" (7). In this manner, De Castro elevates the mainly oral Galician language to the category of a literary language. and also, successfully made folklore and popular tradition subjects fit for poetry (Moure 7). De Castro's decision to revisit a folklore tradition, reproducing in poetry myths and popular songs, is also based on her political commitment to a cultural revival of Galicia, and on literary trends that came from the avant-garde literary circle in the capital city (Stevens 12). María Pillar García Negro (García Negro) states that even "the language of Rosalía" became a euphemism to denominate the Galician language. De Castro became a cultural iconic representation of Galicia, because she achieved international fame and status unparalleled by any other Galician writer of her time ("Una feminista" 337).

Shelley Stevens (Stevens) claims that the success De Castro finally gained as an icon of Galician culture with her pivotal book *Cantares Gallegos*, was due to the author's choice to rewrite a tradition in which she did not need to justify herself on sexual grounds, because she recovered through her verses a well-known female oral tradition. She restored a tradition that she "organically" had in herself since her childhood both as a woman and as a Galician (Stevens 12). That is, De Castro's poetical writings are a translation of the cultural legacy she gathered along the years.

De Castro composed *Cantares Gallegos* as a tribute to Galicia, which historically was deemed by many as "despicable and ugly", while to her it was a place that deserved "the most beautiful and worthy of exaltation" (*Prologue Cantares* 24). De Castro mentions in the prologue of *Cantares* that she had travelled around Spain, from "the solitude of desert-like Castile" to fertile Extremadura and other beautiful scenarios that the country offers, but nothing compares to Galicia "where all I spontaneous in nature and where the human hand cedes its place to the hand of God" (*Prologue Cantares* 25). De Castro finalises the prologue with a critique of the hierarchical dynamics that permeated the entire Europe. As Spain was insulted by neighbouring countries, in the same way Galicia was discriminated by Spain. Specifically, De Castro declares, "It's worth noting that such fatuousness sounds like the French who prate

about their eternal victories over the Spanish. To hear them tell it, Spain never triumphed; on the contrary, it was always vanquished, fallen, humiliated” (*Prologue Cantares* 25).

De Castro was only twenty-six years old when she wrote *Cantares Gallegos*, and seventeen years later, she decided to write the second Galician book of poetry, *Follas Novas*. While in the prologue of *Cantares Gallegos* she shows extreme modesty and a fervent vindication of Galicia, in the preface to *Follas Novas* and in the whole book, she moves entirely away from an optimistic vision and appraisal of the virtues of the land (Geoffrion-Vinci, *On the Edges* 22). In this respect, De Castro describes that *Follas Novas* cannot by any means be considered an offspring of her previous collection of poems *Cantares Gallegos* (1863).

In *Follas Novas* De Castro included a foreword that can be described as a guide to her readers on how this poetical text should be addressed. It could also function as a literary resource to clarify some aspects that are not entirely evident in the book and need some explanation (Caramés Martínez 99-100). In this preface titled *Dúas palabras da autora* (Two words from the author), she introduces her readers to the main reasons behind the publication of a second book and eventually her last poetic volume written in the Galician language. De Castro begins with a message in which she intercalates personal elements and experiences of the writing process of this work. Among them, her weak health condition, her difficult economic situation, a more mature or sceptical state of mind together with her will to protest against the Spanish government and its responsibility on the plight of the Galician people.

Persuasively, De Castro tries to convince her readers of her unique ability of expressing the collective voice of her people, by articulating through in synchrony her personal sorrows with the wrongs committed against Galicians. She expressly states, “I chose, over compositions that might be personal, others than express the tribulations of the people who, one after another, and in different ways over time, suffered around me” (*New Leaves* 45). De Castro describes in her preface that her book was,

Written in the Castilian desert, in nature’s solitude and in that of my heart, offspring of illness and absence, they reflect, perhaps too sincerely, the state of my spirits or, at times, my natural capacity (not for nothing I am a woman) for feeling the pain of others. (*Prologue New Leaves* 2016 [1880] 44).

De Castro locates herself in a desert while she was conceiving this text. It should be noted that she is not telling her readers the entire truth about the original location in which she in fact wrote these melancholic verses. Here, the space plays a significant role in purposely conveying her barren mental state, rather than informing about her real physical location. This description

has more to do with her condition as a woman writer. Some of the poems included in this volume were perhaps published when she was living elsewhere in Spain (Asensio 43).

Certainly, De Castro is more interested in portraying herself as a writer that is contemplating her homeland from a distant location, and metaphorically from her cultural exile in Castile, than in telling accurate facts about the production of her work. Thus, she assumes the position of a migrant, writing from abroad, in order to demonstrate that the sufferings of her people move alongside her (Asensio, *Follas Novas* 43). We see then that De Castro managed to locate her authorial persona in a place where she can represent allegorically her engendered position as a poet writing from the margins. Likewise, in this quotation, De Castro reminds her readers that she is a woman, and consequently, able to be even more empathic to the plight of others. However, De Castro's depiction of herself as a woman able to feel the pain of others, is also in tune with her role and identity as a poet. In this regard she affirmed,

Yet just as only death can free the spirit from its shroud of flesh, even less can poets ignore where they live, and the natural world around them, ignore their times, and stop echoing, even unconsciously, the persistent lament that today is in every mouth. (*Prologue Follas Novas* 45).

In the following lines she continues to affirm her capacity to put herself in the same position of the people of Galicia -- she is one of them and she remarks that her poetry can only voice their communal feelings.

I've seen and felt their sorrows as they were mine, but what always moved me, and which could not fail to echo in my poetry, were the innumerable worries of Galician women; beings who are loving with their own and with strangers, full of feeling, hardworking in body and gentle of heart, and at the same time so unfortunate that they say they were only born to prove how much exhaustion could afflict the weaker and frailer half of humanity. (De Castro *Prologue Follas Novas* 45-46).

Hence, according to De Castro's *Duas palabras*, it is impossible for a poet to be detached or pay no attention to the place where she lives or the context that surrounds her. But mostly, De Castro accentuates her identity as a "woman poet", she asserts, "[t]here are many serious things in the air, it's true; it's easy to be aware and talk of them yet I'm a woman and, to women, it's as if our own feminine frailty allows us to perceive sorrows, feel them as they occur" (44). Thus, De Castro is incapable of being indifferent to the situation of Galicia, because her nationalism is impregnated with a sense of feminine nurturing desire of voicing the plight of her people.

Apparently, the above quotation reveals a very conservative facet of the writer. In this paragraph, she remarks that while women have an innate capacity to put themselves in the

position of others, at the same time they seem unable of addressing serious topics. Yet, if we look carefully at this phrase in the context of the whole text and De Castro's literary production, we might be able to derive further considerations. In the quote above, De Castro uses the verb "allows" in the sentence, saying her femininity allows her to feel and consequently transcribe in poetry the sorrows of others. In short, society does not permit women to write what is considered to be "serious things", they can only write about what is supposed to be irrelevant and frivolous.

As the scholar Marta Beatriz Ferrari has noted, this is not the first time that De Castro avails herself of the verb "allow" in a text. She had previously expressed a deeply proto-feminist concern in the prologue to her first novel *La hija del mar* (1859) – which will be analysed in the next chapter-- in which she openly protests that "*women are still not allowed to write what they feel and what they know*" / "*Porque todavía no les es permitido a las mujeres escribir lo que sienten y lo que saben*" (Ferrari 65). Within a sexual binary model De Castro deploys the excuse of women's limited capacities as writers to be interested in "serious subjects", to be allowed later to vindicate the role of women poets, who are able, instead, to voice the feelings of others in a manner that is inaccessible to male authors and to the Spanish literary canon which is informed by them (Ferrari 66). Moreover, the same occurs for example in the concluding poem of *Cantares Gallegos* in which De Castro apologizes for her lack of poetical artistry,

As for me, I sing, and sing, I sang
 even though I had little grace
 But, woe is me, what more could I do
 if I wasn't born more graceful³⁷ (qtd in Wilcox 46-47)

Wilcox expresses that this poem reveals the writer's feelings of inferiority at the beginning of her career (47). De Castro's discourse belongs to a long tradition of women writers' self-deprecation, a rhetoric of modesty in which women deny their own capacity to compose, i.e. their authorial agency. Also, at the time, even though this was not the first literary published work of the author, she might not have predicted the notoriety she was going to acquire along the years after this volume and other later work were released. In the poem, she denotes the absence of "grace" but the abundance of sentiments in her compositions, as if the readers could not ask more from a female hand. Yet, the allusion to De Castro's incapacity to master

³⁷ Yo cantar, cantar, canté
 aunque mi gracia era poca
 ¡Mas qué he de hacer, desdichada,
 Si no nació más graciosa!

the art of poetry consents her readership to trust that these verses are the genuine poet's feelings (Wilcox 47). Moreover, the illusion De Castro's creates through modestly presenting herself, contributes to the work's authenticity in reproducing popular songs usually performed by female rural peasant and not a masterwork of a professional writer (Stevens 11).

De Castro mentions in *Duas palabras* how migration and poverty changed the lives of the population of Galicia, particularly the lives of women, making the feeling of displacement a common existential condition of her fellow country women folks. She complains,

Emigration and military service continually take their lovers, brothers and husbands, depriving families of sustenance; abandoned and weeping, women spend their bitter lives in uncertain hope, dark loneliness and the anxiety of unrelenting poverty (*Prologue Follas Novas* 46).

Clearly, De Castro's poetic voice is a protest against the Spanish establishment that had maintained Galicia in a state of social inequality and had forced many to emigrate. But, she also wishes to transmit through her words the feelings that accompanied the population everywhere and that have become part of what is to be a Galician. This is why, in De Castro's poetics, Galician national identity is conceived as a place where all these sorrows and deprivations of the people are articulated. Being Galician means in De Castro's poetical terms, living in-between countries, being forced out and, thus, to be marginalized, feeling attached to a land that should be left behind in order to survive.

In this preface, De Castro also asserts that she did not choose to write in the Galician language with the purpose of allowing her people to understand her poetry, at least not in that particular moment. Instead, she affirms,

Some will claim that I express myself in Galician because I speak of humble things. That's not the case. The multitudes in our countryside are unlikely to read these verses soon, verses written because of them, but only partly for them. What I wanted was to speak again of the problems of Galicia, in our own language, and repay some way the appreciation and love that Galician Songs awakened in its enthusiasts (*Prologue Follas Novas* 47).

In her poetry, De Castro elevates Galician to the category of a literary language that permits to convey not only the simple aspects of everyday life, but sentiments, sorrows and the existential condition of an entire people (Pollain 416). Because of this decision, De Castro's persona and writings were the target of numerous critiques. When she wrote in the Galician tongue, she was censured for employing a "common dialect" not suitable for literature; when she wrote in Spanish, she was condemned for being too extravagant (Davies, "Cultural Isolation" 176). For Catherine Davis, the fact that *Follas Novas* was penned by a woman employing an unofficial

and marginal language, constituted “the clearest manifestation of poetic revolution in nineteenth-century Spain” (65). Undoubtedly, making Galician a worthy language for literature was important to De Castro, but the central interest that drove her work was to recognise the people of Galicia, as subjects and citizens that deserved to be listened. On this matter, Moure quotes Jacques Rancière, who affirms that “the refusal to consider certain categories of people as political beings starts with the refusal to understand the sounds coming from the mouths as discourses” (9).

At the end of her preface, De Castro declares that her book instead of having been titled *Follas Novas* (New Leaves), should have been called *Old leaves*, because the text is full of sadness and plight; metaphors of pain that she takes from the Romantic literary tradition, in which the authors privilege the poetic “I” (Asensio). She also declares her intention of not continuing to write any other texts in the Galician language, saying she has already paid the price she owed to Galicia. With a deep melancholic state, she renounces to employ the Galician language in her following works.

2.6 Imagining a unified country and a women’s citizenship: Risorgimento and Italian Romanticism

The particularities of the historical period in which Italian Romanticism emerged might have overshadowed its existence giving to the movement a less relevant role to play within the Italian literary context than in other parts of the continent. This invisibility is due substantially to the intense political, social and ideological struggles that the future Italian nation faced throughout the nineteenth century. Besides, the diverse and complex features that have characterised European Romanticism complicate the study of its impact on individual nations or between countries. Instead of defining Romanticism as a coherent movement with compliant characteristics, some scholars have preferred to describe it as “vast and amorphous, lacking a single text which could serve as its manifesto, or a self-reflexive capacity to fix its canonical ideas” (Ginsborg 19). Seen from this alternative perspective, the analysis of Romanticism should embrace various distinct and contradictory transnational forms.

Another aspect that continues to be an unresolved dilemma when dealing with European Romanticism is the way it has been periodised by historians and literary scholars differently depending on the country taken into consideration. It is difficult, if not impossible, to designate a particular range of years to the movement in Europe if scholars ignore the late effect of Romanticism in nations such as France and Italy (Ginsborg 19).

The provocative title of an essay written in 1908 by Gina Martegiani, *Il romanticismo italiano non esiste*, might be useful in order to understand the challenges that Romanticism faced in Italy compared to other countries. The question then would be: did Romanticism really fail to attract the attention of Italian authors, and how far were these writers able to master the aesthetic and the values of the movement? In this respect, one of Martegiani's claims was that Italian writers from 1789 to 1848 – that is, from the French Revolution to the European Revolutions-- were mainly “provincial”, because they refused to embrace a “cosmopolitan cult of genius and individuality” since they only sought patriotic aims (Luzzi 27). Paradoxically, Italian culture and landscapes, such as the crossing of the Alps, have been deployed frequently in mainstream European Romantic texts, making the country a sort of a mecca for Romanticism. Also, many key figures of Romanticism, mainly British writers, spent long periods in the country.

According to recent criticism, other factors might have backed the idea of a weaker Romanticism in Italy, including the lack of a proper attention paid to the tight connections that linked Romanticism to Italian Risorgimento. The division between literary studies and other disciplines in the humanities, such as art, history and musicology, which have been devoted to the study of Romanticism, have somehow also limited the research on the matter (Luzzi 29). No less critical, the scarcity of translated publications of the works of well-known Italian protagonists of the Romantic Period, such as Ugo Foscolo, Alessandro Manzoni and Giacomo Leopardi have kept Italian Romanticism out of the reach of many academics (Luzzi 29; Ginsborg 18). The inaccessibility of fundamental texts abroad, and the fact that these leading figures of Italian Romanticism have been seen less as writers, and more as patriots and fathers of the modern nation, have also contributed to accentuate the invisibility of the legacy of Romanticism in Italy (Luzzi 30). These issues have made Italian Romanticism unknown beyond the nation's borders and therefore frequently missing in comparative research works on European Romanticism.

Recounting the unfolding of events that at the end of the nineteenth century changed the future of the peninsula is indispensable to understand the nuances of the *Romanticismo Italiano*. Romanticism in the Italian Peninsula was strongly shaped by “issues of nationalism, religion and cultural mythmaking”, aspects that ultimately contributed to its invisibility (Luzzi 27). The patriotic politics and fervent nationalism that characterised the majority of the writings of the Romantic era took a central position, in contrast to other Romantic themes that were valued as more significant in other countries. Nevertheless, for Joseph Luzzi (Luzzi), rather

than defining Romanticism in the Italian Peninsula as provincial, it “was far more cosmopolitan” than what has been acknowledged by the scholarship (27).

To understand better this apparent disconnection amongst Romanticism in Italy and the movement in the European context, we have to consider three factors that might explain the lack of attention it has received in literary studies. The first explanation to the insufficiency of a comparative analysis is “the emergence of prescriptive nationalist hermeneutics in nineteenth-century Italian criticism” (Luzzi 176). First of all, the discourses contained in Romantic texts elaborated in Italy necessarily need to be decoded using hermeneutics that take into consideration writers’ political engagement with the national project, in addition to the significant preoccupation of the people in constructing a collective identity. Second, the religious rhetoric that has played a transcendental role in the development of a national identity has fed the opinion that Italian writers were “anti-modern” (43). Italian Romanticism was marked by an inclination, almost aesthetic, towards the Christian religion, as Manzoni’s texts demonstrate by connecting “Romantic theory with Christian doctrine” (43). This characteristic of Italian Romanticism clashes with a Romantic general rational trend that although making theological references maintained a distance from religion and followed an approach in which the state and church remained as separate entities. Lastly, “the diffusion of Italy as a premodern culture in the Romantic foreign imaginary”, in other words, the propagation of a stereotypical idea of Italy as a country that belonged to ancient times, limited a transnational diffusion of Italian Romanticism (Luzzi 36). Following some recent critical works, it can be concluded that Romanticism arrived in Italy, but existed in a way that did not strictly follow the predominant characteristics it had in other countries.

Another aspect that we need to bear in mind when dealing with the Romantic era in Italy, is that the national project that was in progress for almost the entirety of the nineteenth century was affected by the experience of political exile of people who were committed to the reconstruction of the country. Some of the central figures of the Italian Risorgimento that we have already mentioned, were exiles, as is the case for Giuseppe Mazzini and Ugo Foscolo who found refuge in Great Britain (Isabella 8). The distance and detachment of the Italian territory served to exacerbate these intellectuals’ patriotic aspirations. There are some investigations which support that the construction of the Italian nation, thus the project of unification of the peninsula, was also delineated taking from the imaginary of Italy in the minds of northern visitors, who essentially defined the country along the lines of the tradition of the Grand Tour (Isabella 187). The Italian exiles who were immersed in other cultures and communities in diasporic countries, informed the process of unification as a way of renovating

a country with a glorious past. These intellectuals' experience with exile also contributed to their own development into central revolutionary figures and provided an “international dimension” for the Risorgimento (Audenino 148).

As we have discussed in the previous section concerning the building of a national identity in Great Britain, the diversity of people and migrants coming from neighbouring countries was central to this process. As the Galician and Italian cases show, the fragmented collective consciousness of people belonging to different nationalities and living in exile contributed to the circulation of ideas, concepts and strategies that eventually informed the process of Italian unification. Rather important was also the political participation of people who underwent exile across the Italian states, as it is the case of the poet Innocenza Ansuini Tondi.

Moreover, women living under the influence of this “national awakening” contributed and defined the movement by composing literature that dealt with issues referred to the public sphere, although they suffered from “nomadismo nazionale” (National nomadism) since they were closer to the subjectivity of the exiles rather than to the rest of the local population. Soldani quoting Vittorio Emanuele Orlando (1906) says that “[t]he rights women enjoy are personal and not political. Like the foreigner, who enjoys civil rights, but not political rights”³⁸ (Soldani, *Prefazione* 11). However, numerous women saw in the unification of Italy a utopian aspiration for a better future in which they eventually became equal citizens.³⁹

The Risorgimento refers to a process in which aiming for a moral and civil national regeneration was entangled with a political, social and economic project of the same kind. These processes towards a modern nation impacted the whole communities and its individual members, including both men and women (Soldani 185). Women’s involvement in the events has been obscured or simply ignored from the historical picture of the era, yet a few scholars optimistically think that women have started to gradually appear in the historical accounts (Soldani, D’Amelia, Beales & Biagini).

³⁸ “I diritti di cui la donna gode sono personali e non politici. Come lo straniero, che gode dei diritti civili, e non di quelli politici”.

³⁹ Although not the subject of this investigation, during the post-unification and liberal period, Italian women possessed what can be named as a “dependent nationality” (Donati 38). In other words, women were deemed Italians only if their husbands were Italian, in spite of having been born inside the Italian Peninsula. At the time, if a woman’s place of birth was one of the Italian states but she married a foreigner, she automatically lost her own citizenship to gain the sole citizenship of her husband. That is, she was not allowed to retain dual citizenship. In some cases, under these policies, women became stateless or had no nationality to transmit to their children (Donati 39). These legal dynamics of exclusion that were explicitly designed against women show that their desire to become citizens was not necessarily in line with the primary objectives the founding fathers fought for in the modern project of the nation.

Some are of the opinion that women's fight for emancipation and to be recognised as citizens of their own country during the Risorgimento benefited from the widespread patriotic rhetoric and the individualistic liberal discourse (D'Amelia 115). As their texts and recovered stories demonstrate, women writers had a lot to say also regarding the implications of the process of national progress for them and for the rest of the population. In this respect, Simonetta Soldani asks from the very first lines of her essay *Il Risorgimento delle donne*, what did it mean for women to think themselves through the idea of broader national community and collective national identity? Did this patriotic language prove to be the right path to women's equality? The few resources and historical materials concerning women writers' involvement in the political activities and debates that permeated the Risorgimento can give us an insight on how they elaborated their gender politics and how they conceived their subjectivity in a period of transformation, upheavals and radical changes. Nevertheless, as recent opinions sustain, women's role in the Risorgimento, their incorporation in the narrations of revolutionary key events of the nineteenth century, is still the most neglected subject in the history of the country (Beales & Biagini 134).

Marina d'Amelia (d'Amelia), for instance, talks about the significance of "motherhood" as a female identity narrative during the Risorgimento. That is, to support the Italian nation-building project, people relied on patriotic narratives, something the movement in the Italian peninsula had in common with similar national projects around Europe (D'Amelia 116). Between the various models of femininity that appeared in the nineteenth century, the mother—in its various forms—was granted a distinct and authoritative position within the family. Women reached this level of power, as mothers, because their nurturing skills were pondered as indispensable for the national building project (D'Amelia 115-6). But also because, on a metaphorical level, the figure of the mother as well as the role played by her children could easily embody Italy itself. This means that the process of becoming a nation-state replicated the heteronormative model of the family. However, the position of authority of the mothers did not necessarily mean that they were granted any legal recognition as citizens, yet they received a social appraisal that had not been available to them before.

For some scholars, while the Risorgimento may have not necessarily signified the conquering of citizenship for women, it was a step forward in the recognition of their subjectivity. During the Risorgimento, women had the possibility of writing their "I" into social and political history (Tardiola 283). Nevertheless, women's almost complete exclusion from the public sphere, and their lack of access to fundamental civil rights did not change after the promulgation in 1865 of a new civil code. For this reason, the ideas promoted during the

Risorgimento, in a very subtle way, supported women's access to public life ("Soldani, Prefazione" 9-10). These patriotic ideas were shared and spread amongst women in the salons or "salotti", a sort of liminal space between the private and public spheres.

Nowadays, we have the possibility of hearing the voices of women who attempted to leave a trace at a time in which they essentially had no political or social rights (Dell'Abate-Çelebi 21). Women's contribution to the Risorgimento came in different forms. Some carried out military duties and even fought in the battlefields, other collaborated with people in prison or exiles and some became writers (Russos 178). Even though women's relationship with their country, their sense of national belonging, has always been problematic, their engagement with patriotic language and metaphors gives us an interesting viewpoint on how they managed to intervene, even figuratively, on political and patriotic endeavours (Soldani "Prefazione" 9-10).

2.7 Innocenza Ansuini Tondi: A writer in the inbetweenness of a nation

Del forte sesso vittima
Diseredata e oppressa
De' propri dritti vindice
Sorga la Donna anch'essa.
E che? Per sempre l'opera
Del Creator più bella
Dovrà restarsi Ancella?
(Ansuini Tondi, *Presente e Futuro*)

The poet Innocenza Ansuini Tondi (Ansuini Tondi) has been described in a biography written in the middle of the nineteenth century, which is part of the historical heritage of the Risorgimento kept by the *Museo Centrale del Risorgimento* in Rome, as follows,

Eroina per sublimità di abnegazione, patriota per amor di patria operosissimo grande per la fedeltà ad un' Idea che, come il suo patriottismo, non fu febbre di un momento, non ebbrezza passeggera, ma passione cosciente, vereconda, duratura (Giuseppe Bruni).⁴⁰

Likewise, Professor Onorato Roix in 1896 refers to Tondi Ansuini's poetry collection *Canti dell'Esule* as "Il libro è il sospiro appassionato e spesso il grido di un cuore di donna generoso e perseguitato". It is interesting regarding these intersections between gender and patriotism, the way in which the second description remarks the generous and persecuted female heart of the poet. These two examples serve to reflect on an important aspect when dealing with the female figures who participated in the Risorgimento. No matter how political women could be, even when they had leading positions, their contribution in favour of their country, if

⁴⁰ Archivio Albani, b. 1094.

acknowledged, is always ascribed to a traditional female script. It seems that the biographers needed to neutralize Ansuini Tondi's patriotic commitment with women's attributes to finally include her in the catalogue of historical figures of the Risorgimento.

The construction of these engendered ambiguous narratives for the support of the Italian nation-building project was something the movement had in common with similar national projects around Europe (D'Amelia 116). Nevertheless, Ansuini Tondi was definitely not the stereotypical patriotic woman in charge of sewing flags. According to the historical material available, Ansuini Tondi intervened directly and openly in political activities, exhibiting a transgressive model of patriotic womanhood. Her persona and literary works even attracted the attention of biographer Michele Rosi, who included Ansuini Tondi in *Dizionario del Risorgimento Nazionale* (1930;1936).

Ansuini Tondi was born in a wealthy family in Viterbo, on March 15th, 1829. As a few women during this period, she was able to receive a formal education, though the instruction she received was apparently rigid, conservative and markedly Catholic (CEOD). Moreover, an analysis of her poetical works shows that the author received instruction in classical knowledge, since she knew the traditional literary canonical genres and she was capable of making intertextual allusions to the literary classics. These references might have been a way to demonstrate that she had sufficient knowledge of the classics to compose poetry. Since the majority of women did not have access to a formal education, literature was out of reach of the female population. Besides, according to some scholars who have studied her poetical composition, Ansuini Tondi mastered the Italian language and she was able to transmit with literary artistry domestic affections, friendship, love and pain, but mostly her patriotism (Falcioni XLVI). Not by chance, she was known as "colta e gentile" (Marinucci 211).

Tondi Ansuini's access to a formal education put her in a position of privilege in front other women who were not allowed to acquire knowledge of any kind. Indeed, the high percentage of illiteracy in the Italian states shows that women's access to culture was limited, and that they were prevented from learning basic skills such as reading and writing (Mori 23). In the case of Ansuini Tondi, from very early in her life, she rejected the superficial religious devotion taught by the Catholic Church, and instead became an autodidact by reading –secretly-- the works of Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, Ugo Foscolo, Giacomo Leopardi and Dante Alighieri, including novels, patriotic hymns and Risorgimento poetry (Mancini XXVIII; Roux 8).

After fleeing with Ermenegildo Tondi (E. Tondi), a man nine years older than her, Ansuini Tondi got married. This happened when she was only 14 years old. Her husband was a member of the insurgent political group *Giovine Italia* and National Guard in Viterbo. Ansuini Tondi's

parents were against the marriage, and after the misbehaviour of their daughter, they distanced themselves from her and even decided to cut her out of their inheritance (Marinucci 209-10). According to Roux, after her marriage, she occupied her time between studying and taking care of her children, which made her acquire the reputation as “colta e gentile, e immensamente buona, massime verso i poveri e sofferenti” (8).

The reconstruction of Ansuini Tondi’s life has been possible thanks to the recovery of almost fifty letters (1860-1882) she addressed to her husband, who was living in exile, and to acquaintances of the couple. Other aspects of the political life of the poet are known from documents of the various legal procedures she faced for her active role in different attacks against the papal power in Viterbo. The biographical and historical sources available sustained that Ansuini Tondi took part in the conspiracies for the liberation of Viterbo. Under the excuse of organising recreational and literary gatherings, Ansuini Tondi, as other women of her time, had a protagonist role in political reunions. She hosted in her house volunteers and participants of the Garibaldian Committee for insurrection. The strategy of using the house’s *salotto letterario- ricreativo* (literary and recreational salon) became common in the Italian states (Marinucci 209).

Ansuini Tondi along with her husband E. Tondi was involved in three different attempts to free the city of Viterbo from the Papal State. The first attempt took place in 1849, the second in 1860, and during this time the papal soldiers were defeated, and an independent government was established in Viterbo. The liberation occurred after Ansuini Tondi with the collaboration of her daughter Adele Tondi organised a secret and unofficial poll for the annexation of Viterbo to the Savoy Kingdom. After overthrowing the Papal authority over the city, the French troops intervened and re-established the power of the Pope Pio IX. Following the revolt, E. Tondi to avoid the risk of being subjected to the death penalty, escaped first to Orbetello, and later to Orvieto. Ansuini Tondi, for her part, remained in Viterbo with her many children and took the lead of the revolutionary movement. She spent her nights placing and distributing propaganda, hoisting three-coloured flags and destroying the papal coat of arms (Marinucci 211).

In a letter Ansuini Tondi sent to her husband after his departure to exile, she narrates the arrival in Viterbo of approximately one thousand two hundred French men along with two hundred and fifty *Gendarmi* (French military) and Pontiffs. She describes the city of Viterbo as looking like a desert, there was deathly silence since all the population was hiding from the intruders. Part of her letter describing the events read as follows,

Eccoti le notizie del girone della tua partenza in poi. La mattina dell’undici circa il mezzo giorno fecero il loro ingresso I francesi, in numero di, milleduecento, e circa

duecentocinquanta Gendarmi, Pontefici e francesi. La Città era deserta del tutto, niuno alle fenestre, niuno per le vie. Un silenzio di morte. (CEOD, Letter 1)

In the same letter quoted above, she tells E. Tondi that she received news from Rome regarding French troops of about seventy thousand that occupied the peninsula up until the territory of Ancona. She narrates that more and more armed soldiers arrived in the region daily.

In a second letter Ansuini Tondi addressed to her husband a few days after the one mentioned before, she declares her concerns with the reprisals of the government against the population. She also says that several people who left Viterbo after the reappraisal are supposed to return from their exile. As a note of hope, she mentions the presumed arrival of Vittorio Emmanuelle to Napoli. Also, in the letter she indicates that the people in Montefiascone read a manifest in the name of Re Vittorio, wherein he speaks to the people of the South of Italy and claims to be in the process of achieving the will of the population concluding the revolutionary era. Ansuini Tondi wrote,

Credo vi sarà già noto l'ingresso di Vittorio Emanuello a Napoli; questa notizia riportata dal Giornale di Genova ha tranquillizzato gli animi dei più, fiduciando che dalla sistemazione delle cose colà; ne viene di conseguenza la caduta di Roma, e suo patrimonio. In montefiascone leggemo un manifesto a nome del Re Vittorio, diretto ai Popoli dell'Italia meridionale, nel quale dopo di aver vivamente dipinto la volontà che l'ha guidato negli affari d'Italia, li partecipa l'avanzamento delle sue truppe per rafforzare l'ordine e li esorta ad emettere liberamente la loro volontà, qualunque ella sia, essendo egli venuto per farla rispettare.

In regard to Ansuini Tondi's secret ballot, for which she was eventually condemned to permanent exile, a report from the police, quoted by Marinucci, reads as follow,

Viterbo 17 novembre 1860

Anche in Viterbo si è sparsa una vaga voce che clandestinamente si fosse fatta la votazione riportata poi dai periodici esteri. Assuntesi sul proposito le necessarie investigazioni, si è potuto risapere con qualche fondamento che si facesse clandestinamente col mezzo di una donna circolare un foglio per attaccar firme, e che quindi venisse dalla donna stessa portato in Orvieto (212).⁴¹

Ansuini Tondi is the woman the document describes as responsible for circulating the voting sheet and announcing the results of the proscribed poll against the Pope to the nearby city of Orvieto –the centre of political migration for exiles from Viterbo--. As a consequence of her involvement in these activities, the police came to her house one night with the intention of carrying out an arrest, but she convinced them to let her remain in the house. She said to the

⁴¹ ASRm, *Direzione generale di Polizia, Archivio segreto*, b. 581, fasc. 2254

police, “heroes, heroes, are you afraid of a woman and a boy?/“*Eroi, eroi, avete timore d’una donna e d’un bambino?!*” (Roux 10). After arguing with the police officers, they decided only to arrest her older son called Giovanni (Nino). In the fragment of a letter addressed to E. Tondi quoted below, she briefly describes the situation that ended with her house arrest.

Se mi hai amato e se mi ami ti scongiuro di non fare alcun imprudente passo che rovinerebbe me e Nino. Non posso dettagliarti tutto, ma il fatto è che presso molti validi impegni io non sarò tradotta in carcere, e forse domani mi si leveranno le guardie, e Nino ritornerà in casa presto. Se tu dunque facessi la menoma imprudenza sacrificheresti me ed il figlio. Pensa ache io in carcere ci vivrei pochi giorni. Se io ti sono cara obbedisci ciecamente. (CEOD Letter 28) (November 1860)

Here, in this letter, the patriotic poet asks E. Tondi to restrain himself from doing anything that could affect what she has obtained negotiating with the police. As the letter suggests, Ansuini Tondi was focused on avoiding having to spend time in prison and was trying to prevent her husband from intervening in what she had already accomplished. In a subsequent letter, written in December of the same year, she describes to E. Tondi,

Si tenta tutto per avere un’estracarcere per me e per Nino, o pure un’esilio. Stà tranquillo che io stò bene e spero presto riabbracciarti. Per carita non la più piccola imprudenza, sia anche di parole perche costi avete delle spie e si risà tutto [...]

P.S. Non puoi credere la premura di tutti i cittadini a mio favore, anche i nostri nemici mi hanno giovato molto (CEOD Letter 30)

Ansuini Tondi sent a request to a general director of the police, Monsignor Matteucci, in January 1861, in which she asked to be condemned together with her oldest son Giovanni to voluntary exile. In her petition and with the intention to avoid going to jail, she said to the officer she was in a delicate health condition and claim to be sole caregiver of her four children, including the one incarcerated for the same political reasons. Consequently, the apostolic delegate of Viterbo sent a report to Rome asking to prohibit Ansuini Tondi to live in the territory, therefore accepting her request for voluntary banishment. In this document, the delegate calls Ansuini Tondi and her son, “bad citizens according to the public opinion”/“*Ciò non toglie che la Tondi e suo figlio siano realmente pessimi soggetti, tali pure giudicati dalla pubblica opinion*”. The report ends with a recommendation to expell mother and son because they deemed “useful that this kind of people should stay away from this province, at least to avoid the propagation of subversive ideas”/ “*Io ritengo utile che questa razza di gente così esaltata stia lontana de questa Provincia, almeno si eviterà con questo la propagazione delle idee sovversive*” (Marinucci 42).

Asuini Tondi's petition to voluntarily leave the city was granted, and as requested, she was condemned to perpetual exile from the Papal State of Viterbo. After her expulsion of the territory, she reunited with her husband in Orvieto, where she continued to be involved in political activities. She kept communication with Giuseppe Mazzini, Giuseppe Garibaldi and with the people of the *Comitati d'Azione*.

The third and last attempt for the independence of Viterbo occurred in 1867, while Ansuini Tondi and her husband were expatriated. In this last action, she contributed to the military intervention in Viterbo by hosting volunteers in her house, and also by collaborating with the *Comitato Garibaldino*.

Amid the conflict between Cavour and the National Parliament and the intransigence of Napoleon III, who assumed the defence of the Holy See, the unification of the city and the province of Viterbo took place in 1870 (Mancini XXII). After the complete adhesion of Viterbo to Italy, Ansuini Tondi returned to the city with her family, where she supposedly was acclaimed as a heroine (Marunacci 220). Later, she moved to the chosen capital of the new Kingdom of Italy, Rome, aiming to improve the economic situation of the family. Ansuini Tondi died on the 30th of March 1896 in Rome.

After examining the biographical and historical conditions in which these four poets produced their literary works, we could now approach the writers' production without isolating them from the historical circumstances in which they emerged. We will see in the following chapters, how the climate of mobility and displacement, the war scenario in Europe, and the personal stories of the writers definitely played a central role in their compositions.

CHAPTER THREE:

Proto-Feminist Manifestos: Fictional and Biographical Prose writings

Both Mary Darby Robinson (Robinson) and Rosalía de Castro (De Castro), despite their differences as writers from quite distinct eras and geographic locations, engaged with proto-feminist arguments and provided a harsh critique of the patriarchal social norms and national systems of oppression which primarily affected them as women. The proto-feminist awareness of these authors is quite remarkable in the variety of literary genres they produced; however, in this chapter we will be examining their prose texts, which tend to offer their proto-feminist views⁴² in a less veiled manner than their poetic writings. We will be focusing the analysis on the following texts: Robinson's *A Letter to the women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination with Anecdotes* (1799); De Castro's poetic prose text *Lieders* (1858), the prologue to her first novel *La hija del mar* (1859), and the epistolary pamphlet *Las Literatas. Carta a Eduarda* (1865).

One might say that the mere presence today of women writers' works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continues to challenge basic assumptions concerning women's intellectual and cultural legacy.⁴³ The relatively recent discovery of a large number of women who took up the pen actively during this period in Britain, Italy, and Spain continues to change the contours of a literary history that has denied women writers a proper place as cultural producers. Apart from recognizing these authors' mastery of different literary genres including poetry, the specific interest in this chapter is to analyse their involvement in discussions regarding egalitarianism, women's subjectivity, and the possibility of conceiving themselves as citizens of their countries. Also, in this section we wish to underline these authors' active complaints against the exclusionary literary policies of their time, their desire for engendered radical changes in a male-dominated field, and the importance they placed on indicating the presence of female writers.

In this chapter, we will turn our attention from poetic texts to prose texts, with the intention of providing alternative viewpoints from which we can approach these authors' gender identity politics. In addition, the study of these prose texts may serve to develop a historical and

⁴² For the purpose of this investigation, the term *proto-feminism* is used to designate ideas that these writers promoted in which they challenged traditional gender roles and also questioned male privileges in the face of women's disenfranchisement. I have focused on these writers' ambition to obtain equal legal rights for women, their desire to acquire the same literary fame and recognition as their male associates, their involvement in making education accessible to all women, and their protest against women's physical and mental oppression.

⁴³ Anne K. Mellor in particular stated that the figure of the "female poet is explicitly political". The tradition of poetical dissent came to women writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century living in Britain from the textual productions of the "female preachers or prophets" who followed the Quaker Theology of the seventeenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century, women immersed in these Quaker circles were socially authorized by religion and by a progressive reading of the bible to speak out publicly (Mellor, "Women's Political Poetry" 70).

theoretical framework for the interpretation of the poetic texts in the following chapters. In a close reading of these prose writings, particular emphasis is placed on scrutinizing the way these authors negotiated with sexual difference, aiming to disrupt a restrictive idea of citizenship that generally excluded women in practice. These writings highlighted the long history of gender inequality and they constituted explicit social demands which continue to bolster a trans-historical and transnational tradition of feminist dissent. These texts did not, however, touch upon the migration and exile themes that are at the core of this research. For this chapter, the deliberately selected writings were known for giving emphasis to the authors' desire to obtain equal rights for women. They formulated arguments on the topic of sexual difference, and in which they protested against the social norms that played a central role in the endurance of a patriarchal society. While the poetic texts dealing with displacement addressed these same topics in a different way, the aim behind dealing with these prose works is to offer a different point of entry to explore their authors' gender awareness.

At the end of this chapter, a discussion of Robinson's and De Castro's practices of acknowledging female figures (ranging from artists and writers to religious and political characters) who interrogated gender norms and yet still achieved social recognition is provided. Seemingly, Robinson's and De Castro's prime objective, underlining women's role as cultural producers, was to challenge the way in which women had been depicted in historical writings. These practices of acknowledgement served to create counter-historical accounts in which women were protagonists, and on some occasions constituted self-declarations of the importance of women writers' own literary works to their readership.

3. 1 Envisaging women as citizens of the world

In education all the difference lies,
Women, if taught, would be as brave, as wise,
As haughty man, improv'd by arts and rules;
(Lady Mary Wortley Montagu qtd. in Robinson *A Letter* 66)

The 1790s saw a number of women taking up the pen in Britain as an act of resistance against the social policies and stereotypes which limited their possibility of being treated as equal citizens, in the full sense of the word. The vulnerability and susceptibility of the political scenarios in which they were immersed furnished opportunities for these writers to engage in a series of publications regarding women's social status in which they shifted the subject of male-oriented political arguments concerning universal rights to include women as the main protagonists. According to Anne K. Mellor (Mellor), these writers' activism took the form of

what we refer to today as ‘liberal feminism’ (“English Women” 255). By this is meant that these writers advocated “the equality and even the potential sameness of men and women” (255). Moreover, many of the ideas they promoted were elaborated within the paradigm of the bourgeois family, in which they usually demanded equal responsibility in the domestic sphere without advocating changing its structure. Thus, as Katherine Binhammer (Binhammer) has stated, in this period, hierarchical and partisan ideas about the meaning of sexual difference were substituted in some pro-feminist texts by views based on a concept of the ‘complementarity’ of the sexes, in which women were not seen as inferior, but simply different within the heteronormative family frame (669). After Wollstonecraft’s pioneering text, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) – one of the few proto-feminist texts that has acquired the recognition of a ‘Classic of Western Civilization’, some of her most illustrious followers included Mary Hays with an *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798), Mary Anne Radcliffe with *The Female Advocate* (1799), and our case in point, Mary Robinson, with *A Letter to the Women of England* (McInnes 479-480; Hunt Botting 4).

*A Letter to the Women of England*⁴⁴ (*A Letter*) was published in London in 1799. Robinson finished its composition a year before she died, while suffering from complete paralysis in the lower part of her body and living socially isolated at her daughter’s cottage in Englefield Green Surrey, England.⁴⁵ In the midst of these arduous circumstances, Robinson decided to send a strong and direct message to all the women of England, adding to her developments on the subject of women’s emancipation. This manifesto was not the kind of text written to improve the writer’s economic status or her popularity in the literary world; instead, its publication was a risky authorial move in the repressive British society of those days (Cross, “He-She philosophers” 56). Robinson seems to have had the objective of leaving this letter – in which she openly states her protest against women’s oppression – as a literary legacy to a female readership. As we pointed out in the previous chapter, she shared proto-feminist statements in *Memoirs* (1801) and in the essay *Present Manners* (1800) – both written almost at the same time as *A Letter*. In the first, among other things, Robinson tried to counteract the attacks she had received throughout her life for transgressing the limits of a socially accepted female sexuality. She also denounced her former partners’ abuses, such as the Prince of Wales’s

⁴⁴ Also known later in other editions as *Thoughts on the Condition of Women and on the Injustice of Mental Subordination*.

⁴⁵ During those years Robinson was impoverished, persecuted by creditors, and suffering from severe paralysis (Brewer 119).

sentimental desertion and his breach of a contract both had agreed to sign (Binhammer 672).⁴⁶ In the second text, *Present Manners*, through a cross-European and cosmopolitan perspective, she advocates, *inter alia*, the recognition of women writers' role in the circulation of knowledge in Britain. In *A Letter*, however, she abandons her personal story and her struggle as a public figure⁴⁷ and brings to the forefront "with the most undecorated language" a protest against the disenfranchisement of all the women in England (*A Letter* 41). Although Robinson had employed the epistolary form previously in novels and poetic compositions, this was the first time she decides to use this literary form in explicitly political writing (Setzer, "Introduction to *A Letter*" 22).

In *A Letter*, Robinson goes beyond her individual toil as a woman writer criticized by society for the way she transgressed conventional social norms of decorum and imagines a future in which women as group might become "citizens of the world"⁴⁸ (*A Letter* 91; Setzer, "Introduction to *A Letter*" 9). She did so in a climate of great debate regarding the extension of citizens' rights to women. Questions concerning the relationship between women and citizenship were current, not only in revolutionary France but in the rest of Western Europe, within the framework of the "democratic revolutions" (Gay Levy & Applewhite 79). This was a time when discussions on the rights of men began to dispute the possibility of imagining women as co-citizens in the development of a new political order for the nation.

Thus, Robinson's *A Letter* exposes some of the gender debates and proto-feminist activism that were taking place at the end of the 18th century in Britain. In this social and political context, sexual difference attracted special attention, and women writers who entered the public sphere to address this issue were trying to subvert well-established notions of womanhood. For instance, in elaborating her strong proto-feminist declarations, Robinson abandoned poetic ornate words – considered part of a female language – for a stark, straightforward message. Robinson fervently asserted:

⁴⁶ Robinson and the Prince of Wales agreed that the latter would pay Robinson a sum of £20,000 in exchange for her company. After one year of the affair, the Prince abandoned Robinson and refused to make the promised payment (Binhammer 672).

⁴⁷ In this non-personal approach, she is seemingly following Wollstonecraft's words in *Rights of Woman* when she says that, "I plead for my sex—not for myself" (21).

⁴⁸ In the course of these years, cosmopolitan ideas in which new ways of belonging were transmitted informed the proto-feminism of British writers as well (Brekke 30). Moreover, passages contained in this type of discourse during the revolutionary years, such as "the citizen of the world", were penned by women writers who "challenged the gendered order implied in the radicals' plea for the 'rights of man'" (Brekke 58). For example, Helen Maria Williams – a contemporary author of Robinson – used the metaphor of "citizen of the world" in her 1790 essay *Letters written in France* (in Craciun "Introduction" 1).

“How comes it, that in this age of reason we do not see statesmen and orators selecting women of superior mental acquirements as their cohorts? Men allow that women are absolutely necessary to their happiness, and that they ‘had been brutes’ without them”.
(*A Letter* 14)

Robinson deems that in the alleged ‘age of reason’, British men should share the public sphere with the other half of the population. She claims that, according to the general belief, women had been endowed with the capacity to make men happy, so she asks why they were forbidden to share other realms with men besides the domestic one. Robinson was following Wollstonecraft’s words very closely when she condemns the irrational way in which half of the ‘human race’ had been excluded from political participation (*A Letter* 46; Wollstonecraft 22). Thus, *A Letter* illustrates how an English feminist writer and a follower of Mary Wollstonecraft cleverly managed the emerging discourses of equality that profoundly influenced British feminism during the revolutionary years. The growing individual male notion of citizenship which the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and Citizen* (1789) brought was intensely contested by women writers who set out to change its exclusive, biased implications (Brekke 40). They saw in the *Declaration* a hopeful occasion for radical and progressive political changes that could have an impact on the whole of humanity (Gay Levy & Applewhite 79).

Despite the fact that, linguistically, the word ‘citizen’ is a gender-neutral term linked to the broader category of humans, during this period this was not the case in practice nor was it interpreted or implemented in a general fashion to include women. In a best-case scenario, women were considered “educators of future citizens” but never citizens in their own right (Gay Levy & Applewhite 80). Which is why Wollstonecraft “loudly demand[ed] justice for one half of the human race” (*A Vindication* 24). The critical conversations that began with the emergence of the *Declaration* served as a point of departure to elaborate counter-discourses for women writers who envisaged other possibilities to redefine the concept of citizenship.⁴⁹

Significant for the rights of humankind was protection of the autonomous and inviolable private self, to the fore in the idea of every human being’s natural rights. This conception of the self justified aspects of capitalism whose core was the ownership of property; but also radical arguments for universal liberty and equality that became widely influential in various revolutions at the end of the century (Kirkpatrick 5). However, the definition of ‘universal’ was fairly restricted to national boundaries and did not envisage an androgynous cosmopolitan

⁴⁹ The idea of citizenship that women aspired to, included the social recognition of their subjectivity.

citizen for whom gender was irrelevant to the exercising of full citizenship.⁵⁰ The sexual norms of the British nation did not conceive women as citizens and took to the idea of universal citizenship even less warmly. Which is why Robinson asks in *A Letter* a very profound but simple rhetorical question: “is not woman a human being, gifted with all the feelings that inhabit the bosom of man?” (43).

Robinson’s prose and poetry can be seen within a literary movement promoting republican ideas in opposition to the strong wave of British patriarchal nationalism⁵¹ that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century (Craciun, “Radical Politics” 65). Writers such as Robinson and Smith did not find a way to obtain egalitarian citizenship in nationalist discourses; on the contrary, they felt exiles amid a torrent of fervent nationalism. Put differently, these writers found that to pursue equality, a better road was to seek women’s access to the public sphere as citizens of the world, rather than seeking it in that rhetoric of British ‘national belonging’ so celebrated in those times (Keane qtd. in Craciun, “Introduction” 14).

Within the context of discussions on the equality of the sexes, Robinson was forced to deal with the incongruities of supposedly “universal” natural rights. Women writers in general used the same egalitarian and liberal political language and rationality to fight back against monarchical establishments supposedly established by divine authority. Using this same language, they elaborated claims against the dictatorship of the patriarchal system (Kirkpatrick 5). Accordingly, it is no coincidence that Robinson, in *A Letter*, quotes Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as saying that women’s “charms a monarch may enslave” (67).

Certainly, Robinson’s arguments were consonant with the proto-feminism of the late eighteenth century, which consisted in imagining a “genderless individual endowed with natural rights”, a discourse flexible enough to include women, and grounded on a central Republican postulate (Scott, *The Fantasy* 102). However, the prevalent discriminatory interpretation of the doctrine of natural rights conceived the notion of ‘citizen’ as if it automatically implied a male subject only. Evidently, the adoption of ‘equality language’ for women’s identity politics contributed to a complex conundrum for proto-feminist women writers. On the one hand, women who decided to pursue the path towards equal rights were obliged to recur to their identity as women in order to be perceived as a united group with a collective force. On the other, they needed to elaborate arguments that contravened the

⁵⁰ The current idea of Planetarism, which some scholars such as Susan Stanford Friedman have coined, neglects the implications of the ‘universal’ concept as it has been employed in the Western world often using a Eurocentric perspective.

⁵¹ Craciun states that the ardent and moreover visible British nationalism had been driven by the revolutionary wars with France since 1793 (“Introduction” 13).

exclusion of any individual based on specific physical and sexual traits. Robinson's text is a fine example of these discrepancies in the proto-feminist activism of the late eighteenth century, since she focused on women as a homogenous and marginalized group distinct from men, while advocating the erasure of their gender differences.

In the case of these women writers, and specifically in Robinson's *A Letter*, it is also crucial to bear in mind – besides the historical implications of the Republican and egalitarian discourses – the way they fluently changed and played with categories such as 'women', 'sexual distinction', and 'citizenship'. Throughout Robinson's text, the meaning of these concepts diverges depending on the circumstances in which she employed them. In the discussion on feminist historiography developed earlier in the first chapter, we mentioned the problem of using concepts such as 'gender', 'women', and 'men' as if they could remain unalterable and unchangeable throughout time and space. As Joan Scott (Scott) has stated, these historical and theoretical terms cannot be considered as having a fixed meaning, and instead, need to be problematized continuously and read according to the circumstances in which they were (and are) used. For Scott, the implications of these terms change in keeping with the geopolitical and temporary context we are dealing with, but in addition, they need to be understood along with other key categories of analysis such as race and class.

To take an example, British women writers – such as Robinson and Wollstonecraft – in their struggle to obtain their political objectives, which included obtaining equal rights and ultimately becoming citizens, needed to exploit a strong engendered collective identity. These writers opted to call women⁵² a cohesive group that suffered similar discrimination in order to transmit their strong message against a country that was neglecting them. Their efforts to create cohesion between women involved constructing their womanhood using physical traits and biological associations. This strategy of sexual distinction was indeed a complex and problematic response to the imagery of the white male British citizen.

As the title suggests, Robinson's text takes an epistolary form and is addressed to the "Women of England". The author's intention to strengthen female solidarity explains why *A Letter* is directed to an audience with a sexual and national distinction, i.e. "to the Women of England". Robinson also refers to her addressees as the "enlightened countrywomen" and

⁵² As Scott has pointed out, the term 'women', even when employed along with other categories, usually harks back to a biological reference, which serves to create and support a collective identity which acquires different meanings and purposes over time (Scott, *The Fantasy* 10).

“unenlightened country-women”, depending on the arguments she is putting forward (*A Letter* 3, 93). The author expresses in the first lines:

I shall remind my enlightened country-women that they are not the mere appendages of domestic life, but the partners, the equal cohorts of man: and, where they excel in intellectual powers, they are no less capable of all that prejudice and custom have united in attributing, exclusively, to the thinking faculties of man”. [...] “I argue thus, and my assertions are incontrovertible. (3)

In this introductory paragraph, she reminds the educated (enlightened) women that they are partners of men in every matter, including mental attributes. An assertion that she believes irrefutable. In contrast, at the end of her text, Robinson urges, “my unenlightened country-women! read, and profit, by the admonition of Reason. Shake off the trifling, glittering shackles, which debase you.” (*A Letter* 93). The author changes her way of approaching women as a group, instead of exalting their mental attributes and their equal status as “enlightened women”, she accentuated women’s condition of illiteracy and exhorted them to use knowledge as a tool for empowerment and liberation. Although in both quotations Robinson uses different adjectives to refer to English country-women – enlightened or otherwise – the relevance of knowledge for the aspiration of an equal status with men was key to her argument from the beginning to the end of her text.

Robinson’s decision to write *A Letter* had powerful “socio-political implications”, particularly if we consider the revolutionary atmosphere surrounding the period when her text was published (Rooney 360). Robinson explicitly chose a traditionally politicised form destined precisely for political discourses. Clearly, this author has no fear of the consequences that her political tract might bring, since the selection of the literary form (a letter) associated with political discourses and the “undecorated” and “incontrovertible” language she employs leaves nothing to the imagination. Some scholars have stated that as a consequence of the numerous women that became authors during the Romantic period, writing was becoming a non-political arena. Thus, women writers were caught in a conundrum, between declaring themselves openly political by using explicit content or by choosing to write in an overtly political mode (Ross 94). This might be one of the reasons why Robinson decided to exploit the epistle form instead of a less political literary mode to send a direct political message to the “women of England”.

Indeed, Robinson's choice of genre tainted the text with a political message.⁵³ Within the conventional binary conception in this period of the epistolary genre – which included women's love letters or men's political epistles – she chose to occupy a male-dominated field with her proto-feminism. In selecting to write in an epistolary form she followed the models of revolutionary political writings, a genre that was principally dominated by male writers. Another reason for this choice might have been the format that a letter has, that is to say, it provides an open democratic platform on which a multivocal dialogue can take place. A letter encourages “the open exchange of ideas, suggesting that Robinson's choice of genre is, in and of itself, indicative of her progressive politics” (Rooney 360). As Tone Brekke has asserts – referring to Helen Maria Williams, an author who also employed the epistolary form for a political text – this genre brings the public into the domestic arena, into those intimate spaces where feelings play a central role (41).

Moreover, Robinson's selection of the epistolary genre might also be read as a challenging way of depicting herself as an “epistolary woman”, a paradigm arising out of the idea of women's inclination to write emotional love letters (Setzer, “Introduction *A Letter*” 22). Robinson subverted the stereotypical female version of the epistolary genre, whose leading focus was on individual emotions, to encourage women to combat the system of oppression that was subordinating them, and to use the pen as a political tool for their emancipation. Robinson's decision to write a letter as a woman for a large female audience – while promoting the equality of the sexes – was undeniably a destabilizing act. In a conservative Britain, openly declaring the intention of starting a revolution against the social patriarchal dynamics legitimized by the political establishment was an act that only a courageous and politically committed writer could perform.

Robinson's statements were principally intended for English (British) women as she stated in the title and introduction of her pamphlet. However, we can find throughout the text various assertions that make us believe that she was addressing her words to a broader audience which included men and particularly learned men. Robinson added a note to her text in which she urges her male readers to change their behaviour towards women: “Read this, ye English fathers and husbands, and retract your erroneous opinions, respecting female education.” (*A Letter* 58). Moreover, her words of protest clearly go directly to men who contribute to women's condition of inequality by denying them access to a formal education, and

⁵³ Markman Ellis states that “the choice of genre [a]ffects not only how something is said, but also what is said, and to whom.” (Rooney 360).

consequently maintaining a system of subordination against them. Robinson opines, “What first established, and then ratified this oppressive, this inhuman law? The tyranny of man; who saw the necessity of subjugating a being, whose natural gifts were equal, if not superior to his own.” (*A Letter* 55)

Robinson claims that it was specifically the domestic space, in which men-engendered subjugation against women took place that needed to be reformed. In her text, Robinson refers to husbands as oppressors, – the antagonistic term for protectors – who “controlled, perverted, and debased” women (*A Letter* 42). Robinson challenges the domestic sphere in which women are obliged to dedicate all their time and efforts in the service of their families. She rejects the prevailing idea that if women devoted their time to intellectual undertakings – activities which men freely employed their time for – they would eventually neglect their “domestic drudgery” (*A Letter* 46). This general opinion was for Robinson an unjustified excuse to prevent women from receiving a proper education and participating in the public sphere. In Robinson’s proposed family model, women could be wives but also men’s “cohorts” (*A Letter* 46). Otherwise stated, fulfilling household responsibilities should not prevent women from playing an active role as citizens together with men. In this aspect of her political project, Robinson continued to follow Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication* when the latter affirmed that for women “the first duty is to themselves as rational creatures”. (Wollstonecraft qtd. in Craciun “Introduction” 21). Robinson does not focus on women’s nurturing role in the family, on the contrary, she mainly states that even though women were supposed to be in charge of domestic responsibilities, men should not deny them the possibility of becoming equal citizens. Her views on this matter were rather distant from, for example, Smith’s affective motherhood perspective in *The Emigrants*, in which a maternal ethic of care takes a predominant role. For Robinson, women should be citizens first and wives and mothers second. Robinson avers that a woman should “know that she was created for something beyond the mere amusement of man; that she is capable of mental energies, and worthy of the most unbounded confidence” (*A Letter* 82).

Women writers’ struggles with patriarchal British society also brought, to a certain extent, the challenge of whether their access to power would cause a “social reform” or they would eventually become as corrupt as men (Ross 91). Put in other terms, it was not clear for these female radical writers if the correct path for women to access the public sphere was to use men’s fickle discourses, which had invariably ended in episodes of violence and authoritarian regimes, or to discursively distinguish themselves from men’s patriarchal voice in the public sphere. To solve this dilemma, for her part, Robinson envisages women as capable of managing

power better than their male cohorts. She states that education would only improve women's powers and would not unsex them (*A Letter* 65).

In her advocacy for women's equality, Robinson applies the dichotomous conception of the separate spheres – public and private – to underline women's exclusion from political life. Robinson mentions the word “sphere” in the first paragraph of *A Letter* when she exhorts, “Let WOMAN once assert her proper sphere, unshackled by prejudice, and unsophisticated by vanity; and pride, (the noblest species of pride) will establish her claims to the participation of power, both mentally and corporeally.” (41) This conception of the separate sphere was useful for Robinson to highlight the gender norms that prevented women from exercising active citizenship.

The separate sphere ideology has proved significant for historians dealing with gender matters in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when the theoretical and philosophical emergence of this concept took place (Shoemaker 305). Indeed, the period when Robinson wrote *A Letter* was marked by the dualistic idea of separate spheres inhabited by men and women. Women were generally positioned in the private domestic sphere⁵⁴, while men occupied the public sphere in which they could “participate of power [sic]” (*A Letter* 3). In her many texts, Robinson seeks to enter the prohibited sphere. At the time, literature used to occupy the “public sphere of political action” and consequently provoked anxiety among Robinson's fellow male citizens, who assumed that this space was solely intended for them (McInnes 483). Nevertheless, after critical works had been produced on this concept of the separate sphere during the Romantic period, various scholars revisited the public/private dichotomies to expand the definition and incorporate new understandings of the gender dynamics of the time.

Seemingly, the scholar Anne K. Mellor (Mellor) is of the opinion that during the Romantic Era women had a very active participation in what has been defined as the public sphere, “[t]hey openly and frequently published their free and reasoned opinions on an enormous range of topics” (“Public Sphere” 2-3). For this scholar, women's involvement in the public sphere was real, and not restricted to the print media. Women actively contributed on diverse platforms with their well-informed opinions and knowledge. Thus, the separate spheres in Britain during the Romantic Period did not completely preclude women's participation in the public realm,

⁵⁴ Mellor states that in the late eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, many historians agreed on the presence of the “doctrine of the separate spheres” in which, according to gender rules, women occupied the private “domestic realm of the family”, along with the world of emotions. On the other hand, men were active participants in the “public realm of government and commerce” (“Introduction” 1)

nor their reaction against the discriminatory policies that interfered with their intervening in political discussions.

While in *A Letter*, Robinson employs the dichotomist idea of separate spheres to reinforce her arguments regarding women's subordination, she also "connects the emergence of female literary authorship with the suppression of female subjectivity" (Rooney 362). Thus, although Robinson affirms that women were constantly allocated to the domestic sphere, this confinement has also provoked the emergence of enlightened women who decided to take up the pen to exercise their mental strength. Robinson asserts:

The embargo upon words, the enforcement of tacit submission, has been productive of consequences highly honourable to the women of the present age. Since the sex have been condemned for exercising the powers of speech, they have successfully taken up the pen: and their writings exemplify both energy of mind, and capability of acquiring the most extensive knowledge. (*A Letter* 90-91).

Undeniably, literature is described by Robinson as a powerful means for women to prove society wrong in its practice of excluding them from equal participation in the public sphere. The restrictions imposed on women, and the belief in their mental inferiority, had awoken in them a desire to cultivate their literary capabilities as a way of destabilising the widespread discriminatory assumptions concerning their sex. On this subject, Ashley Cross (Cross) argues that Robinson considered the importance of knowledge, reading, and writing as appropriate instruments to subvert the sphere to which women had been constrained by patriarchy (Cross, "He—She" 57). Cross asserts that these intellectual tools were, according to Robinson, indispensable for women's emancipation.

Like many other contemporary women writers of the 1790s, in *A Letter* Robinson replicates Mary Wollstonecraft's views, particularly those developed in the author's *A Vindication*. Robinson's letter is a radical proto-feminist manifesto which honours her most recent precursor, a writer "whose death has not been sufficiently lamented, but to whose genius posterity will render justice" (*A Letter* 41). Robinson was not the only woman writer who paid homage to Wollstonecraft. For instance, although in a different manner, Charlotte Smith in the preface to her novel *The Young Philosopher* (1798) also regrets the death of Mary Wollstonecraft. In the midst of various accusations of plagiarism, she mentions that Wollstonecraft was a "Writer whose talents I greatly honoured, and whose untimely death I deeply regret; from her I should not blush to borrow, and if I had done so I would have acknowledged it" (Boyd 162).

Overall, *A letter* is a defiant tribute to Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), in which Robinson mourns the latter – who had died two years before its publication – by emulating her

predecessor's political style, genre, and ideological arguments. Yet Robinson does so critically and in her own unique manner. As she clearly states in one of her authorial notes to the text:

“The writer of this letter, though avowedly of the same school, disdains the drudgery of servile imitation. The same subject may be argued in a variety of ways; and though this letter may not display the philosophical reasoning with which ‘The Rights of Woman’ abounded; it is not less suited to the purpose,” (*A Letter* 41)

On the very first page of the pamphlet, Robinson takes a political stance affirming that her country had not properly acknowledged Wollstonecraft's talents, nor has she yet acquired the status she deserved. In addition, Robinson proclaimed: “[f]or it requires a legion of Wollstonecrafts to undermine the poisons of prejudice and malevolence” (41).⁵⁵ Through these opening remarks, Robinson set the tone for the rest of her tract, in which she recognised Wollstonecraft as a prominent intellectual figure and her philosophy as an antidote against social injustices. *A Letter* was Robinson's continuation of Wollstonecraft's political project, but also an acknowledgement of Robinson's devotion to the late author during a period in which her reputation was marred. However, even though Robinson was a follower of Wollstonecraft's text and persona, her tract differs from the latter and from many other proto-feminist pamphlets of her time, such as the ones penned by Mary Hays, Priscilla Wakefield, Mary Ann Radcliffe and others, in her emphasis on the “literary women”, a figure who, according to the author, was capable of changing the social system of sexual inequality (Cross, “He-She” 57).

At the time when *A Letter* was published (1799), the deceased Wollstonecraft was the object of many cruel and violent critiques as a consequence of her husband's publication in 1798 of a biographical text entitled *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in which he disclosed controversial aspects of her private life. In that period, when even renowned women writers such as Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821), who shared Wollstonecraft's vision, distanced themselves from her personal choices, Robinson unreservedly displayed her admiration for the author (Cross, “Vindicating” 138-139).⁵⁶ Robinson's response to

⁵⁵ In the *Gentlemen's Magazine* (1799) the text was negatively criticized as a “confusion of idea”, a fragment of the review in the journal reads as follows:

“In the general confusion of ideas, religious, moral, and political, we are not surprised to find claims set up for the female sex, unsupported we must say by prescription, but we are justified in saying by reason. Mrs. R. avows herself of the school of Wollstonecraft [sic]; and that is enough for all who have any regard to decency, order, or prudence, to avoid her company.” (*The Gentleman's Magazine* in Cross *He-She* 56).

⁵⁶ In the previous text discussed, *Present State of the Manners*, in regard to Mary Wollstonecraft Robinson expressed the following considerations: “The monumental tablet (placed by the hand, and bedewed by the tears, of friendship) points out the tomb of Mrs. Wollstonecraft Godwin; yet illiberal malice and unmanly abuse has

Wollstonecraft's posthumous defamation reverberated with yet another of her primary concerns, the inclusion of women's contribution, particularly women writers' works, into the literary history of Britain. To this end, she attempts to counter vicious attacks on women's reputation that had been used to dismiss their position as cultural producers. Therefore, Robinson promotes a spirit of solidarity among women by extending her vindication of Wollstonecraft's figure and her proto-feminist political project to all the women writers in Britain, including herself (Cross, "Vindicating" 141). As regards the aspect of reputation and posterity, it is important to point out that Robinson started composing her autobiographical narratives – which later developed into her memoirs – immediately after Godwin's publication of Wollstonecraft's biography (Setzer 10). As we observed in the previous chapter, Robinson's decision to write the accounts of her life in her own terms in *Memoirs* could have been a way of preventing others from damaging her image, as it happened to Wollstonecraft.

3.2 From Perdita to Anne Frances Randall

Robinson publishes *A Letter* using the pen name Anne Frances Randall. Literary scholars maintain different hypotheses on Robinson's decision to sign this pamphlet with the name of a fictitious author, also because by that time she had published other works using her own name without disguising her authorship (Arnold 738). Daniel Robinson (D. Robinson) argues that this particular pseudonym played a different role from other pen names used by the "chameleonic" Mary Robinson. According to this scholar, by using the name of Anne Frances Randall, Robinson wishes to create an "illusion of impartiality" in her practice of recognising great historical female figures (D. Robinson, "The English Sapho" 114). This might be better understood if we take into account that Robinson in her pamphlet, besides mentioning the names of exemplary women to prove her arguments on women's worth, also included, along with *A Letter*, a "List of British Female Literary Characters Living in the Eighteenth Century" (86). The list Robinson added to the tract includes "many prominent bluestockings, novelists, and poets, as well as writers who had also generated essays on women's issues such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah More, Mary Hays, and Catherine Macaulay" (86). Robinson added her own name to the list: "Robinson, Mrs. – Poems, Romances, Novels, a Tragedy, Satires, &c.

disgraced the pages of literature; while it failed to sully the treasures of mental splendour, which this illustrious woman has bequeathed to posterity." (117)

&c.” (87) This means that Robinson’s strategy of creating a permanent record of great literary women would not have been complete without upholding her own fame as a writer.

Another hypothesis related to Robinson’s use of a pen name – which does not necessarily exclude the aforementioned suppositions – is the one Amy Culley (Culley) asserts. This scholar posits that Robinson employed the name Anne Frances Randall to prevent her already-damaged reputation from interfering with the reception of the text (Culley, “The Literary” 114). This was due to the fact that Robinson knew the value of reputation perfectly well and how it had played against her desire for a female community. As we noted earlier, like Wollstonecraft, Robinson herself experienced the rejection of various fellow female writers, such as Charlotte Smith, because of her inability to follow the rigid rules of a ‘proper’ femininity.

In *A Letter*, Robinson attempts to address the lack of knowledge of female historical figures and the women writers’ legacy, by envisaging a way to strengthen a collective female identity that could offer mutual support. To this end, Robinson preferred to use the name of Anne Frances Randall, “a fictitious woman with no reputation”, instead of her own name to prevent biased judgements against her letter (Culley, “The Literary” 114). As I already pointed out, Robinson was particularly concerned about this aspect of authorship, and in various texts, including her essay *Present State of the Manners*, she declared that authors were immortalised by reputation (115). She was aware that the people of England were more interested in unjustified and malicious attacks and preferred to ignore a lengthy list of women who had enriched the country’s cultural heritage:

England may enumerate, at the present era, a phalanx of enlightened women, such as no other nation ever boasted. Their writings adorn the literature of the country; they are its ornaments, as they ought to be its pride! But they are neglected, unsought, alienated from society; and secluded in the abodes of study; or condemned to mingle with the vulgar. (115)

Robinson notices that in other countries such as France, even under despotism, the work of intellectuals, including “men as well as women of letters”, was praised (Robinson, *Present State* 116). A further explanation, which supports the two previous hypotheses in regard to her use of the pen name, is that the name Anne Frances Randall has a different impact than the other pseudonyms used by Robinson in previous works, as it alone took the form of a ‘real’ name. Robinson tried to make her readers believe it was an unknown writer who was advocating women’s rights; whereas the other names Robinson had employed for her former literary works, such as ‘Sappho’, ‘Laura Maria’, and ‘Portia’, were clearly pseudonyms (Hodson, “The Strongest” 97). In the same year as the first publication of *A letter*, Robinson

reissued the text under a new title *Thoughts on the Condition of Women* and revealed her identity as the author of the work (Sodeman 179).

The literary imagination of writers such as Robinson played a significant role in influencing readers by pointing out the injustices of a society that has treated women for centuries as property and not as individuals. Robinson states that women were no less capable in intellectual endeavours, since it was “prejudice and custom” that had made people believe in their inferiority. For Robinson, as for other women writers, literature was a tool for feminist politics and the idea of a woman as an author represented a way of rethinking women’s traditional roles. Indeed, in *A Letter* Robinson presents a manifesto in favour of the figure of the literary woman, a female author who could aspire to develop progressively a masculine mind (Cross, “He-She Philosophers” 55). Robinson’s literary proto-feminism was not without its challenges; writing about and promoting female equality necessarily created many paradoxes regarding sexual difference.

3.3 Negotiating with sexual difference in *A Letter*

Yet, such is the force of prejudice,
the law of custom, against woman, that she is expected
to act like a philosopher, though she is not allowed to think like one
(Robinson, *A Letter* 76)

In Britain, sexual differences were based on ideas belonging to the binary domains of masculine and feminine; this was evident in every aspect of social and political life. Citizenship was shaped within the confines of physical traits, and moreover by the implications that had historically defined the body in mutually exclusive binary ways. Additionally, women’s sexual difference was defined in negative terms, that is to say, focusing on what the female body lacked as opposed to what it was capable of. Arguments against women’s citizenship were grounded on the idea that “women were by nature unfit to exercise political rights” (Scott, “A Woman” 103). Wollstonecraft specifically mentioned that “either nature has made a great difference between man and man, or the civilization which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial.” (29)

To advance her cause for women while clearly continuing the ideological and cultural critique of her predecessor Wollstonecraft, in *A Letter* Robinson exposes the irrationality of some of the discourses used to refuse women access to full citizenship rights and to hinder their entry into the public sphere. Robinson managed to fluctuate between favouring the idea of a universal citizenship that included women – a position in which sexual difference disappeared

– to arguments in which she instead emphasises sexual distinction. In this constant negotiation concerning sexual differences, she sometimes reproduces the ideas she herself intends to eradicate in the first place. In this way, Robinson's text reveals how the discourses used to promote women's equal rights were malleable and full of incongruities, unable to specifically categorize within a binary identity politics of sameness or difference. As the feminist historian Scott has stressed, during the revolutionary years, women needed to work with the paradoxes of rejecting the existence of a sexual difference which excluded them from the public sphere, while expressing their sexual difference to invoke their collective identity.

Robinson also employs the term "sexual distinction" to describe the differences that render women's social inequality possible. According to her text, women's condition of subordination is based on the "profane" belief "that an all-wise Creator sends a creature into the world, with a sexual distinction, which shall authorise the very extent of mortal persecution" (Robinson, *A Letter* 16-17). Here, Robinson portrays sexual distinction as something given by God, and shows the irreverent nature of believing that divinity consented oppression to its own creatures. Later in the text, Robinson states, "I will boldly assert that there is something peculiarly unjust in condemning woman to suffer every earthly insult while she is allowed a sex; and only permitting her to be happy when she is divested of it" (*A Letter* 48).

Additionally, Robinson claims that religion had traditionally oppressed women who had also been tortured and killed under the accusation of witchcraft, more frequently than men, by people called Christians, who for Robinson were, instead, merely a "pampered priest" or a "superstitious idiot" (*A Letter* 66). For the poet, in the same way that women who transgressed the established religious order were prosecuted as witches, women philosophers were constantly demonized for their interference in matters belonging to the public sphere (Craciun, "Female Philosophers" 38). This might be the reason why Robinson uses the example of witches to demonstrate how and why brave and learned women have always been discriminated against.

Thus, Robinson heavily criticises religious bigotry and hypocrisy which, while justifying humankind's sinfulness, had committed countless acts of violence against innocent women. She distances herself from the Christian approach which some contemporary women writers used for their political tracts, such as Hannah More (1745-1833), in which the evangelical moral lesson for a better society was at the centre of their ideological project (Craciun, "Female Philosophers" 33). Robinson, on the contrary, seemed to reject any references to the possibility of social improvement through the means of religion or traditional morals. Instead of reforming

the British social patriarchal order, the latter were fundamental in keeping women in a state of social subordination.

Of course, women were not the only group with a marginal status and excluded from the definition of citizen, since the notion of citizenship was restricted exclusively to white men, an identity derived from a racial, gendered, and privileged representation of the body (Scott, *A Woman* 103). As Joan Scott has stated,

“For women, the legacy of the French Revolution was contradictory. On the one hand the unit of national sovereignty was declared to be a universal, abstract, rights-bearing individual; on the other hand, this human subject was almost immediately given particularised embodiment as a man.” (*A Woman* 102)

Accordingly, Jane Hodson remarks that the intense debates about the universality of rights were directed to the “rights of men”, in which the assumed majority of the participants were indeed men (90). Even Wollstonecraft’s and Robinson’s earliest texts – *A Vindication* (1790) and *Impartial Reflections* (1791) – concerning the issue of universal rights, were assumed to have been written by male writers (90). This aspect of reception complicated Robinson’s task of addressing access to universal rights for women from a woman’s perspective. She found herself in a situation in which she needed to appeal to sexual difference in order to attract her audience (the women of England) and to strengthen her claims, while at the same time she aspired to erase the gender difference that prevented women from becoming citizens.

Most of Robinson’s assertions in *A Letter* are directed to confront widespread beliefs about woman’s mental and bodily weakness. Robinson asks rhetorically: “In what is woman inferior to man? In some instances, but not always, in corporeal strength: in activity of mind, she is his equal” (*A Letter* 48). Robinson’s statements were influenced by popular discourses of the period in which the mind was supposed to be sexless. This notion of the “unsexed mind” emerged in the midst of the rise of egalitarian ideas – in which sex had nothing to do with a person’s rational capacity but had more to do with access to a formal education (Binhammer 674). While women and men had an equal mind, they experienced social inequality. In this context, a “masculine woman” was used to describe one “of enlightened understanding” (*A Letter* 74).

In Robinson’s *A Letter* neither the mind nor the soul has a sex⁵⁷. Developing this idea further, she brings to the reader’s attention that in the past we could find cases of important male figures who shared their knowledge with both women and men, as was the case of Cicero,

⁵⁷ The soul and the mind were often synonyms in this period (Binhammer 675).

who “did not confine the attribute of Reason to sex” (*A Letter* qtd. in Binhammer 675). Robinson sustains her case for women’s education by pointing out that the mind of a woman was equally capable of acquiring knowledge like any other person, but men’s desire to subjugate women had prevented them from fully developing their intellectual powers. For Robinson, gender differences are the result of prejudices and stereotypes whose ultimate goal is to keep women socially oppressed. She argues:

Let these mental despots recollect, that education cannot unsex a woman; that tenderness of soul, and a love of social intercourse, will still be hers; even though she become a rational friend, and an intellectual companion. She will not, by education, be less tenacious of a husband’s honour; though she may be rendered more capable of defending her own. (*A Letter* 65)

The term “unsexed” was also employed by conservative writers to refer negatively to women writers who tried to occupy a position which, according to the social norms, was only available to men. For example, the writer Richard Polwhele in his polemical text, *The Unsex’d Female*, treats radical women writers such as Robinson, Charlotte Smith and Mary Wollstonecraft as over-sexualized for having dared to express opinions of their own (Binhammer 675).

As we have seen, education was at the core of Robinson’s proto-feminist project. If women had no access to a proper education, they would continue to be unable to exercise their intellectual capacities, because only knowledge could unshackle women from oppression. In this respect, there are many intertextual connections between the experiences Robinson shares as a cultured and successful writer in her *Memoirs* and the proto-feminist messages in favour of women’s education she voices in the pamphlet *A Letter*. Robinson’s corpus of works proves her ideological commitment to improving women’s collective situation in Britain. In the self-portrait Robinson constructs of her persona, she shares her experiences of receiving a “masculine education”⁵⁸ which had not unsexed her but established the basis for her successful career as a poet. Interestingly, she points out that she received a “masculine education” through “an extraordinary woman”, yet again challenging the idea of women as intellectually inferior. Equally significant is that Robinson highlights women’s ability to teach and learn. In her *Memoirs*, she underlines that the education she received included classical knowledge, and a training in different languages, such as French and Latin (Peterson 39).

⁵⁸ “Her father, whose name was Hull, had from her infancy been the master of an academy at Earl’s Court, near Fulham; and early after his marriage losing his wife, he resolved on giving this daughter a masculine education.” (Robinson, *Memoirs* 22)

Throughout her *A Letter*, Robinson plays with the stereotypical scripts of femininity to strengthen her claims of mental equality. She knew that the idea that women's natural femininity could change dramatically if they acquired knowledge needed to be challenge. Which is why she tried to demonstrate that, on the contrary, women needed sufficient education to be able to defend themselves. Robinson continues to expand her argument on women's sexual difference, but not without taking some measures to assure her readers, particularly her male audience, that women's sensibility would remain intact even if they had access to knowledge. If women lacked knowledge, the false idea of their natural mental fragility was easily maintained. Robinson claimed in contrast that women might even be "superior in natural gifts" to men, attesting that some men were "mental despots", advocating the termination of the "system of mental subordination" (*A Letter* 65, 72).

For Robinson, the awareness that could be gained through an egalitarian education would significantly counter engrained beliefs about women's inferiority and consequently would provoke a significant social change. In the context of the French Revolution, women representation as irrational subjects was not only a justification for denying them education or citizenship rights; this also served to depict logic as an exclusively male function (Scott ix). Thus, for Robinson, it was essential to demonstrate that education could benefit women individually but also society at large. In the end, her call for an egalitarian education was presented as a tool to produce a more "virtuous citizen" – but also better mothers (Binhammer 677).

To fight back against the ideas of women's weakness, Robinson dedicates a great part of her text to exemplifying circumstances in which women demonstrate more fortitude than men in both mental and physical endeavours. In such cases, she discusses women as a unitary, well-defined group, marked by sexual difference. However, this strategic endeavour to claim a collective identity accompanied her effort to redefine the meaning imposed on women's sexual distinction. Furthermore, for Robinson, education could not unsex women, because their mind and soul had no sex. The idea of a sexless soul and mind central to an egalitarian notion of the human came to Robinson as another legacy of Wollstonecraft. For some scholars, the concept of the sexless soul and mind was inherited from the "Western Christian theology and philosophy" which believed in them as gender neutral elements of humankind (Givens Johnson 57).

Interestingly, within this topic, although Robinson defended "masculine women" strongly, she rejected "effeminate men". Robinson labelled men who possessed female attributes as the

“shadow of mankind who exhibit the effeminacy of women, united with the mischievous foolery of monkeys” (47). She added in one of her authorial notes to this section of *A Letter*:

“Query. Might not the society of some living English women, if properly appreciated, tend to the reformation of certain gothic eccentricities; as well as, by comparison, produce more masculine energies? Men would be shamed out of their effeminate foibles, when they beheld the masculine virtues dignifying the mind of woman.” (57)

However, despite the fact that – as we have seen – in a substantial part of her letter, Robinson supports a broader notion of humanity that embraces both women and men, she, like other writers of her time, fell into the trap of granting negative characteristics to gender transgressive subjects when it came to effeminate men. This prejudice against feminine men might have been connected firstly to the belief that women were inferior subjects, and secondly to the idea that only heterosexual couples were able to sexually reproduce. According to these ideas, the main problem if men socially became “women” was that they would eventually become oppressed. Robinson asserts that women innately have “strong mental and corporeal powers” but they are “born to yield obedience”, and the same could happen to men if they decided to become more like women (*A Letter* 48). On the other hand, women’s bodies were made for procreation, which, according to many, was the real reason behind their subjugation. Moreover, if men became more feminine the reproductive heterosexual order would be transgressed since men would start having sex with men and in this scenario, no children could be procreated (Binhammer 684). It seems that for the most part, Robinson thought that both women and men should aspire to become manlier. Nevertheless, on a few occasions in the same text, she points out that men are in need of learning from women.

Robinson in *A Letter* and Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication* mention the figure of Madame d’Eon. Both writers claimed that Madame d’Eon was an exemplary woman with a masculine strength worthy of emulation (Binhammer 685). Madame d’Eon was a controversial person during the writers’ time, who supposedly cross-dressed as a man to perform traditional manly occupations, such as soldier, spy and diplomat, but she was discovered by some authorities to be a woman. From the moment her sex was revealed, she became for some the object of sharp criticism; for others, a person to be praised. Specifically, in one of her authorial notes, Robinson states about Madame D’Eon,

We have a living proof of this observation in the person of Madame D’Eon. When this extraordinary female filled the arduous occupations of a soldier and an ambassador, her talents, enterprise, and resolution, procured for her distinguished honours. But alas! when she was discovered to be a WOMAN, the highest terms of praise were converted into, ‘eccentricity, absurd and masculine temerity, at once ridiculous and disgusting’ (73).

Likewise, Wollstonecraft describes Madame D'Eon as one of "a few women who, from having received a masculine education, have acquired courage and resolution" (*A Vindication* 104). In short, Robinson together with Wollstonecraft celebrate this woman's masculine strength and intelligence and censure the way she was defamed as "eccentric" for going undercover as a man when she was actually a woman. They both underline Madame D'Eon's accomplishments and attributes, and regret that society could not tolerate these masculine qualities in women.

Ironically, when Madame D'Eon passed away, it was discovered that she had the sexual organs of a "biological" man and consequently she was not a woman who used to live as a man, but a man with feminine features. Unfortunately, it is not possible to know these writers' opinion about this later turn of events. In her reading of this androgynous figure in these authors' proto-feminist tracts, the scholar Katherine Binhammer, for example, thinks that while Robinson and Wollstonecraft condemned the social gender double standard against women, if they had known about Madame D'Eon being a "feminine man", an androgynous or a transgender person – a term that did not exist at the time – they might have perpetuated the assumptions against femininity in men. Hence, the debates around the 'real' sex of Madame D'Eon and her female/male attributes expose the fragility of a social system and culture constructed from gender traits and stereotypes. Unfortunately, even for women intellectuals with a critical mind, the idea of a man trying to act like a woman was unthinkable.

Continuing with the discussion of sexual difference, Robinson approaches the subject of physical strength by referring to a woman's natural right to respond to an offence. She asserted that a "woman is denied the first privilege of nature, the power of SELF-DEFENCE" (*A Letter* 79). In this part of the text, Robinson places particular importance on gendered violence against women and the impossibility for them to avoid or at least defend themselves against physical and mental oppression. Robinson explains that the passive character which distinguishes women is the result of the constraints imposed by tradition and has been one of the main reasons to explain why they have not yet started a revolution against the patriarchal system that oppressed them. Anger and rage were emotions women could not publicly express. For Robinson, women were not inherently passive or defenceless, they had been taught this way to maintain a status quo in which they could remain subjugated. She writes:

Let me ask this plain and rational question, – is not woman a human being, gifted with all the feelings that inhabit the bosom of man? Has not woman affections, susceptibility, fortitude, and an acute sense of injuries received?" [...] "Why may not woman resent and punish? Because the long established laws of custom, have decreed her passive! Because she is by nature organized to feel every wrong more acutely, and yet, by a

barbarous policy, denied the power to assert the first of Nature's rights, self-preservation. (*A Letter* 43-44)

In the first lines of this paragraph, Robinson is replicating Shakespeare's voice and alluding to "woman as a human being" with the same sentiments as any man. She goes back to nature and universalism to demonstrate how the oppression to which women are subjected interferes with core elements of their humanity, specifically including "the first of Nature's rights, for self-preservation" (*A Letter* 9).

Further on in her text, Robinson mentions Maria Antoinette and Charlotte Corday as notable examples endowed with women's physical and mental strength. These two women exhibited, as Robinson asserted, "Spartan fortitude when they ascended the scaffold" (*A Letter* 27). She describes the way the French Queen Maria Antoinette endured the wrongs done to her, including an "ignominious death", with the greatest mental strength that could be learned from and emulated (Robinson, *A Letter* 25). A French aristocrat and a Girondins sympathizer, Charlotte Corday, was another female character whom Robinson regarded as a woman whose strength should be imitated. Robinson vindicates Maria Antoinette along with Charlotte Corday as exemplary women in a period in which they were both depicted as monstrous figures, or as "unsexed" women. The former as a consequence of her "perverse sexuality" and the latter for her "unnatural lack of feminine sensibility" (Craciun, *Violence* 10). In *A Letter*, Robinson responds to evil representations of Maria Antoinette, such as that of Edmund Burke in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*⁵⁹ in which the Queen, along with other women involved actively in revolutionary acts, symbolizes the "female excess", a description that also accompanied his sexualized representation of the French Revolution in a broader sense (Craciun, "Introduction" 16). In the same vein, the gender and Romanticism scholar Adriana Craciun (Craciun), in her wide-ranging study of Robinson's *A Letter*, considers that the violent act executed by Corday when she murdered Marat dramatically disturbed the concept of womanhood during revolutionary times ("Violence" 47). Benefiting from this transgression of the gender rules of the period, Corday's example also served to fulfil Robinson's feminist ends. Robinson decided purposefully to uphold Maria Antoinette and Charlotte Corday as models of women's courage. In a society in which female bravery was demeaned, Robinson presents examples of renowned women who live a different type of femininity and even were able to endure the death penalty fearlessly.

⁵⁹ Edmund Burke, in his *Reflection on the Revolution in France*, shows his anti-revolutionary views in which women involved intensely in the events were depicted by him as "the furies of hell" (Craciun, *Introduction* 16).

Craciun also calls attention to the fact that Robinson's discussion on a woman's natural right to reply is not a common issue in feminist writings of the period, but for Robinson it was at the heart of women's fight for equality (Craciun, "Violence" 53-54). According to Craciun, "The right to resent and punish" questioned basic ideas on "women's moral superiority and benevolence" (55). Furthermore, as noted earlier, this representation of women as fragile passive beings was at the core of the patriarchal agenda. Robinson reverses these arguments and affirms that instead, women not only possessed physical strength, but the latter was also accompanied by mental self-control and dignity (55).

On this topic of self-defence and women's right to respond, Robinson mentions further on in the text the ridiculous belief that women should not learn to swim because "it is not feminine" but it is "perfectly masculine to let a woman drown" (*A Letter* 69). Robinson fills her text with examples of how women were constantly trapped in endless stereotypes which, however absurd they might be, had the power to keep them in a position of subordination.

Right from the opening of *A Letter*, it is evident that women's intellectual equality is Robinson's primary claim, developed from discourses on sexual difference that had particular relevance in the historical context in which her text was conceived. The whole text is connected to her desire to liberate women from their mental slavery. She envisages the day that a University of Women could exist, inviting her addressees to exercise reason as a way of ridding themselves of the chains that constrain them (Robinson, *A Letter* 92).

3.4 De Castro's protofeminist manifestos: *Lieders* and "*Las Literatas. Carta a Eduarda*"

Reading De Castro's poetic texts reveals a fascinating author with a strong voice against any oppression deriving from different relationships of inequality, including the national subjugation of Galician people by the Spanish central government and the hierarchical social and cultural dynamics of gender in Spanish society as a whole. The author's preoccupation with the lack of freedom that women writers experienced in the nineteenth century was also a recurrent theme in her compositions but is most perceptible in the prologues to her poetic and narrative works, and in the prose writings of her early literary career. It is precisely this protofeminist angle of her work that I would like to highlight in this section.

In a short poetic piece that opens De Castro's volume *Follas Novas* the author gives her readers a glimpse of her gender critique and her support for women writers. In these verses, De Castro tries to disassociate herself from the stereotypical idea that as a female author she could only write about birds and flowers. She stated:

“Of women who write of doves and flowers,
It’s said they’ve women’s souls.
And me who doesn’t write of them, oh Virgin of Paloma,
Argh! What soul have I?”⁶⁰

De Castro continues to touch upon the issue of women’s freedom in their role as creators of literary culture, especially when it comes to freedom of speech. She starts her poetic composition by describing her own authorial personality, which is different from the female author archetype. In other words, De Castro is not like other women authors who only write about doves and flowers. On the contrary, she presents her authorial persona as unique, as one that defies the prevailing notion of femininity and is not constrained by gender norms. According to Marina Mayoral (Mayoral), De Castro begins *Follas Novas* by problematizing her own personality, declaring that she refuses to do what other women think they are supposed to do, namely, to be feminine (*La Poesía* 228-229). De Castro’s opening poem has been read as a “self-questioning response” to all the criticisms she received after *Cantares Gallegos* by defending her position as a writer who goes beyond what was expected from her as a woman writer (Wilcox 66). In these verses, De Castro emphasises her unwillingness to submit to any rules, hence, she follows the lines of the previous prose texts that will be analysed in this section – *Lieders* and “*Las Literatas. Carta a Eduarda*”.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when De Castro was actively writing along with other women, there was still a significant lack of recognition of the existence of female poets in the Iberian Peninsula, despite evidence that women had started to write as early as the ninth century (Wilcox 15). There is a very real possibility that a good number of the earliest forms of poems developed in the Spanish territory that can be traced historically, may have been written by women.⁶¹ Thus, it is no surprise that De Castro tries to stand out in a context in which women writers were invisible or censored. She attempts to earn a place as an author, while declining to be defined by the norms of a biased literary culture.

Departing from the transgressive self-portrait that De Castro offers to her readers every time she introduces one of her works, the scholar John C. Wilcox (Wilcox) recommends avoiding the viewpoint that portrays De Castro as a saint or as a mere regionalist writer. De Castro has

⁶⁰ “Daquelas que cantan as pombas i as froes todos din que teñen alma de muller. Pois eu que n’as canto, Virxe da Paloma, ¡ai!, ¿de qué a teréi?” (*Follas Novas* 303-306).

⁶¹ There are many reasons to believe that the *jarchas* which could be described as “the ‘concluding couplets’ to the Arabic *muwassaha* of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries” were written by women (Wilcox 15). There could be also a connection between the “European *frauenlieder*” in which women’s proclamation of their own erotic desire and love is at the centre of the text (15).

been described at the same time as “the perfect Catholic”, as “the mother of all Galicians”, and as “queen of nostalgic patriotism”. That besides, she has also been portrayed as a “frustrated novelist”, or “a simple and spontaneous writer”, and has been accused of falsely authoring texts that were in reality composed by her husband (García Negro, *Una feminista* 338)⁶². For Wilcox, De Castro needs to be appreciated for what Gilbert and Gubar would have defined as her “monstrosity”, i.e. as “a committed woman artist whose subconscious mind is intent on self-determination” (Wilcox 43). Instead of confining De Castro to one of the three common archetypes of the Spanish literary canon, i.e. as “the perfect married woman”, “the naked woman” or “the monster”, she should be approached as a poet whose authorial persona was antagonistic to the female stereotypical image of the angel of the house (Wilcox 43). In the last few decades, in discussing De Castro’s literary work, scholars have defined it, by turns, female, feminist, or critical (Wilcox 44).

Paradoxically, in the second poem of *Follas Novas*, De Castro seems to show a certain degree of “anxiety of authorship”. De Castro displays concern on how to achieve originality and, at the same time, how far her models of inspiration might affect the authenticity of her own poetry (Wilcox 66). She wrote:

I know well there’s naught
that’s new beneath the stars;
that others have thought already
things I think up now

So then, why do I write?
So then, because that’s what we are,
Clocks that tick
Perpetually going round.⁶³

Later, in another short poem included in *Follas Novas*, called *Silence!* De Castro reflected on the struggles involved in poetic creation:

I soak sharp quill in my own blood,
bursting the swollen vein,
and I write..., I write..., why? Go back
to the dark pit of the soul,

⁶² According to García Negro, De Castro’s persona has been depicted as follows:

Por otro lado, se haría interminable la lista de testimonios eufemísticos (católica sin tacha, santa, divina, madre de todos los gallegos, reina de la morriña...) / disfemísticos (obra de su marido, el historiador Murguía; novelista frustrada; simple y espontánea, escritora “regional”, dedicada sólo a los “asuntos domésticos” y, para eso, por una hipersensibilidad patológica...) que podríamos aducir para dar cuenta de una operación falsificadora, ya de antiguo, que llega a nuestros días. (García Negro “Una feminista” 338).

⁶³ Ben sei que non hai nada novo en baixo do ceo, que antes outros pensaron as cousas que ora eu penso. E ben, ¿para qué escribo?/ E ben, porque así semos, relox que repetimos eternamente o mesmo. (*Follas Novas* Kindle Locations 311-316).

stormy images!
[...]
The hand trembling over the page writes only
words, and words, and words!

Wilcox has pointed out that in this poem, *Silence*, De Castro is presenting the image of a female writer who impregnates herself with the pen as a metaphor of a lacking female literary genealogy (67). At the same time, she is torn between the attempt to find an original poetic voice and the fear that all efforts might be vain, since words might not be able to convey deep existential meaning and concern. De Castro's fear and doubts find no grounds in reality, since the fact is that De Castro left her mark on the destiny of Galician literary culture, first with *Cantares Gallegos* and later with *Follas Novas*. The author may have been trying to address certain critiques by the Spanish literary elite that diminished the importance of her work in comparison with mainstream male authors. Additionally, she may have been trying to state her desire to be different in a country in which writers regularly imitated one another.

Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly, in the prologue to *Follas Novas* entitled *Two words from the author*, De Castro contradicts herself, presumably in order to justify her daring poetic attempt, when she pretends to belittle women's capacity to master intellectual endeavours. De Castro states that,

The thinking of women is light, just as butterflies fly from rose to rose pondering lights things; the hard work of thinking is not for us. We unwittingly impregnate thinking with our innate debility; our frivolous or unaccustomed spirits easily stray, which doesn't happen to men of study and reflection, who realize that under the clear current of form there's naught in our thoughts but the insubstantial froth of vulgarities. (De Castro 44)⁶⁴

[...]

I have always fled from it with all my will, and to avoid such momentous sins I stick with simple poetry, though even there I sometimes encounter, in a felicitous expression or chance ideas, a nameless force direct as an arrow that penetrates our flesh. (De Castro 45)⁶⁵

However, if we read her text with other statements in mind in which De Castro tackled women's position in the context of Spain and Galicia, we realize that her declarations were

⁶⁴ O pensamento da muller é lixeiro; góstanos, como ás vorvoletas, voar de rosa en rosa sobre as cousas tamén lixeiras: n' é feito para nós o duro traballo da meditación. Cando a el nos entregamos, imprenámolo, sin sabelo siquera, da innata debilidade, e se nos é fácil enganar os espíritos frívolos ou pouco acostumados, non socede o mesmo cos homes de estudio e reflexión, que logo conocen que baixo da crara corrente da forma non se atopa máis que o limo insubstancial das vulgaridades. E nos dominios da especulación, como nos do arte, nada máis inútil nin cruel do que o vulgar. (Follas Novas Kindle Locations 163-164).

⁶⁵ Del fuxo sempre con todas as miñas forzas, e por non caer en tan gran pecado nunca tentéi pasar os límites da simple poesía, que encontra ás veces nunha expresión feliz, nunha idea afertunada, aquela cousa sin nome que vai dereita como frecha, traspasa as nosas carnes [...] (Follas Novas, Kindle Locations 167-169).

more accurately ironic and also self-critical, since she was fully aware of the patriarchal oppression that prevented women from freely expressing themselves. Undoubtedly, De Castro was trying to give a double message in this introduction since she certainly did not consider women's literary creations to be inferior. On the contrary, she claims that women had been deprived of the possibility of aspiring to a literary career of their own, and when they attempt to have one, they have to cope with the adversities that come with their decision.

Long before writing *Two words from the author*, in 1858, De Castro had published *Lieders*, a feminist manifesto in poetic prose, which is considered by some scholars her first statement of an anti-patriarchal position (García Negro, *Iusfeminismo* 92; Del Barco 69). The text is written in the first person and the poetic voice throughout the text is that of a female speaker. The title of the composition is "*Lieders*" a German word meaning 'songs' which the author turns into a false plural form by adding an 's'. The title might also have intended to underline the influence of the Romantic German poets on the author's work. It has been noted that in this text, De Castro was informed particularly by the idea that poets should translate the environment that surrounds them into verse, as occurs in German *lieder*, songs which are both subjective and lyrical (Barcia Caballero V). By using this single foreign word in the title, the author might also have been remarking on her freedom as a writer to create new words or alter them as she wished. Furthermore, the meaning of the term, 'songs', also reminds us of the name of the Galician poetry collection she would write five years later, *Cantares Gallegos*. Indirectly, by naming her proto-feminist text *Lieders*, she was also establishing a connection, a sort of a preamble, for the subsequent volume of poetry.

In *Lieders*, in the first line of the text, De Castro explicitly affirms her decision to not act according to the rules of art, because her feelings, thoughts and imagination cannot be controlled. She states:

No, I do not want to become a slave to the dictates of art. My thoughts are vagabond, my imagination errant, and only impressions satisfy my soul.⁶⁶ (*Lieders* 469)

De Castro asserts and defends her freedom as a writer right from the start of her literary career. She deals with this issue over and over again, not only in prose but also, as we pointed out earlier, in several of her poetic compositions during her years of writing. Continuously, De Castro affirms her right as a writer to be free; and despite a social context that would constrain her will, she rejects the rules of men but also any wish for glory and fame. She asserts:

⁶⁶ "¡Oh, no quiero ceñirme a las reglas del arte! Mis pensamientos son vagabundos, mi imaginación errante y mi alma sólo se satisface de impresiones".

Never has the hope of fame blinded me, nor have I ever dreamed of laurel wreaths weighing upon my brow. My lips have babbled only songs of independence and freedom, though surely I heard, even from my cradle, the sound of the chains that would imprison me forever, because the shackles of slavery are a woman's patrimony.

[...]

And yet, I am free, as free as the birds the breeze, the desert Arab, or the high seas pirate." (*Lieders* 469).⁶⁷

De Castro employs the slavery trope, quite common among women writers during the Romantic period, to instead affirm her identity as a writer who resists women's destiny of oppression. Even her attachment to Galicia, the land to which she dedicates her best poetic lines, was not stronger than her liberty as a woman and a writer. Her decision to abandon the Galician language in her poetic compositions after publishing *Follas Novas* shows that her literary freedom was more important than her commitment and sentiments towards the region (Mayoral, *La poesía* 252). However, De Castro's nationalism serves to generate her own gender identity politics. Certainly, Galicia symbolically turned into a subjugated female figure. And, since she was deeply engaged from the very early stages of her career in issues of women's subordination, it could be said that the situation Galicia was kept in and her own female condition within the country somehow overlapped, providing De Castro with a full picture of what it meant to be marginalized and subjugated.

In *Lieders*, she fervently declares her independence, describing herself in anti-clerical terms as Luzbel, "[f]ree is my heart, free my soul, and free my thought, that reaches up to the sky and descends to the earth, proud as Lucifer and sweet as a hope."⁶⁸ While the female speaker continues to sing her song of freedom in the midst of threats coming from the "the lords of the land", she remarks that deep down – although rebellious and unable to follow the commands of her peers – her soul is good.

When the masters of the earth threaten me with their looks or try to mark my forehead with the stain of their disapproval, I laugh just as they laugh, and my iniquities seem to surpass even theirs. And yet my heart is good; though I heed not the commands of those who are my peers, because I believe their craft is equal to mine, my flesh the same as theirs.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ "Jamás ha dominado en mi alma la esperanza de la gloria, ni he soñado nunca con laureles que oprimiesen mi frente. Sólo cantos de independencia y libertad han balbucido mis labios, aunque alrededor hubiese sentido, desde la cuna ya, el ruido de las cadenas que debían aprisionarme para siempre, porque el patrimonio de la mujer son los grillos de la esclavitud. Yo, sin embargo, soy libre, libre como los pájaros, como las brisas; como los árboles en el desierto y el pirata en la mar."

⁶⁸ Libre es mi corazón, libre mi alma, y libre mi pensamiento, que se alza hasta el cielo y desciende hasta la tierra, sobervio como el Luzbel y dulce como una esperanza.

⁶⁹ "Cuando los señores de la tierra me amenazan con una mirada, o quieren marcar mi frente con una mancha de oprobio, yo me río como ellos se ríen y hago, en apariencia, mi iniquidad más grande que su iniquidad. En el

De Castro emphasises the equality of all human beings, including her literary peers who deliberately concentrated on criticizing her works. In the last parts of the *Lieders*, the female speaker directly addresses women as a group and asks, rhetorically:

“Oh, woman! Why, being so pure, do they project upon the white rays emanating from your forehead the unholy shadows of earthly evil? Why do men shower you with the filth of their excesses, afterward despising and abhorring in your mortal weariness the horror of their own disorder and their feverish delirium?”⁷⁰

Here, De Castro focuses ironically on women’s alleged pure nature and how this supposed purity makes them more vulnerable to men’s power. As a result, she depicts women and men as perpetual adversaries. She ends the text by admonishing women to avoid trusting men’s intentions. For García Negro, De Castro produced all her following poetic and prose works using the framework of *Lieders*, in which she ardently denounced the injustices of patriarchal hierarchies (“Iusfeminismo” 92).

Indeed, De Castro’s long proto-feminist project embraced all her active life as a writer. She also anticipated Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) by more than fifty years with her essay *Las Literatas. Carta a Eduarda* published in 1865, seven years after *Lieders*. Like Virginia Woolf, who believed that “Intellectual freedom depends upon material things,” and “Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom”, in this text, De Castro tackles the myriad difficulties women writers underwent when dealing with a patriarchal culture and a literary tradition dominated by male writers (Woolf qtd. in Carmen Blanco 181). De Castro, like Virginia Woolf, interrogates the capacity of women to succeed and even excel in the art of literature. Nevertheless, both of them firmly denounced the restrictive possibilities that women had in a world governed by gender inequality (Carmen Blanco 181).

Las Literatas was published in a Galician almanac, along with literary compositions penned by different authors. De Castro’s prose text takes the epistolary form, like Robinson’s manifesto *A Letter*; however, in De Castro’s text there is only one addressee, a woman named Eduarda. The alleged author of the letter is a woman named Nicanora. Through these two fictional female characters, De Castro elaborates on the tension between a woman’s desire to become a writer and the social obstacles that prevent her from pursuing a literary career. The

fondo, no obstante, mi corazón es bueno; pero no acato los mandatos de mis iguales y creo que su hechura es igual a mi hechura, y que su carne es igual a mi carne.”

⁷⁰ “¡Oh mujer! ¿Por qué siendo tan pura vienen a proyectarse sobre los blancos rayos que despide tu frente las impías sombras de los vicios de la tierra? ¿Por qué los hombres derraman sobre ti la inmundicia de sus excesos, despreciando y aborreciendo después en tu moribundo cansancio lo horrible de sus mismos desórdenes y de sus calenturientos delirios?”

first lines of the letter inform us that the two women – the addresser and the addressee – have known each other for some time and that the epistolary conversation between them did not begin with the letter De Castro found by chance lying on the street. The letter reads:

My dear Eduarda: Would I be too cruel if I were to begin this letter by telling you that yours has made me feel sad and bad tempered? Will I seem to you jealous of your talents, or brutally frank, when I dare to deprive you, without pretence or compassion, of those costly illusions you so ardently cherish? But you know who I am, you know my most intimate sentiments, all that my heart holds dear, and I can talk to you.⁷¹

As these lines gradually unveil, the two women writers in the letter appear to have a very close friendship. Nicanora (the addresser) declares that her friend knows “her most intimate sentiments” and that is why she feels the need to talk to her. Within the frame of women’s friendship and solidarity, the character that we can consider De Castro’s alter ego sincerely recommends an amateur female author to avoid any attempt to publish her literary works:

“No, a thousand times no, Eduarda. Flee from that fatal temptation, publish nothing, and keep for yourself alone your verses and your prose, your novels and your plays, and let them be a secret known only to you, me, and the heavens. Can you not see that the world is filled with these things? Everybody writes, and about everything. The muses have been unleashed.”⁷²

Interestingly, Nicanora does not recommend her friend to keep herself apart from literary endeavours, her opposition is directly against Eduarda’s desire to openly reveal herself as an author by trying to make her works available to a readership. What is argued by the addresser of this letter is mainly that literature should be an intimate art, not subject to the arbitrariness of publication and the unfair and prejudiced dynamics of reception nor to the tyranny of reviewers (Blanco García 294). In *Las Literatas*, De Castro, using the voice of Nicanora, denounces the difficulties she has to undergo as a writer who puts into print what other authors have refused to say. Hence, she is a writer who articulates freely what she feels, without fear of transgressing the rules of a Western patriarchal society.

Nicanora also criticises the recent abundance of works composed by men and women simply because she does not consider them of the highest quality. She also denounces the way these

⁷¹ *Mi querida Eduarda: ¿Seré demasiado cruel, al empezar esta carta, diciéndote que la tuya me ha puesto triste y malhumorada? ¿Iré a parecerte envidiosa de tus talentos, o brutalmente franca, cuando me atrevo a despojarte, sin rebozo ni compasión, de esas caras ilusiones que tan ardentemente acaricias? Pero tú sabes quién soy, conoces hasta lo íntimo mis sentimientos, las afecciones de mi corazón, y puedo hablarte.*

⁷² *No, mil veces no, Eduarda; aleja de ti tan fatal tentación, no publiques nada y guarda para ti sola tus versos y tu prosa, tus novelas y tus dramas: que ése sea un secreto entre el cielo, tú y yo. ¿No ves que el mundo está lleno de esas cosas? Todos escriben y de todo. Las musas se han desencadenado.*

publications have been received by the critics, especially in the case of female writers. She says: “[I]ike a devastating plague, critics and writers have invaded the earth and they devour it however they can. What need is there for us, then, you and me amid this cataclysmic confusion? None at all, and what is not needed is always superfluous” (“Brief Prose Selection” 40). Indeed, at the peak of the Romantic era, in the middle years of the nineteenth century, Spain saw a boom in literary publications. In addition, during these same years, women also became active participants in the world of letters (Kirkpatrick 1). But as De Castro constantly notes, unlike men, women could not write without restrictions or the fear of eventually being criticised for their audacity in taking up the pen.

To illustrate her points, Nicanora presents an example of how men are socially motivated to follow their passion for the letters, while women are unjustly censured. Continuing the subject of inequality in the appreciation of women’s literary productions, she uses the story of a barber who believes himself to be the most excellent writer in order to satirize male presumptuousness. In De Castro’s narrative, the man is in the process of finishing what he describes as a “scientific novel” to demonstrate that his barber’s occupation is the most interesting of all the trades that can be called “mechanical”, and that it should therefore be elevated to the highest ranks of honourability. Nicanora’s reaction to this story and to this man’s high self-esteem is to immediately destroy all the manuscripts she has written up to then. Nicanora justifies her impetuosity to Eduarda by saying, “such is the world, Eduarda: he, whom God has created more stupid than a marmot, will pick up the book, or, better yet, the stillborn creature of that barber, and he will dare to compare it to a novel by George Sand.” (*Las Literatas* 473).

Nicanora’s decision to destroy her works echoes De Castro’s own desire to eliminate what was left of her unpublished texts before her demise. When De Castro was in the last stage of the illness that took her life, she asked her children to burn all her manuscripts and unpublished writings, aware that after her death she would no longer be able to defend herself from unfair judgements (Blanco García 294). De Castro, like other women authors, was conscious of the prejudices against women’s texts, and in a broader sense, against women as authors, this social pressure in many ways influencing their writing process. As Nicanora narrates to her friend Eduarda:

[t]hey constantly point you out on the street, and not for well-intentioned reasons, and everywhere they gossip about you. If you go to a social gathering and speak of something about which you know, if you so much as express yourself in language

more or less correct, they will call you pedantic, say that you do it to hear yourself speak, that you think you know everything.⁷³

Furthermore, in these lines, she mentions how the use of language is also an aspect to be evaluated in public gatherings. Here, De Castro may have been referring not only to the ability of mastering the art of conversation, but also to the critiques directed at the use of Galician instead of Castilian.

At the end of the text, De Castro includes a note in which she strategically says that the letter to Eduarda (*Las Literatas*) was found on the streets at the outskirts of the city.⁷⁴ Although De Castro denies authorship of the letter, nevertheless she explicitly agrees with the intention that underlines it, and, she admits, this was the main reason behind her decision to have it printed. The aspect of narrating a story through different voices with the purpose of defying the notion of authorship was a literary device that she took from the well-known Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. Using a pessimist viewpoint but also an ironic tone, De Castro pointed out very clearly the unfortunate complications she had endured as a female writer.

In one of the few letters penned in 1864 that survived her husband Martínez Murguía's hands, she writes to a friend and fellow Galician poet, Eduardo Pondal, who was also a key figure in the Galician *Rexurdimento*. In the letter to Pondal, De Castro shows a hypercritical attitude towards her own compositions, stating that she is not proud of anything she has produced during her literary career.

“Regarding work, absolutely nothing, and even when you deign to make me some compliments that I am far from deserving, and that I can only owe to your good friendship, I assure you that you lose very little with me not writing. Frankly, I have no faith in glory, and, on the other hand, I know my little strength too much. Perhaps it will be the result of being very ambitious, but the truth is that nothing that I have done satisfy me in the least, and that is why, after having tried some new works of which I was very dissatisfied, I have eliminated everything I did and never again pick up the pen.” (De Castro 2014, *Mayoral Por que* 14)⁷⁵

⁷³ *por la calle te señalan constantemente, y no para bien, y en todas partes murmuran de ti. Si vas a la tertulia y hablas de algo de lo que sabes, si te expresas siquiera en un lenguaje algo correcto, te llaman bachillera, dicen que te escuchas a ti misma, que lo quieres saber todo.*

⁷⁴ Strolling in the outskirts of the city one day I found a small purse that contained this letter. It appealed to me, not for its literary merit, but for the reason it had been written, and thus I decided to publish it. May the unknown writer forgive me for the liberty I have taken in view of the analogy that exists between our sentiments.

⁷⁵ *Respecto a trabajar, absolutamente nada, y aun cuando V. se digna hacerme algunos elogios que estoy muy lejos de merecer, y que solo puedo deber a su buena amistad, le aseguro que se pierde muy poco con que yo no escriba. Francamente, no tengo ninguna fe en la gloria y, por otra parte, conozco demasiado mis pequeñas fuerzas. Acaso consistirá en que soy muy ambiciosa, pero es lo cierto que nada de cuanto hice me satisface en lo más mínimo y por eso, después de haber ensayado algunos nuevos trabajos de los cuales quedé muy descontenta, he roto cuanto hice y no volví a coger la pluma* (De Castro 2014, *Mayoral Por que* 14)

Although modesty and a self-critical attitude were typical of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women's writing, in this letter De Castro recalls Nicanora's words and views on the public dimension of female authorship. The reception of women authors' works often led them to recur to apologies, using pennames, changes in style, false modesty, and in the most radical cases, total anonymity (Blanco García 294). De Castro's concerns echo Robinson's ideas in her memoirs when she describes the "fatigue or the hazard of mental occupations!" and when she declares that being a writer "is a destroying labour" (*Memoirs* 197).

In *Las Literatas*, De Castro rails against the discriminating division of labour (García Nero *Iusfeminismo* 98). She asserts that male writers had become enemies of women writers, since "they never pass up an opportunity to tell you that women should leave the pen alone in favour of darning their husbands' socks, and if they are unmarried, then darn the butler's"⁷⁶ (De Castro qtd. in Geoffrion-Vinci 142). She rejects any obstacle socially imposed on women writers, either coming from male cohorts who refused to esteem women authors as their equals, or from everyday people who surround and judge women's behaviour. She has Nicanora claim, concerning her experience with authorship:

About me it is commonly said that my husband works tirelessly to make me immortal. Verse, prose, good or bad, all is his; but above all that which they judge less bad, and there is not a novice poet nor a prudent man who affirms otherwise.⁷⁷

Interestingly, what Nicanora's statement refers to is, in fact, an autobiographical suggestion to Martínez Murguía, De Castro's husband, who was an acclaimed Galician scholar and a vital go-between in the circulation of his wife's literary corpus. After De Castro's death, he dedicated much effort to preserving her image against speculations based on her private life and uncertain past as a parentless child.⁷⁸

In some instances, Martínez Murguía appears to have been the pre-eminent supporter of his wife's career, almost in an obsessive way (Alonso Valero 68). It is believed that De Castro's husband Martínez Murguía destroyed nearly all the personal letters penned by the author after

⁷⁶ "no dejan pasar nunca la ocasión de decirte que las mujeres deben dejar la pluma y reparar los calcetines de sus maridos, si lo tienen, y si no, aunque sean los del criado".

⁷⁷ "Por lo que a mí respecta, se dice muy corrientemente que mi marido trabaja sin cesar para hacerme inmortal. Versos, prosa, bueno o malo, todo es suyo; pero, sobre todo, lo que les parece menos malo y no hay principiante de poeta ni hombre sesudo que no lo afirme".

⁷⁸ Her having no parents to boast of is particularly important, since over time there have been many conjectures on the way her personal life interfered with and informed her literary work. Aspects of her life have been frequently mentioned in academic studies, mainly because she was the "daughter of unknown parents" as her certificate of baptism testifies. In point of fact, she was the daughter of a seminarian, who may have already been a priest at the time, and an unmarried woman belonging to an aristocratic family (Kaminsky 456).

her death because he wanted to preserve his own image as a good husband, removing any reference to marital problems that the couple might have had (Mayoral, “Por que” 9). Although Martínez Murguía did not follow De Castro’s instructions asking for the destruction of all her unpublished texts, he did attempt to keep a part of De Castro’s life hidden from her readers and unavailable for public consumption (Mayoral, “Por que” 24). As he states in the prologue he wrote for his wife’s last poetry collection *En las orillas del Sar*, “[a]fter all, the life of a woman, no matter how illustrious it could have been is always very simple. The life of Rosalía, like many other women, is limited to two dates: that of her birthday and that of her death; the rest only matters to her relatives” (Martínez Murguía, “Prologue Sar”).⁷⁹

Over the years, the scholar Mayoral changed her opinion towards Martínez Murguía’s decision to dispose of almost all De Castro’s letters. Initially, she had seen it as a selfish act to protect his own privacy and reputation. Later, Mayoral believed that De Castro’s husband destroyed the letters as a strategy to avoid disclosing information about De Castro’s hypercritical attitude to her own work. All of this makes sense since, when all is said and done, Martínez Murguía had a significant impact in the reception and circulation of his wife’s literary works from her very early beginnings.⁸⁰ Moreover, the fact that he continued to defend his wife’s texts against unfounded criticism and tried to avoid the immortalisation of her name as a national icon, without adequately acknowledging her role as a precursor of a modern Galician literary movement, shows his devotion to De Castro’s oeuvre.

One of the final aspects De Castro addressed in *Las Literatas* was the lack of a sense of solidarity among women writers. Indeed, women’s literature was also conditioned and limited by the patriarchal norms that endorsed the same game of oppression among women. Nicanora states:

Women emphasize your defects, including the best concealed of these, and men never tire of saying to you at every turn that a woman of talent is a veritable disaster, that one is better off marrying the ass of Balaam, and that only a silly little fool can make a mortal male happy.⁸¹

⁷⁹ “Después de todo, la vida de una mujer, por muy ilustre que sea, es siempre bien sencilla. La de Rosalía, como la de cuantas se hallan en su caso, se limita a dos fechas: la de su nacimiento y la de su muerte; lo demás sólo importa a los suyos.”

⁸⁰ Martínez Murguía demonstrated a special interest in De Castro’s work. Even at the beginning of De Castro’s career, he published a fine review of his future wife’s first work *La Flor* (Calero).

⁸¹ Las mujeres ponen en relieve hasta el más escondido de tus defectos y los hombres no cesan de decirte siempre que pueden que tina mujer de talento es una verdadera calamidad, que vale más casarse con la burra de Balaam, y que sólo una tonta puede hacer la felicidad de un mortal varón.

De Castro's alter ego, Nicanora, was conscious of how dangerous an intellectual woman appeared to a patriarchal society, among both men and women. Such a woman who excelled in intellectual endeavours was susceptible to becoming a victim of a system of inequality that encouraged women to fight one another.

3. 5 Contributing to a genealogy: Transnational dialogues between women writers

Robinson and De Castro both attempted to redefine the prevalent conceptions on women's capacity to be active cultural producers, and they both manifested a longing for a community of women writers who would be able to provide mutual support by playing a central role in reclaiming a place for women in history. The two writers' ideological commitment drove them to develop practices of resistance in which they could inscribe counter-discourses to challenge ideas on sexual difference that centred on the inferiority of women to perform their intellectual faculties. These practices of reinserting women's voices into historical accounts played an essential role in resisting the dynamics of exclusion and in re-evaluating the reconstruction of a past which often excluded women. In the context of feminist historiography, Scott's words well summarise the significance of these practices: [t]he point of looking to the past was to destabilize the present, to challenge patriarchal institutions and ways of thinking that legitimated themselves as natural, to make the unthinkable thought" (*Fantasy* 37).

Robinson's and De Castro's practice aspired to legitimise the authorial voices of women, when at the time they were not merely a minority, as the huge number of published women writers' works demonstrates, but a group prone to becoming invisible. Moreover, to follow and imitate other "intellectual women of the past" was also, according to Robinson's *Letter*, crucial for a future in which women would become citizens of the world (Cross, "He-She" 57).

Even though the preoccupation with historical memory took on special relevancy in feminist historiography during the twentieth century, this does not exclude the fact that throughout the British Romantic period, women writers had also questioned a male-centred history (Kucich 20). According to Greg Kucich, "their massive intervention in the discursive structures and imagined communities of masculine history anticipate many of the central practices and problems of contemporary feminist historiography" (20). Thus, accounts of exemplary female historical figures and women writers would inspire women to show mutual solidarity and encourage other women to pursue and accomplish activities that were traditionally considered outside their scope.

In line with these practices of resistance, Robinson, for her part, concludes *A Letter* with a “List of British Female Literary Characters” which in many ways strengthened her arguments on mental equality. De Castro does virtually the same thing, but in the prologue to the first novel she wrote in her literary career, *La hija del mar*, when she introduces a catalogue of women who have been recognized historically for their mental strength and courage in exceeding and challenging gender norms. Through their practices of inclusion and recognition, both Robinson and De Castro defended the position of women as intellectuals and envisaged a future for women writers in which they became citizens of the word.

Charlotte Smith also shares the same preoccupation as Robinson and De Castro in regard to the lack of women’s presence in cultural memory. This is evident in one sonnet she included in her collection *Elegiac Sonnets* called *Written in the Churchyard at Middleton in Sussex*. In this sonnet, she described the strong effects of nature’s power over a landscape (Rosenbaum 114):

With shells and sea-weed mingled, on the shore,
Lo! their bones whiten in the frequent wave;
But vain to them the winds and waters rave;
They hear the warring elements no more:
While I am doom’d—by life’s long storm oppress,
To gaze with envy on their gloomy rest.

This sonnet reflects Smith’s preoccupation with the posthumous fate of her persona as a writer. Her fame came largely from her capacity to establish intimate relationships with her readers, through affective communication and not based on a secure genealogy of founding literary mothers. As this poem shows, for Smith, life and nature would eventually erase her name from the literary accounts of her time (Rosenbaum 114).

In their book, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss the issue of women writers’ invisibility and lack of female foremothers, since the majority of cohorts and previous writers were male in Western literary history (Geoffrion-Vinci, *On the Edge* 141-142). They define the anxiety women writers experimented as a result of the lack of a genealogy of women writers. Such an “anxiety of authorship” somehow incapacitates them to create successful literary outcomes. In addition, they point out that the female figures who populate literature reproduce stereotypical concepts revolving around womanhood, with characters vacillating between angels and monsters, or between ignorance or innocence, and whenever they are clever, they became diabolical (Geoffrion-Vinci, *On the Edge* 141-142).

It is undeniable that both Robinson's and Smith's literary corpus remained hidden in the bookshelves of the cultural memory of Britain for almost two hundred years. In the case of Smith, some scholars have agreed that the invisibility of Smith's works for such a long time had to do with the political antagonism towards sentimental writings that were considered subterfuges to hide pro-revolutionary discourses and democratic ideals (Rosenbaum 123). More in general, the negative reaction against the literature of sensibility that often involved women's writing, is also informed by an underestimation of women authors or towards women who expressed an interest in literary endeavours. (Rosenbaum 123). Excessive sympathy for the pain of others, the extreme openness in sharing her own sufferings, and, ultimately, simply being a woman writer contributed to her disappearance from British literary landscape.

Repeatedly, women's writings, such as the ones produced by Robinson and De Castro, have returned to the conception of women as a social and homogenous group in order to preclude their invisibility in their country's collective memory. The concern lay with documenting leading women figures, even when the pressing goal was to change common conceptions of women's inferiority. In Robinson's *A Letter* she acknowledges British women's literary contribution in a period when their work was widely disseminated, although not adequately appreciated by the "*Tribunal of British Literature*" (*A Letter* 97). Robinson expresses:

There are men who affect to think lightly of the literary productions of women: and yet no works of the present day are so universally read as theirs. The best novels that have been written, since those of Smollet, Richardson, and Fielding, have been produced by women: and their pages have not only been embellished with the interesting events of domestic life, portrayed with all the elegance of phraseology, and all the refinement of sentiment, but with forcible and eloquent, political, theological, and philosophical reasoning. (*A Letter* 95)

The necessity to leave an evident trace of women's active participation in the history of British literature is the reason that, rather than continuing her acknowledgement of great female characters via a sort of transnational approach (which we can appreciate in the main content of the text), she chose, as part of her own publication, to list specifically, by individual name, British women who had dedicated their intellectual capacities to writing. With this catalogue, she concludes in *A Letter* her efforts to subvert the dominant preconception of women's lack of reason, while also contributing to a future in which women writers might be remembered in the same way as their male cohorts. She was aware of the urgency to create an archive that could preserve the memory of women's works for posterity. Thus, once avoided their disappearance from the literary and cultural history of the country, their literary production would have been appreciated as part of the British canon (Sodeman 12).

Robinson searches through history to find exemplary women who could be emulated by “enlightened countrywomen” (*A Letter* 3). In the course of *A Letter*, she also mentions Theano, Themiste, Cornelia⁸², Sosipatra⁸³ and Portia⁸⁴ as “women of superior mental acquirements” (*A Letter* 47). At the end of the text, she creates a list based on sexual and national differences, as to include British women writers only. It serves her aim of developing a genealogy of women intellectuals who might counteract mainstream ideas of women’s intellectual incapacity and unsuitability for rational endeavours. Apart from the “List of British Female Literary Characters”, Robinson reproduces verbatim in the body of her text “an extract” from Gerardus Vossius’ text *De Philologia*, “concerning illustrious WOMEN who had excelled in polite literature” (*A Letter* 30-31). Furthermore, she stresses that “the list might have been very much enlarged, since the time that Vossius wrote” (*A Letter* 30). As Stuart Curran (Curran) emphasises in his ground-breaking essay on women poets, *The I Altered*, Robinson’s list of exemplary women is more accurate in acknowledging their role in the history of culture than the work of modern scholars (186-187). More precisely, as Curran frames it:

Although our concern is with poetry, the breadth of the list should remind us from the start that by the 1790s in Great Britain there were many more women than men novelists and that the theater was actually dominated by women [...]. In the arena of poetry, which in the modern world we have privileged as no other in this age, the place of women was likewise, at least for a time, predominant, and it is here that the distortions of our received history are most glaring. Its chronology has been written wholly, and arbitrarily, along a masculine gender line 186-187).

In this regard, Cross considers Robinson’s act of quoting Vossius to be a way of demonstrating her “desire to produce a different history” (Cross, *Vindicating* 152). In this new history, women would take credit for an equal, if not a leading portion of intellectual merits. The professor of English Romanticism, Sharon M Setzer (Setzer) asserts that Robinson’s list was an active resistance to “the exclusionary practices of earlier biographers”. These biographies included George Ballard’s *Memoirs of British Ladies* (1775), William Alexander’s *The History of Women* (1779), and the anonymously published *Biographium Faemineum* (Setzer 23). Setzer explains that Robinson’s text gives more examples and includes women who were neglected or marginalised in the aforementioned biographies.

⁸² Theano was a woman instructed by Pythagoras, Themiste was a disciple of her husband, the philosopher Leontius, and Cornelia educated the Gracchi brothers.

⁸³ Sosipatra was a female philosopher and prophetess in the 4th century. She was knowledgeable on Neoplatonism, more specifically she was interested in Iamblichus’ philosophical circle. Presumably, she had her own philosophical school. None of her written work has come down to us. (Oxford Bibliographies)

⁸⁴ Robinson says about this historical figure, “PORTIA, the glory of the female race; PORTIA, more lovely in her *mind* than face” (67).

Through this practice of rewriting a different history, Robinson also went beyond Wollstonecraft's few examples of legendary women who "defied the general rule of mental subordination" in *A Vindication*. Robinson believed in women's excellency, one that could surpass that of their male opponents (Setzer 21-23). Robinson declared:

"There is no country, at this epoch, on the habitable globe, which can produce so many exalted and illustrious women (I mean mentally) as England. And yet we see many of them living in obscurity; known only by their writings; neither at the tables of women of rank; nor in the studies of men of genius; we hear of no national honours, no public marks of popular applause, no rank, no title, no liberal and splendid recompense bestowed on British literary women." (*A Letter* 69-70).

Robinson considers it crucial, in order for women's literary works to endure for posterity, that they were included in the pages of Britain's literary history. Robinson's "List of British Female Literary Characters" responded to her desire to disseminate knowledge of women's contribution to the nation's literary history, which could then be emulated by other English women. Robinson's project was to give women authors the same portion of fame as their male cohorts.

According to Ashley Cross' scholarly work on *A Letter*, Robinson tries in this text to "restore a tradition" of female authorship that could be used by the present and future generations of female writers ("He-She Philosophers" 53). Her main idea behind acknowledging other female writers was to provide a historical narrative in which women were the main protagonists. In a similar vein, women's interventions in the public discourse through literature contributed to a lineage of female philosophers that had been anticipated by Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication* (Cross, "He-She Philosophers" 54). Robinson claims that a woman is "expected to *act* like a philosopher, though she is not allowed to *think* like one". Women have to demonstrate the greatest self-control and humanity while it is neglected to them the freedom of the mind.

The late eighteenth century in Britain was quite distinct for its literary traffic, and authors' representation in the public sphere and their social status became a central topic among writers. As an alternative model for literary celebrity, Robinson proposes to "shift the focus from the author's reputation to the author *in person*" (Arnold 725). More precisely, Robinson's personal struggles to be recognised for her literary and artistic merits persuaded her to interrogate the established grounds and assumptions of literary celebrity. This reference to literary endeavours was part of another of Robinsons' projects, one focused on a redefinition of the role and position of authors, something particularly important for women writers. Robinson's approach

considers achieving literary celebrity is essentially determined by the author's ability to construct a public image (735).

Following the previous argument, in Robinson's essay *Present State of the Manners* (1800), which she composed almost contemporaneously to *A Letter*, she compliments the French authorship model in which the writers, whether women or men, were esteemed and greatly distinguished by the highest social circles (*Present State* 116; Arnold 740). For Robinson, it was essential for any authors' professional growth to be worshipped properly by the public, by their fellow writers and by the highest intellectual circles of their country. Literary acclamation played a crucial role in avoiding their eventual disappearance from the collective memory of their period.

Like Robinson, also De Castro pays tribute to other women writers in her diverse literary ranks. One such case was the dedication to Fernán Caballero – the aristocratic male pen-name of the Spanish writer Cecilia Francisca Josefa Böhl de Faber – in De Castro's first well-known Galician poetry book, *Cantares Gallegos* (Davies, *Cecilia* 45). In 1863 she wrote:

“Madam, As you are a woman and novelist whose works I have found deeply sympathetic, I dedicate this small book to you. It will serve to demonstrate to you, author of *La Gaviota* and *Clemencia*, my great appreciation for, among other things, the way you avoided, in your pages that touch on Galicia, the vulgar ideas with which some try to taint my country (De Castro, *Galician Songs* 21).”⁸⁵

De Castro dedicates her pioneer work, *Cantares Gallegos*, to a female writer who at the time had managed to acquire international renown. By identifying her poetic compositions with a writer of the calibre of Fernán Caballero, De Castro was indeed, once again, demonstrating that women had the capacity to aspire to a writing career and even become successful. Interestingly, for more than a century, a letter which Fernán Caballero wrote in response to De Castro's words, remained hidden in a private family library and was discovered only a few years ago. The letter Caballero addressed to the poet shows an example of solidarity between women writers, something De Castro had dreamt of since she started her literary career with feminist texts like *Lieders*.

At the beginning of the letter, Fernán Caballero describes De Castro's book as a “precious gift” (*precioso envío*) and refers to the author as the “sweet nightingale of Galicia” (*dulceruiseñor de Galicia*). Fernán Caballero explains that before writing her letter, she had drenched

⁸⁵ *Por ser mujer y autora de unas novelas hacia las cuales siento la más profunda simpatía, dedico a usted este pequeño libro. Sirva él para demostrar a la autora de La Gaviota y de Clemencia el grande aprecio que le profeso, entre otras cosas, por haberse apartado algún tanto, en las cortas páginas en que se ocupó de Galicia, de las vulgares preocupaciones con que se pretende manchar a mi país.* Santiago, 17 de mayo de 1863

herself in her precious verses, even though, she adds, it was very difficult to fully understand some of the lines in De Castro's Galician verses even with the help of a glossary. Nevertheless, after fully immersing herself in De Castro's poems, Fernán Caballero states that she has never read verses of such intense sensibility and real feeling, clearly inspired by the author's heart. In her letter, Fernán Caballero also touches upon the issue of "literary indifferentism", that is to say, the double standard of appreciation that affected the reception of texts generated by women writers. She deplores that De Castro's audience "will not receive this work with noisy and universal enthusiasm as it deserves" (Angueira 11-12). However, Caballero encourages De Castro to continue to be a "true poet" who "is above the pleasures of vanity" and in that way her verses "will remain in Spain among the glories of Galicia". The letter ends with a proto-feminist statement, in which Fernán Caballero writes a sort of ode to women writers: "Blessed be the feminine pens, which in our country are the pure vestals that consecrate themselves to preserve the sacred fires of Religion, patriotism, poetry, family love and all that is good" (Angueira 13). Indeed, Fernán Caballero's letter shows an example of sisterhood, an alliance between women writers who share the same concerns about the patriarchal western world of literature. Unquestionably, for these writers, the pen constituted a strategic tool in the pursuit of women's liberation. They believed in the art of writing for women's emancipation, yet more importantly, they relied on the collective memory of women writers to confound the idea of women's mental fragility.

A few years before *Cantares Gallegos*, De Castro tried to fill the lack of female figures in the prologue to her novel *La Hija del Mar* (1859), published a year after the prose poetic text *Lieders*, when the author was only twenty-two years old. The text begins with a very brief apology by the author for committing an "immense sin, unworthy of forgiveness" (Mayoral *Biografía* 1).

Before writing the first page of my book, allow the woman to apologize for what for many will be an immense sin unworthy of forgiveness, a mistake that is necessary to be clarified. (De Castro *La hija del mar*)⁸⁶

In this quotation, she follows the tradition of false modesty, "captatio benevolentiae", an ironic literary device (Carames Martínez 100). De Castro does not fully disclose what kind of sin she was about to commit, but we are able to understand what she means if we remember her statements in *Lieders* and *Las Literatas* and in the prologues to her Galician poetry collections.

⁸⁶ *Antes de escribir la primera página de mi libro, permítase a la mujer disculparse de lo que para muchos será un pecado inmenso e indigno de perdón, una falta de que es preciso que se sincere.*

She had been providing clues since the beginning of her journey as a writer, hence, the sin she hints at has been, in fact, committed many times; it is the act of writing without the social constraints which many others are oppressed by:

“It could be quoted here, indeed, some texts penned by famous men, who, like the profound Malebranche and our wise and venerated Feijoo, which maintained that women were capable for the study of sciences, arts and literature.” (De Castro *La hija del mar*).⁸⁷

In this prologue, De Castro creates an exclusive female genealogy, openly refusing to quote the works of male writers, even the writings of those who have been in favour of women’s capacity in the study of sciences, art, and literature. However, she does nominate Nicolás Malebranche (1638-1715) and Padre Feijoo as two male figures who sought equality of the sexes. The disguised mention of these men provided, in a subtle manner, models of masculinity for the detractors and opposers of women’s emancipation (García Nero, *Iusfemminismo* 93). She deliberately chooses two historical male figures, both churchmen and philosophers, who, despite their positions in the Church, endorsed a clear message in favour of women’s rights. The former sought for the education of women and their right to freely consent to marry. The latter, Padre Feijoo (1676- 1764), also had a central role in Galician culture, and was very well-known among his fellow compatriots. He was a Benedictine priest and a scholar who composed the *Speech in Defence of Women*,⁸⁸ in which he stands in favour of the acknowledgment of women’s intellectual capabilities and their right to be educated in the same way as men (García Nero, *Iusfemminismo* 94).

In the epilogue to *La Hija del Mar*, we can read De Castro’s opinion on the literary elite – whose members were mainly men – impartially reinforcing the idea that:

A woman only serves for domestic works and that the one, that perhaps obeying to an irresistible force, departs from that peaceful life and throws herself into the revolt waves of the tumults of the world, is a woman worthy of general execration. (De Castro *La Hija del mar*.)⁸⁹

De Castro praises several historical and emblematic female figures, revolutionary characters such as Madame Roland, Madame de Staël, and the French painter Rosa Bonheur whom she

⁸⁷ “Bien pudiera, en verdad, citar aquí algunos textos de hombres célebres que, como el profundo Malebranche y nuestro sabio y venerado Feijoo, sostuvieron que la mujer era apta para el estudio de las ciencias, de las artes y de la literatura”.

⁸⁸ Discurso en defensa de las mujeres was published in 1726.

⁸⁹ “La mujer sólo sirve para las labores domésticas y que aquella que, obedeciendo tal vez a una fuerza irresistible, se aparta de esa vida pacífica y se lanza a las revueltas ondas de los tumultos del mundo, es una mujer digna de la execración general”.

described as unparalleled to other artists of her time. She also mentions the writer George Sand – pen-name for Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, who shared the glory of Balzac and Walter Scott, the mystical theologian Santa Teresa de Jesús, and the poet Sappho, all of them serving as an inspiring figure for generations of women writers. She then mentions Catherine the Empress of Russia, the heroine and saint Joan of Arc, and Queen Maria Teresa. From revolutionary and religious figures to writers and artists, De Castro rendered honour to a number of foremothers. These women have been remembered by a biased history, even if they protested against the idea that women were destined to domestic chores, and although they defied the rigid norms imposed on them by aspiring to have a public life. She ends the prologue with a strong statement on the inequality of the sexes, “women are still not permitted to write what they feel and what they know” (De Castro, Prologue to *La Hija del Mar* 36).

Paradoxically, De Castro begins the prologue by asking forgiveness from her readers and the male literary establishment for defying the gender norms by becoming a writer who composes texts that expressed her knowledge and feelings. However, she immediately followed this ironic petition with a list of several important female figures in history, including the renowned writer George Sand, clearly demonstrating her real intention.

Robinson and De Castro unveil the way women’s literary works and women’s contribution to the intellectual progress of society have been made invisible in history. Both writers show an extraordinary awareness of the exclusionary historical dynamics that precludes us from believing in history as a truthful narration of the past. *A Letter* and the Prologue to *La hija del mar* are examples of a feminist practice of resistance carried out by various writers during the Romantic period. They have used representative figures from the past who conquered spaces and positions banned to women, in order to create lineages that could be emulated by other women for centuries.

We see, then, that women’s erasure from history was a concern that dominated the private and public domains long before the 20th-century feminist historians decided to counterattack the way history has been an ally to the patriarchal system, through its practice of excluding women. The category of women writers, so crucial to Robinson and De Castro, is still relevant today, in times when women’s literary works sometimes remain invisible often because of a lack of gender opportunity. Although we cannot speak of ‘women’ as a category, since it brings along some challenges of definition, nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize nowadays that millions of women still struggle globally to have access to education or to receive recognition as producers of culture.

In a broader sense, Robinson denounced gender-based discrimination, the inability of women to obtain full citizenship, with no freedom to choose whether they wished to participate in social and cultural life without the fear of facing social rejection. She remarked on the necessity to change the patriarchal rules that had limited women's possibilities of succeeding in the art of literature. It is important that women transgress the limits imposed by a discriminatory culture and social system, following the example of brave women and female intellectuals who have preceded them, thus acquiring the necessary language to participate in the public life as full citizens.

Robinson's and De Castro's writings obliged them to play with the contradictions entrenched in the use of sexual difference for their literary activism. Their provocative discussions on equality contributed to the proto-feminist history of their respective periods and demonstrated the variety of forms of resistance that women had and have employed for centuries to promote their aims for equal rights. Likewise, their advocacy for the recognition of women writers' works was strategic in avoiding women's disappearance from the literary history of their country and provided the readers with a wide range of figures that they could emulate, to finally become citizens of the world.

As it has been shown, feminist studies interested in history and literature offer us significant tools to understand the present from a critical perspective. Moreover, revisiting traces of past feminist discussions on equality is useful in order to show us a diversity of practices of resistance, as well as their failures and merits. The gender dynamics that were pertinent for the production of a culture of gender equality in the past are still significant and inspiring for the gender equality activism of these days. Nowadays academic research, specifically that with a feminist approach, is still concerned with the lack of women's presence in history in general and, in particular, literary history can certainly afford to have more women writers to celebrate.

In accordance with these writers' proto-feminist practices of inclusion and social protest, I have endeavoured as a primary objective of this research project – to recall a genealogy of women writers that disrupted traditional ideas of nationalism and citizenship – to address and employ themes and tropes of migration and exile. In a contemporary climate of social anxiety about migration and increasing policies against the idea of a borderless world, these writers' legacy offer to a modern-day reader interesting critical perspectives useful to be applied, or at least recalled, in the complex context in which we are living. No doubt, these authors' texts transcend their time and might well contribute to defy the social dynamics that have supported gender oppression and discrimination for centuries.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Reading the texts, hearing the voices I

4. 1 At the edge of national borders: Exile writing in Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants*

Britain saw the emergence of copious literature dealing with mobility and displacement in response to the events unfolding in revolutionary France, which impacted the rest of the continent with a large human migratory movement. Written compositions of the period, today classified as belonging to the early Romantic Movement, often confronted issues and experiences directly connected with this trend of transnationality and identity. The English nation's involvement in projects of colonialism and its participation in the slave trade also impacted the literature of those years, particularly literature written by women, as that national participation became a central, recurrent topic in poetical and prose literary works (Mellor, "Slavery" 311). Women authors such as Charlotte Turner Smith (Smith) and Mary Darby Robinson (Robinson) shaped their writings according to this literary tendency.

These emerging thoughts and metaphors on migration were malleable enough to allow for a proto-feminist discourse and the possibility for women to envision the day they might be recognised as citizens of Britain. As demonstrated by Smith's literary oeuvre, for women writers like herself, the condition of the French newcomers and others subject to discrimination, appeared to be more illustrative of their gendered condition than the emerging nationalist discourse of the English populace. Likewise, for Smith, the émigrés served as a starting point from which to pursue cultural revolution in Britain. As we shall see shortly, though Smith is following Wollstonecraft's petition for a "revolution in female manners", she pushes still farther and calls for a structural change in national priorities, advocating for and a more inclusive, anti-militarist society (Labbe, "The exile self" 38). For Curran, in *The Emigrants* Smith employs a narrative framework to confront "exile at home no less than abroad as a normative mode of being and the violation of one's rights as a pan-European phenomenon to be expected wherever one lives" (Curran, "British Romanticism" 74).

As suggested by the historical snapshots of the individual author's context discussed in the previous chapter, women writers, including Smith and Robinson, were treated as foreigners in their own country. In the late eighteenth century, women "whose fatherland" was England, "never had a home, or at least they have never had a home which was secure enough to build a future on" (Rennhak 582). Such as the émigrés, women lacked legal recognition as subjects capable of managing the basic aspects of their own lives. They explored poetically the affective social consequences of feeling "homelessness" in a period marked by war, extreme violence and reactionary policies that limited individual rights and threatened the freedom of British

citizens. These authors' poetical texts also provided a space for identification with and reflection on women's social condition.

In her novels and other literary genres, Smith touches upon the political turmoil of the revolutionary days and the collective displacement and dispossession that occurred in the late eighteenth century. She is the author of *Desmond* (1792), a political and historical novel written in an epistolary form in which Smith reacts to Edmund Burke's controversial *Reflections on the Revolution*.⁹⁰ Smith's radical authorial voice and political keenness during the early stage of the Revolution are evident in *Desmond* (Blank & Todd 16), as she tackles events that unfolded in neighbouring France, drawing parallels between the tyrannical absolutism that dominated before the French Revolution and the patriarchal violence against women in Britain (Lokke, "Desmond" 61).

In a novel titled *The Banished Man* (1794), published two years after *Desmond* and released almost contemporaneously to *The Emigrants*, Smith imagines a society in which an "enlightened cosmopolitanism" could properly emerge and overcome British provincialist nationalism (Batchelor 74). In *The Banished Man*, through the author-character of Mrs. Denzil, Smith ponders how women and French emigrants suffered a similar position of distress in the late eighteenth century. Smith's presumedly autobiographical character Mrs. Denzil proclaims:

"Alas! Sir, my children and I have also been wanderers and exiles. I know not whether we may not still be called so; for the victims of injustice, oppression, and fraud, we are now banished from the rank of life where fortune originally placed us" (Smith qtd. in Rennhak 576).

As shown in this quote, Smith employs mobility tropes to examine a common social condition of oppression between the French émigrés and British women and children who were supposed to feel secure and privileged in their home country. Likewise, in *Hubert de Sevrac* (1797) she explores "the physical and psychological challenges of a life in exile, including homelessness and isolation" (Markley 388). In these novels she seems to deviate from her aspirations of strictly political reform, adopting instead an approach that concentrates primarily on daily acts of social sympathy and compassion, as in *The Emigrants* (Batchelor 74).

A further example of a prose work in which Smith deals with these migration topics is *The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* (1802), released a few years after *The Emigrants*. This text is composed by a series of novellas connected through epistles containing different stories that

⁹⁰ According to Toby Ruth Benis (Benis) Burke praises the French revolution as an incomparable event in history; he describes it as "the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world" (Benis, "Revolutionary Narratives" 291).

reverberate with historical and revolutionary events characterized by “violence, rootlessness and despair” (Garnai, “The Alien Act” 101). In one of the tales of this novel, Smith condemns the injustices committed by the British System of Law against foreign refugees of political conflicts. She examines the effects of the enforcement of the *Alien Act*⁹¹ on one of the main characters of the text, Leopold de Somerfeldt, an immigrant obliged to leave England in a period of twenty-four hours as a consequence of the law (Garnai, “The Alien Act” 101). As demonstrated in these texts, Smith approaches migration and exile in the English context with high intensity in her numerous novels of prose. Yet it is in her poetry, particularly in *The Emigrants*, where she portrays the most vivid representation of what Stuart Curran calls the “massive cultural alienation” of the period (“Displaced” 642).⁹²

Even though Smith was a multi-genre author⁹³, it appears she preferred and relied principally on poetry to achieve a literary reputation that would last for generations. Smith’s authorial preference might have to do with the prevalent idea that novel writing was becoming a female genre, and was consequently transforming its social consideration as a financially lucrative practice. Meanwhile, poetry writing remained a more prestigious genre (Batchelor 69). At the end of her literary career, Smith wrote a letter to her publishers Thomas Cadell, Jr., and William Davies, declaring that “*it is on the Poetry I have written that I trust for the little reputation I may hereafter have & know that it is not the least likely among the works of modern Poets to reach another period*”⁹⁴ (Stanton 706). Judith Phillips Stanton (Stanton) underlines that Smith’s publishers thought differently, believing that the author’s reputation would have increased more due to her novels than her poetry (xiii).

Smith achieved widespread fame at the very beginning of her professional literary career with her first sonnet collection, *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784).⁹⁵ Smith’s name continues to acquire literary recognition, due in particular to the composition of the long blank verse poem *The*

⁹¹ As I mentioned in the second chapter, the *Alien Act* was a bill enacted with the central aim of regulating the transit of people arriving on the coast of Britain. Under this act the government was authorised “to order the deportation of any alien at any given time; if the alien refused to leave, he or she was liable to arrest” (Garnai, “The Alien Act” 101).

⁹² Smith and Robinson’s cohort female writer, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, generated in the midst of British political chaos of the 1790’s what has been called a “distinctly ungendered political voice” that assumes an egalitarian tone in which she did not take advantage of religion or a stereotypical “feminine sentiment” (Craciun “Introduction” 16). In Barbauld’s prose writings⁹², as Smith and Robinson, and other revolutionary sympathisers, she approaches the situation in Britain, discarding the increasing “xenophobic nationalism” through a discourse that engages with revolutionary principles. She does the same in poetical texts, such as *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812), published as many of her other works by Joseph Johnson (Craciun, “Introduction” 18).

⁹³ Smith wrote novels, poetry, plays and children’s books.

⁹⁴ Letter dated on the 18 August, 1805.

⁹⁵ At the end of the twentieth century she was the first female author to be included in the Oxford Series, *Women Writers in English, 1350-1850* (Curran, “British Romanticism” 66).

Emigrants. According to many scholars of Romanticism, in *The Emigrants* Smith reinvents the traditional form of the long blank verse by crafting a poetic style in which a potent multi-perspective approach is coming from an “isolated sensibility” (Curran, “British Romanticism” 73). However, Smith’s early and broad fame did not preclude the nearly two centuries in which her work, in every genre, would remain in complete oblivion.

In the first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith’s constant authorial presence in the text is justified by the elegiac form; however, in *The Emigrants*, the refugees are deemed to be in the centre, accompanied by the author’s voice. Many of Smith’s readers bought *The Emigrants* in support of the émigrés’ cause, which, at the end, contributed to improve the author’s own challenging financial situation (Andrews 18). We must also keep in mind Smith’s early marriage to a man she used to describe as “a monster”⁹⁶, their shared period of debt imprisonment, her long-lasting legal battle for the inheritance of her children, and the lack of authority that she had as a woman dealing with a literary market. Smith’s public display of her pain and difficulties as a mother and unhappily married woman likely attracted a significant amount of readers, drawn to her constant personal poetical intromission through explanatory notes, images, prefaces, dedications and explicit poetical presence.

In *The Emigrants*, Smith takes the melancholic wanderers that populated her *Elegiac Sonnets* and employs them through the long blank verse form to transmit a more aggressive and direct message. For Smith Hart, the poet in *The Emigrants* denounces the responsibility of “the modern European nation” from within her own gendered exile, implicating Smith’s own country as accomplice to the injustices she long endured (306). *The Emigrants* is an anti-war and anti-patriarchal poem, described by the author as a “conciliatory book”⁹⁷ in which she pairs a sort of humanitarianism from her capacity to understand the difficulties of the exiles, along with her promotion of Republican ideals (Craciun and Locke 5). The tropes of mobility and exile in *The Emigrants* provided Smith with the opportunity to overcome the conventional conceptualisation of England versus France and the dilemma of revolution versus the status quo, while also allowing her to confront individual differences such as gender and class disparities (Rennhak 587).

The Emigrants appeared to the public for the first time in 1793, released “at the height of the Terror”, while Smith witnessed the arrival of the French emigrants including aristocrats,

⁹⁶ “the monster whose name it has been so long my misery bear & to whom I was sold a legal prostitute in my early youth, or what the law calls infancy” (Stanton 625).

⁹⁷ She wrote to her friend Joseph Cooper Walker describing her poem as: “[i]t is not a party book but a conciliatory book (Garnai, “Precarious Bread”27).

members of the clergy and people who were considered supporters of the monarchical authoritarian regime (Goodman 987). The context of the poem has been described as a “border-crossing” of refugees from France to Britain (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 511). Smith herself describes the poem to her publisher Thomas Cadell in December 1792 as “quite unlike in its nature any I have printed & is, tho not on politics, on a very popular & interesting subject mingled with descriptive & characteristic excursions in the way of the Task, only of course inferior to it” (Stanton 55). In the widely-read poem Smith narrates three stories in parallel, portraying the story of the émigrés alongside the author’s plight, in contrast with the story of a European country in moral and political decadence (Meyer, “Narrative” 227).

Smith begins *The Emigrants* by describing a scene “on the Cliffs to the Eastward of the Town of Brighthelmstone in Sussex”, which is located across the English Channel from France, now modern Brighton (Curran, *The Poems* 135). Smith’s poetic female speaker is a spectator of an open, natural and unobstructed space, in which she can observe the people who are disembarking to the English coasts. Her gaze acquires a leading role from the very beginning of this poetical account of the arrival of the émigrés. The act of situating the poetic speaker in a broad landscape with an extensive view is presumably an old poetical legacy by which authors attempt to incorporate tangible elements to a lyrical narrative (Andrews 14). In the poem, the reader observes a woman, who in turn is witnessing an event that will change the politics and social climate of her country. The exercise of witnessing the emigrants sympathetically effectively exposes the reader, from the beginning of the poem, to the migrants’ collective condition of vulnerability. The female observer gradually becomes the spokesperson of these people while portraying herself as one of them. As Curran points,

“[t]heir compounded loss of language, country, and means threatens their very sense of cultural and personal identity, and as the poem increasingly focuses on them as emblems of alienated humanity, the greater becomes their correspondence to the solitary figures observing them” (“The I Altered” 201).

The first book is set on “a Morning in November 1792”, a period in which many members of the clergy who rejected the new Constitutional Church were declared traitors, and consequently immigrated to different European countries. People belonging to the royal family also abandoned France with the hope of returning in the near future. To intensify this strained situation, during the September massacres, emigrants’ properties were confiscated, and the death penalty was imposed on those who returned to France (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 511).

The detailed description of time and location that heads the first lines of the blank verse poem appear to the reader as introductory information provided by the author herself, not by the poetical speaker. Some scholars who have tried to understand Smith's intervention in the heading of the poem are of the opinion that she specifically set her poetical narration into a tangible date and location because she was conscious of the impossibility of anticipating the future in the volatile revolutionary context in which she was living and writing (Guest, "War with France" 26). In short, Smith's introductory notes have been interpreted as a strategy to underpin the author's opinion and poetical narration in a precise scenario, in the aftermath of the French Revolution (Hart 312).

The introductory information in *The Emigrants* marks the author's affective chronological responses to significant events such as the execution of Louis XVI and the declaration of war against Britain (Guest, "War with France" 27). According to Kerri Andrews (Andrews), Smith pays particular attention to time and place in order to bring her reader closer to the scenes and emotions that she wishes to share throughout her texts (14). Consequently, the poem is, in essence, an invitation to feel compassion for others. In this same vein, Susan Wolfson (Wolfson) concludes that Smith provides this introductory information in order to add factual veracity to her poetical narrative and provide awareness of the situation in Britain.⁹⁸ Smith's decision to follow a linear narrative by changing the elegiac form to a long blank verse, along with the addition of dates, seasons and names of places, effectively renders her poem a "historiographic text" (Bernstein 34).⁹⁹

Conscious of the operations of the gender politics of the period, Smith uses a "female identity" that allows her to speak emphatically of the plight of the emigrants while at once developing an eloquent and radical critique of British society. It is intriguing how Smith utilises the recognised women's archetypes to discuss revolutionary and republican views. It is not by chance, as Labbe has pointed out, that Smith exercises in *The Emigrants* the traditional female stereotypes of care, nurturance and compassion towards those in need with her poetic voice (Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 119). Thus, the subject of the emigrants serves both to focus her

⁹⁸ "six months after priests who refused to support the Constitutional Church were declared traitors, three months after the decree for their expulsion and the arrest of the royal family at the Tuileries, two months after the September massacres (3 bishops and 220 priests among the slaughtered) and the confiscation of emigrants' property, and one month after the death penalty was established for any returnees. By November, Robespierre, the Terror's architect, had risen to power and Saint-Just was demanding judgment of Louis XVI as 'a foreign enemy' of the Republic's 'independence and unity'; in the same month, Smith was sheltering some emigrants in her own home" (Wolfson, "Forging Connections" 83).

⁹⁹ Bernstein explains that *The Emigrants* reflects a "crisis in historiography", that drove numerous authors of Smith's time to explore other forms of writing history (34).

appraisal of the political turmoil in Britain, while also deflecting the readers' attention away from it. (119). In many ways, Smith grounds the sympathy she professes for the migrants on her natural feminine capacity of caring, as her own experience with distress makes her a "natural arbiter for the exiles" (Andrews 18).

This aspect of Smith's text, the maternal approach to the situation of the emigrants, does not necessarily portend that Smith wants to remain apolitical on the matter, or that she does not attempt to challenge the patriarchal customs of the British society in the poem. Smith's maternal affection in favour of the refugees and the levelling of her own sufferings to those of the emigrants are each strategic modes of appealing to the sympathy of her readers in favour of the cause of the people who, like her, an English woman and a cohort citizen, have been maltreated and discriminated against. In regards to Smith's capacity to experience intense sympathy for others, she explains in the preface of her novel *The Young Philosopher* (1798), published a few years after *The Emigrants*, "[i]f a Writer can best describe who has suffered, I believe that all the evils arising from oppression, from fraud and chicane, I am above almost any person qualified to delineate" (Smith qtd. Boyd 162). In a nutshell, Smith considers herself qualified to write about the plight of the emigrants, because she has suffered all kinds of oppression as a woman.

In Smith's Dedication of *The Emigrants* to William Cowper (Cowper)¹⁰⁰, she asks for a "retrospective rereading" of the recent revolutionary events and for a reappraisal of the manner in which they influenced social perception, especially in regard to liberal minds.¹⁰¹ She denounces that many supporters of the ideals of the revolution became the subjects of banal attacks and were stigmatised as "promoters of Anarchy" and as anti-nationalists (Guest, "War with France" 27). Smith declares,

A Dedication usually consists of praises and of apologies; my praise can add nothing to the unanimous and loud applause of your country. She regards you with pride, as one of the few, who, at the present period, rescue her from the imputation of having degenerated in Poetical talents; but in the form of Apology, I should have much to say, if I again dared to plead the pressure of evils, aggravated by their long continuance, as an excuse for the defects of this attempt (*The Poems* 132-133).

¹⁰⁰ William Cowper was a very well-known English poet belonging to the generation between Alexander Pope and William Wordsworth. Deemed one of the "best modern poets" and an "advocate of Evangelical Christianity", his writings, particularly the six-book long verse poem *The Task* (1785), offer an interesting intersection between religion and literature in early romantic Britain (Newey 41). Smith was an acquaintance of Cowper, they spent two weeks writing *The Emigrants* (Knowles and Harrocks 127)

¹⁰¹ Cowper was aware of Smith's myriad difficulties. He wrote to a friend in regard to Smith's economic and health condition: "I know not of a more pitiable case. Chain'd to her desk like a slave to his oar, with no other means of subsistence for herself and her numerous children, with a broken constitution, unequal to the severe labour enjoined her by necessity, she [Smith] is to be pitied" (Knowles 48).

Smith expounds that, in the midst of British social and political backlash, many people were publicly shifting their opinions. For her part, in her Dedication to Cowper, Smith maintains her endorsement of the revolution and laments the increasing climate of Francophobia, affirming that the English were “confounding the original cause with the wretched catastrophes that have followed its ill management” (*The Poems* 133-134). Smith “confronts the local and current turmoil of the French Revolution, which had by 1793 evolved into the Reign of Terror”, events that caused numerous original supporters of the revolution to distance themselves from their previous liberal convictions (Staton 56). She underlines her intention to promote a peace pact, to stop the animosity divorcing the people of France and Britain¹⁰², and hopes for an ending in which the two countries may stand equally as great nations. As noted by Wolfson, “*The Emigrants* joins an evolving female poetry of condemning war as patriarchal militarism” (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 512).

The social perception of the revolution was also changing as a consequence of the increased flux of French refugees arriving to Britain, perceived as an invasion. The British Parliament passed legislation to regulate the human traffic, which created further tension among the French newcomers and British citizens, as the act was “a means for observation and control” over the émigrés (Garnai, “The Alien Act” 102). The Parliament approved the *Alien Act* in 1793—the same year *The Emigrants* was published—which, as explained previously, allowed for the deportation of aliens without any limitation in terms of time or motive of the expulsion. According to this law, if the soon-to-be-deported refused to evacuate Britain, they could be taken into prison without a right to trial (Garnai, “The Alien Act” 102). A year after the enforcement of this law the suspension of *Habeas Corpus* took place, and in 1795 and 1796 two other acts were passed by the Parliament, known as the *Treason and Sedition Bills*, which punished the actions of “writing and speaking against the Government” (Garnai, “The Alien Act” 102).

According to Labbe, Smith’s Dedication turns the attention from the author’s presence in the text to the figure of Cowper and what he represents in repressive British society (*Culture*

¹⁰² In her dedication, Smith declares that she has a special connection with the emigrants that stems from her ability to understand the pain of others. Smith states, I was gradually led to attempt, in Blank Verse, a delineation of those interesting objects which happened to excite my attention, and which even pressed upon an heart, that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others. (Prologue, lines 19-23)

of *Gender* 30).¹⁰³ In the context of Britain's declaration of war against France in 1793, amidst reactionary politics that put at risk the freedom of speech and movement of the population, Smith finishes her dedication with a few lines that give the reader a piece of her liberal mind. She connects the admiration of Cowper's poetical talents with the figure of Charles James Fox, a supporter of the Girondin Party in the French nation and part of the Whig minority in the House of Commons (Curran, "British Romanticism" 69, Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 31). Smith concludes her dedication by saying that "in the Parliament of England the greatest Orator of our time [Charles James Fox] quoted the sublimest of our Poets—when the eloquence of Fox did justice to the genius of Cowper". As Curran stresses, "Smith's dedication has decided political overtones", as she acknowledges a leader who was against the "counter-revolutionary war" (*The Poems* 134).

In Smith's poetical portrait of 1790's Britain, the French émigrés were depicted as a group of people obliged to hastily abandon their country to start a new life in a place where they were considered enemies of the nation by a good part of the population.¹⁰⁴

The autobiographical female speaker of the poem is a spectator of the arrival of the French refugees, a multitude that included a variety of people, but the most often represented in Smith's poem are the clergy, the nobility and female émigrés, the latter appearing primarily as victims of the volatility of wartime. In the context of the poem, the political tension between the two European nations achieves new heights when the French expatriate reaches the coast of England and war is subsequently declared between the two countries. Some scholars state that in the early years, the refugees in England themselves presumed their obligatory post-revolution sojourn would be temporary. Many of these French outcasts believed that the possibility of returning to their homeland would be available in the near future (Oliver 20).

The influx of people belonging to the Catholic Church of France did not necessarily inspire compassion to the anti-Catholic Britain, who treated them as a threat to the Church of England

¹⁰³ Nevertheless, throughout the poem the author's poetical voice reappears, loudly expressing her many sufferings.

¹⁰⁴ Through poetry, as we will see in the next sections, Smith decries together the effect of patriarchy on her life, and the repercussions of the imperialist dynamics of war in the treatment received by the emigrants and women in general. Stuart Curran included a footnote to his edition of Charlotte Smith's poems in which he describes the historical context in which Smith's composed *The Emigrants*, making a particular remark on the author's interest and connection with plight of the female migrants, "As the Revolution unfolded in France, a great many who had enjoyed power and privilege under the *ancien regime* sought refuge in England. [...] Thus, to the numbers of unprotected women who had been sent abroad with their children for safety were added others whose husbands had emigrated with them but had then returned to France to fight and die, leaving unprovided widows to their fate in a strange land. The extent to which the rules made by men at once keep women dependent and leave them no recourse when left alone links these distressed emigrants and the poet who observes them" (*The Emigrants* 131).

(Markley 389). In addition, the French emigrants represented an alliance with an aristocrat class that took advantage of their privilege in France, and part of the population was afraid they would attempt the same in England (Markley 389). Thus, addressing the situation of the emigrants, even poetically, required touching upon sensitive aspects of France's and Britain's historically conflicted relationship. Due to these tense circumstances, the "humanitarian sensibility" of Smith's authorial persona clashes with her "political outrage" and disillusionment with the ancient regime and those who benefited from it (Wolfson, "the Politics of Allusion" 17).

As Anne K. Mellor (Mellor) points out, in *The Emigrants*, Smith—unlike other cohort writers of the period such as Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge—does not merely draw upon the discourse grounding the French Revolution and its aftermath; she prefers instead to elaborate a critique of the imperialist patriarchal system in Britain from the plight of the French emigrants, particularly clergymen, aristocrats and female migrants (Mellor, "Women's Political Poetry" 73). These external figures (emigrants) call on the poetical speaker to evaluate the events occurring inside the British territory, echoing the injustices that drove the revolution to the other side of the Channel. The emigrants' presence in Smith's text contributes to a political and ethical dialogue between the poetical speaker and the British population. However, Smith's critique stretches beyond the British government and nation to include every western European patriarchal political system ruled by "Man, misguided Man" (Smith qtd. in Mellor, "Women's Political Poetry" 73).

As it is in the case of *The Emigrants*, some scholars have stated the necessity of distinguishing the concept of "metaphorical exile", which defines how the author of the piece feels identified with the alien's condition, and the circumstance of disenfranchisement of the French émigrés (Rennhak 576). Many women writers reflected broadly on the phenomenon of the French Emigration, on the implications brought forth by the expatriates' arrival to the coast of their northern island, and on the way their presence allowed them to rethink their subjectivity and existential condition of alienation. Indeed, women writers had much to say about feelings of estrangement and disenfranchisement. They could parallel their legal and social status to that of the emigrants, and they could speak in their favour, as their sympathy towards the emigrants was fuelled by their daily personal experience with oppression.

In *The Emigrants*, the concept of metaphorical exile enforces Smith's feminist political critique, while the connection between the personal woes of the authorial voice and the plight of the émigrés resonates with the conciliatory intent of the book (Felber 36). Smith attempts to reconcile the private and collective woes, and to put at centre the question of which voices have

been heard during conflicting times by privileging personal stories. As a conscious and anti-militarist writer, Smith focuses on private accounts, including her own, to narrate macro-historical events, and to defy the political antagonism that was contaminating English society. For the author, individual experiences are what really counts in times of political turmoil and instability.

Labbe conceives *The Emigrants* to be “a poem about a speaker who attempts, through her engagement with the political situation in France and England, to move from passive spectator to active director” (Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 116). In the poem, the poetic voice is an “omnipresent” speaker who merges the poet’s private life with her political critiques and activism, putting into practice the second wave feminist slogan “The personal is political”. This merging appears for the first time in the prologue. Later in the text, she partially reveals to the reader that her involuntary exile is the result of the many injustices she and her children have suffered, making references to her inability to legally ensure to her children the inheritance of their paternal grandfather.¹⁰⁵

Smith does not advocate in *The Emigrants* for “revolution and democracy”; instead she calls for “reformation and a constitutional monarchy” (Rennhak 579). Yet, despite the presence of these liberal and revolutionary aspects in the long blank verse text, in 1792 Smith told her publisher James Dodsley that *Emigrants* was “not on politics” but “on a very popular & interesting subject” (Wolfson, “Politics of Allusion” 23).¹⁰⁶ Some scholars maintain that the studies on Smith have not done justice to her engagement with French revolutionary ideas. Apart from being “one of the most technically accomplished and influential of the Romantic poets, [Smith] was also undeniably one of the most political” (Craciun and Lokke 4).

¹⁰⁵ Sodeman believes that these legal injustices are one of the main causes of the author’s alienation (136). Smith never saw the settlement of her children inheritance, since she died seven months before the end of her thirty-year legal battle (Boyd 148).

As Smiths’ words express to her cohort Cooper: “I assure you I have neither naturally nor artificially the least partiality for my native Country, which has not protected my property by its boasted Laws, & where, if the Laws are not good, I know nothing that is, for the climate does not agree with me, who am another creature in France..” (Letter written to Joseph Cooper Walker on 25 March 1794).

¹⁰⁶ Even though Smith’s novels are not part of my primary sources in this investigation, I would like to quote a paragraph from her novel *Desdmond* in which the author’s presence in the text is quite strong in her opinion of women’s involvement of politics. Smith says,

“Have they no interest in the scenes that are acting around them, in which they have fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, or fiends engaged? –Even in the commonest course of female education, they are expected to acquire some knowledge of history; and yet, if they are to have no opinion of what is passing, it avails little that they should be informed of what has passed, in a world where they are subjects to such mental degradation; where they are censured as affecting masculine knowledge if they happen to have any understanding; or despised as insignificant triflers if they have none.” (Preface, iii) (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 514)

As a result of the declaration of war between France and Britain in 1793, the government under Prime Minister William Pitt increased regulatory measures restraining political expression (Markley, "Banished Men" 387-388). It was clearly dangerous to generate this type of controversial revolutionary rhetoric and anti-war political discourse at a time when libel legislation was gaining strength, and the hostility against France was increasing. According to Jacqueline Labbe (Labbe), the Libel Act of 1792/93 restricted writers on the content of their literary productions but did not provide clear guidelines in terms of its application, thereby subjecting writers to the arbitrary power of British system of law. Under this statute, "the intent of the author mattered a great deal less than the interpretation of the work by its readers" (*Culture of Gender* 119-120). Publishing opinions that were consonant with revolutionary ideas was a dangerous act in such a repressive period of authoritarianism (Markley, "Banished Men" 388). The political context made Smith's words more courageous, even if she attempted to disguise her political intentions by employing a sympathetic tone towards the plight of the exiles (Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 118).

The Emigrants navigates the benefits that migration posed to ultimately reform the country while Smith reflects on the viability of the British nation and its ethical duty to receive these asylum seekers. For Smith, these people, far from endangering the stability and security of the country, are profitable for provincial Britain. Overall, Smith's approach to the emigrants reveals her cosmopolitan views, her vindication of a country without borders, including linguistic, cultural and religious barriers. Smith conceives migration as a means to contest the British individualistic rhetoric of citizenship, the extreme nationalism and isolated local culture; all of these aspects demonstrate the author's committed stance against war, xenophobia, violence, tyranny and social inequality (Garnai, "The Alien Act" 108).

At the beginning of the first book of *The Emigrants*, the poetic persona is speaking from a peripheral space from which she can appreciate a panoramic view of the people arriving to the English shores. This position may also have a symbolic meaning. Situated on cliffs, Smith is contemplating the emigrants from her own cultural exile, from a land in which she is an outcast as well. The association between isolation and nature is highlighted. The coastlines become an organic metaphor to represent the connections between national borders, a significant element in migratory landscapes where humans are in constant mobility (Morrallis 169). More than simply observing the migrants landing on the shores of England, Smith's poetic speaker also mirrors herself in the refugees. As Zoë Kinsley (Kinsley) has pointed out: "coastlines are the metaphoric and real places that exiled women inhabit, the no man's land of expulsion" ("The Space"101). For Kinsley, Smith was a writer aware of the relationship between gender

and space, as she persistently employed the ocean's coastlines as a threshold, a non-place inhabited metaphorically by discriminated women (101).

In this first book, Smith's poetic persona is "on the Cliffs"; whereas in the second book, as we will observe later, the poetic persona is "on an Eminence" in the South Downs of Sussex; from these places it is possible to contemplate the sea and the land at the same time. Smith portrays the veracity of the circumstances framing her poetical words without restricting the manifold interpretations that could emerge from her verses. Thus, Smith's poetic persona stands at the margins, cut off from the political arena as almost every woman, but more importantly detached from nationalist fanaticism (Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 126; Ross 91). It is difficult to separate reality from fiction in the extensive scene description offered by Smith, because she sets the poem in a concrete place while also alluding to metaphorical meanings evoked by that physical space (Labbe, "Mediating History" 70). Returning to Kristeva's ideas regarding female exile, we can say that Smith creates a "non-place" that allows her to elaborate on a perspective that is not available to men (Lechte 80). Women during the Romantic era had an affective outlook on their surrounding circumstances, since their opinions were often disregarded. In Kristeva's view, the "most intense forms of estrangement experienced by the subject, are those produced by poetic language". She states that poetic language is "a fire of tongues" that reaches beyond a state of awareness, a sort of explosion of emotions (A. Smith 11).

Smith's poetical speaker aligns herself with the emigrants by remarking on their common humanity with the people of Britain. Her poetic voice, while witnessing the traffic of people, is fully engaged in their mobility, putting herself in the same position as those she is contemplating. Curiously, although the French exiles have experienced a long journey, they are depicted almost as static creatures waiting for something to occur (Garnay, "Precarious Bread" 28). The poem's inaugural scene is all about nature's sadness and fatigue; in the first lines, the narrator describes Britain as a "northern isle" in which the emigrants may only fancy bliss. The only joy the exiles experience is a fictional one, held by an innocent hope for a better future (Andrews 19).

By commencing the poem in this tone, isolation and melancholy are established as central themes. In the midst of nature's unwillingness, the exiles arrive,

SLOW in the Wintry Morn, the struggling light
Throws a faint gleam upon the troubled waves;
Their foaming tops, as they approach the shore
And the broad surf that never ceasing breaks
On the innumerable pebbles, catch the beams

Of the pale Sun, that with reluctance gives
To this cold northern Isle, its shorten'd day.
Alas! how few the morning wakes to joy!
How many murmur at oblivious night
For leaving them so soon; for bearing thus
Their fancied bliss (the only bliss they taste!)
(Book I, lines 1-11)

According to Andrews, in this first stanza, the entire scenario is imbued with reluctance; even the sun shines unwillingly (19). The troubled waves reflect the voyage of the émigrés to England, but also the instability and the volatile situation awaiting them on arrival. These people, who have just crossed the Channel, are obliged to completely change their lives and their expectations about the future. They have lost everything, the good and the bad, “faithless friends, and fame and fortune”; their dreams have been changed for calamities and “every day brings its own sad proportion” (Book I, lines 14,16). In the following verses, Smith also passionately condemns the violence executed by men who have spoiled the “beauteous works of God”, while, in large scale, she condemns the devastation propagated by the European nations in war, and the evil of men as a threat to the natural environment (Book I, line 56). The poetical voice also accuses men’s bigotry and selfishness as primarily responsible for the misfortunes of the emigrants, as well as for the legal injustices Smith personally has endured. The female speaker utters:

Nothing but good: Man, misguided Man,
Mars the fair work that he was bid enjoy,
And makes himself the evil he deploras.
How often, when my weary soul recoils
From proud oppression, and from legal crimes
(For such are in this Land, where the vain boast
Of equal Law is mockery, while the cost
Of seeking for redress is sure to plunge
Th’already injur’d to more certain ruin
And the wretch starves, before his Counsel pleads
(Book I, lines 32–41)

Here, Smith intercalates the collective suffering of the exiles caused by the hatred of the nations into the private grief of the poetic speaker. The individual experience of inequality merges with the emigrants’ plight, an equation that highlights the incorporeal proximity of the poetic authorial persona (Smith) and those she is observing, while evoking a general reflection on human justice (Andrews 21). Lorraine Fletcher (Fletcher) is of the opinion that in the poem, Smith and the emigrants are almost a single entity, asserting:

The Emigrants begins with the speaker's personal griefs. At first these seem obtrusive, but like *The Prelude* her poem is partly about the growth of a poet's mind and about

the angle of vision, where the subject is inseparable from the sensibility that contemplates it (“Girondism” 193).

Specifically, in the very first lines, while the speaker is narrating the natural scene, she refers to the emigrants as “they.” Later she refers to the exiles as “us”, connecting them to a common humanity that surpasses religious and national prejudices. Finally, quite suddenly, the speaker begins using the pronouns “I” and “me”. In this fashion, a feeling of compassion for a marginal group evolves into sympathy for the common human plight (Andrews 19-20). This idea of common humanity that stems from liberal thought is expanded under Smith’s poetical and political project to include discriminated subjects. Smith proposes a conception of humanity that reaches beyond hierarchical categories. For Smith, whoever is suffering should be assisted, no matter his or her social status or country of origin.

Smith’s conceptualization of the suffering of humanity in the figure of the emigrants is observable from the first book of *The Emigrants*, when the speaker questions who the unfortunate people are, stating, ‘Poor, wand’ring wretches! Whoso’er ye are’ (lines 296). While the emigrants become a representation of the injustices committed against all humans, Smith predominantly remarks on the plight suffered by French and British women who have become the victims of patriarchal governments and of a corrupted system of law (Andrews 24). For Smith, even though women and children are not active participants in the conflict between France and Britain, they are direct, innocent victims of their ongoing circumstance (Wolfson, “The will of social being” 9).

An idea of common humanity driven by acts of solidarity between people coming from different countries is one of Smith’s main proposals in *The Emigrants*. Not every British citizen was against the émigrés; their arrival attracted the sympathy of some sectors that viewed them simply as people fleeing the violence directly attributed to the Revolution. Yet the xenophobic concerns of “national security and the, anti-French and anti-Catholic sentiment of the population, which saw in the émigrés their Protestant enemy, proved stronger than the humanitarian sympathy of a few individuals (Garnai 103).

The element of proximity between the poetic voice and the emigrants can also be observed in the following verses (fifth stanza), where the voice depicts herself as a fellow victim:

For I have thought, that I should then behold
The beauteous works of God, Unspoil’d by Man
And less affected then, by human woes
I witness’d not; might better learn to bear
Those that injustice, and duplicity
And faithlessness and folly, fix on me:

For never yet could I derive relief,
When my swol'n heart was bursting with its sorrows,
From the sad thought, that others like myself
Live but to swell affliction's countless tribes!
(Book I, lines 55-64)

Harriet Guest (Guest) affirms that Smith, who constantly enters the poem through the poetic speaker, stresses that Britain, apart from being the destination of the French migrants, has within its frontiers its own “homeless outcasts”. Guest denominates these “internal exiles”, i.e. women, who have a similar social condition to the émigrés (“War with France” 30). In her own life, Smith experienced a state of “perpetual exile” as she endured the consequences of an early marriage to which she did not properly consent, and lived through a system of law that would not recognize her as a citizen (Smith Hart 306).

As various scholars have stated, *The Emigrants* can be defined as a “difficult poem”, as the author manages an amalgam of ideas in the text that are not easily combined. Smith continuously laments her personal plight and elaborates arguments in favour of an egalitarian society, just as she puts forward a defence of the revolution and the French emigrants together with an anti-war discourse. Smith also speaks against the privileges enjoyed by the nobility and the members of the Catholic Church, although she supports a “limited monarchy” for the French nation (Terry, “Thomson” 232)¹⁰⁷. For A. A. Markley, as a complex author, Smith is able to provide not only a sympathetic, but critical and poetical angle of the situation of the émigrés, which is only possible because she is speaking from the margins as an alienated woman in economic distress, “From the sad thought, that others like myself, Live but to swell affliction's countless tribes!” (Smith qtd. in 390). Smith unmistakably attempts to appeal to the compassion of a challenging British audience, which is why she remarks in regard to the emigrants, “Whate'er your errors, I lament your fate”, as her compassion for the emigrant runs deeper than political animosity (Book I, lines 107).

Smith's difficult task of asking the British population for a moral and ethical response in respect to the situation of the emigrants is a good example of the way authors of the period managed the romantic central notion of “sympathy”. According to William Richey (Richey), “sympathy” was conceived as “fellow feelings” in which a person almost becomes one with

¹⁰⁷ “Smith now wants to defend the revolution as it had been in the three years before the ascendancy of the Jacobins, and wishes to believe that the Jacobin terror, and the execution of Louis, were not its inevitable outcome. She deplores the war set in motion in 1792 by the Duke of Brunswick to restore Louis to the position he had enjoyed before 1789, and is still more horrified by Britain's entry into that war; but, while she still despises hereditary titles and the pageantry of courts, she believes that the best hope for France lies in the restoration of limited monarchy and of a king more loyal to that institution than Louis had been” (Terry, “Thomson” 232).

the subject of their sympathy (427). Based on Adam Smith's book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), feeling sympathy for others is not grounded in an individual's rational decision, but rather is an emotive response to the situation of the person in distress. Simply put, the concept of sympathy as it was theorized in the eighteenth century pertains to the emotional sphere and does not necessarily involve rational choice. Still, as we have witnessed, Smith in *Emigrants* centres her appeal for sympathy primarily on emotional argument by vividly describing the plight of the émigrés alongside presenting convincing rational arguments. First, Smith condemns men and their ambition for power that defies the designs of nature and contributes to a social climate of general hatred. She denounces the system of law as a "mockery", in which the "wretch starves, before his Counsel pleads" (Book I, line 41). She censures the trans-historical fatal effects of war and the inefficacy of violence to resolve national conflicts. Furthermore, rather than condemning people who were born into a privileged class, she blames the French and British patriarchal systems of privilege and oppression. In the last lines of the first book, Smith writes:

The exil'd Nobles, from their country driven,
Whose richest luxuries were their's, must feel
More poignant anguis, the lowest poor,
Who, born to indigence, have learn'd to brave
Rigid Adversity's depressing breath!—
(Book I, lines 311-314)

As Richey stresses, a person cannot feel sympathy for another without undergoing an analogous situation (428). Therefore, Smith's authorial poetical voice is able to assume the role of spokesperson of the socially and culturally disenfranchised émigrés. The collective and the personal are fused in *The Emigrants*, though not without conflicts. While Smith commiserates with the suffering of the emigrants, in another section of the poem she expresses her critique of the way clergymen and nobility lived their opulent lives in France, while the population suffered poverty and hunger (Benis, "Boundless" 27). So, as Keane has remarked, the sympathy Smith displays in *The Emigrants* is ambiguous. She attempts to encourage sympathy towards the displaced French citizens, but not without highlighting their participation in a system of privilege and corruption ("Double vision" 46). In Keane's words, Smith in *Emigrants* "provides a double vision of connection with the suffering of the emigrants and disconnection from their cultural provenance, unity with the revolutionary cause and dislocation from the progress of the actual revolution" ("Double vision" 46). Smith's ambiguous position may be better understood if we take into account that she is managing her solid support of the Revolution, while at once rejecting its resulting violence.

The first group of emigrants the poetic speaker encounters in the poem is a group of exiled monks. The crowd with “dejected looks” approaches the poetic speaker:

A group approach me, whose dejected looks,
Sad Heralds of distress! proclaim them Men
Banish'd for ever and for conscience sake
From their distracted Country, whence the name
Of Freedom misapplied, and much abus'd
By lawless Anarchy, has driven them far
To wander; with the prejudice they learn'd
(Book I, lines 95-101)

In this stanza, the speaker requests that the reader “proclaim them Men”, as if this group is lacking humanity in the eyes of the British population. Smith, as a radical thinker politically committed to the ideals of the revolution, knew that its vicious aftermath had damaged the liberal cause and nourished hatred in the hearts of the population against the French refugees. For this reason, the poetic narrator explains that the exiles have been banished from their “Country whence the name of freedom misapplied, and much abus’d” (Book I, lines 97-99). For Smith, the period of terror was the result of “lawless Anarchy” which forced the emigrants to wander lost in the foreign land of Britain. The speaker laments the fate of these “unhappy Men”, but she notably elects not to depict the French Catholic Clergy as innocent beings; she denounces their abuse of privilege and their bigotry (Book I, lines 107, 101).

In a subsequent stanza, the female narrator directs her attention towards one of the members of the monks’ group, “who moping clogging cloister long consum’d”, are now wanderers contaminated by “the prejudiced they learn’d” (Book I, lines 114, 101). The poetic voice recounts all the miseries this monk has endured in England, such as having been obliged to “renounce God’s works”, since in England he cannot freely profess his religious vocation (Book I, lines 119). However, in the subsequent lines, the poetic speaker admits that the monk’s current condition, in which he has been obliged to renounce to his position and privileges, will eventually “please that God” (Book I, lines 119). Clearly, Smith’s sympathy for these men is not sightless, as she cannot forget how their excessive ambition moved them to take advantage of their authority at the expense of the population’s wellbeing.

In this regard, Susan Wolfson (Wolfson) cites Smith in the preface of the poem: “[i]n speaking of the Emigrant Clergy, I beg to be understood as feeling the utmost respect for the integrity of their principles”, echoing Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Men* by referring to the “republican integrities, the only action to admire” (“Forging connections” 517). Later, in one of the authorial notes, Smith clarifies that her sympathy for these people does not signify agreement with their past behaviour as allies of the ancient regime:

... It is necessary to repeat, that nothing is farther from my thoughts, than to reflect invidiously on the Emigrant Clergy, whose steadiness of principle excites veneration, as much as their sufferings compassion. Adversity has now taught them the charity and humility they perhaps wanted, when they made it a part of their faith, that salvation could be obtained in no other religion than their own (*The Poems of Charlotte Smith* 139).

Smith depicts the figure of the exiled monk as one who evokes his past with melancholy, waiting for a “fortunate reverse that never comes” (Book I, line 111). In the present, as an emigrant in England, the exiled man is forced to accept the compassion of the people he previously judged as heretics. Yet the exiled monk, instead of further reflecting on his former mistakes and attempting to purge his sins, seems to assume the role of victim “and with sick heart Regrets his pious prison, and his beads” (Andrews 21).

Comparing the female poetic narrator’s desire for a peaceful life with the clergyman’s discontent with his “pious prison”, the author may have tried to delineate the hypocrisy of these men of God, who cannot accept the charity of the people in England with an open heart. As Labbe and Andrews have remarked, through the figures of the French Catholic Clergy, Smith is pointing out what is wrong with the British institutions and their contributions to social inequality (Andrews 21). Noteworthy is the question of accountability that could be deduced from Smith’s references to the emigrants’ past, to their prejudices and bigotry, especially in reference to the clergy and aristocrats. Smith’s personal sorrows, on the contrary, have nothing to do with her errors; she is only an innocent victim of a patriarchal system and has not contributed to her own unfortunate destiny (Andrews 20). The text continues with a deep melancholy and grief of the poetic speaker who presents herself as an “involuntary exile”.

I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known
Involuntary exile; and while yet
England had charms for me, have felt how sad
It is to look across the dim cold sea,
That melancholy rolls its refluent tides
Between us and the dear regretted land
We call our own—as now ye pensive wait
On this bleak morning, gazing on the waves
That seem to leave your shore.
(Book I, lines 155-163)

In the above stanza, the female narrator directly intervenes in the poem to share how the English nation has disappointed her. The intensity of Smith’s lyrical “I” drives the reader to believe that the poetic voice is Smith’s own (Labbe, “Culture of Gender” 166). When the authorial poetical voice reappears in the poem as an exile, Smith is subtly indicating the equivalent nature

of the injustices committed by both nations. The geographical and cultural differences of France and Britain are obscured before their culpability in the wrongs carried out against their people (Curran, "Displaced" 643). Smith calls to question the validity of such a rigid separation between the countries and bears witness to the repercussions of the tyranny committed by members of the church and the upper class in Britain during the early 1790's, parallel to the violence and abuse of power which triggered the French revolution (Terry, "Thomson" 232). In this respect, Rennhak maintains:

The Emigrants is constructed along a number of parallels that equate the tyranny of the French monarchy as well as the revolutionaries' "lawless Anarchy" (Book I, line 341) with the state of affairs in the British Court where "worthless hirelings" and "pamper'd Parasites" are paid by Britons "For forging fetters for them" (Smith qtd. in Rennhak, "Tropes on Exile" 578).

For Smith, the two countries are, after all, divided only by a "dim cold sea" in which the melancholy of the émigrés "rolls its reflux tides". The conflicting relationship between the European nations is portrayed throughout the poem via the metaphor of the waves, a movement between "conciliation and contest" (Keane, "Double vision" 46-47). According to Curran, the waves also connect the two countries, something inexorable no matter the conflicts between them. Moreover, in this stanza the emigrants are depicted as "driftwood or flotsam, existential remnants of a culture that no longer signifies and from which they are cut off" (displaced 643; Book I, line 163). It can also be said that the affective and ideological ambivalence of Smith's message is reflected on various levels in the way she portrays nature, especially the sea (Wolfson, "Politics of Allusion" 17).

Afterwards, in significant contrast to the personality of the exiled monk, the poetic narrator encounters a parish priest with a "milder heart" who has learned from a poor French peasant what it means to be humble and hard-working. Here, Smith presents another type of émigré priest, "the wandering pastor... with bleeding heart" who mourns "[h]is erring people, weeps and prays for them" (Book I, lines 195-197). Instead of thinking egocentrically of his own material losses during his exile, he is concerned for the destiny of the disciples he was supposed to be religiously guiding in France.

Later in the poem, the female speaker encounters an exiled mother who is reflecting melancholically on her fortunate and privileged past of luxury while her children play innocently on the seashore. Luxury is central in this woman's mind; in her thoughts she idealises the enchantment of Versailles while travelling in "walking dreams" to her "native land". In the scene, the exiled woman's children are described as "[u]nmindful of the miseries of Man!" (Book I, lines 211-214). Some of these verses dedicated to this female character were

rewritten by the author as a sonnet titled *The Female Exile* and were included in the second edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1797). The verses read as follows:

From her dear native land, now yields awhile
To kind forgetfulness, while Fancy brings,
In waking dreams, that native land again!
Versailles appears—its painted galleries,
And rooms of regal splendour, rich with gold,
Where, by long mirrors multiply'd, the crowd
Paid willing homage—and, united there
(Book I, lines 225)

In these verses Smith highlights the distance between the diasporic nation of Britain and France, the emigrants' "dear native land". The fact that the exiled women's children are playing on the shore underlines their tenacity amid surrounding difficulties and despite their current state of national in-betweenness. Moreover, in this stanza Smith introduces the figure of Marie Antoinette as an exiled woman in pain who stands for all the émigré mothers suffering a similar fate. It is not uncommon to find text authored by women writers of the 1790's in which the figure of the queen appears. Independent of the writers' vindication or rejection of the French Revolution, Marie Antoinette came to be almost mythical for many women authors, mostly because she represented how patriarchal violence transcended the bounds of social status and nationality (Hunt qtd. in Garnai, "One Victim" 385).

By invoking the figure of the queen, Smith advocates again for a common humanity and solidarity among women, illustrating that in times of war, mothers are all victims no matter their social or class distinctions. Smith identifies with the queen's misfortunes, and extends her sympathy to all marginalised people who have been victimized within this period of turmoil and forced mobility. Greg Kucich (Kucich) indicates that Smith in *Emigrants* revisits Burke's statements on Marie Antoinette's death in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (23). In his text, Burke focuses scantily on the queen's persona or personal quandary, preferring instead to portray Marie Antoinette as an object (not a subject) that reflects the loss of French chivalric social customs. In contrast, both in *The Emigrants* and in the sonnet *The Female Exile* (in which she rewrites a section of *Emigrants*) Smith concentrates on the humanity and intense plight of the queen, while elaborating a gendered critique that encompasses pro- and anti- revolutionary political dichotomies. Smith's practice of revisiting and interrogating historical events such as Marie Antoinette's last days from the perspective of a marginalized group is a common aspect of romantic writing authored by British women of the late eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Smith's interest in narrating history in her own poetical terms demonstrates her concerns with historiography and renders her a sort of historian. She attempts to reconcile

“natural history and human history” in the midst of what Bernstein called a “historiographic crisis” (Bernstein 29). According to this scholar, in *Emigrants* Smith adopts a more narrative poetry in which she explicitly and intensely examines her present historical moment. Thus, Smith uses motherhood to present an anti-war message, in which she aims to defy the patriarchal violence that has dominated in the European countries. The subject of the emigrants also allows her to speak from her own gendered experience, i.e., as a mother with a soldier son fighting a “wide-wasting War” (Wolfson, “Politics of Allusion” 19). After describing the affective state of the exiled mother, the poem continues with a full description of a “fellow sufferer”, an aristocrat yearning to return to his pre-revolution privileges (Terry, “Thomson” 232). The verses read as follows:

And that high consciousness of noble blood,
Which he has learn'd from infancy to think
Exalts him o'er the race of common men:
Nurs'd in the velvet lap of luxury,
And fed by adulation—could he learn,
That worth alone is true Nobility?
And that the peasant who, "amid the sons
"Of Reason, Valour, Liberty, and Virtue,
"Displays distinguish'd merit, is a Noble
"Of Nature's own creation!"—If even here,
If in this land of highly vaunted Freedom,
Even Britons controvert the unwelcome truth,
Can it be relish'd by the sons of France?
Men, who derive their boasted ancestry
From the fierce leaders of religious wars,
The first in Chivalry's emblazon'd page;
(Book I, lines 235-250)

The aristocratic exile portrayed by Smith has learned since childhood to arrogantly trust in his superiority to “common” people. According to Smith’s account, the ancient regime has created a culture of social inequality in which aristocratic men have been “fed by adulation” to feel superior to the rest of the population. It is critical that Smith quotes various male mainstream authorial voices when discussing the aristocratic wrongful idea of merit and virtue.

When the poetic speaker exclaims "Of Reason, Valour, Liberty, and Virtue, "Displays distinguish'd merit, is a Noble "Of Nature's own creation!" Smith is citing James Thomson’s *Coriolanus* (1749), a play adapted from Shakespeare’s tragedy, in which the author deals with the theme of exile in wartime (Book I, lines 242-244). Of the context, Wolfson describes that “[t]he voice is that of Roman general Cominius, heading a delegation to exiled Coriolanus to see an end to his vengeful war-making” (“Forging Connections” 528). Smith may have gained

inspiration from this play, since there are many parallels between *The Emigrants* and Thomson's *Coriolanus* that might explain Smith's decision to explicitly allude to it:

a noble exile, driven by a popular rebellion from his native country, and planning, as did the French émigrés, to invade it and reclaim his position; the eloquent opposition voiced by Galesus in Thomson's play and by Smith in her poem to aggressive war and to the ambition of one state to intervene in the internal affairs, however anarchic, of another; the concentration on how much of the cost of war and civil strife is borne by women; the commitment to public virtue, to 'Patriot Virtue', and to the classical republican vocabulary in which its value is proclaimed (Terry 233).

Smith explicitly intervenes in this stanza, quoting Thompson through an authorial note in which she declares, "[t]hese lines are Thomson's, and are among those sentiments which are now called (when used by living writers) not commonplace declamation, but sentiments of dangerous tendency" (*The Emigrants* 144). Smith's practice of citing other authors' works, mainly male canonical writers, effectively obscures her behind their voices. By quoting Thomson, Smith reinforces anti-war poetical rhetoric through the voice of a well-known writer who, decades earlier, condemned the catastrophic historical results of war and its direct adverse effect on women. Likewise, Smith stresses how restrictive British policies are banning ideas and discourses that were previously articulated by famous men of letters.

As Wolfson has stated, in *The Emigrants* Smith "writes across gender, calling on male voices, phrases and tropes from Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Thompson, Collins and Gray" ("Forging Connections" 510). Smith enters the public arena in a gender-fluid manner, in which she engages with male voices to censure patriarchal violence and militarism. In a sense, Smith appears to have submitted to the powerful influence of "canonical writers". Her decision to cite so many male authors, including Thomson, could be explained by the need of women writers at that time to demonstrate their intellectual capabilities, and to prove that they possessed sufficient knowledge of the classics to write poetry, even if they lacked a formal education (Wolfson, "Forging Connections" 510). In this regard, Curran views Smith's practice of referring to male literary legacy in *Emigrants* as a way to "re-ground her[self] culturally" ("Intertextualities" 180). In other terms, populating her text with mainstream authors' voices contributes to Smith's recognition as a writer and intellectual.

Smith expresses a double message in which she oscillates between a sharp critique of a hierarchical social culture that has fed social inequality, and the promotion of sympathy for the French expatriates. She references the past lives of luxury and privilege as the cause of their extreme plight, as they are not accustomed to the adversity that "the lowest poor, Who, born to indigence have learn'd to brave, Rigid adversity's depressing breath!" (Book I, lines 312-314).

After the description of the aristocratic emigrant, the first book concludes with an apocalyptic war picture.

The infernal passions; Vengeance, seeking blood,
And Avarice; and Envy's harpy fangs
Pollute the immortal shrine of Liberty,
Dismay her votaries, and disgrace her name.
(Book I, lines 346–50)

Smith denounces the impact of war on the precarity of human lives, and the fact that justice seems to be lacking in Britain for everyone who is not an accomplice of the reactionary government. At the end of the first book, Smith deplors the prejudices of some English, which, according to the author, are the result of pride and ignorance (lines 358-359). She calls for “acts of pure humanity” in which men might interact as brethren:

By Reason's gen'rous potency subdued,
Learn, That the God thou wordshippest, delights
In acts of pure humanity!—May thine
Be still such bloodless laurels! nobler far
[...]
In British bosoms, than the deafening roar
Of Victory from a thousand brazen throats,
That tell with what success wide-wasting War
Has by our brave Compatriots thinned the world.
(Book I, lines 366-369, 379-382)

Smith's quoted stanzas reverberate with John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The rhyming of roar and war, in the first and the third lines respectively, calls to mind Milton's Archangel Michael's description of “brazen Throat of War had ceast to roar”, which in turn also alludes to Homer's *Iliad* (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 511). Besides, Garnai emphasises that in this stanza when Smith elects “bloodless laurels” over “defending roar”, she is presuming her readers' knowledge of a historical event, alluding to “the British commander George Augustus Elliot and the siege of Gibraltar, 1779-83” (“Precarious Bread” 28). With these textual and historical references, Smith delineates how the horrific aspects of history continue to reappear if countries persistently employ patriarchal military solutions to resolve their conflicts (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 512).

The second book of *The Emigrants* appeared to the public six months after the first. Through her authorial notes and preludes, Smith sets the second book in April 1793, when “[l]ong wintry months are past”, whereas the first book was framed on “a Morning in November 1792”, released after the execution of the King of France, in the midst of Britain's declaration of war against France (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 511). The tone of this second book is more

dramatic than the first; the text is filled with violent scenes from the deep sorrows of a mother, and the violent deaths of children. A climate of devastation reigns in the poetic verses, reinforcing Smith's engendered anti-war and anti-imperialist message. While contemplating the striking events taking place, Smith solidifies her gendered critique of war, including some singular passages of terror¹⁰⁸ (Fletcher, "Girondism" 194).

Lost in despondence, while contemplating
Not my own wayward destiny alone,
(Hard as it is, and difficult to bear)
But in beholding the unhappy lot
Of the lorn Exiles; who, amid the storms
Of wild disastrous Anarchy, are thrown,
Like shipwreck'd sufferers, on England's coast,
To see, perhaps, no more their native land,
Where Desolation riots: They, like me,
From fairer hopes and happier prospects driven,
Shrink from the future, and regret the past. (Book II, lines 6-16)

Mellor states that Smith gives an alternative viewpoint to one of the most relevant events of the eighteenth century by exposing the culpability of the patriarchal European governments in the plight of their citizens ("Women's Political Poetry" 73). In her poetical historical account, Smith finds Britain equally accountable as the *ancien regime*, the anarchical "new French Republic" equating the British monarchical regime ("Women's Political Poetry" 73). Smith, as other writers of the early Romantic Period, responded to the historical circumstances and proposed a "social or political reform" that could generate a "social revolution"¹⁰⁹ (73).

In the first book of the poem, Smith negotiates the revolutionary ideas she admires, while at once distancing herself from the violent aftermath of the Revolution. While supporting the principles of the Revolution, she focuses on disseminating a spirit of sympathy among the English readership towards the emigrants; in the second book, she attempts to mark a difference between the principle of 'Liberty', which was a solid foundation of the Revolution, and the misapplied principle of 'Freedom' (Guest 215).

In this second book, although Smith criticizes the despotic power and regal crimes committed during the Revolution, she continues to advocate for the émigrés, primarily the group belonging to the royalist faction. In the following lines she alludes to the violent death of Louis XVI:

The headless corse of one, whose only crime

¹⁰⁸ In one of the scenes a mother is hiding in the woods with her baby after her family are victimized by violent acts and a man returning home finds his children murdered. (Fletcher, "Girondism" 194).

¹⁰⁹ Wollstonecraft in political pamphlet *Rights of Woman* called for a social revolution (Mellor "Women's Political Poetry" 73).

Was being born a Monarch—Mercy turns,
From spectacle so dire, her swol'n eyes;
And Liberty, with calm, unruffled brow
(Book II, lines 54-57)

During Smith's writing of the second book, she expresses to Joel Barlow in a letter dated 15th November 1792 her sympathy for "the unfortunate Man, who could not help being born the Grandson of Louis 15th" (Wolfson, "Politics of Allusion" 48). This is in reference to Louis XVI's relative, the Duc d'Orleans, who was known as Philippe-Egalité, who was in favour of the Revolution – to the point that he voted for the death penalty for Louis XVI – yet who feared it would cost him his privileges as a noble (Guest, "War with France" 32). Smith makes a case for this aristocratic man, who is in her view a victim of an unfortunate turn of events, while she continues to condemn the bloodshed of the Revolution, believing that no republican and revolutionary principle should lead to the extreme violence that France had witnessed. The second book continues:

Wading beneath the Patriot's specious mask,
While War, wide-ravaging, annihilates
The hope of cultivation; gives to Fiends,
The meagre, ghastly Fiends of Want and Woe,
The blasted land—There, taunting in the van
Of vengeance-breathing armies, Insult stalks;
(Book II, lines 72-77)

Smith continues to deplore the consequences of war, and the poem deviates from the predominant topic of exile of the first book towards a more intense anti-militarist discourse and a vivid description of the outbreak of war (Bainbridge 60). The poems continue the description of the aristocratic character Philippe-Egalité, who tried to retain his privileged position as a member of the royal family (Guest 32):

Wading, beneath the Patriot's specious mask
And in Equality's illusive name,
To empire thro' a stream of kindred blood—
Innocent prisoner!—most unhappy heir
Of fatal greatness, who art suffering now
For all the crimes and follies of thy race;
(Book II, lines 124-129)

Smith disapproves of this man's obstinacy yet considers him an "innocent prisoner" who is suffering for the errors of his class. Curiously, Guest affirms that Smith rejects this man's anarchical break of the rules of "kinship and class loyalty", although she includes him in her humanitarian call for sympathy (32). Later, the poem continues with the depiction of a "bereft woman", a figure that populated a good number of poetical texts throughout the 1790's (Labbe,

“Mediating History” 56). As we have seen, Smith often employs this common poetical archetype in the form of an “abandoned wife” or mother (such as herself) or in the form of a “displaced emigrant” (Labbe, “Mediating History” 56).

Thy wretched Mother, petrified with grief,
Views thee with stony eyes, and cannot weep!—
Ah! much I mourn thy sorrows, hapless Queen!
And deem thy expiation made to Heaven
For every fault, to which Prosperity
Betray'd thee, when it plac'd thee on a throne
(Book II, lines 152-157)

Judith Pascoe (Pascoe) claims that Smith presents Marie Antoinette in *The Emigrants* as the Virgin Mary (“Embodying”105). First, Smith describes the unfortunate situation of her son, the young Louis, whom she calls the “imperial Boy”, a character completely innocent of his current state. After describing the Dauphin’s plight, Smith concentrates on Marie Antoinette’s maternal identity and how her intense quandary seems to purify her sins (“Embodying”105). Moreover, for Pascoe, in an exemplary representation of a mother’s predicament Smith transforms Marie Antoinette into the Pietà, “[thy wretched Mother, petrified with grief]/ “Views thee with stony eyes, and cannot weep!” (Book II, Lines 152-153 qtd. in “Embodying”105). Notably, Smith depicts in a frightening manner the universal plight of the mother, one that escalates to extreme levels during wartime. Smith evokes the images of “Shelter, maternal tenderness, protection, suffering and death” all together, to reflect on motherhood in the midst of political turmoil and war (Kerfoot 220).

Wolfson points out that during the 1790’s, poems dealing sympathetically with the French monarchs’ plight and their violent end often made references to Marie Antoinette’s maternal sorrows, and her child’s innocent death (“Politics of Allusion”18). It should be noted that the sympathy Smith had for Marie Antoinette does not mean she was a supporter of the ancient regime. The monarchical establishment, besides being a system in complete opposition to Smith’s democratic views, was also a breeding ground for oppressive, gendered ideas. Crucially, as Labbe has pointed out, Smith equals women’s submission to marriage laws which dislocate them as exiles in their own land to the period of Terror during the Revolution and its effect on members of the French Catholic Church who were forced to leave France (“The Exile Self” 42). The long poem continues with the following lines:

True to maternal tenderness, she tries
To save the unconscious infant from the storm
In which she perishes;
[...]
The Mother and the Infant perish both!—

[...]

To save my children from the o'erwhelming wrongs,
That have for ten long years been heap'd on me!—
The fearful spectres of chicane and fraud
(Book II, lines 282-284, 291, 353-355)

These verses contain one of the most tragic moments of the poem, narrating a mother's failure to save her children from a storm. Julie Kipp (Kipp) believes that Smith aims to provoke a sentiment of "sublime horror in the reader" through this tragic scene (72). The extreme cruelty presented through mother and children again exemplifies the lethality of war and the impossibility of thinking in terms of justice and equality when the lives of innocent people are at stake.

In these stanzas, Smith acts in accordance with the dominant script of femininity, using the female voice of a mother of numerous children. Her views are filtered through a maternal subjectivity, which allows her to enter the "public literary sphere", playing the role of a woman in pain (Knowles 51-52). In this sense, she differentiates her authorial voice from other tendencies of the period, such as the "theatrical approach adopted by Della Cruscan" (Knowles 51-52). Labbe states that Smith employs a maternal voice and imagery in *The Emigrants* as well as in some Elegiac Sonnets: "[S]he uses the space allowed by the shift in genre from sonnet to blank-verse meditation to explore a different approach to motherhood, one that fuses a personal identity as Mother with portraits of hunted and despairing mothers physically affected by war". (*Culture of Gender* 81). Smith was not only a mother in this context of political upheaval, but had a son participating in war who was seriously injured, as previously stated in Chapter Two.

Labbe, quoting Sarah Zimmerman (Zimmerman), states that Smith plays with the illusion of distancing herself from the current political debates of the time by dedicating all her writing efforts to the cause of the exiles, thus adopting a conciliatory tactic in *Emigrants* (*Culture of Gender* 118). But in reality, for Zimmerman, this is the complete opposite of what she does. By speaking from the position of mother, a woman displaying feminine empathy for the sorrows of the exiles, Smith obscures her radical political stance

The speaker's poetical sensibility as a mother provides throughout the poem a special viewpoint of the consequences of war and discrimination in a society that privileges militarist culture instead of seeking a climate of reconciliation. She remains in support of the exiles' plight and of national and transnational efforts for reconciliation. Thus, Smith's verses subvert the fiction of war as something fought in valorous defence of female innocence, and stand

instead for a wider idea of solidarity (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 541). She also challenges a tradition of associating women with domestic and private concerns by developing a transnational poetics of peace and reconciliation.

Throughout the final stanzas of *The Emigrants*, Smith exalts a world uncorrupted by the human hand, and proposes a new organic cartography of mobility in which the idea of nation-state might be disrupted through the idea of permeable borders (Wiley 12-13). Her admiration for the natural world stems from her engagement with Romantic literary aesthetics (Morrallis 169). Again she depicts the poetic speaker’s act of gazing at the miracles of nature, as witnessed before the description of violent scenes:

But on these hills, where boundless, yet distinct,
Even as a map, beneath are spread the fields
His bounty cloaths; divided here by woods,
And there by commons rude, or winding brook
(Book II, lines 392-395)

In *The Emigrants*, nature stimulates the speaker’s imagination and emotions, alongside a reflection on the individual condition in relation to others (Morrallis 171). From beginning to end, Smith employs nature in the poem to metaphorically describe the violent intervention of men in the natural order. In Smith’s verses, nature’s changes are directly connected to human sufferings. For Michael Wiley (Wiley), Smith envisions a Britain in which nature would hold dominion over men’s “institutional power” (“Deposing”13). In a similar vein, Wolfson argues that Smith’s imagination aspires to a natural and feminine order of things, no longer ruled by “misguided men” (qtd. in Kerfoot 219). Indeed, Smith aims to alter the cartography of militarist and patriarchal Britain towards a peaceful land in which nature governs. Smith’s idea of a map, the reflection in terms of a cartographical representation of an alternative Britain, is significant during a period in which maps were shaped to remark wealth and land ownership (Wiley, “Deposing”13). Smith attempts to furnish a different representation of Britain, one free of the individualist profit and desire for power that have hindered nature’s flow and process.

Smith’s sentimental approach to the political situation of the French emigrants is a demand for social transformation. She aspires to a cosmopolitan Britain that welcomes migrants as citizens, but she further seeks to alter the system of corruption and the violent response that is often privileged over dialogue between equals. As a woman who, through her writings, is capable of participation in public discussion, Smith’s approach emphasizes the struggles of a discriminated group from a perspective that centres on affects and sentiments. According to Ross, women writers of the Romantic Era who wished to be politically involved had available to them only a “position of dissent”, as the mere act of speaking politically was in itself anti-

establishment. Being non-political necessarily implied remaining silent before the “political establishment” (92).

In one of her authorial notes, Smith once again expresses a double message in her sympathy for the human plight, while acknowledging the consequences of human error (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 525-526). She passes judgment on humanity’s compliance with the ancient regime, yet laments its current situation.

Let it not be considered as an insult to men in fallen fortune, if these luxuries (undoubtedly inconsistent with their profession) be here enumerated—France is not the only country, where the splendour and indulgences of the higher, and the poverty and depression of the inferior Clergy, have alike proved injurious to the cause of Religion (*The Emigrants* 140).

The poetic speaker of *The Emigrants* replaces the voice of the emigrants with her own voice¹¹⁰; they are not allowed to speak for themselves. Throughout the poem the speaker identifies with the subjects of the poem, as she is herself an exile. She shares their same status, a common humanity and alienation. Labbe mentions that Smith fails in “self-doubling”, as she portrays “only abjected and empty others” (“Mediating History” 64). These figures are represented as lacking individuality, they possessed a subjectivity as empty and suppressed as “non-people”, resonating with what war makes of humanity (Labbe, “Mediating History” 71).

Smith transforms the role of the poet as the critical and even prophetic voice, heretofore dominated by male authors. According to Anne Mellor, Smith presents the complete opposite of this masculine voice, which is usually characterized in the form of “a self that is unified, unique, enduring, capable of initiating activity and above all aware of itself as a self”, an “unacknowledged legislator” (Tayebi 424). Instead, Smith adopts the role of the poet, evolving towards a voice that speaks face-to-face with the outcasts, the protagonists of her text. One of the most remarkable aspects of Smith’s text is her articulation of such strength, from the personal experience of a woman in social and cultural exile, an alien herself within the patriarchal society of Britain. After all, this female version of the poet has much to do with the fact that “otherness” has been continuously represented in parallel, in both the female subject and in the position of authority of the poet (Tayebi 425).

Smith concludes *The Emigrants* with some hope for the emigrants’ future, but the poetic voice appears as an eternal exile (Andrews 23). For this writer, even the émigrés in a period

¹¹⁰ Smith was accused of plagiarism for her practice of borrowing or collecting fragments from other authors and putting them together in her own terms. Smith’s sympathetic identification with the exiles, which can sometimes be seen as misappropriation of the plight of the emigrants, also echoes the allegations of plagiarism against the author (Hawley 191).

of war have a better possible future than women living in their own country of origin. After all, patriarchal oppression has not yet ended, while the situation of the emigrants had better chances of improving in the near future. Smith promotes a conciliatory message in a time of significant repression and political turmoil, and her voice guides us to witness the plight of the exiles while also providing a uniquely gendered appraisal of events that marked the history of her country. She devotes her literary efforts to impart critical viewpoints, from her personal perspective as a woman writer, on the groundbreaking events taking place in England at the time. Smith deliberately closes *Emigrants* with figures of female potency: “lovely freedom” and “equal Justice”. *The Emigrants* concludes with hope for an era of peace and unification, in which Smith puts forth a beacon of “common humanity”, one that rejects social inequality in all its forms (Bernstein 29).

4.2 Charlotte Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets* of displacement

Smith has been acknowledged as one of the leading poets to revive the sonnet and restore its fame, rendering it a preeminent poetic genre during the early English Romantic Movement (Backscheider 316). Before the resurrection of the sonnet in the late eighteenth century, it was considered an old-fashioned genre, a literary form of the past. So, at a time when the sonnet was absent in the literary panorama, Smith brings it to light by employing it in an experimental and autobiographical manner (Keane 9, 18). She takes advantage of the sonnet as a poetical form that makes the public privy to the poet’s most private feelings.

Elegiac Sonnets (1784) constitutes the first published poetry volume authored by Smith. She composed this collection during a short period with her husband in the Kings Bench Prison (debtors’ prison). The money she obtained from the publication was used to economically support her family and to release her husband from imprisonment (Andrews 13). In light of these personal difficulties, this sonnet collection is consequently populated by diverse, solitary female narrators who communicate feelings of deep lamentation and reflect upon individual and collective plights (Knowles 45).

Significant to Smith’s poetical oeuvre is the sonnet’s revival in England at the same time as what was known as “humanitarian poetry”, a genre in which the protagonists were marginalized and discriminated people (Richey 427). The influence of humanitarian poetry, together with the increasing cultural literature dealing with exile and displacement, heavily shaped Smith’s poetry. In the case of her sonneteer facet, particularly in *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith also manages to strategically conciliate the individual plight of the poetical “I” with sympathy

towards other discriminated subjects. Smith approaches the existential difficulties of a variety of wretched figures who mirror her poetical I.

The Romantic concept of sympathy has been central to understanding the impetus of poets to look outwards towards the marginal condition of others, to find oneself in these subjects' otherness and become one person with them (Richey 427).¹¹¹ To this emergence of "humanitarian poetry", Smith's proto-feminist discourses added a poetical narrative of women's plight. Generally, the sonnet was commonly associated with evoking individual reflection, the texts focused on one's own self. In an entirely different manner, the new humanitarian poem usually reaches beyond the individual subject to contemplate other subjects who are strangers to the authorial voice (Richey 427). In its more general sense, the sonnet form was dedicated to the poetical I, whereas the humanitarian poem centred the reader's attention on the other.

However, as illustrated by Smith's sonnets, the distinctions between the two poetical modes were not entirely exclusive; it is possible to find sonnets dealing with figures that evoke humanitarian sentiment towards the plight of other (Richey 427). Perceptible in the various prologues that had accompanied the different editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* is Smith's preoccupation with women writers' position as cultural and professional producers, as well as domestic workers and family providers, as in Smith's own case. These aspects played a significant role in the shaping of her authorial persona in this collection of sonnets. Paradoxically, in Smith's time, poetry was allegedly a "higher art form" detached from authors' economic interest, and thus a masculine enterprise (Batchelor 69).

According to Curran, *Elegiac Sonnets* constituted the initial step for Smith to become an independent writer, a position traditionally denied to women. Smith garnered "two translations from the French, ten novels, ten expanding editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*, a crucially important poem in blank verse [...] a collection of six books written for children, and even, it appears, one play" ("British Romanticism" 67). Smith's poetical self-portrait in *Elegiac Sonnets*, a text that evolved for decades, attracted the attention of her readership as her own story evolved melancholically (Zimmerman, "Dost thou" 117).

Smith states in the preface to the first edition of this collection that her sonnets are the outcome of "very melancholy moments" (Zimmerman, "Dost thou" 1). These moments seem

¹¹¹ Richey mentions Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) as one of the foregrounding text to understand the concept of Sympathy. For A. Smith the "fellow feelings" a person can experiment for others are never of same nature. Individual experiences, both of the sympathiser and the subject of sympathy, can never be equal and are all contaminated by one's own perspectives and prejudices (Richey 427).

to convey the author's lamentation of the social treatment and discrimination she has endured. It has been affirmed as a common trend that women's social complaints in their poetical form in eighteenth-century Britain were usually underscored by a sentiment of melancholy in the first-person expression of the author's feelings (Rosenbaum 116). In layman's terms, the sufferings of the author render this text autobiographical on a certain level. The openness of the female writer in expressing her woes and referring poetically to her private experiences creates an aura of closeness and intimacy with the reader that promotes emotions of sympathy and identification.

The notions of privacy, subjectivity and private experience in British Romanticism became central in rewriting history from individual and personal stories. For Zimmerman, Smith's poetic works, in which she articulates a fluid concept of privacy, invite us to reconsider some prevailing notions during the Romantic period such as "Jürgen Habermas's rigid theory of public and private spheres" ("Varieties of Privacy" 484). In *Elegiac Sonnets* Smith does not depict her private feelings in a single manner, rather employing at least two different modes of privacy, one which can be classified as "the poet's isolation" and the other as the "intimate relationship between the poet and readers" (Zimmerman, "Varieties of Privacy" 484). Smith strategically displays her private I throughout her poetry, the feelings of a "private woman" to participate in discussions supposedly pertaining to the "public sphere". In this way, the private and individual become a means to manoeuvre the gender politics that restricted women's voices.

Smith is continuously zigzagging between her private life and the public sphere in which her poetry circulates (Andrews 14). This authorial mobility within the texts allows us to witness the author as an exile herself. As Horrocks points out, Smith makes repeated use of "figures of wandering", and centres her text in the theme of "rootless exile" ("The Desolations" 80). This collection of sonnets anticipated the themes addressed broadly and in a more direct manner in the long blank verse dedicated to the émigrés.

For her part, Labbe does not consider the autobiographical tone of Smith's sonnets to be sincere, but rather a poetical performance of diverse "gendered subjectivities". Perhaps even more importantly, the female figures also serve as a fictional, theatrical depiction of conventional roles of femininity (Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 81). In reference to Labbe's critical work, Keane sustains that the autobiographical tone of these sonnets is a "compendium of identities", a performance of the writer and not a portrait of her personal sorrows (10). All of these voices share a melancholic state accompanied by a sense of dis-belonging that may even cause their readers to call their own identity to question (Keane 11). This act of writing varied

femininities may link to the idea that negatively depicting women lacked unitary subjectivity. Smith was able to transmit poetically the way women are constantly, often superficially, represented as empty and fragmented subjects (Labbe, *Culture of Gender* 81). After all, her depiction of female subjects serves to evidence women's representation in the patriarchal society of England.

Moreover, the fact that Smith is present in the sonnets throughout the many footnotes and through introductory information in which she locates her poems in familiar places, contributes to the strong presence of the authorial I (Tayebi 427). On this matter, Zimmerman quotes a review of *The Emigrants* in the *The European Magazine* (July 1743) in which the reviewer describes Smith as a poet "whom we can discover almost at the bottom of every page, as we may the portrait of some of the most renowned painters in the corner of their most favourite pictures" ("Charlotte Smith's Letters" 58).

Through *Elegiac Sonnets* Smith gained a reputation that preceded *The Emigrants*. She wrote different editions undergoing some change during the sixteen years that followed the first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* in 1784, up to the ninth edition in 1800 (Horrocks, "The Desolations of Wandering" 79). It appears that Smith took advantage of what she knew about the reception of her previous editions, expanding and revisiting her work to make it more appealing to her evolving readership. In this collection of sonnets, "over a third" of the approximately thirty-six sonnets have a poetical voice different from Smith's own authored voice (Curran, "British Romanticism" 72).

In the preface to her first and second editions, Smith states:

Some of my friends, with partial indiscretion, have multiplied the copies they procured of several of these attempts, till they found their way into the prints of the day in a mutilated state; which, concurring with other circumstances, determined me to put them into their present form.

Smith presents her work as almost accidental, as if she had no intention of publishing, until it became necessary, as consequence of the impropriety of a friend who circulated a draft of her sonnets (Tayebi 431). Despite their unintentional beginnings, these sonnets became very famous and influential. Their great reception led to several new editions, which demonstrated the authorial transformation of the author for the fifteen years following their initial publication (Horrocks 79).

Throughout these sonnets, Smith takes advantage of the "elegiac conventions" through which she can attract the sympathy of her audience for the social condition of people living in the margins, and also for herself (Rosenbaum 103). In *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith portrays several

isolated, wandering figures via which she navigates profoundly within human feelings of isolation, an aspect that has been considered as a “key unifying device” in the sonnet collection (Horrocks 80). Horrocks considers that Smith was an author who was able to construct a figure of the wanderer much darker than other characters that populate the poetical texts of this period. In this collection of sonnets, the figures’ alienation grows throughout the poetical texts (80); in the end, these elements only render her poetry more appealing to the literary market.

In the preface to the sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith mentions that not even at this new phase of her life has she been able to change her usual sorrowful poetical tone, alluding to the lengthy legal process she was made to undergo to obtain her father-in-law’s inheritance for her children. Smith wrote, “I wrote mournfully because I was unhappy – And I have unfortunately no reason yet, though nine years have since elapsed, to change my tone” (Knowles, 48). This statement marks the history of the poetic book, as the author maintains with transparency that the source of her predicament and permanent state of melancholy, the driving element of her sonnets, has been the exhausting legal battle against the assigned trustees of her children’s promised estate (Zimmerman, “Dost thou” 117). Employing the modest rhetoric common among women writers, we presume that the sonnets are not to be written for public consumption, yet her plight “drew them forth”. She continues to declare in the Prologue of this same edition: “I am well aware that for a woman—‘The Post of Honor is a Private Station’” (6th ed., qtd. in *The Poems* 6). Thus, she is not asking for public recognition, instead expressing her persistent grief and authorial “psychological homelessness”.

In this preface, Smith invites her readers to approach her verses as autobiographical (Andrews 14). Nevertheless, for some scholars, Smith’s sonnets beg to be read beyond the autobiographical context in order to convey the existential conditions of numerous subjectivities (Billone 15). According to critics, Smith’s references to her personal plight are a mere commercial strategy to justify her multiple editions. Andrews asserts that in Smith’s poetry “[t]he reader is allowed the voyeuristic pleasure of believing they are watching a real woman in the landscape, and Smith is in return accorded by the reader the status she craves of being a well-born poet” (14). Thus, there is a sort of complicity between Smith and her readers; while she publicly exhibits her grief, the reader affirms her capacity to translate her most intimate self into poetry.

In *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith connects the poetic speakers with a series of mourner figures whose woe appears never-ending (Billone 14). Let’s take for example, Sonnet XXXVI, which concludes the fourth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*. In this composition, Smith presents the figure

of a male wanderer, tired and distressed, who is searching for a place to rest (Horrocks, “Desolations” 89). The text reads as follows:

SHOULD the lone wanderer, fainting on his way,
Rest for a moment of the sultry hours,
And though his path through thorns and roughness lay,
Pluck the wild rose, or woodbine’s gadding flowers,
Weaving gay wreaths beneath some sheltering tree,
The sense of sorrow he awhile may lose;
So have I sought thy flowers, fair Poesy!
So charm’d my way with Friendship and the Muse.
But darker now grows life’s unhappy day,
Dark with new clouds of evil yet to come,
Her pencil sickening Fancy throws away,
And weary Hope reclines upon the tomb;
And points my wishes to that tranquil shore,
Where the pale spectre Care pursues no more.
(lines 1-14)

The long, continuous journey of this lonely masculine figure has been marked by “thorns”, but along the way nature seems to provide him with a sort of temporal consolation. In the sonnet, the art of composing poetry is connected with nature’s consolatory capacities. While silence offers relief from the wanderer’s melancholic mood, poetry distracts the poet-speaker from life’s fatigues (Billone 29).

This sonnet (XXXVI) was published along with a plate depicting an illustration of a female figure seated in a graveyard, a pen on the ground before her. For Amy Christine Billone (Billone), the woman’s fallen pen may represent the author’s “impulse” and “disgust” before her personal difficulties, or her impotence and exhaustion (29). In the image, together with the female figure, there is another female character with a ghostly appearance holding a large anchor. This second character might represent the poetic speaker’s “wishes to that tranquil shore” (Horrocks, “Desolations” 90). The plate contains the quote “Her pencil sickening Fancy throws away, And weary Hope reclines upon the tomb”.¹¹² At the end of the sonnet, the male wanderer, who has attracted the attention of the poetic speaker, only wishes to die, and he continues to wander towards the abyss of inaccessible death (Billone 30). The female poet-speaker finds shelter in poetry, while the man is unable to transform his woes into art. Labbe believes that in this sonnet, Smith illustrates poetry as a recompense for the calamities of her life, whereas the wanderer can only find tranquillity within his desired “tomb” (“War Poetry” 98).

¹¹² See appendix, Figure 1

Smith's anti-war critique, consistently evident in *The Emigrants*, is also present in *Elegiac Sonnets*; such is the case for Sonnet LXXXIII, also titled *The Sea View*. In this text, the poetic speaker is observing the landscape before her as she lies atop an eminence. This description echoes Smith's authorial notes at the beginning of both Books I and II of *Emigrants*. The first lines of the sonnet read: "THE upland shepherd, as reclined he lies"/ "On the soft turf that clothes the mountain brow". This vivid description of the scenario has been recognised as a common feature in Smith's tactile poetry (Girten 217). As she identifies closely with the subjects of her poetry in *Emigrants*, in *Sonnets* Smith also privileges physical proximity and tangible experience (Girten 217). From the first lines we learn that the protagonist of the sonnet is a shepherd, someone who is accustomed to wandering in natural scenarios and whose main duty is guiding sheep to their destination. The Shepherd is usually a figure used to represent someone who is taking good care of others. Later in the sonnet, the poetic speaker describes a paradisiacal scenario in which the shepherd contemplates:

The summer sun in purple radiance low,
Blaze on the western waters; the wide scene
Magnificent, and tranquil, seems to spread
Even o'er the rustic's breast a joy serene
(lines 5-8)

Until now, the natural scenario has been described as "tranquil" and "serene". In the ninth line the sonnet changes completely, and mankind intervenes with its military machinery to transform the calm panorama to one of "death" and "blood":

When, like dark plague spots by the demons shed,
Charged deep with death, upon the waves, far seen,
Move the war freighted ships; and fierce and red,
Flash their destructive fires-The mangled dead
And dying victims then pollute the flood.
Ah, thus man spoils Heaven's glorious works with blood!
(lines 9-14)

Smith includes an authorial endnote to the sonnet in which she attempts to add some factual authenticity. The endnote reads:

Suggested by the recollection of having seen, some years since, on a beautiful evening of summer, an engagement between two armed ships, from the high Down called the Beacon Hill, near Brighthelmstone.

Thus, the sonnet is a reminiscence of the author's previous experience contemplating warfare. The poem is set in the locale of Beacon Hill, near *The Emigrants*' location in Brighthelmstone (Horrocks, "The Desolations" 105). The drastic change of tone in the middle of the poem in which a pastoral scene is converted into one of bloodshed might be Smith's remark on the

culpability of humankind in altering nature's order. For Smith, war and the patriarchal society of England are the primary enemies of a more egalitarian and peaceful society. In this respect, Curran highlights that Smith's text demonstrates "her recognition that the law is a social code written by men for a male preserve, and that the principal function of women within its boundaries can only be to suffer consequences over which they have no control" (qtd in Zimmerman "Dost thou" 119).

Another marginal and vagrant character that we encounter in Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* is the pauper. In the *The Dead Beggar*, the lyric's emphasis on subjectivity and the author's persistent autobiographical tone are put to the service of a social cause (Zimmerman, "Dost thou" 106). In this text, Smith might have been influenced by humanitarian poetry, as she invites her readers to concentrate on characters that have suffered a history of discrimination.

This poem has two titles; one highly descriptive: *The Dead Beggar: An elegy, addressed to a lady, who was affected at seeing the funeral of a nameless pauper, buried at the expence of the parish, in the church-yard at Brighthelmstone, in November 1792*; and a shorter version, *The Dead Beggar*. Kandi Tayebi (Tayebi) has noted that the descriptive version of the title put emphasis on the lady and her reaction to the dead beggar, rather than on the story behind the pauper's demise. Smith deals here with the element of affectedness, as the reader learns from the title that a woman is affected by the death of a poor man, and the second character, the beggar, appears as an object of sad contemplation and pity (Terry, "Sentimental" 54).

Smith includes *The Dead Beggar* in the eighth edition of the *Elegiac Sonnets*, and locates the context of the poem "in the church-yard at Brighthelmstone, in November 1792". As Labbe has shown, although the poem was published in 1797, Smith dates this poem on November, 1792, the same date of the Book I of *The Emigrants*, and of two other sonnets, *The Female Exile* and *Written for the Benefit of a Distressed Player* ("Mediating History" 60). This is a significant date because it references a short period after the September Massacres and a few years prior to the declaration of war between Britain and France (Labbe, "Mediating History" 60).

Smith names the text an elegy, since it is not formally a sonnet, underlining its purpose of remembrance for someone recently deceased. Historically, this lyrical mode was conceived as means for the poetical expression of an author's personal grief and plight (Rosenbaum 102). In Smith's elegy, the poetic speaker laments the death of an unknown person, but grieves even more the collective response to social inequality. The text is shaped in the form of a moral lesson to a Lady (Labbe, "Mediating History" 61). The first part of the elegy reads:

SWELLS then thy feeling heart, and streams thine eye

O'er the deserted being, poor and old,
Whom cold, reluctant, parish charity
Consigns to mingle with his kindred mould?
Mourn'st thou, that here the time-worn sufferer ends
Those evil days still threatening woes to come;
Here, where the friendless feel no want of friends,
Where even the houseless wanderer finds a home!
(lines 1-8)

In the sonnet, the beggar is a person disenfranchised to the point that his funeral is the result of “parish charity” (line 3). The poetic speaker views the emotions expressed by the Lady to whom Smith addresses her elegy as inauthentic and belated. Smith endorses a genuine feeling of sympathy, one accompanied by timely positive actions (Wolfson, “Politics of Allusion” 37). After all, charity after death is useless for the subject in need; it remains an act only meaningful to the mourner. In the sixth stanza of *The Dead Beggar*, Smith writes:

Rejoice, that though an outcast spurn'd by fate,
Through penury's rugged path his race he ran;
In earth's cold bosom, equall'd with the great,
Death vindicates the insulted rights of Man.
(lines 17-20)

Smith considers the beggar's death to be the result of the absence of human solidarity towards the poor (Labbe, “Mediating History” 60). In the context of the “rights of man”, Smith criticizes the hypocrisy of equality discourse from the viewpoint of a woman unable to secure legal justice for her children. In the final part of the elegy, death is notably regarded as the only real leveller of humankind, since death is common to all humans and does not make distinctions based on class, national origin, gender, etc. (Rosenbaun 109). Death is depicted as the only real consolation for every human being for the sufferings that life may bring.

Smith seems here to employ a “language of political liberalism”, centralizing the theme of equality through death (Labbe, “Mediating History” 60). Richard Terry (Terry) asserts that Smith's footnotes in *The Dead Beggar* reflect the political and social climate of the late 18th century, in which the culture of “patronage” ruled not only in Parliament, but in every sphere of British society (“Thomson” 235). Terry remarks that in this sonnet we can confirm that Smith's firm commitment to the Revolution persisted, even after the violent aftermath that caused a large number of British people to revoke their support of the cause. Instead, Smith continued to subtly advocate for equality and the rights of every person, no matter their social class or condition of gender. Smith includes in the 1787 edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* a note on *The Dead Beggar*, in which she responds to critics who negatively reviewed her choice of

words in the text, claiming that the language employed by the author resonates with Republicanism. Smith responds to these assertions by first reclaiming her right to freely express herself, including using “terms that have become obnoxious to certain persons”, and by denouncing the lack of legislation in place to prevent hunger. She argues that “there ought to be some regulation which should prevent any miserable deserted being from perishing through want, as too often happens to such objects as that on whose interment these stanzas were written (*The Poems* 90; Labbe, “Mediating History” 55). These authorial notes and references likely aimed to remove the revolutionary and republican label from the equality language, instead incorporating it into a discourse of compassion and sympathy (“Thomson” 235).

Smith’s constant desire for death, a theme often repeated in her sonnets and in *The Emigrants*, is a traditional romantic trope that adds to the authenticity of her sorrows (Rosenbaum 113). Smith shared her view of death as the only real leveller of humanity with Robinson, as will be explained in the discussion of Robinson’s *The Fugitive*, a poem that is part of *Lyrical Tales*. Neither Robinson nor Smith maintains a positive vision of the future; as we have observed in *The Emigrants*, and *Elegiac Sonnets*, and will be seen in *Lyrical Tales*, human sufferings are portrayed without end. In *The Dead Beggar*, the poetic speaker declares that “Death vindicates the insulted rights of Man”, words which have been considered the “republican sarcasm” of a writer who knows how to imprint political texture on her words (Wolfson, “Forging Connections” 528). For Smith, it was impossible to achieve social equality without a radical cultural and political change.

Another of Smith’s sonnets dealing with mobility is *On being cautioned against walking over a headland overlooking the sea, because it was frequented by a Lunatic*. The protagonist of this sonnet is also a wanderer, a person roving mentally and physically in an upland place in which the sea is an integral part of the landscape. After warning the reader with a very descriptive title about this eccentric character, the sonnet begins with a lengthy question.

Is there a solitary wretch who hies
To the tall cliff, with starting pace or slow,
And, measuring, views with wild and hollow eyes
Its distance from the waves that chide below;
Who, as the sea-born gale with frequent sighs
Chills his cold bed upon the mountain turf,
With hoarse, half utter'd lamentation, lies
Murmuring responses to the dashing surf?
In moody sadness, on the giddy brink,
I see him more with envy than with fear;
He has no nice felicities that shrink
From giant horrors; wildly wandering here,

He seems (uncursed with reason) not to know
The depth or the duration of his woe.
(lines 1-14)

In this sonnet, Smith once again tackles the theme of alienation. The lunatic that figures in the text is in a state of expectation, measuring “its distance from the waves that chide below” (line 4). He is located “In moody sadness, on the giddy brink”, not only mentally but also physically (line 9). With this description Smith might be implying that the man is considering jumping from the cliff (Ruston 64). The poetic voice reflects invidiously on the wretched man’s incapacity to fully comprehend his own affliction or alienated state; his compromised and wandering mental condition serves to protect him from what is happening around him. Smith’s message appears paradoxical, as she admires the madman’s unconsciousness of his situation, yet he seems to be willing to commit suicide, a decision often driven by a mental awareness of a drastic situation of distress (Ruston 64).

The title of this piece does not seem to fully resonate with the primary message of the sonnet (Terry 53). The cautionary title, in which the author is advised to avoid “walking over a headland overlooking the sea, because it was frequented by a lunatic”, has nothing to do with the desire of the poetic speaker to handle her own plight in the same manner as the lunatic. The title of the sonnet, then, is a mere conjecture of the possible danger of a marginal and discriminated person, and not a concise version of the main message of the sonnet (Terry 53). The title might be more connected to the idea of women’s inability to occupy or pass through certain spaces, a form of the speaker lamenting her female gender identity (Ruston 64).

After 1797, in the eighth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, this sonnet was accompanied by a plate with an illustration depicting the lunatic at the centre scene, with a woman behind him replicating his gestures. The woman seems to resemble Smith’s own portrait in the frontispiece of the 1797 edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*.¹¹³ The relationship between the lunatic and the poetical speaker is visually represented as a mobile scene, in which the wind signals the motion of the characters, and the enormous, strong physical appearance of the lunatic contrasts with the figure of the woman with an admiring gaze.¹¹⁴ Curiously, both characters are standing on the rocky precipice, suggesting they are representations of the same subject with fragmented identity. An alternative explanation could be that the lunatic is just a mental “projection” of the

¹¹³ See appendix, Figure 2

¹¹⁴ See appendix, Figure 3

poetic speaker's melancholic state and her desire to forego awareness of her plight (Ruston 64).

Another noteworthy poem dealing with mobility is *The Female Exile*. This two-stanza sonnet was adopted into the eighth edition of the *Elegiac Sonnets* in 1797. Smith took a fragment of the long blank verse poem *The Emigrants* and adapted it to a set of quatrains, thus completing the earlier draft included in *Emigrants*. In the poem, "she and the exiles are face to face" (Horrocks, "Desolations" 97).

Why did Smith return to the female exile segment of *The Emigrants*? Wolfson interprets this shift in form as the result of political pressure the poet faced when supporting Revolutionary ideals, which might have interfered with her literary audience ("Allusion" 53). Andrews affirms that the change of poetic genre may have been employed by Smith as a way of protecting herself from the repercussions of writing revolutionary texts (25). Thus, Smith decides to reflect once again on the figure of female exile, this time only on grounds of gender, avoiding any references to the Queen of France. In this poem, Smith's maternal concerns resonate with the female exile's preoccupation for the destiny of her children amidst a period of complete uncertainty. This shift in poetical mode could signify Smith's detachment from English literary tradition and lineage, an anti-nationalist protest against a British society that leaves women, wretched people and children behind (Andrews 25). That said, as an experimental writer well-recognised in her role as a sonneteer, it could simply have been a theme that the author wished to revisit in another literary form.

As in *The Dead Beggar*, Smith sets the location of the poem in Brighthelmstone, November 1792. In this poem, Smith forgoes signs of historical links with Marie Antoinette's persona to present instead the portrait of an unknown mother in disgrace (Wolfson, "Politics of Allusion" 53). In this short poem, she focuses on a female emigrant who is contemplating the seashore, waiting for something or someone who never arrives. Interestingly, when Smith depicts French women, she does so while exempting them from any harsh criticism. Smith represents all female characters, in both England and France, as "domestic creatures divorced from political investment and struggling" (Benis "Boundless" 27). The poetic speaker describes the scene:

Beneath that chalk rock, a fair stranger reclining,
Has found on damp sea-weed a cold lonely seat;
Her eyes fill'd with tears, and her heart with repining,
She starts at the billows that burst at her feet.
There, day after day, with an anxious heart heaving,
She watches the waves where they mingle with air;
For the sail which, alas! all her fond hopes deceiving,
May bring only tidings to add to her care.

(lines 5-12)

In this sonnet, the references to Marie Antoinette in *The Emigrants* are left out, resulting in a less controversial text. Besides, this focal shift from such an important figure to a common mother can be interpreted as a form of levelling the queen to any other woman. Smith mentions the origin of the sonnet in a note at the end of the text: "This little Poem, of which a sketch first appeared in blank verse in a poem called "The Emigrants," was suggested by the sight of the group it attempts to describe—a French Lady and her children" (Wolfson, "Politics of Allusion" 53). Thus, Smith explains to her readers that she got the inspiration for the poem from a real émigré's family, but she makes no allusions to the French queen.¹¹⁵

The sonnet continues with a description of the radical changes the female exile has undergone since her arrival to England, "[h]er dress unregarded, bespeaks her distresses, And beauty is blighted by grief's heavy hours" (line 15). As in the sonnet dedicated to the vagrant lunatic, in which the man's madness gives the impression of unawareness of his own sorrows, the children's innocence allows them to live in the present, not lost in melancholy. The poetic speaker describes the children as "[a]mused with the present, they heed not to-morrow" (line 19) On the contrary, Smith's female migrant has a stronger sensibility that condemns her to long-lasting woes in a "hostile soul". At the end of the sonnet an authorial voice intervenes, declaring:

Poor mourner! – I would that my fortune had left me
The means to alleviate the woes I deplore;
But like thine my hard fate has of affluence bereft me,
I can warm the cold heart of the wretched no more! (lines 33-36)

In this last quatrain Smith again interpolates directly, describing her own hopeless condition. Labbe affirms that in this text, Smith is no longer hidden in the voice of the poetic speaker; rather she is directly speaking to her readers, referencing her personal plight as caused by a patriarchal society that has made it impossible for a woman to exercise compassion for others in a similar position.

In sonnet XLIII, also known as *The Unhappy Exile*, Smith further tackles the theme of exile and alienation. In the text, the refugee's fate is confined "[t]o the bleak coast of some unfriendly isle" (Smith qtd. in Hart 307). The refugee has been taken to a coast of some deserted and "unfriendly isle" (line 2). Smith describes a desolated sea with no ships, but suddenly "a fancied

¹¹⁵ The sonnet was accompanied by a plate in which a female exile is portrayed who is watching her children (Labbe, "Mediating History" 64).

semblance of a distant sail” appears in the melancholic scenario (line 11). The phantasmagoric sail disappears, leaving a deeper feeling of pain in the exile. A personal interjection of the author occurs in the middle and last lines of the sonnets, as Smith first compares her own plight to the exile’s feeling of despair, saying, “[s]uch heartless pain, such blank despair as mine” (line 8). At the end, the authorial voice declares:

While the lost hope but aggravates his woe!
Ah! so for me delusive fancy toils,
Then, From contrasted truth –my feeble soul recoils
(lines 12-14)

Smith clearly parallels her personal sorrows with the confined exile’s unhappy destiny. For various scholars, including Curran, Smith’s poetical practice of self-promotion constituted “political gestures” against a male-controlled social system in which women suffered the worst consequences (Zimmerman, “Dost thou” 119).

In sum, for Zimmerman, in *Elegiac Sonnets* Smith employs her position as an abandoned wife and mother to justify her professional career as a writer (“Varieties of Privacy” 487). She enters the public domain of literature through sharing her private life in print. This travel to the author’s interiority – an element that contributes greatly to the theatricality of the poems – is stressed in the frontispiece portrait included in the first edition of the collection of poems, and in some subsequent publications of the same. In these images Smith is depicted as a wanderer; the readers are able to observe her walking in the midst of natural sceneries (Zimmerman, “Dost thou” 106). The theatrical act of wandering in Smith’s autobiographical representation, including the symbolic images, supports her desire to inspire sympathy for the plight of the émigrés (Zimmerman, “Dost thou” 110). Her readers might have been at first more inclined to feel compassion for a middle class, cultured woman writer, but Smith cleverly arrives at the core of the problem, giving an example of sympathy that surpasses national origin, religion, or political ideology. The readers began identifying with Smith so profoundly that even her compassion for the emigrants proved contagious.

4.3 Mary Robinson’s *Lyrical Tales*

Robinson also dedicates her literary imagination to migration and exile writings, to elucidate the fragmented identity of displaced populations and of people in marginal positions. In one of her latest poetical compositions, *Lyrical Tales*, Robinson fills her verses with several estranged and alienated characters, such as a lost Indian sailor, a hermit, an alienated child, a pair of slave lovers, a maniac, and a fugitive, among others. *Lyrical Tales* was published after William Wordsworth’s and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* and was influenced by these

authors' manner of addressing the complexities of human nature from a "sentimentalized humanitarian narrative" (D. Robinson). The subject of "vagrants and wandering women" was typical of the general poetry written in the period, particularly in the texts authored by Jacobin supporters (Benis 56).¹¹⁶ Stuart Curran deems that Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* provides a repositioning and enlargement of the focus on signs of alienation and destitution in the characters portrayed by her predecessors Wordsworth and Coleridge, with whom she had numerous cultural and literary interchanges (Curran, "Lyrical Tales in Context" 26). Robinson plays with the position of "insider and outsider", as the famous writer that has suffered isolation herself. She also challenges the "relationship between self and other, original and copy" as *Lyrical Tales* could be defined as a response to and a revision of the former text, *Lyrical Ballads* (Cross, "From Lyrical Ballads" 178). This collection of poems has been perceived as Robinson's "most innovative and radical achievement" (Fulford 60).¹¹⁷

As shown by Jacqueline Labbe (Labbe), in *Lyrical Tales* Robinson is interested in de-romanticizing the experiences of decriminalised people by demonstrating the harshness of human existence ("Deflected Violence" 163). She addresses the question of human responsibility in the plight of others, exposing the other face of a society that does not necessarily fit the idealistic image of the British nation. She also gives space to other subjectivities that defy the prevalent model of the British citizen, exposing how the social privileges exercised by some individuals are culpable, in various manners, for the plight of others. Many of the poems in *Lyrical Tales* transmit the scenario of war and violence unfolding in Britain and its effects on the people through "poems of grotesque, even extreme alienation" (Curran, "From Lyrical Ballads" 32).

As Smith, Robinson explores the repercussions of the arrival of the French émigrés and other migrants to Britain across national, social and existential dimensions. She does so not by taking one simple political stance; in other words, her views are not reduced to pro- or anti-revolution. Yet her views on slavery remain clear, as she considers it an abominable institution that should be abolished. She expands the topic of migration by exploring the consequences of physical and psychological displacement in multidimensional ways (Markley 388). The alienation and displacement of Robinson's characters are always the result of injustices, and through their stories she is quite direct in condemning social discrimination. As a cosmopolitan

¹¹⁶ The supporters of the French Revolution were known as "Jacobins" for speaking their radical ideas out loud.

¹¹⁷ *Lyrical Tales* influenced strongly the work of Charlotte Dacre, a women writer who publicly paid tribute to Robinson (Pascoe, *The Poems* 45-46).

author, she envisions a multicultural society in which diverse people could be integrated; viewing isolation as a symptom of human inequality.

According to Toby Benis (Benis), Robinson was a British writer who, in the 1790's, along with Smith, dedicated most of her writing to the emigrants' cause (49). Her poetry is populated with tropes of "alienation and exile" in which vagrants, travellers, exiles, orphans, and refugees openly communicate their emotions (Miskolcze 207). Notably, the figure of the wanderer, which first acquired attention in the mid-eighteenth century, provided the possibility of a poetic standpoint "through mobility" and sympathy. As in Smith's *Emigrants*, the wanderer perspective, thinking as a person in constant mobility, is the ground for sympathy and to envision other forms of social corroboration (Horrocks, "Circling Eye" 39). Robinson's interest in the wanderers and vagrants brings to mind Julia Kristeva's view, in which the figure of the foreigner or "diversity man" becomes the opposite of the ideal of "national man" (*Strangers to Ourselves* 104). Kristeva believes: "[t]he more so as we are all in the process of becoming foreigners in a universe that is being widened more than ever, that is more than ever heterogeneous beneath its apparent scientific and media-inspired unity" (*Strangers to Ourselves* 104). In short, the figure of the wanderer or vagrant helps to rethink subjectivity, national identity, and citizenship, the two latter aspects having contributed to a climate of intolerance and discrimination.

Robinson's poetry collection, *Lyrical Tales*, published for the first time in the year of her death in 1800, has since been branded an experimental literary masterpiece. Robinson's choice of composing tales, instead of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's lyrical ballads, underlines the author's intention of going beyond the lyric and even surpassing poetry, to provide the reader with an innovative literary experience (Nicolazzo 153). In this respect, Jerrold E. Hogle (Hogle) affirms that Robinson distances herself from *Lyrical Ballads* by contrasting an idea of homogeneity that defines her cohort writers' works and adds a variety of "stanzaic and sonic patterns", aspects that apparently echoed the multi-forms of social inequality that people were experiencing in the 1790's (Curran qtd. in Hogle 369). Also, Shelley Jones (Jones) discusses that Robinson's titular shift from *Ballads* to *Tales* highlights the hybrid nature of the second genre (poetical tales).¹¹⁸ In Robinson's tales, the narrative voice evolves to a form of conversation, and the protagonists of these tales are active interlocutors in most of the poems (Jones 46). Her stress on a narrative mode transforms her poetry to the suitable vehicle, the

¹¹⁸ Dorothy Wordsworth was against Robinson's decision of using a title that made clear allusion to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (Labbe, "Deflected" 163).

appropriate textual ground for the different emotions she wishes to transmit throughout her characters' stories (Meyer, "Narrative" 221).

The nature of the tale also presumes a moral message, so, the readers know from the beginning that there is something to learn from the text, an element that dilutes the violent and frightening circumstances present in the poems. Robinson also mixes "social satire" with a touch of sympathy towards the victimised characters that populate her verses (Mellor, "Making an exhibition" 296). Presenting the reader with an aesthetically unique text using experimental narrative poetry, Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* has been deemed "the single most inventive use of metrics in English verse since the Restoration" (Curran, "New Lyric" 9).

In the structure of *Lyrical Tales* Robinson follows the idea of an anthology, providing a sort of "democratic model" through which the reader can select the poems at will, depending on their preferences and urgencies (Cross, "The Morning" 103). Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* has no specific order, she merely presents a list of poems titled in suggestive ways which mainly describe a character's condition, a place or the name of a pet, such as *The Lascar*, *The Widow's Home*, *The Shepherd's Dog*, or *The Negroe Girl*, among others (Cross, "Morning Post" 102). The way the descriptive titles are organised facilitates revisitation of poems by the reader, who is completely free to navigate, however chaotically, Robinson's collection.

Robinson declares herself an outcast. She sees her own foreignness in the migrants that were living in Britain, including the French émigrés, the African Slaves and other characters, which prompts an in-depth analysis of the complexities of displacement and alienation in Robinson's work. This occurs not only in her poetical texts, but is also quite evident in her prose, essays and novels. The same year her volume *Lyrical Tales* was published, Robinson wrote a letter to William Godwin, dated 24 August 1800, in which she describes herself as a "wanderer". Robinson's self-description is analogous to the way Smith named herself an "involuntary exile" and a "wanderer upon Earth", as stated in previous chapters. Robinson wrote to Godwin:

Since I first felt the power of discrimination, since I adored the excellent part of mankind, and execrated the base, I have been a wanderer in search of some things, approaching to my idea of a perfect being. (Cross, "Romantic Dialogues" 1).

Paradoxically, Robinson draws this female self-portrait of the wanderer, migrant, traveller, etc. as she herself was becoming physically immobile.¹¹⁹ She continues to deploy tropes of

¹¹⁹ According to the biographer James Boaden, the situation of Robinson was critical, "A perfect martyr to the rheumatism; the use of the lower limbs quite gone; carried from room to room, or from her house to her carriage like an infant; she yet had the nerve to control her bodily sufferings, so as to indulge a constant use of the pen, except at the periods of refection and exercise" (qtd in Brewer, "Disability" 105).

migration and exile, even as her condition of rheumatism caused the paralysis of her lower limbs, rendering writing an undeniably challenging endeavour (Brewer, “Disability” 105). It is possible that in suffering this challenging medical condition Robinson might have shared the same sense of dispossession, isolation and loneliness of some of the protagonists of *Lyrical Tales*. All of these characters are in many ways inhabited by the author, and apparently her own authorial subjectivity is intersected by the way she views the suffering figures that occupy her poetry.

As in Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets*, various poems that eventually became part of this poetry collection were written over many years and previously published in newspapers. Six of them were published previously in *The Morning Post* under the name Tabitha Bramble, “the voice of popular caricature” of an old maid, with which Robinson satirized her own status as a cultural icon (Vargo, “Tabitha Bamble” 37).¹²⁰ The pen name of Tabitha Bramble demonstrates the author’s critical and ironic approach to the way she was represented in the press. Through this pen name, Robinson was able to experiment with the “ugliness” of life to put forward a social message in favour of exercising sympathy for all of society’s fellows (Labbe, Bicentennial 5). The significance of the Bramble poems continues to demonstrate the author’s interest in a literary critique of society and gender.¹²¹

Robinson gives space poetically to the voices of marginal subjects who are often left out or misrepresented under pastoral literary conventions that traditionally disguised their plight. Robinson rejects an aesthetic of natural and organic beauty for her tales, and instead prefers to illustrate the brutal violence of humankind using elements from the Gothic (Labbe, “Deflected Violence” 163). As does Smith in *The Emigrants* and in some of her *Elegiac Sonnets* discussed in the previous sections, Robinson identifies with the social victims of Britain and makes explicit the cruel reality they are facing. Yet, for Robinson, writing about the situation of the French emigrants necessitates the representation of other subjects that are also socially neglected. For this writer, European and non-European migrants/vagrants/refugees are located in the same position; there is no hierarchy in classifying social oppression. Thus, the French expatriates and African slave women were both subjects who deserved to be listened to.

¹²⁰ The poems written under the pen name Tabitha Bramble are the following: *Mistress Gurton’s Cat*, *Old Barnard*, *Deborah’s Parrot*, *The Confessor*, *The Fortune Teller* and *The Granny Grey* (Vargo, “Tabitha Bamble” 39).

¹²¹ According to Vargo the pen name Tabitha Bramble comes from one of Tobias Smollet’s characters in his book *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). Robinson uses the alter ego of this character to critically reflect upon Wordsworth’s ideas on the connection between “truth and beauty” as part of “a liberal agenda”, and she instead presents a more authentic poetical depiction of reality (“Tabitha Bramble” 38).

As mentioned previously, Robinson does not include any prologue, advertisement, or authorial notes in her *Lyrical Tales*; instead she opens the collection with a poem titled *All Alone*, which deals with vagrancy and a character's "catalogue of losses" (Nicolazzo 154). The title of the poem suggests solitude, a recurrent theme in the book that describes a condition shared by several of Robinson's characters. This aspect of Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* highlights the urgency to alter the individualistic society that promotes self-interest and a dynamic of exclusion, reinforcing the lack of human cohesion.

The poem *All Alone* is exemplary of Robinson's attention to local and transoceanic mobility. She presents characters that have travelled across continents, people who remain nomadic, living apart from the rest of society, orphaned and abandoned children and young women and men. A significant historical element to be considered is that in the course of the eighteenth century, vagrancy was viewed as an offence to the public order, punishable by law and left to the discretionary competence of the authorities. The misconduct was linked to the government's efforts to keep individuals from economically burdening the state (Nicolazzo 152). Nicolazzo asserts that vagrancy was a "crime of status", and therefore, intention was irrelevant to be found guilty of this offence. This aspect could have been central for Robinson's decision to include vagrants in her catalogue of decriminalised subjects (152).

The opening poem *All Alone* was republished in *The Morning Post*, a newspaper in which Robinson was an active contributor following the release of *Lyrical Tales*. Stuart Curran (Curran) has referred to this poem as "one of the most affecting productions that has lately issued from the English Press" (Curran qtd. in J. Wordsworth 160). To articulate the protagonist's most profound feelings of isolation, as the title of the piece suggests, the author stages the poem in a graveyard. Betsy Bolton (Bolton) has stated that this poem could be read as "a critical revision" of *We are Seven*, penned by Wordsworth, a poem in which the author "contrast[s] an older narrator with a young boy". In both *All Alone* and *We are Seven*, the youngest family member is abandoned as a result of the death of his parent ("Romancing the Stone" 746). However, Robinson rejects Wordsworth's perspective, which was centred on the poet's gaze towards the bereaved child, and instead allows the orphaned wanderer boy to speak up about his situation of deprivation and solitude ("From Lyrical" 182).

In the poem *All Alone*, the poetic speaker is an observer of an orphaned boy's emotional struggle. The narrator describes the opening scene, inquiring, "Ah! wherefore by the church-yard side,/ Poor little lorn one. dost thou stray?" (lines 1-2). By these first lines, the reader discovers that a solitary child is crying on his mother's gravestone. The poetic speaker attempts to comfort the orphaned boy by convincing him that he is not alone: "Thou art not left alone,

poor boy, /The traveller stops to hear thy tale;” (lines 7-8). In the first stanzas, Robinson emphasises the youth’s unbearable grief, his lack of sense of belonging and his incapacity to connect or even interact with others in his surroundings. Besides his status as a parentless child, the reader does not receive any information regarding what brought the character to this situation of complete isolation and loneliness.

The poetic narrator confesses to having meticulously observed the orphaned boy wandering with “naked feet [...] wounded sore” (Lines 25). He/she has been a witness of the relationship between the wretched child and his mother, before and after the mother’s demise. In the seventh stanza, the speaker expresses, “Oft have I seen thee, little boy, / Upon thy lovely mother's knee;/ For when she lived, thou wert her joy (lines 37-39). The speaker has witnessed the way mother and son shared their love for each other, and the transformation the boy suffered after his mother’s passing. In an attempt to alter the protagonist’s mood, the narrator communicates to the boy how she/he sees him:

I know thee well! thy yellow hair
In silky waves I oft have seen:
Thy dimpled face so fresh and fair,
Thy roguish smile, thy playful mien,
Were all to me, poor orphan, known,
Ere Fate had left thee—all alone!
(lines 13-18)

After describing the beautiful features of the boy, the narrator ends the stanza with the word *alone*, something he/she repeats throughout the poem. According to Nicolazzo, “[r]edundancy is also the poem’s most insistent formal concern, as the boy’s utter refusal of life takes the form of semantic and sonic repetition” (155). For instance, in the first stanza, Robinson concludes the sestet with a question, “that thou art left alone?” (line 6). In the second stanza, the narrator affirms, “Thou art not, urchin, left alone” (line 12). In the aforementioned stanza (lines 13-18), the speaker identifies with the orphaned boy’s solitude, and utters that everyone is “alone”, including the narrator. In the subsequent stanzas, the word *alone* is used to describe the boy’s grief and the loss of his beloved mother.

The narrator consistently tries to convince the protagonist that he is not alone, since travellers that have passed through the land are affected upon hearing his story and villagers have also accompanied him in the midst of his terrible loss. The consolatory tone of the poem clashes with the stark description of the boy’s circumstances. The speaker describes the transformation of the boy from his “yellow hair” and “dimpled face so fresh” to a figure almost corpselike, “Thy russet coat is scant, and torn,/ Thy cheek is now grown deathly pale!” (lines 19-20). The amalgam of deprivations the boy has tolerated has made of him an empty subject,

echoing his mother's unfortunate state (Nicolazzo 154). The narrator depicts the boy's status as a character that lives "between the living and the dead" (Hogle 370).¹²² Gradually, the boy becomes an inanimate subject, unable to find happiness as a human being, almost wishing to die to be closer to his mother.

Robinson underscores the boy's otherness, before the character speaks directly to the reader in his first-person voice about the "irreducibility of his grief" (Cross, "From Lyrical" 183). In the ninth stanza, the orphaned boy interacts with the narrator, declaring his impotence to pursue an ordinary life when his deepest feelings are still attached to his mother's grave. The boy expresses:

"I cannot the green hill ascend,
I cannot pace the upland mead;
I cannot in the vale attend
To hear the merry-sounding reed:
For all is still beneath yon stone,
Where my poor mother's left alone!

"I cannot gather gaudy flowers
To dress the scene of revels loud—
I cannot pass the evening hours
Among the noisy village crowd;
For all in darkness, and alone
My mother sleeps, beneath yon stone.
Where my poor mother's left alone!
(lines 49-54)

The boy's endless devotion for his mother has paralysed him, making his days gloomy and centring all his attention on his mother's grave. The boy is unable to enjoy nature's beauty, an essential element of his eremitic life. He repeats the phrase "I cannot" five times in these two stanzas. The stubbornness of the boy makes him unwilling to hear the voice of the narrator, and he declines any attempt to open himself to new experiences and sentiments apart from the mourning related to his mother's absence (Nicolazzo 154).

Later in the poem, the orphaned boy continues his conversation with the narrator and shares that before his mother's death, his father perished on a "stormy sea". Yet the boy's story continues to put at the centre his late mother by recounting with admiration how, during his father's absence, his mother never left him behind, which is the main reason why he loyally refuses to "ever quit the stone/ Where she is left to sleep alone" (lines 77-78). The poem is transformed into an ode to the mother's selfless love and dedication to the boy in the midst of

¹²² Hogle points out in his essay *The Gothic Romantic Hybridity in Mary Robinson's Lyrical Tales* that Robinson filled her poems with "Gothic images" that have their origin in "graveyard poetry" (370).

the difficulties that arrived after his father left them: "My mother still survived for me" (line 103). For the boy, even nature seems to honour his mother, "For there the pale primroses grow/They grow to dress my mother's bed" (lines 69-70).

In a subsequent stanza, the abandoned boy describes the moment he lost his humble house and how other circumstances obliged him to "[wander], friendless—and alone!" (line 114). In the last stanza, the boy rejects the narrator's optimism and declares:

"No brother's tear shall fall for me,
For I no brother ever knew;
No friend shall weep my destiny,
For friends are scarce, and tears are few;
None do I see, save on this stone,
Where I will stay and weep alone.
(lines 139-144)

From the first lines of the text, the narrator alludes to the child's physical traits and virtues, such as his capacity to tell his own story. The poem ends after the orphaned boy concludes his account of life's deprivations, and refuses to accept his own subjectivity, living apart from his mother's grave (Nicolazzo 154). The orphan boy cannot imagine a hopeful future for himself; he can only live in the past, revisiting his memories and lamenting the present. Societal compassion for the miseries of abandoned children appears as a major trope in this poetical text. The poetic speaker is affected by the boy's traumatic story, and is able not only to observe this wanderer character, but to interact directly with him. For some scholars, the poem is not just a sad tale about a parentless boy, but an existential poem that highlights the importance of a sympathetic gaze in response to a person's plight (Miskolcze 4).

The poetic narrator connects strongly with the orphaned boy while he vividly describes his trauma. Robinson privileges as poetic theme the existential crisis of discriminated subjects, and the majority of her characters speak freely about their traumatic experiences (DeLong 85). For this reason, in *All Alone* the boy is able to openly share the reasons behind his state of alienation and complain about his life predicaments; in this way the voice of the outcast takes the lead in narrating his own story of loss and despair.

4.4 Gendered, anti-imperialist and abolitionist Poetry

Mobility themes and metaphors allowed writers to speak up about urgent social and political topics in spite of restrictive British policies and backlash. They were employed as a vehicle to address an amalgam of political issues ranging from critiques of the imperialist and colonial spirit of the English nation to patriarchal violence against women and children. It is significant

that British Romanticism was immersed in a context of involuntary mobility and in its most extreme form, the traffic of human beings for commercial and sexual exploitation. Despite the fact that slavery was kept geographically distant from Britain, writers took a stand on the subject and voiced their complaints against this antithesis of human freedom (Lee, “British Slavery”¹¹)

In *The Negroe Girl*, Robinson continues to engage with the topic of mobility, but this time in the form of forced transatlantic journey. In the age of the “rights of the man”, the question of who was considered a citizen was angled in terms of gender and race. As discussed in the previous chapter, in her proto-feminist tract *A Letter*, Robinson supports an egalitarian social model in which all individuals, women and men, may stand together as citizens. In *The Negroe Girl* she expands this discourse on women’s rights to continue challenging the very notion of the human to include enslaved African people.

In Charlotte Smith’s texts, slavery and the slave trade remain essentially ignored as she fights for the inheritance of her children, of which income consisted primarily of the product of forced slave labour in the colonies. When Smith mentions slavery, she does so only to speak metaphorically about her gender condition, but she never really addresses the theme in her poetical works. This absence might look more contradictory if we recall that Smith dedicates *The Emigrants* to William Cowper, a writer who contested slavery in various poetical compositions, such as in *The Negro’s Complaint* (1788), published a few years before Smith’s long blank poem. While Charlotte Smith overlooks racial categories entirely in *The Emigrants* and *Elegiac Sonnets* and makes no allusion to slavery as an institution or to the slave trade, in *The Negroe Girl* Robinson touches radically upon these issues, denouncing the horrors of slavery and its effects on a couple’s future together.

During the 1790’s, Robinson composed various anti-slavery poems, including *The Storm*, *The Negroe Girl*, *The African*, *The Negro Child* and *The Lascar*. Not all her abolitionist poems were included in *Lyrical Tales*, however; only *The Negroe Girl* and *The Lascar* are part of this collection. Robinson’s abolitionist rhetoric was influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft, a writer who denounced the extreme violence of slavery and the congruencies between the treatment and status of African slaves and English Women. Wollstonecraft’s proto-feminist discourses were first articulated employing a “language of natural rights”, but later she changed tone and took advantage of contemporary slavery discussions to address women’s state of subordination (Ferguson 83). According to Moira Ferguson (Ferguson), in Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* (1792) she made approximately eighty references to slavery. What is more, for Ferguson, Wollstonecraft was the first writer to address issues of gender and colonialism together, a

practice that Robinson adopted in her proto-feminist pamphlet *A letter* and in her anti-abolitionist poems.

Mellor affirms that gender was a central aspect in slavery discussions at the end of the eighteenth century (“Am I not a Woman” 315). Gender was present in the idea of expanding the notion of the “man rights” to include African man, and to incorporate woman as a subject with rational capacity, therefore capable of exercising active citizenship. Gender played a central role in women’s oppression, since African women were not only merchandise for commercial exchange, they were part of a vicious system in which white Europeans perceived them as personal possessions.

Robinson addresses this theme of slavery directly in *The Negroe Girl*, as well as in its predecessor, *The Storm* (Craciun, “Introduction” 6). *The Negroe Girl* is a revision of *The Storm*, which was published in the *Morning Post* in 1796, two years before the release of Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). For Fullford, this anti-slavery poem is a “lyrical ballad of romantic confession”, as the text focuses on how imperialist power destroys affective relationships, especially for African slaves who have been dehumanised and expatriated.

Robinson not only employs the word slave to stand for an “oppressed woman”, as Smith does; she also condemns slavery as an institution and the radical violence it causes as a machinery for the extermination of human beings. In *The Negroe Girl* she tackles the issue of the slave trade from the perspective of two characters who have suffered it in their own flesh, whereas in *The Storm*, the author is more concerned with the repercussions of slavery on the everyday life of “Britain’s working classes”, and how the poor are obliged to fight and perish for the colonial interests of the nation (AJ Jones 39).

The Storm (1796) appeared to the public in the midst of a conservative climate in regard to the abolitionist cause, and considering writers’ limited freedom of speech, this was further evidence of Robinson’s fearless character. At the time, Britain’s major enemy, France, had already decided to abolish the slave trade, something that rendered anti-slavery writing suspicious in the British reactionary atmosphere. Fear of English Jacobins and a desire to expand the dominion of the former French Colonies contributed to increasing censorship of the topic (AJ Jones 40, 42). Nonetheless, for the publication of *The Storm* and later *The Negroe*

Girl, Robinson did not employ any of her pen names; she signed her composition simply as “Mrs. Robinson” (D. Robinson 165).¹²³

While *The Storm* is geographically set in Britain and centres around a white European couple named Nancy and William, in *The Negroe Girl* the protagonists are two black African slaves, Zelma and Draco, and the scene takes place in Africa. Moreover, whilst in *The Storm* William is a crewmember or a soldier aboard on a slave vessel, in *The Negroe Girl* Draco is a slave in chains who has been traded by his latest owner to avoid his having a relationship with Zelma.

Robinson becomes more radical in the second version of *The Negroe Girl*. She not only laments the effects of slavery in the lives of British men whose circumstance obliged them to participate in the institution, but she embraces the idea that African slaves are humans and therefore their stories must be heard (D. Robinson). Yet, in *The Storm*, the distinctions between oppressors and oppressed races are unclear, as war had also rendered white Europeans victims of their own imperialist system. For Robinson, slavery was problematic in both sides of the world, in the country of the colonizers and in the colonies.

For Shelley AJ Jones, it is important when reading both texts together that we take into account that *The Storm* is a “periodical verse”; this genre usually responds to the immediacy of contextual elements, and at the time it was intended to create awareness of white men’s involvement in the slave trade (38). We must remember that Robinson, as a constant contributor to various newspapers, was well aware of the functions of British print culture. The context of Robinson’s poetical composition is directly connected to the British invasion for the expansion of slave trading in the French Caribbean colonies. At the time, the recent news of a strong storm that devastated a number of ships traveling towards the West Indies, which resulted in many casualties, caused commotion among the population, and the event became a trending topic for literary compositions (Jones 42). In both poems, Robinson sets a scene in which she depicts a sinking ship, rather than portraying an image of celebration for the safe return of vessels to the British shore, as reports of the period confirmed (D. Robinson 164).

According to Daniel Robinson (D. Robinson), in *The Storm* the author proposes a “forthright condemnation of her country’s participation in the slave trade” and of its refusal to terminate its imperialist colonial ambitions (164). In this text she focuses on class discrimination,

¹²³ In formal aspects of poetical structure, the stanzas of *The Storm* are homostrophic, each consisting of a six-line unit that begins as conventional hymnal measure but that adds a couplet consisting of a pentameter and hexameter: a4b3a4b3c5c6 (D. Robinson 165)

disparities between rich and poor, and how the slave trade involved the exploitation of white underprivileged men (Jones 39); whereas in *The Negroe Girl* Robinson revisits her poetical composition to make significant changes. According to Jones, Robinson's two separate versions of the same poem evidenced the progeny of a complex poet able to create texts that stand alone, but can also be read in conjunction (Jones 37). Ideologically, these poems demonstrate that Robinson had much to say about British colonialism and its obsession of exercising power both at home and abroad. She was outspoken about which lives really mattered to the imperialist and patriarchal British government.

Both *The Storm* and *The Negroe Girl* open with a scene in which a woman is waiting on a beach shore for her partner, who is aboard an English slave ship (D. Robinson 164). In the case of *The Negroe Girl*, the title of the poem alludes directly to the female protagonist of the tale and signals her gender, age and race, while the title of the former version of the poem, *The Storm*, depicts a tumultuous natural phenomenon; no references to the characters are made. Robinson's decision to name the poem after the female character might have had the intention of focusing on the plight of an African woman, while with the title *The Storm*, Robinson might have been underlining that, for British men, the most dangerous aspect of the transcontinental journey was the unforeseen weather and not the horrific violence suffered by African people across the Middle Passage (Jones 39).

In both poetical texts, Nancy and Zelma, the female protagonists, are witnessing the shipwreck of an English slave ship from shore, which causes them to presume the deaths of their partners aboard. The two sister poems are framed within nature's cyclical changes, an aspect which resonates with the poem's central theme of Britain's accountability in the violence executed against its people, and how history continues to repeat itself (Jones 45). Thus, Robinson replicates the exact weather circumstances for both poetic compositions, altering only a few select adjectives such as, in *The Negroe Girl*, "boisterous" instead of "chilling", and "tempest's roar" instead of "deafning roar". Both poems begin with the word "dark" to describe the weather circumstances contemplated by the female protagonist:

Dark was the dawn, and o'er the deep
The boist'rous whirlwinds blew;
The Sea-bird wheel'd its circling sweep,
And all was drear to view,
When on the beach that binds the western shore
The love-lorn ZELMA stood, list'ning the tempest's roar.
(*The Negroe Girl* lines 1-6)

Robinson reflects on the effects of slavery in domestic affection. Both couples, the European and the African, were torn apart for the sake of Britain's commercial and colonial interests. In the fourth stanza of *The Negroe Girl*, Robinson replicates almost the exact text of *The Storm*. In these lines, Zelma unsuccessfully implores nature to calm itself:

"Be still!" she cries, "loud tempest cease!
O! spare the gallant souls!"
The thunder rolls — the winds increase—
The Sea like mountains rolls.
While from the deck the storm-worn victims leap,
And o'er their struggling limbs the furious billows sweep.
(lines 19-24)

Yet, despite Zelma's pleas, the storm continues to strengthen. In this stanza the female protagonist refers to the African men and women aboard the European ship as "gallant souls". Robinson takes the opportunity to honour these people by elevating their status from slaves to nobility. The whole poem could be read as a tribute to African women slaves and a reminder of the accountability of the European nations in their plight.

In the case of *The Storm*, Jones affirms that Robinson's character William is quite complex. In William we see both "oppressor and oppressed", as while he may have been obliged for a variety of reasons, economic and otherwise, to participate in a British colonial expedition, his involvement in this mission nevertheless contributes directly to the system of slavery (45). Social inequality drove Britons to serve as a workforce under deplorable conditions. The intricate dynamics of slavery and colonialism rendered these vulnerable lower-class people participants in the nation's imperialist project, but also victims of that system in their own right. In the fourth stanza of *The Storm*, Nancy declares, "Some, nurs'd in lux'ry, deal Oppression's Blow,/ "While humble MERIT pines in Poverty and Woe!" (lines 23-24). These lines underscore the artificial hierarchical social structure, biased by prejudices, which operated to degrade the poorest people in Britain, Africa and the colonies (D. Robinson, *Form and Fame* 164). Interestingly, in *The Negroe Girl*, Robinson changes the wording of this stanza to the following: "Some nurs'd in splendour deal Oppression's blow,/ "While worth and DRACO pine — in Slavery and woe!" (lines 29-30). This time, she specifically mentions the name of the character Draco, and the word "Slavery" stands in for "Poverty". Reading these two versions of the stanza together, we are able to uncover Robinson's strong anti-imperialist abolitionist message, which demonstrates the damage caused by the colonizers to the British working-class people and to the African Slaves.

Zelma desperately calls to Draco from shore, but receives no response from her love. Zelma's voice fades in the storm, and the tragic and tempestuous atmosphere prevents the two

lovers from communicating. Later in the poem, we discover that Zelma's master, who is selfishly infatuated with his female slave, has deliberately separated the two lovers.

"Torn from my mother's aching breast,
My Tyrant sought my love—
But in the grave shall ZELMA rest,
Ere she will faithless prove;
No, DRACO! — Thy companion I will be
To that celestial realm where Negroes shall be free!
(Lines 67-72)

In this stanza, Robinson makes allusions to the slaver's desire to sexually exploit Zelma. The white European man wants everything from his female slave, including her affections. In this situation, with no way out, Zelma refuses to submit to her master's will and longs for the day she could be free.

In both *The Storm* and *The Negroe Girl*, the female characters, in abrupt response to their partners' apparent deaths, throw themselves to the "wat'ry grave". The element of suicide is particularly important in these poems if we consider that it was regarded as a form of resistance for slaves, a manner of escaping a system of oppression. Acts of self-destruction filled anti-slavery poetry; many protagonists starved themselves to death or drowned themselves in the sea (Lee "Distanced Imagination" 30). Robinson challenges the idea of objectifying and considering African women slaves as mere merchandise by making both female characters respond to patriarchal and colonial oppression in the same way. Robinson reinforces her egalitarian message by equating the emotions of a European white woman and an African black woman, and this aspect of both poems underlines the destructive nature of imperialism for all human beings.

Robinson's decision to terminate the life of her female protagonists in this manner may have been influenced by events of the previous decade, when the slave ship *Zong* sailed from Britain to the west coast of Africa and later towards the Caribbean with approximately 470 African slaves aboard. In the midst of a health crisis affecting the slaves and some of the crew members, a group of slaves took their own lives, instead of accepting their captain's arbitrary decision to mass-murder Africans by throwing them to the sea (Lee, "British Slavery" 11). For Ferguson, in *The Storm*, Robinson might have had in mind some reports from investigations in Bristol in which the casualties of seamen brought more public attention than the deaths of slaves. Thus, the rewriting of the poem with an African couple could be read as a critique of societal double standard in grieving the lives of British people but ignoring the plight of the African slaves ("Reactions" 240-241).

In *The Negroe Girl*, Zelma confesses that her master has educated her. In the hierarchical relation between master and slave, Zelma acquired a “European education” (Mellor, “Am I Not a Woman” 325). The thirteenth stanza reads as follows:

"The Tyrant WHITE MAN taught my mind
The letter'd page to trace;
He taught me in the Soul to find
No tint, as in the face:
He bade my reason blossom like the tree—
But fond affection gave the ripen'd fruits to thee.
(lines 73-78)

Mellor states that even Robinson, who was a clearly anti-colonialist writer, believed the European literacy to be superior to the African oral culture, which is why Zelma’s master could teach her mind. Yet Zelma’s soul is colourless, it has “no tint”, just as that of any white European (Mellor, “Am I Not a Woman” 325).

In *The Negro Girl*, Robinson purposely revisits the lyrical piece, shifting the main focus from the storm to a person, the negro girl, from a macro-vision to an individual approach that signals humanity and affection. In her constant lucubration of the human condition, which included envisioning the day in which women might become citizens of the world, Robinson attempts to put forth an abolitionist message in which slaves could be viewed as humans rather than objects for commercial exchange. While Britain was trying to construct a national identity by differentiating themselves from others, such as the French, slaves were not humanised. Robinson took exactly the opposite approach, defining in the *Negroe Girl* no hierarchy of peoples or races; equating the lives of a European couple with those of African slaves. *The Negroe Girl* ends with the following stanza:

Long, on the swelling surge sustain'd,
Brave DRACO sought the shore,
Watch'd the dark Maid, but ne'er complain'd,
Then sunk, to gaze no more!
Poor ZELMA saw him buried by the wave,
And, with her heart's true Love, plung'd in a wat'ry grave.
(lines 121-126)

Robinson finishes the poem in the same manner as she did *The Storm*, but with a crucial difference. Besides changing the name of William with Draco, in line 123 she changes “the white cliffs” for “the dark Maid”. In doing so, Robinson emphasizes the role of race in the destiny of the two couples (Jones 39). For the European lovers, the famous white cliffs stand for the British nation’s culpability in their plight, a symbol of the repercussions of a blind nationalism that destroys its own population. In *The Negroe Girl*, the allusion to “the dark

Maid” has the same intention of the poem’s title, signalling that the social position of the African woman is servant, or maid. It could also underline the characters’ inability to legitimize their romantic relationship. This difference underscores the element of national identity. While the British couple could blame their homeland for the impossibility of a future together, the martyrdom of the stateless couple goes to the root of not viewing the female slave as human.

As I have mentioned, in *Lyrical Tales*, Robinson addresses displacement in its multiples forms, primarily as the result of forced migration and exile. Not only did Robinson voice the atrocities committed against African folk reduced to commodities for the sake of the expansionist aims of the British nation; she also expanded her critique to include the effects of war on British people and on other displaced communities who were also oppressed. This was the case for the East Indian sailors who arrived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to serve as replacements for the British soldiers dismissed during the Napoleonic Wars (Garcia 255).

As testified by the various poems included in this section, most of Robinson’s characters are victims of an insatiable desire for expansion and dominion of the British nation. We saw that in *The Storm*, Robinson was interested in pointing out the cost of militarism and war on British families who were forced for economic reasons to participate in the nation’s colonial projects. Similarly, in *The Negroe Girl*, Robinson denounces the violence of slavery and the repercussions of war in the life of an African couple. Indeed, Robinson likely intended to denounce all of the atrocities that the process of colonialism had on the lives of everyone, regardless of their origins inside or outside the country.

As in *The Negroe Girl*, Robinson has no qualms about condemning engendered racial discrimination in *The Lascar*, a twenty-six stanza poem that is also part of *Lyrical Tales*. In this tale she again approaches this issue, capturing the consequences of war on another non-British character, an East Indian sailor. In the poem, Robinson displays the realities of a period in which Britain increased its demand for soldiers, money, and other material resources, efforts that affected almost all the population and foreigners who were exploited for the benefit of the nation (Ingrassia 102). Expanding on the subject of racial discrimination, Robinson criticises the way Britain reinforced the exclusion and marginalisation of foreigners, not without attempting to demystify the idea of the nation’s superiority over all others. In a poetical narrative form that reflects the cosmopolitan ideas found in her essay *Present State of the Manners* (1800), discussed in the Second Chapter, Robinson revisits the notion of equality she advocated so fervently in *A Letter* (1799).

Paradoxical was the situation of the lascars during the Romantic Period. These people, who travelled transcontinentally to the “northern world!” for commercial and colonial purposes, ended up wandering aimlessly without any stable place to call home. The Indian sailors became an indigent population in Britain, as their migrant status and the Navigations Acts restricted their mobility in some British ships and therefore reduced their possibilities of obtaining a regular job (Nicolazzo 158). This group of marginalised people were treated in deplorable ways, exploited as a cheap working class and left in a state of in-between in Britain, without resources, obliged to become “paupers, beggars, and petty thieves” (Garcia 255). In Tim Fulford’s (Fulford) words: “*The Lascar* shows that colonial exploitation began and ended at home” (57). The dynamics of colonialism affected different people on many levels; it had no limits, no respect for human lives.

Robinson dedicates this tale specifically “to racial oppression” (DeLong 87). The poem opens with the voice of the Indian sailor, lamenting “another day”/ “of dreary sorrow”. In this pessimistic tone, the protagonist shares his inconformity with his life in the diaspora and with the way migrants like him are treated in the British land. He considers melancholically all that this long journey has stolen from him. From the very beginning, Robinson allows the marginalised subject to speak directly to the reader:

Far from my native Indian shore,
I hear our wretched race deplore;
I mark the smile of taunting scorn,
And curse the hour when I was born!
I weep, but no one gently tries
To stop my tear, or check my sighs;
For while my heart beats mournfully,
Dear Indian home, I sigh for thee!
(Lines 5-12)

Again, as in *The Alien Boy*, Robinson deals with the lack of sympathy towards the plight of others, something she views as a social failure of British society. She chooses to elaborate a humanitarian poetry to express her sentiments of inconformity with the reactionary climate of the day, prevalent not only in macropolitical life but also in the relationships of people living together in society. Robinson might centre her efforts on resisting cultural imperialism by attempting to transform the social culture of exclusion that operated in tandem with the nationalist ideology of the state.

In this tale the Indian sailor has been left abandoned in the British land, seeking human warmth and a place to rest, but not a single soul gives him comfort, a display of the prevailing xenophobia of the time. Unfortunately, the system of oppression to which these people were

forced to adapt made them permanent victims of colonialism. First, they were brought to Europe as slaves, as disposable military material, and when they were not aboard a commercial ship, they were left alone without recourse to survive an oppressive climate of racial hate. In the poem, the economic hardship of the character is underlined: “I have no home, no rich array,/ No spicy feast, no downy bed!” (lines 27-28). Robinson is even more explicit in describing the lascar’s plight:

I with the dogs am doom'd to eat,
To perish in the peopled street,
To drink the tear of deep despair,
The scoff and scorn of fools to bear!
I sleep upon the pavement stone,
Or pace the meadows, wild-alone!
And if I curse my fate severe
Some christian savage mocks my tear!
(Lines 29-36)

Robinson, reminiscent of Smith in *The Dead Beggar*, addresses homelessness as she presents the crudest face of people’s selfishness and incapacity to provide help to others in need. Both authors lament the social hypocrisy towards the misfortunes of others. It is curious how Robinson depicts the British citizens as savages, an offensive epithet employed to describe a racialized other, someone uncontrolled and frightening, lacking in civility. Robinson’s message is clear: for her, the true savages are the racist, xenophobic and patriarchal European population.

In the poem, the author makes a comparison between North and South; we see Britain depicted through the eyes of the lascar as a land of coldness and despair. Contrastingly, India is portrayed as a wonderland; the sailor describes “My Indian plains now smiling glow,” recalling the affection of his mother (line 41). In India “[t]here sun and shade delicious blend”, while in England, “Cold shadows hourly cross my way” (lines 46, 48). The natural scenario reflects the population’s attitude of indifference, while gradually the plight of the Indian sailor intensifies.

Robinson tackles the hierarchies of the races, toying with the irrationality of the discourse underlying racial inequality. In the seventh stanza, she alludes to the differences between Europeans and Indians:

For Europe's suns with softer dyes
Mark Europe's favour'd progeny!
Low is my stature, black my hair,
The emblem of my soul's despair!
(lines 75-78)

The lascar boy could never embody Englishness because his physicality is the result of nature's action, wrongly interpreted by human beings. These physical differences, which justify social inequality, are for Robinson the result of nature's aleatory manner; it is the human who has distorted the meaning of physical traits. The colour of the skin and the physical constitution of this man prevent him from receiving any assistance from the "native" British population.

Alone, amid the race of man,
The sad, the fearful alien ran!
None would an Indian wand'rer bless;
None greet him with the fond caress;
None feed him, though with hunger keen
(lines 113-117)

The Lascar boy goes wandering, asking for someone to give him refuge. The futility of his attempts to find a welcoming person weakens him, "[a]nd now, with faltering, feeble breath, The famish'd Lascar pray'd for death (lines 215-216). Later, at the end of the poem, the lascar boy is killed by a fearful traveller who is scared of the Indian's colouring:, "But he was dark, and dark the scene, The torches long extinct had been;" "But ere the sufferer they behold, His wither'd heart is dead—and cold!" (lines 223-224, 311-312).

4.5 Revisiting Alienation

Another tale in which Robinson engages with otherness and alienation is *The Alien Boy*. This poem has been described as a response to Wordsworth's *The Idiot Boy* in *Lyrical Ballads*, a text in which the author presents a loving relationship between a mother and her "half-wise"¹²⁴ son who, in the midst of the story, is presumably transformed into a "horseman-ghost" (Hogle 376). Robinson reaps from this story, among other elements, the strong bond between mother and son, the presence of an external third figure in need, and a profound transformation of the youngest character.

The Alien Boy appears almost as a sequel to Robinson's novel dedicated to the French Revolution, *Hubert De Sevrac* (1796). The titular protagonist of the novel is Hubert De Sevrac, a man who changed his perspective of his past and how he benefited from the ancient regime, while living in the diaspora as an "expatriate and family man" (Brewer, "The French Revolution" 119). In this novel, Robinson employs a "Gothic narrative" to share her support to the revolution while centring her story on the difficulties experienced by a group of émigrés

¹²⁴ A term that in the context of the poem seems to describe a person with a mental disability.

belonging to the nobility, who were obliged to escape and begin life anew in Italy. Judith Pascoe (Pascoe) includes in her edition of *Mary Robinson: Selected Poems* a note on the first stanza of the poem, in which she explains that the persecution mentioned in the poem might be linked to “the September Massacres of 1792, when over a thousand priests, aristocrats, and criminals were publicly executed after mob trials” (*The poems* 262).

The title of *The Alien Boy* signals that the protagonist of this tale does not belong to what the poetic voice calls home (Bolton, “Romancing the Stone” 746). The tale opens with a description of a father-son relationship, which evolves surrounded by a natural landscape. The young man “Henry”, son of “Saint HUBERT,” is living alone, dwelling in the mountains “near the Western Main”. The first stanza of the poem reads:

'Twas on a Mountain, near the Western Main
An ALIEN dwelt. A solitary Hut
Built on a jutting crag, o'erhung with weeds,
Mark'd the poor Exile's home. Full ten long years
The melancholy wretch had liv'd unseen
By all, save HENRY, a lov'd, little Son
The partner of his sorrows. On the day
When Persecution, in the sainted guise
Of Liberty, spread wide its venom'd pow'r,
The brave, Saint HUBERT, fled his Lordly home,
And, with his baby Son, the mountain sought.
(lines 1-11)

Thus, Hubert is living in exile, “a fugitive from the French Revolution”, isolated from society for a period of ten years (Hogle 376). The French émigré brought with him his “baby Son” Henry (line 11), whose only life experiences thus far have been with his father, isolated in the mountains. The young man may have been an emotional support to his father as the pair lived in precarious and diasporic conditions, but seemed to have found happiness and consolation in one another. They created their own world, and only when someone from outside their nucleus interrupts their pacific lives does tragedy arrive on the scene. In the fourth stanza, Henry asks about his past, and why are they the only ones populating the mountains.

Oft, the bold Youth, in question intricate,
Would seek to know the story of his birth;
Oft ask, who bore him: and with curious skill
Enquire, why he, and only one beside,
Peopled the desert mountain?
(lines 31-35)

Later, the young man watches his father’s attempts to save a “shipwrecked mariner” during a sea storm, and hence becomes an orphaned boy as occurs in *All Alone* (DeLong 85). Robinson

employs the same natural phenomenon as a cause of separation of families and lovers in *The Storm*, in *All Alone* and in *The Negro Girl*. Before the terrible incident terminates the life of his heroic father, the young man seeks to learn more about his origins before his father elected a solitary life for them both. The boy inquires about “the secret of his birth”, “the story of his birth” (lines 32, 13), but the only clear information we obtain appears in the fourth stanza:

A daily journal would Saint HUBERT make
Of his long banishment: and sometimes speak
Of Friends forsaken, Kindred, massacred;--
Proud mansions, rich domains, and joyous scenes
For ever faded,--lost!
(lines 39-43)

In the poem, the narrator discloses that Hubert “fled his Lordly home”, describing the young man’s precedence as “Ah! birth too high/ For his now humbled state”, thus alluding to the character’s royal ancestry (lines 10, 13, 14). Yet, the father chose to raise the young man differently, teaching him the “labour’s task”, only mentioning in vague terms his former life in the French nation. It is possible that Robinson perhaps had Smith’s *The Emigrants* in mind when composing this poem, as it particularly addresses the plight of French exiles by describing the effects of displacement on their family ties. Furthermore, the references to the “Proud mansions, rich domains, and joyous scenes / Forever faded” (1, 10, 42–43), resonates with *The Emigrants*’ allusions to one of the characters’ aristocratic past, “To the deserted mansion, where no more/The owner (gone to gayer scene) resides” (lines 200-201) .

Immediately following the storm that kills his father, the reader can observe the transformation of the boy into a sort of wild and alienated creature, as witnessing his father’s death renders him mad. In the final stanza, the narrator describes this transformation:

And fix'd his eye in madness.--From that hour
A maniac wild, the Alien Boy has been;
His garb with sea-weeds fring'd, and his wan cheek
The tablet of his mind, disorder'd, chang'd,
Fading, and worn with care.
(lines 127-131)

DeLong affirms that *The Alien Boy* might involve autobiographical reference, as Robinson’s own father was a mariner who abandoned his family. Thus, *The Alien Boy* could be echoing Robinson’s experience of being left deserted by her father (86). Very early in life, Robinson began to suffer from progressive physical paralysis, a condition that eventually rendered her immobile and isolated (Brewer, “Paralysis” 105). Robinson’s transformation from a beautiful

sexual icon to a woman tormented by disability could also be reflected in this drastic character transformation.

In a broader sense, the poem reflects upon the nations' accountability in the émigrés' plight, especially on domestic bonds such as that of father and son (Benis "Boundless"). Henry is the result of a "social failure" to connect with foreigners in distress (Bolton, "Stone" 747). Robinson attempts to transmit a message of sympathy; she believes "people should feel for one another", something that occurs rarely in her *Lyrical Tales* (Meyer, "Narrative" 235). She is against the xenophobia and nationalism that stigmatize differences among the population. Many French émigrés were socially neglected, even though some of them, as in Henry's case, lived almost their entire lives in Britain, remaining all the while in a state of displacement. These people were driven to become alienated and invisible subjects, culturally excluded and socially forgotten.

The Fugitive, included in Robinson's *Lyrical Tales*, is also a blank verse poem, thus composed according to the same narrative verses utilized in Smith's *The Emigrants*. In *The Fugitive* Robinson speaks in first person, and on some occasions she even attempts to interact with the subject of her poem. This is notable, as this standpoint appears in only two of the twenty-two poems contained in *Lyrical Tales*, and *The Fugitive* is one of these two (Cross, "From Lyrical" 180). Robinson dedicates the lines of her poem to a specific subject, someone she denominates as the fugitive, and she focuses on the everyday life of this character. In this way Robinson distances her poem from Smith's texts, which employ a more general view of the situation of the French emigrants.

The poem starts off with the speaker's contemplation of a solitary character. In both Smith's and Robinson's texts, the poetic voice is viewing the protagonist(s) with sympathy. In *The Fugitive*, the speaker is paying close attention to this solitary man, interpreting what he is doing throughout the course of the poem. As the speaker watches the features of the man, she slowly comes to understand that he is "a persecuted exile" (Meyer, "Narrative" 258).

Oft have I seen yon Solitary Man
Pacing the upland meadow. On his brow
Sits melancholy, mark'd with decent pride,
As it would fly the busy, taunting world,
And feed upon reflection. (lines, 1-6)

From the beginning of the poem, the speaker, as the observer of the solitary man, "moves on to speculation" (Meyer, "Narrative" 257). She attempts to discern who this wandering, lonely man is, and the poetic persona calls directly upon the reader to find a possible answer: "the tear

in the solitary man's eye seems to say that the world is to him a desert, "Is it so? the speaker inquires". (line 34) (Meyer, "Narrative" 257).

In eighteenth century British literature, the figure of the wanderer was central to evoking emotions related to the romantic notion of sympathy, and a shared existential condition of "homelessness" or "loss of community" (Horrocks, "Circling Eye" 666). The figure of the wanderer also is attractive to the eye of the reader due to its mystery and estrangement.

Robinson provides her readers with a full description of the protagonist of her tale. She knows from looking at him what kind of exile he is: "a priest, torn from his kindred, and those kindred massacred" (lines 42-44) (Meyer, "Narrative" 258). This is notably distinct from Smith's reflection on the situation of the exiled priests. As Patricia Meyer points out, unlike Smith, Robinson does not comment on the fugitive's religious position or his relation to England. After physically and mentally describing the subject of her gaze, the speaker mirrors herself in the fugitive, and interacts directly with him (258).

Poor Traveller! Oh tell me, tell me all--
For I, like thee, am but a Fugitive
An alien from delight, in this dark scene! (lines 34-36)

In these lines, the speaker states that she is also a fugitive, as alien as the solitary man. In her own manner, the speaker reveals her subjectivity as someone who is homeless and isolated. Similarly to Smith, Robinson projects herself through the subject of her poem. Thus, the words assigned by the speaker to the solitary man can be considered the speaker's own words:

Dimming his dark eye's lustre, seems to say,
"This world is now, to me, a barren waste,
"A desert, full of weeds and wounding thorns,
"And I am weary: for my journey here
"Has been, though short, but cheerless." Is it so? (lines 29-33)

Robinson might be attempting to communicate to her readers the manner in which she views the complicated geopolitical context surrounding her, a world like a "barren waste". Within these lines Robinson also makes an effort to share how she internally views herself as a wanderer, an isolated fugitive. After gazing on the solitary man, perceiving and understanding him, his feelings and moods that mirror her own, the speaker declares the fugitive to be just like every existing creature:

EXILED MAN!
Be cheerful! Thou art not a fugitive!
All are thy kindred--all thy brothers, here--
The hoping--trembling Creatures--of one GOD! (lines 74-77)

Robinson concludes her poem with a sort of message of equality; it is within sorrow and death that all humans and creatures are the same (Meyer, "Narrative" 258). It is clear that Robinson abstains from ending her poem on a consolatory note, or with the allusion to a better future for either the fugitive priest or the speaker. Although Robinson posits an argument for equality that may be considered political, she does not prefigure a future without misery for her poetic persona, or for her character (Miskolcze 210). This expression of brotherhood recalls Smith's verses, when she utters at the end of the first book of *The Emigrants*:

These ill-starr'd Exiles then, who, bound by ties,
To them the bonds of honour; who resign'd
Their country to preserve them, and now seek
In England an asylum—well deserve
To find that (every prejudice forgot
Which pride and ignorance teaches), we for them
Feel as our brethren; and that English hearts, (Book I:354-360)

The brotherhood that Smith suggests is not one of men united to fight in favour of the nation as a group of patriots or national heroes, common in discourse populating militarist and patriarchal society. Rather, Robinson and Smith's idea of brotherhood seeks to erase the national identity distinctions between people of separate nations. She implores the English look on them as siblings, due to their humanity and not their place of origin. This is an approach of dissenting women writers, integrating personal experiences of everyday life to reflect on broader political issues (Ross 97). Women writers could write from the principles they professed without making distinctions between their private and public lives. In the case of *The Emigrants*, Smith repeatedly refers to her personal problems, but in a similar manner she also underlines the "vision of social reform" of the Revolution that concluded as an unsuccessful political disappointment (Garnai, "Precarious Bread" 14).

As demonstrated in this section, though Mary Robinson was committed to inequality in a more inclusive manner than her cohort writer Smith, they both saw in the exiles and in other marginalized subjects a unique opportunity to elaborate on the revolutionary events in France and their repercussions in England. Through the experience of the exiles and other discriminated individuals, they had the possibility to question ideas concerning national identity and citizenship. The condition of these outcasts also echoed Smith and Robinson's social status as women writers excluded from the hegemonic position where formal political conversations were taking place. They identified strongly with the material and internal experiences of the subjects of their poetry, to the point that their authorial subjectivity was shaped in the act of contemplating and sympathizing with them. By expressing sympathy for

those who were the victims of displacement, they also promoted an anti-war critique amidst the increasingly antagonistic climate between France and Britain. Moreover, the circumstances of these social outcasts prompted the writers to envision a more egalitarian cultural society where all individuals would be welcome and respected.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Reading the texts, hearing the voices II

5.1 Introduction: A general view of the effects of migration on De Castro's works

During the past decades, the work of Rosalía De Castro (1837-1885), from now on De Castro, has been the subject of substantial scholarly research from an amalgam of standpoints. These approaches include, but are not limited to, the analysis of the author's proto-feminist awareness in the face of citizens mass exodus and the rise of an economic precariat. In this respect, some feminist scholars have offered an insight into the author's social protest on the condition of Galician women. They have also questioned how the mobility of the population had a direct relationship with gender dynamics in the mainland, Galicia and abroad, in the places of destination (López Sáñez 10).

Most recently, in the past ten years, De Castro's poetry in both Spanish and Galician has been translated into English, allowing her work to reach a broader audience and consequently more global attention.¹²⁵ Nowadays, thanks to these efforts and a large number of academic works dedicated to De Castro's oeuvre, she is considered "one of the most authentic, poignant, and strikingly original voices of nineteenth-century Spain" (Dever et al. 1).

Certainly, the concrete historical circumstances that triggered the phenomena of migration in Galicia towards countries located on the other side of the Atlantic, such as Argentina and Cuba, marked De Castro's literary production, particularly her poetry. She fills her poetry with migrants, returnees, women and children left behind, among other characters whose identities are constructed as a result of social, economic and physical displacement. Her poetry contributes to a cultural imaginary in which the vulnerability of the nation is underscored as a result of the colonial and imperial dynamics of the Spanish state. In her poetics, she denounces discrimination based on gender, national identity, language, and literary tradition. But also, her proto-feminist and identity politics are intertwined with metaphors and tropes of migration, regional folklore, and nationalism, that her geopolitical context offered.

For these reasons, De Castro's poetical compositions provide nowadays an adequate place for the exploration of the effects of displacement and migration in the national identity and the gender dynamics of a population within the framework of post, anti-colonial and feminist perspectives. De Castro's poetry offers the possibility to think critically about the relationship that bonds the migrants to their "homeland" or places of origin, and that goes well beyond territorial limitations, including affections and sentiments of the ones who instead can or must remain.

¹²⁵For example, Michelle Geoffrion-Vinci authored an English feminist translation of De Castro's poetry collection *En Las Orillas del Sar* (2016).

In a significant part of her literary works, including prose and poetic compositions, De Castro writes from and about Galicia, a land geographically located in a peripheral position, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and the north of Portugal, connected, at the same time, to Europe and, across the sea, to America (Hooper and Puga Moruxa 1). She captures the fluidity of this land's geography, by metaphorically incorporating the sea as part of its landscape and the fragmented existential condition of its people as the result of a long history of migration and diaspora. A number of scholars argue that when dealing with the history of Galicia there is a need to employ a concept of identity that takes into account what characterises the physical space of the country and “the movement and displacement” in the history of the population who inhabits it (Romero, “Contemporary Galician” 105). Thus, not by chance, the history of Galicia according to De Castro's poetics, included what happens inside and outside the borderlands, comprising the feelings of the people that cross the ocean.

Thematically speaking, De Castro touches upon the subject of migration not only on her poetical compositions but also in various prose writings, such as in a short story published in 1866 titled *El Cadiceño* (The Cádiz Man). This text presents a pessimist vision of migration by criticising the way Galician men tried to find fortune in distant lands and, thus, contributed to the impoverishment of Galicia (Lorenzo-Modia 11-12). De Castro builds a story in the context of the migratory wave of the nineteenth century, from the viewpoint of two characters presented in a caricaturist style. By portraying the story's protagonists in such a way, she might have had the intention of reflecting on the issue of cultural identity, as she deeply laments the returnees' uprooting as a consequence of the time spent distant from Galicia.

Moreover, in this short narrative, the author makes no distinction between the two migrant characters. The man who migrated to Cadiz and the one who moved to Havana are portrayed in a similar way as if migrating, regardless of the place you go to, creates this contemptible masculinity (Rábade Villar, “Enunciación” 119). Overall, De Castro's *El Cadiceño* questions a cosmopolitan vision of migration by refusing the idea of Galicians becoming citizens of the world, while also critically addressing the existence of a “pure” Galician national identity at times of constant mobility (Cabo Aseguinolaza 197).

Another of De Castro's literary compositions –preceding *Follas Novas*—in which she deals with the topic of migration, also tackling the subject of Galician national identity amid the mass displacement of citizens, is *Cantares Gallegos* (1863), a text we mentioned in the second chapter. This poetry volume was published a decade after the Spanish government lifted the restrictive regulations which prohibited its citizens to migrate to South America (Hooper & Puga 7). According to the Galician Society in Havana (Cuba) *Cantares Gallegos* was essential

in recuperating the “absent homeland of Galicia” (Infante, “Locating” 246). De Castro’s verses became not only a complaint against discrimination, but also a cultural instrument to preserve a distinct Galician national character even at distance from the country.

In this collection, she shows both affection towards her land, and a commitment in defence of Galician culture. The title *Cantares Gallegos* echoes Antonio Trueba’s *El libro de Cantares* (The Book of Songs), a text which brings back to life popular Galician glosses (Aldaz et al. 3). In the prologue, De Castro expresses her wish to “make known how some of our poetic customs still retain some primitive and patriarchal freshness” (Wilcox 51-2). Also, in response to the prejudices that have undermined Galician wonders, its language and people, De Castro clearly states her intention of sharing with the world the greatness and beauty of her Galician land (Mayoral, “Poeta” 900). Through her poetic mind, she seems to be listening and transmitting a historical echo. As Moure frames it, “[a]nd Rosalía doesn’t merely present readers with ready-made or recuperated myths or ditties or songs; she listens acutely and then writes her own in a kind of transmission-loop that belies any notion of ‘original’” (“Introduction to Galician Songs” 8).

In *Cantares Gallegos* she tries to show the most festive side of Galician culture, that includes the relationship between the peasants and their humble land, and the poetic links of the people to their ancestral culture (Candel 3). Thus, De Castro’s employment of folksongs in *Cantares Gallegos* could be described as a device through which the author can manifest in an ironic and defensive manner her strong anti-Castilian feelings. The folkloric rhetoric allows her to redirect the reader’s attention from her political message, since her poetry is a mere reproduction of the traditional songs and tales that live orally amid the Galician people. Undeniably, she appeals to a sort of nationalistic pride to contrast the imperial dominion of the Spanish state over the Galician land.

Also, preceding *Follas Novas*’ emphasis on strong female characters, in *Cantares Gallegos* De Castro includes a variety of contrasting female figures, “women who sing”, “women who sin”, “independent women”, “rebellious women”, “unfaith and faithful”, conversations between different generations of women, “seductive and seduced”, “religious and superstitious women”, and “angry women” among other archetypes of femininity (Wilcox 53). In Wilcox’s words, “[a]ll of these poems present an image of a woman that is diverse, complex, and fascinating” (53). These multiple representations of womanhood are possible since De Castro’s takes a lot from folk songs of her land, that “belonged to a tradition in which women were the main creators and performers” (Stevens, *Galician Revival* 11). In this way, De Castro attempts to create a sort of lineage, between the voices of suffering Galician women and her own voice

which builds up the path for the renewal of a debilitated and forgotten tradition. Also, through Galician folklore, she found room for her talent to stand out despite the difficulties that being a woman and a writer involved. Because folkloric lyric tradition was already conceived as belonging to women, she found the perfect excuse for her poetry to take shape (Stevens 12). Her poetic text acquired a special place in the cultural realm, because she replicates a female oral tradition that was still alive among the population, even though it was undocumented (12).

Moreover, with this ground-breaking Galician poetry book, De Castro adopts words from the Galician language to portray feelings that could only be experienced by those who transcend spiritually or physically the national limits of their country. This aspect of her poetry contributed to her status as a canonical writer. With this collection, generated using “popular knowledge”, De Castro became a national icon (Miguélez-Carballeira 179). Even Galician migrants, some illiterate, transform her verses into “patriotic hymns” (Davies, “Cultural Isolation” 186). Hence, she was able to transmit to the diasporic communities who lived across various parts of the world traditions still alive locally.

De Castro describes that when she wrote her first book dedicated to Galicia, she was influenced by the inspiration that only youth and hope can provide. The popular voice of a community is intersected by the poet’s personal voice and subjectivity (Armiño15). In *Follas Novas* De Castro meant to collect the voices and feelings of the people, to put them in tune with her own sentiments and poetical voice. She asserts,

Even if I tried, this new book, written amid upheavals, could not contain the enchanting innocence of first impressions: the sun of life that illuminates the world we inhabit doesn’t shine at dawn in the same way that it glows at sunset, shrouded sadly in clouds of coming autumn (De Castro 45).

In this passage, the author is sharing with her readers her ideological and emotional position. De Castro emphatically states that the process of writing this new text was affected by the passing of time, together with the experiences that she had accumulated over the years. Through these words she changes radically the attitude of her previous nationalist rhetoric, in which she mainly focused on the worship of her motherland, to give space to a text that embodies her dissent and more mature subjectivity. As she declares in this prologue, “Galicia is in the background”. Besides, she has transformed over the years, and she wishes her readers to know that she had translated into poetry her personal metamorphosis. After twelve years from the publication of *Cantares Gallegos*, De Castro changes her tone to one of sad melancholia in *Follas Novas*.

While De Castro takes a great deal from traditional Galician culture, she does so, in an innovative manner, without restraining her capacity as a writer to transform and negotiate with the diverse regional genres. For Moure, De Castro “borrows from and harnesses older popular forms without being constrained by them” and “she used and altered many forms and shapes of folk verses” (“Introduction to Galician Songs” 10). So, on what some scholars call experimental poetry, De Castro assumes the role of the spokesperson of Galicians able to make their customs, tradition and voices shared as discourses that deserve to be heard and known transnationally (10).

Two fundamental aspects of Galician culture are crucial in order to analyse De Castro’s poetry, these are the notions of *saudade* and *morriña* (Hopper 54). Concerning them, Marina Mayoral (Mayoral) dedicates an analysis of the different types of meanings attributed to the concept of “*saudade*” and “*morriña*” in De Castro’s body of work. Mayoral explains that what makes *saudade* different from *morriña* is its vagueness. While *morriña* is a desire for something concrete, such as the land, *saudade* is a yearning for something distant and uncertain (*La poesía* 198). The notion of “*morriña*” denotes well-defined sentiments of nostalgia for something specific (Krauser 71). In contrast, there is, no general accepted definition of “*saudade*”. However, “*saudade*” has been described as a sort of permanent nostalgic state of homesickness, an incessant longing for an undefined place called home (Núñez Seixas 298). “*Saudade*” is all about feelings of loss, and does not necessarily means physical separation or distance, but an absence of something that is not available in its original form, an emotional state linked to the romantic idea of home. According to Plácido Castro, “*saudade*” can be defined as “the product of a desire for something that we do not really know, and it is precisely the vagueness of this yearning that distinguishes it from the simple desire to return home and elevates it to the category of an artistic feeling”¹²⁶ (Candel 8).

The various definitions ascribed to the concept of “*saudade*” underscore its ambiguity. Yet, scholars are certain that “*saudade*” has always been connected to “Galician and Lusitanian culture” (Krause 70). This word, “*saudade*”, has a Portuguese origin, it refers to a wandering and nostalgic feeling that remained in the memory of the Galician people for generations (Candel 9). De Castro’s “*saudade*” not only concerns her internal exile as a woman who feels detached from her land, but it is intrinsically connected to the continuous displacement of Galicians. For James Krause, “*saudade*” is “an undercurrent that flows throughout De Castro’s

¹²⁶ “La *saudade*, como el arte, es el producto de un deseo de algo, no sabemos bien de qué, y es precisamente la vaguedad del anhelo lo que la distingue del sencillo deseo de volver a la patria y la eleva a la categoría de un sentimiento artístico” (qtd in Candel 8)

poetry” (69). Put differently, whether it refers to a specific aspect of the person’s homesickness or to a desire for something that ultimately is linked to a general sense of national identity, these two different longings have filled De Castro’s poetry and Galician literature.

5.2 The poetics of displacement: Rosalía de Castro’s *Follas Novas*

In De Castro’s fourth book of poetry, *Follas Novas*, she vividly presents the consequences of migration on the daily life of people, particularly on the women who remained in the country during the first wave of migration to America¹²⁷. Her poetical historical account of the Galician migration to America has been significant in uncovering the profound social effects of a major influx of people fleeing economic necessity (Rábade Villar 120). We find in De Castro’s *Follas Novas* one of the most moving and convincing depiction of a society affected by a massive social and cultural alienation. The economic crisis and famine in Galicia together with Cuba’s need of acquiring more workers after the abolition of slavery in the island, provoked the substantial displacement of Galician men into the Caribbean island (González Fernández 99).

In *Follas Novas*, she displays a high awareness of the complexities of gender and national identity in a population in constant displacement. De Castro denounces the mistreatments the migrants suffered once they arrived in Cuba. The situation that was awaiting the migrants on the island was unstable because of the increased of violence and militarism motivated by the independence movement against Spanish colonisers (Davies, “Cultural Isolation” 183). As noted previously, this was a worrying scene in which contradictory dynamics of colonisation inside Spain and within the colonies concerning Galician expatriates coexisted. Nevertheless, De Castro rejects the wave of migration mostly because of the displacement of Galicians; the poet also laments that the migrants’ resettlement in the other continent would eventually contribute to the depopulation of the home country (Davies, “Cultural Isolation” 184).

The publication of *Follas Novas* in 1880 marked a new phase of Galician literature, since De Castro chooses to cover her verses with social complaints, existential introspection and philosophical statements (Blanco 180). Previously, with *Cantares Gallegos*, De Castro sought to recover an oral tradition, mainly female, thus becoming a precursor of a modern Galician language and literature. In this second poetical collection –in which she still employs the Galician language-- she starts a new phase of an already consolidated literary culture. In *Follas Novas* De Castro depicts scenes in which women are the central subjects, while the author’s

¹²⁷ The first wave of Galician migration took place around 1853 (Hooper, “Mapping Migration” 40).

identity blends with the women peasants to provide the viewpoint of the people left behind from the wave of migration.

In many ways, the Galician nation was constructed from the experience and condition of dislocation. The tension “between attachment and loss” among the people who migrated and the people –generally women-- who were left behind, turns the Galician national identity into a fusion of affective feelings that do not necessarily belong to or merge with a specific geographical location (Romero, “Contemporary Galician” 105).¹²⁸ Therefore, in De Castro’s poetry, Galician identity should be examined from a perspective that takes into consideration myths, affections, imaginaries and notions that transcend territorial limitations. As Kirsty Hooper remarks, quoting Miguel Anxo Murado, “If history were written taking into account what happens at sea and not only on land, Galicia would have plenty to tell” (qtd. in Hooper, “Ríos, fontes” 73).

5.3 Those who leave and those who remain in *Follas Novas*

In the prologue, entitled *Duas palabras de autora*, De Castro admits having composed *Follas Novas* at a difficult time, when she was banished to Castille (Delgado Corral 205). In this book, ‘saudade’ and De Castro’s poetical artistry converge. *Follas Novas* is considered a unique poetry collection of late Spanish Romanticism, precisely because no author, in Galician or Spanish language, has done anything similar (Mayoral, *Rosalía* 39-40). De Castro’s use of the Galician language in a lyrical text, following the canon of Romanticism, was quite innovative. The lyric mode was deemed to be only used in an official language such as Spanish (Poullain, “Poesía Gallega” 416). The presence of these two different languages in her oeuvre also shows the intercultural dimension of this author’s work (Regueiro Salgado 1060).

The title *Follas Novas* refers at the same time to “pages” and “leaves”, connecting nature to literature (Aldaz et al. 191). In order to explain her decision to call the book *Follas Novas*, De Castro in *Duas palabras da autora* states, “[s]o here are *New Leaves*, more aptly called old, and they’re the last, for now, I’ve paid my debt to my land”. And, truly, this book became the last book written in Galician (47). The collection consists of five books or sections, and 127 poems in total (Stevens *Rosalía* 76). The book is divided thematically into five parts: vagaries/Vaguedás, intimacies/;Do íntimo!, varieties/Varia, homeland/Da terra, and widows of the living, widows of the dead/ As viudas dos vivos e as viudas dos mortos. The content of these

¹²⁸ Eugenia Romero stresses, “In Galicia, we find a concept of *galeguidade* that exists as virtual space of negotiation between attachment and loss; so Galician identity becomes an imagined place between here and there” (“Contemporary Galician” 105).

sections is wide-ranging and the way it is organised does not follow the specific order the titles might suggest. Davies describes *Follas Novas* as a sophisticated and conflictual collection of poetry, the poems included in this volume oscillate “between despair and resignation, on the one hand, aggressivity, revenge and protest on the other, the poems are informed thematically and formally by discord, dissonance, negation, paradox and antithesis” (Davies, “Mother Cathedral” 65).

In the first part of *Follas Novas*, called *Vagarías*, De Castro addresses issues concerning the process of poetry writing. The title of this section might suggest the author’s incapacity to define her poetry, which is filled with sentiments that are difficult to explain to her readers (Delgado Corral 207). It is the only section in which the author numbers the poetical compositions (Stevens, *Galician Revival* 78). As we discussed in the previous chapter, in the very first poem of *Vagarías*, De Castro interrogates her own gendered authorial persona and declares that she is not going to follow the female authorial archetype. She presents herself unlike other women “who write of doves and flowers”. The ambiguity and contradictions De Castro presents in the poems which are part of *Vagarías* open the way to a text that embraces a gendered critique, but also sentiments of joy as well as ‘saudade’ (Delgado Corral 207).

In the second, third and fourth sections of *Follas Novas*, entitled *Intimacies*, *Varieties* and *Homeland*; the book focuses on a personal description of places of Galicia linked to autobiographical aspects of the writer. De Castro’s detailed descriptions of Galician rural landscapes are essential in connecting the readers to a Galician national identity that opposed the undermining statements of a centralist Spain (Reimóndez, “The rural” 161). In the fifth section, *Widows of the Living*, *Widows of the Dead* the poems are more about the daily life aspects of an abandoned female population. De Castro shows the sufferings caused by internal and transnational migration. She also shows some “defiant female characters” who unveil the damage caused by a patriarchal and colonial Spanish state (Reimóndez 161). Besides, through the whole book there are poems in which the author deals with existential issues and the poetic I (Poullain, “Poesía Gallega” 420).

The poem *¡Adiós!* (Farewell) is part of the second section of the book *Follas Novas* called *Do Íntimo*, translated to *Intimacies* in English. The poems included in *Intimacies* are dedicated to a feeling of inner exile, rather than to a more collective exile, a theme that populates other segments of the book (Flitter 115). For some scholars, such as Claude Poullain (Poullain), this section deals with aspects of the inner self of the author, even though in some of the poems she talks from the perspective of someone who is about to migrate, or from the position of a marginalised character (“A Súa Obra” 25).

In *¡Adiós!* De Castro presents a character who is leaving and saying goodbye to Galicia. The poem has some similarities to another authored by De Castro titled “*Adiós Ríos, Adiós Fontes*,”¹²⁹ which became part of *Cantares Gallegos*¹³⁰ (Lagos 119). Apart from the similarity in the titles of both compositions, these two texts shared De Castro’s intention of poetically depicting the sentiments of those who are obliged to migrate. It is evident that the subject of forced migration needed to be expanded and it was still a preoccupation for her while she was composing the poems for *Follas Novas*.

These verses contain the melancholic account of an emigrant’s journey to a foreign land. The readers do not get enough information on the migrant’s destination, but they can perceive the anguish experienced by someone who is going away. De Castro opens her poem with the following stanza:

Farewell, hills and meadows, chapels and bells;
 farewell, Sar and Sarela rivers, rife with brambles,
 Farewell, glad Vidán, mills and gorges;
 Conxo, of sombre cloister and placid fallow fields;
 San Lourenzo hiding, like a child in the bushes;
 Belvis, place for me of fondest memories;
 San Domingos where I went in need of rest;
 Lives of my life, part of my very core.
 And you, too, shadowed lonely walls
 Who’ve seen me weep alone and broken;
 Farewell, dear shadows! Farewell, detested shades!
 Once again, fortune’s reverses
 Drag me far away (lines 1-13)

The first stanza of *¡Adiós!* is very descriptive. The poetic I is concentrated on naming all the places that attract her/his attention while she/he continues the journey to a place where fortune is taking her/him. She/he says goodbye to her/his familiar natural surroundings, to rivers and mountains, and to the churches and bells she/he is accustomed to see and hear, and to a neighbourhood she/he describes as joyful. Some of the names De Castro mentions are in fact places linked to episodes of De Castro’s own life, showing her close relation between her emotions and the sites she once inhabited (Poullain, “Poesía Gallega” 420). In the poem, the Galician landscapes are intrinsically connected to the sentiments of the poetic speaker, who might be the author herself, as the act of including the poem in *Intimacies* implies. Likewise, this repetitive act of invoking spaces in De Castro’s poetry could be regarded as an “act of

¹²⁹ This was De Castro’s first Galician language poem to be published.

¹³⁰ “*Adiós Ríos, Adiós Fontes* was first published in a newspaper from Madrid, *El Museo Universal*, in 1861 (Lagos 119).

power” because it legitimises their current existence and identity, while safeguarding them in the Galician imagery of the future (Rábade Villar, “Spectres” 234).

Thus, De Castro with this poem apparently had the intention of recreating the memories of meaningful places of her life-journey. She might also refer to locations and spaces she is leaving behind because her life is passing by too. The poetic voice is quite specific in evocating, through an idealised sketch, the places that she is saying farewell to. The persistent rhythmic repetition of the Galician locations highlights the emotional connection the poetic speaker has with them (Mayoral, *Rosalía* 61). This gesture of mentioning all these locations brings the readers closer to De Castro’s persona, but also to her land, Galicia. The allusion to this sort of sentimental geography might also be a strategy to attract the interest of her readers --who were, for the most part, Galician migrants. She is displaying the close relationship of the poet with the place she lives in and the nature that surrounds her. Moreover, the relevancy that these places have in De Castro’s life also transforms the text into a sort of memoir.

We see Galicia from the viewpoint of a writer who has a complex relationship with the place she calls her homeland. In the first stanza, the poetic I mentions two rivers that run across Santiago de Compostela, and the cloister of Conxo, located close to the same city (Asensio n15). In addition, the poetic narrator refers to Belvis as “a place of fondest memories”, the cemetery in which De Castro’s mother, and two of her children were buried (Asensio n15). The poetic speaker even says goodbye to the shadows that, in the context of Galicia, represent figures that come from spiritual popular beliefs. These characters live in the in-between, they do not belong to heaven nor to hell. The shadows and shades bring the readers to a Galician past that becomes timeless. They also evoke the uncertainty in life and excite strong existential anguish (Dever 41).

The intense rhythm marked by the repetitions and parallelisms in the poem *¡Adiós!* produces a very vivid and musical text (Asensio n28). De Castro employs alexandrine verses with great harmony. As in most of De Castro’s poetical writings, the Galician natural world is evoked as well as the plight of poverty of the population. The emphasis that De Castro puts on the Galician natural sublime seems to be derived from Spanish Romanticism (Poullain, “A Súa Obra” 25). Indeed, De Castro has been praised for the way she sings one of the most significant elements of Galician modern literature, the natural landscape. She employs rural scenarios as a national identity sign that remains, even to this day, in the collective memory of Galicia (Nogueira Pereira 3). It is a fact that the Galician idealised images of rural landscapes contribute to a vindication of a unique national identity of the country, quite different from that of Spain.

consider all the poems included in this part as an articulation of her deeper and most intimate feelings, as she purposely categorised them under this subtitle (Mayoral, *La poesía* 170). The first stanza of the poem reads as follows:

Those known as honourable in town,
stole from me my every brightness,
cast muck on my finery in a single day,
and threw me an old smock in tatters.
They left not a stone where I'd lived;
homeless, without abode, I lived amid potatoes;
slept rough in the meadows with hares;
my children...my angels!! Whom I so loved,
they died, died for hunger killed them!
I was dishonoured, they tarnished my life,
left me a bed of thorn and bramble;
while they, malicious weasels,
slept calmly in bed of roses (Lines 1-13).

De Castro herself wrote a Spanish version of this poem. The second version differs from the original written in Galician in its metric form, while the first version is written in decasyllabic lines, the second is composed in alexandrine verses and some words from the original poem are missing (Poullain, *Rosalía* 71). The fact that the exile identity of the main protagonist is built out of social and gender inequality is significant as it confirms the author's intention of denouncing patriarchal violence (Cebreido, "Xusticia").

From the first lines, the poetic anonymous female speaker expresses sentiments of anger. The poetic narrator declares at the beginning of the poem that "[t]hose known as honourable", people who belong to the town's elite, have taken everything away from her. The woman has been left to a state of total deprivation, "dishonoured" and "homeless". She sleeps with the hares, and her children die of hunger. Sexual abuse is implied as an act associated with the destruction of the integrity of the woman. The identity of the woman remains veiled during the whole poem, an element that underscores the character's marginal position and invisibility (Solís Cortizas 1104). Symbolically, this woman has been forced to live in the woods, to live metaphorically and literally as an exile, removed from society. The woman is obliged to wander alone in the meadows, transcending the confines of the private domestic and heteronormative space; she exceeds the canon of femininity in every way. She transgresses the boundaries of what is socially expected from a disenfranchised woman.

Then, in the second stanza, the poetic I claims in vain for justice, but in the legal system she only finds mockery. Later, she asks for help from divine justice, but not even God seems to hear her prayers. Thus, the female speaker cries:

Save me, oh judges! I yelled... Crazy hope:
they mocked me, and justice sold me out.
--*God, help me God!* I cried, and yelled again
But from on high, no deity heard me
(lines 14-17)

As Maria do Cebreido Rábade Villar (Rábade Villar) states, this marginal position allows the woman of the poem to judge from a distance what is inside the social structure from which she was expelled (“A Xustiza”). Indeed, the protagonist does not hesitate to declare all the injustices that have been committed against her. The third and fourth lines of this second stanza highlight how critical was De Castro towards the Catholic Church and its authority over Galician people. As presented in the previous chapter in regard to the author’s prose literary works, De Castro had anticipated her anti-clerical proto-feminism in *Lieders*, when she declared: “[f]ree is my heart, free my soul, and free my thought, that reaches up to the sky and descends to the earth, proud as Lucifer and sweet as a hope.”¹³¹

An episode in De Castro’s life that took place almost two decades before the publication of *Follas Novas*, demonstrates the problematic relationship the author had with the Catholic Church. In 1864, during the process of releasing in a newspaper of the Galician city of Lugo an article titled *El Codio*, the seminarians of the city felt so attacked by the De Castro’s words that they threatened the director of the *Almanaque de Galicia*. The seminarians sent a menacing message to the newspaper saying: “either Mrs. Rosalía de Castro stops collaborating with you or we break the office’s windows” (Mayoral *La poesía* 582).¹³² Supposedly, these people had access to De Castro’s article before it was released to the public. De Castro’s text contained a severe critique against a sort of seminarian which was not well received by members of the Catholic Church. Ultimately, the seminarians carried out their threats and damaged the newspaper’s office. The article *El Codio* disappeared after this event and today we have no trace of it (Mayoral, *La poesía* 582).

Now, going back to the analysis of *A Xusticia Pola Man*, it is worth noting that notwithstanding De Castro’s animosity against religion, particularly Catholicism, this is the first time we hear the author referring to God with such a “hurtful sarcasm” (Mayoral, *La Poesía* 171-172). After the blasphemous declaration of the female speaker, the poem continues with a terrifying scene of murder. After not finding justice in the legal system, or in God, the

¹³¹ “Libre es mi corazón, libre mi alma, y libre mi pensamiento, que se alza hasta el cielo y descende hasta la tierra, soberbio como el Luzbel y dulce como una esperanza” (*Lieders*).

¹³² “O doña Rosalía de Castro deja de colaborar o le romperemos los cristales” (Mayoral *La poesía* 582).

woman decides to kill her oppressors with her own hands. De Castro describes the striking scene in the last stanza:

I watched them calmly, and raised my hands,
with a whack, just one! I left them lifeless.
And satisfied, I sat beside the victims,
Quiet, waiting for day to dawn.
And so..., so justice prevailed:
I, on them, and the laws, on the hand that smote them
(lines 23-28)

In these lines, the narrator describes a homicide committed by a serene perpetrator. The woman murdered her offenders coolly by cutting their throats while they were sleeping. After she killed them, she sat calmly beside their corpses, waiting for the morning to come.

In the poem, the circumstances of the murder are not clear. The whole story is nuanced by the emotions of the female protagonist. The readers are not informed with precision of the identities of the woman's offenders or the specificity of the crime committed against her. We only know that they are people with a good social reputation, "honourable in town", who have stolen her whiteness (might be a reference to the woman's reputation, or/and sexual abuse), spoiled her clothes, destroyed her house, and left her children to die of hunger. According to Mayoral, De Castro does not give us these particulars, because she wants us to wonder what kind of intimate feelings the plight of Galician women evokes in her. De Castro could be also taking the occasion to declare that there is no human or divine justice, just women's own justice (Mayoral, *La poesía* 171-172).

The scene becomes extremely shocking, even more so because the agent is a woman and there is no previous work in which De Castro has portrayed a scene with such gruesome details. It is worth mentioning that this poetical tone and imagery marked by anger is not typical of De Castro when she is speaking about the hardship of the people of Galicia. It might have been deployed because in these verses she is focusing all her attention on this woman's pain and revenge (Mayoral, *La poesía* 171-172). The speaker refers to the bodies as victims, eluding any self-reference of victimhood in this last part of the poem. De Castro concludes her poem with an explicit message in which real justice is only obtainable when women take it into their own hands, as the title announced.

Mayoral asserts that in *A Xusticia Pola Man*, De Castro's verses are so potent because they hold years of resentment. The portrayal of this marginalised woman's story constitutes one of the most potent scenes in *Follas Novas*. The poetic voice even enjoys the ins and outs of her crime. Although the speaker is described to act "like any hurt or wounded she-wolf" before

committing her crime, she watched her victims serenely; a description that makes us believe that she is completely conscious of her behaviour, and she was not acting in the heat of the moment (*La Poesía* 103).

In the poem, society is responsible for the state of deprivation in which this woman is obliged to live but is also accountable of her crime. For De Castro, women are capable of responding, even in the most aggressive way to patriarchal oppression. This woman experienced injury, desertion by her country-fellows, the loss of her children and poverty. After society fails to assist this woman due to institutional abandonment, after finding no resources, she became a murderer by doing justice on her own terms. Therefore, in the poem, the author's criticism is directed towards a society which is doubly accountable for this woman's plight, firstly for attacking her honour, and secondly, for abandoning and leaving her without any resources. For De Castro, the people who mistreated her and the ones who remained as mere passive spectators of this deserted woman are equally guilty (Rábade Villar, "A Xusticia").

An alternative interpretation of the poem relies on imagining the female protagonist embodying Galicia who is experiencing the Spanish government's discrimination, since De Castro never hid her anti-imperialist and anti-clerical protest. As discussed in the second chapter, during the massive economic crisis, Galician people did not receive any support from the Spanish central government or any other institutions such as the Catholic Church. Not surprisingly, her criticism against the politics of colonisation and patriarchy permeated all her poetics. In this poem, De Castro might have used the gendered imagery of a raped, abandoned woman and a childless mother, to represent the marginalised and discriminated state of Galicia.

As we have argued so far, long before these verses were published in *Follas Novas*, in her previous poetry collection, *Cantares Gallegos*, De Castro condemns the Spanish government for abandoning Galicia to its fate: "Poor Galicia, you should never call yourself Spanish, since Spain forgets about you" ("A gaita gallega"). Hence, she is aware of the colonial dynamics and is not afraid of addressing Galicia's exploitation from Spain openly by assuming the defence of her land and its people, particularly of Galician women.

Besides, in *A Xusticia Pola Man*, she is probably alluding to the strength of the land and its people, who motivated by all the injustices perpetrated by the central government, have no choice but to defend themselves. Thus, the woman of the poem becomes the voice of the Galician community, and her gender played a significant role in representing them as an oppressed population deprived of the most fundamental rights. Her symbolic use of physical revenge and extreme violence signals how the nation and its people might exercise the law of self-preservation, including the right to resent and punish the wrongs they received.

Scholars who have studied De Castro's works believed *A Xusticia Pola Man* to be emotionally and politically linked with another poem which is also part of the same section, *Estranxeira Na Súa Patria* (Stranger in her own land). For Rábade Villar, *A Xusticia Pola Man* serves as a preamble to understand the condition of a woman who lives as an internal abject, i.e. deprived of a house, forced to wander in the meadows, living isolated outside the confines of a community ("A Xustiza"). Based on this interpretation that presumes an intertextual connection between the two poems; after the woman in *A Xusticia Pola Man* becomes expatriated and socially alienated, she finds herself in the contradictory position of being a stranger at home. Consequently, in *Estranxeira Na Súa Patria* the poetic narrator radically states that the female protagonist feels unrooted in her own country.

This liminal position is probably reflected in the authorial act of setting the protagonist of the poem "by the worn veranda". This place allows the character to encounter subjects that come from another dimension, spectral figures, such as ghosts of the dead (Rábade Villar 234).

It can be noted that when dealing with the question of how to narrate the phenomena of migration and the condition of migrants in Galicia, Eugenia Romero quotes a text, *A Man Dos Paíños* (2000), authored by Manuel Rivas, that resonates with De Castro's poetical conception of Galician spaces and places (112). The text reads:

[B]eing Galician means living on the edge, always touching the edge of the world, the final margin, and breathing for that reason, the unsettling smell of the other side, where it's impossible to know what's there. That's how we live at the end of the world, in a marginal country wholly marginalised, made fundamentally from absences (Romero 112).¹³³

The Galician identity that in some of De Castro's compositions seems to be intrinsically linked to physical spaces, as if she wished to underline that it is necessary to return the land to its people, becomes in some poems of *Follas Novas* more fluid. In *Estranxeira Na Súa Patria*, national identity and a sense of belonging are, in fact, redefined to include the emotional shifts of leaving the land, and the feeling that home is no longer the place to which you once belonged. The author collects elements of a trans-national reality to poetically build a complex Galician identity.

Estranxeira Na Súa Patria is written in third-person, and the poem revolves around a woman who is seated in front of an old church, in "the worn veranda" (a vella varanda), while

¹³³ [S]er galego significa vivir nos confins, tocando en todo tempo a beira do mundo, a derradeira marxe, e aspirando, por iso, o inquietante arrecendo do outro lado, no que se non pode saber o que hai. Así vivimos no fin da terra, nun país marxinal e marxinado por todos, feito fundamentalmente de ausencias (Rivas qtd. In Romero 112).

she is contemplating all that is happening around her. The title's strength resides in the dichotomy national/foreigner (García Negro, "Estranxeira" 353). The poem subverts the idea that a citizen is at home when she/he lives in her/his place of origin. For the protagonist of the poem, her nation is no longer her homeland. Moreover, if we read the poem as a sequel of *Cantares Gallegos*, we can conclude that in these verses the hope for returning home is replaced by a pessimist sentiment, in which not even one's own country can give you relief in a time of need (Asensio n38). Therefore, this poem marks the shift in vision that De Castro underwent from *Cantares Gallegos* to *Follas Novas*. Interestingly, when De Castro was composing this poem, she was a migrant in Castile, out of the Galician's geographical borders.

Up to this point, in the poems of *Follas Novas* De Castro has illustrated the alienation of the people who were obliged to leave their families to migrate. But here, she is referring to a different feeling. It is not distance from her land that provokes this estrangement. On the contrary, it is precisely the fact of being *in situ*, and suffering from sentiments of not belonging. This conflictingly existential emotion is entangled with the gender identity of the speaker.

In the first stanza, the main character went to sit in front of an old chapel, where she was able to contemplate a procession of the dead. She is watching the dead people passing by, some in their bodies, others in their spirits. None of these figures recognised her, even if some of them were her lovers, friends, relatives, or neighbours.

She contemplated how they passed and passed,
filing on together to infinity,
without gazing upon her
with their dull and sunken eyes
that gave no sign or hint
of once having known her

And some were her lovers in the past,
some were family, and others friends,
childhood playmates,
servants and neighbours.
But passing and passing in front of her,
The dead just pressed forward
walking indifferently
the road of infinity,
while the silent night drew close
its sad bereavements
around a stranger in her own land,
who, without abode or ally,
sat on the veranda watching
how their fleeting flickers glowed.
(lines 1-20).

The procession of the dead is central in this scene. As Mayoral asserts, the elements that come from Galician folklore play a significant role in the depiction of the condition of this observing subject, described in her radical solitude, in her feelings of estrangement (*La poesía* 33). The procession of the dead also marks the existential condition of the woman who lives through memories that remain alive in her mind, but they belong to an ideal past. The poet employs this folkloric ceremony critically to interrogate the woman's subjectivity in a space where she is marginalised and needs others to reaffirm her own identity (Morreda Carrizo 1040). Her identity relies on the perception and relation with others, but 'these others', to emphasize even further her alienation, are supernatural figures. The poetic subject of this poem has been left out by the Galician people, no matter if they had a significant role in her life - lovers, friends, childhood playmates, servants or neighbours. Her rejection from social memory has transformed her into a stranger.

De Castro associates the individual experience of a woman with a Galician popular tradition, the procession of the dead (Garcia Negro 353). In De Castro's poetry, the pagan esoteric world coexists with ideas and rituals coming from Catholicism (Kahiluoto Rudat 160). The wandering shadows of Galician popular culture that fills De Castro's verses are figures that come from beyond Christian heaven or hell (Mayoral, *La poesía* 33). In *Estranxeira Na Súa Patria* these figures interact with the living, thus they exist in the in-between of life and death. Even the shadows have emotions as if they were alive. These shadows embody the cultural heritage of a people who refuse to leave their land even when they die (*La poesía* 33).

The nostalgic scenery of the woman seated alone in front of an old Church has been interpreted as a manifestation of the poet's own sentiments of displacement (Davies, "The Return" 77). The poem's topic of patriotic saudade has been read as a depiction of the author's longing for a land that is no longer what she venerated in her youth (Harvard, "Paralelo" 222). The woman is yearning for an ideal Galicia that lives only in the author's mind. So, the saudade the character experiences is the result of memories linked to a people and places that have been transformed by the passage of time. In addition, migration could have played a central role in altering the relationship among people, and the way they inhabit spaces that were once part of their everyday life. For Davies, who has analysed this poem from a psychoanalytical approach, the text has to do more with a "projected self which is both exiled from the symbolic (unlike the onlooker, the speaking subject) and is simultaneously resistant to the semiotic" (Davies, "The Return" 77-78).

Although the representation of the experience of crossing the Atlantic Ocean can be observed in some of the poems as a source of anxiety and alienation, it is by no means the only

point of origin of the saudade sentiments. These feelings exceed the material experience of mobility and urge the readers to incorporate in their understanding of national belonging a fluid metaphor of identity. De Castro's *Estranxeira Na Súa Patria* presents a metaphysical notion of national identity that transcends geographical spaces and destabilises the contraposition of the two concepts, foreigner and national (Morreda Carrizo 1040). In terms of how gender is also central in configuring the existential condition of the main character, it must be said that women are also always in the margins: socially, legally, and politically invisible. This aspect of the poem functions as a prelude to the section dedicated to the *Viudas dos vivos e viudas dos mortos* (Widow of the Living, Widow of the Dead).

5.4 *Viudas dos vivos e viudas dos mortos*

Forced by the concrete circumstances -- discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation- in De Castro's poetry women reacted to migration differently from their partners, and other male family members. In the section of *Follas Novas* called *Viudas*, De Castro accentuates the situation of abandonment Galician women have endured as a consequence of a mass wave of overseas migration. Thematically, *Viudas* is allegedly the most coherent part of *Follas Novas*, because the author reflects on the plight of Galician migrants and tackles specifically gender issues related to the abandoned women (Pollain, *Rosalía* 27). Yet, *Viudas* presents multiple voices to account for the effects of migration, from the distress of leaving towards the unknown, to the hope for a better life (López Sández 11).

Geographically and socially, De Castro writes from the Spanish peripheries, from a land that suffered from the impact of imperial politics and colonialism. In *Follas Novas*, the condition of the Galician women who remained in the country while their sons, husbands, brothers, lovers, and fathers migrated to America becomes a central topic, because the so-called first wave of transoceanic migration was predominantly an emigration of men. De Castro named these women "The widows of the living and the widows of the dead" to underline their solitude and metaphorical condition of widows of living beings. Married women were in an unclear gendered position: they were still under the obligations of the social duties assigned to wedded women, as they continued to be in charge of the households and the responsibilities that their spouses could not carry out, but they were also without the certainty that their partners would ever return. The insecure destiny that was awaiting their family members in the distant lands, the possibility that they could even die in the diaspora, or create new sentimental bonds,

was hunting the women's mind. De Castro denounces the effects of migration on these widows and praised them as heroines for their courage and patience (Poullain, *Rosalía* 171).

In *Follas Novas*, De Castro recounts the stories of these women who, to her, appear as “unknown brave heroines who live and die doing marvellous things that go unnoticed, miracles of love and endless forgiveness” (*Prologue* 46). While the poet gives the migrants and marginalised people a voice, she also allows the women left behind to take the lead in narrating the national crisis as its main witnesses. In her collection of poems, she offers a representation of her country from the viewpoint of those who have been estranged and lost. Also, the personal becomes strikingly political and the psychological and affective repercussions of migration become palpable.

According to Helena González Fernández (González Fernández), De Castro brings to the Iberian Peninsula the canonical myth of Ulysses' Penelope to describe Galician women's condition of abandonment. Yet, she rewrites the myth, making of Penelope's patience and faithfulness an example to deconstruct leaving, instead, all the anger, restlessness, solitude and powerlessness that Galician women felt and expressed (González Fernández 99). For De Castro, their situation is the result of multiple causes but to some extent is also a consequence of male selfishness. In fact, if the economic crisis forced men to migrate, their wives, mothers, daughters or sisters who were left behind in precarious conditions, had also to fight their own battle in order to survive (Poullain, *Rosalía* 27). Not by chance, De Castro defines the women left behind in the plural, “viudas”, remarking a shared condition experienced by numerous Galicians women (González Fernández 101).

The reasons behind men's departure are numerous, the main and primary one was economic, but also, De Castro adds, death, betrayal, and selfishness (Wilcox 58). However, the majority of the Galician men who left the country were not necessarily voluntary travellers, but unwilling pained characters, migrating because they had no other option available. In the poem titled *¡Pra a Habana!* (On to Havana!) –the first poem of *Viudas* -- the poetic voice wholeheartedly narrates the condition of mobility of a nation and the plight of these people (López Sáñez qtd. in Hooper, “Mapping” 47). Havana became the destination for most of Galicians who migrated overseas from 1870 until 1970 (Núñez Seixas, “Galician Immigrant” 705).

De Castro opens the poem with a farewell to the male population who is leaving towards Havana, Cuba. Departure scenes were common in Galicia at a time when the land was experiencing a collective exile which contributed to its deterritorialisation. Galician women were left not only without the companionships of the adult male members of their families, but

also without the means to live. De Castro poetically accentuates the paradoxical situation in which men migrated because of economic necessity, but the cost of their travel impoverished, even more, the families left behind. In the first stanza, De Castro presents a recurrent scene in which a young man expresses his desire to look for a better life abroad: “Galicia is poor, so I’m going to Havana”. Later, the poem shows the emotional midpoint that accompanies his decision to leave or stay in the country. The speaker narrates a moment in which a blend of emotions take place in the mind of the migrants, when in solitude sadness replaces the hope for a better future: “men like shifting shadows wander over plains and through fields”, anticipating their future voyage to an unknown future (Hooper 48).

In the first stanza, the poetic speaker narrates the migrants’ decision-making process and how Galician people funded their exodus to America by selling a significant number of their properties (Hooper 47).

They sold his oxen,
They sold his cows
The cauldron for soup
And the blanket off his bed
They sold his cart
and the fields he had;
left him with only
the shirt on his back
--María, I’m young,
I’m not going to beg,
I’ll go into the world
to try to make good. (lines 1-12)

Overall, the poem *¡Pra a Habana!* draws a complete picture of the consequences of transatlantic migration of the people of Galicia. In this occasion, the displacement takes place outside the borders of the Iberian Peninsula. This poem opens with various scenes, in which is portrayed the departure of the male population towards La Havana. The poem includes a conversation of a young married couple that is about to be separated. De Castro also incorporates an account of a group of men waiting to depart to their new destination. She describes the suffering and confusion that accompany those who were obliged to leave their land and their loved ones (Asensio n105). The verses of the second stanza display a moment in which in solitude the future migrants are in “limbo between decision and departure” (Hooper, “Mapping” 48). When no one’s looking,

Their faces cloud, over, sombre,
men like shifting shadows wander
over plains and through fields (lines 17-20)

In the poem, we see men wandering in uncertainty through Galician fields, driven by the “unknown future” and the fear of abandoning their homeland for a country located on the other side of the Atlantic. One of the future migrants is taken by his thoughts, lying on the edge of an oak tree with his eyes raised into the infinite (Flitter 11) in a moment in which a blend of emotions takes place: in such deep solitude sadness replaces the hope for a new future. There is also a man who is “leaning at the fountain” caught in a state of intense melancholy. The poetic voice utters, “[t]hey’re about to abandon their country....!”, “and in front of them lies the abyss” (lines 29, 32). Hooper describes it as a “normally unseen and unrecorded moment of limbo between decision and departure, the almost-migrants wandering unobserved through the familiar landscape” (“Mapping” 48). In this stanza, some elements of the landscape suggest a connection of the migrants with their place of origin and familiar Galician scenery, as if they were “rooted” in the land as an “oak tree” (Hooper, “Mapping” 48).

In the third part of the poem, De Castro displays a scene in which uncertainty acquires a tragic tone:

Where are those men going?
In a month, in the immense cemetery
of Havana, or in its woods,
go and see what became of them,
they sleep forever forgotten!
Poor mothers who raised them,
and poor girls who lovingly await them!
(lines 48-54)

In this stanza, the poetic voice highlights the plight of the women left in a constant state of expectation. Galicia itself turns into a lonely mother, suffering “life-long absences” (line 79). These lines encapsulate the uncertainty caused by the long voyage and the anguish of the women who imagine the insecurity involved in such a long journey. In the poem, the male characters ignore what his future new life will be like. In addition, in the third section of the poem, De Castro provides the readers with a very specific landscape of the Galician north coastline (Poullain, *Rosalía* 111).

The sea savagely punishes suffering,
and the irritated waves
of the briny Cantabrian at Coruña
break against banks of fog
(lines 34-37)

Metaphorically, the sea becomes in De Castro’s poetry a representation of a suicide desire. The sea acquires the meaning of a place of death, the passage to another life for migrants (Poullain,

Rosalía 111). In these lines, the sea is depicted as a savage being that punishes the population who migrate, since it separates the emigrants from their families and their land.

In the fifth stanza, the sentiments of the people who leave Galicia mirror the plight of the ones who remain (Vega-Durán 5). The speaker expresses, “[this] one went, that one’s going, and all, all of them go”. Despite the distance that separates them, there will always be a bond which will keep them together. They all share a sense of dislocation, as the land changes, women and children are left instead in a kind of temporary suspension, living in between past and present, in a constant state of expectation, waiting for their fathers and husbands to come back.

In this poem we see that despite the fact that, in most of her poetical texts, De Castro intentionally privileges women’s plight over men’s, she also captures male vulnerability. Men are also victims of the system, and their masculinity made them suffer in silence as the scene of departure shows. The exodus of Galician men towards America did not erase their attachment to their homeland. In De Castro’s poetry, the men who migrated continue to be permanently linked to Galicia. In this regard, the term migrant becomes particularly significant in describing the action of being away, but it also grounds the person’s national belonging to a place of origin (Vega-Durán 5). This was the case for Galician men, regardless of their long-distance voyage across the Atlantic Ocean: their identity remains attached to the community left at home. Interestingly, that nation is not the “madre patria” Spain (motherland), but the subjugated Galicia.

As shown so far, amid the colonial oppression of the Spanish government and the significant mass migration that took place in the nineteenth century, Galicians struggled to represent a coherent national identity. Therefore, in De Castro’s poetics, home is not just a land, but it is an imaginary space that travels along a displaced population and intersects their identity. Yet, the allusion to a fixed location serves as a point of reference for the expression of a yearning of a “native land” and reinforced a traditional way of symbolising national communities. This longing is well-represented in the poem *¡Terra a Nosa!* (Our Home and Native Land!), which is also part of *Viudas*. The title of this piece is based on an old Galician national affirmation, *¡Terra a Nosa!* (Asensio n110). It refers to an expression that bonds the population to the territory of Galicia. The text constitutes a prayer to the country, that along the poem acquired human characteristics (Porrúa, “El tema” 407). Galicia is described as a paradise but also as “a blessed and beloved mother” who is losing her children.

The structure of the stanzas in *¡Terra a Nosa!*, oscillates between hendecasyllabic and heptasyllabic combinations (Porrúa, “El tema” 407). This alternation of metric combinations

is visible in several of De Castro's poetical compositions. The eight-stanza poem begins with a picturesque description of Galicia:

Under the placid shade of our good
Country chestnuts
under those
[...]
Laughter heard in the peaceful evenings
of loving April!
And there too, such sad farewells
we've so often heard!
(lines 1-3, 9-12)

In the poem, the natural scenario provides a pleasant environment in which there is no sense of alienation, but, on the contrary, an environment in which people feel protected. De Castro incorporates throughout the poem sensorial images such as, "torrential rain", "penetrating perfumes", "the caress of breezes", and "church bell's prolonged ring" (Porrúa 407). This beautiful space is disrupted by "sad farewells". The description of these natural settings also could have had the intention of evoking memories on the diasporic communities and drive in them a desire to return to their native country.

In the second stanza, De Castro is more direct and voices a harsh critique of the precarious situation the people of Galicia were facing. Notwithstanding the fact that Galicia was a province full of natural resources, the lack of ownership over their lands, the economic crisis, crop failure and famine were driving people away to escape even to uncertain places (Pereira Muro, "Emigración" 119). De Castro replicates in her verses the feelings of impotence and desperation that led to Galician migration. The poetic voice declares, "To have a house, is already to have half a life". After describing the humbleness of the Galician way of living, the poetic speaker declares: "no one can dispossess you. No one? Oh yes, poverty can" (lines 21-22). De Castro explicitly mentions, "oven without bread, hearth without wood", "without food or coat he shivers" (line 23, 26). She denounces how the paradisiac image of Galicia is ruined by the economic emergency.

In the sixth stanza De Castro takes the opportunity to vindicate another distinctive element of Galician patrimony, that is, its language:

the cherished language that is ours,
such sweet solace,
that it only speaks in utter affection
(lines 95-97)

As already mentioned in the second chapter, De Castro is known as the precursor of modern Galician literature, largely because she was one of the first authors to publish literary texts in

her native language. By composing poetry able to transmit emotions that were supposedly portrayable only in the Spanish language, she changed the history of Galician literature forever (Poullain, “Poesía Gallega” 416). In the quoted lines, De Castro wishes to underscore the affective dimension of the Galician language. It should be pointed out, that in De Castro’s *Follas Novas* the Galician language is also a cultural and social instrument to maintain the bond between the people who stayed inland and the ones who were living in the diaspora. This, because the majority of the Galician who migrated to America belonged to a lower social class who spoke the language.

In the poem, De Castro returns to the supernatural when she declares in the poem that, “[t]hough their bodies be in distant regions their spirits always here” (lines 109-110). Galicia is always present, no matter the distance between the land and its people. This idea of belonging that transcends the human bodies is directly connected to some spiritual shadows, a recurrent motif in De Castro’s literary production. Put differently, the spiritual connection of Galicians with their land exceeds the body, and thus, it goes beyond life, death and physical conditions (Dever 41).

In the last stanzas of *¡Terra a Nosa!*, the poetic voice stresses again the natural splendour of Galicia. She calls Galicia her “enchanted land”, a “copy of what Adam lost” (lines 87, 90). Then, after portraying Galicia as a mother who is losing her children, the poem ends with a strong saudade lament.

How your children love you; how it consumes them
to leave your soil behind;
they sigh inconsolable if they must go
away to live in other lands.
(lines 105-108)

Evidently, in the poem, migration is always an act driven by necessity. For the poetic voice, Galicia is a land, instead, to be treasured. No one, she believes, leaves the nation voluntarily, and migrants will find a way of returning home, even after death.

In other poems of the same section, *Viudas*, the author shows clearly her social commitment against gender violence and discrimination. De Castro addresses the issue of violence against women in various ways including the private and public space. The Galician women in De Castro’s poetical accounts are the victims of a system that centres on “hard work, poverty, emigration and military service”¹³⁴ (Geoffrion-Vinci, *On the Edge* 21). However, she also names these women as heroines for the sacrifices they made in a time of political and social

¹³⁴ “do seu duro traballo, a pobreza, da maternidade, da emigración e do servizo militar”.

instability. In the prologue of *Follas Novas*, she mentions specifically that in the section *Viudas*, she had the intention of narrating the stories of Galician women, “unknown brave heroines who live and die doing marvellous things that go unnoticed, miracles of love and endless forgiveness” (46).

In another poem of *Viudas* entitled *¿Qué lle digo?* (What’ll I Tell Her?), De Castro locates the poetic migrant speakers outside Galicia. In *¿Qué lle digo?*, she presents an outlook of migration from their place of destination. The title of the poem is in the form of a question, signalling the disconnection between the migrant men and their female partners. The poem is markedly narrative, it is developed through a conversation between two migrants.

In the poem, one of the characters is going back to Galicia, and he asks his friend if he wishes to communicate something to his wife who is still living in their village (Hooper 49). The first lines open with the conversation in which one of the characters ask the other: “What’ll I tell your wife Antona?” (line 2). The migrant who has decided to remain in Cuba, Antón de Riaño, answers his friend “forget you even saw me”, preferring to avoid any confrontation with his wife who is living in Galicia (line 5). The non-returning migrant continues, “You already know the sayings, pal: freedom first”. As this daily-life poetical account shows, apparently for De Castro, in the diaspora, some men forget their domestic duties towards their families.

In these verses, De Castro depicts the transoceanic diaspora as a place in which Galician men have no family responsibilities. The second migrant declares during their conversation, “[b]etter to be a bachelor on this shore, as they say, than married over there with children” (line 10). The focus is not on the man’s impossibility of returning home, but on his conscious decision to elude his married life in Galicia. Thus, De Castro transmits an ironic message of societal double standards. For the poet, women amid a mass economic crisis, remain constrained by the obligations of a patriarchal society and do not have the same freedom as the male migrants. As Hooper mentions, it is quite perceivable in the literature post the first major wave of migration, that there was a Galician romantic myth of the returnees, in which women waited for the “triumphant return” of their loved ones (51). De Castro plays with this myth and exposes the harder reality of the unequal gender dynamics.

The figure of the *Viudas* is fundamental in De Castro’s poetics, since it acquires a central place in the national representation of Galician women (González Fernández 99).¹³⁵ After the

¹³⁵ De Castro’s critical poetical nationalist verses was appropriated by Jose Marti in discourses during his fight for the Cuban independence and resistance movement against the presence of the United States in South American (Davies, “Isolation” 186).

first wave of migration in the nineteenth-century, women in Galicia were in De Castro's opinion 'white' widows, whether their companions were alive or not. In De Castro's poetical accounts, migration separates people as death does. In addition, there was a presumption that men would eventually leave Galicia and women would remain grieving their loss.

In *¿Qué lle digo?*, the focus is not on the man's inability to return home, but on his conscious decision of eluding life in Galicia. In other poems, such as *¡Terra a Nosa!*, the hope of returning to the idyllic land the migrants were once forced to leave is a driving energy to face difficulties during the voyage and their time away. On the contrary, in *¿Qué lle digo*, De Castro presents a migrant who voluntarily has decided to stay abroad.

In the mind of the expatriate that refuses to send any message to his wife, "all women are the devil" and therefore, his infidelity is justified by women's natural evilness. The migrant affirms that his wife in Galicia has the same freedom as him abroad, because he is not there to watch her actions, "who neither knows nor sees ... always forgives". Through these lines, De Castro transmits an ironic message to her readers. The women left behind in Galicia were in a state of disenfranchisement; they carried on their shoulders all the responsibilities of their children. Men as Antón de Riaño chose to ignore their family's current marginal condition to enjoy a new life overseas. Yet, the selfish migrant wishes to return in his senior years,

When I get old,
I'll haul my bones back to the village,
as I have to bring something home to our beloved land;
but while I'm still young, I can't do it (lines 18-21)

Besides, De Castro in these lines shows the ambiguity of Antón de Riaño's nationalism. He has a wife waiting for him, but he decides to ignore her likely precarious situation, and even refuses to soothe the anguish of the woman waiting for his return. However, the migrant is unwilling to renounce definitely to the bond with his wife, because when he gets old he can receive the proper care from her. The return to the land, even though it is a desire expressed by Antón de Riaño's words, is always tinged with apathy regarding the Galician woman status.

In most of these poems, the poet offers a pessimist vision of migration and marriage. She presents the unadorned reality in which women were supposed to wait indefinitely for their partner's return while raising their children alone. Migrant men on the contrary, could avoid all their domestic duties while they were living overseas, and even have new families (Porrúa 408). De Castro exposes the psycho-social implications of migration in Galician women and its effect on their family gender roles. The different ways she characterises the female and male

protagonists of her poetry shows the inequality of the construction of a heteronormative society in which women suffered the consequences of migration much more intensely than their partners. According to Regueiro Salgado, in the 19th century liberalism contributed to the reinforcement of the hierarchical relations between man and woman, in which the first has the physical and mental force to go out to face the world, while the woman, defined by her emotional sensitivity, is the one that has to maintain her home as a pure space where the man can return to whenever he wants (Kirkpatrick qtd. in 1055).

In De Castro's poetry, love does not appear to occupy an important place. She seems to address with more attention the affection towards the land in the form of *saudade*. Nevertheless, in *Viudas*, she deals frequently with romantic love to underline the fragility of these long-distance marriages and their detrimental consequences on women's lives. In the poem titled *¡Olvidémoslos Mortos!* (Never Mind the Dead!), she approaches again the issue of romantic fidelity. The main character in the poem is a Galician woman who is struggling between her desire to try-out romantic love again and the memories of her dead husband. In Stevens' words, in this poem "loyalty is carried beyond the grave" (*Galician Revival* 102). The woman in the poem could not respond to the affection of any man, because she is "dead to those that are alive" (line 22). The female character eventually prefers to abstain from new romantic experiences to protect the sacred memories of her deceased husband (*Galician Revival* 103).

As if the admiration for the Galician landscape was necessarily connected to the memories of the deceased ones, in the following verses the poetic speaker's desire to love again clashes with her close relationship with her homeland. In *¡Olvidémoslos muertos!* the spirits of the people she has lost continue to be vivid elements of the Galician natural landscape. In the fourth stanza the poetic speaker asserts:

and the shades clumsily draw near me
through these hills and crannies,
shades of my beloved dead,
and of my living pain.
(lines 33-36)

Again, shades and shadows appear as a motif that represents a collective past marked by a population on the move. These wandering figures haunt the woman and evoke on her "guilt and self-recrimination", forbidding her to ignore the memories of the "people who have gone" (Stevens, *Galician Revival* 100). This poem conveys a completely different picture from what we saw in *¿Qué lle digo?*, in which the migrant man refuses to render special his relationship to the woman who is presumably waiting for him and there is no recollection of memories, just an on-look to a man's selfish desire of freedom. In *¡Olvidémoslos muertos!*, the protagonist is

completely immersed in the memories of her beloved ones and is unable to look beyond the past.

In one of the last poems of the section *Viudas*, De Castro shows the sufferings caused by internal migration. In this case, the protagonist is a young woman of the village, named Rosa, who has just moved to the city. The poem has no specific title, although in the English edition it is called *She is dying of yearning*, as the first line of the following opening stanza:

She's dying of yearning
in town, pining for the village;
the houses with their walls spooked her,
as did the towers and churches
(Lines 1-4)

In respect to this poem, Mayoral argues that the main character Rosa is suffering from a strong *saudade* for her village. This *saudade* feeling is defined through her relation to characteristic elements of the new city, such as the paved streets, the towers of the churches, the walls of the houses, all are seen by the female protagonist as dreadful. Rosa also complains about missing the fragrance of the countryside, the forests, the open spaces up to the air and to the sun (*La poesía* 205). Being out of her village prevents Rosa from enjoying her current urban scenery, exacerbating her melancholic state for what she has left behind.

The young woman is dying of melancholia and displacement. She laments that “the dead wandered outside their sad graves” as if they could not rest in peace (lines 7-8). In the third stanza, the narrator underlines that “food tasted to her of flour without salt”, and the meals she had “instead of giving her energy, they were killing her” (lines 10, 12). The poetic voice cannot really tell if the woman is fantasizing about the “scents of rural fields”, or if those aromas “reached her from distant riverbanks and pinewoods” (lines 14-16). In the last two stanzas, after the young woman sits to contemplate the “wide horizons”, in the midst of an emotional crisis she exclaims, “I’m going”. The poem ends as follows:

And off she rushed without a second thought! Went
with the mortal sorrow that consumed her!
Poor Rosa went off
but ...to another life! (lines 21-24)

Rosa is extremely affected by the *saudade* for her native land. After being unable to return home, only death can comfort her lost soul.

5.5 Literary transnationalism in *En las Orillas del Sar*

After examining in what way De Castro articulates the theme of migration in *Follas Novas*, in this section we will turn our attention to poetry dealing with a more intimate introspection (Lee, "Otra Cara" 31). In *En las Orillas del Sar (Sar)*, De Castro tries to elude "literary conventions" and the "prosaism" of a number of contemporary Spanish poets (Davies, "Anti-regionalism" 614). Even though in *Sar* she writes about Galicia and the issue of migration also appears in some of her poems, it is quite evident that De Castro prefers to write about these themes in the Galician language (Poullain, "Poesía Gallega" 421). Nonetheless, as a bilingual writer she was capable of composing poetry addressing aspects of Galician national identity in both languages, Spanish and Galician.

De Castro named this book *En las Orillas del Río Sar (On the Edge of the Sar River)*, after the river near the place where she grew up and learned to speak Galician, a language that she had decided to vindicate through her previous poetical compositions (Geoffrion-Vinci, *Sar* 17). Indeed, Galician cultural rexurdimento crosses linguistic boundaries, mostly thanks to the contributions of De Castro herself (Hooper & Puga 8).

However, in *Sar* she intentionally decides to leave the Galician language for the Spanish one. Thus, she ended her literary career publishing works in Spanish so as to demonstrate perhaps that a Galician poetical literature could also be produced in the mainstream language of the Coloniser. In fact, although *Sar* is chronologically De Castro's last poetic work, a great number of the poems were composed before 1866, that is, the majority of the compositions even preceded or were written almost at the same time of *Follas Novas* (d'Ors 16). De Castro's central role in the recovery of Galician literature demonstrates that both languages are culturally significant to narrate the story of this land and population, but also the existential aspects of a person's life. In this manner, she also breaks the bridge between Castilian as the official language and Galician as the peasants' dialect (Poullain, "Poesía Gallega" 416). According to Geoffrion-Vinci:

Sar is Castro's own swan song. In it she explores themes more universal in nature: love, death, faith, fame and honor and the loss thereof, justice, the fleeting nature of youth and youthful idealism, passion, and fertility and its opposite, barrenness. (*Sar* 24)

De Castro presumably stopped composing poetry in Galician language in 1881, as a consequence of the severe reviews she received for an article she published for the Newspaper

El Imparcial in which she mentioned a tradition in which women offered sexual hospitality to foreigners (González Fernández & Cebreiro Rábade 160).¹³⁶

The title of the volume, *Sar*, refers to a specific Galician location, the allusion to “en las orillas” (On the banks) precludes a static view of space. Positioning her authorial voice “en las orillas” provides a sense of mobility, through which De Castro can refer to different locations and different times, replicating the movement of the river itself (Ferrari, “Poesía y Pensamiento” 76). The author is also embracing the borders, alluding to her unclear position as a Galician-Spanish writer, and as a foreigner in her own land. In *Sar*, De Castro uses a poetic language “expressive of a complex female selfhood” typical of romantic female authors (Kirkpatrick qtd. in Lee “Otra cara” 40).

García Negro claims that two years after De Castro’s demise the Royal Spanish Academy commented that De Castro’s *Sar* contains numerous aesthetic mistakes and extravagances, typical of a female hand which tries to imitate the German school (“Una Feminista” 340). On a completely different note, though always engendered, Unamuno praises De Castro as an example of “virility and freedom of spirit”.¹³⁷ Moreover, for other contemporaneous scholars, such as Carballo Calero, De Castro was not the typical female poet, since her poetry touches upon metaphysical depth that goes beyond the issues dealt with by many members of her sex. For this scholar De Castro in *Sar* did not write a masculine poetry but a human poetry (Carballo Calero 186 qtd. in García Negro 341).

In *Sar*, the poet engages with various symbols and images such “as the moon, the sea, land/earth, and flowers such as the rose” and the “bride, bard, mother, goddess/saint, harpy, harlot, even rabid she-wolf”, to touch upon issues of gender and sexuality. She criticizes the idea of women as “ángel del hogar” (angel of the house), by portraying a wide range of female characters that transgress a conventional representations femininity. Moreover, in this collection, *Sar*, she chose to describe the majority of her characters within a non-binary sexual category of identity (Geoffrion-Vinci, *Sar* 5).

This poetry collection has no clear structure, it appears as it was written in complete disorder (Poullain, *Rosalía* 28). The collection contains more than one hundred poems, some of them

¹³⁶ “Entre algunas gentes tiénese allí por obra caritativa y meritoria el que, si algún marino que permaneció por largo tiempo sin tocar tierra, llega a desembarcar en un paraje donde toda mujer es honrada, la esposa, hija o hermana pertenecientes a la familia, en cuya casa el forastero haya de encontrar albergue, le permite por espacio de una noche ocupar un lugar en su mismo lecho” (qtd in Mayoral).

¹³⁷ “[m]ujer que no se redujo a ser Laura inspiradora de un Petrarca, sino que petrarquizó ella misma [...]; una mujer que produjo, que cantó, que dio ejemplo de virilidad e independencia de espíritu” (Davies qtd in García Negro 340).

nameless, with large and short extensions indistinctly, diverse metric forms, and only a few are enumerated (Ferrari, “Poesía y Pensamiento”68-69). De Castro, in these verses, depicts travellers’ nostalgia and melancholy for having lost their roots and becoming stateless persons. As well as in *Follas Novas*, she remains focused on the people left behind --majorly females-- by their relatives in Galicia (Geoffrion-Vinci, *Sar* 11). However, De Castro does not cover only the theme of migration that is predominant in *Cantares Gallegos* and *Follas Novas*; in *Sar* she gives us an insightful view of her subjectivity and poetic I.

The volume begins with a short poem, included by De Castro’s husband in the second edition of *Sar*, but omitted in the English version of the book. The poem reads in Spanish as follows:

Aunque no alcancen Gloria,
pensé, escribiendo libro tan pequeño,
son fáciles y breves mis canciones,
y acaso alcancen mi anhelado sueño (lines 1-4).

De Castro in *Sar* might have been more concerned in following the romantic canon than in her previous collections, a decision that might be linked to the author’s well-known status as a writer (Noia Campos 269). As Mayoral has pointed out, *Sar* is De Castro’s primary poetry collection written in Spanish, published four years after the release of *Follas Novas*. In a Spanish literary context, the book constitutes not only one of the central works of Romanticism, but ultimately, one of the key works leading to the renovation of twentieth-century Spanish poetry (*La poesía* 231).

In *Sar*, De Castro included a poem numbered as twenty-seven (27) in which she narrates the time of leaving the land.

It was the last night,
the night of mournful farewells,
yet hardly a tear soaked
his resolute gaze.
Like the servant who leaves
a master who whips him
[...]
Cry? For what? It’s lucky
we can leave our humble land;
the stale crusts denied us by this fatherland,
for all that foreigners might abuse us,
will not be lacking in the new fatherland.
(lines, 1-6; 9-13)

In the first stanza, the author describes a sorrowful scene of departure. The poetic narrator refers to the night dedicated to the farewell and in which a migrant is forced to leave home

trying to do it without regret. Here, De Castro represents the act of separating from the land as an act that offers the hope of a future happiness to the expatriate. The migrant expresses these hopeful feelings, because even the foreign country will treat them better than the way their homeland had. However, interestingly De Castro distinguishes between homeland and humble lands to differentiate between Spain and Galicia. In this poem Spain is depicted as a mother that maltreats her children who, as a consequence, leave her without any pain or sense of guilt.

The ones who still suffer are the women who are left behind and comfort themselves with envisioning the day their husbands will come back home. Nevertheless, the idea that the women will eventually leave the land to reach their partners gives them strength. This poem also defies the interpretation that De Castro was an uncritical nationalist, since the protagonists of this poetical tale lack feelings of attachment to the humble land. In the two final stanzas, De Castro disrupts the positive fate of the migrants by imagining they might be an ingenuous and easy prey (lines 29-32 below).

In the poem we can read explicitly Galician sentimentality. De Castro depicts, again, the anguish of the ones who have no choice but to leave their own country. The population is condemned to gradually desert their native soil and Galicia is predestined to lose her children. In the poem, the places of Galicia hold the memories of the time the migrant had once inhabited them.

And the children smile contented,
and the wife, tho' grieving, is calmed
by the staunch hope
that he who parts must one day return for her.
To think that they must go, that is the dream
that gives strength to those in anguish left behind,
when your own children blithely leave you!
[...]
As if to the dull pulse
of long illness, today a hundred, a hundred tomorrow,
until you lose count,
clan after clan is culled.
Doves who fox and hawk
will hunt, from the home nest
depart with a fugitive's zeal,
and they go perhaps for naught.
Then on pausing their flight to rest
perhaps at the edge of that other land,
they see the ripe fruit withering
and the vulture hovering in the sky.
(lines 14-20; 21-32)

For Acereda, De Castro stands for the rights of the migrants; these lines in fact are informed by the concept of human rights that was in development at the end of the eighteenth century (20). As it has been argued earlier on, bitterly, men leave their land with resignation, since the possibility of finding a better future abroad alleviates the feeling of dispossession. The poem describes the migrants as “doves”, “and they go perhaps for naught”. Ironically, De Castro stresses the futility of these people’s plight, since she emphasises that in the place of destination, they will equally live on the edge. Thus, the marginal status of the Galician migrants that are obliged to depart, appears to be replicated once they land on the foreign soil. At the end of the poem, the poetic voice predicts a sad destiny for the expatriates, described as “helpless pigeons” who will end up being exploited by the Castilian colonisers, represented as a devouring eagle (Acereda 21).

There is one poem in *Sar* that alternates between the first- and third-person voice, in which the author seems to describe the Galician saudade. In the second stanza the poem reads as follows:

I know not what I’m forever searching for
on the earth, in the air, or in the heaven;
I know not what I’m searching for, but it is something
that I lost I know not when and that I cannot find
even if I dream of you invisible and alive
in everything I touch and everything I see.
(lines 13-18)

In these lines, the poetic persona searches for something undefinable. For Havard, in these verses De Castro articulates a “Romantic Angst”, through a sentiment of saudades (“The poetics” 36). As the poem shows, saudade is related to something that is no longer accessible because it has been lost, but it is still in everything the narrator touches. According to Cortezón saudade is something abstract and unknowable (65). It belongs to an affective and spiritual dimension. Mayoral states in this regard, that in De Castro’s verses anguish is present in multiple forms, such as restlessness, agitation, a yearning for love, desire to survive, and also in the form of an indefinable longing (*La poesía* 211).

Poem number twenty-eight (28) of *Sar* is composed in a first-person voice and it conveys a lament for those who have left Galicia.

God knows well the bitter tears wrung from me
by those who leave us,
but I am pained and struck by grief
all the more by those who won’t return.

[...]

The swallow returned to its old nest,
and on seeing the walls and the home deserted,
asked the breeze: "Have they died?"
And silently she replies "They have gone
like a lost ship
that abandons its home port forever!
(lines 1-4; 36-41)

These two poems reflect on the main topics of De Castro's corpus of work. She accentuates the fact that the people who populate her verses are simple and innocent and that they were obliged to migrate. The Galician natural landscape is portrayed as a mother who wishes to provide shelter to her exile children (Juliá 127).

I tell you and I swear
that there are mysterious beings
that call to you with feeling and in love
and with such deep tones of grief
that they sadden the breath of wind
when in the hard winter nights
in your homes, saddened by your absence,
they wander through the fearful spaces,
and in the fields sob silently,
going from mountain to river
full of grief and always murmuring
"They left... ! Since when?
What loneliness! My God, will they never return?"
(lines 18-35)

The poetic narrator ends declaring that not even in death could the bodies of Galicians rest in peace, away from their native land.

It has been said, that almost all literary accounts on migration owe something to Homer's *Odyssey* (Peral Crespo 102). De Castro's *Viudas* is not an exception. The author takes much from this literary legacy and adapts it to the condition of Galician women. Wilcox asserts that this act of rewriting canonical myths, that often present a phallogocentric vision, is a distinctive feature of women's writings of the nineteenth century (75-76).

So far, we saw in *Follas Novas* various poetical compositions, especially the poems included in *Viudas* where De Castro portrays female protagonists following the archetype of Penelope. For example, in the first-person Galician language poem *Tecín Soia a Miña Tea* (*I wove my cloth alone*) she presents a picture of women's multilevel agony caused by the large male emigration. The first stanza reads as follows:

I wove my cloth alone,
alone my turnip field I seeded,
alone I fetch wood on the mountain,

alone I watch it glowing in the hearth
Not a fountain nor at pasture,
when I was dying from my load
did he come to help me lift it
nor will he help me set it down.
(lines 1-8)

In this stanza, the speaker expresses her feelings of desertion, but it also depicts the independence of the woman who is capable of doing almost everything by herself. The poetic *I* complains using an “Elegiac-Ovidian” tone through which the Galician woman evokes her solitude and excess of domestic responsibility (López 335). The original lines in Galician read, “el non ha de virme a erguer, el xa non me pousará”, where the verb “pousará” also means to “copulate”. Thus, the speaker, a widow of a living man, takes care herself of her own sexual desire (Wilcox 58-59).

Robatto praises the harmony De Castro achieves between the simplicity of *Tecín soia a miña tea* and its internal density (67). Firstly, the poem presents the hard work Galician women were obliged to carry out without the assistance of their expatriated partners. In the poem, women are strong enough to endure difficulties. However, the poem also remarks the woman’s feeling of loneliness and the unpleasant feeling of the loss of her beloved one (Robatto 67).

Now going back to *Sar*, De Castro again rewrites in the last poem of this volume Ulysses’ myth from the viewpoint of Penelope. In poem ninety-four (94) of *Sar*, she presents a female character who recalls Penelope, a woman deserted by her husband who migrated to America (López 335). In this poetical account the protagonist, as many Galician women, remained faithful to her man who might have abandoned her and will never come back (Wilcox 59). The poem known by the name *Desde los cuatro puntos cardinales* (From all four corners) is structured in three stanzas. In the first stanza, the author describes a world in which everyone works together with an idea of progress in mind, while in the second stanza, she praises the people who are committed to their responsibilities (Lewis qtd. in Marco López 74). However, in the last stanza of the poem, De Castro lets their pro-feminist voice be heard:

But in my corner most solitary
and also most beautiful on earth
without waiting any further for Ulysses,
as outs has been lost in a stormy sea,
like Penelope
I weave and unweave my shroud without ceasing,
Thinking that this is the tireless work
of human destiny
and that now rising, now falling,
sometimes in light and others blindly.

we end our days and arrive
sooner or later at the shores
(lines 19-30)

De Castro subverts the myth of Penelope and shows a woman who is tired of waiting for her Ulysses –the immortal representation of strong masculinity-- to return. The author is almost mocking the stereotypical idea of a script of femininity that praises women’s patience and fidelity. While Homer’s Penelope was created within a patriarchal feminine archetype, De Castro’s character in this poem is a strong woman, independent and the owner of her own destiny (Lewis qtd. in Marco López 74). The Penelope protagonist of De Castro’s poem is not waiting for Ulysses; she continues “to weave and unweave” her “shroud without ceasing”. Her destiny is not reduced to yearning for a lover; she instead, with her active social role, she contributes to the progress of society (Marco López 74).

De Castro’s texts display different and multi-layered feminist discourses. The author shows the interconnections between the art of writing and a proto-feminist awareness (Robatto 63). Without a doubt, De Castro was interested in sharing the stories of Galician women. All the poetic oeuvre included in *Follas Novas* and *Sar* is impregnated with a denouncement of the social injustices. De Castro’s proto-feminism goes along her critical nationalism, since the problems she points out in regards to Galicia include the ones who affected the lives of their female population the most.

De Castro’s poetics serve to propose new perspectives towards a culture and a language that was undermined. In De Castro’s poetry, the stories that take place between the diaspora and home, the experience of the voyage, the transnational connection amid the people living inside and outside the territory, are part of what constitutes Galicia’s past and present. Also, her engendered position as a woman located sometimes in the margins, gave her a poetic sensibility to advocate for equality for her people, but mainly for Galician women. De Castro benefited from the metaphors and language dealing with the experience of displacement and alienation of Galicians for her social protest. These metaphors encourage her to speak out-loud against the imperialist and patriarchal dynamics that affected the population. They serve as a means to depict her subjectivity and to tackle the complexities of being a woman poet during the late nineteenth century in Galicia, as a sort of alien in her own land.

5.6 The Patriotic verses written by Innocenza Ansuini Tondi

During the eighteenth century, in the midst of the events that led to the Risorgimento, poetical language acquired a transcendental meaning in developing and spreading a politic

vision for the formation of a mass movement in the Italian states (Mori, “Le poetesse” 75). What could be defined as political and patriotic poetry became very popular among writers, women and men, but also among the whole population. The patriotic notions and cultural markers evoked using the poetical form, such as honour, courage and sacrifice, were essential for strategically reinforcing narratives and discourses meaningful for the progress of the national unification (Ginsborg qtd. in Mori, “Le Poetesse”34).

The Risorgimento as a movement, which to some extent, derived from the French Revolution put at the centre the nation and its population (Banti & Ginsborg XXIV). Certainly, the idea of a nation, so problematic those days, could only be envisioned through the invocation of strong emotions able to create a sense of legitimacy and collective belonging among the people. Thus, awakening nationalist sentiments was essential for encouraging the population to believe in the possibility of a political, moral and civil regeneration (XXIV). We have to remember that the notion of an Italian identity was still quite challenging even at the beginning of the twentieth century. This is due to the difficulties of organising such a divided population and territories with distinct cultural traditions and even animosity (Giuliani 31).

Therefore, the literature of those years reflects the struggles for the territory unification and independence. Although Romanticism apparently arrived in Italy later than in other countries, it managed to enter inside the political movement towards a modern nation.¹³⁸ Romanticism, in its amorphous, and sometimes paradoxical forms, informed the Risorgimento, particularly its concentration on the self, the exaltation of the uniqueness of the individual, including when this idea expanded to include a collective of people (Banti & Ginsborg XXV).

Specifically, for women poets such as Innocenza Ansuini Tondi (Ansuini Tondi), writing patriotic verses gave them the possibility of expressing individual and collective concerns in a potent and mainstream language, while entering traditionally out of reach. Poetical compositions praising the future nation lead the poetry written by women in the course of the nineteenth century, mainly between the 1830-1870’s years (Soldani “Prefazione” 9).

Moreover, deriving from the scenario of conflict and war, the topics of exile and alienation were used to explore both existential aspects of the self and the condition of the whole population. The collective feeling of being uprooted was the result of the revolutionary climate. To reflect on the fragmented and fragile national identity of the people living in the Italian states, Curran quotes Ugo Foscolo’s novel *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* in which one of the

¹³⁸ For some scholars, the word Romanticism might have some of its origins in the Latin Roma, the eternal city of Rome. Is not accidental that numerous romantics writings make references to the ancient city (Ferber 4).

characters expresses, “So all of us Italians are exiles and foreigners in Italy” (Curran, “displaced” 639).

It is no coincidence that many of the builders and leading figures of the Risorgimento were obliged to flee the land and live long periods as expatriates. As Adrian Lyttelton stresses, “[e]xile and imprisonment were almost obligatory ritual ordeals through which the true patriot had to pass” (39). For instance, this scholar also recalls that in the previously mentioned work by Foscolo *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*, the theme of exile was fundamental in his patriotic discourse, and for the author it was linked to the notion of “martyrdom” (Lyttelton 40). Foscolo was almost an exile since his birthday, since he was born in a Greek island from “mixed parents”. He authored texts in which he fluctuates between depicting his authorial persona as an exile in Italy and portraying himself as a persecuted fugitive abroad (Curran, “displaced” 638). Yet, when Foscolo became expatriated in England, he started to fill his writings with a type of nationalism that impacted the Italian literary culture of the nineteenth century (Curran, “displaced” 638). The compositions he produced during the period he was banished in England, were significant for the emerging Italianness.

Indeed, exile was a defining characteristic of the formation of Italian society; the developing of an Italian identity and community promoted by the Risorgimento was the result of a “diasporic nationalism” (Isabella 1). Also, the experiences with the forced mobility of people involved in political activities contributed to the presence of tropes and metaphors of exile in the literature of those years. No wonder in *Canti dell’Esule*, Ansuini Tondi uses the figure of the exile, which was one of the most popular symbolism among the imagery deployed in the nationalist rhetoric (Mori, “Introduzione” 17).

Canti dell’Esule constitutes Ansuini Tondi’s sole published book. She composed the verses included in this poetry collection using the gendered perspective of a woman living in exile and while under the influence of a national awakening movement. The book contains twenty-six poems that range from patriotic themes to more intimate feelings. Some of the poetic compositions are dedicated to family members and friends (Mancini XXIV).

A few of Ansuini Tondi’s poems were published beforehand in the newspaper *Fede Nuova*. Later, in 1910, all the poetic compositions became part of a book entitled *Canti dell’Esule di Innocenza Tondi proscritta romana 1860-1870*, printed posthumously by a publishing house in Abruzzo (Mancini XXIV). Throughout the book, Ansuini Tondi follows the Mazzinian political ideals characterised by addressing sentimental, personal and patriotic themes together, using an anti-clerical style typical of the poetry written by women who were supporters of this republican revolutionary leader (Marinucci 217).

In the preface penned by Onorato Roux (Roux) to the first edition of *Canti dell'Esule*, he asserts that Ansuini Tondi composed these poems to distract herself from agonizing thoughts during her period living as an expatriate (15)¹³⁹. Apparently, poetry gave to the author comfort, but it also became an instrument to channel the poet's devotion for her homeland (Onorato Roux 15).

As it was described before, Ansuini Tondi¹⁴⁰ was a leader in a revolutionary movement aiming for the independence of the province of Viterbo from the Holy See and for its annexation to Italy. In Onorato Roux's words, she was an "abnegated and faithful woman with a self-controlled and conscious passion for the nation" (qtd. in Mancini XXI). In the preface, she is portrayed as the ideal companion to her husband in his political fights. Yet, she continued her political participation in the movement even after she was forced to live separated from her spouse (Roux 11).

As previously mentioned, Ansuini Tondi composed the poetry included in her posthumous book when she was in exile in Orvieto for a decade, from 1860 to 1870. While living expatriated from Viterbo, she wrote verses informed by the idea of a unified nation, which unfolded sentiments and emotional bonds between the citizens and supported the image of a new society in formation. She does so, taking as well from Giuseppe Mazzini the concept of exile which integrates his first-hand experience with political persecution, and defined his own identity as a leading political figure and as an intellectual. When Mazzini's various insurrectional attempts in the Italian peninsula failed, he started to circumscribe himself more often as an exile, both in Italy and abroad (Pesman, "Mazzini" 55). Ansuini Tondi relates to the experience of exile from Mazzini's texts along with her own personal condition, to adorn her nationalist and patriotic poetical rhetoric.¹⁴¹

For some scholars, Mazzini represented the "noble exile" who sacrificed everything for the wellbeing of the future nation (Lytelton 40). A significant part of Mazzini's romantic and cosmopolitan patriotism, which informed Ansuini Tondi's verses, developed during his time outside the Italian Peninsula. For Ros Pesman (Pesman), while expatriated in London, Mazzini "conspired and proselytized for the realization of his vision of a united and independent, democratic and republican Italy in which all classes, and women as the equals of men, would

¹³⁹ "Per distrarsi di pensieri angosciosi che la opprimevano durante il lungo servaggio della sua città, Innocenza cercò un conforto nella poesia, e scrisse versi pieni di affetto e vibranti di amore patrio" (Onorato Roux 12).

¹⁴⁰ See appendix, figure 4.

¹⁴¹ Ros Pesman affirms, Mazzini's "ideas, expressed in a very large corpus of writings in a variety of genres, were derived from Romanticism" ("Marriage" 25).

participate” (“Marriage”²⁵). According to Adrian Lyttelton (Lyttelton), the prominent figure of the exile was problematic because besides standing for sacrifice, it also represented “failure, estrangement from reality, futility and disillusionment” (40). Further, living away implied a disconnection with what was truly happening in the territory (40). Simply put, this physical separation contributed to an unreal and illusory attachment of the patriot to the ideals of the movement and shows the fragility of the nationalist discourses.

The theme of exile dominates significantly the poems included in *Canti dell’Esule*. The book opens with a poem titled *Un sospiro e una lacrima* (A sigh and a tear) in which the poetic voice reflects on her struggle to continue living a life full of tribulations. The disturbed poetic speaker describes pessimistically her personal story, “Fin dalla cuna ordita, Di triboli e di fior”, “Ma di quei fior non restami”/ “Che il disseccato stelo” (lines 7-8, 9-10). In one of the last stanzas of the poem, the female first-person poetic voice declares:

Fín da quel dì dell’Esule
L’ingrata vita io meno;
Numero i mesti palpiti,
Con gemiti del seno;
Miro i sopiti popoli
Di servitù nel fango,
D’ira impotente piango
Vivo romito e sol (lines 49-56)

In these lines, the speaker regrets her tormented life since becoming an exile and living in solitude like a hermit. Also, in a broad level, the speaker laments the indifference of the people who for centuries adapted to a life of servitude under foreign oppression. In the poem, the exile position enables the poetic voice to look clearly to the situation and condition of a tired and resigned population.

The fourth poem of Ansuini Tondi’s book is dedicated to her husband Ermenegildo Tondi¹⁴² who was banished from Viterbo. He was living in exile in Orvieto as a government’s precautionary measure to avoid his participation in any insurrection movement against the Papal States. The first stanza of this poem is a description of Ansuini Tondi’s expatriated spouse,

Al dolce amico all’Esule infelice
O disadorna mia canzon n’andrai
E se dagl’occhi una lacrima elice
Tu in amoroso e mesto suon dirai:

¹⁴² A footnote to this poem reads as follow: “Il marito Ermenegildo Tondi – già esule in terra italiana – fu dal *Regio Governo* condannato a *domicilio coatto* in omaggio alla *Convenzione* col Bonaparte, per impedire agli esuli di tentare un’insurrezione negli Stati Pontifici” (*Canti dell’Esulle* 27).

“Il pianto tergi dalla tua pupilla
“Piaga un tenero cor l’amara stilla
(Lines 1-6)

The poetic narrator dedicates these verses to her sweet companion, to the unhappy exile. The autobiographical voice declares from the very first lines, that her song is unadorned, underlining the authenticity of the sentiments contained in the composition. Also, she vividly asks forgiveness if a bitter tear comes out of her eyes to sore the exile tender heart. The poet’s passionate emotions towards her patriotic husband are later replicated in the forms of nationalist rhetoric. The discourse of romantic love, as any other forms of collective intimacy, also contributes to the legitimisation of the idea of the new nation. The bonds of friendship and love were at the centre of Mazzini’s political aims, since it was a way of uniting and keeping people together (Roland Sarti qtd. in Pesman, “Marriage” 26). Frequently, in the writings of the period, the nation is pictured as a big family; people linked to each other like siblings, sharing a common culture and history.

In respect to this argument on affections and patriotism, some scholars have stressed that there was a fundamental relationship between family and nation during the years of the Risorgimento (Gazzetta 45). In Giuseppe Mazzini’s writings, the two sexes in the traditional heterosexual family complement each other in a presumably egalitarian framework, in a union of equal partners (Gazzetta 48). Yet, while women contributed politically to the national building project, they should not be taken away from the sanctuary of the domestic space, where they raise the future citizens and maintain the integrity of the family.

In the last stanza, the female poetic voice declares:

L’aura che dolce gli carezza il viso,
Il ruscello che mormora e si lagna
Quando medita solo all’ombra assiso
Digli che gliel’invia la sua compagna:
Nell’aura un bacio ed un sospir nel Río
Pegni riceva dell’amore mío.
(Lines 25-30)

Ansuini Tondi writes these verses remembering the period she spent away from her banished mate, for that reason she metaphorically uses nature as a messenger to send her love to him. She expresses tender feelings towards her spouse. She imagines him meditating alone accompanied only by his own shadow, a description that accentuates his solitary state.

After joining her husband in Orvieto, Ansuini Tondi continued to participate in patriotic activities and maintained an epistolary communication with leading figures of the movement

for the unification of Italy, such as Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi, to whom she paid tribute in her poetic book. In *Canti dell'Esule*, there is a poem entitled *XIX Marzo MDCCCLXVII (1867) giorni onomastico di due grandi italiani Mazzini e Garibaldi*. The poetic composition is an ode to the nation and to these leading characters that have fought for the national project. It is a ten-stanza poem with a strong nationalist message for the liberation of the country (Falcioni XLVI). By dedicating her verses to two of the most significant patriotic intellectual leaders, Mazzini and Garibaldi, she is following a common literary tradition of praising the Risorgimento most significant places, events and characters, such as writers, soldiers and politicians (Mori "Introduzione" 17). In the first stanza, the poetic speaker calls the population to rise as a glorified nation:

Sorgi Italia, ed appresta I tuoi brandi;
E quest'alba di gloria foriera:
Essa mormora un nome, che fiera
E superba ti rese di sé
(lines 1-4)

As we can deduct from this stanza, the poem is a call to encourage the population to be proud of their future nation and to take the arms and fight until the chains of slavery could disappear. We see in these verse, that Ansuini Tondi, as other women writers whose work has been analysed in this dissertation, takes advantage of the slavery trope to represent a condition of oppression, in this case, a collective state of subordination. The poet repeats this argument in other compositions of the book.

In the second stanza, the speaker brings to the poem the figure of Giuseppe Garibaldi represented as "il Leone indomato" (an untamed lion) and as "Il Proscritto terrore dei Re!" (The expelled terror of the Kings!). Thus, the patriot is defined as an unrestrained, frightening and displaced character. In the third stanza the narrator stresses using a warlike tone that the population should not celebrate until the country emerges free from foreign oppression, "[s]orgi all'armi: non feste o conviti/ Fin che al piè la catena risuoni," (lines 9-10). For the poetic narrator, the country needs to be released from its subjugated position, "Ma non pria che lavate fien l'onte/ Di straniera e Regal servitù" (lines 15-16). The poem ends by reiterating that the population should not rejoice, until Italy becomes "Grande, libera, forte ed unita" (Great, free, strong and united) (lines 18).

These two leading actors of the national movement, Mazzini and Garibaldi, incarnated the supreme value of sacrifice, liberty and devotion for the nation, and therefore they became essential figures in the nationalist cult (Lyttelton 52). We have to remember that at this time of fervorous romantic nationalism, Mazzini represented a martyr, a man who was able to sacrifice

every aspect of his private life for the country (Pesman, “Mazzini” 58). Also, Garibaldi represented heroism, patriotic devotion and democratic nationalism. This rhetoric praising the patriot leaders contributed to an Italian identity formation and a sense of community in a socially, politically and culturally divided territory.

Although it was more common to find poetic writings honouring the figure of Garibaldi than Mazzini, Ansuini Tondi in *Canti dell'Esule* praised almost equitably both patriots. Mazzini was admired by an intimate circle integrated mainly of people “who shared a Nonconformist religious background (mainly Unitarian) and radical political views (including advocacy of the emancipation of women) and connected by ties of marriage, friendship and social life” (Pesman, “Marriage” 27).

Likewise, in this poem, Ansuini Tondi engages with an engendered representation of the Italian nation as a woman who needs to be protected and liberated. In the third stanza, she describes Italy as “No signora, ma Ancella sei Tu” (line 12). The poet asserts that Italy will stay as a handmaid until the people decide to heroically save her, “Grande, libera, forte ed unita/ Dir potrai: La missione ho compita” (lines 18-19).

This poem also contains various classic patriotic images. For instance, the reference to ancient Rome, the land of Bruto and Camillo¹⁴³, from a Risorgimento perspective has the intention of highlighting a representation of a united Italy in which the eternal city of Rome is the capital (Falcioni XLVI). In the historical uncertainty of the situation, the author turns to an idealised picture of the past. In the movement for the unification of the country, the liberation of Rome from the Pope was one of the primary aims, able to create consensus between “democrats and liberals, radicals and moderates, and republicans and monarchists” (Boruta 206).

In these verses, it is possible to perceive some specific features of Mazzini’s nationalism such as “a powerful mystique of the nation”, nostalgia for a “folk culture” and the ancient language, but most importantly, the necessity of carrying out sacrifices for the nation and continue to praise the heroic leading figures of the movement (Huggins 15). Further in the poem, she again mentions that Italian wandering heroes need to come back home, “Oggi un' aura s'aggiri d'intorno/ Al Grand' Esule, Al Grande Guerriero” (line 29-30). She imagines the day when the exiled patriots, Mazzini and Garibaldi, could return victorious to their homeland.

¹⁴³ These are two historical characters linked to ancient Rome who became both political exiles. Marco Giunio Bruto (85 a. c. 42 a. c) was a writer, politician, philosopher and one of Caesar’s assassins. During the Renaissance, he was the model of the classic hero. Marco Furio Camillo (403 a. c.) was a politician and leader, who helped increase the territory of Rome (Treccani).

Ansuini Tondi also penned a *stornello* to Giuseppe Mazzini, on March 19, 1869, the name-day of the patriot. The poem later became part of the volume *Canti dell'Esule*. The short poem entitled *A Giuseppe Mazzini* is structured in three stanzas and is written in the third person. In the text, Ansuini Tondi talks in the name of the population and particularly as the spokesperson of the Italian women.

Vago fior del Pensier, vanne e ti posa
Sovra il cuore dell'Esule a Lugano,
Narra la speme
Di tutto quanto il popolo Italiano.

Digli che in questo giorno del suo nome
Noi donne un serto odiam per le sue chiome,

Il Serto che fra poco con orgoglio
Gli cingerem superbe in Campidoglio,¹⁴⁴
E che gli uomini – chiusi a molti affetti –
Preparano le daghe ed i moschetti.

In these lines, the poet sends a message to Mazzini, who also spent time in Lugano, Switzerland, as an exile. The poetic speaker praises the name of the patriotic hero and declares that all the hope of the population rests in him. In these verses, while women prepare a flower crown for the Italian nationalist, men are invited to take up arms for the war. Evidently, the author makes a distinction between the role of women and men in their patriotic endeavour, assigning to the first group a more aesthetical function and to the second a direct duty of fighting for the country.

Ansuini Tondi also wrote a *stornello* dedicated to Giuseppe Garibaldi who, among the many locations he visited escaping from prosecution, spent a period banished in the island of Caprera, Sicily. It is a short poem of two stanzas,

Esser potessi un zeffiro leggero
Volerei sullo scoglio di Caprera
E sopra il crin del Dittatore fiero
Il fior porrei che annunzia primavera

E gli direi: “fu colto in questo giorno
Che insieme al nome Tuo fece ritorno;
Fece ritorno con il giuro Santo
Di cangiar col Berretto il Regio Manto”.

¹⁴⁴ Campidoglio is one of the seven hills of the city of Rome.

Here in this short poem, the poet prophetically announces the ending of a dictatorship and beginning of a new period. As this composition evidences, Ansuini Tondi was against the monarchical authority and the despotism of the Catholic Church.

Regarding the author's proto-feminist ideas, in the poem titled *Presente e Futuro* (Present and Future), Ansuini Tondi shared a message of social protest against women's oppression.¹⁴⁵ The poet used from metaphor of the outcast to portray her feelings of estrangement and alienation, which she experienced within her own land. The third person poem is composed of twelve septets and it can be interpreted as a call for rebellion. Whereas the poetic speaker praises the qualities of the population, she also interrogates their lack of efforts to change their marginalised position. In the first and second stanza, the poem reads as follow:

Docile stendi o popolo
le braccia alle catene,
solo un ribelle anelito
Ti danna a orrende pene
Travaglia, suda ed abiti
Servaggio fame e morte
E questa la tua sorte

A te fu data un'anima
Ardente ed Amorosa;
Sangue che al nome s'agita
D' ogn' opra generosa
Ma perchè schiavo o martire
Ambi versar tu dei
Sul campo, o in palchi rei!
(lines 1-14)

The trope of slavery appears again in this poem, when the speaker expresses “Servaggio fame e morte”. Ansuini Tondi questions the temper of the population. She asks why if they had “un' anima Ardente ed Amorosa”, they remain living as servants. The verses of the final stanzas are an invitation to challenge the tyrannical power of the Pope's regime and government and to pursue political emancipation.

Su, su traditi popoli
D'ogni favella e seme
Su, Su la man porgetevi
Su combattete insieme,
(lines 50-56)

The poem ends with the following lines:

¹⁴⁵ Paradoxically, according to Onourato Roux, in her poetry, Ansuini Tondi uncovered her virile intentions, “Ella manifestò sempre propositi virili”.

Tutte le genti segnino
Dell' Alleanza il patto
Eterno, ed infrangibile
Di Libertà, Uguaglianza,
Amore e Fratellanza

Del Forte sesso vittima
Diseredata e oppressa
De' propri dritti vindice
Sorga la Donna anch'essa.
E che? Per sempre l'opera
Del Creator più bella
Dovrà restarsi Ancella?

The poetic narrator mentions the motto “Libertà, Uguaglianza, e Fratellanza”, a legacy of the Enlightenment associated with the French Revolution. To the nationalist phrase, she adds “amore”, to anticipate a gender-specific concern in the subsequent stanza. Without hesitation or recurring to an embellished language, Tondi Asuni denounces explicitly patriarchal violence. She underscores how hierarchical social relationships are responsible for women’s disenfranchisement. This poem echoes Mazzini’s statements on women’s emancipation. He believed that ideas on women’s inferiority were the direct consequence of hierarchical social dynamics (Pesman, “Marriage” 26). Mazzini wrote in the last part of his text *The Duties of Man*:

[t]he Emancipation of Woman, then, must be regarded by you as necessarily linked with the emancipation of the Working-man. This will give to your endeavours the consecration of a Universal Truth (qtd. in Pesman, “Marriage” 26).

Also, in the poem, the condition of an oppressed nation is paralleled with a female figure. Italy is in the same position as the female population, “Diseredata e oppressa”. Her political commitment to the unification of the nation gave her a license to talk about patriotic themes that intertwine with other concerns of the author.

Ansuini Tondi also composed to a friend called M.F. a poem she entitled *L'Addio*. The text might refer to the moment in which the poet departed from Orvieto escaping political prosecution. The poem is structured in six quatrains. In the first stanza, the poetic voice defines what saying farewell is for her:

Addio!-- Questa dolente parola
Vibra al core con lugubre suono
Gli ricorda il crudele abbandono
Di persone e di cose che amò!
(lines 1-4)

Sentiments of deep melancholy accompany the speaker's farewell. The feelings of the poetic voice fly from the past, bringing woeful memories to the present. The poem accentuates the sentimental emotions evoked by the involuntary displacement of the protagonist.

E coll'ansio desire che vola,
Sull' abisso s'avvia del passato...
Gioie... affetti... ogni gaudi sperato...
Quella mesta parola involò!
(lines 5-8)

The speaker laments the impossibility of staying close to the people she loves, and therefore feels abandoned. Throughout the whole poem, grief and loneliness accompany the poetic speaker. The last stanza of the poem reads:

E ripeti pietosa quell'una
Mia canzon che ispirava il suo lume!...
Del mio verno...Deh! temprin le brume
Tuoï sospiri qual'aura d'april.
(lines 20-24)

In these last lines, Tondi Ansuini seems to make reference to another piece she penned called *Alla Luna*. This last stanza includes a footnote that reads.

Allude ad un componimento intitolato *Alla Luna* dall'autrice lasciato in memoria all'amica prima di partire da Orvieto per altra destinazione imposta dal Governo Italiano al profugo E. Tondi, temendo una *nuova invasione* – come nel 1867 – nel territorio Pontificio.

In this note, the editor/author explains that *L'Addio* alludes to a poem Tondi Ansuini composed earlier in her life, *Alla Luna*. The editor/author further explains that Tondi Ansuini wrote these verses before leaving from Orvieto to another destination imposed on her husband E. Tondi by the Italian government. The editor/author points out that this exile was a precautionary measure to avoid any new attempt to overturn the pontifical territory.

Another composition included in *Canti dell'Esule* is the seven-stanza poem *Ora di Dubbio: Lamento dell'Esule*, which is written in a dramatic and pessimist note, with a first-person perspective. The tone of the poem is similar to *L'Addio*. Along the poem, the poetic speaker highlights her condition of expatriate. The opening stanza reads,

Dimenticato ed esule,
Entro romite mura,
Io mi disseto a un calice
D'affani e di sventura
Non un amica voce,
Non uno sguardo amato
Tempran la doglia atroce
Del disertato cor,

L'ira su me del fato
Rugge fremente ognor.
(lines 1-10)

The speaker feels forgotten, displaced and socially abandoned. The person lacks the sympathy of the people around her/him. The protagonist is a victim of misfortunes and pain, while he predicts that destiny will only bring sorrows and pain to his life. Along the whole poem, the speaker laments his condition, and claims that there is no pleasure or affection in his/her life. In the last stanza, death is depicted as the only real consolation amid the forced exile. Here in this poem, the poetic voice is unable to find comfort, he/she is tormented by the memories of the people he/she is leaving behind.

O bella morte! Unica
Consolatrice vera,
Che ti nomò terribile
Da'timida la schiera,
Io sempre ti mirai
Come di pace un porto,
Quando di vita entrai
Nel tempestuoso mar;
E te mio sol conforto
Appresi ad invocar.
(lines 51-60)

The speaker ends the poem hoping that death could bring him/her the yearned peace and shelter. Death is described as a peaceful port to the torment that is life.

Tondi Asuini also composed a poem entitled *La Notte de' Morti* (The night of the dead) to commemorate a tragic event that took place in 1867, in Rome. Particularly, she dedicates the poem to a woman patriot, Giuditta Arquati whom she calls "Vittime Tuttora Invendicate della Tirannide Papale, della Prepotenza Francese e della Regia Codardia Italiana" (Victim of the Papal Tyranny, the arrogance of the French and the Italian cowardice). On the mentioned day, Giuditta Arquati was murdered with her husband and other republican friends, by the Pope's army. This tragedy occurred during a patriotic attempt against Pio IX. Later, she became an icon for republicans and a heroine of the Risorgimento (Porciani 89). The eight stanza of the poem reads,

Quelle tombe che gloria dischiuse,
Di quei martiri il sangue versato
Hanno in parte dell'onta lavato
Questa terra che il Prete abbruti.
(lines 28-32)

The poet pays tribute to the revolutionary martyrs, particularly to Giuditta Arquati a defender of the Roman Republic and a woman who died during her fight against the dominion of Pope.

O Giuditta! A te volto è il mio sospiro,
A te fiera e sdegnosa alma romana,
Cui amor di libertà valse martiro:

Tu, mentre ardeva di ferocia insana
Masnada vil di prezzolati schiavi,
E strage in tua magion fea desiummana,
[...]

Scellerato Pontefice infame,
Che grondante di sangue fraterno
Non mai sazia l'ingorda tua fame
Sveni in nome del mite Gesù.

Trema Iniquo! Nell'ombra già scerno
La nefanda tua Regia caduta,
E già leggo sull'Ara polluta:
L'empio seggio dei Papi Qui fue
(lines 75-80; 145-152)

In this poem, using the example of the heroine martyr, the poet inserts ideas for women's emancipation exploiting the model of femininity Mazzini taught. According to the patriot's writings, women deserved to become equal citizens, but they should continue carrying out the traditional social duties imposed on them as mothers, sisters or wives, while sacrificing everything for the nation (Marinucci 219; Pesman, "Mazzini" 58). Women's political activism did not prevent them from being controlled according to the moral conduct principles of the period. Since Ansuini Tondi was following and supporting her husband, who was also involved in the movement for the annexation of Viterbo to the Italian State, the associations between her role as a mother and wife enabled her to justify her patriotic activism. Thus, the engendered representations of Ansuini Tondi, as an exemplary wife and mother, help to underline that somehow her femininity remained unalterable, even though she was politically very active.

As these verses show, women writers' involvement in the political activities and debates that permeated the Risorgimento can give us an insight on how they elaborated their gender politics and how they conceived their subjectivity in a period of transformation, upheavals and radical changes. Many women writers chose a nationalist poetry, as a cultural instrument through which they were able to intervene in the political life and future of an idea of a nation. Today, Ansuini Tondi is pictured as a Republican and a supporter of women's emancipation.

Conclusions: Mapping a transgenerational and transnational genealogy of women poets dealing with poetics of displacement

We have seen throughout this dissertation a multilingual and transnational literary dialogue between four women poets. The intertextual conversations generated showed that regardless of the diverse historical and socio-political geographical background of the various authors, all faced similar processes while writing poetry dealing with the experience of displacement. All four writers were able to judge the situation of the migrants and exiles from their own existential banishment, which went beyond their national place of origin to highlight their engendered social position. They were closer to the subjectivity of the exiles and they talked from the perspective of the displaced population, through the construction of a female subject speaker or in some cases other marginalised subjectivities, experimenting similar discrimination. Certainly, one of the most significant outputs of this dissertation is precisely the creation of a genealogy of women writers with similar concerns, discourses and rhetoric.

Moreover, the poetic writings authored by the writers overstep the boundaries of a local cultural product to embrace a more transnational conception of literature. By associating texts written in different parts of Europe, and therefore in different languages, the dissertation tried to create a sort of global view towards women's literary poetic production by which we may envision literature as a cultural product that surpasses local and national borders. The comparative analysis aimed to side-step the approach of isolating literature in relation to a specific time and location and highlight the connections and intersections that occurred across nations.

Also, by concentrating on the recurrent use of migration and exile tropes and metaphors in gender identity politics, sought out a universal language which helped women writers disrupt ideas of national identity, which allowed space for alternative projects towards a more inclusive citizenship. This poetry alters concepts of national frontiers, creating instead a multinational conversation in which gender oppression plays a leading role. Amid a growing nationalism across Europe at the time of writing this dissertation, these texts still invite us to rethink ideas concerning citizenship and to look beyond the limits of the traditional conception of the nation-state.

From a perspective that took into account the biographical voices of the writers, throughout the first chapters we looked at the geopolitical context in which the author's poetical texts were produced. We explored the intersections between the personal experiences captured in their autobiographical accounts with the historical overview of the events that were unfolding

around them. This outlook was significant in describing how migration and exile impacted these writers' lives and their literary oeuvre directly. Women writers had a lot to say about feelings of estrangement and disenfranchisement. They could parallel their legal and social status to that of the emigrants, and they could speak in their favour, as their sympathy towards the outcasts reverberates with their daily personal experience with oppression.

In the third chapter, the analysis of non-poetical texts by Robinson showed her eager critique on the rigid nationalism that infected England's cultural development. She concentrates on the exaltation of the capacity of the country to share spaces for the expansion of knowledge and culture. Furthermore, De Castro and Robinson, both of whom believed in the archetypal of the literary women, strove to disrupt some hegemonic discourses on womanhood and underscore the importance of reinserting women's voices into the historical record to resist gendered dynamics of exclusion.

Broadly, in the chapters dedicated to the close reading of the poetical writings, we saw the authors' subverted notions of gender, citizenship and national belonging, employing a language that prioritised the condition of people in the move.

In the case of the English writers, Smith and Robinson rejected the prevalent model of Englishness, and chose to publicly identify themselves with the émigrés who appeared to convey like no other subjects, womanhood and alienation. For them, while women were essentialised as belonging to home, contrary to men who are depicted as free travellers, they lived at home as migrants, dispossessed by patriarchy and colonial politics. These writers' texts could be described as anti-nationalist, since they were against policies of closing national borders and the persecution people for political reasons to protect the security and confines of the country.

For her part, in the fifth chapter, the verses of the Galician-Spanish writer De Castro oscillate between an anti-imperialist and anti-colonial message, together with a devoted affection for her land, Galicia. Her Galician nationalism was infused with her skepticism. Not for nothing, she called a first-person poem "As a stranger in her Own Land". De Castro portrayed the Galician population as wanderers without a homeland.

Lastly, the poet Ansuini Tondi, described as a patriotic heroine for her contribution to the liberation and annexation of Viterbo to Italy, composed nationalist and political poetry. Her message was so potent with the intention of making people imagine a still inexistent nation and a collective national identity. Her composition testified that women's fight for emancipation and to be recognised as citizens of their own country during the Risorgimento, took advantage

of the widespread patriotic rhetoric, even though the conquest of their civil rights came much later.

All of these writers share an attraction for the situation of marginalised populations, such as discriminated individuals, people suffering from poverty, gender violence and xenophobia, among other circumstances. They put emphasis on intersectionality to tackle the repercussions of patriarchy and imperialism. Moreover, they all believed literature as an instrument that has the capacity of impacting communities to promote social justice.

By looking back at the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for answers, inspiration and ideas, we observe the potential of poetry to promote and enrich the production of cultures of equality in the present. The historical periods of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were filled with gender debates that are stimulating in contemporary discussions on gender equality. These women writers addressed issues of citizenship and national belonging, in which they aspired to a broader national community and an inclusive national identity. Some of them also became the voice of communities, spokespersons on issues of marginalization. Smith and Robinson voiced the concerns of emigrants and discriminated communities and individuals, De Castro accentuates the colonial dynamics that affected the people of Galicia, and Ansuini Tondi fought for the liberation of Viterbo while aspiring for citizenship that included women.

The scenario of displacement and instability that these writers witnessed is not far from the current context and contemporary poetry. A poetic or at least literary transnational dialogue could still counter today a social atmosphere tainted with the anxiety of regulating border-crossing movements, with racism, xenophobia and discriminatory policies. More than ever, we need to go beyond national parameters, to embrace an open humanitarian and transnational culture. Fortunately, currently we can find initiatives such as AfroWomenPoetry¹⁴⁶ which tries to create a bridge between different female poets in the continent of Africa. In this contemporary poetic project, the category of “women” provides communality, a manner of connecting people with similar gendered experiences from different locations.¹⁴⁷ It creates an original platform for the interaction between women coming from different national communities. These texts denounce colonial and patriarchal oppression, racial and gender discrimination. The writings of AfroWomenPoetry project echo strongly the concerns of the European female poets included in this dissertation, allowing us to connect the past and the present through a genealogy that defies geographical borders and time.

¹⁴⁶ AfroWomenPoetry has as primary objective, narrating the life of African women through poetry.

¹⁴⁷ At the moment, in their online platform they have poetry penned by writers living in three different countries belonging to the Sub-Saharan region: Togo, Ghana and Ivory Coast.

APPENDIX

FIG. 1



Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnet 36*.

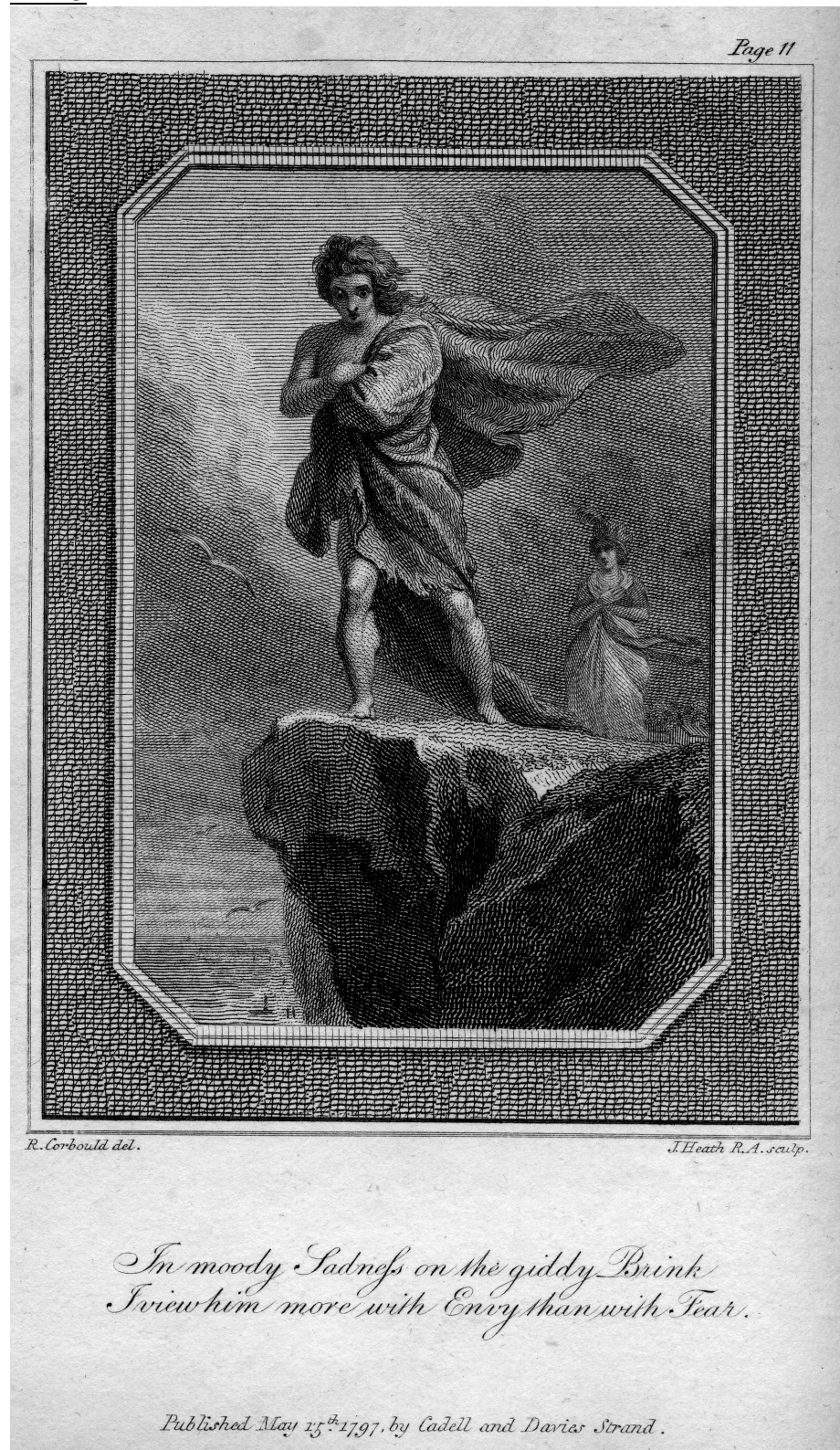
Volume One. By [Richard] Corbould, engraved by Neagle. January 1, 1789. Image and description from Horrocks' essay *Desolations of Wandering* (9).

FIG. 2



Smith's own portrait in the frontispiece of the 1797 edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, "Oh! Time has Changed me." Volume Two, *Elegiac Sonnets*. By Pierre Condé, after John Opie. May 15, 1797. Image and description from Horrocks' essay *Desolations of Wandering* (9).

FIG. 3



Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnet 70*. *On being cautioned against walking over a headland overlooking the sea, because it was frequented by a Lunatic*. Volume Two. By R[ichard] Corbould, engraved by J[ames] Heath. May 15, 1797. Image and description from Horrocks' essay *Desolations of Wandering* (103).

FIG. 3



Ritratto di Innocenza Ansuini Tondi (O. ROUX, *Canti dell'esule*, citato).

Image of Innocenza Tondi Ansuini

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