



HAL
open science

The poet and the woman : a study of Felicia Hemans's letters

Marie-Joshua Huet

► **To cite this version:**

Marie-Joshua Huet. The poet and the woman : a study of Felicia Hemans's letters. Humanities and Social Sciences. 2017. dumas-02110525

HAL Id: dumas-02110525

<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-02110525v1>

Submitted on 25 Apr 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

The Poet and the Woman.

A Study of Felicia Hemans 's letters.



Dissertation supervised by Mr. Alain Kerhervé.

Marie-Joshua Huet

Université de Bretagne Occidentale

Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines Victor Ségalen

Département d'Anglais

Master 1 Arts, Lettres et Civilisations - 2017

**U
B
O**

Université
de Bretagne
Occidentale

Table of contents.

Acknowledgments.	4
Introduction.....	5
FELICIA HEMANS AND HER LETTERS.....	9
1. Felicia Hemans's biography.....	10
2. Presentation of the three primary sources.....	13
i. Henry Chorley's Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: With Illustrations of Her Literary Character, from Her Private Correspondence and Harriet Hughes's The Work of Mrs. Hemans, With a Memoir of Her Life by Her Sister.....	13
ii. Susan Wolfson's Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials.	18
3. Presentation of the letters.....	21
i. Dates of her letters.....	21
ii. Location of her letters.....	24
iii. Her correspondents.....	27
FELICIA HEMANS AND THE EPISTOLARY FORM.....	38
1. The ambiguity of the epistolary form.....	39
2. Felicia Hemans's stance on the form.	44
3. Her epistolary style.....	52
i. Opening and exordium.....	52
ii. Body of the letter.	55
iii. Signature.	58
4. The purpose of her letters.....	62
i. Regular communication.....	64
ii. Literary and artistic criticism.....	66
iii. Business matters.	74
iv. A place to confide.....	76
FELICIA HEMANS AND HER IDENTITY.....	81
1. The theme of nature in her letters.....	82
i. The Beautiful.....	83
ii. The Picturesque.....	89
iii. The Sublime.....	93

2. Her role as a woman and a poet.....	99
i. Awareness of her role as a woman.....	99
ii. Awareness of her role as a poetess.....	105
iii. Felicia Hemans's relationship with fame.....	109
iv. Negotiating her identity as a woman and as a poet.....	115
Conclusion.	125
Appendices.....	128
Appendix 1. Corpus of Felicia Hemans's letters used in the analysis p.10.....	128
Appendix 2.1. Harriet Hughes's <i>The Works of Mrs. Hemans, With a Memoir of... Her Life by Her Sister</i> , pp. 240-241.	139
Appendix 2.2. Henry Chorley's <i>Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: [...]</i> , Volume 2., pp. 219-221.....	140
Appendix 3. Extract from a letter sent by Felicia Hemans to a female correspondent, date and place unknown.	141
Appendix 4. Letter sent to a female correspondent, date and place unknown.....	142
Appendix 5. <i>Cupid revives the fainted Psyche</i> , Bertel Thorvaldsen.	142
Bibliography.....	143

Acknowledgments.

Writing this paper was a challenging but ultimately gratifying experience which could not have been completed without the help of many people. Firstly, I would like to thank Mr. Alain Kerhervé, my research supervisor, for his advice to focus on the letters of Felicia Hemans. Moreover, his expertise and guidance were precious resources on which I could rely, and throughout the year, his motivation and interest for my work were strong encouragements in my writing.

Secondly, I am much indebted to my diverse teachers, however, I would like to thank in particular Tom Mole from the University of Edinburgh who introduced me to Felicia Hemans's work, along with Mrs Annick Cossic and Mrs Camille Manfredi for their teaching which helped me shape this present document.

I would like to thank my fellow students, their advice and their generosity was very helpful, in particular, thank you to Noémie Tossier, Léa Marzin, Claire Puget, Megan Guyonvarch and Marie Eustace who have been a constant support in moments of hardship. I am grateful for the motivation and companionship shared during this year and I hope that I was able to reciprocate the help that they brought me.

I could not end these acknowledgments without thanking my family for their unconditional support in my studies, not only during this year, but also the one yet to come.

Introduction.

“Her even lines her steady temper shows;
Neat as her dress, and polish'd as her brow.”
Anna Barbauld, “On a Lady's Writing,” (1773).¹

“I came home, to be sure, in rather a disastrous state after my adventure, and was greeted by my maid, with that most disconsolate visage of hers, which invariably moves my hard heart to laughter; for I had got wet above my ankles in the haunted burn, torn my gown in making my way through thickets of wild roses, stained my gloves with wood strawberries, and even-direst misfortune of all ! scratched my face with a *rowan* branch.”
Felicia Hemans in a letter from July the 13th 1829.²

I first encountered Felicia Hemans in a classroom at the University of Edinburgh where her recent academic "recovery," as well as that of other Romantic women poets, was being discussed. It was said that women were responsible for around half of the published poetry of the period 1780 – 1830 however, I could not remember having ever studied a Romantic woman writer. Furthermore, Felicia Hemans was one of the best-selling and most popular poets of the century, read in Britain and America alike, and one of the first women writers to make a living out of her profession. Therefore, I was puzzled by my own ignorance but also by the general lack of interest for Felicia Hemans or other female authors of her time. The more I read about Felicia Hemans, the more she appeared contradictory: applauded by many of her contemporaries she was simultaneously disregarded as merely the expression of an outdated imperialism sentimentality a few decades after her death, with women writers seeking to disassociate themselves from her. It appeared that her fame became her downfall and she was regarded not as a talented writer but a popular one suffering from her celebrity which fueled critics both of the twentieth century and modern ones, calling her talent “facile.”³ Thus, my decision to study Felicia Hemans has come from a desire to understand her poetry but also to understand more about who she was as a woman, since it has been

1 Michele MARTINEZ, “Women Poets and the Sister Arts in Nineteenth-Century England” *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 14, n°4 (2003), p. 623. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, (1743 – 1825), was an English poet, essayist, and literary critic.

2 Henry CHORLEY, *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: With Illustrations of Her Literary Character; from Her Private Correspondence*, vol. 2. (London: Saunders and Otley, Conduit Street, 1836), p. 31.

3 ed. Susan WOLFSON, *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters and Reception Materials*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. xiv

proven by one of her letters that her need to provide financial resources for her family has dictated some of her poetic works,⁴ it might not be an adequate medium to uncover perhaps less well-known aspects of the poet. In this paper entitled *The Poet and the Woman: A study of Felicia Hemans's letters*, I will try to answer the question "can we get a better understanding of Felicia Hemans and her works through the study of her letters." My goal is to bring to light Felicia Hemans's epistolary corpus to try and offer a more authentic vision of a woman and a poet.

To begin with, since Felicia Hemans and other women writers of the period are dismissed from the canon of Romanticism, her works are largely understudied when compared to men's. Likewise her epistolary corpus has been given even less attention excepted when it is used as a support for claims made regarding her poetry. Therefore, the first task is to set up the basis of her epistolary corpus, notably to compare and mark out the sources from which her letters are taken. Moreover, this corpus needs to be defined through an analysis of contextual information such as where, whence, and to whom she was writing her letters. This analysis allows us to better understand her corpus from a temporal as well as a relational standpoint. Indeed, the type of relationship a writer entertains with their correspondents influences on the type of speech they will use.

Secondly, a study of the limits and peculiarities of the epistolary form is necessary. Felicia Hemans's poetry is in part inauthentic due to her dependence on financial remuneration, but are her letters more authentic? On the one hand, we have to understand the ways in which the epistolary form is both genuine and ungentine and on the other hand how Felicia Hemans used it. Furthermore, a study of the form and the content of Felicia Hemans's letters through an examination of her epistolary style and the uses she made of her letters, such as a business relationship or more importantly a potential place to confide to her correspondent, will give us more information about her as well as instruct us on the importance she gave to her letters.

Lastly, after considering the previous points and coming to the conclusion that indeed her letters might be able to inform us more on her authentic feelings and intentions, a study of the content of Felicia Hemans's letters is possible. A close study her relation with nature (in the sense of the physical world consisting of plants) demonstrates her desire to be a poet in line with male poets of the time and, finally, we

⁴ Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

will see that Felicia Hemans's letters are a good insight into how she negotiated her identity and more especially how she understood and dealt with her dual identity as a woman and a poetess. Central to this negotiation is her self-awareness of the expectations of limits imposed on both of her roles as well as a control over her fame.

FELICIA HEMANS AND HER LETTERS

Before Susan Wolfson's book *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials* (2000) the last anthology dedicated to Felicia Hemans was published by Oxford in 1914. More recently, Felicia Hemans has appeared in general anthologies such as Paula Feldman's *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era: An Anthology* (1997) or Duncan Wu's *Romanticism: An Anthology* (1994) but these works included only a biography and a selection of her poems. Therefore before answering the question whether Felicia Hemans's letters can give her readers a better understanding of her works a twofold introduction is necessary. Firstly, a biography of Felicia Hemans is fundamental both for readers who are familiar with her work and those who are not. Secondly, a presentation of the corpus of letters through the introduction of the primary sources as well as an inquiry into whether those sources are sufficient and trustworthy will follow, as well as the establishment of the corpus of letters which will be used in this dissertation and a short analysis of these letters to help understand Felicia Hemans.

1. Felicia Hemans's biography.

Felicia Dorethea Hemans, born Browne, was one of the most well-known and most widely read poets of the nineteenth century. Although she was an English poetess she spent most of her life in Ireland and Wales. She visited London twice as a child but never returned.¹ She was born in Liverpool in 1793 but she and her family quickly moved to North Wales in 1800, following her father's business failure. In 1810, her father sought work alone in Canada only to die there two years later. Felicia was very fond of the Welsh countryside which influenced her greatly in her poetry and which she called her home.

Felicia never went to school but was taught by a gentleman who said of her "that she was not a man to have borne away the highest honours at college."² She started writing poetry very young with the support of her mother, who encouraged her studies and taught her Portuguese, French, Spanish and Italian. Her mother was a pillar in Felicia's life, both emotionally and physically, as she lived with her even after her

1 Paula R. FELDMAN, "The Poet and the Profits: Felicia Hemans and the Literary Marketplace," *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol.46, (1997), p. 149.

2 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 19.

wedding, keeping her under her “maternal wing.”³ Her mother's death in 1827 was to be a strong blow to the poet. With the help of her mother she published her first volume, *Poems*, in 1808. The book was financed through subventions and subscriptions and was supposed to raise money to help Felicia's education. Her volume received harsh reviews, many complimenting Felicia's talent but criticizing her youth, a reviewer in the *Monthly Review* commented that “if the youthful author were to content herself some years with reading instead of writing, we should open any future work from her pen with an expectation of pleasure.”⁴ The book led her to make the acquaintance of Percy Shelley through the help of Thomas Medwin who had subscribed to the *Poems*. Medwin, upon meeting Felicia when she was sixteen, said of her “it was impossible not to be struck with the beauty, the grace, and charming simplicity and *naïveté* of this interesting girl.”⁵ Felicia then started a correspondence with Percy Shelley which was put an end to by her mother, apparently due to Shelley's heterodox opinions⁶.

The negative reviews of *Poems* did not discourage Felicia and soon her second work, *England and Spain, or, Valour and Patriotism*, was published in 1809. In the same year, she met the man who was to become her husband, Captain Hemans, a man who had served alongside her brother in the Napoleonic wars. They got married in 1812, the same year Felicia turned 18 and published her third volume *The Domestic Affections*, financed by an old friend, Matthew Nicholson, which proved to be another disappointment. Felicia would have to wait until 1816 to meet success with *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy*, a poem celebrating Britain's triumph over Napoleon. The poem received favorable reviews, *The British Critic* said of Felicia Hemans that she was “possessed of a powerful imagination and commanding mind.”⁷ The poem was praised by Lord Byron who even said when planning to visit Italy “I shall take Felicia Hemans's *Restoration*, &c. with me; it is a good poem – very.”⁸ Lord Byron would not always be so kind to Felicia Hemans, referring to her as “Mrs. Hewoman” and saying that “if [she] knit blue stockings instead of wearing them it would be better.”⁹

3 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

4 Duncan WU, *Romanticism: an Anthology* (Third Edition), (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 1241.

5 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 526. Italics are the author's emphasis.

6 *Id.*, p. 526.

7 *Id.*, p. 529.

8 *Id.*, p. 535.

9 *Id.*, p. 536.

In 1818, John Murray (Byron's publisher) had already purchased the second edition of *Restoration* as well as published *Modern Greece* (1817) and another volume of poetry and translations. In the same year, Captain Hemans emigrated to Italy leaving a pregnant Felicia and their four boys behind. The reasons for this decision are still uncertain, himself mentioned his health while some reported his complaint about "having a literary wife that could never get a pair of stockings mended."¹⁰ The couple was never to see each other again. The departure of Captain Hemans left a broken home and the burden of providing for the family to Felicia alone. With the help of her family (mother, sister, and brother) she was still able to work on her poetry and her career took off.

By 1820 she was well known to the public and she was winning literary competitions. She met with commercial success and produced successively several works of poetry such as *The Sceptic*, *Stanzas to the Memory of the Late King*, *Dartmoor*, and *Welsh Melodies*. Furthermore, she also published in magazines and annuals such as the *New Monthly Magazine* or the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, of which she was "the single highest paid contributor [...] commanding more per page than such well-respected writers as [...] Thomas De Quincey and Walter Scott."¹¹ These magazines gave her a steadier source of income. Moreover, she was published by John Murray and William Blackwood. Her fame reached a peak with the publication of *The Forest Sanctuary* (1825 and 1829) in which her famous poem, *Casabianca*, was published. Other publications such as *Records of Women* (1828) and the *Songs of Affections* (1830) were also successful. During that time, under the supervision of Professor Andrew Norton of Harvard University, Felicia's poetry reached America, where she was very well received.¹² After the death of her mother in 1827 her family quickly divided and she moved back to England, near Liverpool, where she became more acquainted with the literary society among whom Rose Lawrence,¹³ Mary Howitt¹⁴ and Maria Jane Jewsbury¹⁵, who would become the addressees of many of her letters.

In 1830, she went to Scotland, where she met Walter Scott and then she came back South and met William Wordsworth and his family. She stayed with them for a few

¹⁰ *Id.*, p. xxii.

¹¹ Paula R. FELDMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹² *Id.*, p. 159.

¹³ Rose Lawrence (dates unknown) was the wife of Liverpool's mayor and a writer.

¹⁴ Mary Howitt (1799 – 1888) was an English poet.

¹⁵ Maria Jane Jewsbury (1800 – 1833) became Maria Jane Fletcher following her wedding to Reverend William Kew Fletcher was an English poet and prose writer.

weeks before renting her own lodging nearby. Wordsworth said of her that “her poetical genius is highly promising”¹⁶ but he also remarked in another letter that “her conversation, like that of many literary Ladies, is too elaborate and studied.”¹⁷

By that time she was 37 years old and her health had started to deteriorate. She went to live with her brother and his wife in Dublin but was unimpressed by Irish society. She became more and more religious. By 1834 she was bed-ridden but carried on writing but she confessed to a friend in a letter her regrets of not having wrote “more noble and complete work, something of pure and holy existence,”¹⁸ forced as she was to rely on her poetry to provide for her family. In the same year, she published *National Lyrics and Scenes and Hymns of Life*. She died in 1835 and was buried in St. Anne's Church in Dawson Street, not far from where she spent the last years of her life.¹⁹

2. Presentation of the three primary sources.

My dissertation uses as primary sources the letters of Felicia Hemans available in three different books: two dating from the nineteenth century, and one more recently published in 2000. The latter compiles a few letters taken from both of the previously mentioned books as well as other letters coming from different sources such as the John Murray Archives or the Blackwood Archives held at the National Library of Scotland.

i. Henry Chorley's *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: With Illustrations of Her Literary Character, from Her Private Correspondence* and Harriet Hughes's *The Work of Mrs. Hemans, With a Memoir of Her Life by Her Sister*

The first book is entitled *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: With Illustrations of Her Literary Character, from Her Private Correspondence In Two Volumes*, it was published in 1836 only a year after Felicia Hemans's death. It was edited by Henry Chorley, an English critic, writer, and editor as well as one of Felicia Hemans's friends. He met her when she moved from North Wales back to the area of Liverpool after the death of her

16 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 556.

17 *Id.*, p. 557.

18 *Id.*, p. 521.

19 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 330.

mother.²⁰ Henry Chorley begins his book by explaining in his acknowledgment that he started researching into Felicia Hemans's life via another piece he wrote for the *Athenaeum* which consisted of sketches and remembrances (letters). The success of this piece, especially of the letters as well as the important “store of materials [which] was so liberally enriched by the kindness of known and unknown friends”²¹ which he acquired led him to consider writing a longer work in which he was able to “trace out the entire progress of her mind through its several stages.”²² Moreover, Henry Chorley warns the reader that he “purposely refrain[ed] from touching upon any such details of the delicate circumstances of her domestic life, as were not necessary to the illustration of her literary career”²³ and acknowledges that his book is not complete enough to be considered as a real biography.

The second one is a re-edition of Felicia Hemans's poetry entitled *The Works of Mrs. Hemans; With a Memoir of Her Life by Her Sister In Six Volumes* published in 1839. Only the first volume features the memoir written by Felicia Hemans's own sister, Harriet Hughes (born Harriet Browne), which includes letters either partially or integrally. Harriet Hughes's work was written in response to Henry Chorley's book, indeed, she begins her memoir by reminding the reader how much Felicia Hemans valued her privacy and how much she would loathe seeing her private correspondence on display. She even mentions, either accurately or not, the “plaintive tones of her deathbed injunction, 'Oh! never let them publish any of my letters !’²⁴ Although she deplores this invasion of her sister's privacy, what she considers even more damaging is the resulting consequences of the book. According to her, Henry Chorley's book gave “a very inadequate estimate of her [sister]'s character”²⁵ but she excuses the author, who is not mentioned by name but only called “the kindly-intentioned editor.”²⁶ By writing this memoir, and in consequences by revealing even more of her sister's private correspondence, she seeks to restore the image of Felicia Hemans, even if she is doing so with reluctance. She defines her intention in selecting letters as to “illustrate some individuality of character or temperament, or to exhibit the vivid powers of description

20 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

21 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol 1., p. vi.

22 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. xii.

23 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. xii.

24 ed. Harriet HUGHES, *The Works of Mrs. Hemans; With a Memoir of Her Life by Her Sister In Six Volumes*, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1839), p. 1.

25 *Id.*, p. 2.

26 *Id.*, p. 2.

possessed by the writer.”²⁷ She wants to avoid giving pain to others as well as giving any wrong impressions about her sister. Moreover, she also acknowledges the “deficiency”²⁸ of her memoir but without giving more information about what those will be. She defends her choice to give partial information by affirming that it is preferable to the “breach of those confidences of home and friendship, which no precedent can justify.”²⁹

Published only a few years apart from each other, both books present many similarities: on the one hand, they had to face the same issues and on the other hand, they used similar methods to deal with those issues which were to heavily edit the letters. However, both disregarded the need to inform in what ways this editing was to take place. Both editors had to take into consideration that many of Felicia Hemans's correspondents were still alive and any damage done to her reputation could have repercussions on her family. Henry Chorley and Harriet Hughes have expressed in their respective ways this issue, the former explaining his decision not to dwell on the personal details of her domestic life while the latter points out that it is not in her intention to cause harm to anyone. To protect Felicia Hemans's privacy, as well as those she exchanged with, both editors have sometimes erased the identity of her correspondent either by removing completely their name, by cutting the opening of the letter or by providing minimal information such as their gender “My dear Mr.—”³⁰ or the first letter of their name (Mr. L³¹ or Dr. R³²). They have also erased the names of people Felicia Hemans mentions in her letter, very often replacing it by a dash. We can observe some exceptions especially when Felicia Hemans mentions someone famous like Mr. Wordsworth,³³ Sir Walter Scott,³⁴ or Mr. Mackenzie³⁵ their names remain untouched in the letters. Yet, we can remark that in a letter dated from 15th November 1822,³⁶ Felicia Hemans talks about a certain dead man whose name has been removed

27 *Id.*, p. 3.

28 *Id.*, p. 3.

29 *Id.*, p. 4.

30 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol 2., p. 292.

31 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 93.

32 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 97.

33 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 126. William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850), was an English poet. Famous titles include: *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Prelude*.

34 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 79. Walter Scott (1771 – 1832), was a Scottish novelist and poet. Famous titles include: *Ivanhoe*, *Rob Roy*, *The Lady of the Lake*, and *Waverley*.

35 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 60. Henry Mackenzie (1745 – 1831), was a Scottish novelist. He is most famous for *The Man of Feeling* (1771).

36 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 81.

from the letter but who she calls “he, with whom 'Queen Mab hath been'” as well as “that deluded character,” furthermore she mentions that she had been “persecuted” by this man through “extraordinary letters.” All these information point to Percy Shelley being the man in question, indeed he died in July 1822 and as we have mentioned previously he sent a few letters to Felicia Hemans after the publication of her *Poems* but the correspondence was cut short by Felicia Hemans's mother due to his reputation and religious point of views. The mention of Percy Shelley in this letter is not agreeable for the author and we can conclude that it is the reason why Henry Chorley removed his name, he probably only left out the names of diverse people when it was beneficial for Felicia Hemans to be associated with them and when it was not prejudicial to the person. From what we have seen of Harriet Hughes, I would suppose that when faced with the same letter, she would have excluded it entirely from her book as it shows a less gracious side of her sister (spreading gossip and rumors). The way in which the letters are included in the books is also similar in both works. They are presented as part of the narrative, part of a biography of Felicia Hemans, they are used as “autorité biographique.”³⁷ Despite their similarities in presentation, the two authors made different uses of them, for instance, Henry Chorley tends to present a few letters focused around the same time or subject and then draws conclusions from them, whereas Harriet Hughes's is more inclined to only use a few sentences here and there to support a claim she is making about her sister. Additionally, Henry Chorley often retains the formal presentation of a letter while Harriet Hughes frequently inserts herself in the letter by adding comments such as “‘You have judged me rightly and kindly,' **she wrote to one always considerate and indulgent.**”³⁸

As we can see even if both books have many similarities in the way they report letters they also have differences notably in their content. To begin with, we can see that in Henry Chorley's version of the letters there are a lot more italicized words than in Harriet Hughes's version. Since both works present this italicization it is fair to assume that it was written in the original letters and that one author decided to keep them whereas the other did not. Consequently, even when both books report the same letter for example page 242 of Harriet Hughes's and page 223 of the second volume of Henry Chorley's, words are italicized in one and not the other. Furthermore, they are a few occasions when letters are not even similar in content, they are not always exact copies

³⁷ Brigitte DIAZ, *L'épistolaire ou la pensée nomade*, (Paris: PUF, 2002), p. 110.

³⁸ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 257. Emphasis is mine.

of each other. We can take as an example two letters which are presented in Appendix 2.1 (for Harriet Hughes's version) and 2.2 (for Henry Chorley's). Both letters are featured among others written at the same time, in Kilkenny, although the precise date is not given for either of them. They start similarly and proceed to describe at first a copy of Raphaël's *Madonna* and then the beauty of Kilfane. Differences appear quickly: in Appendix 2.2 line 12, we find a bracket written by Felicia Hemans "(I am very sorry that the neighbourhood has lately been seized with quite a mania of making parties for me.)" but in Appendix 2.1 it is replaced line 11 by a dash. We can suggest that because Harriet Hughes had made her goal to restore the reputation of her sister she removed the bracket which could show her sister as ungrateful, or complaining, or could also hurt the "neighbourhood" in question. This difference is easily identifiable and gives us useful information: Harriet Hughes uses dashes as a visual code to indicate that she has removed either a few words or a name. Yet, in Appendix 2.2 line 11 is presented as follows: "Kilfane; quite in a different style of beauty from Woodstock-soft." whereas in Appendix 2.1 the same line, here line 14, is transcribed differently: "Kilfane, however, the scene of yesterday's réunion, is a very lovely spot, quite in a different style of beauty from Woodstock." This time there is no dash to indicate that anything has been removed.

It thus seems to be impossible to find a pattern in the censure of the letters. As mentioned previously some words in Appendix 2.2, Henry Chorley's version, are italicized whereas they are not in Harriet Hughes's version. The most striking difference occurs after the quote of Spencer line 20 in 2.1 and line 25 in 2.2: both letters carry on differently for an entire paragraph before ending, in the two cases, before the epigraph. The letter of Harriet Hughes carries on with a passage which is found a few pages later in Henry Chorley's version, for some reason either she or he has decided to cut the letter and to copy it at different places but neither of them has given a warning concerning this change. All those edits raise the question of authenticity. It is complicated to base an analysis on a reported text without knowing to what extent said text is faithful to the original one. Moreover, due to the editing of Henry Chorley and Harriet Hughes the Felicia Hemans which is presented in their books and through these incomplete letters is only one vision of the woman, it is a crafted image supposed to show us the person they wanted her to be. That is not to say that they had dishonest or malevolent intentions, indeed this editing is presented as a respectful act to preserve the privacy of their writer.

Nevertheless, those fragmented letters only represent a fragmented Felicia Hemans whose most intimate expressions and personal matters were left out from the letters presented to the public. If both of them present one image of Felicia Hemans, that of the poetess, Henry Chorley clearly acknowledges that another Felicia, one with a personal life, existed. He draws the portrait of a more complex woman than does Harriet Hughes, who for her part, prefers to present her sister and the poetess as one and insist on the unity of that persona. She wants to present us a Felicia Hemans in harmony both privately and publicly. The difference between the two books was mentioned in a letter from Elizabeth Barrett Browning³⁹ to Mary Russell Mitford⁴⁰ dating from November 23rd 1842. In the letter, she mentions that she understood from Harriet Hughes's memoir that Henry Chorley's book was offensive toward Felicia Hemans but she cannot understand why. She carries on and criticizes Harriet Hughes's memoir saying that it is “totally void of character, undescriptive of character, scentless, colorless [...] with the taste of holy water.”⁴¹ According to her, the fault can be directly linked to the persona of Felicia Hemans. Susan Wolfson mentions these issues before her own chapter dealing with the letters of Felicia Hemans, although not in the same way, she says that “when both CM [Chorley's memorial] and HM [Hughes' memoir] provide the same letter, therefore, I have usually preferred the text in CM, because it was published first and because Chorley exerts less editorial mediation.”⁴²

ii. Susan Wolfson's *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials*.

Susan J. Wolfson is the author of the last and much more recent book containing Felicia Hemans's letters: *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials*. It was published in 2000 and includes not only a selection of her letters but a re-edition of some of Felicia Hemans's works alongside a concise biography and further resources necessary for any research on Felicia Hemans. Similarly to Harriet Hughes and Henry Chorley, Susan Wolfson explains her motivation behind her decision of

39 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, (1806 – 1861), was an English poet, very popular in Britain and America.

40 Mary Russell Mitford, (1787 – 1855), was an English dramatist. She was famous for her work *Our Village* as well as her correspondence published posthumously.

41 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

42 *Id.*, p. 475.

editing this book. She mentions how she came to be aware of Felicia Hemans through a headnote by Wordsworth and a letter of Lord Byron⁴³ which led her to do more research on the poet but those were disappointing. Indeed she was confronted to a lack of resources and minimal information. This is why she states that her intention is to “meet the need for substantial, professionally prepared materials on which informed discussion may develop”⁴⁴ since most of the resources on Felicia Hemans are either out of print or outdated. She also criticizes both Harriet Hughes and Henry Chorley's books for lacking any of the business correspondence of Felicia Hemans as well as heavily editing her letters to fit “‘feminine' propriety.”⁴⁵ Contrary to the other two books, Susan Wolfson is much more objective in her methodology of reporting the letters. They are joined in a single chapter, presented in chronological order and without analysis apart from useful explanations in the form of footnotes. At the beginning of the chapter, she clearly states the origins of any modifications we may find between her letters and Harriet Hughes's as well as Henry Chorley's. She explains that before every letter she gives, when able, the recipient and address, the letter writer and address, the date, and the source where she obtained the letter. On a few occasions, she also provides letters received by Felicia Hemans or footnotes providing context for some of the correspondence.⁴⁶ Susan Wolfson's presentation of the letters is meticulous, almost scientific, reinforced by evidence and explanations which offer a strong base on which to rely for an analysis.

After studying the respective qualities and defects of these three books I decided to make my own selection among all the letters available in them in order to construct a manageable corpus of letters and thus making it easier to study them. I chose to limit my corpus based on two criteria, firstly I favored letters which were given contextualizing information such as to whom they were sent as well as when and where they were written. Secondly I also took into account letters which showed an interesting insight into Felicia Hemans's mind. Consequently, it must be said that my corpus includes a part of subjectivity. When the same letter appears in different books I relied on the level of authenticity perceived in each editor to pick one among the different versions. Susan Wolfson's book being an academic work came first, then Henry Chorley, since his book was the first published, and lastly Harriet Hughes, who presents

43 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

44 *Id.*, p. xxvi.

45 *Id.*, p. xxvi.

46 *Id.*, p. 495.

her letter as part of her narration (no breach between her writing and her sister's letters, they are included as part of her work and not presented separately) and who clearly states at the beginning of her book her intentions to right the wrongs done to her sister's image, therefore I do believe her to be less objective. I tried to demonstrate objectively my decision by comparing the contextualizing information given by each as presented in this visual comparison:

	N° of letters taken from each book	N° of letters given in their integrity	N° of letters where the identity of the recipient is given	N° of letters where the precise date is given
CHORLEY	139	9	29	60
HUGHES	17	0	0	0
WOLFSON	56	17	38	32
TOTAL	212	26	67	92

	% of letters making up the corpus	% of letters given in their integrity	% of letters where the identity of the recipient is given	% of letters where the precise date is given
CHORLEY	65,56%	4,24%	13,67%	41,00%
HUGHES	8,01%	0%	0%	0%
WOLFSON	26,41%	8,01%	17,92%	55,35%
TOTAL	100%	12,26%	31,60%	43,39%

Figure 1: General information about the letters.

This comparison confirms our expectations that Susan Wolfson is much more objective and thorough in her editing with a majority of her letters being presented with contextual information, therefore, I chose to take all the letters presented in her book (with the exception of letters addressed to Felicia Hemans and not sent by her). Even if Harriet Hughes and Henry Chorley are less meticulous with their information I still decided to include letters from them both since they represent the majority of the available corpus of her letters, furthermore, I felt that 56 letters would be insufficient for my study because it represents only a minority of Felicia Hemans's letters. Furthermore, by selecting different works I avoid relying on an unique and subjective vision of

Felicia Hemans. The majority of my letters comes from Henry Chorley but this can be explained by the volume of the source material he provides (two volumes of respectively of 309 and 356 pages).

3. Presentation of the letters.

My selection amounts to 212 letters written by Felicia Hemans, the first one being from 1808 when Felicia was fifteen years old and the last being written the year of her death, 1835, at forty-two. The following analysis of the corpus was made not only using the information provided by Susan Wolfson, Henry Chorley and Harriet Hughes but also my own deduction regarding, for example, the gender of a correspondent or the place where the letter was written.

i. Dates of her letters.

Through the visual comparison previously established, it appears that only 43,39% of the letters of the corpus were reported alongside the day, month, and year of when they were written. Among the 212 letters, 53 are presented with no information as to the period when it was written, whereas the rest is presented either with the day, or the month or the year or sometimes just in relation with events happening in Felicia Hemans's life. If Susan Wolfson always gives the date when she is aware of it, it is not rare to find in both Harriet Hughes and Henry Chorley indications as vague as “soon after her establishment in the Irish capital.”⁴⁷ Since my corpus is not an exhaustive compilation of Felicia Hemans's letters I cannot analyse it as the explicit representation of Felicia Hemans's epistolary habits but I still think it can be interesting to study it from the point of view of the editors who have chosen the letters which compose my source material. Therefore, I will firstly analyse the relationship between the number of letters reported for each year and the significance this can have for Felicia Hemans and for the editors.

⁴⁷ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

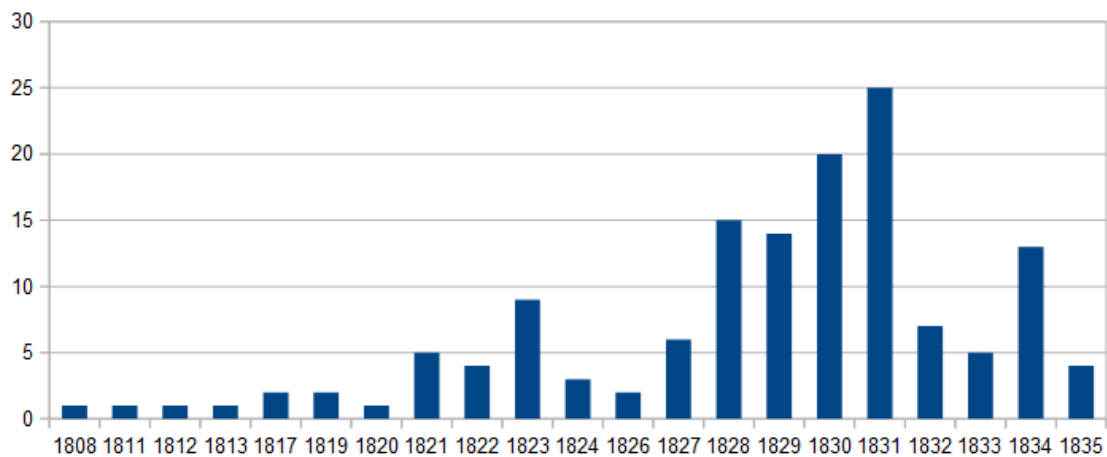


Figure 2: The number of letters per years.

This graph depicts the range of letters reported each year in the corpus which goes from the lowest, 1 letter, to the highest, 25 letters. The corpus of her letters starts at the same time as her poetic career since her first publication was in 1808 and the first letter of the corpus is dated from the 19th December 1808. Although at that time she was still inexperienced and unsuccessful, she had already entered the world of writing professionally. If this corpus starts with a fairly young Felicia Hemans sending a letter to her aunt filled with youthful attitude quickly the following ones, from 1811 to 1820, are related to the beginning of her career as a poetess with matters such as her publishing, asking for advice, and establishing her style being talked about, often, to older and literary men.⁴⁸ This corpus does not give us an insight into the life of Felicia Hemans as a young woman, it is as if Felicia Hemans and her function as a poetess were indivisible. Moreover, those letters were reported only by Susan Wolfson, indeed in her book, she mentions that according to her the most interesting letters written by Felicia Hemans are those related to her business affairs.⁴⁹

The first visible peak in the rhythm of the correspondence is seen in 1823, which corresponds to the year she published *The Voice of Spring* as well as the year her play the *Vespers of Palermo* was presented on stage and failed. By 1828 the number of letters for each year starts to be more important with 15 in 1828, then 20 in 1830 and finally

⁴⁸ Her correspondents for that time period are Matthew Nicholson, William Stankey Roscoe, John Murray, James Simpson, her uncle B.P. Wagner and her sister Harriet.

⁴⁹ Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. xxvi.

the highest number, 25, in 1831. The year 1828, and particularly the month of May, corresponds to the publication of one of her most famous volume: *Records of Women*. Felicia Hemans said of this volume in a letter to Mary Russell Mitford: “I have put my heart and individual feelings into it more than anything else I have written.”⁵⁰ The volume was met with success, selling all of the 1000 first copies before a second edition was launched in October, and a third the following year.⁵¹ The correspondence of the year 1828 is less influenced by this important publication than we could have expected, among the 15 letters of 1828 only 4 mention the book. Furthermore, the majority of the letters mentioning it are sent before its publication in which Felicia Hemans talks about her intentions regarding the book. Only one letter is dated from May and is sent to Joana Baillie⁵² to whom she previously asked and was granted permission to dedicate her the volume. Finally, only one letter mentions the success of the volume and it is sent to her publisher, William Blackwood.

Otherwise the year 1828 also corresponds to the beginning of Felicia Hemans's correspondence with Mary Russell Mitford and Miss Maria Jane Jewsbury, both renowned authors of their times but who have similarly to Felicia Hemans suffered from the passing of time. The importance of her literary correspondence during that time can be explained easily. Indeed it was during that time that Felicia Hemans started travelling across the United Kingdom starting in Scotland where she enjoyed the company of Walter Scott. She then spent a few weeks with William Wordsworth in 1830 in the Lake District. Her letters from that time are full of descriptions of the place she was renting in Dove Nest. Finally, in 1831 Felicia Hemans left Wales to go and live with her brother in Ireland, especially in Kilkenny. Her travels can explain the rise in the number of letters since many of them actually consist of descriptions of her days or events she attended, reported back to her friends left behind. To Harriet Hughes and Henry Chorley, this period is also interesting since she was meeting with a lot of important people of the time and thus described her relations with them.

Quickly afterwards, the number of letters drops. This could be explained by the fact that by 1832 her health, more particularly what she called her “greatest foe”, an “over-beating of the heart,”⁵³ was troubling her greatly, forcing her to write lying

⁵⁰ *Id.*, p. 498.

⁵¹ Duncan WU, *op. cit.*, p. 1246.

⁵² Joanna Baillie, (1762 – 1851), was a Scottish poet and dramatist.

⁵³ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

down.⁵⁴ In 1833, she travelled once again, this time moving to settle in Dulin where she would spend her last years. One last peak is seen in 1834 with 13 letters talking in general about her newly found interest in religion as well as three of them dedicated to the death of her friend, Maria Jane Jewsbury, and finally, 1835 with only 4 letters dated from her final year all more or less talking about her fatigue and illness.

ii. Location of her letters.

Similarly to the issue of dates, the information about the address from which Felicia Hemans wrote her letters is a recurrent problem: it is either given with precision, vaguely or not at all. The problem of the address is more easily bypassed, indeed if the date of the letter is given then it possible to deduce the place it was written at, for example, any letter written after 1831 will be from Ireland but this technique lacks precision. It simply identifies the place where she lived at the time and not where she actually was writing from.

A majority of her letters are written from St Asaph where she lived most of her life (first at Bronwylfa and then at Rhyllon after a short time at Daventry after her marriage). After that she moved to Wavertree near Liverpool but then she also wrote from her diverse travels. She wrote a few letters from Seacombe where she spent some time with her children to improve her health. Felicia Hemans travelled throughout the United Kingdom during her life starting from childhood in Wales to her final years in Ireland. Henry Chorley is very helpful in tracing the map of Felicia Hemans's travels, indeed he sometimes left intact the header of the letters which includes the exact number and the street Felicia Hemans was residing at, notably during her stay in Ireland. Thus we are able to know that she lived at “2, Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin”⁵⁵ or “20 Dawson Street”⁵⁶ when she was in Ireland. Furthermore, in a few letters he also kept the names of other people's houses, which allows us to learn the diverse relationships of Felicia Hemans, for example two letters are sent from the The Milburn Tower⁵⁷ in Edinburgh, which belonged to Sir Robert Liston.⁵⁸ More famously,

⁵⁴ *Id.*, p. 264.

⁵⁵ Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 245.

⁵⁶ *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 284.

⁵⁷ *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 65.

⁵⁸ Sir Robert Liston, (1794 – 1847), was an important Scottish surgeon.

one letter is sent from Abbotsford, the residence of Walter Scott with who she spent some times in the year 1829. Felicia Hemans also spent some times during the summer of 1830 in the company of William Wordsworth and his family at Rydal Mount in the Lake District area whence she sent several letters. After spending time with him, she rented a place not far from his called Dove Nest at Ambleside for the rest of the summer. By the end of April 1831 she had moved to Ireland, first to Kilkenny then to Dublin and finally to Redesdale near Dublin where she says in one of her letters that she is residing at “the Archbishop's palace.”⁵⁹ Information about where she was travelling to can also be found not in the header of her letters but within, for example in a letter dated from the 20th of November 1824 she says that she “remained some time in the Bangor neighbourhood about Midsummer.”⁶⁰ Among the three primary sources of the corpus, no letters are indicated as having been sent from Bangor, either the information was removed by the editors or all the letters of this period have been lost or simply not included in the three works since it is unlikely that she has not sent any letter during her stay there.

⁵⁹ Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 345.

⁶⁰ *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 105.



Figure 3: The map of Felicia Hemans's travels and residences.

On this map are indicated the places whence Felicia Hemans sent her letters. The white circles indicate where she lived and the gray triangles, where she resided as a

guest.

iii. Her correspondents.

Despite the main focus of this study being the letters Felicia Hemans sent and not the ones she received, it is still meaningful to take a look at the people she was exchanging with. As I previously stated notably due to the censure applied by Harriet Hughes and Henry Chorley, the identities of the recipients are only explicitly given in 31,60% of the letters. Among the 212 letters of my corpus, 139 of them do not disclose any information concerning the identity of the correspondent or give vague information as when Henry Chorley mentions letters sent to “members of the Chorley family”⁶¹ or when Susan Wolfson makes an assumption concerning the identity of the correspondent based on the letter itself.⁶² Nevertheless, even if the precise identity of the correspondent is not always known other factors can be used to classify the type of people she was communicating with. A classification based on the gender of the correspondent can be helpful in shaping a frame of Felicia Hemans's epistolary relationships. The gender of the correspondent is either determined by the name of the recipient or the title used to salute them (“Dear Mr.,” “Dear Mrs.”) or to take leave of them. It is also possible to find this information within the body of the letter. Furthermore, if none of the above indications are available the editor can intervene to give precisions, for example, Henry Chorley uses an asterisk to warn the reader that the correspondent was “of her own sex.”⁶³

61 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 189.

62 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

63 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 222.

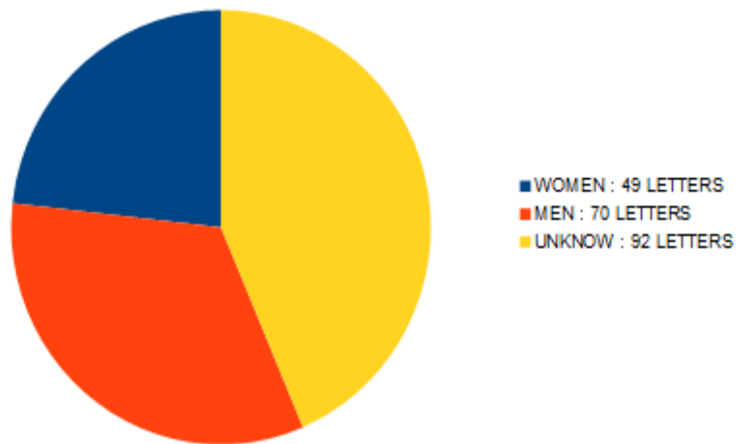


Figure 4: The gender of her correspondents.

The first remarkable aspect of her correspondence is that it differs from what we might have expected from a woman's correspondence: the majority of people she is writing to are not women (who represent only 42,2% of her correspondence) but men (who represent 58,8%).

These expectations are based on the one hand on assumptions of eighteenth century separate masculine and feminine spheres which suppose that the public sphere of the coffee-house is predominantly masculine (as well as bourgeois), whereas the private sphere of the house is more feminine,⁶⁴ but they are also on the other hand based on the largely spread beliefs that letters are women's area of predilection rather than men's. In his *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, Gustave Flaubert defines the epistolary genre as a “genre de style exclusivement réservé aux femmes.”⁶⁵ This belief can be traced back to the second half of the sixteenth century in France with the emergence of the epistolary genre in literature with works either fictive or real such as *Les Lettres portugaises*⁶⁶ (a French book published in 1669 and translated into English in 1678) as well as to the publication of Mme de Sévigné's letters notably to her daughter.⁶⁷ In

64 E.J. CLERY, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England*, (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 15.

65 ed. Christine PLANTE, *L'épistolaire, un genre féminin?*, (Paris: Honoré Champion Editeur, 1998), p. 11.

66 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *Lire l'épistolaire*, (Paris: Dunod, 1998), p. 24.

67 *Id.*, p. 26.

Britain, popular epistolary novels by Samuel Richardson like *Pamela* (1740) or *Clarissa* (1749) also associated the genre with women and more particularly with a desire to discover the feminine sphere through a voyeuristic approach to her letters. This dimension of the knowledge of the female sphere taken by force is even more obvious in Terry Eagleton's comment on Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* with a recurrent pattern which is the association of the female body to the letter,

“nothing could be more intimate and alienable [...] the letter is that part of the body which is detachable: torn from the very depths of the subject, it can equally be torn from her physical possession, opened by meddling fingers [...] hijacked as trophy or stashed away as spoils.”⁶⁸

This association of women and letters was not only seen in literary works but also in painting with the numerous paintings by Jan Vermeer representing a woman either reading or writing a letter, often unaware of the painter and/or spectator, re-enforcing this dimension of voyeurism indeed “when the letter-narrative exposes the private body to the public, it is, of course, a woman's body that has been exposed.”⁶⁹

Regarding real letters written by real women, they often represented one of the few forms of expression available to women, who were usually confined and oppressed within the private sphere. Jean de La Bruyère, a French moralist, was among the first to state this belief in his book *Les Caractères* (1689) when he affirms that “ce sexe [féminin] va plus loin que le nôtre dans ce genre d'écrire. Elles trouvent sous leur plume des tours et des expressions qui souvent en nous ne sont l'effet que d'un long travail et d'une pénible recherche”⁷⁰ but this belief has continued through the years and in his *Oxford Book of Letters* published in 2003, Frank Kermode almost repeats exactly what Jean de La Bruyère wrote: “a great many of the most accomplished letter writers have been women [...] perhaps the eloquence of familiarity comes more naturally to them than it does to men.”⁷¹ Henry Chorley, when talking about Felicia Hemans's letters sent from Scotland, describes them as being written “under the immediate impulse of the moment, and in the artlessness of perfect confidence.”⁷² The image given of Felicia Hemans is in harmony with the stereotype of the talent of women regarding the

68 ed. Rebecca EARLE, *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, (England: Ashgate, 1999), p. 17.

69 *Id.*, p. 118.

70 *Id.*, p. 3.

71 *Id.*, p. 121.

72 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 27.

epistolary, that of a prose flowing effortlessly and with authenticity. Feminist theory in the 1970s and 1980s even supposed a theory of “l’écriture féminine” which explained that men and women do not have the same relationship with the epistolary genre.⁷³ Although this belief has been proven to be more of a myth than a reality we could have wrongly expected Felicia Hemans to exchange more with people of her own sex. To understand why this is not the case we can further this analysis by crossing the gender of the correspondents with the origins of the letters to see if we can find a certain pattern between Henry Chorley, Harriet Hughes and Susan Wolfson.

	Total number of letters which gender is indicated	N° of letters addressed to a woman	N° of letters addressed to a man
CHORLEY	80	42	38
HUGHES	0	0	0
WOLFSON	41	7	34

Figure 5: The gender of her correspondent and the origins of the letters.

Here what is striking is the lack of information Harriet Hughes offers about the gender of her sister's correspondents. This is mainly due to her only reporting fragmented letters, thus leaving out the opening and closing lines containing the identity of the recipient. The single exception is found in her sister's introductory letter to Miss Mary Russell Mitford dated from the 6th of June 1827 however since Henry Chorley also included it in his corpus I did not take it into consideration for Harriet Hughes's corpus. In this letter, her sister explains the aim of the letter is to ask for an autograph to complete an album she is making for a friend in “a distant country”⁷⁴ but in reality, it is most certainly to make the first contact with Mary Russell Mitford. Most of the letter is dedicated to the description of Felicia Hemans's admiration for her correspondent. In her admiration, she mixes reality and fiction by saying how she feels like she has been to the imaginative world pictured in Mary Russell Mitford's books alongside her and that she shares with her more than “than the mere intercourse between author and

⁷³ Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁷⁴ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

'gentle reader.'"⁷⁵ In this letter, Felicia Hemans deeply conforms with the image Harriet Hughes wants to convey of her sister; she displays a humble character: "I cannot but hope that you will kindly pardon my intrusion, and that my name may be sufficiently known to you to plead my cause" when by that time she was already being paid more per page than Walter Scott.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the image presented is also in perfect harmony with the literary women passionate about a book and the dedicated mother and friend. For two editors separated by centuries, Henry Chorley and Susan Wolfson's numbers in the table are not so different. They both show about thirty letters sent to men but whereas Henry Chorley demonstrates a fairly equal number of letters sent to each gender with a slightly higher number for women, Susan Wolfson's letters are largely dominated by letters sent to men. This can be explained by the focus she exercises on archive letters coming from Felicia Hemans's editors as well as other business relations.

Almost all of the letters dealing with Felicia Hemans's business affairs are reported by Susan Wolfson. Her business affairs can be defined as exchanges with her publishers either on the subject of the publication of a work or as a request for guidance and help with particular inquiries. Among the 67 letters whose recipient is identifiable, 23 deal with business affairs and 19 of them are found in Susan Wolfson's book while the other four are reported by Henry Chorley. In these letters, two of them are addressed to John Murray (1778 – 1843), her publisher for *The Restoration and Modern Greece*. He was also the publisher of Lord Byron and Jane Austen and founded the *Quarterly Review* in 1809. Seven are sent to her last publisher William Blackwood (1776 – 1834) who notably published her *Records of Woman*. Other letters sent to her publishers were destined to William Stanley Roscoe (1782 – 1843) and Thomas Cadell (1773 – 1836) with one letter each. She also sent three letters to William Jerdan (1782 – 1869), the editor of the *Literary Gazette* on the subject of him publishing a few of her poems within his journal as well as his role within the Royal Society of Literature. The rest of Felicia Hemans's correspondents linked to business affairs are fairly different, but all shared an interest in literature or the arts. For example, Felicia Hemans sent four letters to the Reverend Henry Hart Milman (1791 – 1868) who was a historian but also a dramatist, his play *Fazio* is mentioned in the letters Felicia Hemans sent him from St Asaph a 19th June 1821. In the same letter, we can see that the Reverend had taken an interest in Felicia Hemans and had offered to help her edit her work, what she calls the

⁷⁵ *Id.*, p. 123.

⁷⁶ Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. xxxviii.

“task of curtailment.”⁷⁷ Felicia Hemans seemed really happy about the help offered since she says in the same letter that it is “a great satisfaction to [her] that the 'Sicilian Vespers' should be in the hands of one, upon whose judgment [she] can rely with entire confidence.” She sent him four letters in 1821 and 1823, the last one following the failure of her play. Other correspondents have also exchanged with Felicia Hemans on business matters, most of them by advising her on diverse subjects, but have maintained a less formal tone than the ones we have seen precedently. Here the professional relationship has become one of friendship as well. For the most part, they are addressed to older men who appear as mentors for Felicia Hemans, guiding her in her studies and development. For example, two letters are addressed to Matthew Nicholson (1746 – 1819), who discovered Felicia Hemans through his subscription to *Poems* and who organized the publication of her work *The Domestic Affections*. The relationship between them was not only focused on her poetry, indeed Matthew Nicholson said to his sister that he had fallen in love with Felicia Hemans and would have proposed to her if he had been younger.⁷⁸ When Felicia Hemans published *Poems* she was fourteen years old but Matthew Nicholson was already sixty-two. Through Felicia Hemans's letters we can see that her relationship with him was more of a student and her mentor, she jokes with him for example about his “very good grave, mentorial face” when she mentions having been “guilty of reading a Romance.”⁷⁹ However, in another letter Felicia Hemans is trying to reassure her old friend that her upcoming wedding will neither affect her studies and writing nor their relationship.⁸⁰ One letter was sent to James Simpson (1781 – 1853), a Scottish advocate and a friend of Walter Scott's. Although this letter has a less business like tone than the others, Felicia Hemans remains respectful and shows that this is not their first letter. It appears that they had already exchanged about how to contact the *Monthly Edinburgh Review*: “I have not been unmindful of your wishes”⁸¹ and “I wish to appear as Mrs. Hemans in the title page of the poem.”⁸² Another single letter was sent to William Jacob (?1762 – 1851) concerning her play *The Vespers of Palermo*. Despite the only letter sent to him being one which deals with business affairs, Susan Wolfson mentions that “he and his

77 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 65.

78 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 477.

79 *Id.*, p. 476.

80 *Id.*, p. 479.

81 *Id.*, p. 482.

82 *Id.*, p. 482.

daughter visited F[elicia] H[emans] at Bronwylfa in the autumn of 1822, and he remained a lifelong friend.”⁸³ In regard to the gender of Felicia Hemans's business and advising relations, all of them are addressed to men only with the exception of one letter sent to Fanny Luxmoore. The daughter of John Luxmoore, who was at the time the Bishop of St Asaph as well as a member of the Royal Society of Literature, was the recipient of one letter from mid-July 1822. This letter illustrates the importance of publishing and writing for Felicia Hemans. Her writing was her only way to support her family especially after her husband left her. In this letter Felicia Hemans faces a dilemma regarding the second poetry competition held by the Royal Society of Literature. The Society announced their intention to publish the winner in March 1832 (this letter is from mid-July 1822) but Felicia Hemans was in need of the monetary prize and was considering removing her poem from the competition to publish it instead. In this letter, Felicia Hemans is straightforward and asks for advice not only of Fanny but of her father as well: “be so kind to take the matter into consideration, and if the Bishop will favour me with his advice, I shall feel much indebted”⁸⁴ and ends it by suggesting they meet afterward probably to discuss this issue more in depth.

Those last correspondents illustrate the problem of categorizing any of Felicia Hemans's correspondents as well as any episotlary relationships: the limits between one category and the other are rarely clearly cut and many of them occupy diverse roles at the same time such as friends, business partners, or role models. This is the case for Reverend Samuel Butler (1774-1839) and his family who are the recipients of three letters as well as the family of Henry Chorley or the poet Rose Lawrence. Felicia Hemans also exchanged with literary people such as G.F. Richardson⁸⁵ but never befriended them. Throughout the three main sources, letters are described as being sent to a “friend” and sometimes with further explanations such as “an old and much valued friend”⁸⁶ or “an attached friend in Scotland.”⁸⁷

The familiar correspondence of Felicia Hemans possesses both female and male recipients. Among her female correspondents only six of them are named, they are a majority of contemporary female writers with whom she began to entertain an epistolary

83 *Id.*, p. 489.

84 *Id.*, p. 487.

85 Author and translator, G. F. Richardson was famous for having translated from the German the works of Theodor Körner as well as his biography written by his father which he sent a volume to Felicia Hemans with a dedicatory sonnet leading to an exchange between the two.

86 *Id.*, p. 493.

87 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

exchange around 1827⁸⁸ and with whom she quickly became friends. Although they mainly communicated through letters Felicia Hemans expresses her desire to meet them in person at different occasions like we can see in a letter dated from the 16th of July 1827 and addressed to Mary Russell Mitford:

“Would anything tempt you, my dear Miss Mitford, or is it within the bounds of possibility that you could be induced to visit me at St. Asaph? The most cordial reception I could promise you, and you would find here new scenes [...] on which to exercise your powers. I wish you would think of it.”⁸⁹

The first one is Mrs. Joanna Bailie (1762 – 1851) a Scottish poet and dramatist famous for *A Series of Plays* (1798) and several poems. Three letters are addressed to her but none of them is the introductory one. Already in the first one, Felicia Hemans mentions in her closing sentence that Joanna Bailie's kindness “makes [her] feel[s], whenever [she] address[es] [her], as if [she] were writing to a friend.”⁹⁰ Then in the second one, she mentions that “I delight to think that I have passed the bounds of a mere literary correspondence, and may, I hope, address you as a friend.”⁹¹ Felicia Hemans also asks for the permission to dedicate her work *Records of Woman* as she is a woman “of whose name my whole sex may be proud”⁹² to which Joanna Bailie agreed since Felicia Hemans mentions it in her following letter. The second writer is Mary Russell Mitford (1787 – 1865) who was known for *Our Village*, the work Felicia Hemans talks about in her first letter to her and continues to do so in the following ones. In the corpus five letters are addressed to Miss Mitford from June 1827 to December 1828. The third writer is Miss Mary Howitt (1799 – 1888), an English poet. Three letters are addressed to her, all from 1828. One letter is addressed to Maria Jane Jewsbury (1800 – 1833) who is another female writer. Although she is the recipient of only one letter she appears in several others, notably three being entirely dedicated to the news of her death following her marriage and removal to India. The rest of her female correspondents are not famous writers, they are Clara Graves, the sister of Robert Perceval Graves, an English poet, Felicia Hemans's son's tutor, and Felicia Hemans's own sister, Harriet, who has two letters addressed to her.

88 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. xxxviii.

89 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 156.

90 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 142.

91 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 143.

92 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 146.

The other members of Felicia Hemans's family to appear in the corpus are her aunt, her uncle and four letters are written for a “cousin” notably one cousin-to-be “fair cousin, (I mean that to be your title in future).”⁹³ It is interesting to take note of the letters which do not appear in the primary sources. For one, even though several sources mention letters sent between Felicia Hemans and her husband after he left for Italy none of them seems to have been published. Additionally, no letters addressed to her mother are available either but this is explained by the fact that Felicia Hemans never left her apart from a short amount of time after she married. No letters are available between her and her brother who went to live in Ireland a few years before she joined him. And finally, no letters sent to any of her sons even if two of them went to join their father in Italy. Finally, the corpus includes one letter, an epistle, addressed to William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850) and one to Robert Peel (1788 – 1850). In both cases, they are very formal letters, one asking to dedicate *Scenes and Hymns of Life* to the writer and the other to thank him for the financial help he offered her and the job he found for her son.

To conclude, a special place must be attributed to John Lodge, or as he is called in many letters, “Mr. L-” who by himself is the recipient of sixteen letters and many more not included. This is the highest number of letters dedicated to one correspondent by far since the closest is William Blackwood with seven letters addressed to him. Furthermore, four letters are sent to John Lodge within the same month, April 1831, and they seem to follow one another re-creating Felicia Hemans's side of a conversation. John Lodge (1801 – 1873) was a well-known amateur musician, he collaborated numerous times with Felicia Hemans putting her songs to music. Music and their collaboration, as well as everyday matters, are the main themes of their conversations. In her introduction, Susan Wolfson makes the hypothesis that their relation might have been more than friendship, she suggests that Felicia Hemans was flirting with him and she refers to the “lively”⁹⁴ letters Felicia Hemans wrote to him during the summer of 1830.

This introductory part has, firstly, established that the three published works containing Felicia Hemans's letters, although differing in their goals and ethics, are

⁹³ *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 266.

⁹⁴ Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

usable sources although subjectives. Secondly, this introduction was essential to define the limits as well as the particularities of the epistolary corpus of Felicia Hemans but more importantly it has helped shed light on the woman behind the poetess. By becoming more familiar with her travels, her life and more importantly her correspondents, we are one step closer to becoming more familiar with the woman herself. Therefore, by only analysing the contextualizing aspects we can already note that Felicia Hemans defies her first stereotype: that women were more likely to write letters to their fellow women than to men. A portrait of Felicia Hemans can be discerned, notably that she appears to have created a “public image” seen through Harriet Hughes's desire to restore her sister's reputation from Henry Chorley's book, and that she does not conform with typical expectations.

**FELICIA HEMANS AND THE
EPISTOLARY FORM**

To determine the authenticity of Felicia Hemans's letters we must not only assess the legitimacy of the sources but also the reliability of the letters themselves. To begin with, the study of letters, whether real or fictive, has to consider the specificities of the epistolary genre which answers to precise codes dating back to the Antiquity. More precisely, what interests us is the ambiguity of the epistolary genre as well as its subjectivity and how Felicia Hemans could have used this subjectivity. Therefore we have to understand how she perceived the medium and how she made use of it which will be done in a study of her epistolary style and of the different functions of her letters, certainly as tools of communication, but more importantly as a place of exchange with her editors, or of discussions about arts, or as a space of self-reflexion.

1. The ambiguity of the epistolary form.

Until now most studies of Felicia Hemans's opinions and personalities have used her poetry as a primary source but we have to acknowledge the fact that she was dependent on the sales of her poetry to support her family and thus might have written what would sell rather than what she wanted to write. She mentions in one of her last letters, her regret that “the constant necessity of providing sums of money to meet the exigencies of the boys' education, has obliged [her] to waste [her] mind in what [she] consider mere desultory effusions.”¹ In another letter, she worries about the taste of “the Public,”² which, as explained by Paula Feldman, means that she aimed at “appeal[ing] to the public taste in order to author a profitable book”³ rather than write what she wanted. Researchers of Felicia Hemans's works who have questioned her authenticity throughout the studies of her poems have had reasons to do so. Supported by the point of view expressed in those two letters we can suppose that Felicia Hemans was not always truthful about her feelings and the themes written in her poems. It seems reasonable then, to argue that Felicia Hemans was more authentic in her letters than she had been in her poetry. We can suppose that her poetry was meant for publication thus she showed in them a public opinion whereas her letters, only meant for one

1 *Id.*, p. 521.

2 *Id.*, p. 480.

3 Paula FELDMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

correspondent, were the expression of her private opinion. However, it is not so simple and we have to take into consideration that the epistolary genre is not as straightforward as it seems. Although some have advocated that letters are the real expression of one's personality, scholars have refuted this claim by insisting on the "constructed character" of the letter.⁴ Furthermore, the letter has a long history of being ambiguous, it is able to embody something and its contrary: "a bridge between correspondents as well as a barrier either opening the intimacy of one's thought or offering nothing but indifference, unity of speech and discontinuity, here/there, now/then."⁵ Throughout an exchange of letters, the two correspondents appear to exist in their own world where geography and time seem to be less important, a letter takes up where the previous one has left even if weeks have passed between the two. The exchange of letters becomes an intricate space, at the threshold of the public and private spheres, a "troubled frontier between private and public worlds"⁶ where the relationship between the two correspondents is able to develop privately but still restricted by rules, much like in the public space. Even if the letter is "an emblem of the private," its primary function is to convey information, thus it belongs to the public sphere.⁷ We found here many themes in common with Felicia Hemans: the creation of a persona and the distinction between private and public sphere.

First of all this space created by the letter relies on a communicative and physical aspect, indeed the letter is a material object which is first written, then sent, then read by the recipient. The exchange of letters implies that both correspondents have physically equal roles to play, the letter is based on the scheme of answer/question between correspondents. Both have the duty to reply to a letter even if in the content of the conversation one might hold a position of power. The correspondent thus frames the narration and the themes of the letter by guiding the conversation one way of the other. If Felicia Hemans was writing her poetry *for* money, she is writing her letters *to* someone and that someone dictates what she says and how she says it: "on doit s'accommoder aux temps, aux lieux et aux personnes à qui on écrit pour rendre la lettre judicieuse"⁸ as we will see later with the writing code and epistolary style expected

4 Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

5 Janet GURKIN ALTMAN, *Epistolary: Approaches to a Form*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), p. 180.

6 Carolyn STEEDMAN, "A woman writing a letter" in Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

7 Elizabeth HECKENDORN COOK, *Epistolary bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 6.

8 Geneviève HAROCHE-BOUZINAC, *L'épistolaire*, (Paris: Hachette – cop., 1995), p. 55.

from a letter. Furthermore, the epistolary relationship is based on a physical object, the letter, which contains the expression of their author's thoughts. On a practical matter, the letter has to be sent, which implies that it could get lost, bringing the conversation to a stop, or it could be delayed, slowing the discussion down. The efficiency of the postal service and more particularly its speed was improved during Felicia Hemans's time and "by 1820s, mail was delivered the morning after posting in towns more than 120 miles apart"⁹ which we can see in Felicia Hemans's letters when she sent letters in the morning to request attendance in the afternoon: "Will you come here some evening early next week [...] shall it be Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday? or this evening, if you are disengaged?"¹⁰ The tangible letter is entrusted to the correspondent, who is free to dispose of it as they please excepted when clearly stated. Thus the epistolary relationship has to be based on an tacit trust or a common acknowledgement of each other's privacy. If we take a look at Felicia Hemans we can see that this trust is broken several times, indeed she often joins other people's letters to her own to share it with another correspondent. What could be the reasons for this action?

Firstly, Felicia Hemans breaks this trust to mock the people she has received letters from. In an exchange with John Lodge she joins two letters received previously: "I was going to add them letters from to my beacon-fire, but I thought, as curious traits of character, I would show them to you first. Can you conceive anything so *innately*, so *unutterably* vulgar, as the style of mind they betray?"¹¹ It is not a single occurrence, in another letter the same situation is displayed: "the enclosed, however, which, for its delightful absurdities, was rescued from the pyre, I think will excite only mirthful sensations: pray read it!"¹² Here it is plain that Felicia Hemans disliked the people who sent these letters to her, which explains why she felt free to break the implicit contract between correspondents. We can also suppose that these letters were sent a long time before since she was ready to burn them. Finally, Felicia Hemans entrusts John Lodge with these letters and remarks, indeed she must trust him a lot to share these mockeries shamelessly. In the rest of the letter to John Lodge she asks him to bring them the next time they meet so that they can "make another conflagration" but in another letter she encourages her correspondent to share the letter with someone else: "When you have

9 Venetia MURRAY, *High Society: Social History of the Regency Period*, (London: Viking, 1998), p. 2.

10 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p.74.

11 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 193.

12 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 246.

read and laughed at it—for laugh you cannot help—pray give it to — to enrich a little store of such originalities, which I believe he is collecting.”¹³ It is interesting to note that the majority of these quotes of Felicia Hemans mocking her correspondent is found in Henry Chorley's book and we can understand why Harriet Hughes felt like he was degrading her sister's image. However, mockery is not the only reason why someone might want to share a letter, on the contrary, one might share an interesting letter they received. Letters can be relics to be cherished, in a letter to Mary Russell Mitford, Felicia Hemans says she is to receive an “original letter” of George Washington from her American friends and that “[she] shall prize [it] very much.”¹⁴ In another letter, she shares a letter of Mary Russell Mitford that she received, on the account that it is a “pleasant letter”¹⁵ that saved her from boredom. Finally one last reason is that corresponding with someone is a privilege, indeed “the right to correspond [to someone] was a public display of that right.”¹⁶ In a letter, Felicia Hemans says that she received a “private letter”¹⁷ from Mr. Croly and although she does not join it to her own letter she expresses her pleasure at being addressed by “so distinguished [a] writer.” Felicia Hemans herself must have been aware that her letters could be conserved or shared by her correspondent, in one letter she confesses her desire to cry like a “tired child” but just after she exclaims: “How very foolish — would think me! and rightly too ! so do not betray my weakness !”¹⁸ The length to which a person trusts or appreciates their correspondent influences the degree to which they are ready to share and be authentic in their letters.

A letter is neither private nor public since while it is written in the private space created by two correspondents, it can be shown to others outside the epistolary relationship, furthermore the epistolary relationship might also include more than two correspondents. Rebecca Earle mentions that “the writing of familiar letters was and remains a communal practice. Prior to being posted, a familiar letter might be passed around among family members, who could add codas and brief postscripts.”¹⁹ We can suppose that Felicia Hemans might have done the same. In some of her letters she includes her sister and her family, either to be polite: “My mother and all my family

13 *Id.*, vol. 2., p.291.

14 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

15 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 229.

16 Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

17 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

18 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 224.

19 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 7.

unite in every kind remembrance to Mr. — and yourself,”²⁰ “My Brother and the rest of my family desire me to present you their best regards”²¹ or to mention what they have said about a certain topic including them into the conversation: “My sister applauds to the skies your preference of Rossini to all others.”²² It is never clear if her sister or anyone else has ever written in any of her letters, in Susan Wolfson's book one letter is written by Felicia Hemans's mother in her name²³ and another is written with the third singular pronoun²⁴ which implies that Felicia Hemans may have dictated it. Lastly she also mentions that “[her] sister is quite enchanted with the music of the Chevalier Neukomm, and mentions it in every one of her letters.”²⁵ which supposes that the two sisters were discussing her letters or maybe even letting the other read them.

In Felicia Hemans's time, the publication of the private correspondences of important people was already popular, she mentions reading the letters of Coleridge to his godson in the *Saturday Magazine*²⁶ but it was not restricted to men of letters and she also mentions reading the letters of Lord Collingwood to his family²⁷ or the letters of Agustín de Iturbide through the transcript that one of her correspondent has supplied her with.²⁸ The habit of publishing private letters dates back to Antiquity when Cicero's private letters were published under Nero's reign.²⁹ For the public, these publications are the person's real intentions made public, very often in harmony with the image depicted during their lives as Harriet Hughes does for Felicia Hemans: it is in a way one last inquiry into who they were. Felicia Hemans seemed aware that her letters might be published, if we rely on her sister's testimony that one of her deathbed wishes was that her letters should not be published.³⁰ However, it is possible that she only realized that late in her life, if not on her deathbed. Thus we have to consider that the letter is not as private as it seems to be and that correspondents who are not particularly familiar with one another show to each other a sort of semi-public personality. In this space where

20 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 86.

21 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 489.

22 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 199.

23 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

24 *Id.*, p. 485.

25 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 175.

26 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 331.

27 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 6. Cuthbert Collingwood (1748 – 1810), was an English admiral in the Navy and participated in the Napoleonic wars with Lord Nelson.

28 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 100. Agustín de Iturbide (1783 – 1824) was a Mexican army general and politician. He was proclaimed Emperor of Mexico.

29 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

30 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

both writers are led to reflect upon themselves, to put their thoughts into words, and to *create* themselves, a place which according to Marie-Claire Grassi is “la forme la plus achevée de l’invention de soi,”³¹ it is a created persona which appears. In this invention of oneself, the writers are free to reveal themselves or on the contrary hide themselves, indeed “depending on the writer's aim, the letter can either be portrait or mask.”³² The letter allows the writer to either invite the other into the intimacy of one's thoughts and daily life or, on the opposite, to keep them at arm's length. This is done by either retaining information or not or by closely following the rules of letter writing or on the contrary by bending them to allow a more familiar conversation to take place. In fact, the epistolary genre is not entirely free of limits and obligations. The act of writing a letter is also ambiguous, as Marie-Claire Grassi says: “[c'est une] écriture codifiée, normalisée et une expression spontanée.”³³ In the eighteenth century principally, the development of self-expression notably through letters facilitated by the improved postal service was opposed to the rise of a culture of norms and politeness.³⁴ On the one hand, the writing of letters was governed by rules and pre-established codes of conduct which were taught through letter writing guides such as *The Ladies Complete Letter-Writer*, which was released in London in 1763 but on the other hand, it represented the free and intimate expression of the private sphere. Thus my study will be based on the belief that Felicia Hemans's letters still represent a truer form of expressing herself than what she wrote in her poetry albeit that they are confined to a particular form and a common style, which would not have been the case from a diary or other forms of self-expression.

2. Felicia Hemans's stance on the form.

The portrait that both Henry Chorley and Harriet Hughes draw of Felicia Hemans as a correspondent in their respective biographies is reasonably similar. Harriet Hughes pictures her sister as a dedicated and efficient epistolary writer:

“Long mornings of application,-hours spent first of all in the instruction of

31 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

32 Janet GURKIN ALTMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

33 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

34 Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

her children, then in answering countless letters, and satisfying the pressing claims of impatient editors,—she would shake of the burthen of care, 'like dew-drops from a lion's mane,' and emerge into the fresh air with all the glad buoyancy of a school-boy released from his tasks, and with that pure, child-like enjoyment of the world out of doors [...].”³⁵

Although here Felicia Hemans is seen as dutiful, it is also highlighted that answering these “countless letters” was a “burthen of care” and she was happy to get rid of them. Furthermore, her image of Felicia Hemans writing her letters in the morning can be questioned when put in parallel with the actual letters which, at times, end with Felicia Hemans wishing goodnight to her correspondent.³⁶ To begin with, Felicia Hemans was not a conscientious epistolary correspondent; while on the one hand, she enjoyed exchanging with her friends, on the other hand, she often had to apologize for answering letters late and delaying the correspondence. The regularity of a correspondence and the importance of answering a letter were primordial as it formed the basis of the epistolary relationship: to each letter would answer another, as Marie-Claire Grassi remarks: “la lettre est un dû.”³⁷ The answer is an obligation out of respect for the other, she carries on by saying that “son retard voire son absence sont considérés comme une faute, une atteinte à la justice d'une relation réciproque d'où dès les premières lignes l'exigence d'une justification.”³⁸ Actually, many of Felicia Hemans's letters open with excuses for her late response.

One of the excuses Felicia Hemans used most often was the fragility of her health, and indeed it is visible in the letters written later in her life because she was then obliged to write in a “reclining posture”³⁹ instead of sitting due to heart problems, forcing her to use a pencil rather than a proper pen or a quill. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the earliest reported letter of Felicia Hemans begins with an excuse to her aunt for not writing sooner which also involves her health: “the severe indisposition from which I have just recovered, has prevented me, my dear aunt, from fulfilling, so early as I could have wished, my promise of writing to you.”⁴⁰ Her health is not the only excuse Felicia Hemans invokes when delaying her answer, in a letter to Mary Russell Howitt, she says that her late answer is much more interesting now than

³⁵ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

³⁶ Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol 2., p. 13.

³⁷ Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

³⁸ *Id.*, p. 38.

³⁹ *Id.*, p. 264.

⁴⁰ Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol 1., p. 29.

what it would have been if she had written it right after reception of Howitt's letter,⁴¹ an excuse she uses another time with a different correspondent, saying that she waited to answer so that he could be certain she had read what he had sent her.⁴² In her book, Harriet Hughes acknowledges this habit of her sister's and notes that “the correspondence had indeed 'languished,' with many others not less valued”⁴³ but is quick to excuse her sister by mentioning her health yet again. However, physical health is not the sole health excuse given by Felicia Hemans. Multiple times she also mentions her mental health as an excuse. In one letter to Mary Russell Howitt from 1828, she declares that the delay of her answer is due to depression and that “[her] health also had been much affected by mental struggles, and [she] thought within [herself], ‘I will not write what I know would only sadden so kind a heart; I will wait till the sunshine breaks in.’”⁴⁴ She uses the excuse of her mental health again in a letter from 1831 saying that she has not heard from her American friends or Dr. Channing in a long while but she carries on by saying that she does not deserve to hear from them since she has “nearly dropped all merely literary correspondents” due to a “languor of mind and heart which has so long been creeping over [her], [making] letter-writing, except to the very few who understand [her], a task more irksome than [she] can describe.”⁴⁵

Although the difficulty to overcome her health problems, both physical and mental, delayed her epistolary conversations, another aspect can be taken into account. Harriet Hughes gives another excuse for her sister's tendency to let letters pile up, she says that by 1830, “the indescribable pressure of correspondence, of which words can scarcely give any adequate idea—for of letters and notes it might really be said that 'Each minute teems a new one' made it absolutely impossible for her to keep up the conventional forms and etiquettes of an extensive general acquaintance.”⁴⁶ Felicia Hemans herself complains about it in one of her letters: “it is vain for me, situated as I am, to think of keeping up distant correspondences. My burthen is, in these things, ‘greater than I can bear.’”⁴⁷ Her sister assures that not answering her letters weighed on Felicia, “and the fear that her old friends might consequently think her negligent or

41 *Id.*, p. 237.

42 *Id.*, p. 117.

43 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

44 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 238.

45 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 252.

46 *Id.*, p. 135.

47 *Id.*, p. 268.

ungrateful, would press upon her, at time, very painfully.”⁴⁸ It is indeed visible through her letters that she is aware of breaking a code of conduct, she says to one correspondent that she “*ought* to have acknowledged both [their] kind notes ere now”⁴⁹ and she also expresses her gratitude towards her cousin when they write to her again after she has failed to answer their letter for so long.⁵⁰ Here we see again that Felicia Hemans was conscious of the importance of responding to a letter since by delaying the correspondence she becomes unworthy, she loses the right to exchange with the person. Despite showing regret at her behaviour, it appears that answering letters and maintaining a steady correspondence was not among Felicia Hemans's priorities, furthermore, she also confesses that she “answer[s] all [her] amusing letters first and leave[s] the others to their fate”⁵¹ as part of her “small sins.” She was aware of her wrong doing but never took upon herself to right it, continuing to use excuses throughout her life.

Admitting her health and the great number of letters she received are both good excuses as to why Felicia Hemans was not able to keep up with the flow of letters forcing her correspondents to wait longer than usual for a response, another reason hinted in the last excuse alluded previously, might have been that she disliked writing letters. It appears in her letters that she did not appreciate the epistolary medium and would rather have a verbal conversation than a written one. In one of her letters, she expects to meet a friend soon and recounts a Serbian proverb saying that “the *Daughter* of the Voice is better than the *Son* of Ink.”⁵² The proverb is straightforward: exchanging in person with someone is better than to write to them but what is interesting here is the female/male dimension it introduces. This dimension cannot be ignored since Felicia Hemans, herself, puts an emphasis on the words “Daughter” and “Son.” This implies that the personifications of talking and writing, visible through the use of capital letters for “Voice” and “Writing,” are respectively that of a woman for the former and that of a man for the latter. This supposes that discussing is more dependent of the female sphere whereas writing is more part of the male sphere perhaps a vision in contradiction with the previously mentioned theories of the epistolary as part of the female sphere. Sadly, the following sentence is cut off, which leaves our interpretation open to contradictions.

48 *Id.*, p. 257.

49 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 11. Emphasis is mine.

50 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 65.

51 *Id.*, p. 261.

52 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

She even goes as far as to say to one of her correspondents: “I feel like my greatest pleasures from all these new objects of interest will arise from talking them over with you when I return.”⁵³ The “new objects of interest” are only worthy through the conversation they introduce. However, often it is not enough simply to talk about a place or a landscape after the fact, in a certain number of letters Felicia Hemans writes that she wishes she could “draw [her friends] hither,”⁵⁴ from the air: “had I possessed any power of 'gramary' you would certainly have found yourself all the sudden transported though the air,”⁵⁵ and: “I must try to describe my little nest, since I cannot 'call spirits from the vasty Lake,' to bring you hither through the air.”⁵⁶ The “since I cannot” indicates that writing is a default choice for her and she would rather have her friend with her rather than writing to them. She explains her reason when she says: “I must try to describe” indicates how unsatisfactory and ill-fitted the written words are to her, notably in the description of a scene, which aside is surprising for an author. We could say that she wants to talk directly to her friend but she could also want to allow them to experience first hand the scenery she is witnessing. To do so, she uses a common pattern in the epistolary form: she includes the act of writing the letter and the writer (herself) in the scenery she is describing. Further in the same letter, she details the place whence she is writing: “I am writing to you from an old-fashioned alcove in the little garden, round which the sweet briar and moss rose tree have completely run wild; and I look down from it upon lovely Winandermere.”⁵⁷

Through that form of metatextual staging of her own writing process, her correspondent becomes then a part of the act of writing and they are no longer simply a passive reader of the letter but an active influence on it as well as a participant to the moment with the use of “I am writing to *you*.” By being in the thoughts of the writer at the time during the writing process, now the recipient is able to picture the scene and to share it, in a privileged way, with the writer. Although they are not present physically they hold a physical testimony of that moment in their hand, the letter, and are transported to the scene of writing. Felicia Hemans repeats this pattern in other letters, she closes one with the salutation: “now farewell for the present—in the house I cannot

53 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 46.

54 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 156.

55 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 58.

56 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

57 *Id.*, p. 216.

remain one moment longer”⁵⁸ which invites the correspondent to visualize her finishing her letter sitting at her desk and then, rising up and leaving immediately. Then, these are stage directions and there is no way to prove that she truly wrote her letter from the place she is describing or that right after finishing the letter she did leave the house. This is part of the tacit trust between correspondents that we assume that what she is describing is the truth.

Other instances of Felicia Hemans choosing the “Daughter of Voice” over the “Son of Ink” are seen when she withholds from writing down some details from an adventure to tell them in person to her correspondent: “I must reserve many of these things to tell you when we meet.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless, sometimes the need to share was too urgent to wait for a further meeting and she impatiently sits down to write to her friends: “I must communicate to you the impression of its pleasant hours, in full confidence that while they are yet fresh upon my mind, I shall thus impart to you something of my own enjoyment.”⁶⁰ At other times, she has to withhold details for a future letter: “I will now describe to you the scene I mentioned in my last letter, as having so much impressed me”⁶¹ because she is running out of space: “Unfortunately, I cannot get his ecstasies within the limits of any frank that ever was or will be.”⁶² Felicia Hemans had a tendency to write very long letters at times and she thought they would scare its recipient: “What a volume of a letter !—I fear you will think that my pen means to journey like Ahasuerus the wandering Jew—“on-on on’—forever and a day.”⁶³ At the time of Felicia Hemans's writing, a letter was paid for by the recipient, which implied that “*écrire fréquemment à quelqu'un c'est donc en quelque sorte l'obliger à payer le plaisir de la lecture d'une lettre*”⁶⁴ but not answering a letter was a great “breach of conduct”⁶⁵ since the correspondent had paid for the previous letter and had answered it. Moreover, the price of the letter depended upon the number of paper sheets, which explains why she was apologizing when she wrote long letters. To lower the price a common practice in the nineteenth century was to write crosswritten letters meaning that after finishing writing the first side of a letter rather than turning it over, its writer would turn it at a right angle

58 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 48.

59 *Id.*, p. 31.

60 *Id.*, p. 33.

61 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

62 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 308.

63 *Id.*, p. 281.

64 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

65 Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

and write over the first layer of text, the two crossing each other. “A Guide to the Felicia Hemans Manuscript Material in the Pforzheimer Collection [...]” compiled by Charles Cuykendall Carter from the Public Library of New York in 2009 mentions holding three letters of Felicia Hemans which are crosswritten.⁶⁶ Since the correspondent had to pay to receive the letter it was then important to write meaningful letters, that is why Felicia Hemans wonders in one of her letters “I do not know what I can tell you of myself and my family that will *repay* you for the pleasure your late letters have bestowed upon me.”⁶⁷ Not only was the correspondent giving time to read and write an answer, they were literally spending money to correspond.

There were ways to keep the correspondents from having to pay for the letter, either one could frank it, meaning that official mark was put on the letter to indicate that it was free or they could write the letter to the address of non-paying citizens such as members of the House of Lords. Felicia Hemans used both methods, notably asking to be contacted through the Bishop of St Asaph, a title which was shared during her lifetime by William Carey and John Luxmoore: “perhaps Mr. Howitt will send a line under cover to the Bishop of St. Asaph, [...] or I should have procured a frank for this.”⁶⁸ Even if the frank was a useful way to avoid having to pay the reception of a letter it was still another limit put to the free expression of the person writing the letter since the frank was limited to a certain amount of pages. Several times Felicia Hemans complains that what she has to say will never fit in the frank she possesses: “the limits of my frank will not allow me to write more.”⁶⁹

The mention of the frank within the letter highlights the fact that the epistolary speech is both limited and under constraint. To carry on with the theatrical metaphor, if she is staging herself writing, therefore the frank is one of her props. It is necessary to the speech and yet highlight its artificiality and its constructed format. The frank is not the only prop she uses, she also mentions the pen or swan-quill she is using to write the letter. As for the frank, the pen is part of the necessary tools to write a letter and Felicia Hemans grants them the importance they deserve. When she mentions her pen it is for

66 “A Guide to the Felicia Hemans Manuscript Material In the Pforzheimer Collection: Being a Complete and Annotated List of all the Handwritten Poems, Letters, &c., &c., &c., by Hemans herself, held by that Repository.” Compiled by Charles Cuykendall Carter, Bibliographer of the Pforzheimer Collection. Accessed 07 June 2017.
<https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/archivalcollections/pdf/ms_guide_hemans_f.pdf>

67 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 109.

68 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 239.

69 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 213.

either for two reasons both relating to the quality of the prop, it is either apologies or praises. Very often the bad quality of the pen is due to the fact that it is not her own, when she stays at an inn and has to use one of their pens she says that “[she] hope[s] you will not find this, written with the very worst pen (I will not say “the worst inn’s worst pen”) an inn can produce, wholly illegible.”⁷⁰ Whereas when she praises it, it is on the contrary one of her own which she describes with lot of details:

“Pray are you sensible of any improvement in my hand or style of writing? I have just had a most elegant pen presented to me, all twisted round with red silk, and bearing my name in Venetian beads, with a garniture of laurel and forget-me-not; and I really think such an implement ought to produce only *‘paroles d’or et de soie.’*”⁷¹

It appears that the quality of the pen influences the quality of the letter since the one written with the inn’s pen might be “illegible” whereas the one written with the beautiful pen “ought to produce only *‘paroles d’or et de soie.’*” It seems that the position of the pen in the writing stage of a letter is even more important for her, in one letter to John Lodge she writes: “I must not allow my pen longer indulgence,”⁷² as if the pen itself was the instigator of the speech and wrote of its own impulse rather than by the guidance of Felicia Hemans’s hand. In another one she says that, “I have just received the most exquisite letter ever indited by the pen of man” rather than “indited by man.”⁷³ The pen emerges as a very important part of the letter, as a matter of fact she highlights the dependance of her letter upon props to reach her correspondent. Moreover, the pen is not only important for her who is writing but also for the one who will be reading the letter, when complaining about a pen’s quality she includes her recipient in her complain: “I am really ‘a woman to be pitied’ for the one with which I write, and your lot in reading will not be much more enviable.”⁷⁴ Here we are reminded that the correspondent is half the conversation and if she writes with a bad pen, then they too, are to be “pitied.” More than a simple conversation filler, sometimes this worry about her pen fulfills a real role, which is the case when she has to write using a pencil rather than a pen because of her health. In most of the letters where she focuses on using a pencil, she asks her correspondent whether her letter is illegible and precises that the

70 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 277.

71 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 265.

72 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 269.

73 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 107.

74 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 26.

necessity to use a pencil is linked to her health thus on one hand worrying about her recipient and on the other hand disclosing information about herself. Furthermore, if her writing is not legible, in consequence it is not her fault but that of her pen's.

Felicia Hemans's relationship with the epistolary form is one of convention and duty, the author does not appear to have any more interest in it than what is necessary to the conduct of diverse conversations. The materiality of the letter is given an important role, notably in the range of excuses given by Felicia Hemans for her lateness in writing or for the quality of her letters. It might be more instructive to consider not the letter as an object but as a text.

3. Her epistolary style.

As previously stated, both the writing and the style of a letter depend upon preconceived codes which Felicia Hemans could have been taught either by her mother or through letter-writing manuals, which were common at the time. Rather than seeing how much writers would follow these codes it is interesting to see how much they did not and how much they would bend them and arrange them to their liking to allow more personality and free expression to be exchanged through their texts. Not only must the form of the writing follow a certain code but its content must too. While the epistolary rhetoric is based upon the speech rhetoric with its forms and its intentions, just as all letters are not alike, all speeches also work differently from one another. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, the recipient of the letter plays an important part in the design of the letter, going from formal letters to familiar letters in which epistolary codes can be applied more loosely.

i. Opening and exordium.

Before a single word of the letter is applied to the paper, one must get the attention of one's correspondent as well as indicates to whom the letter is addressed. Although it seems inconsequential, it already gives much information about the letter which follows. Thus a letter addressed to a "Sir" will not have the same content as a

letter addressed to “My dear friend.” Within our corpus only 86 letters indicate the title linked to their correspondent, sometimes indicating only that, having removed the following name. The way Felicia Hemans addresses her correspondent is typical of the expected letter writing codes, and remains similar throughout her life. It is made up of eight variations on the model of “Dear -” or simply “Sir” or “Madam” as seen in the following table:

The different styles of title.	Number of times they appear.
Sir	6
Madam	1
Dear Sir	11
Dear [name]	2
My Dear Sir	21
My Dear Madam	3
My Dear [name]	41
My Dear Friend	1

Figure 6: The title of Felicia Hemans's correspondents.

The type of title used depends directly on the type of relationship between the two correspondents and it indicates the extent of their friendship. In her first letter to Mary Russell Mitford, Felicia Hemans refers to her as “Madam”⁷⁵ but in her second letter the title “Madam” has already become “My Dear Miss Mitford”⁷⁶ which appears much less formal and more friendly. Some correspondents keep the same title throughout the correspondence but without an exhaustive corpus of the letters this might be proven to be false. The graduation of her relationships with the recipient of her letters is visible notably through the way she addresses her most formal correspondents notably her editors who are either addressed as “Sir” or “Dear Sir.” Consequently, it emerges that the use of the possessive pronoun “my” to designate a correspondent highlights a relationship of friendship or at least a form of familiarity through the idea of belonging to someone whereas conventional letters by excluding the use of the possessive, at least in the first greeting, maintain a certain distance between the correspondents.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁷⁶ Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 154.

⁷⁷ Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

After the title comes the real opening of the letter, what is called the “exordium,” which has a threefold goal: “obtenir de l'auditeur sympathie, intérêt et attention.”⁷⁸ Regularly in Felicia Hemans's letters, either familiar or formal, the opening is used to refer to the previous letter sent by the correspondent but more importantly to the “réception ou non réception de la lettre placée sous le signe du *plaisir*.”⁷⁹ Most often in Felicia Hemans's exordium it is under the sign of gratitude that the letters open, she thanks her correspondent for their previous letter: “I beg to acknowledge with many thanks, your kind letter of yesterday,”⁸⁰ “Accept my sincere thanks for the very kind letter with which you have favoured me;”⁸¹ or she acknowledges its content by thanking them if they have done something for her: “I have many acknowledgments to offer, for the very kind interest you take in the success of my dramatic attempt.”⁸² The concept of pleasure mentioned earlier is also present and is repeated in the thanks which opens the letter: “I had the **pleasure** of receiving your very obliging letter,”⁸³ “I beg to thank you for the great **pleasure** afforded me by your very interesting letter.”⁸⁴ Its purpose is to serve as a bridge so that the two distinct letters can be seen as one, flowing, conversation as well as to acknowledge the time and effort dedicated by her correspondent towards her person. Already we can perceive the coded language of the letter writing, indeed received a letter is always “a pleasure” and a letter is very often “obliging” and additionally you “beg to acknowledge”⁸⁵ a fact. Felicia Hemans also uses the opening of her letters to include outside information such as the documents which she is joining to her letter: “I had the pleasure of receiving your obliging letter, and I enclose another little poem for the *Magazine*”⁸⁶ or “I earnestly wish that the little volume here inscribed to you [...]”⁸⁷ It is written in a matter-of-fact way but remains polite. Other formal letters start *in media res*: “Some of my friends, who saw the little poem I had the pleasure of sending you a few days since[...]”⁸⁸ or “I should like to have my pieces in *Maga* announced, for some time to comes, with my name in full length

78 *Id.*, p. 34.

79 *Id.*, p. 37.

80 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

81 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 84.

82 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 65.

83 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 488. Emphasis is mine.

84 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 120. Emphasis is mine.

85 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 500 – 520.

86 *Id.*, p. 495.

87 *Id.*, p. 517.

88 *Id.*, p. 495.

[...]”⁸⁹ but once again the editing of the diverse editoes renders difficult the identification of the letters really starting *in media res* and those which beginnings were removed. While the aim of the opening of the letter is to be a bridge between the two letters and therefore between the timespan it has taken to reach each correspondent, it might also be used to acknowledge the time passed between the reception of the last letter. This leads to Felicia Hemans recognizing and apologizing for her delay in answering often using words such as “I should have,”⁹⁰ “I ought to have acknowledged”⁹¹ or “I ought long since to have thanked you for you very kind letter [...]”⁹² but she can also highlight the lack of answer from her correspondent: “It appears so long since I have heard from you, that I have for sometime past been inclined to fear some illness in your family may have prevented your writing.”⁹³ As we have seen the exordium is a place of acknowledgement, either of the good reception of the previous letter or on the contrary, the breach within the conversation caused by either of the correspondent. The exordium brings thus a sense of circularity to the back and forth movement of letters.

ii. Body of the letter.

Following the exordium comes the body of the letter, or the *narration*, which contains the purpose of the letter. It represents “l'ensemble des informations, nouvelles données ou commentées.”⁹⁴ While the narration of the letter is visually less coded than the exordium or the conclusion, it still has to respect a few conventions, for example it must try to be brief and clear,⁹⁵ which occurs as an explanation for the excuses made by Felicia Hemans, or the blaming of her pen for taking control over her, whenever she writes a letter she feels is too long. The characteristics of the narration as well as the epistolary rhetoric find their source within the speech rhetoric, and especially that of antic Greek orators: “dans la recherche de ses effets, plaire, émouvoir, ou convaincre, elle [la lettre] n'est pas éloignée de l'art oratoire.”⁹⁶ These effects are found within the

89 *Id.*, p. 502.

90 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 107.

91 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 11.

92 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

93 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 105.

94 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

95 *Id.*, p. 34.

96 Geneviève HAROCHE-BOUZINAC, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

epistolary style of their writer, which uses specific techniques to achieve these actions.

Within Felicia Hemans's letters we can clearly see her intentions to please or to move her correspondents through stylistic effect. Felicia Hemans recurrently refers to description in her letters, either through the narration of her daily life but more particularly through her description of her surroundings and especially when those are related to nature. Her descriptions aim to be pleasant and interesting even if they do not appear to fit within the expected brevity. In fact, Felicia Hemans describes at great lengths the places she went to or the situation she lived in a way that, once again, makes them really scenic or stage-like. In a letter describing her visit to the tomb of the poetess Mary Tighe, she first describes her surroundings not only with an attention to details but also with what could be seen as stage directions or precisions about her own appreciation of said surroundings:

“The scenery of the place is magnificent; of a style which, I think, I prefer to every other; wild, profound glens, rich with every hue and form of foliage, and a rapid river sweeping through them, now lost, and now lighting up the deep woods with sudden flashes of its waves.”⁹⁷

She goes on to describe the actual moment of seeing the tomb, which she describes also with precision and then the reception she found there as well as the thoughts and feelings it inspired her. Her descriptions are not only external but also internal, they do not only focus on the landscape but also on her feelings and impressions. In another letter, she describes a happy scene, that of an afternoon spent with her boys and the attention to detail and the structure of it is more reminiscent of a novel than of a letter:

“The boys and I passed a most comic yesterday, sitting in a sort of verdant twilight, as we were obliged to have the outworks of green blinds fastened over the windows, to keep them from blowing in. Then the wind kept lifting the knocker, and performing such human knocks all day, that we thought friends must be coming to see us in the shape of meteoric stones for certainly in no other could they have approached us. However, Charles cut out and painted what he pleases to call the Weird Sisters from *Macbeth* ; and Henry set to music ‘The Homes of England,’ in a style only to be paralleled by Charles’s painting ; and I read *The Robbers* ; and the knocks at the door were thought so full of happy humour, that they made us laugh *aux eclats*.”⁹⁸

Here the narration is neither brief nor clear but it is certainly pleasant, the return to the

97 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

98 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

“knocks at the door” at the end of the paragraph gives an impression of circularity to the whole. However, a successful narration should conform to a certain format and principally to a desire to be concise. It is understandable in Felicia Hemans's time through the cost of the letter previously mentioned, but it is also already visible with Seneca and more specially with Cicero and his theory of a “adondance maîtrisée.”⁹⁹ To achieve this, the writer must apply a sense of moderation to his remarks which we already saw with the repeated use of Felicia Hemans's “I cannot tell you,” some feelings become impossible to express within the format of a letter. Another example of such moderation is seen in the allusion to a particular subject but never its completion, either it be because she has ran out of space to mention more about it or simply as a regret “I could say so much on this subject.”¹⁰⁰

Additionally, the idea of regret might be used to move one's correspondent, to make them feel empathy for the writer. Felicia Hemans frequently uses this rhetorical aspect through diverse techniques. As we saw, Felicia Hemans's mentions of her health as well as of her feelings are recurrently used in her letters to engage the compassion of her recipient but another stratagem is the dramatization of her letter. This dramatization can be minimal with the use of hyperboles or exaggerations with sentences such as “the latter is to me a thousand times more touching.”¹⁰¹ Exclamations, for example, are both expressions of dramatization and intimacy¹⁰² therefore they are only found in familiar letters rather than in more formal ones. In the following edited letters, we can see a much greater exaggeration, the goal of which is to create compassion or pity for Felicia Hemans:

“They had an Album with them, . . . absolutely an Album ! You had scarcely left me to my fate —O how you laughed the moment you were set free !— when the little woman with the inquisitorial eyes informed me, that the tall woman with the superior understanding—Heaven save the mark !—was *ambitious* of possessing my autograph, and out leaped in lightning forth ‘the Album. A most evangelical and edifying book it is truly; so I, out of pure spleen, mean to insert in it something as strongly savouring of the Pagan miscellany as I *dare*. O the “pleasures of Fame: o that I were but the little girl in the top of the elm tree again !”¹⁰³

The use of the exclamation “O” or also written “Oh” in other letters, such as when she

99 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

100 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 332.

101 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 78.

102 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

103 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 219.

accounts for her departure towards St Asaph she starts the story of that day by: “Oh! That Tuesday morning!”¹⁰⁴ It is often used in her letters and is always followed by an exaggeration either positive or negative. We can note that the dramatization of such a small incident appears not only as emotional but also as sort of ridiculous and humorous.

iii. Signature.

Contrary to the exordium, the conclusion of a letter is not a simple act but rather a process which can be translated into three levels. The first is the conclusion or the “péroraison, dernière partie d'un discours”¹⁰⁵ then comes the standard polite form of address and then finally the signature of the writer.

Marie-Claire Grassi in *Lire L'épistolaire* establishes several purposes to the conclusion of the letter which are visible within Felicia Hemans's corpus. She mentions “le retour du thème important”¹⁰⁶ which gives to the letter an idea of circularity, to end a letter by going back to its beginning making it into a consistent whole. However, there is another stratagem to write a conclusion which is to keep the most important element for the end, as in the first letter to Mary Russell Mitford when Felicia Hemans keeps the reason of her writing until the last lines, “but I really must come to the aim and object of this letter”¹⁰⁷ or in the conclusion to one of the letters addressed to John Lodge in which she explains her main reason for writing: “I only wrote from an impulse to inquire after your health and welfare, and to remind you of an old friend, who is always / 'Faithfully yours, / 'FELICIA HEMANS.”¹⁰⁸ Marie-Claire Grassi also mentions that the conclusion is a key place to reach out to the recipient: “le rappel du poids de l'absence, l'allusion à une prochaine rencontre, à un retour que l'on souhaite ou exige toujours immédiat, le désir de d'abolir toute distance géographique ou temporelle.”¹⁰⁹ In her letters, Felicia Hemans looks out towards the future, either towards an answer to her letter “I shall be happy to hear from you as soon as you have leisure”¹¹⁰ and “I shall be much indebted if

104 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

105 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

106 *Id.*, p. 41.

107 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

108 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 269.

109 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

110 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 481.

you will inform me that you have received these manuscripts safely”¹¹¹ or, to the future letter she will write: “Now I must say good-bye, and reserve many things till I write again, which will be very Soon.”¹¹² In this last one, she implies that she has refrained from writing everything she had to say which leaves the correspondent wanting more.

Felicia Hemans is a puzzling writer when it comes to conclusions, meaning that on the one hand she demonstrates some undeniable skills in meddling the body of her letters with its end and its signature:

“My head is half turned, but still steady enough to assure you that I remain
ever, my dearest aunt,
Your attached and affectionate
Felicia.”¹¹³

“Should you be induced to visit this country in the course of the ensuing
summer, I trust you will not pass St. Asaph without giving me an
opportunity of
assuring you that I am,

Dear Sir, very truly,
Your obliged, &c.,
F. Hemans.”¹¹⁴

Whereas on the other hand, she likewise manifests sometimes a willingness to end her letters abruptly, almost disrespectfully: “I am very much tired, very stupid, and as cross as is consistent with the *pleasure of convalescence*; so good-bye,”¹¹⁵ or “My health has *not* improved lately. /I am most faithfully yours, /F. H.”¹¹⁶ Through these abrupt conclusions emerge a feeling of impatience or exasperation, but we can also see a sentiment of familiarity with her correspondent, indeed “faire l'économie d'une formule de politesse est un trait de grande intimité.”¹¹⁷

Following the conclusion comes the standard polite form of address, which this time is much more coded than the conclusion. Whereas the conclusion can be anything, those greetings remain relatively similar. These formulas always include the possessive pronoun “your” alongside diverse variations on the theme of obedience and respect, more precisely: “pour signifier le respect, la formulation de base la plus utilisée au

111 *Id.*, p. 480.

112 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 128.

113 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

114 *Id.*, p. 489.

115 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 229.

116 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 208.

117 Marie-Claire GRASSI, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

féminin comme au masculin est l'expression de l'humilité (du latin humus, bas, d'humble origine), donc du respect et de l'obéissance: on signe humble et obéissant serviteur.”¹¹⁸ One way to classify the 86 different greetings used by Felicia Hemans is to relate her expressions with their etymological origins, thus “truly” comes from truth and “obliged” from the idea of obligation. However, these greetings are standard and coded expressions and their meaning may have lost their original sense as they became part of the epistolary language. Among the 86 greetings used by Felicia Hemans we can distinguish six different categories with crossing variations, indeed she can be simultaneously both “grateful and affectionate”¹¹⁹

Affection	Faith	Truth	Obligation	Gratefulness	Servitude	Ever
20	20	27	18	3	7	1

Figure 7: Her greetings.

From this short comparison we can see that the most used greetings are the ones related to the notion of truth and honesty: “ever most truly yours,” “very truly yours” and “ever truly yours.” Although we could suppose that she preferred them for their shortness, in practise she would associate them with longer feelings such as “believe me, dear Sir, very truly yours”¹²⁰ often associated with an indent which would take more space.

Felicia Hemans does not hesitate to re-use the same formulas even in following letters thus she closes her letters to Mr. John Lodge dating from April 1930 with “Very sincerely yours & &.”¹²¹ and “Very sincerely yours.”¹²² However, neither did she always keep the same one for the same correspondent, in a letter from the 18th of April 1932 still addressed to John Lodge she writes “Faithfully yours”¹²³ and in another dating from the 9th of May 1932 to the same she puts “Ever believe me most truly yours.”¹²⁴ The greetings appear to be used for any correspondent alike, William Blackwood with whom she entertained a more formal relationship than with John Lodge is greeted by similar

118 *Id.*, p. 51.

119 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

120 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 187.

121 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 93.

122 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 95.

123 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 268.

124 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 273.

expressions notably once by “Believe me to remain Sir, / Very truly yours”¹²⁵ although he is often greeted by expressions related to obligation, servitude or gratefulness. It might be noted that on one occasion Felicia Hemans cuts short her greeting and simply writes to Joanna Baillie “I am yours.”¹²⁶ The shortness and the simplicity of the greeting, free of superfluous sentiments, feels much truer than all the “truly” mentioned previously.

Lastly, to end the letter comes the signature. Here the focus is no longer about the correspondent but about the writer. Felicia Hemans has a special relationship with her signature both in her letters and outside. At the beginning of her career, her signature was already a subject of concern for her as she remarks to James Simpson in one of her letters dating from 1819: “I wish to appear as Mrs. Hemans in the title page of the prize poem; as infelix Felicia is the subject of so many animadversions and allusions to Rosa Mathilda, Laura Maria, and all the Della Cruscian tribe, that I am determined wholly to bid it goodbye.”¹²⁷ She adds that parents should name their daughters with names “fit for the common purposes of life.” The “Della Cruscian tribe” she is referring to is the “self-dramatizing Society della Crusca” which was founded by poet Robert Merry in 1784 which “extravagant artifice, literary allusiveness, theatricality, wit and eroticism, earned fame and infamy.”¹²⁸ Their members were using pseudonyms such as the ones mentioned by Felicia Hemans. Later, while she was using only her initials to sign her works she would have to change it again as another writer took upon to sign with “F.H.” and she wanted to distance herself from them.¹²⁹ She chose to use her full name “Felicia Hemans” from that time onward. In the case of her letters, she uses a diverse number of signatures:

125 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

126 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 143.

127 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

128 *Id.*, p. 483.

129 *Id.*, p. 502.

Type of signature	Number of times it appears
F.H.	40
F. Hemans	13
Felicia Browne	1
Felicia Hemans	29
Felicia	3

Figure 8: Her signature.

More precisely, in her letters Felicia Hemans uses five variations of her name, one being her first name and her maiden name. She signs her letter with a simple “Felicia” three times; the first time is in the first letter of our corpus in a letter addressed to her aunt when she was fifteen, the second time and the third one are both addressed to an unknown female correspondent at an unknown date. There does not seem to be a logic behind the use of one signature rather than another, indeed there is no temporal pattern or no identification pattern, she uses different ones with the same correspondent and during the same time period.

To conclude, we can deduce from this that Felicia Hemans was not the sort of writer to shy away from conventional formulas, but neither was she a writer who took great care to avoid using the same formulas too many times, if indeed “le choix et la disposition de ces motifs [épistolaires] sont les révélateurs de la qualité de l'échange”¹³⁰ then Felicia Hemans was a talented writer but at times it appears that she was not terribly concerned with epistolary matters however this should not be taken as a reason to dismiss a study of her letters.

4. The purpose of her letters.

Admitting that it is possible to read within Felicia Hemans's letters her distaste for the medium we cannot ignore the fact that it remained very important to her, both on a personal level as well as a more general one, as a literary woman at the turn of the nineteenth century. Therefore my hypothesis that she disliked writing letters must not interfere with the reality of her time, for instance, it appears that if writing letters was a

¹³⁰ Geniève HAROCHE-BOUZINAC, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

troublesome and “irksome”¹³¹ action, receiving them might have procured the poet some sort of joy. Certainly, if she often uses her letters to highlight the distance between herself and her correspondent (notably by repeating her desire to bring them to her through the air) she also acknowledges that a letter can bring two people closer together. She says, for example, in one of her letters that “it really was like hearing the pleasant voice of a dear friend to receive your letter just then.”¹³² It shows that even for Felicia Hemans a letter can sometimes be a substitute to the Voice. In another, she tells one of her correspondents that “[she] cannot tell [them] how very welcome [their] letters are to [her]; how much they always seem to bring [her] back of pure and home-feeling—'the cup of water, for which my spirit pines in the midst of excitement and adulation”¹³³ Here, on the one hand, Felicia Hemans is pleased by the reception of the letter which closes the distance between herself and home but on the other hand she once again remarks that “[she] cannot tell [them] how very welcome [their] letters are”¹³⁴ highlighting the inadequacy of the letter to express her feelings. However, the formula “I cannot tell you how much/very” is repeated throughout her letters several times and it rises the supposition that it might be part of an epistolary rhetoric which uses exaggeration such as when she says “I have a thousand things to say to you.”¹³⁵ It could be more a stylistic issue than an actual expression of Felicia Hemans's feelings about the epistolary genre.

Nonetheless, there is a difference between receiving a letter and writing it and while the former procured joy to Felicia Hemans, the latter was mostly unpleasant. Felicia Hemans could not have escaped the necessity of exchanging via letters and by analysing the different uses she made of those letters we can see that they were not all the product of necessity and some even appear as a privileged way to express confidences or to deal with business relations. Of course, some of the type of letters she wrote were expected and typical such as thank you notes¹³⁶ or condolences. Plus, one letter does not only have a single topos and can cover different themes or have different purposes simultaneously, it is not solely focused on one goal. Within many of her letters, Felicia Hemans deals with different subjects not always linked to each other. In

131 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 252.

132 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 124.

133 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 57.

134 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 57.

135 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

136 *Id.*, p. 250.

her first letter to Mary Russell Mitford, for example, her real intention to request an autograph for her friend only appears at the end whereas the majority of the letter is used to introduce herself and praise its recipient.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the recipient of the letter often dictates the function of the letter: with her editors, her letters are written with a business goal whereas with her friends it is more an exchange of information about each other. Rather than trying to find matches between expected type of letters I want to focus on the particularities of Felicia Hemans's corpus and not rely on preceding analyses.

i. Regular communication.

Before being used as a biographical object which opened up the voice of the private sphere¹³⁸ the primary function of a letter was to serve as a tool of communication. The point of the letter is to exchange information, either about oneself or about more general concerns, with someone too far away for a direct conversation. What we will be looking at are the mundane conversations Felicia Hemans entertained through the exchange of letters, because they fall under the everyday concerns or the discussion without stakes, the focus is here more on the familial letters based on familiar but also friendly relationships. Their goal is simply to inform the other of what is happening in the writer's life but more importantly to maintain a social network.¹³⁹ A particularly compelling example is one of Felicia Hemans's letters dating from 1822, in which she describes the turmoil that is her daily life, notably “the same state of tumult and confusion”¹⁴⁰ due to repairs being done to her house; in another letter she asks one of her correspondents “Is my geranium still blooming? You have not told me of it for a long time.”¹⁴¹ We could rightly wonder what might be interesting in reading or studying such letters. For authors or famous people in general, this type of letter offers an important insight into the domesticity of their writers' time. For the specific case of Felicia Hemans, it is interesting because she bestowed a strong importance to the concept of home and family. However, our corpus only being made up of Felicia

137 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

138 Brigitte DIAZ, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

139 Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

140 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

141 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 291.

Hemans's letters what we are looking at are only one-sided conversations which inform us more about Felicia Hemans than her correspondents, furthermore, we are looking at a selection of her letters and thus certain parts containing those commonplace information might have been censored. For example, the corpus lacks letters sent to her family. Felicia Hemans often talks about the tight link she entertained with her family, described herself as “a creature of hearth and home”¹⁴² and expressed how she suffered from “the dispersion of a little Band of Brothers and Sisters, among whom I had lived, and who are now all scattered”¹⁴³ and yet there are only eight letters addressed to members of her family, two are addressed respectively to her aunt and her uncle, four to diverse unnamed cousins and lastly, two to her sister, although maybe more are available but not yet published.

To understand the specificities of these mundane exchanges of letters, one might look at a quote from Cicero who designated the letter as a “conversation entre des amis absents”¹⁴⁴ and by this simple sentence, he introduced fundamental concepts about what a correspondence should be. First of all, a letter is part of a “conversation,” it is an exchange which requires a reciprocity. The writer has to give information but also requires it from its correspondent. One of the easiest ways to do this, especially for correspondents who are not able to see each other often, is to enquire about their health, or that of their families, or their situation in general such as their employment or the weather. These enquiries can be done in passing, as a form of politeness within a letter with a different goal, for example at the beginning or at the end of a letter as when she says to Mary Russell Mitford “I hope the dear papa is well, and able to attend your rambles as usual, and that your mother has not suffered from this very trying winter.”¹⁴⁵ The goal of these enquiries only makes sense if their are answered and therefore find their function within the answer/response scheme of the conversation, furthermore “the harmony produced by these reciprocal interactions nurtured a stable [social] order.”¹⁴⁶ Letters act as substitutes for visits or social exchange. Secondly, Cicero uses the word “friends” to designate the participants of the correspondence. The idea of friendship implies a level of trust which we mentioned earlier. It also highlights the fact that mundane letters are, for the most part, familiar correspondences addressed to friends

142 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

143 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 501.

144 Geneviève HAROCHE-BOUZINAC, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

145 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 309.

146 Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

and family. It aims at keeping the social bond intact even through the distance. Finally, the idea of absence which prevails in the exchange of letters since each enquiry must wait for an answer, the speech of the letter is only partial, marked by the lack of a direct answer. One instance of commonplace information within Felicia Hemans's letters is the description of her stay at Seacombe where she describes her days with her sons and who visited them. The sole purpose of the letters is to keep the correspondent informed about the events in her life, to share with them some scenes of her life. However, since the letters are often edited, some of them might have another purpose than to simply inform its recipient about her daily life.

The exchange of information is not only limited to the lives of the correspondents and can also include larger news. Rebecca Earle mentions the importance of this exchange of news, saying that there was “a great hunger for information”¹⁴⁷ at the time, although she talks about the seventeenth century it can be still relevant to Felicia Hemans's times. In our corpus, Felicia Hemans exchanges about current events such as the death of a friend, visible in the three letters mentioning the death of Maria Jane Jewsbury,¹⁴⁸ or more general events such as the atmosphere in Ireland which she describes in these words: “This county is, however, tolerably quiet; but the spirit of hatred existing between Protestant and Papist, is what I could never have conceived had I not visited these scenes.”¹⁴⁹ She carries on to describe an event she witnessed that of meeting one of her brother's men who was carrying a pistol “on account of his being a Protestant.”¹⁵⁰ In the first letter of the corpus, the one Felicia Hemans sent to her aunt, she fulfills all the expectations of a familiar and regular letter: she informs her about her health, about what she has read lately and speaks about more general news, in this case the Spanish rebellions, saying to her aunt “you have perused the papers as I have done,”¹⁵¹ the letter being a way to enrich and discuss world events.

ii. Literary and artistic criticism.

Apart from exchanging news with her correspondents, Felicia Hemans also

147 *Id.*, p. 23.

148 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

149 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol.2., p. 206.

150 *Id.*, vol.2., p. 207.

151 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

discusses literary and other artistic works, notably contemporary ones, with them. It appears to be the second most important use she made of her letters or at least, the second most interesting to the editors of her memoirs. It makes sense that Felicia Hemans's interest for art would be visible in her letters since it is also found in her poems through the creation of about thirty ekphrastic poems. Ekphrasis can be understood as “the process of making verbal art from visual art.”¹⁵² Additionally, it is compelling to read about what works an author might have admired and the ones they disliked or criticized. The following analysis is not exhaustive and the criticism of Felicia Hemans could deserve their own dissertation. Felicia Hemans mentions several times in her letters her dislike for criticizing, she is “just the reverse of Iago, who calls himself 'nothing if not critical.'”¹⁵³ She exchanged with her correspondents about books and works she was interested in, which ones she liked and which ones she did not, she would join articles or books alongside her letters to recommend them to her correspondents and they would do the same. She thanks one of her correspondents for lending her the *Westminster Review* and adds:

“I gratefully acknowledge your kindness in occasionally selecting for me such things as you know will interest and amuse me, because, from my great distaste for reviews in general, I should otherwise lose much that may be well worth reading. It is their perpetual bitterness, and jealousy, and strife, from which I turn with so much dislike; they remind me constantly of the line “La haine veille et l'amitié s'endort.”¹⁵⁴

She does not only dislike criticizing but also the mindset necessary for such writings. She does not understand why one would read criticism, she mentions it in a letter: “I never could understand the *pleasure* of criticising”¹⁵⁵ but even if this is the image of herself she wants to come across she does criticize several works although never harshly.

In regards to books, the first ones mentioned in our corpus are present in her first letter. She declares reading *Le Siege de la Rochelle* by Madame de Genlis¹⁵⁶ and compares it to *Corinne ou l'Italie* by Madame de Staël¹⁵⁷ which, to her, is a great

152 ed. Nanora SWEET and Julie MELNYK, *Felicia Hemans: Reimagining poetry in the Nineteenth Century*, (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 36.

153 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol.2., p. 196.

154 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 274.

155 *Id.*, vol 2., p. 149.

156 Stéphanie Félicité du Crest de Saint-Aubin, Countess of Genlis and Marchioness of Sillery, (1746 – 1830), was a French writer.

157 Anne-Louise Germaine Necker, Baroness of Staël-Holstein, known under the name Madame de Staël,

compliment but was as well for others since this work was “one of the most influential novels for women writers in nineteenth-century Britain.”¹⁵⁸ Felicia Hemans mastered several languages, among them French and German, and would read books in different languages additionally she would also discuss translations, either her own or others. It seems, however, that she had a preference for the German language and for its “affecting simplicity.”¹⁵⁹ Throughout her letters she admires the German language and philosophy, in the same letter mentioned previously where she explains her distaste of review, she adds “How very different seems the spirit of the literary men in Germany! [...] I am delighted with the beautiful simplicity of these words in the dedication.”¹⁶⁰ It is not only the culture or the language she admired, but the mindset of German people as well. Furthermore, she was a strong defendant of the language and even tried to convince Wordsworth of its worth:

“Indeed, I think he is inclined to undervalue German literature from not knowing its best and purest master-pieces. ‘Goëthe’s writings cannot live, he one day said to me, ‘because “they are not holy! I found that he had unfortunately adopted this opinion from an attempt to read Wilhelm Meister, which had inspired him with irrepressible disgust. However, I shall try to bring him into a better way of thinking, if only out of my own deep love for what has been to me a source of intellectual joy so cheering and elevating.”’¹⁶¹

In her letters, she refers to a German poet, Ludwig Tieck (1773 – 1853), whom she likes for his simplicity and joy, on different occasions. Regarding the British writers, she mentions William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) throughout her life (often in relation to plays she went to see) as well as other contemporary writers such as Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, Walter Scott and female writers too, Joanna Baillie or Mary Russell Mitford to only name a few. Felicia Hemans had a fondness for the figure of the tortured or doomed character, which shows both in her poems and in the subject of her attention: Hamlet is described as “of all Shakespeare’s characters the one which interests [her] most”¹⁶² and Theodor Körner¹⁶³ is “an object of peculiar enthusiasm to [her]”

(1766 – 1817), was a French philosopher and writer.

158 Susan BROWN, “The Victorian Poetess,” *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph BRISTOW, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 184

159 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 120.

160 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 275.

161 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 145.

162 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 512.

163 Theodor Körner (1791 – 1813) was a German poet and soldier, he fought during the Napoleonic Wars and died at 21. His work consists of poems, light comedies and historical tragedies.

which “is impossible to read without a feeling almost of pain that such a spirit has passed away, with all its high and holy thoughts.”¹⁶⁴ However, Theodor Körner is not a character but a real life poet, her endearment with him almost blurs the line between reality and fiction. Very often Felicia Hemans reads about real men who suffered a tragic fate: Kröner is one, as well as Napoleon or, Iturbide, whom we previously mentioned. The line between reality and fiction is not blurred in one sense only, from the real world becoming fictional, indeed whenever she writes to Mary Russell Mitford and mentions her work *The Village* she talks about the characters as if they were real human beings:

“I believe, if I could be personally introduced to you, that I should, in less than five minutes, begin to enquire about Lucy and the lilies of the valley, and whether you had succeeded in peopling that shady border in your territories 'with those shy flowers.’”¹⁶⁵

Whether it be real people or fictional ones Felicia Hemans has a lot of empathy, and gives a lot of importance to the feelings produced by or present in the work she is reading or admiring as revealed by her affirmation that “the highest degree of beauty in any art, certainly always excites, if not tears, at least the inward feeling of tears.”¹⁶⁶

Another display of her interest in art is seen when she mentions sketching in her letters: “I have been making you a little drawing of Mr. Wordsworth's house, which, though it has no other merit than that of fidelity, will, I know, find favour in your sight”¹⁶⁷ or at a younger time “I shall take advantage of the picturesque scenery by which we shall be surrounded, to improve myself in drawing.”¹⁶⁸

164 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 118.

165 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

166 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 222.

167 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

168 *Id.*, p.476.



Figure 9: Sketch “Drawn by Mrs Hemans” on the title page of her sister's memoir, *The Works of Mrs. Hemans; With a Memoir of Her Life by Her Sister In Six Volumes, Volume I.* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1839).

Alternatively if she mentions a few paintings throughout her letters it is mostly in passing whereas the sculptures have all of her attention, as she says in a letter about a sculpture of Sappho by John Gibson: “there was a good collection of pictures in the same house, but they were almost unaccountably vulgarized in my sight by the presence of the lonely and graceful statue.”¹⁶⁹ Therefore, it is of sculptures that Felicia Hemans makes her most compelling criticism. Rather than being a personal interest, her attention to sculptures and statues, especially of the female body, was more a cultural phenomenon as “nineteenth-century 'poetesses' transformed *ut pictura poesis* into *ut sculptura poeta* ('as a sculpture, so a poet').”¹⁷⁰ Sculptures were perceived as the representation of the female body but more importantly of the woman poet's work put on display. The sculptures she admires are often inspired by Greek myths as for example Ajax and Patroclus¹⁷¹ or Sappho¹⁷² which contrasts with her taste in literary works. In particular, she makes similar criticism towards two different sculptures of woman poets, one is by Danish artist Bertel Thorvaldsen¹⁷³ and the second, the funerary monument of

169 *Id.*, p. 512.

170 Michele MARTINEZ, *op. cit.*, p. 621.

171 By Scottish Artist Lawrence MacDonald (1799 – 1878).

172 By John Gibson (1790 – 1866) but also by Antonio Canova (1757 – 1822).

173 Bertel Thorvaldsen, spelled as “Thorwaldsen” in her letters, (1770 – 1884).

the poetess Mary Tighe, by British sculptor John Flaxman¹⁷⁴ which are described and criticized as follows:

“It represents a dying female, supported by her husband, who is bending over her. Nothing can be more admirable than the perfect *abandon* of her figure, the utter, desolate helplessness of the sinking head and hands, so true and yet so graceful: it is like looking at a broken flower. But, unfortunately, the sculptor has thought proper to introduce a *man with wings* and an hour-glass, at the foot of the couch, looking not one bit more ideal than the man without wings at the head. Now I never could, in my severest illness and most visionary state of mind, imagine either Time or Eternity entering my room with the doctor or one of my brothers, and standing at my bed-side: and I heartily wish that some skilful exorcist would banish these evil genii from the realms of painting and sculpture altogether, and lay them quietly, with other goblins, at the bottom of the Red Sea.”¹⁷⁵

“We went to the tomb, ‘the grave of a poetess,’ where there is a monument by Flaxman: it consists of a recumbent female figure, with much of the repose, the mysterious sweetness of happy death, which is to me so affecting in monumental sculpture. There is, however, a very small Titania looking sort of figure with wings, sitting at the head of the sleeper, which I thought interfered with the singleness of effect which the tomb would have produced: unfortunately, too, the monument is carved in very rough stone, which allows no delicacy of touch.”¹⁷⁶

In both cases Felicia Hemans admires the quality of the sentiment displayed by the figure of the broken woman, either dying or dead, that of “perfect abandon” or “mysterious sweetness of happy death.” These women are helpless but in a way they are also at peace through their death. What is more interesting here is not only the commentary upon the meaning of the works but the criticism made of the material choices of the sculptors: she dislikes the choice of a rough material for the tomb of Mary Tighe, which breaks the illusion of the credibility of the statue. Above all what repulses her is the addition of supernatural elements to these scenes of death. It seems that she particularly dislikes the winged figures either it be Titania or “the man with wings.” If the winged man is an angel then Felicia Hemans does not fancy him since she describes him as having nothing more than a mortal man. The addition of the supernatural breaks the realism of the scenes for Felicia Hemans who wants to project herself onto these women and is unable to do so. She imagines a man “banish[ing] these

174 John Flaxman, (1755 – 1826).

175 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 159. I was unable to retrieve an image fitting Felicia Hemans's description however one sculpture by Bertel Thorvaldsen is similar to the one she describes, it is *Cupid revives the fainted Psyche*. see in Appendix 5.

176 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

evil geni” not only on these particular sculptures but from the realm of Art in general.



Figure 10: The statue at the tomb of Mary Tighe, by John Flaxman.

Conversely, if she heavily criticizes the supernatural as not having its place among the deeply human experience that is death, Felicia Hemans is not always so adamantly against the supernatural world. On the contrary, on different occasions she quite enjoys the supernatural and especially when it revolves around legends and the use of imagination. She exchanges ghost stories with one of her correspondents:

“I hope the ghost stories made your hair stand on end satisfactorily, and that the wind moaned in the true supernatural tone while you were reading, and that the lamp or taper (it ought to have been enshrined in a skull) threw the proper blue flickering light over the page, and gave every mysterious word a more unearthly character. I have been making research for a good Welsh ghost to introduce to your acquaintance, but have not yet met with one whom I consider sufficiently terrific.”¹⁷⁷

One might say that her opinion changed with times, indeed the two descriptions made of the sculptures both date from after her arrival to Ireland therefore more towards the end

¹⁷⁷ Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 198.

of her life, maybe the change of scenery and the repeated illness bored her from the supernatural or scared her away? If indeed the ghost stories she mentions appear more often earlier than her removal to Ireland one exception must be made and that is, her description of a song based on a supernatural theme. This song is *Napoleon Midnight Review* by Sigismund Neukomm¹⁷⁸ that she heard during a concert at the Irish capital, she describes it as

“The music, which is of every wild, supernatural character, a good deal in Weber’s incantation style, accords well with this grand idea: the single trumpet, followed by a long, rolling, ominous sound from the double drum, made me quite thrill with undefinable feelings.”¹⁷⁹

The song tells the story of “the dead hosts of Napoleon [arousing] from their sleep under the northern snows, and along the Egyptian sands, and in the sunny fields of Italy”¹⁸⁰ at midnight which once again mixes the experience of death and the supernatural. This time there is no trace of the previous distaste of the supernatural when combined with the idea of death. Perhaps it is the difference between the two media, music on the one hand and sculpture on the other. However it could also be explained by the fact that Napoleon and his surroundings have achieved the level of myth, they have passed in the fictional world more than the real one which leads to his death being deconsecrated whereas the ones of the two women statues are still sacred, or it could also be that the sacred character of their death is directly linked to them being women and furthermore poetesses rather than men, since the death of women is a theme already very present in her poems notably in *Records of Woman*.

Throughout her letters, Felicia Hemans recurrently references music and songs, while a piano player herself (she mentions playing for the Duc de Chartres, son of the Duc d'Orleans at Walter Scott's house probably in 1829)¹⁸¹ as well as a composer of melodies which were then put into music by her friend John Lodge; music had a great importance for her. The concert of Paganini that she heard in Dublin in 1831 is the subject of several of letters, not only the music but the man himself. Other references to music include German songs or Italian's as well as Mozart and Beethoven which she applauds for their “deeper tone.”¹⁸² Lastly, she is not only interested in art but also in

178 Sigismund Ritter von Neukomm, (1778 – 1858), was an Austrian composer and pianist.

179 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

180 *Id.*, p. 247.

181 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 51.

182 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 199

theories about art and the conditions of artists. She refuses the theory of Thomas Moore¹⁸³ about the unfitness of genius for domestic happiness but wonders about William Hazlitt's *Pleasures of Painting*.¹⁸⁴ In this essay, William Hazlitt postulates that artists live longer and that their art is a “kind of sanctuary” from everyday life which allows them to be happy, something that Felicia Hemans does not envy.

iii. Business matters.

The third purpose of Felicia Hemans's letters is much more formal and practical, that is, the establishment and maintenance of a business network with more formal letters abiding by more conventional epistolary forms. Felicia Hemans lived far away from any capital, and thus was relying on letters to exchange with her editors, additionally her poetry reached much farther than she ever travelled to since she became famous in the United States and Germany, two countries she never visited. It is within Susan Wolfson's book that we find most of the business-themed letters taken from the archives of publishing firms, Murray or Blackwood. The relation between Felicia Hemans and business is one of inexperience letting place to experience.

At the beginning of her career, her mother was handling the business matters with the help of Matthew Nicholson and William Roscoe as is shown in a letter written by her and included in Wolfson's book.¹⁸⁵ She was in a partnership with the publishing firm Cadell & Davies, who took care of the publication of her first three books of poetry. However, they did not seem very interested in the poet and Felicity Browne, the mother of Felicia Hemans, complains about it the letter “I am sure C. & D. have it fully as much in their power to promote the sale of a work & thereby make it popular [...] if they would think it worth their while to exert themselves a little in the cause.”¹⁸⁶ This letter also displays the inexperience of Felicity Browne, who is seeking advice from Mathew Nicholson. When Felicia Hemans takes on the role of working out her own publications her letters are hesitant, seeking out counsel and letting others make decisions for her, she says to William Roscoe: “you will perhaps have the goodness to

183 Thomas Moore (1779 – 1852) was an Irish poet.

184 William Hazlitt, (1778 – 1830) was an English writer.

185 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 477.

186 *Id.*, p. 478.

fix what you would consider as an adequate compensation”¹⁸⁷ or to Matthew Nicholson: “I avail myself of your kind offer to undertake the disposal of my manuscripts for me.”¹⁸⁸ Paula Feldman in her article “The Poets and The Profit: Felicia Hemans and the Literary Marketplace” states that Felicia Hemans likely had a representative to take care of the negotiations in her place, which would have been common in her time (she says that either her brother or her friend William Jacob assumed that role at different times.)¹⁸⁹ She did not only seek counsel in the handling of her remuneration but also in the subject themselves, she asks John Murray in a letter dated from the 26th of February 1817: “Had I been more fully aware of the very limited taste for the Arts which you inform me is displayed by the Public, I should certainly have applied myself to some other subject.”¹⁹⁰ It seems that the sale of her works was the important factor in the writing of her poems, she wanted to write works that would sell, at least at the beginning of her career.

This view, as well as her inexperience with business matters, slowly comes to change, by the end of her life, she regrets that the need to provide for her family has kept her from writing what she wanted and not what would sell. With more success comes much more legitimacy to make demands, and rather than letting her editors decide for her, Felicia Hemans started to make decisions. She advises her editor, often William Blackwood, on the best time to publish a work “I have taken the liberty of sending for your perusal a few extracts from a little poem I have now by me, which would I think, be appropriate to the present state of public feeling, if it were brought out promptly.”¹⁹¹ Felicia Hemans was paid by “profit-sharing plan,” meaning that she would earn money for her work only after her editor had paid his own expenses (print, paper) with the profit of the work.¹⁹² When Cadell & Davies tried to take advantage of Felicia Hemans's success with *Records of Woman* and asked her for her authorization to republish one of her old volumes of poetry, she answers that it would be “so injurious to [her] present literary reputation, that [she has] earnestly to request no steps may be taken to re-produce it,”¹⁹³ being aware that what she wrote when she was fourteen was not a work of the best quality, or as she puts it in a letter addressed to William

187 *Id.*, p. 480.

188 *Id.*, p. 479.

189 Paula FELDMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

190 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 480.

191 Paula FELDMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

192 *Id.*, p. 154.

193 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 508.

Blackwood: “I am sensible how very great difference there is, I will not say of merit but of subject and interest between my earlier and later poetical works.”¹⁹⁴ In the letter to Cadell & Davies referred before she also says that “both my friends and myself consider” her work not worthy, indicating once again that she had support and help in her business affairs even if now she is the figurehead of her own dealings. The consecration of her talent is seen when she asks William Blackwood for two guineas a page for her contribution to *Maga* (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*) and he accepts it, answering her that “though 2 guineas a page is so much higher than what I pay even my most gifted friend, I will not grudge it to you.”¹⁹⁵ From Susan Wolfson's book what we can see of Felicia Hemans's business letters is an inexperienced young woman letting place to a woman with much more assertiveness.

iv. A place to confide.

It is paradoxical to see such assertiveness in Felicia Hemans when the last use of her letters is as a way to confide to someone but also as a way to express her anxiety. The act of writing is particularly introspective, it is a “psychological process, which brings self-exploration and the means to relate one-self to society.”¹⁹⁶ By writing we can sometimes express more than by talking. Furthermore, the letter has a history of being used as a substitute for the voice, “on écrit ce qu'on ne peut pas dire, et voilà tout” said Gustave Lanson.¹⁹⁷ Is it really the case? In 1689, Pierre Ortigue de Vaumorière defines the letter as “un écrit envoyé à une personne absente pour lui faire savoir ce que nous lui dirions si nous étions en état de lui parler”¹⁹⁸ whereas a year later, in Antoine Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* the letter is defined as “un écrit qu'on envoie à un absent pour lui faire entendre sa pensée avec ces caractères.”¹⁹⁹ Then is the letter the expression of words or of thoughts? Aren't thoughts much more private than words and if so, is there in the letter a confessional aspect? What sort of introspection, or confession, can we see on the part of Felicia Hemans?

194 Paula FELDMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

195 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 515.

196 Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p.21.

197 Brigitte DIAZ, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

198 Gérard FERREYROLLES, “L'épistolaire à la lettre,” *Littératures classiques*, No 71 (Armand Colin, 2010), p. 3.

199 *Id.*, p. 3.

Firstly, from what we have seen before it would seem unlikely that Felicia Hemans would have relied on her pen to say things that her voice could not say. The word “to confess” or “confession” (with the meaning of admitting or disclosing a weakness or a mistake) only appears three times throughout the corpus. None of them are life-changing confessions, she declares being disappointed at the Scottish scenery but “[does] not dare to make the confession openly”²⁰⁰ or she “frankly confess[es]”²⁰¹ to being overwhelmed by the society she's in. When she writes to her friend “do not betray my weakness” the previous statement also takes the form of a confession, to be kept between the two correspondents. However, in one letter she does say “How very gravely have I written to you ! If you were sitting here beside me, I could hardly have spoken so.”²⁰² The exclamatory sentence highlights Felicia Hemans's surprise at what her letter has turned out to be, she seems unaware of what she wrote previously and admits that she would not have been able to say it aloud. Therefore, it seems that the introspective aspect of writing did work on Felicia Hemans, this is illustrated by the acknowledgement of her fragility and the state of her feelings which seem to transcribe through her letters and notably her anxiety and her anguish. It seems then that Felicia Hemans was using the act of writing to discuss her feelings and more particularly her inadequacy to face the world. Although a much less common use of her letters than the function of communication, it is still an interesting one and sheds light on her character. She appears to have been a fairly anxious woman describing her mental health and her temper as an Irish melody “with its quick and wild transitions from sadness to gaiety.”²⁰³ In modern terms we might say that she suffered from anxiety and even a possible bipolarity. Her anxiety takes the form of physical and medical problems, she speaks about a “state of nervous suffering”²⁰⁴ which goes by phases or that “[her] health varies with every emotion of [her] mind.”²⁰⁵ Different things lead her to worry, for example the future of her sons “whose future prospects in life I begin to feel painfully anxious,”²⁰⁶ when Robert Peel offers a position to her son he “relieve[s] [her] from the pressure of a heavy anxiety”²⁰⁷ Her literary career also makes her anxious and notably the reception

200 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 243.

201 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

202 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 137.

203 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

204 *Id.*, p. 257.

205 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 247.

206 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

207 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 520.

of her works, something she attributes to the failure of the *Vespers of Palermo*:

“I cannot that I am again help feeling more anxiety than usual on the occasion. I believe it is the ill-nature apparently excited by the “Vespers’ which has disagreeably enlarged my knowledge of the world, and given me a timidity to which, at least in its present degree, I was before a stranger. But I have no choice, and cannot do otherwise than persevere in the course to which circumstances introduced me.”²⁰⁸

It seems that the entire world makes her nervous and she appears to have a hard time facing this anxiety which sometimes paralyses her; the prospect of travelling alone leads her to imagine herself “[sitting] down in a sort of stupid despondence and utter inability either to advance or retreat”²⁰⁹ but the salvation here comes from a friend who will meet her and help her in her travel, just like in her acknowledgement that “if it were not for the kind encouragement I have received from you and Mr Reginald Heber, should be much more anxiously occupied in searching for any outlet of escape, than in attempting to overcome the difficulties which seem to obstruct my onward path.”²¹⁰ Her friends appear as the necessary clutch to help her overcome her “thousand inward anxieties.”²¹¹

It is important to take into account the subjective aspects of the epistolary form. However, those should not be a reason to dismiss Felicia Hemans's letters as inauthentic. Certainly, a letter can be “a mask or a portrait” but because the possibility of hiding behind the words exists, we should not negate the probability of the portrait. Her decision to create a certain mask for specific conversations can be more revealing than a simple portrait. The tension present within a letter between the public and private spheres is particularly fitting in a study of Felicia Hemans, especially when her letters present such different facets. Therefore, it is safe to assume that Felicia Hemans was more truthful in certain of her letters rather than in her published works. Furthermore, while the epistolary form imposes certain codes upon the writer, her letters should not be seen as simply fulfilling codes but on the contrary we could suppose that the lack of embellishment in her letters display more honesty. Even formal letters such as her business letters are interesting since they display her commercial strategies, which

208 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 106.

209 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

210 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

211 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 205.

highlight yet another side of Felicia Hemans. Her letters can teach us a lot about her personality, that she was for example an anxious woman prone to melancholic moods. Thus we can answer that, indeed, Felicia Hemans's letters can lead to a better understanding of who she was as a poet and a woman than her poetry can.

FELICIA HEMANS AND HER IDENTITY

After considering the contextualizing information as well as the form and ethics of the letters of Felicia Hemans we are free to finally examine their content. In the previous argument, the content of her letters has already been outlined through a study of their diverse uses. A close study of a recurrent theme found in her letters might be more useful to try and distinguish particular aspects of Felicia Hemans's personality and opinions. Rather than looking at the letter as a tool of communication, this chapter will consider it as a tool of introspection. Furthermore, it also gives a preview of what a more consequent work on Felicia Hemans's letters might resemble. Lastly, the tension between her role as a poet and as a woman will be explored as a central theme of her letters as well as in some of her works. Several factors are to be taken into account, notably the diverse expectations she had to fulfill as both a woman and a poet along with the pressure imposed by her fame and lastly, her negotiation of these two images.

1. The theme of nature in her letters.

Felicia Hemans did not consider the epistolary form as a way to express her talent as an author but simply as a tool of communication, yet her letters are not uninteresting, if they are not especially remarkable through their style, they are through their content. Her letters contain an extensive and diverse range of themes which teach us more about their writer and her interests, from Welsh folklore, to Spanish politics as well as History especially the Middle Ages. Some themes are more consistently present, for example contemporary literary works, songs and music, or the German language and culture which she tries to share around her.¹ However, it seems that one of the most recurrent and the most revealing regarding Felicia Hemans's personality is the presence of nature in her letters. Although nature is not specifically a theme of the eighteenth or nineteenth century, its development in the Romantic era was important both for common people with the development of roads and guide books and for writers, who “saw natural objects through their own eyes and no longer through the writing of Theocritus and Virgil.”² With the rise of an interest in nature and especially in its representation in arts

1 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 145.

2 ed. Jean RAIMOND and J.R. WATSON, *A Handbook to English Romanticism*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 184.

such as paintings came new theorisations, notably Edmund Burke's³ theories about the Beautiful and the Sublime and William Gilpin's⁴ aesthetic of the Picturesque which became characteristic of the Romantic movement. Since Felicia Hemans was writing during the Romantic era, these theories will be used to analyse the presence of Nature in her letters. If Felicia Hemans has never mentioned either writer in her letters, nevertheless she must have been aware of those two authors as they were influential throughout the eighteenth century. Because of its representation in arts, Nature was understood as an object to be admired, Felicia Hemans indeed associates the two in a similar manner, in a letter from 1811 she says: "I shall take advantage of the picturesque scenery by which we shall be surrounded, to improve myself in drawing; as I am convinced that the practice of taking views from nature, is the principal way of acquiring that spirit and correctness, which alone constitute superior excellence."⁵ Similarly to the other descriptive passages of her letters, her descriptions of nature are very thoughtful and detailed giving the reader a real appreciation of what was unfolding before her. The nature present in Felicia Hemans's letters is both a domesticated and a lesser nature such as the presence of flowers for which she had a real fondness or, a larger and more dominant one, meaning the surrounding landscapes changing with the influence of seasons.

i. The Beautiful.

The Beautiful, along with the Picturesque and the Sublime, is complicated to define and this is mainly due to the plurality of possible definitions established throughout the century. Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) associates the Beautiful with feminine qualities which are all related to softness or fragility: "[...] small [...] smooth [...] not angular but melted [...] a delicate frame without any remarkable appearance of strength [...] its colour clear and bright, but not very strong and glaring [...] or if it should have any glaring colour, to have it diversified with others"⁶ These characteristics are almost all found in Felicia Hemans's descriptions of her time at Rydal Mount and Dove Nest,

3 Edmund Burke, (1729 – 1797) was an Irish statesman, an author, and a philosopher.

4 William Gilpin, (1724 – 1804) was an English artist, cleric and author.

5 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 476.

6 Anne K. MELLOR, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

for example:

“You can scarcely conceive a more beautiful little spot than Rydal Mount; my window is completely embowered in ivy and roses, and Winandermere lies gleaming among the hills before it: - what a contrast to the culinary regions of Liverpool!”⁷

To begin with, she uses the word “beautiful” herself but the rest of the description appears to be in agreement with Edmund Burke's idea of the Beautiful; the spot is “little,” the sharpness of the window frame is softened with flowers and lastly the mountain in the background is “gleaming.” These terms are soft and minimize the impact of nature, it is not grandiose but pretty, the complete opposite of the Sublime. A postcard from Dove Nest present a visual representation of Felicia Hemans's descriptions.



Figure 11: Postcard of the home of Felicia Hemans. Dove Nest, near Ambleside where she resided during the summer of 1830.

The house is entirely covered in flowers and plants up to the window frames, the garden is ordered and maintained (also flowered with a single color: red) and the rise of the

⁷ Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

background hints at the presence of the unseen mountain.

Most of her descriptions carry the same idea of beauty but there is also an important focus put on the stillness of the landscape:

“I seem to be writing to you almost from the spirit-land, all is here so brightly still, so remote from every-day cares and tumults, that sometimes I can scarcely persuade myself I am not dreaming. It scarcely seems to be “the light of common day,” that is clothing the woody mountains before me; there is something almost visionary in its soft gleams and ever-changing shadows.”⁸

“There is balm in the very stillness of the spot I have chosen. (The residence of Thomas Hamilton) The majestic silence of these lakes, perfectly soundless and waveless as they are, except when troubled by the wind, is to me most impressive. Oh! What a poor thing is society in the presence of skies and waters and everlasting hills!”⁹

Once more, nothing in her descriptions is sharp or grandiose rather everything is still and soft. Those quotations are yet again in harmony with Edmund Burke's vision of the Beautiful: “the 'ideal' or beautiful landscape was everywhere associated with the undulating lakes, harmonized foregrounds and backgrounds glowing golden or silvery tonalities [...]”¹⁰ Even the brightness in the first quote is opposed by the stillness of the lake in order to keep the general impression of the description as beautiful. Between those two extracts, two points are raised: the first is the place of religion within nature and the second the place of man, or rather society.

In addition to Edmund Burke's criteria of the Beautiful, we can look at John Ruskin's¹¹ vision of the Beautiful and more especially of Beauty which was “something Divine; either the approving voice of God, the glorious symbol of Him, the evidence of His kind presence, or the obedience to His will by Him induced and supported.”¹² This vision of God is clearly opposed to the vision proposed by the Sublime that of a wrathful God but is also the vision found within Felicia Hemans's letters. In the previous ones, nature is presented as immortal and as “the spirit-land.” The following

8 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

9 *Id.*, p. 217.

10 Anne K. MELLOR, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

11 John Ruskin (1819 – 1900) was an English artist and critic.

12 “The Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin: Chapter 2, Section II: Ruskin's theory of Typical Beauty” by George P. Landow, Professor of English and the History of Art, Brown University. Victorian Web. Accessed 23.May 2017

<<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/2.2.html>>

extract however, dates back to 1834 when Felicia Hemans was residing in Ireland and a year before her death. By the end of her life, similarly to William Wordsworth, she had become more and more religious, even planning to write a book of sacred poetry.¹³

“But better far than these indications of recovery, is the sweet religious peace which I feel gradually overshadowing me with its dove-pinions, excluding all that would exclude thoughts of God. I would I could convey to you the deep feelings of repose and thankfulness with which I lay on Friday evening, gazing from my sofa upon a sunset sky of the richest suffusions—silvery green and amber kindling into the most glorious tints of the burning rose. I felt its holy beauty sinking through my inmost being, with an influence drawing me nearer and nearer to God. The stillness here is exquisite; broken only by the occasional notes of the robin, one of which faithful birds yesterday paid us a visit.”¹⁴

This description focuses less on the physical nature that she perceives but its inner effects. What we can understand from what Felicia Hemans cites, is that the beauty of nature is bringing her closer to God and that she found both an inner and outer peace among the “stillness” of nature. Once again her depiction is very close to Edmund Burke's views, with the “feeling of repose” around her and the “silvery green and amber” sky. Earlier than in 1834, she had already associated nature and religion in another letter:

“How shall I tell you”, she wrote from this delicious retirement, “of all the loveliness by which I am surrounded – of all the soothing and holy influence it seems shedding down into my inmost heart. I have sometimes feared, within the last two years, that the effect of suffering and adulation, and feelings highly wrought and too severely tried, would have been to dry up within me the fountains of such pure and simple enjoyment; but *now* I know that

– 'Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her.'

I can think of nothing but what is pure, and true, and kind; and my eyes are filled with grateful tears even whilst I am writing to you.”¹⁵

This time, although the idea of holiness and sacred nature is still present, it is less evident whether this nature is a product of God, or rather, a deity in itself. There is no mention of God himself, on the contrary “the loveliness by which [she] is surrounded” does not bring her closer to God but to nature itself, or rather, herself since once again

13 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 297.

14 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

15 *Id.*, p. 214.

nature is gendered as female (although this part of the letter is a quote). In another letter she referred to Nature as a woman again:

“I thought Anglesey, through which I travelled, without exception, the most dreary, culinary looking land of prose I ever beheld. I strove in vain to conjure up the ghost of a Druid, or even of a tree, on its wide, monotonous plains, which I really think nature must have produced to *rest* herself, after the strong excitement of composing the Caernarvonshire hills.”¹⁶

Even if assigning a female gender to Nature was common in her time, it still associates Nature with Felicia Hemans herself and other women and women writers. Nature, if she is female, is good and motherly. Moreover, because then she belongs to the female sphere, the appreciation of Nature is no longer just a male experience, women writers are also able to project their inner life and turmoils into the scenery; Nature is not only something that is exterior but interior as well, within Felicia Hemans's letters it becomes an introspective tool. Furthermore, we can see here a perception of the Beautiful specific to Felicia Hemans, indeed in a letter she says that: “the highest degree of beauty in any art, certainly always excites, if not tears, at least the inward feeling of tears.”¹⁷ The tears, in this case, are real material tears although in the previous quotes there is certainly a feeling of melancholy whether it be produced by gratefulness or simply by a sort of awe when faced with beauty.

In a true Romantic fashion, Felicia Hemans channels and projects her feelings and inner thoughts onto the nature around her. Previously, we have seen that Felicia Hemans compared her changing mood with that of Irish melodies, but she also uses nature as a metaphor for her inner life. To begin with, she describes her mood as “variable as the lights and shadows now flitting with the wind over the high grass”¹⁸ which parallels the same ideas as the metaphor of the Irish melodies did; both images represent her spirits as immaterial, neither wind nor sound can be bound, and in both cases her mood is quick to change and unpredictable. She also says to a correspondent: “you know how rapidly my thoughts and feelings chase each other, like shadows of clouds over the mountains,”¹⁹ it is not simply her sensibility or her emotions that are brisk but her entire way of thinking. Moreover, her spirits are not only influenced by the immediate action of nature but also by its ever-changing essence:

16 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 154.

17 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 222.

18 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

19 *Id.*, p. 171.

“I cannot but feel every year, with the return of the violet, how much the shadows of my mind have deepened since its last appearance; and to me the spring, with all its joy and beauty, is generally a time of thoughtfulness rather than mirth.”²⁰

This extract is different from the previous images because it provides expectations, indeed it appears that her mood returns every year at the same period whereas the image of the wind is one of unpredictability and pulsion. Her image is contradictory: what should be a time of rebirth and renewal becomes a time of “thoughtfulness” betraying Felicia Hemans's melancholic nature. She is not in harmony with nature since she cannot feel the joy of the coming of spring. Her spirit is also very much associated with flowers, here her melancholy is due to the return of the violet, in another letter, she mentions feeling “*Mimosa-like*” when “contemplat[ing] the desperate undertaking [visiting Chiefswood] a little more closely.”²¹ But Felicia Hemans does not only appreciate flowers for their metaphorical value but also for the material objects that they are. She thinks that “it is very dismal to live in a *world without flowers*”²² and writes:

“I really think that pure passion for flowers is the only one which long sickness leaves untouched with its chilling influences. Often during this weary illness of mine have I looked upon new books with perfect apathy, when, if a friend has sent me a few flowers, my heart has leaped up to their dreamy hues and odours with a sudden sense of renovated childhood, which seems to me one of the mysteries of our being.”²³

According to that passage, Felicia Hemans's love for flowers, and thus nature, is even greater than her intellectual interest. This, associated with John Ruskin's belief that “any material object which can give us pleasure [...] without any direct and definite exertion of the intellect, I call in some way, or in some degree, beautiful,”²⁴ gives to the flowers the image of an expression of the Beautiful. Flowers are beautiful wholly because they are pleasing to the eyes. They do not represent a challenge or demand a need for analysis, anyone can appreciate their beautiful value and not solely gifted minds. Flowers can also be associated with the domestic sphere. Felicia Hemans, mentions

20 *Id.*, p. 84.

21 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 20.

22 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 300.

23 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 28.

24 “The Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin: Chapter 2, Section II: Ruskin's theory of Typical Beauty” by George P. Landow, Professor of English and the History of Art, Brown University. Victorian Web. Accessed 23.May 2017

<<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/2.2.html>>

embellishing her place by adding flowers to it:

“Do you know that I have really succeeded in giving something of beauty to the *suburban* court of my dwelling by the aid of the laburnums and rhododendrons, which I planted myself, and which I want you to see while they are so amiably flowering.”²⁵

Felicia Hemans often mentions the flowers she has planted herself associating them with homeliness and everything that goes with it: childhood, friendship, and more importantly innocence. Flowers are then a way to domesticate a place, to make it a home but it also represents an innocent and fragile image of femininity. It is puzzling to note that at the same time, the Beautiful is both characterized by its relation to femininity: it is soft and smooth, and by its lack of self-questioning on the part of the viewer, it is much more earthly than intellectual as a reflexion is not necessary to the admiration of flowers.

ii. The Picturesque.

Although nature is very often described as Beautiful in Felicia Hemans's letters it is at the same described as wild. Thus appears a sort of paradox, indeed very often she lingers on the wildest attributes of nature and yet she appears to find in it a certain peace of mind. The Picturesque, similarly to the Beautiful or the Sublime is hard to define, mostly because it has been the source of debate and several writers have used the word with their own interpretations, not always with the same ideas. William Gilpin first theorized the characteristics of the Picturesque (also called Picturesque beauty, highlighting the lack of major differences between the two) in *Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales, etc. relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the summer of the year 1770*, in 1772. He defines its most characteristic aspects as the roughness and ruggedness therefore it can be associated with the rural and the archaic seen in the presence of ruins.²⁶ Sir Uvedale Price,²⁷ whose work was also influential for the definition of the Picturesque, places it midway between the soft Beautiful and the fearsome Sublime.²⁸ In a similar comprehension, Suzy Halimi makes

25 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 14.

26 Jean RAIMOND and J.R. WATSON, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

27 Sir Uvedale Price, (1747 – 1829), was an English author and a landowner.

28 Stephen COPLEY and Peter GARSIDE, *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, landscape and*

the difference between the “homely” and the “grand” picturesque, the former being more associated with the Beautiful and the latter with the Sublime.²⁹ The “homely” Picturesque includes not only nature but its inhabitants too, who are described as “ragged country folk appear[ing] among shaggy trees in well-composed landscapes”³⁰ We found this image in Felicia Hemans upon her meeting with William Wordsworth, her first view of the man is described as such:

“I was driven to a lovely cottage-like building, almost hidden by a profusion of roses and ivy; and a most benignant-looking old man greeted me in the porch: this was Mr. Wordsworth himself.”³¹

The cottage is described as lovely, which is incompatible with the expected roughness of the Picturesque but nevertheless the image of the “old man” appearing from a “profusion” of flowers remains in accord with the previously drawn image of the “homely” Picturesque which is closer to the Beautiful than the Sublime.

Felicia Hemans uses the term “Picturesque” only once in the corpus and it is tightly associated with the Sublime. She is describing to her correspondent the countryside of Llangollen and its mountains and notably the ruin of a castle upon a rock. However, what we can see in her depiction is the disfiguration of the scene by modernity:

“I can easily imagine your indignation at the sight of stage-coaches amongst such scenery. You will, therefore, I trust, sympathize with my feelings on finding, upon my last visit to Conway, the *ci-devant* picturesque little island, in the midst of the river, metamorphosed into some thing like a raised pie, for the better accommodation of the proposed bridge. I am not so moon-struck as to quarrel with civilized life, and all its advantages, but I own I should like occasionally to be transported to some scene where I might see what nature was, when utterly untamed, with her hair *uncurled*, and in all her original wildness.”³²

As Felicia Hemans says it is not solely modernity she is against but more largely the presence of man in nature. What was before a “picturesque island” is turned into a “raised-pie,” an object made by man for his pleasure. The civilized Man modifies nature and tames it, depriving it of its “original wilderness.” It seems that there is a difference

aesthetics since 1770, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 220.

29 Jean RAIMOND and J.R. WATSON, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

30 *Id.*, p. 215.

31 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 503.

32 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 88.

between wild nature and domesticated one such as the flowers that Felicia Hemans planted around her house. It is interesting to note that Felicia Hemans, once again, associates nature with femininity, she uses the pronouns “her” and talks about her “uncurled hair” however at the same time she uses a vocabulary related to animality and savageness (“untamed,” “wildness”). Felicia Hemans recurrently deplores the presence of man in nature, indeed, to her the appreciation of nature must be done solitarily:

“The scenery round the waterfall, though of exquisite beauty, is much spoiled, to my taste, by the lounging, eating, and flirting groups, who disturb what nature meant to be the depth of stillness and seclusion.”³³

Her appreciation of nature is disturbed by other people's presence and certainly by their disregard towards what she considers a beautiful place. Society has overstepped into nature, taking away from Felicia Hemans a place of quiet and reflexion. When she visits the tomb of Mary Tighe in Ireland she expresses her “wish [that] [she] could have been alone with Nature and [her] thoughts, but to [her] surprise, [she] found [herself] the object of quite a reception.”³⁴ Furthermore, communion with nature, is to Felicia Hemans, an apparent source of strength and revitalisation;

“I returned from the country rather wearied than refreshed, as I unfortunately found myself an object of much curiosity, and, in gratitude I ought to add, attention; still it fatigued my spirits, which were longing for full and quiet communion with nature.”³⁵

The constant attention under which she was, as a result of her popularity, pressed upon her and demanded that she escaped from society into nature. Therefore, nature is for Felicia Hemans a place of communion which she has gendered as feminine, it is a place of peace and one that she considers as part of her home. It is useful to remember that Felicia Hemans was not raised in a big city but a small Welsh town, consequently nature and the wilderness are part of Felicia Hemans's nostalgia as well as her ideology of the home setting which itself is associated with quiet and calm. She says about nature that “[she] [has] been almost cradled amidst scenes of beauty, and almost all the forms and colours of nature are familiar to [her], but it is not so with those of art.”³⁶ Whenever

33 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 303.

34 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

35 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 245.

36 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

Felicia Hemans longs for home she is also wishing for a return to nature. Nature becomes a memory, a melancholic nostalgia and therefore she is not alienated from it but rather united to it.

John Ruskin has a different understanding of the Picturesque from William Gilpin. To him, part of the Picturesque is found in the decay of architecture but more importantly it is also the "sublimity not inherent in the nature of the thing, but caused by something external to it; as the ruggedness of a cottage roof possesses something of a mountain aspect, not belonging to the cottage as such."³⁷ The idea is described more in depth in *The Stones of Venice*:

“When a highland cottage roof is covered with fragments of shale instead of slates, it becomes picturesque, because the irregularity and rude fractures of the rocks, and their grey and gloomy colour, give to it something of the savageness, and much of the general aspect, of the slope of a mountain side.”³⁸

A very similar image is provided in Felicia Hemans's letters dating from her stay in 1830 at Dove Nest with William Wordsworth:

“The house was originally meant for a small villa, though it has long passed into the hands of farmers, and there is in consequence an air of neglect about the little domain, which does not at all approach desolation, and yet gives it something of touching interest. You see every where traces of love and care beginning to be effaced – rose trees spreading into wildness – laurels darkening the windows with too luxuriant branches; and I cannot help saying to myself, 'Perhaps some heart like my own in its feelings and sufferings has here sought refuge and found repose.' The ground is laid out in rather an antiquated style, which, now that nature is beginning to reclaim it from art, I do not at all dislike. There is a little grassy terrace immediately under the window, descending to a small court with a circular grass plot, on which grows one tall white rose tree. You cannot imagine how I delight in that fair, solitary, neglected-looking tree.”³⁹

The main difference between the two descriptions is that Felicia Hemans appears more delicate in her choice of words, the idea of roughness present in the first quotation is absent here, replaced by a profusion of flowers and plants. Nevertheless, the two are

37 “The Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin: Chapter 3, Section II: Two Modes of the Picturesque” by George P. Landow, Professor of English and the History of Art, Brown University. Victorian Web. Accessed 01.June 2017

<<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/3.2.html>>

38 George P. Landow, *op. cit.*, Accessed 23.May 2017

<<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/3.2.html>>

39 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 125.

very similar, especially in the idea that nature is taking back territory from man's work or art. The decay previously mentioned is present in the signs of neglect that are spreading and the “antiquated style.” Felicia Hemans in her description expresses an idea of profusion of the plants taking over the house itself and she repeats that idea in other letters. Once again, Felicia Hemans finds tranquility in nature and in its abundance. Lastly, one of the most picturesque descriptions of Felicia Hemans is also a very Romantic one:

“It was a little green hill, rising darkly and abruptly against a very sunny background of sloping corn-fields and woods. It appeared smooth till near the summit, but was there crested-almost *castellated* indeed—by what I took for thickly-set, pointed rocks, but, on a near approach, discovered to be old tombstones, forming quite a little ‘city of the silent.’ I left our car to explore it, and discovered some ruins of a very affecting character:—a small church, laid open to the sky, forsaken and moss grown; its font lying overturned on the green sod; some of the rude ornaments themselves but ruins. One of these, which had fallen amongst thick heath and wild-flowers, was simply a wooden cross with a female name upon it, and the inscription, ‘May her soul rest in peace !’ You will not wonder at the feeling which prompted me to stoop and raise it up again. My memory will often revert to that lonely spot, sacred to the hope of immortality, and touched by the deep quiet of the evening skies.”⁴⁰

The presence of the ruins in the wilderness which Felicia Hemans reach by leaving civilisation is picturesque. The church and its tombs have been left, forgotten from society to decay among nature. Here, there is no pretense of appearance and the scene is as it is, nothing is embellished but remains in a state of nature. However, Felicia Hemans's sentimental connection to the place, established by the realisation that the tomb is that of a woman, is much more Sublime than Picturesque.

iii. The Sublime.

At first, the concept of the Sublime appears to be missing from Felicia Hemans's letters. Although mountains and impressive sceneries are often mentioned, none are described in what we understand the Sublime to be: a transcendent experience exhilarated by fear and the realisation of one's self. Indeed the Sublime is supposed to

⁴⁰ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

inspire “a mixture of horror and pleasure”⁴¹ but it is never found in Felicia Hemans's descriptions, or rarely:

“I once passed through that scenery at night, when its sublimity was inexpressibly heightened by the fires which had been lighted to burn the gorse on the mountains. The broad masses of light and shadow which they occasioned gave it a character of almost savage grandeur, which made a powerful impression upon my mind.”⁴²

Here, the description of the Sublime is almost too similar to that of a textbook definition; the vocabulary chosen is not particularly striking and furthermore “a powerful impression upon my mind” is vague, it appears to be neither fear nor self-realisation. Felicia Hemans is aware of what the Sublime should be and she can be seen playing with expectations, either intentionally or not. For example, one of her descriptions begins with the conditions of the Sublime:

“I was very unwell for some days after my arrival here, as the mountains gave me such a stormy reception, that I reached this place with the dripping locks of a mermaid, and never was in a condition so utterly desolate.”⁴³

Several expectations of the Sublime are fulfilled in this extract, notably the presence of mountains and a storm. The character, or here, Felicia Hemans, is in a vulnerable position after her encounter with nature and we can expect the meeting with the Sublime. On the other hand, the rest of the description is not as expected and breaks expectations:

“In the midst of my annoyances from the rain and storm, I was struck by one beautiful effect upon the hills; it was produced by a rainbow diving down into a gloomy mountain pass, which it seemed really to flood with its coloured glory. I could not help thinking that it was like our religion, piercing and carrying brightness into the depth of sorrow and of the tomb. All the rest of the scene around that one illumined spot, was wrapt in the most lowering darkness.”⁴⁴

As readers who are aware of the codes of the Sublime, we expect her to be struck by a shadow or a frightening effect but it is not the case, on the contrary, she is not faced

41 Jean RAIMOND and J.R. WATSON, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

42 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 87.

43 Harriet HUCHES, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

44 *Id.*, p. 250.

with something terrifying but with a rainbow full of colours and “glory.” She refuses to give in to the expectations of the Sublime. This description is once again made by the end of Felicia Hemans's life and her religious feelings are more apparent. The rainbow is actively trying to fight the darkness of death in the name of religion, notably because everything else remains in the dark. Furthermore, this rainbow for Felicia Hemans is not simply Nature's expression but God's since it is for her, “like our religion.” Further, in her letter, Felicia Hemans describes a waterfall but in terms much more reminiscent of the Beautiful than of the Sublime:

“I was also much pleased with a little wild waterfall, quite buried among the trees. Its many cascades fell into pools of a dark green transparency, and in one of these I observed what seemed to me a remarkable effect. *The body of water* threw itself into its deep bed with scarcely any spray, and left an almost smooth and clear surface, through which, as if through ice, I saw its foamy clouds rising and working tumultuously from beneath. In following the course of this fall, down very slippery, mossy stones [...].”⁴⁵

The waterfall is “little” and all the surrounding nature is soft and smooth. Nothing about her description inspires awe and this is illustrative of the tone of the letter since she closes by saying: “we afterwards went upon the lake, the dark waters and treeless shores of which have something impressive in their stern desolation, though I do not think the rocks quite high enough for grandeur.”⁴⁶ An insight into Felicia Hemans's opinion about Ireland is present in this citation. Until then she had been fairly happy or at least had appeared to be so, but in this remark, that the rocks are not “high enough for grandeur,” we can see that she regrets her own Welsh mountains.

Therefore is it possible to find the presence of the Sublime within Felicia Hemans's letters? As mentioned before, “the sublime is associated with an experience of masculine empowerment; its contrasting term, the beautiful is associated with an experience of feminine nurturance.”⁴⁷ Consequently, if we must find the presence of the sublime within her letters it will not be the sublime with which most people are accustomed. Anne K. Mellor suggests that the “feminine sublime” is either accepted by women writer as a symbol of men's tyrannic powers or, for women writers from Wales, Scotland and Ireland then “sublime landscape are home scenery, the location of the

45 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

46 *Id.*, p. 251.

47 Anne K. MELLOR, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York; London: Routledge, 1993), p. 85.

blissful childhood memories.”⁴⁸ The sublime is not longer an alienation of man from himself but a source of fondness and memory, Felicia Hemans herself says that she has been “cradled” by nature, therefore we can suppose that she falls under the second category of this feminine sublime, she sees nature as beneficent and motherly. Another letter can complete this reading:

“Part of my journey lay along the sea-shore rather late at night, and I was surprised by quite a splendid vision of the northern lights, on the very spot where I had once, and once only, before seen them in early childhood. They shot up like slender pillars of white light, with a sort of arrowy motion, from a dark cloud above the sea; their colour varied in ascending, from that of silver to a faint orange, and then a very delicate green; and sometimes the motion was changed, and they chased each other along the edge of the cloud, with a dazzling brightness and rapidity. I was almost startled by seeing them *there* again; and after so long an interval of thoughts and years, it was like the effect produced by a sudden burst of familiar and yet long-forgotten music.”⁴⁹

This extract fits in a possible idea of the Sublime, especially according to Anne K. Mellor's new definition. The scene is reminiscent of an episode of Felicia Hemans's childhood since she mentions having already seen the phenomenon “once only, before [...] in early childhood.” Furthermore, the uniqueness of the event is highlighted: she has seen them “once only, before” and never again until this night. Although it is similar in certain aspects to the beautiful with for example, the range of colour, the airiness of the scene, there are distinctive features which were absent from her previous descriptions: it is night and the scene is quick and flashing. Friedrich von Schiller⁵⁰ in *On the Sublime* (1793) described the outcome of the sublime as “a mixed feeling [...] a composition of melancholy [...] and of joyousness”⁵¹ which would also fit Felicia Hemans's extract. The Sublime cannot be understood as a common and a single experience, its meaning changes depending on the viewer, which is also the case for the Picturesque and the Beautiful. They are aesthetic concepts whose definitions are variable. Therefore there are instances of the Sublime in her letters. However it is not the canonical version or precisely it is not the masculine version of the Sublime.

What exactly constitutes Felicia Hemans's sublime might be worth defining; firstly it is a nocturnal occurrence associated with a more important play of light and

48 *Id.*, p 97.

49 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

50 Friedrich von Schiller (1759 – 1805) was a German poet and philosopher.

51 Philip SHAW, *The Sublime*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 90.

shadow than than during the day. Indeed, the light is not soft or warm but present in rapid flashes. Additionally, there is an idea of movement, in her previous letters when she was reporting a beautiful scenery she was very often sitting down and looking out of a window. More precisely, in the two instances of the sublime that have been identified she is travelling. Travels were an important part of the masculine sublime but Felicia Hemans never travelled farther than Ireland. Lastly, in the presence of nature, what Felicia Hemans feels is neither awe nor fear but a desire for communion and solitude. Immanuel Kant⁵² added to his definition of the sublime the characteristic of isolation: “we also regard isolation from all society as something sublime, if it rests on ideas that look beyond all sensible interest. To be sufficient to oneself and hence have no need of society, yet without being unsociable, i.e. without shunning society, is something approaching the sublime.”⁵³ Felicia Hemans does enjoy the solitude in which she finds herself when faced with nature, and she certainly desires to escape society, both because she was probably an introvert and because her fame was a burden:

“I seem to be writing to you almost from the spirit-land, all is here so brightly still, so remote from every-day cares and tumults, that sometimes I can scarcely persuade myself I am not dreaming. It scarcely seems to be “the light of common day,” that is clothing the woody mountains before me; there is something almost visionary in its soft gleams and ever-changing shadows.”⁵⁴

Interestingly, this idea of isolation is immediately broken by the medium of the letter which is in itself an object linking two people. Felicia Hemans does not desire to be entirely alone, several times she wishes her friend witnessed this nature with her:

“You may be sure I do not allude to the dear intercourse of friend with friend; - that would be dearer tenfold – more precious, more hallowed in scenes like this.”⁵⁵

“Yesterday I rode round Grasmere and Rydal Lake; it was a glorious evening, and the imaged heaven in the waters more completely filled my mind, even to overflowing, than I think any object in nature ever did before. I quite longed for you: we should have stood in silence before the magnificent vision for an hour, as it flushed and faded, and darkened at last into the deep sky of a summer night. I thought of the scriptural expression,

52 Immanuel Kant, (1724 – 1804) was a German philosopher.

53 Anne K. MELLOR, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

54 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

55 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 218.

'A sea of glass mingled with fire'; no other words are fervid enough to convey the least impression of what lay burning before me."⁵⁶

This time again religion is present in her description but it is not as nurturing and peaceful as before. The fire and glass of the sea are reminiscent of a wrathful God. Felicia Hemans does not want isolation but communion, she seeks companionship, either through her friends or through nature, as Anne K. Mellor says about the feminine sublime: "the experience of the sublime for this tradition of women is rarely solitary. If alone, the female protagonist feels comforted, even addressed by, female nature."⁵⁷ This is why it is important that Felicia Hemans genders Nature as female too, when she says that she wants to be "alone with Nature and [her] thoughts"⁵⁸ she does not really seek isolation but communion with kindred people or a higher spirit. There is an awareness of her own self and more especially of the way in which she does not fit within society. What becomes apparent is that she had never been able to find this unity, even among William Wordsworth and his family, in a place surrounded by a beautiful nature she exclaims: "Still, still, I am a stranger here !'—but where am I not a stranger now ?"⁵⁹

The diverse appearances of the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and the Sublime are expressions of the Romantic aestheticism of Felicia Hemans. However they are not be understood with a canonical view of Romanticism. By leaving out female writers from the established canon, critics have also left out different perspectives which are now to be uncovered. Felicia Hemans's vision of Nature is different from her male counterparts' but nonetheless it represents a romantic position. "Her" Sublime and her self-realisation is not inspired by the fearful characteristics presented to her by Nature but by the fear of loneliness with which it inspires her. The Sublime Nature is to her, a call for home and solidarity but also a call for poetry whereas her interest for the Beautiful reinforces her femininity. Henry Chorley mentions that "her shrinking from any thing like coarseness of thought, or feeling, or language, [...] may by some be thought to trench upon affectation, whereas it was only the necessary consequence of her exclusive and unchecked devotion to the Beautiful."⁶⁰ Her "unchecked devotion to Beautiful" might well come from a desire to correspond to expectations and notably those set on women.

⁵⁶ Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 507.

⁵⁷ Anne K. MELLOR, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁵⁸ *Id.*, p. 513.

⁵⁹ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁶⁰ Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 23.

2. Her role as a woman and a poet.

Through the study of the theme of Nature, different characteristic aspects of Felicia Hemans start to appear notably that her interest for the Beautiful demonstrates a performative idea of femininity which she pursued, furthermore this performativity is also visible in her approach to her role of woman and poet. Being a woman by birth and a poet by the act of writing is not enough to be considered appropriate to the names. Both roles has to be performed through social settings and relations, one has to appear respectable in the respective roles of woman and of poet. This necessity to conform is at the heart of Felicia Hemans's letters and might be also present in her poems and it creates a need to negotiate between a private and a public character. Felicia Hemans confesses to being unable to perform certain duties inherent in her role as woman and therefore had to atone for it. Furthermore, she needs to conform not only to the expectations of an image of a woman but also to the image of a poet, an association sometimes impossible as we can see in her relationship to fame. Lastly, it is her desire for a conciliation of those two aspects, woman and poet that creates a tension found in both her poems and her letters.

i. Awareness of her role as a woman.

Several articles about Felicia Hemans have discussed the probable lack of authenticity in her poetry and the way she dealt with the expectations of the market, so as to produce commercially successful works. In his article about the poet, Seth Reno says that “throughout her career, Hemans balances a radical Romantic impulse with the more conventional expectations of a feminine poet.”⁶¹ However, few have taken into consideration how these expectations might have played on a more personal level and what sort of impact it might have had for the woman herself.

Right from the first letter of our corpus, which was written when Felicia Hemans was fifteen, there is an acknowledgment on her part of the limits imposed on her by her

61 Seth RENO, “Felicia Hemans and the Affections,” *CEA Critic*, Vol. 77., No. 1., (March 2015), p. 19.

gender. She wrote to her aunt that “though females are forbidden to interfere in politics, yet as I have a dear, dear brother, at present on the scene of action, I may be allowed to feel some ardour on the occasion.”⁶² Although she does recognize that “females are forbidden to interfere in politics” she supposes that this limit will not apply to her. We can see a desire to bypass the established consensus as well as a hint of rebellion on her part. A possible explanation for this desire could be attributed to her youth, she understands what the limits are and she has no desire to respect them yet. However, Tricia Lootens remarks about the same passage that:

“Hemans's strategy seems transparent, and indeed throughout her career the poet was to 'plac[e] her political interest behind the veil of domesticity and writ[e] political poems that take as their immediate concern the trials of feminine affection.’”⁶³

One could suppose that this strategy is visible when Felicia Hemans mentions reading the letters that political figures such as Agustín de Iturbide sent to their families, in this case, to his children.⁶⁴ Her interest for the politician is hidden behind an interest for the domestic ties of family.

Another letter from her youth, this time written when she was eighteen and addressed to a much older male correspondent, contains an admission for Felicia Hemans's part that she “ha[s] also been guilty of reading a Romance.”⁶⁵ Here again, the use of “guilt” shows Felicia Hemans to be aware of her wrongdoing but this does not keep her from acting on them. The relation between guilt and reading a romance might need to be contextualized. During the nineteenth century, Britain went through a process of negotiating its identity and notably rejecting the values of fineness and politeness seen then as a sign of weakness imported from other European countries, especially France. Women were seen as particularly subject to these weaknesses and had to work to redeem themselves as Mary Wollenscraft mentions in her essay *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, “women must aim to be more “manly', austere, forceful, disciplined, and self-directed.”⁶⁶ She also rejects the traditional education of women as futile and

62 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

63 Tricia LOOTENS, “Hemans and Home: Victorianism, Feminine 'Internal Enemies,' and the Domestication of National Identity,” *PMLA*, Vol. 109., No. 2., (March 1994), p. 239.

64 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 100.

65 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 476.

66 Kathleen WILSON, “British Women and Empire,” *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850: An Introduction*, ed. Hannah BARKER and Elaine CHALUS, (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 265.

expresses her desire to see women educated equally with men. Felicia Hemans rarely ever speak about the education of women or women's rights in general. At one point she remarks, regarding Lord Collingwood's letters that his point of view concerning women's education is “notional” and she mocks his apparent belief that women cannot have the same education as men especially regarding science: “geometry and the square-root— 'O words of fear !’”⁶⁷ Women had to prove they could be rational beings like men, not governed by their sentiments and thus we can see that young Felicia Hemans apologizes for reading a Romance during her formative years. Perhaps one might wonder why she did not receive a good enough education. However, her letters prove that she had been instructed in the ways of being a “good girl”:

“I feel that I am not in the least improved since the days when I used to run wild about the mountains, despite all the sage exhortations I received ‘to be a good girl and keep my frock clean, and I really do not know how to reform myself in the matter.’”⁶⁸

“Well, I will be very good and gentle on Tuesday evening, and try to realize the title of a book once inflicted upon my juvenile days by the heads of the family, and called “The Exemplary Matron:”—a “wearifu' woman, I then thought the good lady was, but now I believe she would be a very suitable model for me.”⁶⁹

It is interesting to note that both quotes evoke her inability to actually apply the education she received as a child, years later as an adult. In the latter especially, she is apologizing for her previous bad behaviour and acknowledges that she is now an adult and she has now to endorse the role of the “wearifu' woman” and “the exemplary matron.” This highlights that Felicia Hemans is not unaffected by her reputation and cares about other people's opinions of her, perhaps it is a sign of maturity, as opposed to the younger Felicia Hemans, who did not care for other people's judgement. A mature Felicia Hemans still shows signs of being much more affected by her emotions rather than by a sense of rationality, numerous times she talks about “bursting into tears” at the smallest, even fictional, emotional moment: “I could have burst into tears from the rush of this unaccountable emotion.”⁷⁰

If young women were either educated to be perfect wives or rational beings, once

67 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 8.

68 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 281.

69 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 303.

70 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 58.

adulthood was reached they were then expected to become role models. Felicia Hemans's corpus of poetry particularly displays this female experience and this sentimentality, Angela Leighton remarks that “she makes a bridge between the theatrical, extrovert pathos of the eighteenth century sentimentalism and the sincere, socially responsible pathos of Victorian sentimentality.”⁷¹ This duty is another characteristic of British society at the time. Indeed after being targeted as the source of weaknesses and the birth of a decrease in national values there was a situational turnaround and women were held as the incarnation of the nation, as the saviors of British values especially through the representation of motherhood and education. The way women were treated and how they behaved was seen as a way to judge the degree of civilisation attained by the society,⁷² and by the end of the century intellectual women, either political or social women writers such as Anna Barbauld or Catherine Macaulay, were represented as Roman matrons leading the British nation on a more rational and instructed way.⁷³ As a woman and more particularly as a woman writer, we can see Felicia Hemans fulfilling this role of matron or role model when she asks one of her correspondents to warn their sister that “[she] shall expect her to have learned perfectly the two first pages for repetition the next time [they] visit the ‘happy valley’”⁷⁴ admitting here to the role of teacher. She also gives “lectures” to her friend, really just remonstrances, but once again she does not completely agree with expectations, indeed she says that “[she] really should give [them] a lecture, if [she] did not know, from intimate conviction, how very useless a thing *wisdom* is in this world.”⁷⁵ Although she is aware of her role as an example and a provider of good sense, anyhow “wisdom” is, for her, pointless thus her role to provide it is too.

Women had a duty to be more respectable not for themselves but, as they were seen as being responsible, for the “the public good and the responsibility of a civic culture.”⁷⁶ They were not only held as examples but had to shoulder the responsibility for the state of society, Angela Leighton in *Victorian Woman Poets: Writing Against the Heart* offers a clear insight into this mediation into Felicia Hemans's poetry. She says

71 Angela LEIGHTON, *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart*, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 26.

72 Susan BROWN, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

73 Jane RENDALL, “Women and the Enlightenment in Britain c. 1690 – 1800,” *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850: An Introduction*, ed. Hannah BARKER and Elaine CHALUS, (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 21.

74 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 16.

75 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 17.

76 Jane RENDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

that “both her 'Romantic' poems about exile and her 'Victorian' poems about female passion, set sensibility and home at odds.”⁷⁷ The same feeling of responsibility and duty is found in a remark made in a review of Felicia Hemans's *The Siege of Valencia* published by the *British Critic* in 1823: “when a woman can write like this, she *ought* to write. Her mind is national property.”⁷⁸ Felicia Hemans's choice in writing or not is symbolically taken away from her, writing is no longer a choice or a pleasure but a duty. We can see once again that the public and private spheres of the individual lack barriers and blur together through the appropriation of what can be understood as the most private human part, the mind, which becomes the property of the nation. Harriet Hughes certainly maintained that image of her sister as an example for the nation when she quotes a review of *The Sceptic* saying that:

“With the promise of talents not inferior to any, and far superior to most of them, the author before us is not only free from every stain, but breathes all moral beauty and loveliness ; and it will be a memorable coincidence if the era of a woman’s sway in literature shall become co-eval with the return of its moral purity and elevation.”⁷⁹

The whole being of a woman, body and mind, was subject to expectations, they had to maintain a responsible conduct both in public and in private yet, as we saw, it does not appear to have been the case for Felicia Hemans. In one of her letters, she lists all the reasons for which her conduct is not proper following the reception from one her American friends of a tract called *A Sermon on Small Sins*:

“Small sins” *to me*, who am little better than a grown-up Rosamond, (Miss Edgeworth's naughty girl, you know,) who constantly lie in bed till it is too late to get up early, break my needles, (when I use any,) leave my keys among my necklaces, answer all my amusing letters first and leave the others to their fate; in short, regularly commit small sins enough every day, to roll up into one great, immense, *frightful* one at the end of it !”⁸⁰

Rosamond is a character from Maria Edgeworth's⁸¹ didactic tales for children appearing for the first time in *The Purple Jar* in 1796. The story focuses on a young girl who is advised by her mother to purchase shoes instead of a jar but who refuses to listen and is

77 Angela LEIGHTON, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

78 Duncan WU, *op. cit.*, p. 1243.

79 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

80 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 261.

81 Maria Edgeworth, (1767 - 1849), was a moralist Anglo-Irish writer for both adult and children literature. One of her most famous work is *Belinda* published in 1801.

finally punished at the end by her father. The story is about a little girl learning from her mistakes but more importantly, for us, it shows a girl who refuses to listen to reason and does as she pleases, certainly a similar image to that of Felicia Hemans's through her letters. If Felicia Hemans appears to resist against what was expected from her, she still seemed to have been able to fit in with the rest of the community by her understanding what conduct was acceptable and what was not. She was able to see the limits of her own resistance, as she says in a letter:

“I grew especially weary, duller than any pumpkin or ‘fat weed’ whatsoever, and exceedingly inclined to rush out of the room without any *cong * to host or guest. From this rash act, however, some sense of decorum restrained me.”⁸²

There is a difference between what she internally wanted to do and what she actually did. Nonetheless, we find in her letters that if she was not always in harmony with her society's expectations she still had internalized some of her time's beliefs about women.

She recognizes the existence of differences between men and women and that men are more capable than their counterparts in a wide range of aspects. Men appear to be more capable intellectually or at least they are more free to be self-aware of their intellectual talent: “I fear that a woman's mind never can be able, and never was formed, to attain that power of sufficiency to itself, which seems to lie somewhere or other amongst the rocks of a man’s,”⁸³ or when she says about *Faust*:

“But, alas! alas! my poor feminine intellects were soon nearly as much bewildered as those of our good —, by “*that celestial colloquy sublime*’ once held with Coleridge, and though I do not, like him, pique myself upon the “clearness of my ideas”, I really was obliged to give up the perusal, finding the phantasmagoria it called up before my eyes, rapid and crowded enough almost to give me a fever. I mean to try it again, as my German friend advises me, but I shall need the assistance of the fairy Order herself to clear my way through the mazy dance of Ariel, the Sylphs, Helen of Greece, Thales, Xenocrates, Baucis, Philemon, the Sphinx, Mary Magdalen, the woman of Samaria, and all the other personages, divine and human, whose very names throng the pages so as to make me dizzy.”⁸⁴

At the same time, Felicia Hemans recognizes men's advantages over women she does so in a way that is characteristic of her own writing, both personal and professional: these

82 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 13.

83 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 294.

84 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 293.

two quotes can be understood as standing on the thin frontier between irony and authenticity. Through these two quotes, the reader can legitimately wonder whether Felicia Hemans is actually agreeing that a woman's mind is unable to equal a man's or whether she is she mocking this preconceived idea by dramatizing it as she does in the second one with "But, alas! alas! my poor feminine intellects." Ironic or not the second quote displays a good example of Felicia Hemans's style, visible throughout her letters, and which is the exaggeration and dramatization of a banal event. Nonetheless, we can be certain that Felicia Hemans did believe men to be more physically capable than women, she seeks out masculine help protect her during her travels, she thanks William Henry Atherton for his "protection through that Pandemonium" and recognizes that her "helplessness [is] partly natural and partly acquired," describing herself as a "caged bird [...] watched and guarded with a tenderness which now, alas! I must expect no more."⁸⁵ In that extract, she refers to her mother's death as well as to her education which she describes as having been overprotective, yet she also claims that her helplessness is not only the result of her education but is inherently female or perhaps it is just inherent in her, whose mind is easily overwhelmed.

In another letter concerning her travels, she says in relation to a Mr. D. that: "he really watched over me all the way with a care I shall not soon forget; and notwithstanding all you may say of *female* protection, I felt that of a gentleman to be a great comfort, for we had a difficult and disagreeable landing,"⁸⁶ highlighting here that she felt safer with a man by her side than she would by the companionship of her own sex. Given that Felicia Hemans's husband left her to provide alone (although with the help of her family) for their children and that she lived as a separated woman, a shocking and unusual condition at the time, perhaps her return to the desire for a man's protection is a way to negate her own independence. Her need to counterbalance her own peculiar situation can be seen in her public harmony with the expectations of her time, making sure that the image she broadcasted was enough to let the reality of her life and its peculiarities in the shadows.

ii. Awareness of her role as a poetess.

⁸⁵ Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

⁸⁶ Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

The need to appear a certain way and to fulfill society's expectations was even more important for Felicia Hemans than for other women and not only because of her status as a separated woman. She had the charge to conform not only to the image of a respectable woman but also to the image of a poetess as well, and it was of the utmost importance knowing that her income depended on her sales. If Felicia Hemans needed to take on the dual role of the wage-earner and the motherly role model, she also needed to fulfill the dual role of woman and poetess yet, this was almost impossible.

In the nineteenth century, “writing was considered unseemly for a woman.”⁸⁷ However, what was unacceptable was writing as a self-conscious reflexion, a “work” whereas writing letters for example was as acceptable because it was seen as an instinctive expression of a woman's mind. As we have seen previously when Henry Chorley remarks that Felicia Hemans wrote some of her letters “under the immediate impuse of the moment and in the artlessness of perfect confidence,”⁸⁸ letter-writing is perceived as not demanding reflexion from a woman. Furthermore, a review by George Gilfillan in the *Edinburgh Magazine* describes Felicia Hemans's style similarly:

“The transision is so natural and graceful, from duties or delights of the day employments of the desk, that there is as littre pedantry in writing a poem as in writing a letter”⁸⁹

Both of these visions negate any work on the part of the woman writer and includes the poetry as part of her duties. A recurrent word used to describe women's works at the time was “unstudied” and this was seen as a compliment. Women were not expected to be writers because as Maria Jane Jewsbury herself said:

“We still secretly dread and dislike female talent, it is not for the reason generally supposed – because it may tend to obscure our own regal honours; but because it interferes with our implanted and imbided ideas of domestic life and womanly duty.”⁹⁰

To write with the aim of being published was considered as showing a lack of modesty, and furthermore to rely on the income of such writing to live and consequently to focus on the “material concerns of the marketplace”⁹¹ was not womanlike. When women were the ones to write it was perceived as leisure and not as a career. Therefore there was a

87 Rebecca EARLE, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

88 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 27.

89 Angela LEIGHTON, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

90 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 8.

91 Susan BROWN, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

dichotomy between the role of a woman and that of a poet, then how did poetesses of that time managed to get out of this conundrum?

First of all, the role of the woman was predominant over that of the poetess and they had to prove that they were, in all regards, respectable women who did not seek out glory or fame. Susan Brown in her article “The Victorian Poetess” highlights the issue of being a woman poet at the time of Felicia Hemans: “there was little basis for aesthetic judgment of poetess work but their lives were scrutinized for conformity to perceived womanly and poetic standards.”⁹² A poetess was not only judged on her work but on her personal life as well; thus to sell, Felicia Hemans would have needed to write good poetry, but she would have needed to appear conveniently, which lead to “a form of self-consciously feminine self-staging”⁹³ not only for her but for women poets as a whole. Besides appearing as decent, women poets had to write decent poetry: since they were women they had to be representatives for the rest of their gender. Carolyn Steedman explains that the woman who writes “acquires a particular kind of authority, based on her gender, to give voice to this feminine experience.”⁹⁴ At the time, women writers had to write about women's feelings and their understanding of life, bringing forward sentimentalism. In her letters Felicia Hemans says about her *Records of Woman*, a volume focused on the experiences of diverse women, that it is a volume in which “[she] has put [her] heart and individual feelings into it more than any thing else [she has] written”⁹⁵

Furthermore, critics have applauded her take on the female experience, Francis Jeffrey wrote in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1829 a very long piece about *Records of Woman* and *The Forest Sanctuary*. His article not only mentions Felicia Hemans but women writers in general, highlighting the difference between them and male writers. He notably underlines the importance of elegance and sentimentality in their works and declares Felicia Hemans's poetry “a fine exemplification of Female Poetry.”⁹⁶ He explains what is meant by “Female Poetry” and how Felicia Hemans conforms to it:

“it is infinitely sweet, elegant, and tender-touching perhaps, and contemplative, rather than vehement and overpowering; and not only finished

92 *Id.*, p. 184.

93 *Id.*, p. 184.

94 Carolyn STEEDMAN, “A Woman Writing a Letter,” *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. Rebecca EARLE, (England: Ashgate, 1999), p. 121.

95 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

96 *Id.*, p. 551.

throughout with an exquisite delicacy, and even serenity and humble tone of indulgence and piety”⁹⁷

If to modern readers this statement appears condescending, it would not be so for Felicia Hemans and her contemporaries. However, what is interesting is that it reflects the difference between male and female poets; as a woman, her work is considered good because it shows feminine qualities not only in the subject but in the way it is written. Therefore it appears that Felicia Hemans was successful in affirming her femininity and her womanly aspects so much so that in *Female Poets of Great Britain* written in 1835, Frederic Rowton says of her:

“I think there can be no doubt that Mrs. Hemans takes decidedly one of the most prominent places among our Female Poets. She seems to me to represent and unite as purely and completely as any other writer in our literature the peculiar and specific qualities of the female mind. Her works are to my mind a perfect embodiment of a woman's soul: — I would say that they are intensely feminine. The delicacy, the softness, the pureness, the quick observant vision, the ready sensibility, the devotedness, the faith of woman's nature find in Mrs. Hemans their ultra representative.”⁹⁸

Felicia Hemans was able to represent the nature of womanhood in her poetry, yet very little is found about this subject in her letters or at least in the ones available in our corpus. Felicia Hemans never analyses her own poetry or her own agenda, she only mentions in a letter to her uncle wanting to “follow in the path these Leaders of the public taste.”⁹⁹ She does comment on what should be expected for a woman writer but it is not a comment on her own poetry but someone else's: she criticizes another female writer, “Miss Kemble,”¹⁰⁰ for her tragedies and she says: “to me there seems a coarseness of idea and expression in many parts, which, from a woman, is absolutely startling.”¹⁰¹ This shows that the woman writer has failed to write “as a woman” as if the fact of being one was not enough.

97 Duncan WU, *op. cit.*, p. 1243.

98 “Felicia Hemans: Frederic Rowton, In *Female Poets of Great Britain* (1853) 386. Spencer and the Tradition: English Poetry 1579 – 1830, A Gathering of Texts, Biography, and Criticism compiled by David Hill Radcliffe, Virginia Tech. Accessed 25 June 2017.
<<http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/BiographyRecord.php?action=GET&bioid=35199>>

99 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 484. These leaders were the “first poets”: Lord Byron, Walter Scott and Thomas Moore.

100 Probably France Anne Kemble, (1809 – 1893), who was an English poet and actress.

101 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., 269.

iii. Felicia Hemans's relationship with fame.

As we saw, the act of writing was not seen as a respectable occupation for women and female writers were seen as “inherently immodest for offering their works for public consumption.”¹⁰² To counteract this reputation, women writers and especially women poets had to reassure the public of their humility and modesty and one way to do this was to deny any interest in fame or celebrity. The way Felicia Hemans deals with fame is interesting because there seems to be a contraction between her assurance that fame means nothing to her and the omnipresence of it in her letters. Additionally, she never underestimates her merits of such fame, neither does she wonder if she is deserving of being famous or not, even if it is inconvenient at no point is it underserved.

There is a contradiction between what Claire Brock postulates in her book *The Feminization of Fame, 1750 – 1830* that “fame as a concept underwent a process of feminization, allowing women to embrace celebrity”¹⁰³ and Felicia Hemans's point of view towards fame. Not only does she mention having no interest in it but she also says that it should not hold any importance for women in general. She even compares fame to other things such as friendship or domesticity and everytime fame is seen as less important than the others, she says to one correspondent: “I wish I could give you the least idea of what kindness is to me—how much more, how far dearer than Fame.”¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, fame is seen as a disturbance to her domestic quietness, with admirers seeking her out at her home or when she's in public to secure her autograph for their albums, all of that she calls “the *inconveniences of celebrity* [...]” and describes them as “often painfully oppressive.”¹⁰⁵ Domesticity is opposed to fame and more importantly to the wish for celebrity, as Angela Leighton says; “her own need to elaborate that myth in her poetry, as a generalised story of women's enduring domestic loyalties, was the means by which she [...] fended off the feared stigma of professional ambition.”¹⁰⁶ Society might have judged poetesses for their desire to be famous or for their enjoyment of fame but even Felicia Hemans, a writer herself, criticizes her fellow

102 Alex GRAMMATIKOS, “The Nothingness of Fame, At Least to Woman: Felicia Hemans and the Price of Celebrity” *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 10.3 (2014), p. 2.

103 Claire BROCK, *The Feminization of Fame, 1750 – 1830* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 1.

104 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

105 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 57.

106 Angela LEIGHTON, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

poets for their interest in celebrity. In three of her letters, she judges female writers and their relationship with fame and in each case the judgement is enunciated after the writer has passed away. At the news of her friend's death (Maria Jane Jewsbury) Felicia Hemans notes her relief regarding the way her friend died in two very similar letters:

“I would rather, a thousand times, that she should have perished thus, in the path of her chosen duties, than have seen her become the merely brilliant creature of London literary life, living upon those poor *succès de société*, which I think utterly ruinous to all that is lofty, and holy, and delicate in the nature of a highly-endowed woman.”¹⁰⁷

“I had rather, a thousand times, that she had perished thus in the path of her duties and the brightness of her improving mind, than become, what I once feared was likely, the merely brilliant creature of London life: that is, indeed, a worthless lot for a nobly-gifted woman's nature!”¹⁰⁸

In those two extracts, Felicia Hemans is glad that her friend chose domestic life over fame and admiration and remarks that it is the natural choice for a woman's mind. However, in the last extract, it is the opposite, if Maria Jane Jewsbury had apparently made the good choice by preferring domestic duties over fame, then Mary Tighe has made the wrong choice. Felicia Hemans says about her:

“I was sorry to find that I must give up my beau idéal of Mrs. Tighe's Character; at least in a great measure; much of her domestic sorrow I learned, was caused by the excessive passion for shining in Society, which quite carried her away from all Home-enjoyments, until her Health gave way, and she was compelled to relinquish this career of dissipation.”¹⁰⁹

This time Felicia Hemans, who had previously written a poem about Mary Tighe, “The Grave of a Poetess,” changes her point of view upon the woman after learning that she preferred society to homely bliss. This view was clearly that of Felicia Hemans's society at the time, and we can see that Felicia Hemans agreed to it or at least appeared to be. In a way Mary Tighe's interest for celebrity becomes her downfall and Felicia Hemans seems to think that it was not undeserved. The poet's desire for Society is what in the end killed her, we could say that her poetic spirit was not pure since it did not flourish from domestic enjoyment but a calculated desire for fame.

Felicia Hemans makes sure to reinforce the idea that she disapproved of fame,

107 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p.518.

108 *Id.*, p. 519.

109 *Id.*, p. 514.

therefore she complains about it frequently. In one letter she does it in a very dramatic fashion as she exclaims:

“Of all things, never may I become that despicable thing, a woman living upon admiration! The village matron, *tidying up* for her husband and children at evening, is far, far more enviable and respectable”¹¹⁰

This extract is confusing since in her remark, both portraits of women that are presented are not enviable, neither “the woman living upon admiration” nor “the village matron” is pleasing. However Felicia Hemans acknowledges that from society's point of view one has more merit than the other. Nonetheless, if Felicia Hemans insists that for her, fame means nothing to a woman and it is more troublesome than it is worth, she does mention an exception to this opinion in her letters: to enjoy fame seems acceptable when it is validated by the family or the friends of the poet. Felicia Hemans says that “the pleasure of fame to woman must ever be reflected, such at least is my feeling of it”¹¹¹ and she certainly abides by that several times in her letters. In a letter to Mary Russell Mitford, she laments after the death of her mother that “fame can only afford reflected delight to woman” and that the only pleasure it brings is being able to “run to your father and mother, with all the praises you receive.”¹¹² Fame is only worthy through the pride felt by one's relatives. Since Felicia Hemans lost her mother, the pleasure of her fame is diminished. However, if the pleasure of fame is “reflected,” it is still there and although it might be the entourage of the poet who expresses their joy at her success she still enjoys it in a diverted way. In one letter, Felicia Hemans informs her correspondent of her winning the poetry prize she had competed in:

“What with surprise, bustle, and pleasure, I am really almost bewildered. I wish you had but seen the children, when the prize was announced to them yesterday. Arthur, you know, had so set his heart upon it, that he was quite troublesome with his constant inquiries on the subject. He sprang up from his Latin exercise and shouted aloud, 'Now, I am sure maman is a better poet than Lord Byron.' Their acclamations were actually deafening and George said that the 'excess of his pleasure had really given him a headache'.”¹¹³

If Felicia Hemans mentions her feelings at the beginning of the extract which focuses more on her astonishment regarding her win. The focus quickly goes towards her

110 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

111 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 240.

112 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

113 *Id.*, p. 50.

children and their reactions, which appear quite extreme: one “sprang” from his exercise and the other ended up with a headache from too much “pleasure.” What is perhaps most striking is that Felicia Hemans recounts her son's exclamation that “maman is a better poet than Lord Byron” with no modesty showing perhaps vanity on her part. We can suppose that the letter was meant for a close friend or a family member and such censure would have been unnecessary. However it is worth noting that this letter is found in Harriet Hughes's memoir, the one editor who was more worried about her subject's image. To leave this remark in her memoir, Harriet Hughes might have dismissed it perhaps because it came from a child or because she believed in Felicia Hemans's vision of fame (that it was only relevant through the pride of one's family) or again, perhaps because the poetry competition was among the first she ever won.

Thus, fame is seen as either unimportant or inconvenient, yet in the summer of 1830 when Felicia Hemans stayed with William Wordsworth and his family, a letter sent by Sarah Hutchinson (the sister of William Wordsworth's wife) to Edward Quillinan contradicts what we can see in Felicia Hemans's letters: “she [Felicia Hemans] tho' a good natured person is so spoilt by the adulation of '*the world*' that her affection is perfectly unendurable.”¹¹⁴ What is the truth then? Was Felicia Hemans aware enough of her fame and rational enough to dislike it or is she under its influence? What is certain is that Felicia Hemans was not exaggerating her own fame, which we could suppose when reading in her letters sentences such as “is it not very strange, and hateful, and weariful, that, wherever I go, some odd old creature is sure to fall in love with me just out of spite?”¹¹⁵ Here even if she's exaggerating her own fame, what is insisted upon is the “strange, hateful, and weariful” consequences of being the subject of such attention. When she recounts her meetings with fans, always women, she mentions how they behave in an almost hysterical fashion, either asking for her autograph or, when planning to meet her, revising her poetry for future discussions. Lastly, an anecdote mentioned by Henry Chorley in his *Memorials* truly highlights how famous she was:

“After a visit paid by Mrs. Hemans to the sanctum of a courtly bibliopole of the modern Athens, he was asked by some friend whether he had yet chanced to see the most distinguished English poetess of the day. 'He made no answer,' continues the narrator, 'but taking me by the arm in solemn silence, led me into the back parlour, where stood a chair in the centre of the room, isolated from the rest of the furniture; and, pointing to it, said, with

114 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 556.

115 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 146.

the profoundest reverence, in a low earnest tone, 'There she sat, sir, on that chair.'"¹¹⁶

It is thus understandable that fame for Felicia Hemans was “weariful” or that it might have changed her. We could contradict that point by showing that Felicia Hemans was very much conscious of the effect of fame and she jokes about it with a cousin in a letter sent from Milburn Tower in relation to the adulation of the Scottish people:

“With this, and the admiration of to boot, it is not marvellous that my head retains any sort of equilibrium? Treat me with due reverence, *Sir and my cousin*, when next we meet, that I may be let down to the familiarities of ordinary life by gentle degrees.”¹¹⁷

This extract shows that perhaps, she is aware of what is being said about her or about famous poets in general and she is able to make light of it.

In fact, it is not only a matter of being able to humour her fame. Felicia Hemans pushes her joke even further by imagining herself in the position of a more famous character, the highest level of celebrity, in fact, since in several familiar letters she endorses the role of a queen and talks about herself in a royal fashion. This originated from a letter sent to a female correspondent with whom she was certainly friendly. In the letter, she mentions an evening spent at her friend's house and regrets not having seen her a lot and having missed on a particularly enlightening conversation:

“But I saw very little of *you*, and this I the more regret, as, from the highly moral tone you assumed towards the close of the evening, I am sure I must have lost a great number of improving aphorisms. As for me, I really am 'a creature not too bright or good by any means', but a mere mortal woman, and I wish to gain wisdom much, and I want you to come and pass a day with me for this purpose.”¹¹⁸

As an aside we can see that Felicia Hemans, yet again, considers herself as being inadequate in matters of teaching and preaching which are womanly duties. She is only a “mere mortal woman” who would benefit from her friend's knowledge in such matters. What is important here is found at the end of the letter when she returns to the subject of the party and that she mentions, probably for the first time her future destiny to become a queen: “After you have taught me how to make a virtuous queen, I wish

116 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 29.

117 *Id.*, vol. 2., p.67.

118 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 227.

you would instruct me how to keep plants alive.”¹¹⁹ On the one hand, she asks her friend to teach her how to become a “virtuous queen” but on the other, she also asks for help on a basic domestic duty that she appears to be failing which is keeping plants alive. The parallel between the two gives us to understand that Felicia Hemans associates the duties of a woman and the attitude that is expected of her to that of a queen. This letter holds the origins of this recurrent topos, Felicia Hemans comparing herself to a queen or pretending to be a queen in training, because even if the letter is undated there is a mention at the beginning of Felicia Hemans having received a few copies of *Records of Woman* from her publisher, which would set this letter after May 1828. The second letter having this image was probably sent around the time of the first. However it is also undated; with the exception of Henry Chorley's precision that it was written after her return to Wales. Considering that the letter is found in a part of the book regarding Henry Chorley's own meeting with Felicia Hemans in 1828 and that the previous letters in the *Memorials* are from 1828, it is safe to assume that this letter was written around the same time probably after the one mentioned above but also possibly before it. In this letter, Felicia Hemans talks about her trip back to Wales and the awful fiddler who played during the trip and she affirms that:

“Certainly no human being is fit to be entrusted with despotic power. I consider myself a person of rather a meek and pitiful nature than otherwise, and yet I am not at all sure, that **if I had been an absolute queen**, I should not have ordered the monster to be thrown overboard ‘full fathom five.’”¹²⁰

Reiteratively we find a reference to Felicia Hemans's wish to be queen but contrary to the first one she no longer aspires to be a “virtuous queen” but “an absolute” or a despotic one. She moderates what she is saying by stating previously that no one should have despotic power, however “if [she] had” it would have had disastrous consequences for the fiddler. It is hard to see traces of femininity or role model in this extract but she mentions, as she did before, that she is “person of rather a meek and pitiful nature” just like she was only “a mere mortal woman.” Three other allusions can be noted, the first, again addressed to a female correspondent in the summer of 1830 (the letter was sent from Dove Nest) in which it is no longer a matter of “if” she had been queen or “if” her friend will teach her how to become one but simply a matter of “when”:

119 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 229.

120 *Id.*, vol. 1., 197. Emphasis is mine.

“Will you tell ----- that I shall certainly make her first lady of the wardrobe, for her skill in choosing silks, whenever my long expected accession to the throne takes place.”¹²¹

Although the identity of the recipient is not given there is a possibility that she was writing to the same female correspondent as she had in her first letter. Indeed her “accession to the throne” is “long expected” which would certainly be the case if we consider that around two years have passed between the two letters. That Felicia Hemans remembers a joke shared two years before certainly shows that either her correspondent was a close friend or that the joke was recurrent between them either in letters or in person. The type of queen she would be on the throne is no longer hinted at and we can wonder if it would be the “virtuous” or the “despotic.” Perhaps we find another iteration of this joke in a letter sent to John Lodge in April 1831 when she writes:

“He [a doctor] says that nothing but great care and perfect quiet will prevent its [a complaint from the heart from which she suffered] assuming a dangerous character; and I told him that he might as well prescribe me the *powdered diamonds* which physicians of the olden time ordered for royal patients.”¹²²

The association between royalty and Felicia Hemans is much less visible than in the previous extract, nevertheless, queen or not, Felicia Hemans's luxuries are not “powered diamonds” but “great care and perfect quiet.” Her desire for calm and peace is a recurrent theme in her letters and is often contrasted with the demands and pressures of celebrity.

To conclude, Felicia Hemans's relationship with fame was strained, partly because it was part of the range of subject that she, as a woman and a poet, was supposed to dislike and partly because her fame was oppressive and disturbed her calm and quietness. Nevertheless, Felicia Hemans was self-conscious of her fame and was able to play with it on the one hand and enjoy it on the other.

iv. Negotiating her identity as a woman and as a poet.

Felicia Hemans's letters depict her as understanding and conforming to the

121 *Id.*, vol. 2., 147.

122 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 200.

expectations of her society, yet there are occurrences of her challenging such beliefs. Could we say then that these instances of small resistance are an expression of Felicia Hemans's going against the established order? It is more complex than that, indeed beforehand we have to wonder: what interest would Felicia Hemans have had to go against society's expectations? The answer is that she had none, actually it was the opposite, it was in her interest to conform as much as possible, to be the perfect portrait of what a woman and what a poetess should be in order to be appreciated and thus sell her works well. Those instances of non-conformity seen in her letters must not be perceived as challenges but as failures, as Glennis Stephenson remarks when he talks about Felicia Hemans's "create[d] poetic character that decorously appears to confirm the expectations of her audience concerning why she wrote, what she wrote, and how she wrote – a character clearly gendered as 'feminine;'"¹²³ she was not "as careful of her image in her personal letters and journals."¹²⁴ Ultimately, Felicia Hemans internalizes the fate of a woman of her time, that is domesticity, when she declares herself a "creature of hearth and home"¹²⁵ and says to a female correspondent that "there is *no* enjoyment to compare with the happiness of gladdening hearth and home for others—it is woman's own true sphere."¹²⁶ The house acts, for her, as the "true sphere" of women which includes both the responsibility of the household as well as the impossibility of being present in public spaces. Felicia Hemans is yet again an ambiguous figure when it comes to domesticity, indeed not only did she fulfill the role of a mother in charge of her children's education, she was also the wage-earner of the family, a role traditionally left for the husband. Nonetheless, what appears throughout Felicia Hemans's letters is that as much as she advertised herself as a "creature of hearth and home" she certainly did not appear to conform to the image of the happy mother at home or the "angel of the house."¹²⁷

To begin with, the descriptions she makes of her appearance betray a woman who would rather "run wild about the mountains" than be seated at home taking care of her children. In two letters, she describes with a lot of details her appearance and the

123 Glennis STEPHENSON, "Poet Construction: Mrs Hemans, L.E.L, and the Image of the nineteenth century Woman Poet," *Re-Imagining Women, Representations of Women in Culture*, ed. Shirley NEUMAN and Glennis STEPHENSON, p. 62.

124 *Id.*, p. 63.

125 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 212.

126 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 224.

127 Term originated from Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel of The House" published in 1854 and describing the perfect Victorian woman: devoted wife and mother, submissive to her husband.

circumstances which caused it:

“I came home, to be sure, in rather a disastrous state after my adventure, and was greeted by my maid, with that most disconsolate visage of hers, which invariably moves my hard heart to laughter; for I had got wet above my ankles in the haunted burn, torn my gown in making my way through thickets of wild roses, stained my gloves with wood strawberries, and even-direst misfortune of all ! scratched my face with a *rowan* branch. [...] We had reached a rustic seat in the wood, and were to rest there, but I, out of pure perverseness, chose to establish myself comfortably on a grass bank. 'Would it not be more prudent for you, Mrs. Hemans,' said Sir Walter, 'to take the seat ?' 'I have no doubt that it would, Sir Walter, but, somehow or other, I always prefer the grass.' 'And so do I,' replied the dear old gentleman, coming to sit there beside me, 'and I really believe that I do it chiefly out of a wicked wilfulness, because all my *good advisers* say that it will give me the rheumatism.' Now was it not delightful? I mean for the future to take exactly my own way in all matters of this kind, and to say that Sir Walter Scott particularly recommended me to do so.”¹²⁸

“From the various dilapidations which my wardrobe has endured since I came into this country, I am daily assuming more and more the appearance of 'a decayed gentlewoman'; and if you could only behold me in a certain black gown, which with me here in all the freshness of youth, your tender heart would be melted into tearful compassion. The ebony bloom of the said dress is departed for ever: the water of Winandermere, (thrown up by oars in unskilful hands,) have splashed and dashed over it, the rains of Rydal have soaked it, the winds of Helm-crag have wrinkled it, and it is altogether somewhat in the state of

'Violets plucked, which sweetest showers,
May ne'er make grow again.’”¹²⁹

Between these two descriptions, the latter is much more objective, it focuses on the different reasons for the decay of her dress (her extensive travels) whereas in the former we find expressions of joy and a sort of “perverseness” towards her improper attitude. This extract challenges my point that Felicia Hemans was not truly rebellious since her description is filled with a sense of mischief and glee and a very conscious act on her part to disobey to reason even when it is reminded to her by Sir Walter Scott, something that she evokes in another letter as “[her] incorrigible perverseness with regard to sage advice.”¹³⁰ Felicia Hemans's maid and her “most disconsolate visage” makes her laugh and she agrees with Walter Scott's “wicked wilfulness.” She certainly was not afraid of tarnishing her appearance and these extracts recall her attitude as a child showing

128 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 31.

129 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 509.

130 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 1., p. 250.

perhaps a sense of immaturity on her part, a grown-up Rosamond mentioned previously. This can be felt throughout Felicia Hemans's letters simply because she differs from the stereotypical image of the stern Victorian woman. For instance, she plays tricks on people with the help of her friends (see Appendix 4 for a letter in which she recounts a trick she played on a gentleman) and presents a very unflattering portrait of her contemporaries in society: "I feel myself in a state of dulness, having been obliged to entertain a party of leeches to my head last night, who seem to have drawn therefrom whatever brilliance it might have contained"¹³¹ but even more of her female contemporaries and especially her fans.¹³² Her letters are filled with jokes and humour and often derogatory remarks. However, Felicia Hemans pretends that she is never unpolite, only that she has "what Miss Jewsbury calls [her] "*passive disdain*," a quality in which she considers [Felicia Hemans] particularly rich."¹³³ In a letter to a friend in which she mentions the previous evening, Felicia Hemans speaks of her behaviour and says: "I was quite afraid of looking at you, lest I should have laughed."¹³⁴ Once again she is mocking someone else but remains capable of being in control of her public appearance. Contrary to the other instances of rebellion, here she does not fail in maintaining the expected behaviour.

More importantly than her appearance or her childish demeanor, it is Felicia Hemans's attitude towards the center of domesticity, the home, which appears to be contradictory. As we have seen, Felicia Hemans promotes, both in her letters and in her poetry, the home as the "true sphere" of women. She often writes about how much peace she finds at home, "but how soon the feeling of *home* throws light and loveliness over the most uninteresting spot! I am beginning to draw that feeling around me here, and consequently to be happier."¹³⁵ What appears in her letters is that Felicia Hemans enjoys the home as the antithesis of society. She says that "I have no taste, no health, for the enjoyment of extensive society. I have been all my life a creature of hearth and home,"¹³⁶ according to her, there is a dichotomy between the two and it is not possible to enjoy both. She feels sadness "more bitterly amidst the world of society, where I find so many things to shrink from"¹³⁷ and she also feels "more alone than *when* alone" when

131 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 67.

132 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 228.

133 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 195.

134 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 297.

135 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 15.

136 *Id.*, vol. 1., p. 212.

137 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 125.

she is among “a large party of strangers” because “there [is] no one who interested [her] in the least.”¹³⁸ In society, it becomes more obvious to her that she does not fit among her peers, her mind seeks companionship but is unable to find it. Therefore she would rather find shelter in her home, alone or with her family. Repeatedly, what is always associated when Felicia Hemans mentions “home” is the sense of quietness, simplicity, and happiness put in opposition with the oppressing outside world where she is famous and demanded. Despite this, in some of her letters it transcribes that home is not always synonymous with happiness or fulfilment. To begin with, the peace so much promoted by her can also become tedious. She deplores the ennui of her life as we have seen she calls herself a “caged bird”¹³⁹ and remarks that “so vegetative a life, indeed, ha[s] [she] been leading, that if [she] had lived in the old mythological days, [she] should certainly imagine [she] was undergoing a metamorphose into some kind of tree.”¹⁴⁰ More precisely if Felicia Hemans enjoys the idea of home, the homely duties inherent in the head of the family and in the mother figure overwhelm her, in a letter while she is preparing a trip she says that:

“When I find my unfortunate self surrounded by trunks and boxes, and packing cases, and bills and accounts, and other such uncouth monsters, I get perfectly bewildered, and wonder into what terra incognita I have been transported”¹⁴¹

Daily duties are associated with “monsters” and she proves herself unable to handle them. Felicia Hemans mentions in a letter to the Reverend Samuel Butler from the 19th of February 1828:

“I did take to rearing Gera[niums] some time since [...] in Summer I forgot to water them, and in Winter I forgot to shelter them, so the last frost, these ill-used adopted Children all withered away. It would be too cruel to try similar experiments upon live things [...]. So I fear I must not think of the Bees and Chickens.”¹⁴²

It is interesting to note that by that time, Felicia Hemans has already had five children and yet she considers herself unable to be responsible for “live things.” The source of Felicia Hemans's discontent regarding the home are the “*dinner-ordering* cares of life”

138 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 13.

139 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

140 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 97.

141 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 192.

142 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

since she “still enjoy[s], in much quiescence, the comparative stillness of [her] home.”¹⁴³ Therefore there is a disparity between the idealized vision of “home” and the true reality of the house and its duties. The house can become a sort of hell as another of her letter proves when Felicia Hemans complains about the renovations done to her house and tells her correspondent that “when [they] talk of tranquility and a quiet home, [she] stare[s] about in wonder having almost lost the recollection of such things.”¹⁴⁴ She is unable to take charge of the responsibilities of the household and furthermore, she is even unable to care for herself as it has been noted several times. In the previously mentioned letter (regarding her metamorphosis as a tree) she adds that once again her doctors have prescribed her the need to take care of herself. However she is unable to do so since “it is a thing which [she] [is] convinced requires a natural genius for care to succeed in at all.”¹⁴⁵ The idea of needing a particular sort of “genius” to be able to take care of herself is repeated in other letters and each time she reasserts that it is not the kind of genius she possesses.

Nonetheless there is one type of genius that Felicia Hemans would be more likely to associate herself with and that is the genius of poets or literary people. If her genius was not to turn towards homely duties or self-preservation it was certainly present in her poetic works. Once again it is a complex issue, as we have seen her role as a woman and her role as a poetess were at odds against one another, which left Felicia Hemans in a precarious situation. Firstly, if she presents a dichotomy between home and society there is also one between the house and poetry. As mentioned, if the idea of home brings her peace then the reality of the house is a source of anxiety and pressure almost as much as society. On different occasions, Felicia Hemans wonders if it is possible to combine poetry and more mundane cares. She is certain that “poetry is a mere ‘waif and stray in this work-day world of ours’¹⁴⁶ and

“I would give anything to be going into the country, and to live among trees and flowers till I feel the spirit of poetry come back again—it is quite put to flight by petty cares, which I think are almost as much at variance with it as fashionable dinners.”¹⁴⁷

Two things are very important in this quote. Firstly, when Felicia Hemans describes the

143 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 73.

144 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

145 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 98.

146 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 192.

147 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 198.

country, there is no doubt that what she is describing falls under her appreciation of “home.” In Felicia Hemans's letters home is not simply the house in which she lived with her family but it has a broader sense, home is the country, the land, the people with which she lived or it can also be the past since her notion of home is almost always associated with a nostalgic image that of a longing or a return to a state of nature. Secondly, the allusion made to poetry is that of a spirit being repulsed by “petty cares” which here are compared to the fashionable dinners both being detrimental to her poetry in the same way. Furthermore, if poetry is a spirit in the second quote, in the first it is associated with the wind (“waif”) meaning that poetry for Felicia Hemans is something free, changing and perhaps slightly out of reach. She reinforces this idea in a letter sent to a friend in which she strongly expresses her feelings towards her friend's hesitation regarding, what I assume to be, their own literary intentions:

“You will *not* be 'cribbed and cabined' by the influence of your daily toils: no, you will rise from them, as - all minds gifted for worthier things *have* risen, with a pure and buoyant joy, into a world where they cannot enter. Tell me *one* instance of a generous spirit, . . . which has sunk under the mere necessity for steadfast and manly exertion. [...] I am convinced that you will be all the better for having your track so defined, and for knowing when and where you may turn aside from it to gather flowers upon which no soil of *earthiness* will have fallen.”¹⁴⁸

In opposition to the freedom and airy characteristic given to poetry in other letters, here “daily toils” menace to “crib and cabine” the person she is writing to. In this letter Felicia Hemans is assertive and passionate, she speaks from her own experience. Writing is defined as another world towards which one must “rise” whereas “daily toils” are compared to the “soil of *earthiness*” (the emphasis on “earthiness” being Felicia Hemans's). Poetry, or writing, is not a matter of earth but of out-of-this-world experience, a heavenly experience perhaps. This association of poetry with unearthly qualities is not simply reserved to poetry and Felicia Hemans extends it to include intellectual abilities more generally. Nevertheless, it is the same idea that is reproduced: intellectual abilities are opposed to the more banal occupations;

“Is that strong passion for intellectual beauty a happy or a mournful gift, when so out of harmony with the rest of our earthly lot? Sometimes I think of it in sadness, but oftener it seems to me as a sort of rainbow, made up of

148 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 136.

light and tears, yet still the pledge of happiness to come.”¹⁴⁹

“I can well imagine the weariness and disgust with which a mind of intellectual tastes must be oppressed by the long days of ‘work day world’ cares, so utterly at variance with such tastes; and yet, perhaps, the opposite extreme is scarcely more to be desired. Mine, I believe, has been too much a life of thought and feeling for health and peace: I can certainly quit this little world of my own for active duties; for however I may at times playfully advocate the cause of weakness, there is no one who has, with deeper need for strength, a fuller conviction of its necessity; but it is often by an effort, and a painful one, that I am enabled to obtain it.”¹⁵⁰

These two quotes join the feelings of sadness with the role of the poet or the literary person but Felicia Hemans does not talk about it in a hopeless way. The second one notably goes into more detail about Felicia Hemans's own situation,. “Thought and feeling” report to the poetic mind whereas “health and peace” are worries of the everyday type. Felicia Hemans is aware of her obligations and she abides by them although it is “an effort, and a painful one.” Furthermore, this could explain why the theory of Thomas Moore about genius and domestic happiness was so unappealing to her.¹⁵¹ She first notifies reading about the theory in a letter from 1830 sent to William Wordsworth, with whom she was staying at the time. She says that William Wordsworth by his conduct is enough to refute the idea that “men of higher order of genius” are unfit for domestic happiness. She discusses the theory with the man and his answer confirms her opinion since he postulates that “it is not because they possess genius that they make unhappy homes, but because they do not possess genius enough; a higher order of mind would enable them to see and feel all the beauty of domestic ties.”¹⁵² Of course, a woman like Felicia Hemans must believe that there was a possibility to reconcile earthly matters and airy inspiration otherwise there would have been no hopes for her or for women in general. However, as the theory of Thomas Moore specifies it is not a question of “people” of higher genius but “men,” there is it possible for women to reconcile the two?

When Felicia Hemans writes about her adventures with William Wordsworth or Walter Scott, there is no hint of jealousy in her accounts but perhaps there should be. Walter Scott is presented as very free and always roaming in nature and William

149 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 7.

150 *Id.*, vol. 2., p. 11.

151 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

152 *Id.*, p. 506.

Wordsworth is a man who is able to combine homely happiness and poetic genius without being judged. Everything about William Wordsworth according to Felicia Hemans's descriptions of the man is honest and true, she says that “there is an almost patriarchal simplicity, an absence of all pretension about him [...] all is free, unstudied”¹⁵³ and that “his manners are distinguished by that frank simplicity which I believe to be ever the characteristic of *real* genius; his conversation is perfectly free and unaffected.”¹⁵⁴ He is not held back by the restrictions of being proper or fitting into a certain idea of who he should be. He is free to embrace his poetry as a way of life, the man and the poet are one and they are in harmony: “there is a daily beauty in his life,' which is in such harmony with his poetry, that I am thankful to have witnessed and felt it.”¹⁵⁵ and “it is delightful to see a life in such perfect harmony with all his writing express.”¹⁵⁶ When William Wordsworth tries to direct Felicia Hemans towards housely duties by mentioning the importance of kitchen scales for a woman, she answered that “[she] looked upon scales as particularly graceful things, and had great thoughts of having [her] picture taken with a pair in [her] hand.”¹⁵⁷ The scales that Felicia Hemans desires are not the “handsome, substantial, useful-looking”¹⁵⁸ kitchen scale that, ever the man of the domestic sphere, William Wordsworth recommends but that of Justice. Here Felicia Hemans relishes in her poetic character more than in her role as a woman.

In a way, she aspires to be more like those two authors, as we have seen when she walks with Sir Walter Scott and declares that she will live her life as she wants and say that Sir Walter Scott told her to do so. She envies perhaps their mischief, but through her letters only her admiration for them and for the harmony they presented as men faithful to their poetry results, whereas herself was confined by expectations and needs. The negotiation between her desires and her duties could be seen as leaving her “only more homeless: somehow exiled both ways. She belongs neither to the family home nor to the wild homelessness of 'rocks and storms.’”¹⁵⁹ Because of her need to sell her poems Felicia Hemans was forced to conform to her time's expectations as well as to a certain image and aestheticism of what a poet should be, perhaps it is then the reason why she was very popular in her time and yet turned out to be quickly forgotten, the

153 *Id.*, p. 503.

154 *Id.*, p. 504.

155 *Id.*, p. 505.

156 *Id.*, p. 506.

157 *Id.*, p. 510.

158 *Id.*, p. 509.

159 Angela LEIGHTON, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

authenticity that she presented was only a facade.

Felicia Hemans's letters display a woman torn between poetical aspiration and womanly duty. The dichotomy between those two roles is illustrated in a simple quote by Felicia Hemans's children: "the bust is the poetess, but the picture is *all mother*."¹⁶⁰ The white marble bust, that Felicia Hemans described as "so very graceful that [she] cannot but accuse[s] the artist of flattery,"¹⁶¹ is the poetess because it recalls on the one hand the numerous sculptures of poetesses mentioned and admired by Felicia Hemans, notably Mary Tighe's tomb and Sappho's and on the other, the nineteenth century's interest for the statue as the representation of the poetess. The bust represents an allegory of the body of the poet displayed for admiration in an inverted ekphrasis (from paper to sculpture) whereas, the portrait is of "a very striking likeness"¹⁶² to the author and is recommended in lieu of introduction. Felicia Hemans and the poet she would have wanted to be are not one but two entities, she seeks harmony but is forced into this character of the Poetess, she is not one harmonized artist but rather two facets at odds with each other. She is both the bust and the portrait and yet neither of them at the same time since they both represent only parts of who she was, furthermore, both of them are creations, crafted images. Perhaps, her poems would have been her chance to express and to perform the unity of her personality but she was unable to do so by circumstances. Her letters prove that her desire for harmony remained thus, a desire that she never succeeded in bringing to reality.

160 Harriet HUGHES, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

161 Henry CHORLEY, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 66.

162 Susan WOLFSON, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

Conclusion.

If the corpus of Felicia Hemans's letters remains largely under-studied it is neither for a lack of resources or lack of interest. The three primary sources containing most of the letters of Felicia Hemans have their qualities and their defaults, nevertheless they remain a major source of information. For instance, Harriet Hughes's decision to write her *Memoir* comes from her will to re-establish the image of her sister as a respectable woman, therefore, this indicates a gap between what we could call the "public" and the "private" personas of the poet. This double sense of identity and the creation of a public persona, although already theorized by academics regarding her poetry, is at the heart of this corpus, indeed, its first letter dates from the year Felicia Hemans entered the world as a poet whereas the last is from the year of her death. The study of contextualizing data such as her locations or her correspondents is central to a better understanding of who she was. Therefore, through the sole study of the resources of Felicia Hemans's letters we can already perceive the creation of her different and contrasting identities.

After studying with precision the context surrounding Felicia Hemans's letters, it is necessary to take into account the particularities of the epistolary form in itself and the poet's point of view concerning it. What appears in this study is that Felicia Hemans was a woman at the turning of the century therefore writing letters were part of her daily life, furthermore, as a woman living in a remote town of Wales, letters for Felicia Hemans were a necessity more than a form of leisure. They were not a place of choice to express her literary talent but rather a place of communication. However, this does not mean that her corpus lacks interest and should be dismissed. The importance of the corpus and its diversity in themes deserve a more in-depth study and this essay can only be a preview of what a complete work on Felicia Hemans might resemble. Through her style, we can see a knowledge of the expected forms of the epistolary and although she did not go out of her way to write and to create an elaborated form, this does not signify that her letters are unable to give more information about her. While understanding that her letters answer to the limits imposed by the epistolary form we can still analyse them to get a new approach to her works and her personality. Writing a letter implies

understanding the rules of the form and acting accordingly just like Felicia Hemans understood what was expected of a woman and a poet and acted accordingly.

At last, a lot can be said of the content of Felicia Hemans's letters and especially about the woman she was. She was a woman with a lot of anxiety who felt more strongly the pressure of the world due to her fame and she associated the private sphere where she could be herself with happiness and dreaded the outside world. She also had to conform to society's expectations and demands for both her role as a woman and a mother, as well as a poetess; furthermore there was certainly a dichotomy between the two roles which made it impossible to perfectly achieve the two, except perhaps in her poetry but certainly not in her real life which is reflected in her letters. There is certainly much interest in the study of her artistic criticism which gives an insight into both her tastes and that of her society. Felicia Hemans, to the face of society she belonged to, was no longer a woman but a Poetess, a creature set apart from the rest of the world. As a woman, her literary talent was denied in favor of an ideology picturing women as effortless in their actions. It appears that Felicia Hemans aspires to a reconciliation of these two personae and a harmonization between her role as a woman, her role as a poetess and her own behaviour, very much in the spirit of the male Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth or Walter Scott.

To conclude, one could say that an author's work should suffice by itself, others are even against using biographical information to analyse it, however, in the case of Felicia Hemans contextualizing her works is essential. To understand the value of Felicia Hemans's poetry, works, and mind, we have to re-evaluate what makes a good poet; from the established Romantic canon to the contextual elements of a poem, Felicia Hemans is a major Romantic or Victorian poet if only by the sheer remuneration she received. Her poems might not have left a consequent impact on the literary canon of her time however, she remains a pioneer and the mediation of her reputation and her social appearance is a major aspect of authorship. Thankfully, her letters are a testimony of this mediation and this impact as they display Felicia Hemans's knowledge of the expectations imposed on her as well as a glimpse into something else than her crafted image. They certainly allow us to have a better understanding of her works by allowing us to understand the woman behind the poet and for Felicia Hemans, the two must be dissociated, as they were in her life. There is a form of tension between who she was and who she aspired to be which can be found in her letters or in her poems as well.

More studies on Felicia Hemans are needed, firstly because as a famous author of her time she deserves to be better known by both modern academics and the general public and also, because if people disregard her poetic works as not deserving of further studies then her personal life as well as the negotiation of her identity in the rise of the fame culture certainly does.

Appendices.

Appendix 1. Corpus of Felicia Hemans's letters used in the analysis p.10.

Abbreviations:

Chorley, vol. 1: Henry CHORLEY, *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: With Illustrations of Her Literary Character, from Her Private Correspondence In Two Volumes, Volume 1.* (1836).

Chorley, vol. 2: Henry CHORLEY, *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: With Illustrations of Her Literary Character, from Her Private Correspondence In Two Volumes, Volume 2.* (1836).

Hughes: Harriet HUGHES, *The Works of Mrs. Hemans; With a Memoir of Her Life by Her Sister In Six Volume, Volume 1.* (1839).

Wolfson: Susan WOLFSON, *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials.*(2000).

I tried, to the best of my abilities, to reference whenever the same letter is found in different books. The letter taken into account in my analysis appears first in the list found in “source.”

Nº	DATE (day/month /year)	RECIPIENT	FELICIA HEMANS LOCATION OF WRITING	FULL?	SOURCE	PAGE
1	19/12/08	Her aunt	N/A	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 1	475 29
2	17/07/11	Matthew Nicholson	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 1	476 30
3	12/03/12	Matthew Nicholson	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Wolfson	479
4	22/10/13	William Stanley Roscoe	Daventry	y	Wolfson	479
5	26/02/17	John Murray	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	480
6	XX/11/17	John Murray	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Wolfson	481
7	22/10/19	James Simpson	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	482
8	XX/11/19	B.P.Wagner	Bronwylfa (St	y	Wolfson	484

		(uncle)	Asaph)			
9	XX/10/20	Harriet Browne (sister)	Wavertree Lodge	n	Wolfson Hughes	484 42
10	XX/06/21	N/A	N/A	n	Hughes	50
11	11/06/21	William Jerdan	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Wolfson	485
12	19/06/21	Rev H. H. Milman	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	65
13	12/10/21	Rev H. H. Milman	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	68
14	05/12/21	Rev H. H. Milman	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	70
15	XX/XX/22	N/A	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Wolfson Hughes	486 59
16	Mid-July 1822	Fanny Luxmoore	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	487
17	15/11/22	N/A (female)	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	84
18	19/12/22	N/A (female)	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	87
19	?XX/XX/23	a friend	?Bronwylfa	n	Hughes	66
20	01/05/23	William Jacob, Esq	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	488
21	08/05/23	William Jerdan	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	489
22	14/05/23	N/A (female)	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	91
23	15/05/23	N/A (female)	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Wolfson Chorley's vol.1	490 95
24	19/05/23	William Jerdan	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	491
25	02/07/23	N/A (female)	?Bronwylfa	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	98
26	16/12/23	Rev. H. H. Milman	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	75
27	06/03/24	N/A (female)	?Bronwylfa	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	100
28	19/06/24	N/A	?Bronwylfa	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	101
29	20/11/24	N/A	?Bronwylfa	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	103

30	26/01/26	N/A (female)	Bronwylfa (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1	105
31	Mid-1826	Maria Jane Jewsbury	N/A	n	Wolfson Chorley's, vol. 1	491 173
32	XX/01/1827	an old and much valued friend	N/A	n	Wolfson Hughes	493/10 0
33	?XX/XX/27	N/A	?Bronwylfa	n	Hughes	108
34	?1827?26	Mr. G. F. Richardson	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Chorley, vol. 1.	121
35	08/04/27	Joanna Bailie	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Chorley, vol. 1.	140
36	31/05/27	Joanna Bailie	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Chorley, vol. 1.	143
37	06/06/27	Mary Russell Mitford	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Chorley, vol. 1 Hughes	151 122
38	25/07/1827	Mr. G. F. Richardson	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Chorley, vol. 1.	117
39	13/06/27	William Blackwood	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	494
40	07/09/27?26	Mr. G. F. Richardson	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Chorley, vol. 1.	120
41	24/11/?27	N/A (female)	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	107
42	03/11/27	William Blackwood	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	495
43	14/02/28	William Blackwood	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	495
44	19/02/28	Rev Samuel Butler	N/A	n	Wolfson	496
45	01/03/28	William Blackwood	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	497
46	23/03/28	Mary Russell Mitford	St Asaph	y	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 1.	498 158
47	12/04/28	Mrs Joanna Bailie	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Chorley, vol. 1.	148
48	09/05/28	William Henry Atherton	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	499
49	12/05/28	Mrs. Howitt	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	161
50	18/06/28	Member of the	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	189

		Chorley family				
51	05/07/28	Member of the Chorley family	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	192
52	16/07/28	Mary Russell Mitford	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Chorley, vol. 1.	154
53	29/07/28	William Blackwood	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	y	Wolfson	500
54	XX/XX/28	N/A	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	197
55	XX/XX/28	N/A	Rhyllon (St Asaph)	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	197
56	N/A	N/A (female)	“home”	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	212
57	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	219
58	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	222
59	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	224
60	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	225
61	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	226
62	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	226
63	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	229
64	11/12/28	Mrs. Howitt	Wavertree	y	Chorley, vol. 1. Hughes	237 157
65	?1827?28	to her late kind hosts	N/A	n	Hughes	150
66	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	245
67	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	247
68	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	248
69	XX/04/XX	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	249
70	N/A	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	253
71	N/A	cousin	?Liverpool	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	255
72	?31/? 01/XX/XX	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	257
73	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	258
74	N/A	N/A (male, future cousin)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	266
75	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	268
76	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	270

77	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	273
78	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	276
79	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	282
80	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	285
81	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	292
82	N/A	N/A (male)	Wavertree	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	297
83	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	298
84	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	299
85	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	301
86	N/A	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	302
87	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	303
88	N/A	N/A (female)	?Wavertree	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	305
89	03/04/ XX	Mary Russell Mitford	Wavertree	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	307
90	?XX/XX/28	N/A	?Wavertree	n	Hughes	152
91	10/11/28	Mary Russell Mitford	Wavertree	y	Wolfson	501
92	11/12/28	Mrs. Howitt	Wavertree	n	Chorley, vol. 1.	237
93	N/A	N/A (male)	?Wavertree	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	6
94	XX/01/29	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	11
95	N/A	N/A (female)	?Wavertree	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	11
96	N/A	N/A	?Wavertree	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	14
97	N/A	N/A	?Wavertree	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	17
98	N/A	N/A	Seacombe	n	Hughes	170
99	N/A	N/A	Seacombe	n	Hughes	171
100	N/A	N/A	Seacombe	n	Hughes	172
101	N/A	N/A (female)	Seacombe	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	19
102	Early 1829	a close friend	N/A	n	Hughes	174
103	Early 1829	a close friend	N/A	n	Hughes	175
104	Early 1829	a close friend	N/A	n	Wolfson Hughes	502 176
105	XX/XX/29	N/A	Scotland	n	Hughes	178
106	13/07/29	N/A (female)	Chiefswood (Melrose)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	30

107	13/07/29	N/A	Chiefswood (Melrose)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	33
108	XX/XX/29	N/A	Chiefswood (Melrose)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	38
109	20/07/29	N/A	Chiefswood (Melrose)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	39
110	XX/XX/29	N/A (female)	Scotland	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	46
111	?26/XX/29	N/A	Abbotsford	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	50
112	21/08/29	N/A	Albyn Place (Edinburgh)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	57
113	26/08/29	N/A	8, Albyn Place (Edinburgh)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	62
114	XX/XX/29	cousin	Milburn Tower (Edinburgh)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	65
115	XX/XX/29	N/A (male)	Scotland	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	72
116	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	73
117	N/A	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	75
118	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	76
119	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	79
120	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	80
121	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	81
122	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	86
123	XX/04/30	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	93
124	08/04/30	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	95
125	10/05/30	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	97
126	XX/XX/30	N/A (female)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	99
127	XX/01/30	William Blackwood	N/A	n	Wolfson	502
128	22/06/30	N/A	Rydal Mount	n	Wolfson Chorley's vol.2.	503 111
129	24/06/30	John Lodge	Rydal Mount	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2	504 114
130	?24/06/30	Rose Lawrence	Rydal Mount	n	Wolfson	505

					Hughes	208
11	24/06/30	?H.F.Chorley	Rydal Mount	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2	505 116
132	25/06/30	a male friend	Rydal Mount	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2	506 119
133	02/07/30	N/A (male)	Rydal Mount	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2	507 121
134	05/?07/30	Thomas Cadell	Rydal Mount	y	Wolfson	508
135	XX/XX/30	N/A	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Hughes	217
136	N/A	N/A (female)	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	131
137	06/07/30	N/A	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	124 214
138	Early- / 07/30	?Harriett Hughes	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Wolfson Hughes	508 210
139	11/07/30	cousin (female)	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	135
140	Mid-/07/30	?H.F.Chorley's sister	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2.	509 140
141	20/07/30	John Lodge	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2.	510 142
142	Late- /07/30	Rose Lawrence	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Wolfson	511
143	N/A	N/A (male)	Dove Nest (Ambleside)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	145
144	Fall 1830	a new friend	N/A	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	511 154 221
145	Fall 1830	Friends in Dublin	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	156 223
146	Fall 1830	Friends in Dublin	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	162 223
147	Fall 1830	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	164 224

148	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Hughes	225
149	N/A	N/A	Milburn Tower (Edinburgh)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	148
150	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	158
151	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	160
152	Early 1831	a new friend	N/A	n	Wolfson Hughes	512 226
153	After 12/02/1831	N/A	N/A	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2	513 173
154	N/A	to an attached friend in Scotland	N/A	n	Hughes	235
155	22/03/31	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	190
1156	31/03/31	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	191
157	03/04/31	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	193
158	06/04/31	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	196
159	10/04/31	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	198
160	19/04/31	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	199
161	end of XX/ 04/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Hughes	235
162	21/06/31	To Mr. L (John Lodge)	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	205
163	22/06/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	206
164	01/07/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	231/24 0
165	??/07/31	John Lodge	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	513 208 237
166	??/07/31	Clara Graves	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Wolfson	514
167	XX/XX/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	219

					Hughes	240
168	XX/XX/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	223 242
169	XX/XX/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	221
170	XX/XX/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	228
171	XX/XX/31	N/A	the Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	232
172	XX/XX/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	236
173	XX/XX/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	227 243
174	XX/XX/31	N/A	The Hermitage (Kilkenny)	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	243 252
175	18/09/31	William Blackwood	N/A	n	Wolfson	515
176	05/11/31	N/A	Upper Pembroke Street (Dublin)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	245
177	09/12/31	to Mr. L (John Lodge)	?Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	247
178	29/12/31	N/A	Upper Pembroke Street (Dublin)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	250
179	soon after arrival to Dublin	N/A	Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	232 245
180	03/02/32	N/A (male)	?Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	264
181	18/04/32	to Mr. L (John Lodge)	Upper Pembroke Street (Dublin)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	268
182	09/05/32	to Mr. L (John Lodge)	Upper Pembroke Street (Dublin)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	273
183	XX/05/32	?Harriett Hughes	Dublin	n	Wolfson Hughes	516 256
184	XX/08/32	?H.F.Chorley	Ireland	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2	516 279
185	27/08/32	a friend	Ireland	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	276
186	Fall XX/XX/XX	N/A	county of Wicklow	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	240

					Hughes	250
187	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Hughes	257
188	N/A	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	275 258
189	XX/XX/33	a friend	N/A	n	Hughes	264
190	29/01/33	N/A	Dawson Street (Dublin)	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	284
191	17/03/33	N/A	Dawson Street (Dublin)	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	287 262
192	15/06/33	N/A (male)	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	292
193	XX/08/33	N/A	from an inn	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	301
194	07/11/33	Rev Samuel Butler	Dublin	n	Wolfson	517
195	26/01/34	N/A	N/A	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	304
196	Before- 04/34	William Wordsworth	N/A	y	Wolfson Hughes	517 270
197	04/05/34	N/A	?Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	309
198	08/05/34	N/A	?Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	307
199	28/06/34	N/A	Dublin	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2.	518 312
200	?28/06/34	a friend	Dublin	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2.	518 313
201	Early- 07/34	a friend	Dublin	n	Wolfson Chorley, vol. 2.	519 315
202	04/07/34	N/A	Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	316
203	26/07/34	Archdeacon Samuel Butler	Dublin	n	Wolfson	519
204	XX/07/34	N/A	?Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	319
205	06/08/34	N/A	?Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	320
206	12/09/34	N/A	?Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	328
207	18/09/34	Harriet Browne (sister)	?Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2. Hughes	331 281
208	19/09/34	N/A	Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	332
209	13/12/34	N/A	Redesdale, near Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	28

					Hughes	289
210	27/01/35	N/A	Redesdale, near Dublin	n	Chorley, vol. 2.	344
211	10/02/35	Robert Peel	Redesdale, near Dublin	y	Wolfson	520
212	13/02/35	Rose Lawrence	N/A	n	Wolfson	253

expressed in the last quotation, Mrs Hemans thus alluded to her own lyric—"The Death Song of Alcestis," which was written at this time.

"It was with some difficulty that I refrained from making Alcestis express the hope of an immortal reunion: I know this would be out of character, and yet could scarcely imagine how love, so infinite in its nature, could ever have existed without the hope (even if undefined and unacknowledged) of a heavenly country, an unchangeable resting-place. This awoke in me many other thoughts with regard to the state of human affections, their hopes and their conflicts in the days of 'the gay religions, full of pomp and gold,' which, offering, as they did, so much of grace and beauty to the imagination, yet held out so little comfort to the heart. Then I thought how much these affections owed to a deeper and more spiritual faith, to the idea of a God who knows all our inward struggles, and pities our sufferings. I think I shall weave all these ideas into another little poem, which I will call *Love in the Ancient World*.*"

"I do not think I mentioned to you having seen

* This design was afterwards partly, and but partly, fulfilled, in the *Antique Greek Lament*, which was intended as one of a series of poems, illustrating the insufficiency of aught but Christianity to heal and comfort the broken in heart; and its all-sustaining aid to those, "who, going through this vale of misery, use it for a well," and apply to its living waters for "the

at Woodstock a large and beautifully painted copy of Raphael's '*Great Madonna*,' as it is called—the one at Dresden. I never was enabled to form so perfect an idea of this noble work before. The principal figure certainly looks like the 'Queen of Heaven,' as she stands serenely upon her footstool of clouds; but there is, I think, rather a want of human tenderness in her calm eyes, and on her regal brow. I visited yesterday another lovely place, some miles from us—Kilfane; quite in a different style of beauty from Woodstock—soft, rich, and pastoral-looking. Such a tone of verdure, I think, I never beheld any where: It was quite an emerald darkness, a gorgeous gloom brooding over velvet turf, and deep silent streams, from such trees as I could fancy might have grown in Armidia's enchanted wood. Some swans upon the dark waters made me think of that line of Spenser's, in which he speaks of the fair Una, as

' Making a sunshine in the shady place.'

The graceful play of water-birds is always particularly delightful to me;—those bright creatures convey to my fancy a fuller impression of the joy of freedom than any others in nature—perhaps because they are lords of two elements."

"I heard a beautiful remark made by the Chief-Justice, when I met him at Kilfane. I think it was with regard to some of Canova's beautiful sculpture in the room, that he said—'*Is not perfection always*

terest with which Mrs. Hemans regarded Mrs. Tighe, may be found in a sonnet, (published among the "Poetical Remains,") on "Records of immature genius," which was written after reading some of her earlier poems in manuscript. It might be applied with strict and beautiful significance to all but the latest works of its writer.

'Oh! judge in thoughtful tenderness of those
Who, richly dowered for life, are called to die
Ere the soul's flame, through storms, hath won re-
pose

In truth's divinest ether still and high!
Let their mind's riches claim a trustful sigh!
Deem them but sad sweet fragments of a strain,
First notes of some yet struggling harmony,
By the strong rush, the crowding joy and pain
Of many inspirations met, and held
From its true sphere."

..... "I do not think I mentioned to you hav-

ing seen, at Woodstock, a large and beautifully painted copy of Raphael's 'great Madonna,' as it is called,—the one at Dresden: I never was enabled to form so perfect an idea of this noble work before. The principal figure certainly looks the 'Queen of Heaven,' as she stands serenely upon her footstool of clouds; but there is, I think, rather a want of *human* tenderness in her calm eyes, and on her regal brow. I visited yesterday another beautiful place some miles from us. (I am very sorry that the neighbourhood has lately been seized with quite a mania of making parties for me.) Kilfane, however, the scene of yesterday's *réunion*, is a very lovely spot, quite in a different style of beauty from Woodstock; soft, rich, and pastoral-looking. Such a tone of verdure I think I never beheld anywhere: it was quite an emerald darkness, a gorgeous gloom, *brooding* over velvet turf, and deep, silent streams, from such trees as I could fancy might have grown in Arminida's enchanted wood. Some swans upon the dark waters made

me think of another line of Spenser's, in which he speaks of the fair Una, as

'Making a sunshine in the shady place.'

The house contains some interesting works of art; amongst others, a very beautiful bust of Raphael, which was new to me. It is rather like what I think ——'s face might be in manhood; the eye mild and earnest, the long hair widely parted, and the noble brow with that high intellectual serenity *throned* upon it, which I cannot but consider as characterizing the loftiest order of genius."

..... "I forgot to tell you of a beautiful remark that I heard made lately in conversation, (it is not very often one hears anything worth recording,) it came from the Chief Justice, when I met him at Kilfane; I think it was with regard to some of Canova's beautiful sculpture in the

Appendix 3. Extract from a letter sent by Felicia Hemans to a female correspondent, date and place unknown.

Henry Chorley's *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: With Illustrations of Her Literary Character, from Her Private Correspondence*, Volume 2., p. 250.

“[...] One advises: ‘My *dear* Mrs. Hemans, you *really* go out much too lightly clad; indeed you *ought* to have a cloak lined with fur.’ “So I had once, answer I, ‘and a goodly thing it was, and a very great accession of dignity it brought me; only, unfortunately, I never could breathe in it, so I dismantled all the fur. Another friend—‘I *do* hope you wear a flannel wrapping gown, when you dress in the morning, this very cold weather: ‘No, indeed; if I did I never should get dressed at all; it would tire me so much that I should never reach the last of the curls, and must receive my friends en *papillottes*. Another—“*Indeed*, you should use com forters, it really is quite wrong in you (these last words in italics) to go out without them.” ‘Comforters?—truly I need them sometimes: pray in what shape and hue are they to appear? “Oh ! they are woollen envelopes for the wrists and throat, and the very best things——’ ‘Odious ! in woollen ’twould a saint provoke,’ exclaim I; “tell me no more of comforters " But then comes the greatest barbarism of all:—‘If I *could* but persuade you to wear, what I know many ladies do, (now, my dear, can you believe such a libel?) ‘a delicate piece of hareskin next your chest.” “And why not “hang a calf-skin on my recreant limbs at once? I reply: —‘A hare skin to be treasured in one's bosom !—a hare skin amulet !—what, *will* the march of intellect come to next?” Pray do not consider any of these observations as at all personal; you really make your advances in so winning and insinuating a manner, that it is quite a pleasure to have a fencing-match with you; but, in general, when ladies make their appearance in my room, I ‘screw my courage to the sticking-place, and prepare for an affair à *l'outrance*. [...]”

Appendix 4. Letter sent to a female correspondent, date and place unknown.

Henry Chorley's *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans: With Illustrations of Her Literary Character, from Her Private Correspondence*, Volume 2., p. 247.

“I must tell you of a most delightful dilemma into which an unhappy gentleman fell, who handed Miss — and myself into our carriage at night, and meant to bestow some *fleurette* of gallantry upon *one* of the two, it would be highly unbecoming to decide *which*. After seeing us safely deposited, 'Well,' said the cavalier, 'there you are, *Heaven and Earth side by side* !' 'Truly,' replied she, in rather a piqued tone, 'I, at least, ought to be much flattered. 'Hush ! let him be tormented a little,' I whispered to her, - then turning to the disconcerted beau, - 'Really, Mr. —, I can have no sort of objection to your complimenting Miss should be done at MY expense. So away we drove, before another word could be said, and I only hope he will consider himself as having *two* apologies to make, and so get 'deeper and deeper still' into the mire.”

Appendix 5. *Cupid revives the fainted Psyche*, Bertel Thorvaldsen.



Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen.

Bibliography.

Primary sources.

ed. CHORLEY, Henry. “*Memorials of Mrs Hemans: with illustrations of her literary character, from her private correspondence*” (London: Saunders and Otley, Conduit Street, 1836)

ed. HUGHES, Harriet. “*The Works of Mrs Hemans ; with a memoir of her life by her sister*” (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1839)

ed. WOLFSON, Susan. “*Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters and Reception Materials*” (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000)

Secondary sources.

Articles.

FELDMAN, Paula R.. “The Poets and The Profits: Felicia Hemans and the Literary Marketplace” *Keats-Shelley Journal* 46 (1997): 148-176.

FERREYROLLES, Gérard. “L'épistolaire à la lettre,” *Littératures classiques* 71 (2010): 5-27.

GRAMMATIKOS, Alex. “The Nothingness of Fame, At Least to Woman: Felicia Hemans and the Price of Celebrity” *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 10.3 (2014): 1-17

KLINGENDER, Francis D.. “Le sublime et le pittoresque” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 75 (1988): 2-13.

LOOTENS, Tricia. “Hemans and Home: Victorianism, Feminine 'Internal Enemies,' and the Domestication of National Identity” *PMLA* 109-2 (1994): 238-253.

MARTINEZ, Michele. “*Women Poets and the Sister Arts in Nineteenth-Century England.*” *Victorian Poetry* 41.4 (2003): 621-28.

RENO, Seth. “Felicia Hemans and the Affections” *CEA Critic* 77.1 (2015): 4-24.

Dissertations.

SOUDER, Donna McKinney. *Deliberative discourse, Bakhtinian poetics, and Felicia Hemans: Toward reconceptualizing an interpretive certainty*. Diss. Texas Women's University, 2008.

KERHERVE, Alain. *La correspondance de Mary P. Delany (1700-1788)*. Diss. University of Western Brittany. 2001.

Books

BARKER, Hannah. CHALUS, Elaine. *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850: An Introduction*, London; New York: Routledge, 2005.

BRISTOW, Joseph. *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2000.

BROCK, Claire. *The Feminization of Fame, 1750 – 1830*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

CLERY, E.J.. *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

COOK, Elizabeth Heckendorn. *Epistolary bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

COPLEY, Stephen. GARSIDE, Peter. *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, landscape and aesthetics since 1770*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

DIAZ, Brigitte. *L'épistolaire ou la pensée nomade*. Paris: PUF, 2002.

ed. EARLE, Rebecca. *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*. England: Ashgate, 1999.

GURKIN ALTMAN, Janet. *Epistolary: Approaches to a Form*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982.

GRASSI, Marie-Claire. *Lire l'épistolaire*. Paris: Dunod, 1998.

HAROCHE-BOUZINAC, Geneviève. *L'épistolaire*. Paris: Hachette – cop., 1995.

LEIGHTON, Angela. *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.

MELLOR, Anne K.. *Romanticism and Gender*. New York; London: Routledge, 1993.

MURRAY, Venetia. *High Society: Social History of the Regency Period*. London: Viking, 1998.

ed. NEUMAN, Shirley. STEPHENSON, Glennis. *Re-imagining Women, Representation of women in Culture*. Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

ed. PLANTE, Christine. *L'épistolaire, un genre féminin?*. Paris: Honoré Champion Editeur, 1998.

ed. RAIMOND, Jean. *A Handbook to English Romanticism*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1992.

SHAW, Philip. *The Sublime*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

SHINER WILSON, Carol. HAEFNER, Joel. *Re-visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1994.

SWEET, Nanora. MELNYK, Julie. *Felicia Hemans: Reimagining poetry in the Nineteenth Century*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.

WU Duncan. *Romanticism: an Anthology* (Third Edition). United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Websites.

“Felicia Hemans: Frederic Rowton, In *Female Poets of Great Britain* (1853) 386. Spencer and the Tradition: English Poetry 1579 – 1830, A Gathering of Texts, Biography, and Criticism compiled by David Hill Radcliffe, Virginia Tech. Accessed 25 June 2017.

<<http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/BiographyRecord.php?action=GET&bioid=35199>>

“The Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin: Chapter 2, Section II: Ruskin's theory of Typical Beauty” by George P. Landow, Professor of English and the History of Art, Brown University. Victorian Web. Accessed 23 May 2017.

<<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/2.2.html>>

“The Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin: Chapter 3, Section II: Two

Modes of the Picturesque” by George P. Landow, Professor of English and the History of Art, Brown University. Victorian Web. Accessed 01 June 2017.

<<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/3.2.html>>

“A Guide to the Felicia Hemans Manuscript Material In the Pforzheimer Collection: Being a Complete and Annotated List of all the Handwritten Poems, Letters, &c., &c., &c., by Hemans herself, held by that Repository.” Compiled by Charles Cuykendall Carter, Bibliographer of the Pforzheimer Collection. Accessed 07 June 2017.

<https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/archivalcollections/pdf/ms_guide_hemans_f.pdf>