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*Women Writers and Women's Rights: The Denunciation of Women's Conditions
in the Texts of Mary Leman Grimstone and Gertrudis Gómez De Avellaneda*

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Abstract

Through the analysis of the prose of two nineteenth-century women writers: the English Mary Leman Grimstone and the Cuban-Spanish Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, the present dissertation aims at unveiling the relationship between women's writings and the struggle for the recognition of women's rights in two different geopolitical locations. To do so, it weaves a Feminist Planetary Web between each writer and her context, as well as among both writers, finding points of connection and disconnection. It shows how women appropriated the pen in different geographical locations, exposing a particular female voice that denounced not only the oppression suffered by women, but also by other marginalized subjects, like the members of religious minorities and slaves. For each writer this dissertation analyses three novels and some of their articles, finding macro-arguments present transversally in their work, like their critiques to the institution of marriage, the importance of proper education for women, the advocacy for religious tolerance, and the narrative construction of different male and female paradigms. Among the common arguments between both writers, this dissertation exposes their similar critiques to the institution of marriage. Both Grimstone's and Gómez de Avellaneda's literary works show how the nuptial bond, which was sold as women's best and only option in life, was in fact a cage in which women were no better than slaves or perpetual servants. This appreciation of marriage is present in both authors even though the legal regimes that regulated marriage in England and Spain were, at least in theory, different. Hence, their writings stand as living proof that notwithstanding the specifics of each legal system, the ideological consequences for women, who were left at the mercy of their husbands, were remarkably similar. Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda also coincided in highlighting the importance of women's right to access a proper education, which was not an end in itself, but the means for women to develop their God-given reason and to obtain the right to aspire, to ambition outside the circumscribed and limited role society had assigned them: that of wife and mother. Aside from these commonalities, this dissertation also analyses how Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda negotiated their position in the literary public realm, showing how it was precisely in this point, that is, in the strategies they used and the aesthetics they adopted, that readers and critics can find noteworthy differences between them.

Resumen

A través del análisis de la prosa de dos escritoras del siglo XIX: la inglesa Mary Leman Grimstone y la cubano-española Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, la presente tesis pretende desvelar la relación entre la escritura femenina y la lucha por el reconocimiento de los derechos de las mujeres en dos lugares geopolíticos diferentes. Para ello, teje una Red Planetaria Feminista entre cada escritora y su contexto, así como entre ambas escritoras, encontrando puntos de conexión y desconexión. Este trabajo busca demostrar cómo las mujeres se apropiaron de la pluma en diferentes lugares, exponiendo una particular voz femenina que denunciaba no sólo la opresión sufrida por las mujeres, sino también por otros sujetos marginados, como los miembros de minorías religiosas y los esclavos. Por cada una de las escritoras bajo estudio, esta tesis analiza tres novelas y algunos de sus artículos, encontrando macroargumentos presentes de forma transversal en sus obras, como sus críticas a la institución del matrimonio, la importancia de una educación adecuada para las mujeres, la defensa de la tolerancia religiosa y la construcción narrativa de diferentes paradigmas masculinos y femeninos. Entre los argumentos comunes entre ambas escritoras, se encuentran las críticas que las dos realizaron a la institución del matrimonio. Tanto la obra literaria de Grimstone como la de Gómez de Avellaneda muestran cómo el vínculo nupcial, que se vendía como la mejor y única opción de vida para las mujeres, era en realidad una jaula en la que éstas terminaban viviendo como esclavas o siervas perpetuas. Esta apreciación del matrimonio está presente en ambas autoras a pesar de que los regímenes legales que regulaban el matrimonio en Inglaterra y España eran, al menos en teoría, diferentes. De ahí que sus escritos sean la prueba viviente de que, a pesar de las especificidades de cada sistema legal, las consecuencias ideológicas para las mujeres, que quedaban a merced de sus maridos, eran notablemente similares. Grimstone y Gómez de Avellaneda también coincidieron en destacar la importancia del derecho de las mujeres a acceder a una educación adecuada, que no era un fin en sí mismo, sino el medio para que las mujeres desarrollaran la razón que Dios les había dado y obtuvieran el derecho a aspirar, a ambicionar fuera del papel circunscrito y limitado que la sociedad les había asignado: el de esposa y madre. Además de estos puntos en común, esta tesis también analiza cómo Grimstone y Gómez de Avellaneda negociaron su posición en el ámbito público literario, mostrando cómo fue precisamente en este punto, es decir, en las estrategias que utilizaron y en la estética que adoptaron, donde los lectores y los críticos pueden encontrar notables diferencias entre ellas.

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Introduction

One of the main goals of what we now recognize as the field of women's and gender studies has always been to recover the lost voices of the women of the past. In *A Room's of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf takes us along on her personal journey to try to find her foremothers, and our foremothers, in the literary realm. What she finds is mainly a void, stating that while "women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time ... in real life she [woman] could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband" (Woolf 1929, 75). She goes on to deplore the fact that "nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century" (Woolf 1929, 79), showing how before the nineteenth century only a handful of women could be named for their contributions to literature, women such as Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, and Aphra Behn. Furthermore, Woolf claims that it was only from the nineteenth century onwards that works written by women finally started to fill our bookshelves and libraries, and, when they did, their works almost always took the form of the novel (1929, 114–15). Woolf offers us then, maybe for the first time, a kind of female literary genealogy, in which she includes Charlotte and Emily Brönte, as well as Jane Austen, claiming of the latter two: "they wrote as women write, not as men write. Of all the thousand women who wrote novels then, they alone entirely ignore the perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue – write this, think that" (1929, 130).

Since then, the recovery of women's lost texts has taken us onto a branching path that, paraphrasing Alice Walker's words, has been leading us, through hidden places, detours, and even bifurcations, into our mothers' gardens (2005a [1974]). This act of recovering and re-discovering can be understood in several ways. The first meaning is that of unearthing, of finding the writings of women that until now have remained hidden, unknown, and unstudied. The second connotation, which presupposes the first but has a broader goal, is that enunciated by Adrienne Rich when she demanded an act of re-vision of the past, not only to find new texts but to see them "with fresh eyes ... entering an old text from a new critical direction" (1972, 18). For her, this was an urgent and essential exercise for feminist literary critics to engage in, because "we need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (Rich 1972, 19).

Within the present dissertation, I will seek to engage in these two ways of understanding the rediscovery of women's texts. I have unearthed little-known works by an English woman

writer of the nineteenth century: Mary Leman Grimstone¹ (London, 1796–1869). I propose to analyse these works in relation to their cultural background, trying to identify what message they left for posterity. I will also study some of the writings of a well-known and much-loved Cuban-Spanish woman writer of the same period, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (Puerto Príncipe, Cuba 1814–Madrid, Spain 1873), and intend to posit new feminist interpretations of her works following Rich's advice, that is, by seeing them with fresh eyes. In both cases, my readings are influenced and guided by our present understanding of multipositionality (Friedman 1998; 2001) and intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; 1991).

I believe that analysing the works of Grimstone and Avellaneda provides an important tool for comprehending processes in women's struggle for emancipation, and how these interconnect with other processes like colonisation, the abolitionist and anti-slavery movements, the fight for religious tolerance, among others. In their novels and articles, these two female writers highlighted the importance of proper education for women as a fundamental step for them to achieve their real potential. They also problematise the relationship between love and marriage. For Avellaneda, marriage was an institution in which, under the deceiving disguise of love, women chose "un dueño para toda la vida" [a master for life] under whom they were no better than slaves (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 271). In a similar way, in one of her articles Grimstone described marriage as an institution in which a woman became an "upper servant, who, unlike any other servant, should have no power of ... quitting her service ... unless for the coffin and the grave" (M. L. G. 1835d, 226).

Furthermore, both Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda were able to see and illustrate other systems of oppression, as we now call them, understanding that not only did women face situations of social and moral injustice, but that those injustices also affected other groups such as religious minorities, the working class, and slaves.

Thus, I argue that Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda are prime examples of how women writers appropriated the pen in England, Spain, and Latin America, to denounce their own oppressions, to advocate for their rights and for those of other women, and to shed light on other oppressed groups. What is more, they achieved this in social contexts and at a time when women were not legally considered full political subjects.

¹ Grimstone wrote under several names: Mary Leman Rede, Mary Leman Grimstone and Mary Leman Gillies, as well as using only her initials, M.L.R. or M.L.G. She also used a pseudonym, Oscar, and sometimes she even published her works anonymously. To avoid confusion, throughout the present dissertation I will refer to her as "Mary Leman," "Mary Leman Grimstone" or just "Grimstone." However, in the references and the bibliography, her works are referred to with the signature they were published under.

The main aim of my research is to enquire about how, in their works, Grimstone and Avellaneda saw and captured the oppressed condition of the women of their times, which roles they considered women had to fulfil and which rights they defended. As part of this goal, I intend to explain how these authors defended women's rights: I will examine the genres and instruments these female writers used, and why they used the novel as well as journal articles to deliver their message. Alongside this, I expect to discover whether there are points of connection and disconnection between these two female writers. Although to date there have been several studies on Avellaneda, there have been almost none that analyse Grimstone's extensive body of work, and none at all comparing her with contemporary authors from another geographical and socio-political context. Therefore, the research I propose would be the first comparative study between these two female writers. My research also seeks to establish a dialogue between literature and the movements for women's rights, highlighting how the former had, and still has, a fundamental role in the latter.

Part I consists of Chapter I, which I have dedicated to delineating the methodology used to study both authors and their correlations: weaving a *Feminist Planetary Web*. I formulate this *Feminist Planetary Web* beginning from the recognition that gender still matters, and that 'women' is still a valid category of analysis (Baccolini 2019; Gunnarsson 2011). For this reason, Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism (1985b) and Nancy Miller's arachnologies (1986) constitute my starting point. However, my proposal goes beyond these two theorisations, because I acknowledge that there are different axes of power and oppression intersecting women's lives, both in the past and in the present, that create different experiences of the world (Crenshaw 1989; 1991; Friedman 1996; 1998). Therefore, with this methodology I recognise that the construction of gender, as well as other categories of identity, is a cultural and historical product that changes over time and space.

In this chapter, I also explain the theoretical framework that allowed me to arrive at the formulation of the concept of the *Feminist Planetary Web*. Building upon Virginia Woolf's reflections and her assertion that every woman needs a room of her own to write, I explain the importance of recognising how sex and gender differences affected both women's ability to write, and what they could write. To do this, I establish a dialogue with, and between, leading feminist theorists of the 1970s and 1980s, starting with Kate Millett and her ground-breaking work *Sexual Politics*, where she uncovered and gave a name to the gendered hierarchical system at the base of our Western societies (Millett 2016 [1969]). I continue with an explanation of Rich's call for re-vision (1972), as well as with Annette Kolodny's attempts at defining the characteristics of feminist literary criticism (1975; 1976; 1980) and her academic

debates with Josephine Donovan (1989b [1975]; 1977; 1989a). This section also includes the analysis of Showalter's study *A Literature of their Own* (1977) and of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's pivotal work *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Following these explorations, I question the impact that the post-structuralist turn had on feminist literary criticism, and how the latter responded to the challenge. I present a concise description of Barthes' (1977 [1968]) and Foucault's (1998 [1969]) theorisations about the importance of language and text over the author, and how these impacted the work of poststructuralist feminists like Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous (1976 [1975]), Luce Irigaray (1986 [1985]), and Peggy Kamuf (1982). I then show how other feminists negotiated between poststructuralism's important decentralization of man as the reference knowledge, and the necessity of acknowledging women's identities, struggles, and subjectivities, based primarily on Miller's (1982; 1986; 1988) and Baccolini's (2019) studies.

Recognising women's multiple subjectivities, I include some reflections on the birth of third-wave feminism(s). I start from an analysis of Alice Walker's formulations about the need for black women writers to build a genealogy of their own (2005a [1974]; 2005b [1970]). Then, I explored several essays included in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* edited by Cherríe L. Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa. In this volume numerous women of colour and Third World women explain the different ways in which factors like sex, gender, race, and class can overlap affecting women's lives in various degrees, demanding for these differences to be recognised by the feminist agenda (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2002 [1981]). I finish this section by introducing Kimberlé Crenshaw's theorisations about the importance of intersectionality (1989; 1991), acknowledging that, according to the different axes of power that intersect their identities, women can experience the world in different ways and suffer different kinds of oppression.

Finally, incorporating all these different elements, and drawing mainly on Susan Stanford Friedman's studies (1996; 1998; 2001; 2015), I formulate that beyond the many differences between women, there is also room for commonalities and coalitions in order to fight against oppression and patriarchy. Chapter I finishes with a brief introduction to Mary Lemman Grimstone and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, explaining why I consider them as pioneering feminist writers.

Part II is divided into two chapters dedicated to the analysis of Mary Lemman Grimstone and her work. The title comes from a phrase Grimstone used to describe her understanding of the differences between men and women: "The qualities of men and women, be they good or bad, may differ in the mould, but they agree in the metal" (Grimstone 1830, 528). Chapter II

focuses on Grimstone's biography and on how she interpreted the role of literature. It also includes a discussion about the importance of a woman's name. This argument emerges from the fact that, having been married twice, Grimstone signed her works using several names and even pseudonyms, which, I posit, had a major impact on the reception of her works and, at least partially, was responsible for the silence that has reigned around her for so long. Chapter III is an analysis of the social, cultural, and political critiques made by Grimstone in her works. This chapter covers four macro-topics: women's education, criticism of the institution of marriage, the importance of religious tolerance, and Grimstone's position towards the colonial expansion of the English Empire.

Part III is an analysis of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and her work, and it is also divided into two chapters. This part takes its name from one of Avellaneda's greatest critiques about women's lack of opportunities in her society: "Pero, ¡la pobre mujer sin más que un destino en el mundo!, ¿qué hará, qué será cuando no puede ser lo que únicamente le está permitido?" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000b [1842], II:110) [But, the poor woman with only one destiny in the world! What will she do, what will she be when she cannot be the only thing she is allowed to be?]. Chapter IV, after a brief biography of Avellaneda, focuses on two main discussions that followed Avellaneda during her life and, also, after her death: her national belongingness and her gendered identity. Chapter V refers to the way Avellaneda used her writings to make powerful, sometimes veiled, assessments of her social, cultural, and political context. After a concise introduction about the general way in which Avellaneda used literature as a tool for social criticism, I have analysed some macro-arguments present, transversally, in her prose: the possibility of alliances between oppressed subjects and her condemnation of the institution of marriage, as well as some brief notes on how Avellaneda constructed different narrative paradigms of what it meant to be a woman or a man.

The concluding part of my dissertation is dedicated to highlighting points of connection and disconnection between Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda. I strive to show how, even if they belonged to different geopolitical contexts, they agreed on some of the reasons behind the axes of power and oppression existing in their societies. I also identify common themes I found in some of their spiritual inspirations for demanding equal rights, mainly the idea that God or the Divine Providence had created all members of the human family as equals, thus placing the responsibility for the injustices and inequalities existing in the world with men, and not as part of a plan ordained by God. I also examine their similar views regarding marriage as a source of oppression for women. Regarding their differences, I highlight some disparities in their styles.

Part I. Theories and Methodology

Chapter 1. Weaving a Feminist Planetary Web

Gender and feminist studies are no longer the contested fields of scholarship they once were². Some scholars, like Catherine Belsey, have gone as far as to claim that although gender studies were "once radical innovators", at present "the literary study of race and gender is no longer shocking. On the contrary, it is thoroughly conformist" (Belsey 2011, 27). The myriad faculties, departments, research centres, and courses on women's and gender studies attest to the fact that the study of gender has become common, and even desirable. However, attacks from a certain branch of politics³ as well as differences among feminists and gender scholars, point to everything but conformity within the field. Categories that once were considered stable pillars, like women and the gender/sex division, are constantly being evaluated and reformulated, while concepts like intersectionality have become a fundamental part of any study on women and gender relations.

In this chapter, I will present the different theoretical positions regarding the development and future of gender studies, highlighting those relevant for the literary analysis that follows in Parts II and III. In doing so, I will be weaving my own methodology, intertwining early formulations of feminist literary criticism, feminist formulations from other disciplines, and current feminist discussions. In this endeavour, my legal training, my years as a lawyer, and the knowledge I have acquired in my formal and interdisciplinary studies in the field of women's and gender studies⁴, have played a fundamental role. I will attempt to show

² See for example the discussions between Annette Kolodny, William W. Morgan, and Josephine Donovan in the issues of *Critical Inquiry* from autumn 1975 to spring 1977. Kolodny, Annette. 1975. 'Some Notes on Defining a "Feminist Literary Criticism"', *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 1: 75–92, <https://doi.org/10.1086/447828>; Morgan, William W. Morgan. 1976. 'Feminism and Literary Study: A Reply to Annette Kolodny', *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 4: 807–16, <https://doi.org/10.1086/447865>; Kolodny, Annette. 1976. 'The Feminist as Literary Critic', *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 4: 821–32, <https://doi.org/10.1086/447867>; Donovan, Josephine. 1977. 'Feminism and Aesthetics', *Critical Inquiry* 3, no. 3: 605–8.

³ See for example the decision of the Hungarian Government to ban gender studies at university level, which, together with other attacks, led the Central European University to relocate from Hungary to Austria. CNN. October 19, 2018. "Hungary's PM bans gender study at colleges saying 'people are born either male or female'" <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/10/19/europe/hungary-bans-gender-study-at-colleges-trnd/index.html> (last accessed: July 8th 2021). Cornelia Goethe Centrum "'Gender Studies will not disappear. Gender Studies become cool.' An interview with Andrea Pető on current developments in Hungary and the future of the Central European University" <http://www.cgc.uni-frankfurt.de/84145/gender-studies-will-not-disappear-gender-studies-become-cool/> (last accessed: July 8th 2021).

⁴ I graduated from law school in 2010 at the *Pontificia Universidad Javeriana* in Bogotá, Colombia. After several years working as a licensed lawyer, I decided to expand my knowledge of women's and gender studies, a field I have always felt passionate about. I hold a double master's degree in women's and gender studies from the University of Granada and the University of Bologna thanks to the Gemma programme (Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies). It was due to my studies within the Gemma programme that I realised the relevance of literature and

how it is possible to weave a *Feminist Planetary Web* of connections with and between female writers, even when they lived in different geopolitical, cultural, and social realities.

I have borrowed the concept of *Web* from the formulations of Nancy K. Miller, who in the 1980s coined the term *Arachnologies*, to signify “a critical positioning which reads *against* the weave of indifferentiation to discover the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity” (Miller 1986, 272) (italics in original). In a later revised publication of her text, Miller would explain that the action of weaving provided her “with an irresistible metaphoric: it allowed me to figure a writing identity as grounded and located in a scene of work, thus holding together representation and cultural production.” (1988, 77). As such, the *Web* that I wish to invoke means the inescapable connections between female writers, their contexts, and the texts they produced. In this sense, I share Belsey’s perspective of fiction as “an integral part of culture”, that is, “one of our primary sources of information about the ways people have perceived themselves and their place in the world” (2011, 74). Hence, I propose a cultural and historical feminist analysis of women’s texts, one that understands writers as embedded in a particular context of which they are both witnesses and active participants. As such, I believe that women’s writings can give a portrait of the social constructs and prevalent values of their times, as well as of the contradictions and challenges to said values.

Consequently, this *Web* is necessarily a *Feminist* one. Being a feminist web means, as Josephine Donovan stated, that it implies “a moral and political criticism [that] takes a stand” (1989b, ix). It is a *Web* engaged with the idea of recovering women’s writings, not just so they can be known, but with the express purpose of reading them anew in the hopes of impacting our knowledge of the past, our actions in the present, and our influence on the future. Citing Donovan again, is it an exercise of “concern for a future in which women (and ultimately all human beings) will be free from many of the restrictions that have held them down in the past” (1977, 605).

The starting points of this *Feminist Web* are the formulations by Elaine Showalter about gynocritics, that is, literary criticism “concerned with woman as writer – with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women” (1985b, 128). It is complemented by the overreading proposed by Nancy K. Miller, which means “reading women’s writing ... as it had never been read, as if for the first time”,

literary studies when it comes to recognising the oppressed condition of women and, consequently, their importance when we talk about women’s rights. For this reason, I decided to pursue a doctoral degree that would allow me to combine my legal training and my newly acquired literary knowledge to try and show how these two fields intersect in relevant ways.

while also wondering “about the conditions for the production of literature” (Miller 1986, 274–75). Still, paraphrasing Susan Stanford Friedman, this *Feminist Web* goes beyond the gynocriticism and the arachnologies of Showalter and Miller. Instead, it recognises that identities are not determined only by one axis or structure of power, like the gender/sex division, but by different categories, like race, class, ethnicity, religion, and so forth, and their intersection. That is, this *Feminist Web* acknowledges and applies the concept of intersectionality or, as Friedman referred to it in the late 1990s, it takes into account the existence of different “geographics of identity”. Consequently, it understands identity “as a historically embedded site, a positionality, a location, a standpoint, a terrain, an intersection, a network, a crossroads of multiple situated knowledges” (Friedman 1998, 19).

As Kimberlé Crenshaw explained in her pivotal article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics", an analysis that focuses on a single axis of power cannot fully account for the experiences of discrimination and oppression that different members of a certain group can suffer. Thus, a feminist analysis must include the study of other structures of power, like those of race, religion, class, and ethnicity, to account for and tackle the discrimination suffered by marginalised subjects. Intersectionality, however, is not simply the sum of oppressions and/or privileges, but instead the analysis of how different determinants of identity interact with each other to create particular experiences of the world. Crenshaw, speaking primarily of black women's experiences, explained it in the following terms:

Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender (...) Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. (1989, 140)

Although Crenshaw originally based her theorisations on the intersections between gender and race, the concept of intersectionality does not refer only and exclusively to these two axes of power. Instead, as Crenshaw herself recognised in a later article, "the concept [intersectionality] can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color" (Crenshaw 1991, 1245n9). Recognising these different axes responds to "the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw 1991, 1245). Within gender studies, to take an

intersectional approach means knowing and "emphasising that women are not only women but also black, white, rich, poor, heterosexual, homosexual, etc.", because "unless other power relations than gender are taken into account some women's experiences will be invalidated and power relations among women made invisible" (Gunnarsson 2011, 25).

However, acknowledging that there are differences between women does not mean rejecting or doing away with 'women' as a category of analysis. As Lena Gunnarsson contends, "the category 'women' is absolutely indispensable to the feminist project ... [it] is vital since it relates to something real" (2011, 24). In this sense, paraphrasing Friedman once again, it is necessary to go 'beyond' the differences between women, and understand identity as a historical, cultural, and social product constructed by the interplay of sameness and difference. In other words, it is imperative to recognise that identity means "sameness ... and involves the perception of common qualities", while also requiring "a perception of difference from others in order for the recognition of sameness to come into play" (Friedman 1998, 75).

One element of identity is, indeed, gender, and it has material, real consequences for individuals and groups around the world. Although gender is a cultural, social, and historical product that changes in time and space, this does not mean that it has lost its value as a category of analysis. On the contrary, as Raffaella Baccolini affirms, "gender still matters" because "it (still) does make a difference whether one speaks from the position of a group that has historically been oppressed, or from that of a dominant group" (2019, 37). However, contributions from intersectional and postcolonial/decolonial feminist studies allow us to see and understand that "gender is not a global monolith, but must be studied and theorised in all its local variations" (Gunnarsson 2011, 34): the study of gender must necessarily be located, localised, and intertwined with other axes of power. This understanding will allow the creation of coalitions and contingent identities, based on the recognition of both commonalities and differences.

Consequently, the *Feminist Web* that I am proposing recognises the existence of different axes of power and oppression in women's lives, whether in the past or the present. It also acknowledges that the construction of gender, as well as other categories of identity, is a cultural and historical product that changes in time and space. Thus, I mean to weave this *Feminist Web* not only for each writer, her context, and her texts, but I also imagine and propose it as a network between authors, with the intention of understanding both their differences and their sameness. This proposition goes in line with Friedman's Locational Feminism, which pays "attention to the specificities of time and space" (Friedman 1998, 5), and acknowledges

“the geographically specific forms on which feminism emerges, takes root, changes, travels, translates, and transplants in different spacio/temporal contexts” (Friedman 2001, 15).

In this sense, I have decided to qualify my *Feminist Web* with the adjective *Planetary*, borrowing it from Friedman’s formulations on the study of modernity(ies) and modernism(s). The *Planetary*, according to Friedman, “is cosmic and grounded at the same time, indicating a place and a time that can be both expansive and local” (Friedman 2015, 8). For her, *Planetary* goes beyond terms like *transnational* and *global* “because it bypasses [their] overdetermined associations” with nation-states in the case of the former, and with the consequences, good or bad, of globalisation in the case of the latter (Friedman 2015, 7).

In line with Friedman, I prefer the term *Planetary* to qualify the web I am proposing, because it allows me to create connections between different kinds of female/feminist experiences that are not necessarily determined by the borders/limits of a nation-state. My decision does not, in any way, disregard the multitude of gender studies that have been done and continue to be developed from a transnational perspective. As Eleonora Federici and Vita Fortunati explain, a “transnational perspective permits us to re-analyze the global cultural/literary scene not only from an economic or sociological point of view, but also from a literary and cultural one”, helping us to unveil “the homogenization of cultures derived from capitalism and neoliberal logics” (2019, 48). However, the same authors recognise that transnationalism presents dangers of its own. One of those dangers is the risk of “monopolization along ‘a first/third axis’ ... excluding entire groups of feminists in the so called countries of transition” (Federici and Fortunati 2019, 50). Another problem, closely related to this monopolisation, is the establishment and reification of hierarchies between centre and peripheries, where the hierarchical organisation prevents the creation of transversal relationships, and of relationships between those who find themselves positioned in the peripheries (2019, 50). As François Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih claim:

There is a clear lack of proliferation of relational discourses among different minority groups, a legacy from the colonial ideology of divide and conquer that has historically pitted different ethnic groups against each other. The minor *appears* always mediated by the major in both its social and its psychic means of identification (2005, 2)

As we now know and recognise, these different ethnic or minority communities can exist within the borders of the same nation-state. For me, the use of the term *transnational* runs the risk of hiding or concealing the existence of different communities within the same geographic location which have different histories, stories, traditions, and cultures, because we

have come to identify the nation with the state, even if they are not necessarily the same concept. For this reason, I prefer the term *Planetary*, because it allows me to propose connections between women who may have vastly different experiences of the world, even if geopolitically speaking they 'belong' to the same nation-state. It also makes possible the comparative analysis of subjectivities that pre-date or are concomitant to the formation of nation-states, and thus belonged to different geopolitical formations like the British or the Spanish Empire.

Although it could be argued that the term *global* can also overcome the limits of the transnational, I am reluctant to use it because of its connections with the term globalisation, and with the echoes it brings of 'global feminism'. As Friedman explains, global feminism "arose in relation to the common Second Wave feminist assumption of a universal patriarchy and the promotion of a global sisterhood united in its resistance to world-wide male dominance" (2001, 25). However, because of its primary focus on western feminism as the model for all feminist activism, which in turn signified a homogenisation of feminism according to white western standards, global feminism "became subject to critique (...) for isolating gender from the context of other concerns such as colonialism (and its aftereffects), national identity, race, and class, and for assuming a homogeneous sisterhood of women united together against men" (Friedman 2001, 25).

Moreover, *Planetary* is also more in line with the concept of Intersectionality as posited by Crenshaw, as well as with the Politics of Location formulated by Rich, the Situated Knowledges of Donna Haraway, and the Location Feminism proposed by Friedman. As I will explain in the following section, these have all been vital for my research.

I have adapted Friedman's formulations and use *Planetary* to widen the scope of feminist studies, trying to go beyond national constructs. In doing so, I aim to find points of connection between women writers with different backgrounds and from diverse geopolitical contexts. This exercise implies a careful threading that acknowledges and cherishes their differences, while recognising their similarities, without assimilating them into one single paradigm risking homogenisation and essentialism. To achieve this goal, I will apply, to various degrees, the "four main critical practices" as set out by Friedman: "Re-vision, Recovery, Circulation, Collage" (2015, 76).

Re-vision had already been proposed by Adrienne Rich in her 1972 article "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision", and it consists of "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (Rich 1972, 12).

Rediscovery, according to Friedman, “is the act of digging, creating an archaeology of new archives ... and thus other forms of creative expressivities” (2015, 76). Although here Friedman is referring to the recovery of “other modernities” (76), the act of rediscovering lost texts from the past has long been part of the work of feminist literary critics. In 1975 Annette Kolodny had already put forward this critical practice, in the following terms: “one vital goal of feminist scholarship must be the rediscovery and unearthing of text by women which have, for one reason or another, been either lost or ignored” (Kolodny 1975, 88).

Circulation means “the act of seeing linkages, networks, conjunctures, creolizations, intertextualities, travels, and transplantation”, connecting feminist expressions “from different parts of the word” (Friedman 2015, 77). Finally, Collage is intended as “a nonhierarchical act of comparison”, “a montage of differences where the putting side by side illuminates those differences at the same time that it spotlights commonalities” (Friedman 2015, 77). All four of these critical approaches have been applied, to different degrees, in the present dissertation.

Thus far, I have explained the main approach I will take in analysing the two women writers who are the subject of my dissertation. I have also discussed the main theories that led me to propose a *Feminist Planetary Web*. In the following sections, I will expand upon the theoretical framework which underpins my research. I will also briefly explain why I have chosen to weave such a *Web* for my study of the works and feminist ideas of Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda.

1.1. From sex/gender as the main axis of analysis to an intersectional approach

To understand how I arrived at the idea of weaving a *Feminist Planetary Web* to analyse the works of two women writers of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to take a step back and briefly describe the main theoretical formulations that brought me onto this path. Starting with Virginia Woolf’s assessment that to write fiction every woman needs a room of her own, I will explain the importance of recognising how sex and gender differences impacted both women’s ability to write, and what they could write. To do so, I will also establish a dialogue with, and between, the main feminist theorists of the 1970s and 1980s. Following this discussion, I will go on to expose the impact that the poststructuralist turn had on feminist literary criticism, and how it answered to the challenge. I will also show the relevance of recognising that we are not one and the same and that women, according to the different axes of power that intersect our identities, experience the world in different ways and suffer different kinds of oppression. Finally, incorporating all these different elements, and primarily using

Susan Stanford Friedman's formulations as a base, I will propose that no matter the many differences between and among women, there is also room for commonalities and coalitions in order to fight oppression and patriarchy.

The title of the present section might give the impression that these different expressions of feminist theories occur one after the other as if they were phases or evolutionary stages in feminist thinking. However, the truth is that they presented themselves in overlapping forms, reflecting on one another, and impacting the development of each other. For the sake of clarity, I have decided to present them in a structured manner but, as the dates of the texts analysed show, these different theoretical approaches actually run parallel to one another, sometimes intersecting and sometimes denying the importance or accuracy of the other. All of them continue to ripple today with different intensities, and it is the dialogue between them that constitutes the theoretical framework of my analysis, which, I believe, is made stronger by the intermingling of these different approaches.

1.1.1. The relevance of sex and gender differences

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf exposed how differences in the material conditions and social status of men and women affected women's ability to write, as well as the content of their writing. Her essay starts by affirming, "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (Woolf 1929, 4), before explaining how these conditions have rarely been possible for women:

to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a soundproof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since her pin money, which depended on the goodwill of her father, was only enough to keep her clothed, she was debarred from such alleviations as came ... from a walking tour, a little journey to France, from the separate lodging ... Such material difficulties were formidable; but much worse were the immaterial ... [she did not face] indifference but hostility ... The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing? (Woolf 1929, 90–91)

Woolf also searched for reasons as to why English women mainly wrote novels during the nineteenth century. The first motive she gives is a material one: not being able to have a room of their own, women had to write in the common sitting-room, where they were often interrupted. Hence, according to Woolf, "it would be easier to write prose and fiction there than

to write poetry or a play. Less concentration is required" (1929, 115). The second reason Woolf presents is related to the education women received, and how it impacted their lives and their choices:

all the training that a woman had in the early nineteenth century was training in the observation of character, in the analysis of emotion. Her sensibility had been educated for centuries by the influences of the common sitting-room. People's feelings were impressed on her; personal relations were always before her eyes. Therefore, when the middle-class woman took to writing, she naturally wrote novels... (1929, 116)

She also considered that, given women's lack of a strong literary tradition or genealogy, the novel gave them the possibility to experiment and to adapt it to their reality. Other genres, like poetry, had their rules already established and demanded concentration and the possibility of writing without interruption, a 'luxury' that women did not have. "All the older forms of literature were hardened and set by the time she became a writer. The novel alone was young enough to be soft in her hands—another reason, perhaps, why she wrote novels" (Woolf 1929, 134).

Woolf ends her essay with an admonitory, but somehow positive, reflection. Although she recognises the difficulties that women of the past faced in order to write, she also affirms that by 1929 "the excuse of lack of opportunity, training, encouragement, leisure and money no longer holds good" (Woolf 1929, 197). In retrospect, Woolf's assertion, which comes from the perspective of a middle-class woman with a room of her own and "five hundred pounds a year forever" (Woolf 1929, 63), can be taken more as an expression of hope than that of reality.

A Room of One's Own signifies a fundamental moment for feminism. It exposes how the differences between men and women, created and maintained socially, produced the material and social conditions that hindered women's writing for so long.

However, it was during the 1960s and 1970s that women scholars, inspired by the current of the women's and feminist movements, cemented the bases of feminist studies in general, and feminist literary criticism in particular. It was during this period that the women's liberation movement coined the phrase "the personal is political", developed theoretically by Kate Millett (2016 [1969]) and Carol Hanisch⁵ (2006 [1970]). The word political is intended

⁵ The article was originally published in 1970 in *Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation*, a volume edited by Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt. According to Carol Hanisch's introduction to the same text in 2006, Firestone and Koedt were the ones that coined the phrase "the personal is political", giving it as the title of her contribution. A digitalized version of the original volume can be found in the following link: <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/wlmpc/wlmmms01039> (last accessed: 30th March 2021).

not just as the electoral party process, but as a system of gendered power relationships that permeates every aspect of social life.

Sexual Politics is a ground-breaking work of this period that unveiled the gendered power system. In it, Kate Millett affirms and proves that "sex is a category with political implications" (2016 [1969], 24), understanding politics as "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another" (23). Millett argues that in our societies the framework of the sexual politics coincides with the patriarchy, and she claims that it "obtains consent through the 'socialization' of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status" (2016 [1969], 26). According to Millett's theory, society assigns status, determines temperament, and imposes a role according to the sex of its members. In a patriarchy, men are assumed to have higher status than women, which in turn determines the temperament of each "along stereotyped lines of sex category ("masculine" and "feminine") based on the needs and values of the dominant group [males] and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates [females]" (Millett 2016 [1969], 26). This hierarchy also determines roles and activities, which are decreed by "a consonant and highly elaborate code of conduct, gesture and attitude for each sex" (Millett 2016 [1969], 26). Because these three factors determine the way people act in society, Millett is confident in stating that there is "fairly concrete positive evidence of the overwhelmingly *cultural* character of gender, i.e., personality structure in terms of sexual category" (2016 [1969], 29) (italics in original). Thus, she concludes: "because of our social circumstances, male and female are really two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different" (Millett 2016 [1969], 31).

This last assertion, the fact that the status, temperament, and role imposed by the patriarchy implies differentiated male and female cultures, signified a pivotal moment for feminist studies. If the way women experienced the world meant a different culture from the dominant male one, then the texts written by women had to be found, read (re-read), and analysed in a new light.

In the early 1970s Adrienne Rich, recognizing the "connections ... between our sexual lives and our political institutions", called for an act of re-vision of literature, which for her signified "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction ... an act of survival" (1972, 18). Rich described the task of re-visioning the literature of the past in the following terms:

A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see—and therefore live—afresh ... We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us (Rich 1972, 18–19).

For Rich, the rules of literature: who could write, what to write about, and how to express it, had been established by male culture and male judgement. This situation irrevocably “created problems for the woman writer: problems of contact with herself, problems of language and style, problems of energy and survival” (Rich 1972, 20).

Keeping with this line of thought, Annette Kolodny, in tracing the characteristics of feminist literary criticism, claimed:

...we need to make clear that what women have so far expressed in literature is what they have been able to express, as a result of the complex interplay between innate biological determinants, personal and individual talents and opportunities, and the larger effects of socialization, which, in some cases, may govern the limits of expression or even of perception and experience itself. What is permitted now may not have been in the past (1975, 76).

However, Kolodny advocated for a non-prescriptive reading of women's texts: that is, she was against the practice of reading women's literature with the idea already in mind of finding a particular voice or style that was eminently feminine. As she claimed in a later article, it was preferable to "have literature give rise to the critical rules than have the critical rules formulate the literature" (Kolodny 1976, 828). Kolodny did not oppose the search for common ground among women writers: what she decried was "both the tendency to become prescriptive, suggesting what women *ought* to write, on the basis of what they have written, and the tendency to set up authorities" (Kolodny 1975, 87). According to her, a good feminist literary critic had to start her work by acknowledging "that men's and women's writing in our culture will inevitably share some common ground". From then, the work of the feminist critic could focus on "the ways in which this common ground is differently imagined in women's writing and also note the turf which they do not share". Kolodny also advocated for the recognition of the "variety and variance of women's experience", which in turn meant identifying, "exploring and analysing the variety of literary devices through which different women are finding effective voices" (Kolodny 1975, 86).

This last statement is particularly relevant to the present dissertation because it acknowledges that women experience the world in different ways, as well as the fact that those different experiences will be present in their writing through different devices and strategies. Thus, even if it is possible to find commonalities among women writers, because there is a gender structure that has enough "internal coherence so as to deserve to be thought of as one (differentiated) whole" (Gunnarsson 2011, 34), one must also be aware of how that gender structure manifests itself in different ways and of how those different ways create different experiences of the world. This will necessarily be present in the way women writers represent their world in their work, as well as in the way they express themselves.

With her discourse, Kolodny was trying to tackle a practice common among some feminist literary critics of analysing women's texts with the explicit intention of finding common traits among women or a particular 'women's voice'. As she put it, the variety and richness of women's writing could easily be lost if "we practice a criticism based on assumptions, sometimes even unacknowledged assumptions, instead of beginning with questions ... before we can ask *how* women's writing is different or unique, we must first ask *is it?*" (Kolodny 1975, 78) (*italics in original*). In her 1976 article, Kolodny seemed to be particularly concerned with Josephine Donovan's assertion that feminist literary criticism should be "prescriptive" in the "prophetic mode".

In a 1975 volume on feminist literary criticism, Josephine Donovan, following an essay by Cheri Register, presented the concept of "prescriptive criticism" which, for her, "exist[ed] in what sociologists call the 'prophetic' mode" (1989a [1975], 75). According to Donovan, the literary critic is prescriptive when she is "actively engaged in encouraging the social and cultural realization of those structural changes that promote human liberation" (1989a [1975], 75). What worried Kolodny about Donovan's formulation was not her "want to influence the future and to try to alter the methods of critical inquiry on ideological grounds", an endeavour that she found legitimate (Kolodny 1976, 828). In fact, Kolodny had already claimed that "feminist criticism must continue, for some time, to be avowedly 'political' ... the honest feminist critic will not be able to help bringing to her reading the attitudes and ideologies of a raised feminine consciousness" (1975, 90). However, what concerned her was the idea that the prescriptive criticism presented by Donovan could "influence the future of creative expression", determining, through 'new feminist rules', what could and could not be written (Kolodny 1976, 828).

Donovan answered Kolodny's concerns in a 1977 article, explaining that when she referred to prescriptive criticism in the prophetic mode, she was referring to a form of criticism

in which the critic would be engaged and concerned with affecting the future and, in the case of feminist literary criticism, of correcting the way women's writing had been evaluated thus far:

I am speaking of the engaged scholar who is concerned to influence the future by her/his work today. S/he chooses her/his work with an eye to encouraging political and social changes. Obviously, for a feminist this translates into a concern for a future in which women (and ultimately all human beings) will be free from many of the restrictions that have held them down in the past. Much feminist criticism is thus corrective criticism designed to redress the imbalance in current literary curricula, and more generally to reintroduce "the feminine" into the public culture (Donovan 1977, 605)

In the 1989 edition of the same volume of feminist literary criticism, Donovan referred to the prophetic mode as the positive mode of feminist literary criticism. According to her, in this positive mode, "the feminist critic identifies the text's liberatory dimension and delineates its Utopian horizon. Here the critic recognises the text as a political "allegory of desire," based upon the understanding that the author is a politically situated being..." (Donovan 1989b, xviii).

No matter their different approaches to feminist literary criticism, what both Kolodny and Donovan seem to have in common was their engagement with retrieving women's writings and integrating them into the canon. In her 1975 article, Kolodny affirmed:

...one vital goal of feminist scholarship must be the rediscovery and unearthing of texts by women which have, for one reason or another, been either lost or ignored ... Probably the most valuable and long-lasting achievement of feminist scholarship and feminist criticism, however, will be their insistence that we give the same kind of critical attention to women writers that we have always accorded our male writers (1975, 88).

Donovan also expressed this idea when answering Kolodny's concerns:

...one main concern feminist critics have is to retrieve the extensive body of women's literature and art that has been neglected in the past-not only to retrieve it but to integrate it into the canon. If, in this process of integration, we establish that there is a women's culture, so much the better for the purposes of our politics -to make the world a place in which woman is no longer other. (Donovan 1977, 606).

This endeavour of searching, (re)reading, and re-visioning women's writings led not only to retrieving lost texts, but also, in some cases, to finding a particular women's voice or women's culture. In 1977 Elaine Showalter published *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, a book that constituted "an effort to describe the female literary tradition in the English novel from the generation of the Brontës to the present day, and to show how the development of this tradition is similar to the development of any literary subculture" (Showalter 1977, 11).

According to Showalter, it was possible to find common characteristics and even a sort of genealogy in women's writings, because "women themselves have constituted a subculture within the framework of a larger society, and have been unified by values, conventions, experiences, and behaviors impinging on each individual" (1977, 11). However, she was not presenting a female imagination based on stereotypes or abstractions. Instead, Showalter claimed that, to understand women's writing, the critic needed "to see the woman novelist against the backdrop of the women of her time, as well as in relation to other writers in history" (1977, 9). Only by doing so could the critic understand the "delicate network of influences" and conventions that gave birth to a particular women's voice (1977, 12). Thus, rather than looking "at an innate sexual attitude", Showalter looked "at the ways in which the self-awareness of the woman writer has translated itself into a literary form in a specific place and time-span, how this self-awareness has changed and developed, and where it might lead" (1977, 12).

In her research, which spans from the beginning of the Victorian Era (the 1840s) to the 1960s-1970s, Showalter identifies three phases in women's writing: the Feminine, the Feminist, and the Female. She clarifies that these stages "are obviously not rigid categories", but instead they overlap because their 'limits' are porous. In her own words: "there are feminist elements in feminine writing, and vice versa. One might also find all three phases in the career of a single novelist" (Showalter 1977, 13). However, for the sake of clarity, Showalter classifies these different phases according to a particular timeframe and attitude. For her, the Feminine stage principally covers the period between the 1840s and the 1880s and can be identified by the use of the pseudonym. The Feminine is a "phase of *imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and *internalization* of its standards of art and its views on social roles". The Feminist stage goes from 1880 to 1920 and is characterised by the "*protest* against [dominant] standards and values, and *advocacy* of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy". Finally, the Female stages starts in 1920 and, for Showalter, was ongoing at the

time of publication. The Female is “a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity” (Showalter 1977, 13) (*italics in original*).

For Showalter, women’s writing was embedded in, and imbued with, women’s experience of the world, and that experience shared enough common traits to translate into a common voice in their literature, which is why she spoke of a ‘Literature of their Own’.

Another example of finding common characteristics in women's writings that could lead to a particular form of female literature can be found in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's pivotal work *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. As they admit in the preface:

We were surprised by the coherence of theme and imagery that we encountered in the works of writers who were often geographically, historically, and psychologically distant from each other. Indeed, even when we studied women’s achievements in radically different genres, we found what began to seem a distinctively female literary tradition, a tradition that had been approached and appreciated by many women readers and writers but which no one had yet defined in its entirety (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, xi)

Gilbert and Gubar also shared Showalter's thesis that "nineteenth-century literary women did have both a literature and a culture of their own—that, in other words, by the nineteenth century there was a rich and clearly defined female literary subculture, a community in which women consciously read and related to each other's works" (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, xii). In their work, they identify the difficulties women had in appropriating the pen in the nineteenth century, and the strategies they used to overcome them. They also analysed how women writers introjected, used, and, finally, overturned the stereotypes of women created by male writers: the angel and the monster (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 16–17). As such, Gilbert and Gubar affirmed:

...despite the obstacles presented by those twin images of angel and monster, despite the fears of sterility and the anxieties of authorship from which women have suffered, generations of texts have been possible for female writers. By the end of the eighteenth century—and here is the most important phenomenon we will see throughout this volume –women were not only writing, they were conceiving fictional worlds in which patriarchal images and conventions were severely, radically revised (1979, 44)

Taking into consideration all these instances where the unearthing and re-vision of women’s writings led to the finding of a particular female literary tradition, Showalter coined

the term 'gynocritics' to denote a form of feminist literary criticism "concerned with *woman as writer*" (Showalter 1985b, 128) (italics in original). For Showalter, feminist literary criticism should be female-oriented, that is, concerning itself with what women have said, are saying, and have to say, based on their specific experience of the world, as well as with the modes and strategies women have used to represent their reality. In gynocriticism:

...the program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture (Showalter 1985b, 131)

Gynocriticism is transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary by nature, because it relates "to feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, all of which have developed hypotheses of a female subculture" (Showalter 1985b, 131). It is possible to claim that gynocritics can also avail itself of, and help, fields of research like legal studies, political sciences, and economics, just to name a few. For example, the analysis of women's writings can help understand the strategies women used to circumvent legal fictions, like coverture, to access or administer their own money.

Gynocritics has proved to be an essential tool in the analysis of women's literature because it focuses not only on retrieving women's texts, but primarily on understanding their voices, their culture, and their strategies for appropriating the pen and telling their own stories. As Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Gilberta Golinelli claimed, the act of revision "is crucial not only for finding a personal 'voice' in the literary domain, but also for allowing women to become active agents in the cultural, social and political spheres at large" (2019, 2).

However, with its focus only on gender, gynocritics may fall short of the task of accounting for all the different voices of women writers, instead creating totalising discourses that do not take into consideration the variety of women's experiences. To account for those differences, as well as for other developments in feminist literary criticism and gender studies, it is necessary to integrate this prevalent focus on gender with both the influence of poststructuralism and the recognition of intersectionality, that is, of the different geographics of identity that constitute the human experience.

1.1.2. *The influence of poststructuralism*

The development of feminist studies and feminist literary criticism was influenced by, and runs parallel to, the formation of poststructuralism. For this reason, I will now analyse the effects of poststructuralism on feminist theory. While the theories discussed in the previous section were developed mainly in the Anglo-Saxon world (England and the United States), poststructuralism finds its roots in France, from where it rippled throughout the world. According to Baccolini, "Among post-structuralist critics, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault question the notion of a unified subject, the centre, and the self, and argue that identity is but a construct of language" (2019, 30).

In 1968 Barthes published "The Death of the Author", where he affirmed: "The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as ... it discovered the prestige of the individual". For Barthes, instead of the tyrannical reign of the author "in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines", what should matter is the language, because "it is language which speaks, not the author" (1977 [1968], 143). According to his reasoning, there is no author before the book, there is no subject or individual that predates the book and imbues it with his/her experiences. Instead, Barthes presents the idea of sriptor and text, where "the modern sriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate" (1977 [1968], 145). In this scenario, the text is no longer the manifestation of the author's intentions, "but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash", finding a point of encounter in the reader, not the author (Barthes 1977 [1968], 146, 148). However, for Barthes the reader is not to be taken as the new master of the meaning of the text because he is also "without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted" (1977 [1968], 148) (*italics in original*). Consequently, for Barthes, what matters and what should be placed in the centre of literary analysis are the text and its multiple readings, declaring, as the title of his essay announces, the death of the author.

The death of the author was not a concept exclusive to Barthes. Foucault had also presented a similar idea in his essay "What is an Author?" Foucault starts his argument by referring to a question formulated by Beckett: "'What does it matter who is speaking' someone said 'what does it matter who is speaking'" (1998 [1969], 205). He then explains how the author disappears from the text because of the different strategies he uses to separate himself

from the product of writing⁶: "...the writing subject cancels out the signs of his particular individuality. As a result, the mark of the writer is reduced to nothing more than the singularity of his absence; he must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing" (Foucault 1998 [1969], 207).

Foucault then traces the history of when the author's name became relevant to the study of literary work, designating this identification between the author and the writer's proper name as "author function". He states that it was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, i.e., during the Enlightenment, that "literary discourse came to be accepted only when endowed with the author function", making it an important element of "our view of literary work" (Foucault 1998 [1969], 213). However, Foucault claims that all the characteristics that can be attributed to the abstraction 'author', like his creative power or his motives, "are only a projection ... of the operations we force texts to undergo, the connections we make, the traits we establish as pertinent, the continuities we recognize, or the exclusions we practice" (213-214). For Foucault, what gives meaning to the text is not the author but the readers, according to their particular conditions, which in turn gives the text infinite possibilities of meaning. He posits that what enshrines the author in his privileged position within literary studies is our fear of this multiplication of meaning, because by focusing on the author we can limit, however fictionally, the meaning of the text:

The author is not an indefinite source of significations that fill a work; the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction ... The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning (Foucault 1998 [1969], 221–22)

For all these reasons, Foucault ends his essay with a provocative question, one that, as Baccolini asserts, is particularly "unsettling ... for feminist critics" (2019, 31). He asks, "What difference does it make who is speaking?" (Foucault 1998 [1969], 222).

What do these theorisations mean for feminist and gender studies? If the author is no longer important and what matters is language, as well as the infinite meanings a reader can give to a text, then is it still important to retrieve, (re)read, and re-vision the lost works of

⁶ I am deliberately using male pronouns, not only to be faithful to the translation but also because, in my opinion, the use of only male pronouns shows that the author referred to in this work is considered, by default, to be male.

women writers? Can we still talk about a particular female literary tradition and a particular female voice when the author is no longer the source of meaning?

If what matters is language, and language, according to psychoanalytic approaches like that of Lacan, constitutes the Law of the Father which establishes a patriarchal symbolic order, then some poststructuralist feminists like Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray asserted “that language is inherently phallogocentric”. Therefore, they “claimed that women cannot be represented in language (or narrative), that women’s past writing could inscribe only their Otherness within the phallogocentric discourse, that women have, in short been denied access to the status of subject within the symbolic order” (Friedman 1998, 193).

For example, Cixous, in her article “The Laugh of the Medusa”, wrote:

there has not yet been any writing that inscribes femininity ... the number of women writers ... has always been ridiculously small ... from their species of women writers we do not first deduct the immense majority whose workmanship is in no way different from male writing, and which either obscures women or reproduces the classic representations of women (1976 [1975], 878).

For her part, Irigaray starts her essay/poem “When Our Lips Speak Together” with the following assertion: “If we continue to speak the same language to each other, we will reproduce the same story... //... if we speak to each other as men have spoken for centuries, as they taught us to speak, we will fail each other”, and so she states the necessity to “get out of their language” (1980 [1976], 69).

Both Cixous and Irigaray are therefore calling for a language of the female. For Cixous, this language will have a destructive nature, because it will have "a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of suppressions" (1976 [1975], 886). In other words:

If woman has always functioned “within” the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this “within”, to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of (Cixous 1976 [1975], 887)

For her part Irigaray, in this search for a language of the female, points to the need for a female God. According to her, having a God, that is, a model to aspire to, is a condition of becoming, which means to “accomplish the plenitude of what we can be” (1986 [1985], 4).

However, the Christian God is a “unique masculine God”: in our tradition “there is no woman God”, and “if women lack a God they cannot communicate, or communicate amongst themselves” (Irigaray 1986 [1985], 4). For this reason, Irigaray urges all women to “imagine a God for themselves, an objective and subjective plan or path for the possible assemblage of the self in space and time” (1986 [1985], 8).

As important as these theorisations are, the claim that existing language does not allow any space for women to express themselves can easily fall into a denial of any form of female agency in the actions and writings of women of the past. These women, who appropriated the pen, overcame great difficulties and obstacles to do so. They indeed had to devise strategies and often accept male standards and values to express themselves as writers. However, it is also true that women writers managed to circumvent those values, and even defy or subvert them to tell their stories and impact their societies.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Peggy Kamuf, starting from Foucault's critiques of humanism and its man-centred thinking, called for replacing feminist criticism. For her, either trying to include women's writing in the canon or searching for a particular female voice in order to find "the authentic and essential human" (Kamuf 1982, 45) was just another way of upholding the reigning system of power. In other words, Kamuf's argument pointed to the fact that "to the extent that feminist thought assumes the limits of humanism, it may be reproducing itself as but an extension of those limits and reinventing the institutional structures that it set out to dismantle" (1982, 46). According to her reasoning, following the strategies so far adopted by feminist literary criticism ran the risk of establishing, as humanism had done in the past, a single essentialist truth to which everything should refer, much the same as phallogentrism and androcentrism had done. Thus, for Kamuf feminist criticism had to decentre the subject and “abandon the idea of the woman author as a point of origin of a text and, with it, of identity and of a strong countersubject.” (Baccolini 2019, 31).

The first part of Kamuf's discourse about the risk of creating a single story/single history of women's writing is well accepted now in feminist and gender studies scholarship, thanks to the influence of poststructuralism, postcolonial studies, and intersectional theory. As Crisafulli and Golinelli remind us, when studying women's voices, it is important to bear in mind "the specificity of each story and experience, in various places and times" (2019, 3). Otherwise, we run the risk of creating "a totalizing narrative ... which would silence the differences among women themselves, as well as their differences from us, from the present day." (Crisafulli and Golinelli 2019, 2).

The problem for feminist studies with Barthes', Foucault's, and Kamuf's theorisations is that, by denying the importance of the author and proclaiming their death, these theorisations can cause the undesired effect of effacing the productive agency of the subject and, in the process, cancelling women's long struggle for the recognition of their identity. I am not claiming that their theorisations explicitly and unreservedly had the obliteration of women's subjectivity as one of their goals. What I am positing is that, by focusing entirely on language and text, we can easily forget the material conditions in which texts are/were produced. Consequently, and unwillingly, we may open the door to erasing the importance of recognising women's labouring path of appropriating the pen and telling their own stories. As Nancy K. Miller put it in her answer to Kamuf, "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and Her Fictions", women have always been denied the status of subject, and as such, they cannot let go of issues of identity. As she explains, "society did not wait for the invention of man to repress 'woman' or oppress women and the 'end of man' in no way precludes the reinscription of woman as Other" (Miller 1982, 49). For Miller, only those who already have a name and an identity "can play with not having it" (1982, 53). However, historically women have not had a name or an identity to call their own, so Miller answers the question "What matter who's speaking?" in the following terms:

I would answer it matters, for example, to women who have lost and still routinely lose their proper name in marriage, and whose signature –not merely their voice– has not been worth the paper it was written on; women for whom the signature - by virtue of its power in the world of circulation - is not immaterial (Miller 1982, 53)

In a later essay, where she directly addresses Barthes' theorisations about the move from work to text, Miller reprises her critique and claims, "only the subject who is both self-possessed and possesses access to the library of the already read has the luxury of flirting with the escape from identity ... promised by an aesthetic of the decentered (decapitated, really) body" (1986, 274). For this reason, she believes "that 'we women' must continue to work for the woman who has been writing, because not to do so will reauthorize our oblivion" (Miller 1982, 49). In this endeavour, Miller proposes a methodology to read women's texts which she designates "arachnology", which is "a critical position that reads *against* the weave of indifferentiation to discover the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity; to recover within representation the emblems of its construction" (1986, 272) (*italics in original*). This methodology will work as an overreading of women's texts, in which one does not only search for marks of the female writer but also questions the conditions under which women writers

produced their work. Thus, it creates webs between the writer and her texts, that, as Miller describes, citing Woolf, represent "...the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and the house we live in" (Miller 1986, 275).

Miller does not deny the importance of poststructuralist approaches. In fact, she claims, "let us retain a 'modern', post-humanistic reading of 'literature' that has indeed begun to rethink the very locations of the center and the periphery, and within that fragile topology, the stability of the subject" (1982, 53). In other words, she recognises that poststructuralism's influence allows us to question man and his interests as the centre of knowledge, which is what has placed women and minorities in the periphery (Miller 1988, 105). However, what she brings into question is what it means for feminist critics and women writers, claiming:

The postmodernist decision that the Author is Dead and the subject along with him does not, I will argue, necessarily hold for women, and prematurely forecloses the question of agency for them ... Because the female subject has juridically been excluded from the polis, hence decentered, "disoriginated," deinstitutionalized, etc., her relation to integrity and textuality, desire and authority, displays structurally important differences from that universal position (Miller 1988, 106)

Thus, this means that feminist studies cannot do without an analysis of women writers as authors and subjects, because doing so, as Baccolini claims, "will result in the glossing over of an essential part of women's struggles" (2019, 33).

This negotiation between poststructuralism's de-construction and decentralisation of man as the reference of all knowledge, and the necessity of acknowledging women's identities, struggles, and subjectivities, has yet another element: the importance of recognising the differences between women, and the intersections between different axes of power in the formation of identity.

As Kimberlé Crenshaw claims, the anti-essentialism⁷ posit and use by women of colour "owes a great deal to the postmodernist idea that categories we consider natural or merely representational are actually socially constructed in a linguistic economy of difference" (1991, 1296). However, the fact that categories such as women, black, or people of colour are social constructions, does not mean that we should do away with them. These categories have had, and still have, material meanings and consequences in our world. As Crenshaw argues:

⁷ For Crenshaw, anti-essentialism is the place "from which women of color have critically engaged white feminism for the absence of women of color on the one hand, and for speaking for women of color on the other" (Crenshaw 1991, 1296)

...a large and continuing project for subordinated people –and indeed, one of the projects for which postmodern theories have been very helpful– is thinking about the way power has clustered around certain categories exercised against others. This project attempts to unveil the processes of subordination and the various ways those processes are experienced by people who are subordinated and people who are privileged by them. It is then, a project that presumes that categories have meaning and consequences. And this project's most pressing problem, in many if not most cases, is not the existence of the categories, but rather the particular values attached to them and the way those values foster and create social hierarchies (1991, 1296–97)

I will now move on to exploring how theorisations and critiques from black women, women of colour, and postcolonial theory have impacted feminism and its understanding of women. Their contributions have been, and still are, fundamental in our understanding of women as a plural, intersectional, and complex group, which cannot and should not be essentialised under a universal concept of woman or womanhood.

1.1.3. We are not one and the same: the importance of recognising differences between and among women

Although the research and theorisations of Kolodny, Donovan, Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar, and so many others, were crucial in retrieving women's voices and texts from the past, giving them sense and meaning within and beyond the patriarchal gendered system of power, they focused on a particular kind of women: white, English or Anglo-American, middle-class women. This narrowed focus was part and parcel of a phenomenon happening within the feminist and women's liberation movements. There the interests and points of view of white, heterosexual, middle-class women seemed to prevail over the concerns and needs of women who were oppressed not only due to their gender, but also their race, ethnicity, and/or sexuality. Some prominent white feminists went as far as declaring, as Friedman recounts, that race did not interest them (Friedman 1998, 250n11 citing Mary Daly).

Black women, women of colour, Third World women, women that came from (ex)colonised territories, and lesbian women started to tell their own stories, demanding to be taken into account. Their work unveiled how racism, colonialism, imperialism, and homophobia were inextricably intertwined with misogyny and the upholding of patriarchy, and how there was not, and could not be, a single story of womanhood or a single woman's voice. Rather, because the construction of the category women went hand in hand with the

construction of categories relating to race, class, and other systems of power and oppression, their work showed that there were many female voices which, while sharing common experiences of womanhood, also diverged in significant ways.

In 1974 Alice Walker published "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens", an essay where she questioned how black women writers could build a genealogy of their own, when black women's creativity and art had been curtailed by slavery, poverty, and racism. She asked: "What did it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers' time? In our great-grandmothers' day? It is a question with an answer cruel enough to stop the blood" (Walker 2005a [1974], 235). For Walker, the search for creative expression in the black community had to be done not only in expressions of the so-called high culture, but also, and more particularly, in the everyday tasks and activities where black women could express themselves: in their songs, their quilting, and their gardening. There it was possible to find "an artist who left her mark in the only materials she could afford and in the only medium her position in society allowed her to use" (Walker 2005a [1974], 239). This reasoning is what gives the essay its title, because Walker affirms that her mother channelled her creativity through "a garden so brilliant with colors, so original in its design, so magnificent with life and creativity", that she made art "a daily part of her life" and her vehicle to "hold on" (2005a [1974], 241–42). Walker recognises how her mother's garden and stories inspired her own writings, creating a particular kind of black woman's voice, different, not better or worse, to white women's voices.

Walker acknowledges and exposes the fact that different experiences of the world will create different kinds of writers. Thus, the writings of a black woman from the South of the United States would necessarily have a particular tone, language, mode of expression, and stories to tell. In Walker's words:

The richness of the black writer's experience in the South can be remarkable, though some people might not think so ... it is narrow thinking, indeed, to believe that Keats is the only kind of poet one would want to grow up to be. One wants to write poetry that is understood by one's people... (2005b [1970], 18).

These differences were recognised by other black women and women of colour. They exposed how sexism and racism, as well as other forms of oppression, intertwined in their lives, demanding that their voices be heard within the feminist movement. In the early 1980s, Cherríe L. Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa edited the volume *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. This book contains the voices of several women of colour/Third World women: Latinas, Blacks, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, among others, who saw

and exposed how their lives were affected not only by the gendered patriarchal system but also by hierarchical systems of race and class, which help uphold one another. They not only demanded for these intersections to be acknowledged by feminism, but also for their effects to be tackled as part of the feminist agenda.

Audre Lorde contributed to this book with two powerful texts: “An Open Letter to Mary Daly” and her speech “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House”⁸. In the latter, Lorde calls the lack of analysis of women’s differences an expression of academic arrogance: “It is a particular academic arrogance to assume any discussion of feminist theory in this time and in this place without examining our many differences, and without a significant input from poor women, black and third-world women, and lesbians” (2002b [1981], 106). She also explains that differences are to be seen not as hindrances or threats, nor do they have to be simply tolerated. Instead, differences must be understood as a source of strength for the women’s movement:

...difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways to actively “be” in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters (Lorde 2002b [1981], 107)

Thus, Lorde concludes that if women keep fighting about their differences instead of embracing them as strengths, we are only helping to maintain the patriarchal system of domination under another disguise: “The failure of the academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. Divide and conquer, in our world, must become define and empower” (2002b [1981], 108).

In her open letter to Mary Daly, Lorde highlights that not all women suffer the same kind of oppressions, even if there is a long tradition of white women/white feminists who have not been able, or have not wanted, to hear the voices of Black women and women of colour, thus creating one more form of oppression. She declares: “to imply ... that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women, is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy. It is to ignore how those tools are used by women without awareness against each other” (Lorde 2002a [1981], 102). Therefore, she explains how it is not possible to assume that

⁸ These two texts are also included in Audre Lorde’s book *Sister Outsider*, edited in 1984 as a compilation of her essays and speeches.

the history of white women in western European societies is the only paradigm and point of reference. This assumption relegates to mere examples or decorations the experiences of all non-white, non-western women. Instead, these experiences serve to show not only the commonalities between all women, but also how elements like race and class affect the kind of patriarchal oppression women suffer, creating differences among us:

The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those boundaries. Nor do the reservoirs of our ancient power know these boundaries, either. To deal with one without even alluding to the other is to distort our commonality as well as our difference (Lorde 2002a [1981], 105)

This is a shared sentiment throughout the volume. Mitsuye Yamada, in her essay "Asian Pacific Women and Feminism", demands the recognition of racism as part of the feminist agenda:

A movement that fights sexism in the social structure must deal with racism, and we had hoped the leaders in the women's movement would be able to see the parallels in the lives of the women of color and themselves, and would "join" us in our struggle and give us "input." (2002, 76)

However, she claims that women of colour often feel that they must choose between the feminist fight or the fight against racism, when in fact they are actually intertwined: "...we shouldn't have to sign a "loyalty oath" favoring one [ethnicity] over the other [womanhood]. However, women of color are often made to feel that we must make a choice between the two." (Yamada 2002 [1981], 76). Therefore, she calls for the recognition of the "connections between racism and sexism in our lives" (Yamada 2002 [1981], 78), which in turns "means a commitment to a truly communal education where we learn from each other because we want to learn from each other" (79).

Barbara Cameron, speaking from the position of a Native American, explains how this learning from each other means not only white women learning from women of colour. Instead, she claims that women of colour, a term forged in the loose alliance against a common oppressor, need to face and overcome their own misconceptions about one another:

I've grown up with misconceptions about Blacks, Chicanos, and Asians. I'm still in the process of trying to eliminate my racist pictures of other people of color...

...

Racism among third world people is an area that needs to be discussed and dealt with honestly. We form alliances loosely based on the fact that we have a common oppressor, yet we do not have a commitment to talk about our own fears and misconceptions about each other. (Cameron 2002 [1981], 50–51)

Keeping with this line of thought, Rosario Morales explains that racism is an ideology and, as such, "everyone is capable of being racist whatever their color and condition. Only some of us are liable to racist attack" (2002 [1981], 97). Consequently, the feminist movement, rather than focusing its efforts on including women of colour as a token of good faith, should work toward "understanding the racist ideology - where and how it penetrates -", or how it operates within the gendered patriarchal system. Only by doing so would it be possible to overcome "an identification with the oppressor and oppressive ideology", and "instead, identify, understand, and feel with the oppressed as a way out of the morass of racism and guilt" (Morales 2002 [1981], 97).

For her part, Gloria Anzaldúa in "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter To Third World Women Writers", starts by acknowledging that "the dangers we face as women writers of color are not the same as those of white women though we have many in common" (2002 [1981], 183). Her words are in keeping with what Walker said a decade before when she spoke about the sources of inspiration and ways of expression of the Black community. For Anzaldúa women of colour/Third World women should write about what is important to us⁹, about what is part of our world and our relationships, whenever and wherever possible:

What matters to us is the relationships that are important to us whether with our self or others. We must use what is important to us to get to the writing. No topic is too trivial...

...

forget the room of one's own - write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, on the job or during meals, between sleeping or waking... (Anzaldúa 2002 [1981], 189)

Recognising the dangers and hardships women of colour/Third World women face when writing, Anzaldúa also calls us into action, to take responsibility:

⁹ As a woman that comes from South America, specifically from Colombia, I do consider myself as part of the group of women Anzaldúa was addressing, thus the use of "us" and "our" instead of "them" and "their".

It's too easy, blaming it all on the white man or white feminists or society or on our parents. What we say and what we do ultimately comes back to us, so let us own our responsibility, place it in our own hands and carry it with dignity and strength. (Anzaldúa 2002 [1981], 190).

However, this does not mean that women of colour must take the burden of educating white women upon themselves. White women must do their part, or as Anzaldúa calls it, their "homework", in understanding how racism and sexism intertwine and how their entanglement benefits them, to the detriment of their non-white, non-western sisters.

Cherríe Moraga, in her introduction to the section "Racism in the Women's Movement", explains that we are all part of racist societies, and that racism affects the lives of everyone, "but it is only white women who can 'afford' to remain oblivious to these effects. The rest of us have had it breathing or bleeding down our necks" (Moraga 2002 [1981], 64). Moreover, it is not only that white women have the privilege of being unaware of the effects of racism: as members of the privileged race (white) they are born with the power to implement racist ideology, "and the greater their economic privilege, the greater their power" (64).

All of these texts and essays not only exposed the hardships and oppressions suffered by women of colour, but they also demanded white women use their privilege to take action against sexism and racism alike. The goal of these texts was not to point fingers or assign blame. Instead, they aimed at unveiling the reality of women of colour and their multiple oppressions, while at the same time trying to enrol all women in the fight against all systems of power. They understood that patriarchy, racism, classism, and other systems of oppression function as an enmeshed network that keeps the master's house intact by distracting the oppressed to fight among themselves.

By the end of the 1980s Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black law professor, gave a name to the necessary analysis of the intertwined systems of power that affect people's identity: intersectionality. Crenshaw is both a feminist and a scholar of Critical Race Theory¹⁰. In her studies of the treatment of Black women in the judgement of class action cases (1989) and of violence against women of colour (1991), Crenshaw identified that the plaintiffs/victims were either seen as women or as members of their respective race, but not as a whole, that is, as Black women, Latina women, women of colour, among others. This in turn meant that the oppressions and discriminations that these women suffered were being analysed under partial

¹⁰ For an understanding of Critical Race Theory see Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic, 2017. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Third Edition. New York: New York University Press.

and skewed lenses that saw only either their sex or their race, but seemed to be oblivious to the intersections between the two.

Crenshaw called this approach the "single-axis framework", which focuses "on the most privileged group members marginaliz[ing] those who are multiply-burdened and obscur[ing] claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination" (1989, 140). According to her, for example, "in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class-privileged women" (Crenshaw 1989, 140). In other words, Crenshaw exposed how feminist analyses often focused on the experiences of a privileged subgroup of women, i.e., white middle- or upper-class women, which left untouched the experiences of all other women, and in turn diminished the force of the feminist discourse:

The value of feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is seldom acknowledged. Not only are women of color in fact overlooked, but their exclusion is reinforced when white women speak for and as women ... When feminist theory attempts to describe women's experiences through analyzing patriarchy, sexuality, or separate spheres ideology, it often overlooks the role of race. Feminists thus ignore how their own race functions to mitigate some aspects of sexism and, moreover, how it often privileges them over and contributes to the domination of other women. Consequently, feminist theory remains white, and its potential to broaden and deepen its analysis by addressing non-privileged women remains unrealized. (Crenshaw 1989, 154)

However, because "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism" (Crenshaw 1989, 140), it was not just a matter of adding Black women or women of colour to the existing framework of analysis. Instead, Crenshaw was aiming at a significant change in feminist theory, one that was able to understand the intersection between different forms of oppression and discrimination by including race in its analysis.

In a later article, Crenshaw expanded her study from Black women to women of colour in general, examining how violence against women of colour was framed and tackled. In this new analysis, she redoubled her critiques of feminist and antiracist practices that did not take into consideration matters of race and sex, respectively, affirming:

Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling (Crenshaw 1991, 1242)

She also was clear in stating that race and sex were not the only determinants of identity, nor the only structures of power and oppression. Although her analysis focuses on the intersections between these two, Crenshaw recognises the importance of other factors like class, sexual orientation, and age, among others. For her, intersectionality is “useful as a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics” (Crenshaw 1991, 1296). In other words, intersectionality is better understood as a methodology which helps us navigate a world that recognises identity as a multifaceted and multidimensional process. Different subjects occupy different positions and these can either signify privilege or oppression, according to their historical particularities and context.

The importance of recognising diversity and singularities among women also led to questions about the relationship between gender, imperialism, and colonialism. According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "colonization almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination and a suppression—often violent—of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question" (2003, 18)¹¹. Colonisation can refer to the material act of conquering and settlement in new territories by imperial, expansionist forces. More importantly, it also implies the use of cultural and discursive devices that go beyond the said material settlement, determining the attitudes and representation of both colonisers and colonised, in which the definition of the former necessitates the creation of the latter as 'other':

...it is only insofar as “woman/women” and “the East” are defined as others, or as peripheral, that (Western) man/humanism can represent him/itself as the center. It is not the center that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the center. (Mohanty 2003, 41–42)

It is within this framework that Gayatri Spivak's critique of imperialism must be understood. According to her, "imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English", in which literature played a fundamental part (Spivak 1989, 175). The disregard of both these realities creates a feminist literary criticism that, willingly or not, "reproduces the axioms of imperialism" because it takes the Western European and Anglo-American female and feminist subject as the norm, to which all others should aspire (Spivak 1989, 175). This is the sense of her critiques of both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which do not aim at undermining either Charlotte Brontë or Jean Rhys,

¹¹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty's text "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" was first published as an article in the *Feminist Review* in 1988. In the present dissertation, I am using the version published as a chapter in Mohanty's book *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, published in 2003. The full references to both versions of the text are included in the bibliography.

or their excellence as authors, but rather to provoke a conscious reading of the texts in order to dismantle “the imperialist narrativization of history” (Spivak 1989, 176).

Mohanty, in the field of sociological studies, also expresses similar concerns and critiques. For her, discursive colonisation means that knowledge and scholarship are appropriated and defined according to categories and interests that have been pre-defined as important by the Western world, i.e., the United States and Western Europe, which in turn are implicitly considered “as the primary referent in theory and praxis” (Mohanty 2003, 17–18). This way of seeing the world leads to a monolithic construction of the category “Third World woman”, which does not take into account the particularities of each location in regard to class, religion, and social status, among others:

...the application of the notion of women as a homogeneous category to women in the Third World colonizes and appropriates the pluralities of the simultaneous location of different groups of women in social class and ethnic frameworks; in doing so it ultimately robs them of their historical and political agency (Mohanty 2003, 39)

Instead, what Mohanty advocates for is for the construction of ‘women’ as a category by considering and pondering the “variety of political contexts that often exist simultaneously and overlaid on top of one another” (2003, 32). In her view, “it is only by understanding the contradictions inherent in women’s location within various structures that effective political action and challenges can be devised” (Mohanty 2003, 33).

The importance of recognising women's location and the contradictions inherent to the formation of identity thus become fundamental pillars of any feminist criticism, reading, or action. Hence, feminism, in order to avoid the mistakes of imperialism or hegemonic humanism, should refuse any attempt at universalising and homogenising notions or categories, preferring instead to locate and situate knowledges and practices.

Adrienne Rich, in her crucial essay “Notes toward a Politics of Location”, first given as a speech in Europe in 1984 and then published in her collection of writings *Blood, bread, and poetry* in 1986, gives an example of the importance of grounding and locating feminist knowledge and practice. In it, she calls for a practice that takes into account one’s lived experience, recognising herself as “located by color and sex”, as well as by religion (Jewish) and geographical location (North America) (Rich 1986, 215–16). Thus, Rich rejects “the faceless, raceless, classless category of ‘all women’” (1986, 219), calling instead for the recognition of differences and the importance of accountability, which implies the acknowledgement of racism in some Western feminist actions:

Marginalized though we have been as women, as white and Western makers of theory, we also marginalize others because our lived experience is thoughtlessly white, because even our "women's cultures" are rooted in some Western tradition. Recognizing our location, having to name the ground we're coming from, the conditions we have taken for granted... (Rich 1986, 219)

This means that diversity among women must be recognised, accepted, and valued as a strength: without it, it is impossible to move forward in the search for a better world. This is a view shared by Donna Haraway in her article "Situated Knowledges: The Sciences Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective". In it, she rejects humanist objectivity and universality, calling instead for a "feminist objectivity" which is "about limited location and situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988, 583). According to Haraway, feminism necessarily implies both accountability and embodiment, which "is not about fixed locations in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning" (1988, 588). This in turn means accepting and cherishing differences and contradictions, and a bottom-to-top construction of knowledge that comes from the personal, the body, and one's lived experience:

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims ... I am arguing for a view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structures body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity (Haraway 1988, 589)

For feminist literary criticism, this means a positionality of both the critic and the writers under analysis. As Crisafulli and Golinelli claim:

...we need to interrogate not only the social conditions in which women have acted, or have been acted, as subjects, but how, when and where this has happened. Being all "located" and "situated" in multiple ways, we should never forget the danger of generalization, of speaking for other women as if their positions are identical to one's own. (2019, 3)

In other words, what intersectionality, the politics of location, and situated knowledges mean for the literary critic is the responsibility to acknowledge her own positionality, contradictions, and biases when she tackles her tasks. It also means identifying and appreciating the particularities of the authors she studies, by recognising the cultural, social, material, and economic conditions in which they wrote, and how those conditions impacted their work.

1.1.4. *The Value of Diversity and the Importance of Commonalities*

After this brief overview, there is at least one question that lingers about the future of feminist criticism: is it possible to connect the search for women's voices with both the critiques of the universal subject, as posited by poststructuralism, and the demands for the recognition of intersectionality in the formation of identity and experience of the world?

In 1980 Annette Kolodny, in her article "Dancing through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism", proposed pluralism as a feminist practice. She suggested that instead of applying and conforming to one set of methodologies or theories, feminist literary criticism could, and should, avail itself of all approaches that could help retrieve women's texts, voices, and forms of resistance:

In my view, our purpose is not and should not be the formulation of any single reading method or potentially procrustean set of critical procedures nor, even less, the generation of prescriptive categories for some dreamed-of nonsexist literary canon. Instead, as I see it, our task is to initiate nothing less than a playful pluralism, responsive to the possibilities of multiple critical schools and methods, but captive of none, recognizing that the many tools needed for our analysis will necessarily be largely inherited and only partly of our own making. Only by employing a plurality of methods will we protect ourselves from the temptation of so oversimplifying any text ... whatever our predilection, let us not generate from it a straitjacket that limits the scope of possible analysis (Kolodny 1980, 19)

However, her proposal was contentious. As Showalter explains, Spivak, in an unpublished paper, rebutted Kolodny by claiming that pluralism was just a liberal myth by virtue of which the marginal, in this case women, capitulated to the centre, that is, "the masculinist establishment" (Showalter 1985a, 13 citing Spivak). Donovan also rejected this idea of pluralism, because for her it neutralised the main objective of feminist critical theory as opposed to male domination (1989b, x).

In 1982, *Feminist Studies*, the same journal that had published Kolodny's original article, published "An Interchange on Feminist Criticism: On 'Dancing through the Minefield'", which contains strong critiques of Kolodny's pluralism, as well as Kolodny's answers. In it, Judith Kegan Gardiner, recognising the potential of Kolodny's approach, decries the fact that the original article did not outline the three main feminist ideologies existing in the United States: "liberal, radical and social feminism". Even if the three ideologies could be

seen as complementary, and with flexible boundaries, the choice of one over the others would "shape our selection and use of the various critical approaches available to us", which is something that, according to Gardiner, Kolodny fails to recognise in her original article (1982, 629–30).

The assessments by Elly Bulkin and Rena Grasso Patterson were far sharper. Bulkin accused Kolodny's article of not including the work of women of colour and/or lesbians, claiming that "it demonstrates that feminists can object to the 'canonization' by white male academic critics of certain works, but then go on to canonize some white heterosexual academic female critics whose work reveals racism, heterosexism, and classism" (1982, 636). Patterson, for her part, declared that Kolodny's work was an example of "classist, white, and heterosexist attitudes" (1982, 654–55), because it did not consider issues of class. For Patterson, Kolodny's essay showed the privilege of a certain group of white middle-class feminists over working-class and poor women.

It is possible to assert that Kolodny's conceptualisation of pluralism as an important feminist tool was not necessarily well-received. I believe that this opposition to the idea of using different methodological approaches in the work of the feminist literary critic, was due, at least partially, to the term pluralism in itself. As Kolodny admitted in her answer to her critics, pluralism:

...generally means only the begrudging tolerance of dissent (or difference) until such time as the dissenters (or "others") begin to threaten some alteration in the status quo. At that point, pluralism is forgotten ... battle lines are drawn ... [and] the cant of 'collegiality' or 'academic excellence' ... security" - is invoked as justification for silencing, suppressing, and expelling... (1982, 667)

In this sense, pluralism is the liberal myth decried by Spivak and other critics of Kolodny's approach. However, her pluralism was meant to signify something else. For Kolodny, the call for pluralism in feminist literary criticism designated a practice that "neither suppresses differentness and dissent, nor neutralizes it by *seeming* acceptance (or co-option). Instead, it encourages dialogue between competing possibilities and, just as important, it honors the value of having competing possibilities" (1982, 667) (*italics in original*).

No matter the criticism received by Kolodny's theorisations when they were first published, the work of other feminist scholars showed how it was possible to negotiate between the triad of approaches described in this dissertation. That is, to work within a framework that simultaneously 1) recognises a gendered system of oppression that has silenced women's voices

and, consequently, works to retrieve them; 2) acknowledges the crisis of the subject and the impossibility of universal, objective, and essentialist truths; and 3) understands and values the differences between and among women, which in turn means comprehending that identity is constituted by the intersection of factors such as race, class, religion, and sexual orientation (among others), while still maintaining gender as a loose common denominator.

This is the kind of negotiation that Friedman (1998) and Baccolini (2019) called for in their work, recognising it in the theoretical approaches of Nancy Miller and other feminists from the 1980s onwards. It is within this framework that Friedman, in her 1998 book *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*, calls for:

going “beyond” both fundamentalist identity politics and absolutist poststructuralist theories as they pose essentialist notions of identity on the one hand and refuse all cultural traffic with identity on the other. It argues for a dialogic position in the borderlands in between notions of pure difference and the deconstructive free play of signifiers ... The future of feminism and other progressive movements lies, I suggest, in a turning outward, an embrace of contradiction, dislocation, and change (1998, 4)

As such, Friedman proposes her locational feminism and the concept of geographics of identity, which appeal to the recognition that identities are not stable but ever-changing, according to location. For her "the new geographics figures identity as a historically embedded site, a positionality, a location, a standpoint, a terrain, an intersection (even intersextion), a crossroads of multiply situated knowledge", which can be "polyvocal and often contradictory" (Friedman 1996, 15). She identifies different ways in which this new understanding of identity has expressed itself, from the discourse of multiple oppressions that stresses the differences among women, to the recognition that subjectivity is multiple (encompassing the intersection between different cultural formations like sex, gender, race, class, religion, etc.), contradictory, relational, situational, and hybrid (Friedman 1996, 16–20). This recognition of the multiple layers and expressions of identity means that gender cannot, and should not, be the only axis of analysis, not necessarily the central one, because "other constituents of identity are equally important". Thus, the focus on the binary difference between men and women must be shifted to the analysis of “codependent systems of alterity” (Friedman 1996, 22).

This is not to say that the importance of gender must be forgotten or marginalised. Women were, and are still, oppressed because of their sex and their gender. However, what it means is that any study on gender relations must also take into account the “multifaceted constituents of identity” (Friedman 1996), cherishing the differences among women and

considering them as a strength, as Audre Lorde called for in her ground-breaking essay “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House”.

In this embracing of difference, one must be wary of not drawing insurmountable borders which make the search for common ground impossible. Instead, identities must be understood as porous, contingent places of connections and disconnections. This exercise allows us to recognise, as Friedman posits, that identity requires both sameness and the perception of difference, which in turn, according to our particular location, allows us to find commonalities and create alliances (1998, 75).

It is in this context that Friedman proposes her locational feminism, which she defines as:

simultaneously situated in a specific locale, global in scope, and constantly in motion through space and time ... one that acknowledges the historically and geographically specific forms in which feminism emerges, takes root, changes, travels, translates, and transplants in different spacio/temporal contexts (Friedman 2001, 15).

Locational feminism recognises the historically and geographically specific forms in which feminism emerges and evolves, as well as the fact that it can travel from one location to another. In this sense, it acknowledges that every form of feminism is overdetermined by its conditions of time (history) and space (geography), while also having the potential of being global, or as I prefer, planetary, because it travels, transplants and can be transcultural.

Therefore, locational feminism is perfectly in tune with the concept of intersectionality or, as Friedman calls it, multipositionality. It takes as its point of departure the fact that subjectivity “takes shape at the intersection or crossroads of different systems of stratification where the circuits of power and privilege are multidirectional and complex”. Thus, it accepts and upholds that “individuals belong to multiple communities—sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory” (Friedman 2001, 23).

As Rosi Braidotti claims, this theoretical turn means that the subject of feminism is no longer “*Woman* as the complementary and specular other of man, but rather a complex multi-layered embodied subject”, who is also “interactive and complex” (2003, 45, 43). Thus, Braidotti proposes the figuration of the nomadic subject, which she describes as “a myth, or a political fiction, that allows me to think through and move across established categories and levels of experience: blurring boundaries without burning bridges” (Braidotti 2011 [1994], 26). It is a figuration that embodies the renunciation of the idea of fixity, and instead moves within the axes of differentiation that constitute subjectivity like gender, class, race, and ethnicity,

among others, understanding that their occurrence can be both simultaneous and contradictory. In Braidotti's words:

it is rather a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity. It expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes without an essential unity. The nomadic subject, however, is not altogether devoid of unity: his mode is one of definite, seasonal patterns of movement through rather fixed routes (2011 [1994], 57)

It is this transitioning that gives the nomadic subject her “multilayered consciousness of complexity”, making her a “transgressive identity whose transitory nature is precisely the reason why she can make connections at all” (Braidotti 2011 [1994], 38, 42).

It is specifically in the recognition of multiple, sometimes contradictory, and always complex positionalities that connections can be made. And these connections, in turn, allow for the search for commonalities and the formation of alliances. These alliances will be based on common, sometimes contingent locations, but will not erase differences or subsume them in any kind of monolithic or homogenising norm. This common ground can be found in certain iterations of gender because, as Gunnarsson puts it, "it is possible to think of women as a group on a global level, because although the gender structure looks different in different locations, it possesses so much internal coherence so as to deserve to be thought of as one (differentiated) whole" (2011, 34).

Baccolini's affirmation that gender still matters also goes in this direction. As she explains, “the subject postulated by feminist criticism since the Eighties is not necessarily a strong counter-subject, rather a multiple, contradictory and fluid one, a meeting place of a complex web of categories and/or multiple differences within each woman” (2019, 27). For this reason, instead of creating homogenising concepts of what a woman was, is, or should be, feminism must strive for the acceptance of complexity. In other words, it must accept that the female is not an undisputed unity, but rather a “complex, multiple, contradictory, and fluid” subject (Baccolini 2019, 37).

It is in this specific methodological and theoretical landscape that I propose the *Feminist Planetary Web* that will allow me to analyse the works of Mary Leman Grimstone and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. It is only by understanding identity as a fluid, contradictory, and relational formation, that I can study two women writers from different geographical positions and literary traditions, finding both points of connection and differences between them. By acknowledging feminism as a phenomenon that emerges in particular moments and

geographies, always evolving, travelling and influencing different versions of itself, I can also find commonalities as well as divergences in the way they saw women's struggles, as well as in the solutions they offered to their own oppression and that of their contemporaries.

1.2. *Two Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*

In the present dissertation, the *Feminist Planetary Web* that I am proposing focuses on the positionalities of two nineteenth-century authors. First, it studies an “intensely English”¹² woman who travelled between the metropole and its South Pacific colonies during the settlement period, while being part of a religious minority (Mary Leman Grimstone). Then it analyses a Cuban-Spanish writer, a *criolla* born and raised in Cuba who in her early twenties moved to Spain, where she published most of her work (Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda). Their movements allow me to consider several different positions while leaving others out. However, as Friedman claims, “To work within a planetary framework, no single scholar need do it all” (2015, 76). This means that although I am applying the concept of the *Feminist Planetary Web* to these two particular women writers, I regard it a methodological approach that can be applied to any number of feminist analyses, whether dealing with the past, the present or even the future, and in as many geographical and geopolitical locations as the researcher might see fit.

Mary Leman Grimstone and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda were two prolific nineteenth-century writers. Even if they lived in different geographical locations, with their own cultural and social particularities, both Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda paid close attention to the condition of women and their rights. They were also able to recognise the circumstances that oppressed other marginalised subjects like members of religious minorities, slaves, and the working class.

Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda wrote in a variety of genres: poetry, novels, journal articles, and short stories. The latter also wrote plays and revisitations of known legends. In the present dissertation, I focus on their prose, particularly their novels and journal articles, the latter in the form of essays and short stories. I have decided on this approach because it was mainly through these genres: the novel, the short story, and the essay, that these authors managed to convey their critiques to the hierarchical, patriarchal societies they belonged to. In Grimstone’s case, due to the small amount of critical analysis of her work, I

¹² Mary Leman Grimstone defined herself as such in the preface to her novel “Woman’s Love”.

have used her articles not only as a primary source but also as an instrument to interpret the messages she tried to communicate through her novels. Regarding Gómez de Avellaneda, I have placed my attention mainly on her novels and just tangentially on her articles, because, as previous critics have recognised, her novels are the ones that most clearly express her feminist stands. This is not to say that the other genres in which they wrote, mostly their poetry, did not reveal, in some cases, their ideas about the condition of women. However, as this thesis shows, their prose was, in this regard, clearer and, sometimes, more easily accessible to the public.

Apart from the fact that both authors dealt with comparable arguments when it came to exposing and highlighting the oppressed condition of women, their aesthetic influences were also similar. In the case of Gómez de Avellaneda, it has long been established that she was part of the Spanish Romantic Period. In this regard, the work of Susan Kirkpatrick on Spanish Romantic women writers is still an important point of reference. For her, "while she [Gómez de Avellaneda] used the basic paradigms of the self that had emerged during the Romantic period, she contextualized them in new ways, associating centered consciousness with a position –that of woman– marginalized by social authorities" (Kirkpatrick 1989, 133–34).

In the case of Grimstone, since her activity as a writer spanned a long period from 1815 to almost 1850, she has been classified, according to the period and genre each scholar was studying, either as a Romantic (Saglia 2000; 2007; Devine 1997) or as a Victorian (Rogers 1994; 1999; 2000; Haywood 2004; Valman 2000; 2007). Entering into a definitive discussion about whether Grimstone was a Romantic or a Victorian exceeds the scope of the present dissertation, which focuses on how she used literature as an instrument for social change, demanding women's rights. I propose, however, as a temporary point of encounter, that Grimstone was a transitional author who wrote during that "lacuna ... dash, or some other kind of punctuation mark" between the Romantic and Victorian periods (Cronin 2002, 2). She was strongly inspired by Romantic writers like Byron, Austen, Edgeworth, and Godwin, and, in turn, tried to impact early Victorian society.

An extended analysis of the Romantic elements present in the writings of Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda, which would first require an explanation of the characteristics of the Romantic movement in each context, goes beyond the goals established for the present dissertation. In the case of Gómez de Avellaneda, they have already been established and studied. For Grimstone it would require a completely different kind of analysis from the one I am proposing: it demands a whole project of its own. However, this does not mean that I will do away with using any kind of aesthetic analysis of their work. I fully recognise Gómez de Avellaneda as a Romantic writer and I intend to highlight the Romantic elements of her writing

when my own analysis demands it. Regarding Grimstone, I have used elements from existing scholarship on both the Romantic and the Victorian periods. I adopted this approach following the theorisations of scholars like Richard Cronin (2002), Carmen Casaliggi and Paul March-Russell (2012), Stefano Evangelista and Carlota Farese (2013), among others, who not only assert that the boundaries between literary periods are porous but, more importantly, that several features of the Romantic period rippled throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, impacting other literary movements. In this way, the connections between both female writers are not only based on the arguments they dealt with, but also on the aesthetic choices they made and the genres they used to convey their message.

Nevertheless, the greatest contribution of my research remains the possibility of establishing important connections between literature and women's rights in different contexts. For this reason, based on previous historical and literary scholarship, I argue that both Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda should be considered representatives of an early form of feminism in their respective realities, even if they lived and wrote before the terms 'feminist' and 'feminism' were coined.

In Grimstone's case, the first recognition of her feminist efforts came from Jane Rendall's studies on the origins of modern feminism in England, the United States, and France, which included an analysis of some of Grimstone's articles (Rendall 1985, 115–17). However, it was Kathryn Gleadle, with her research on the historiography of feminism in England during the nineteenth century, who asserted that, contrary to popular belief, there was a "nascent women's rights movement in the 1830s and 1840s", in which Mary Leman Grimstone "was of greatest importance" (1995, 1, 37). Gleadle identified this group with the Radical Unitarians, who developed "a specific feminist movement ... based upon a network of writers and reformers, who supported and relied upon each others' work" (1995, 2).

Understanding Grimstone's connection with the Radical Unitarians is fundamental in order to grasp her stand on women's oppressed position and women's rights. Unitarians were a religious minority in England, which, as I will further explain in Part II, meant that they were subject to the Test Acts until 1828. Because they did not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, Unitarians were considered heretical by other Christian denominations and were subject to criminal persecution for blasphemy until 1813 (Mineka 1944). Unitarians also wholeheartedly believed in the education of women. This marks an important difference between Unitarian women like Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Harriet Martineau, Grimstone herself, and other women of their time: as Unitarians, they were encouraged to develop their God-given reason (Watts 1989; 1998; Gleadle 1995). However, Gleadle differentiates between mainstream Unitarians

and Radical Unitarians. For her, although all Unitarians held more progressive attitudes towards women than the general population, mainstream Unitarians still maintained traditional views about the appropriate roles and behaviours expected of women. In contrast, Radical Unitarians had a broad agenda of social change, which included overturning the social norms that upheld women's oppression and comprehensive advocacy for women's rights (Gleadle 1995). According to Gleadle, literature played a prominent role in Radical Unitarians circles, because they considered it "a social and political instrument" that could be used "as a tool for achieving female emancipation" (1995, 55).

Within this Radical Unitarian milieu, "Mary Leman Grimstone thus set the agenda for establishing literary strategies as a means of feminist protest" (Gleadle 1995, 60). Helen Rogers also shares this view of the Radical Unitarians as feminist activists, and of Grimstone's crucial role in their efforts. She wrote that Grimstone "was the most extensively published and probably the most influential advocate of the rights of women among the radical unitarian circles" (Rogers 2000, 125).

Thus, it is possible to claim that Grimstone, both as a woman and as a member of a religious minority, had a multipositional, relational, and complex identity. This identity was not restricted to her sex and gender, even if these components played a fundamental role in the development of her ideas. Instead, it was intersected by her religion, her class, and even her experiences abroad as part of the English settlement scheme in Tasmania. This multipositionality undoubtedly impacted her vision of the society in which she lived, allowing her to develop strategies of both appropriation and resistance, which will be analysed in Part II.

In Gómez de Avellaneda's case, although she has been extensively studied as a writer, it was from the 1980s onwards that she and her work started to be examined from a feminist and gender perspective. Lucía Guerra, in her study of the feminine strategies used by Gómez de Avellaneda for the construction of her romantic subjects, finds feminist elements in both *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres*, Gómez de Avellaneda's first two novels.

Susan Kirkpatrick's research on female authorship in Spain during the nineteenth century is also a central contribution to a gendered comprehension of Avellaneda's writings. According to Kirkpatrick, Gómez de Avellaneda was "a pioneering literary woman" who "broke new ground by constituting herself as a writing subject whose gender was female" (1989, 132). For her, this construction as a female writer with a voice of her own was partially due to Gómez de Avellaneda's Cuban upbringing, which gave her a more liberal and permissive education than that of women in the Spanish peninsula. Thus, for Kirkpatrick, Gómez de

Avellaneda "approached the centers of Spanish cultural and literary life from a doubly marginalized perspective—both as a woman and as a colonial—that gave her a critical consciousness of white, male, metropolitan hegemony" (Kirkpatrick 1989, 135).

Insisting on Gómez de Avellaneda's doubly-marginalised position as a woman and a colonial subject, Evelyn Picón Garfield, from a poststructuralist perspective, argued:

Desde la posición de doble alteridad, Gómez de Avellaneda forja su propia identidad estética. Por un lado, se distancia del centro en un desafío a la hegemonía del poder político, y, por otro, impone la autoridad de su propio contradiscurso "engendrado" mediante la inversión y la subversión del discurso hegemónico social sobre la sexualidad (1993, 10)

[from a position of double alterity, Gómez de Avellaneda forges her own aesthetic identity. On the one hand, she distances herself from the centre challenging the hegemony of the political power, and on the other, she imposes the authority of her own gendered counter-discourse through the inversion and subversion of the hegemonic social discourse on sexuality]¹³

Building upon existing research on Gómez de Avellaneda's feminist agenda, Brígida Pastor affirms that Gómez de Avellaneda can, and should be, considered a feminist. For Pastor, whose analysis is based on Irigaray's theories and Gilbert and Gubar's work, Gómez de Avellaneda intended "to intervene *as a woman* and to promote change by her writing", which constitutes "an explicitly feminist stance" (2003, 6). Since then, multiple studies, some of which are included in Part III, have focused on different elements of Gómez de Avellaneda's writings and her feminist stance.

It is within this framework that I locate my research, understanding Gómez de Avellaneda as a feminist writer with a female voice of her own, determined not only by her gender, but also by her colonial and class identity. As with Grimstone, I see Gómez de Avellaneda as a subject formed by the intersection of the categories of gender, ethnicity, race, and class, which created a complex and relational multipositionality.

Nevertheless, for both Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda, not all the elements that constituted their respective subjectivities can, or should, be considered as factors of oppression. Both of them were members of the upper, educated classes in their respective realities, which is what gave them the opportunity to analyse their situation and vocalise their own oppression and that of other marginalised subjects. Although being part of a religious minority, in Grimstone's case, and a colonial subject, in Gómez de Avellaneda's one, meant facing

¹³ The translation of this text and any other text in Spanish is mine, unless stated otherwise.

discrimination on bases other than sex, it also opened doors to knowledge that otherwise would have remained closed for them.

For these reasons, rather than speaking of elements of oppression, I prefer to use the term multipositionality when I refer to the different elements that constituted the subjectivity of both Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda. This theoretical move allows me to recognise that the different elements that interacted and intersected to constitute their identities had different meanings and consequences according to their context or, in other words, to conceive them as fluid rather than fixed subjects. Even if some of those elements put them on the periphery of their respective societies, they also granted them a privileged partial perspective that the conservative, hegemonic centre could not provide. For this reason, I postulate that it was only their multipositionality, which combined elements of privilege and oppression, that allowed both Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda to develop the feminist consciousness present in their works.

I also suggest that their respective novels and articles serve as testimony for the rules, costumes, and traditions of their societies. As Belsey affirms:

Fiction constitutes an integral part of culture. One of our primary sources of information about the ways people have perceived themselves and their place in the world may be their imaginative portrayal on page and stage. Stories, plays, and poems depict racial and sexual difference, as we know, but also childhood and old age, love, virtue and vice, disease, life and death (2011, 74)

Furthermore, because "imaginative writing is not subject to any requirement that it should reproduce orthodoxy", but, on the contrary, it "may challenge the prevailing norms" (Belsey 2011, 95), both Grimstone's and Gómez de Avellaneda's texts can help us understand how values and customs of their respective societies were upheld, resisted, and even defied.

In order to identify these elements, I am proposing a close reading of select novels and articles by both of the writers under analysis. These close readings take into account the context in which the texts were produced, as well as the language used by the authors. In an effort to identify each author's particular voice, I have decided to analyse three novels by each writer, as well as several of their journal articles, putting them in relation to each other and their respective context. Hence, there will not be an individual examination of each novel, but rather a compound study of the feminist ideas of each writer that are transversal to their work: the condition of women, their critique of the institution of marriage, women's education, among others. This scrutiny also includes some references to their positions regarding other injustices

and forms of oppression of their time, like the importance of religious tolerance, in Grimstone's case, and the condemnation of slavery by Gómez de Avellaneda. I will also present Grimstone's and Gómez de Avellaneda's stand on imperialism and colonisation.

This transversal analysis allows me to find both differences and commonalities between Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda, both in terms of style and aesthetics, and in terms of their feminist projects and strategies.

Throughout this exercise, I must bear in mind that intersectionality and the politics of location relate not only to the writers analysed, but also to myself. This means that while weaving my *Feminist Planetary Web*, I must always remember that they lived in a different time and context from my own. Consequently, the categories that I and my contemporaries consider as a given, might not have been and, in most cases, were not the same as the categories, mores, and values these writers upheld.

In fact, as Kolodny affirmed, when studying writers of the past it is necessary to recognise the possibility that “if we go back to the letters and diaries of the women's rights activists of the nineteenth century, for example, we will find notions of race and class that our own time holds repugnant” (Gardiner et al. 1982, 671). However, this does not mean that we should not study them or, worse yet, that we should discard them. By misapplying concepts of the present when studying women writers of the past, we run the risk of silencing them, negating their contributions to our feminist understanding of the world and, in doing so, destroying any possibility of knowing our own history.

Instead, I believe that any analysis of women writers of the past must acknowledge the differences between their way of understanding the world and our present sensibilities. It is only by doing so that we can honour their writings and their contributions to feminist thinking, while also admitting that our perception of the world is always changing and evolving. Furthermore, recognising these differences serves as a reminder that subjectivity and identity are not fixed, unchanging categories, but fluid, complex, and often contradictory constructions.

Bearing all these notions in mind, I am proposing a gendered analysis of the works of Mary Leman Grimstone and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, in which I pay close attention to interactions between the text and its context, while also recognising the multipositionality of both authors.

Part II. “The qualities of men and women, be they good or bad, may differ in the mould, but they agree in the metal”: Rediscovering the feminist works of Mary Leman Grimstone

Mary Leman Grimstone¹⁴ (1796-1869) was a fundamental part of the feminist movement that developed in England during the first half of the nineteenth century. She wrote extensively, and in a great variety of genres: poetry, novels, short stories, serialised stories, and critical and polemical essays. In all of them, she explored the degraded condition women found themselves in and championed the cause of women’s rights. In the postscript to her novel *Woman’s Love. A novel*¹⁵ (1832), Grimstone recognised and underscored her main interest in analysing and changing the conditions of women with the following statement:

I feel the present to be a period pregnant with important changes. A liberal spirit is abroad that seems disposed to recognize the interests of humanity upon a broader principle than heretofore. *In the midst of this I glow with zeal for the cause of my own sex*: this preference may be pardoned, since I am not insensible to the beautiful principle that embraces universal interests; but it is natural that, *with such little ability as I can bring, I should take the side most in need of supporters* (Grimstone 1832c, III:357–58) (the italics are mine).

Kathryn Gleadle, a historian who has done extensive research on Radical Unitarianism and its influence on the development of early feminist ideas in England, describes Grimstone in the following terms:

For many early feminists, she was *the* great figure in the movement. First coming to prominence with her feminist articles ... Grimstone went on to become a leading proponent of contemporary feminism, in her many periodical contributions and in her novels. Contemporary radicals refer to her work again and again, and her work had an immense influence upon them. (Gleadle 1995, 37) (italics in original).

Helen Rogers also stands by this consideration of Grimstone, asserting that “she was the most extensively published and probably the most influential advocate of the rights of

¹⁴ Grimstone wrote under several names: Mary Leman Rede, Mary Leman Grimstone and Mary Leman Gillies, as well as using only her initials, M.L.R. or M.L.G. She also used a pseudonym, Oscar, and sometimes she even published works anonymously. To avoid confusion, throughout the present dissertation I will refer to her as "Mary Leman," "Mary Leman Grimstone" or just "Grimstone." However, in the references and the bibliography, her works are referred to with the signature they were published under.

¹⁵ All Grimstone’s texts are cited keeping the original grammar and spelling. When quoting directly from the original text, the titles Mr, Mrs, and Dr include the full stop: Mr., Mrs., and Dr.

women among the radical-unitarian circles based around William Fox's ministry" (2000, 125). The review of Grimstone's novel *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* (1833) published in *The Monthly Repository*, the journal edited by Fox, is a testament to this appreciation:

Mrs. Leman Grimstone is a most agreeable companion for an excursion in the regions of fiction. We know of no novelist who combines more of the requisites of invention and versatility of talent, with so much of pure, wise, and noble purpose ... Like Miss Martineau, she writes with a didactic purpose; but not being restricted to the illustration of a single section of Moral Economy which is her science, there is less occasion to bank up the narrative ... Like Miss Austen, she excels in description ... and her descriptions have generally the additional merit of conveying some knowledge of character and mind, and answering some further purpose besides that of producing a vivid picture in the reader's imagination. Like Miss Edgeworth, she has humour ... and like Miss Edgeworth too, she rarely loses sight of the subject of education ... Like Godwin, she is a reformer, political and social, but aiming at changes less total and impracticable ... more in the reform-not-revolution way ... Were we to trace the parentage for the characters of her fictions, we might ascribe the maternity to Miss Austen and the paternity to the author of *Barham Downs* and *Hermsprong*. Mrs. Grimstone looks more abroad, beyond household doings, than the one; and has less causticity and partisanship than the other. (Fox 1833, 545–46)

Notwithstanding contemporary and present praise, Mary Leman Grimstone remains a largely unknown author. This part represents an effort not just to bring Grimstone to light as a person— work already undertaken by historians like Michael Roe, Katheryn Gleadle, and Helen Rogers— but to focus primarily on her writings and the moral and political ideas about the condition of women and women's rights that she expressed in them: that is, her feminism. To accomplish these goals, in chapter 2 I will focus on describing who Grimstone was and how she understood the role of literature. I will devote chapter 3 to an analysis of Grimstone's texts, predominantly her novels and short stories, using some of her political essays as elements to critically interpret her message. This will allow me to thread a web between Grimstone, her work and her context.

Chapter 2. The Importance of a Signature: Searching for Mrs Grimstone, or is it Mrs Gillies?

Mary Lemman Grimstone was born Mary Lemman Rede in London on 12 June 1796. Her father, Lemman Thomas Rede, a member of the gentry, was a writer and a bibliographer, and her mother, Mary, was related to the Romilly family, being the cousin of Sir Samuel Romilly, a famous lawyer and reformer. Mary was the eldest child and, shortly after her birth, the family moved to Hamburg to escape her father's creditors. She had four siblings, two sisters and two brothers, and it seems that the family only resettled in England after her father died in 1810. Her brothers, Lemman Thomas Tertius Rede and William Lemman Rede, born in 1799 and 1802 respectively, enjoyed some fame as playwrights during the first half of the nineteenth century, and both have entries in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. The sisters, Lucy Lemman (Rede) Adey and Louisa Lemman (Rede) Goldie, had ties with Tasmania because their husbands, Stephen Adey and Alexander Goldie, respectively, worked for the Van Diemen's Land Company (Roe 1989; 1995; 2005; Gleadle 1995, 37; 2016). Mary Lemman seemed to have been particularly close to Lucy and William. During the 1820s, she wrote a series of anonymous articles together with William for *The Belle Assemblée* and *The Ladies' Monthly Museum* entitled "Structures on The Poets of the Present Days" and "Portraits", of which she would later reflect in her scrapbook¹⁶: "it was a great piece of presumption for a girl and a boy thus to set themselves up as critics"¹⁷ (Grimstone 1832-?). And it was with Lucy that Grimstone travelled to Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania, in 1825.

Mary Lemman started writing for publication around 1815, publishing in journals like *La Belle Assemblée* and *The Ladies' Monthly Museum* (Roe 1989; 2012; Gleadle 2016). During this time, she signed her work as Miss Mary Lemman Rede or with her initials, M.L.R. She also won an essay contest proposed by *The Ladies' Monthly Museum* on "whether the influence of women on society has been most injurious or most beneficial to its interest", where Mary, of course, argued the beneficial aspects of women's influence in society (Grimstone 1832-?).

According to marriage records unearthed by Kathryn Gleadle (2016), Mary Lemman married Richard Grimstone in 1816, thus becoming Mary Lemman Grimstone, but apart from his name and the year of his death, nothing else is known about her first husband. However, it seems that while married Mary continued to write under her maiden name, using a pseudonym

¹⁶ Mary Lemman Grimstone's scrapbook is available thanks to the work of Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. It is possible to find a digital copy at the following link: (last accessed: 21st January 2021).

¹⁷ All references to Grimstone's scrapbook keep the original spelling and grammar structure.

or even anonymously. The editions of *La Belle Assemblée* from 1817 to 1824 contain at least twenty-eight contributions signed by Miss Mary Lemman Rede, Miss M. Lemman Rede, or M. L. R., but none with her married name or initials. In 1820, in addition to publishing several signed pieces in *La Belle Assemblée*, Mary Lemman edited the journal “for some months” contributing “a good deal of prose that appeared without any signature” (Grimstone 1832-?). Furthermore, in 1820 and 1821 she also published two poems under the pseudonym Oscar: *Zayda: A Spanish Tale in Three Cantos; and other Poems, Stanzas, and Canzonets* (1820), and *Cleone, Summer’s Sunset Vision, the Confession, with other Poems and Stanzas* (1821)¹⁸. Thus, from her marriage onwards, there are several examples of Mary Lemman using different strategies to either keep her identity, by publishing with her maiden name, or effectively hide it by publishing anonymously or under a pseudonym. It seems that it was only in 1825 that Mary Lemman started to sign her work with the surname Grimstone.

Her first novel *The Beauty of the British Alps; or, Love at First Sight*, was published by J. Bennett in 1825 under the name M. L. Grimstone, while an article in the May 1825 edition of *La Belle Assemblée* entitled “Russian Love” was signed M. L. G. This may account for the fact that previous assumptions about her first marriage had dated it around 1823-1825 (Roe 1989, 11; 2012, 189).

Why did Mary Lemman only start using her married name in 1825, when she actually got married in 1816? The answer to this question might be found in the signs left behind in her personal writings as well as in her works. There are no mentions of this first marriage in Mary Lemman’s scrapbook, which, even if she started it in 1832, contains a great number of memories from 1815 onwards, both professional and personal. This absence has led Roe to hypothesise that it was not a happy marriage, “its tenor perhaps all too true to that surname” (2012, 189). If this conjecture has some truth in it, the reason for Mary Lemman not using her married name for publishing until 1825, when she was already a widow, might be found in one of her later works.

In her fourth novel *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* (1833), Mary Lemman includes the character of Mrs Magdalene Melburn, a wise, excellent woman condemned to an unhappy marriage in which the husband had become “the wreck of a once considerable fortune” (Grimstone 1833a, I:82), who “when thwarted or opposed ... was capable of giving way to the

¹⁸ In his last article about Mary Lemman Grimstone, Michael Roe affirms “This seems an appropriate time to record my conviction that bibliographers have erred in attributing to MLG collections of verse entitled *Zayda* (1820), *Cleone* (1821)” (2016, 91). However, Roe does not substantiate his assertion and seems to be the only one that holds this opinion. The retrospective volume of *The English Catalogue of Books*, which covers the period between 1801 and 1836, assigns both *Zayda* and *Cleone* to Mrs M. L. Grimstone under the pseudonym Oscar (1914, 121, 246, 654). Furthermore, studies relating to these poems, in particular *Zayda*, all attribute authorship to Mary Lemman Grimstone (Saglia 2000; 2007).

grossest abuse” (Grimstone 1833a, I:84). Mr Melburn, ruined as he was, had decided to leave England, taking his wife and children with him. While organising their departure, Mrs Melburn decided to speak frankly with one of her oldest friends, Agnes, to whom she confessed, “I am the anonymous author of many works, the proceeds of which I could only appropriate by concealing them” (Grimstone 1833a, I:93). In this way, Mrs Melburn was resisting the legal fiction of coverture, according to which married women in England, and other countries under common law, became a *femme covert*, with their legal personalities subsumed in those of their husbands, with no rights over property or earnings:

...under coverture, a wife simply had no legal existence ... Any income from property she brought into the marriage was controlled by her husband, and if she earned wages outside of the home, those wages belonged to him, [only] widows and unmarried adult women could own property, collect rents, manage shops, and have standing in court (Zaher 2002, 460–61).

Nevertheless, legal fictions rarely find perfect application in real life and, as Danaya C. Wright's (2013) study shows, married women implemented different ways of resisting the figure of coverture, not necessarily by legal means like lawsuits and trusts, but primarily through informal methods, one of which was to keep or revert to the use of their family name.

Hence, Mary Leman may have resorted to a similar strategy to that of her character to keep her identity and her earnings, while subtly defying the patriarchal legal institution of coverture. On the one hand, by keeping her maiden name in some of her writings, Mary Leman would have been able to preserve the reputation she had made for herself prior to her marriage, which made her a known and beloved name among the readers and editors of the journals to which she contributed. Examples of this esteem can be found in the notes to correspondents of *La Belle Assemblée*, such as the note for the July 1818 edition, in which the editors referred to Mary as “that pleasing poet, Miss M. L. Rede”. Also, in the review of the song *The Maid of Devon*, which appeared in the September 1820 edition of *La Belle Assemblée*, Miss M. L. Rede is described as “a young lady possessed of very pleasing poetic talents, of which we have given repeated specimens in many of our Numbers” (141). On the other hand, the use of a pseudonym and the anonymous publication of some of her works would have allowed her to circumvent the figure of coverture in an effort to stop her husband from appropriating her earnings, keeping them instead for herself.

A review of Mary Leman's publications points to the fact that she started using her married name when she was already a widow. Records show that Richard Grimstone died in 1822 (Gleadle 2016), whereas Mary started publishing as Mrs Leman Grimstone in 1825.

Therefore, it seems that, once she felt safe, Mary Leman decided to take advantage of her status as a widow to publish under the Grimstone surname and the title of Mrs. Even though this is only an assumption based on the available evidence, which albeit is not much given the little traces that Grimstone left behind about her personal life, is it nevertheless plausible within the context in which she lived and would shed light on why the matter of women's rights and their condition once married was so dear to her. As I aim to show in this dissertation, Grimstone's works, whether it be her novels, her political and polemical essays, or her short stories, were all imbued with her deeply held idea of the necessary reform of the institution of marriage, from an unequal alliance based on egoistical interests of position, dependency, and servility, to a true union among equals based on love, congeniality, and sympathy between spouses.

In 1825, Grimstone travelled to Tasmania, then Van Diemen's Land, with her sister Lucy and her brother-in-law, Stephen Adey, who was part of the team in charge of establishing the Van Diemen's Land Company (Roe 1989, 12). Just before departure, Grimstone published her first novel *The Beauty of the British Alps*. The preface to this work is entitled "The author's apology". In it, Grimstone explains that the novel is just a first draft, to which she could not devote as much attention as she wanted because of family events and her going abroad. As such, she concludes her apology by asking indulgence from her public: "under these circumstances, as well as its being a first essay, I hope to win some indulgence from my readers, and trust that they will not suffer the errors of the present, to prejudice the future efforts of the same pen" (Grimstone 1825, iv). In her scrapbook Grimstone confesses that she was not satisfied with her first novel, feeling embarrassment rather than happiness when she recalled it:

My first novel which I began without any faith in my powers for such a work, and finished without any feeling of satisfaction. It was a very hurried production, and bears all the marks of it. I always had a hearty contempt for it. The pride of seeing myself in print soon went off and then I use often to feel humiliation when I recurred to what I had written. This I think arose from my having an ideal standard of excellence below which I could not be pleased with myself (Grimstone 1832-?).

Once in Tasmania, Grimstone seems to have led a secluded life, which, according to her own account, affected her mentally and physically. Nevertheless, in her scrapbook she claimed to have published, albeit anonymously, some verses in Hobart Town's local newspapers during her time abroad:

The above poems and a few others, which I have not by me, I contributed anonymously to the newspapers during my stay in Hobart Town. But the restraints under which I existed while in Van Diemen's Land many of them self imposed, for fear of annoying my connexions by acting otherwise, were most fatal for my powers, and ultimately caused to injure my health both mental and physical (Grimstone 1832-?)

Apart from her poetic efforts, Grimstone also kept epistolary communication with her family. Her scrapbook contains several copies of letter exchanges between Grimstone and her sister Lucy with their mother and siblings, particularly William and Louisa, who had remained in England. According to Roe's account, a letter Grimstone had sent to England around August 1826 was published anonymously "in the British press a year later and then in Hobart's *Colonial Advocate* for May 1828" (1989, 12). The letter, a copy of which is attached to Roe's first article on Grimstone, heavily criticises the colony, considering it "an illiterate cub" of England, with no library or cultural life, "the human mind here, like the soil that would refuse all vegetation for fear of growing a poison, becomes a barren waste". Despite its grim description of colonial life, the letter also recognises the beautiful landscapes of the island, as well as its potential. It also alludes to Grimstone's decision to seclude herself and to the importance literature had in her life, considering it essential to her well-being (Roe 1989, appendix one, 26-28).

It is precisely the importance of literature in Grimstone's life that is most relevant to the present dissertation. By her own admission, *Woman's Love* was "written in Van Dieman's Land" (Grimstone 1832a, I:v). According to E. Morris Miller's research, "it is highly probable that she wrote the basic manuscript of *Woman's Love* during the years 1827 and 1828, and revised some portions of it in 1830-1", before publishing it in three volumes in 1832 (Miller 1958, 15). The reference to Catholic Emancipation in the novel, which occurred in 1829, as well as Grimstone's confession, at the beginning of her scrapbook, of having suffered a nervous breakdown between 1829-1830, both support Miller's theory and account for the time that elapsed between Grimstone's return to England in 1829 and the publication of the novel in 1832.

There is another novel, published before *Woman's Love*, that was probably penned by Grimstone during her time in Hobart Town. *Louisa Egerton, or, Castle Herbert. A Tale from Real Life* by Mary Lemman Grimstone, was published by George Virtue in 1830. The edition that has survived is published in one volume, includes several illustrations, and does not have a preface, unlike all the other novels Grimstone wrote. However, Roe was able to trace earlier

editions of the novel, thanks to the work of Australian antiquarian and bookseller Peter Arnold. According to Arnold's findings, *Louisa Egerton* was first published "in parts and then in two volumes, by George Virtue, in 1829", and then again in three volumes, with "an authorial preface", in 1830 (Roe 2016, 90). There is no record of this three-volume edition of the novel in the British Library, nor in other common sources, thus it was not possible to have first-hand access to its content, particularly its preface. Still, Roe transcribed parts of it in his last article on Grimstone, as proof that the novel was written while she was living in Tasmania:

The all-important preface says that 'the volumes were written at very distant intervals and, as they were thrown off ... were transmitted to England, and without my knowledge, printed as they came to hand.' 'On my late arrival from a remote country,' the preface continues, 'with the completion of my task, and purposing to review the whole, I found that all opportunity of so doing was gone bye.' (Roe 2016, 90–91)

In a letter sent to her brother William in September 1825, when she was about to depart from England, Grimstone wrote, "I send an article for *La Belle*, I might have written more in the time, but I could not always command pen, ink and paper. I shall set about my new novel *instanter*¹⁹" (Grimstone 1832-?). This letter, and the preface to the edition unearthed by Arnold, support Roe's theory "that *Louisa Egerton* was written aboard *Cape Packet*, or even soon after arrival in Hobart, and so trumping both Mary's *Woman's Love* and Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton* as the Australian first novel" (2012, 190).

Apart from its historical significance, this would mean that when Grimstone described literature as an essential part of her life in Hobart Town, she was not only referring to it in terms of reading but also in terms of writing. Literature was an outlet in which Grimstone could express every idea and feeling that plagued her mind and soul. The accounts of Grimstone's feelings before her departure and during her time in Van Dieman's Land show a woman brave enough to accompany her sister to the Antipodes. However, they also reveal how once on the island, Grimstone fell into a deep sense of isolation that ultimately led to her secluding herself from society, affecting her health.

Those health issues seemed to have followed Grimstone back to England when she embarked on the *Sarah* to return home in February 1829. The confession with which her scrapbook begins is a testament to her state of mind at the time:

¹⁹ According to the Oxford dictionary, "instanter" is an archaic form that means immediately, at once.

In the paroxysm of a nervous disorder which I suffered in 1829 and 1830, I destroyed many records and testimonials that should have enriched this book...

...

Secret anxiety, absence of excitement, a sense of dependence which not even the love of Lucy and friendship and affection of Stephen could ward off, gradually undermined my mental health; my subsequent separation from Lucy, and a complete surrender to grief from February the 14th when I embarked for England, till the beginning of May (when St. Helena seemed to give a new turn to my feelings), throw my mind from its base so that when I reached England, I do not think I was competent to the transaction of ordinary business. Mama and Louisa, unaware of this, made to me painful and unexpected disclosures; under these my reason and spirits sunk; the latter utterly, the former very nearly; and for above twelve months no ray of hope, of even transient pleasure or gaiety visited my breast... Instinctive affection survived and so much boasted reason...

Thus on Saturday 22^d September 1832, in London, the emporium of the world; in good health, mentally and physically, I begin this volume... (Grimstone 1832-?)

Once Grimstone overcame her poor mental health, she went back to literature with full force. From 1832 onwards, and particularly after the publication of *Woman's Love*, she started contributing to several journals with poems, short stories, and political and polemical articles. In some periodical publications she signed her work as “the author of *Woman's Love*”, and it was under this epithet that, in 1832, *The Court Magazine* published her first short story about life in the South Pacific colonies entitled “The Settlers of Van Dieman's Land”²⁰. In 1833 Grimstone published her fourth novel, and the strongest thus far, *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*. It received positive reviews in several journals of the time, such as *The Monthly Repository*, *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, and *The Examiner*, as well as some negative criticism, like that published by *The Metropolitan Magazine* and *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Whether good or bad, Grimstone seemed to have cherished those reviews. About the positive ones she wrote, “These reviews give me pleasure as tending to assure me of mental power that I have been very slow to believe myself in possession of. I may surely say I have been a secret to myself...”, while of the negative ones she affirmed, “I like these fault finding reviews, the portion of praise they contain is all the more pleasant ... However all the points which the reviewers regard as absurdities and impossibilities are faith” (Grimstone 1832-?).

²⁰ In 1846 *The People's Journal* republished this story under the title “A Passage of Domestic History in Van Dieman's Land”, signed under Mary's second married name Mary Leman Gillies.

In 1833 Grimstone also started her collaboration with *The Monthly Repository*, a journal edited by William J. Fox and affiliated with the radical unitarian *intelligentsia* of the time. In 1834 Grimstone published her fifth and final novel, *Cleone. A Tale of Married Life*, which again received mainly positive praise from the press, with an entire abstract published in the first volume of *Leigh Hunt's London Journal*.

The 1830s were the most prolific years in Grimstone's career, both as a writer and as a political and moral influence. She wrote for several journals like *The Monthly Repository*, *The Court Magazine*, *The Tatler*²¹, *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, and *The New Moral World*, and her articles were "reprinted in a host of other progressive publications, such as *Star in The East* and *The Reasoner*" (Gleadle 1995, 38). Her work was also recognised overseas. In Australia, she was cited by publications like *Van Diemen's Land Monthly Magazine* and *Leatherwood* (Roe 1995, 37). In the United States, some of her "Sketches of Domestic Life" were reprinted by *The Museum of Foreign Literature and Science*. These years coincide with Grimstone's association with the Radical Unitarians, which extended well into the 1840s.

2.1. Grimstone and the Radical Unitarians

British Unitarianism²² developed from eighteenth-century rational dissent. As their name indicates, Unitarians do not believe in the doctrine of Trinity: that is, they do not believe in Christ as the incarnation or son of God, but rather as a human particularly inspired by God. They also regard the Bible "as the sole authority in religion" and "rejected the doctrine of the atonement" (Mineka 1944, 18). Like all other dissenters, Unitarians were subject to the Test Acts until 1828, but because they denied Christ divinity "until 1813 they were legally, though not in practice, subject to prosecution for blasphemy in denying the doctrine of Trinity" (Mineka 1944, 5).

As a consequence of the Test Acts, Unitarians created their own academies, where they "fused religion with philosophy and science in a supreme confidence that science was a way of understanding the rationality of God's creation and that only good could result from the

²¹ Not to be confused with the famous *Tatler* founded in 1709 by Richard Steele. Its full name was *The Tatler: A Daily Journal of Literature and the Stage* and it was founded by Leigh Hunt in 1830, who edited it until February 1832. The journal continued under other editors until October 1832.

²² For a better understanding of Unitarians see Mineka, Francis E. 1944. *The Dissidence of Dissent. The Monthly Repository, 1806-1838*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. Reprinted New York: Octagon Books 1972; Watts, Ruth. 1998. *Gender, Power, and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860*. Women and Men in History. London: Longman. For an analysis of radical Unitarianism: Gleadle, Kathryn. 1995. *The Early Feminists. Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-51*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

growth of knowledge and open, free enquiry” (Watts 1998, 3). They were never large in numbers, but because of the importance they gave to education, and their sense of social responsibility, Unitarians became involved in different liberal and progressive causes, evolving into a powerful and influential pressure group. Although they did not necessarily have a unified doctrinal system, all Unitarians shared a common faith in people's ability to develop their God-given reason through education. This approach took them into the path of science and experimentation in order to explain the world (Gleadle 1995; Watts 1998; 2011).

Unitarians' faith in reason and their support of everyone's ability to arrive at rational conclusions were also open to women, that is, “neither women nor anyone else could be assumed to be inferior in mental capacity” (Watts 2011, 638). For this reason, Kathryn Gleadle affirms that “Unitarian women were born into a denomination which encouraged a considerable amount of respect for their intellects and judgements” (1995, 21).

However, Gleadle differentiates between mainstream Unitarians and Radical Unitarians. For her, although all Unitarians had more progressive attitudes towards women than the general population, mainstream Unitarians still held to traditional customs and morals regarding the appropriate role and behaviours women were to have and exhibit. Thus, “while encouraging a progression in social perspectives on women, nevertheless cocooned them within conventional expectations of their characters and roles” (Gleadle 1995, 26). Contrastingly, Radical Unitarians, identified by both Gleadle and Rogers as those who orbited around South Place Chapel and its minister, William Johnson Fox, advocated vehemently and comprehensively for women's rights. Their advocacy included an attack on the customs and morals that supported the oppression of women (Gleadle 1995, 34). Radical Unitarians had a broad agenda of social change, and feminism was part of that agenda. One of the instruments they used in their quest for social reform was literature, in which *The Monthly Repository* played a fundamental role.

The Monthly Repository was founded in 1806 and from the beginning “tended to be theologically and politically progressive” (Rogers 2000, 127). In 1828 Fox became editor, before buying it in 1831, ushering in a new series in which the journal “became an important organ of the radical party” (Mineka 1944, 168). Between 1806 and 1826, under 5% of the contributors to the journal were women: “among them were Harriet Martineau, Emily Taylor and Mrs. Barbauld”. Under Fox's editorship that percentage rose to 14% and included, among others, Martineau, Taylor, Eliza Flower, and, of course, Grimstone (Robson 1987, 104). Radical Unitarians believed in literature as an instrument for social and political change, which explains “their attempts to use it as a tool for achieving female emancipation” (Gleadle 1995,

55). Within this framework, *The Monthly Repository* became a platform for the vindication of women's rights and the denunciation of their oppressed condition: "under Fox's editorship, some contributors became much more outspoken in their support for women's rights and critically examined the relationship between the sexes, marriage and divorce reform, female education and the 'domestic slavery of women'" (Rogers 2000, 127).

Grimstone wrote for *The Monthly Repository* from 1833 to 1837. Up until June 1836, the journal was edited by William J. Fox. Grimstone made most of her contributions to the journal under Fox's editorship, including her series "Sketches of Domestic Life". From July 1836 to June 1837 the editor was R. H. Horne, and, under him, Grimstone seems to have published only three articles²³. From July 1837 to March 1838 the journal was edited by Leigh Hunt. It seems that under Hunt's editorship Grimstone did not contribute to *The Monthly Repository*. It was in his very first issue as editor that Hunt published "Blue Stocking Revels; or, The Feast of the Violets", which, in his own words, was "a kind of female *Feast of the Poets*, which nobody took any notice of" (Hunt 1850, III:241). In it, Apollo offers a ball for literary women. In Canto II, in which the female writers are introduced to Apollo, Hunt includes the following verse:

Never praised be prose-love in a style so poetic. —
Then he kissed Mrs. Gillies by right sympathetic,
And somebody smiling, and looking askance,
He said, "Honi soit, my friend, qui mal y pense;
What in gods is a right and confirms a good fame,
Were in you a presumption. The same's not the same"
And with this profound speech, and a bow to the dame
(Whom he thanked for "Cleone", and "Gentile and Jew",
And for other things far more didactic and blue,
But advised for the future, to preach reformation
With all of her sweets, and no exacerbation)
He raised Mrs. Hall from her rev'rence profound,
Saying, "Nonsense, my dear; clasp me honestly round: —
For the gods love the pleasure you take, 'tis so hearty,
In all sorts of characters, careless of party." (Hunt 1837, 42)

²³ "Exclusiveness" in August 1836, "Occupation" in February 1837, and "On the Love of the Hideous; or, the Modern National Melodrama" in June 1837.

In the original version of the poem, the name Mrs Gillies came with the following footnote “Lately Mrs. Lemman Grimstone”. In the 1844 edition of *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt*, this clarification is missing, leaving only the titles of her novels as any indication that he was referring to Mary Lemman as one of the literary ladies of his time, along with Lucy Aikin, Joanna Baillie, Maria Edgeworth, Harriet Martineau, Lady Morgan, and many others. The name change from Grimstone to Gillies was the result of Mary Lemman’s second marriage, to William Gillies. William was the father of the Gillies sisters who were both members of the Radical Unitarian circle, Mary as a writer and Margaret as a painter²⁴. The marriage took place on 9 July 1836 (Gleadle 2016), after which she adopted the name Mrs Mary Lemman Gillies. However, up until 1837, she kept publishing under the initials M. L. G., which could refer to either of her married names.

It seems that Mary Lemman stopped writing between 1837 and 1846. In 1846, under the name Mary Lemman Gillies, she once again started writing for periodical publications, contributing to journals of popular progress. The journal of popular progress was “a new type of periodical which arose in the 1840s and which was situated culturally and ideologically between the expensive monthly journals and the ultra-popular penny weeklies” (Haywood 2004, 195). According to Rogers, the Radical Unitarians were again an important part of “the literary circles based around the journals of popular progress” (2000, 126), which “combined the emphasis on amusement and instruction found in other improvement literature with a commitment to social and political reform” (1999, 54). Unlike other radical publications of the time, the journals of popular progress were targeted towards a “family readership” (Rogers 1999, 54). Grimstone mainly wrote for *The People’s Journal*, which counted Giuseppe Mazzini among its most important contributors. In the presentation of its first edition, on 3 January 1846, *The People’s Journal* claimed that its goal was “to promote the true business and duty of man’s life—the development of all the capacities of his nature”.

In her contributions to *The People’s Journal*, while still worried about the position of women in society, Grimstone focused her efforts on the advancement of society at large, which for her had to necessarily come after a reformation of the home itself. For Grimstone, family was at the base of social improvement and, as such, had to be founded in a sympathy of aims and efforts between husband and wife. This sympathy was to be achieved not only through the adequate education of women, but also by redirecting men’s attentions to their homes. As such,

²⁴ The Gillies sisters and Mary Lemman must have had at least a cordial relation before the marriage, because records for The Exhibition of the Royal Academy show that Miss M. Gillies exhibited a Portrait of Mrs Lemman Grimstone in 1835.

Grimstone stated that men should not focus their efforts outside of the home on attending “monster meetings”, but in cultivating themselves in “fire-side virtues” (Gillies 1846a, 39). Educating themselves and their children was to be the main aim of every Englishman and Englishwoman, to guarantee the progress of society:

The real ends and objects of advancement, worth and weight in the people themselves, and their proportionate preponderance in the national scales, are now the animating, not agitating, subject of thought and discourse; and to these the matron, as well as the man, may advance (Gillies 1846a, 39)

With the progress of society in mind, Grimstone also wrote in favour of a national education system and an associated homes scheme. She used her colonial experience to highlight women's moralising powers, publishing two new short stories about life in Tasmania and reprinting her 1832 story, this time under the title “A Passage of Domestic History in Van Dieman’s Land”. It seems that Grimstone stopped writing in 1848, although there is proof that at least one of her poems, “Song of the Humble”, was reprinted in 1850 by *The Working Man’s Friend and Family Instructor*. Grimstone lived her last years as an annuitant, supported by her relatives, and died on 4 November 1869 after consuming disinfectant (Roe 1995; Gleadle 2016).

2.2. *Grimstone as a Writer with a Voice of Her Own*

Retrieving Grimstone’s body of work under all the different versions of her name—Rede, Grimstone, or Gillies— as well as some of the texts that she published anonymously and those under her pseudonym Oscar, has been possible thanks to the efforts of historians like Roe, Gleadle, and Rogers. In doing so, the call of feminist literary critics, such as Adrienne Rich, Annette Kolodny, and Nancy K. Miller, for the unearthing of women’s writings echoes strongly, particularly Miller’s statement on the importance of the subject for feminist studies:

What matter who's speaking? I would answer it matters, for example, to women who have lost and still routinely lose their proper name in marriage, and whose signature- not merely their voice- has not been worth the paper it was written on; women for whom the signature- by virtue of its power in the world of circulation- is not immaterial (1982, 53).

The decision to refer to her as Mary Leman Grimstone throughout this dissertation was not made hastily or only out of convenience. Grimstone is the name under which she published

all of her novels, which are the primary interest of the present thesis. It is also the one she used during the 1830s, her more productive period in terms of political and polemical essays, which serve as the background for interpreting her feminist positions. Other scholars, like Ian Haywood (2004), Anna Clark (1995), and Helen Rogers in her earlier works (1999), have referred to Grimstone as Mary Leman Gillies, primarily because they have focused on her writings during the 1840s. However, I argue that such a decision can cause confusion with her stepdaughter, Mary Gillies, who was also a writer and contributed to the same kind of journals for which Mary Leman wrote. Haywood, for example, attributed to Mary Leman Gillies the story “A Labourer’s Home”, published in the *Howitt’s Journal of Literature and Popular Progress* in 1847 (2004, 199), when actually it was authored by Mary Gillies, her stepdaughter. A way of recognising which texts were written by Mary Leman under the surname Gillies and which belong to her stepdaughter, is to pay close attention to the middle name. In all the versions of her name, whether Rede, Grimstone or Gillies, the writer under analysis constantly added her middle name, Leman, either in whole or at least with its initial, whereas her first name, Mary, is not always mentioned²⁵. Hence, to avoid undesirable confusion, as well as keeping uniformity with historical records of her and her work²⁶, the preferred way of referring to her throughout this dissertation will be Mary Leman Grimstone.

The question of her name is not the only issue one must face when studying Grimstone’s work. Because she wrote between 1815 and 1848-50, with her more productive years being the 1830s, Grimstone belongs to that “shadowy stretch of time sandwiched between two far more colourful periods”, the Romantic and the Victorian (Cronin 2002, 1). As such, until now Grimstone has been little read and studied, both in literary and in gender studies scholarship. Ann Robson, in one of the first articles that tried to shed light on Grimstone’s work, explained how “in any discussion of nineteenth-century feminism, it is usual after mentioning Mary Wollstonecraft and William Thompson (occasionally Sydney Smith) to move on to the 1850s or 1860s” (1987, 102), a practice that leaves out the movements and organisations of the first half of the century. Gleadle, who has focused her research on unearthing information about those forgotten early feminists that argued for women's rights between the 1830s and 1850s, lamented that “while in recent years some historians have begun to acknowledge Grimstone’s

²⁵ Leman seemed to have been a family name. While the eldest brother was named after Grimstone’s father, Leman Thomas Rede, all the other siblings, including Mary, had Leman added as their middle name (almost like a patronymic). They all seem to have kept it in their signature. The letters sent home from Mary and Lucy during their stay in Van Diemen’s Land were signed as M. Leman Grimstone and L. Leman Adey, respectively. William signed his work as William Leman Rede.

²⁶ Both the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and the Australian Dictionary of Biography referred to her as Mary Leman Grimstone.

contribution to the early feminist debate, scholars have to date only scratched the surface of her large body of work and significance” (1995, 37).

Gleadle’s lament, however, has not been entirely addressed by other scholars. Only a handful have analysed even a fraction of Grimstone’s work within their respective research, placing her either among the Romantics or the Victorians according to which period, and in what genre, they focus their studies.

On the one hand, we find several scholars who include Grimstone among the writers of the Romantic period. Diego Saglia, for example, has studied Grimstone as a Romantic poet, describing her *Zayda* as “a tale of clear Byronic descent” (2007, 160), where “the Byronic palimpsest of the self as opposed and related to natural correlative phenomena” is used for the construction of the characters’ identities (2000, 184). Harriet Devine, a scholar who has retrieved the lost voices of women writers from the nineteenth century through a series of books and anthologies²⁷, also places Grimstone among Romantic women writers. For Devine, Grimstone is part of a group of women writers which emerged at the end of the Romantic period, from the 1820s onwards:

By the last part of the Romantic Period ... owing in great part to the proliferation of annuals and periodicals, women writers were again turning to journalism ... The 1830s, in particular, found an increasing number of female reviewers and essayists including Mary Jane Jewsbury, Mary Shelley, Harriet Martineau, Sarah Flower Adams and Mary Leman Grimstone ... this impressively intellectual and clear-headed group of prose writers began once again to address issues related to women in society... (Devine 1997, xv)

For this reason, Devine includes Grimstone’s articles written in the 1830s in her anthology *Women’s Writing of the Romantic Period, 1789-1836*.

On the other hand, some literary critics and historians have placed Grimstone among the Victorians. Helen Rogers (1994; 1999; 2000), in the field of cultural history, and Ian Haywood (2004), in that of literary criticism, have included some of Grimstone's work in their research on nineteenth-century English popular culture. Both Rogers and Haywood have studied Grimstone as a Victorian writer, possibly because they have mainly analysed her contributions to the journals of popular progress during the 1840s. Nadia Valman has also examined Grimstone’s prose, particularly her novel *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* (1833),

²⁷ Among Harriet Devine’s books we can find: *Women’s Writing of the Romantic Period, 1789-1836: An Anthology* (1997), *Nineteenth-Century Short Stories by Women: A Routledge Anthology* (1998), and *Women's Writing of the Victorian Period 1837-1901: An Anthology* (1999).

focusing on its representation of the Jewess (2007) and its role in the campaign for Jewish civil rights in early Victorian England (2000). Thus, where does one place Grimstone?

Discussions about the boundaries between the Romantic and the Victorian periods exceed the scope of the present dissertation. However, recognising “the survival of Romantic features within Victorian literary culture” (Evangelista and Farese 2013, 9), as well as the fact that “nineteenth-century literary women did have both a literature and a culture of their own” (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, xii), this thesis, instead of monolithically classifying Grimstone as either Romantic or Victorian, considers her as an early feminist and nineteenth-century literary woman, strongly inspired by the Romantics, with whom she shared several features (as recognised by contemporary reviews of her work²⁸), and who in turn impacted Victorian society. Borrowing Richard Cronin’s categorisation, Grimstone might be considered then as a sort of ‘Romantic Victorian’ (2002), who although honouring the style and aesthetic of the Romantic period, along with its political engagement, rippled through early and mid-Victorian popular culture in her efforts to transform society and women’s position in it.

As I have mentioned before, there has been little research that focuses on Grimstone’s work and, apart from Valman’s partial analysis of *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, no other research examines her role as a nineteenth-century novelist. In an effort to fill the gaps in the study of Grimstone’s contributions to the debates of her time, primarily in her role as a female writer who fought for women’s rights, I will examine three of her five novels: *Louisa Egerton*, *Woman’s Love*, and *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*. These novels represent a sample of Grimstone’s interest in the oppressed condition of women and the need for improvement, while allowing for an analysis of her writing style. Some of her articles will also be part of this study, mainly those written during the 1830s, serving as elements that clarify Grimstone’s message. These novels and articles will be examined within the framework offered by feminist literary criticism and its analysis of women’s roles and work throughout the nineteenth century. Taking into account the transitional nature of Grimstone’s texts, which belong to that “lacuna ... dash, or some other kind of punctuation mark” between the Romantic and Victorian periods (Cronin 2002, 2), elements from existing scholarship on both periods, including those about their intersections, will also be part of the present analysis. This will allow me to weave a feminist web between Grimstone and her context.

²⁸ See for example the review of *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* in *The Monthly Repository*, which ascribed the parentage of Grimstone’s characters to the influence of Jane Austen and William Godwin.

It is also necessary to mention that Grimstone's work particularly echoes and mirrors that of Mary Wollstonecraft. However, Grimstone never mentions Wollstonecraft or her work, either explicitly or implicitly. This attitude towards Wollstonecraft was widespread at the time, because once her extramarital affairs and suicide attempts were made known by Godwin's publication of *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, "the popular press ... widely denounced Wollstonecraft as a whore and an atheist, as well as a dangerous revolutionary", thus effectively ruining her reputation (Mellor 2002, 155). Consequently, other women who shared Wollstonecraft's views on the causes and solutions to the oppression of women were not only wary of citing her publicly, but did everything possible to distance themselves from her. Grimstone was also part of this unfortunate trend, and, as Rogers has indicated, "though she and other Foxite radicals enthusiastically discussed Wollstonecraft's ideas, like many later Victorians feminists who feared association with Wollstonecraft's reputation as a sexual radical and political revolutionary, they did not acknowledge her influence in public" (2000, 129). Grimstone strove for a more measured image as a women's advocate, one that aimed at social and moral reformation, and not a full-blown revolution. Still, hers was not merely a reformation of female manners; instead, Grimstone worked towards a reformation of society as a whole and of the asymmetrical relationship between the sexes that supported it.

Reading Grimstone's novels, essays, and short stories in this light, as part of her agenda to achieve moral and social reform, one can also see the development of her ideas. *Louisa Egerton* and *Woman's Love* take place in the aristocratic world, portraying both its condemning and redeeming qualities. With *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, Grimstone shifted her focus to the middle class. She would keep her attention on the middle classes in her political essays and short stories published in the 1830s. By the 1840s, as Helen Rogers (2000) has pointed out, Grimstone occupied herself with the improvement of the working class.

It is also possible to see the development of her style as a writer, particularly when it comes to her character and plot construction. All her novels share a didactic aspect, for which Grimstone uses an ensemble cast that interacts, however tenuously, with the main characters. But, whereas in *Louisa Egerton* the aforementioned ensemble sometimes feels overcrowded, with characters whose function is clearly more for the sake of the moral element of the story than for the plot itself, in *Woman's Love* and *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, the characters are better delineated and justified within the story, although the moral element is still present.

Since the main object of the present dissertation is to identify how Grimstone used her writings to defend women's rights and denounce their oppression, a complete description and

analysis of each novel would exceed its scope. However, an overview of the three novels under examination will aid the subsequent study of Grimstone's ideas.

2.2.1. Louisa Egerton: an overview

The novel, as its title indicates, follows the life of Louisa Egerton from the moment she arrives in England seeking the protection of her uncle, Sir William Egerton, to her happy marriage to Lord Eardley Herbert, Earl of Elville. Louisa and her aunt, Lady Egerton, might be considered as constituting the angel-monster dyad theorised by Gilbert and Gubar (1979). Louisa, an orphan, is constructed as the passive heroine, the obedient angel that suffers silently in the name of honour and family. Her fate seems to be sealed by a phrase her father pronounced on his deathbed: "this [letter] will open to you my brother's heart ... give him, my love, the sacred obedience of a daughter; let nothing induce you to forsake his protection, but the holier claim of a husband he approves" (Grimstone 1830, 374).

This last instruction becomes a sentence that hangs over Louisa's head, dictating all her actions. Therefore, even if Louisa's journey from France to England after her father's death suggested an active disposition, she becomes more and more passive over the course of the novel. This passiveness culminates in her acceptance of a loveless marriage to Major Selton, a union that does not happen, not because Louisa takes some action to save herself but by the occurrence of several fortuitous events.

The arrangement of this loveless marriage between Louisa and Major Selton is largely the result of Lady Egerton's machinations. Lady Egerton wants to ensure the marriage of her daughter Julia to Lord Eardley Herbert, at all costs, and sees Louisa as an obstacle to her plans. Early in the novel, Lady Egerton finds out that Major Selton is interested in Louisa and, with the help of Miss Dickson, tries to prompt a declaration on his part. However, Sir William opposes this idea because he considers Major Selton to have a weak character. He would prefer to see Louisa married to his ward, Stafford Monteith. At first Lady Egerton agrees to Sir William's plans, but when, despite Sir William's desires, mutual interest develops between Monteith and Julia, all of Lady Egerton's worries return. She manages to separate Louisa from the rest of the family, leaving her in the care of her stepmother.

Also, taking advantage of Sir William's sudden illness and Monteith's temporary absence, Lady Egerton reveals to Julia the plans for her union with the Earl of Elville, a match that Sir William and Lord Herbert's father had discussed when both Eardley and Julia were children. She convinces Julia that it is in her best interest to focus all of her energies on

conquering the love of Lord Eardley Herbert. At the same time, to leave no loose ends, Lady Egerton sends a letter to Louisa to convince her to marry Major Selton, presenting him as Louisa's best option and using her uncle's desire to see her well married in her appeal:

It was the first wish of your uncle's heart to see you well married; he knew it was the best, perhaps the only means he had of providing suitably for you...

...

...A good opportunity of establishing herself, is what no young woman ought to miss, since in it she will derive both honour and happiness; without it, she can secure neither. ... Let me now see you acting that judicious part. Major Selton loves you—his fortune is ample, and his rank in the army renders him, in that respect, unexceptionable. He loves you for yourself, for he knows your portion will not be considerable; and you ought to esteem yourself happy and fortunate, in having won the heart of such a man, in this sinister age ...

...

...since you are unfortunately not at ease in your filial position, will that not be an additional motive to your making Major Selton happy? Better to leave Chiswick as a bride, and thus, at once, fix your destiny, than risk what the future may do for you. (Grimstone 1830, 474–78).

In her letter, Lady Egerton also dismisses Louisa's desire to take care of her uncle, in an effort to keep her away and alone. With her actions, Lady Egerton, under the veil of false concern, is actually plotting to achieve her ultimate goal: marrying Julia to Lord Eardley Herbert. Therefore, Lady Egerton functions as the monster of the story, the romantic reincarnation of the evil Queen against Snow White. She can be described in almost the same terms Gilbert and Gubar use to describe the Queen, that is, as "a plotter, a plot-maker, a schemer, a witch ... a woman of almost infinite creative energy, witty, wily, and self-absorbed" (1979, 38–39). Still, there is one element that, albeit partially, redeems Lady Egerton's actions: she is not acting to benefit herself, but everything she does is for her daughter's best interest. For her, marriage is a woman's only opportunity for honour and happiness, and as such, promoting Julia's union to Lord Herbert takes precedence over everything else. In this enterprise Lady Egerton is aided by two other characters: Miss Dickson, a poor spinster who leeches off people around her to survive, plotting and gossiping with only her own interests at heart, and Mrs Egerton, Louisa's stepmother.

Pressured by her aunt's words, together with having been saved by Major Selton from a fire, Louisa accepts his marriage proposal. Her friends, among whom we find Lady Claudia Herbert, Lord Eardley's sister, are against this union, but Louisa lacks the force to retract the

engagement or accept their help to break it. Among this turmoil, we are finally introduced to Lord Eardley Herbert. We also discover that he and Louisa already knew each other. Lord Eardley, under the false name of Mr Leslie, had helped her and her father, during her father's last moments.

Lord Eardley is actually in love with Louisa, but he had promised his dying father that he would marry Julia. He is adamant about keeping that promise, and expresses to his sister, Lady Alicia Herbert, that the only way he will consider himself free is if Julia rejects him. Lady Alicia does not agree with the idea of her brother marrying Julia, because she sees her as morally lacking. She would prefer to see him marrying Louisa. This is even contrary to Lady Alicia's personal interest because she is in love with Monteith, Julia's previous love, to whom she could return if the union between Louisa and Lord Eardley does occur.

When the unhappy fate of our protagonists seems sealed, two unrelated events break their respective engagements and allow them to be together. Firstly, Major Selton, under the protection of the Game Laws, which he upholds but Lord Eardley criticises, kills a young poacher, a boy named Jasper Cleaveland. It is revealed that the boy was the son of Major Selton, who in his youth had tricked young Ianthe Cleaveland into eloping with him, just to use her and then abandon her once she fell pregnant. Guilt-ridden by his past and present misdeeds, Major Selton decides to take care of poor Mrs Cleaveland and to release Louisa from her engagement. Louisa is described as being relieved for having avoided an unfortunate marriage, being able to "step aside, unhurt herself, and un-hurting others", while at the same time feeling only compassion for Major Selton's fate (Grimstone 1830, 648). The thoughts of Lady Egerton are portrayed as far darker: "It appeared to her that Louisa was preserved, by a sort of spell, from the effect of her machinations; and that, after all the trouble she had already taken, new schemes must be devised, to separate her from the Elvilles" (649).

Secondly, Julia runs away, and initial suspicions fall on an elopement with Stafford Monteith. Still, Lady Alicia, being sensible and smart, suspects that Julia must have had assistance from someone on the inside, and her instinct points to the devious Miss Dickson. She soon intercepts two letters addressed to Miss Dickson, one from Lord Harry Arden paying her £1000 for her services, and the other from Julia remarking how happy she was at having escaped with Harry and lamenting only that she had left behind some of her dresses. They had had to run off together because Sir Harry was already married to Lady Arden.

Everything then unfolds in a happy ending for our protagonists, and a foul one for their antagonists. Louisa and Lord Eardley got married, and so did Lady Alicia and Stafford Monteith. Major Selton was condemned for manslaughter, "suffered a short imprisonment",

and then retired to Ireland to take care of Mrs Cleaveland. Poor Sir William Egerton never recovered his health. He and Lady Egerton went to live abroad, where he lingered for about two years before dying in a “peaceful sleep”, while she decided to remain in foreign lands and lived in the “strictest privacy”. “Miss Dickson sunk into obscurity, poverty and contempt”. Sir Harry died in a duel, leaving his unhappy wife, Lady Arden, free to marry Cecil Dudley, a man that loved her. Julia, for her part, debased herself further by hurrying “into a sea of vice and dissipation” (Grimstone 1830, 759, 760).

There are many more characters in the novel than the ones mentioned in this overview. However, their relevance does not relate to their roles within the story, which could have easily been constructed without them, but to how Grimstone uses them to introduce moral and didactic elements to the story. For the present dissertation, Mrs Brown, a middle-class woman associated with Miss Dickson, and the Stubbs family, who gave room and board to Mrs Egerton when she came to England, will be relevant for further analysis.

2.1.2. *Woman’s Love: an overview*

Woman’s Love is Grimstone’s third and longest novel, published in three volumes that together account for more than a thousand pages. It was written during her stay in Van Diemen’s Land, but the story takes place primarily in England. However, there are some references that hint at the impact her time in the former colonies had on Grimstone’s view of the world. In particular, these allusions are present in the novel’s critique of England’s penal system and in its reference to the penalty of exile in the South Pacific Islands (Grimstone 1832c, III:242–51, 356).

The novel is set mainly within the aristocratic world and features an ensemble cast. In it, Grimstone strove to create characters who were not entirely good or bad: that is, neither angels nor monsters, but human. The story revolves around three main characters: Charles Beresford, Ida Dorrington, and Lady Claudia Conway. E. Morris Miller describes these characters as a triad linked by friendship, where their different personalities balance each other’s virtues and vices:

The three leading characters seemed to have been creations designed to fit in with the author’s scheme of a triune friendship between a man and two women. The introversion of Ida Dorrington was devised as a foil to the extroversion of Lady Claudia Conway, the man (Charles Beresford) combining in himself traces of both these determining traits. (1958, 20)

Charles Beresford is the first character introduced to the readers and the indisputable protagonist of the story. His full background is only revealed in the novel's second volume. There, the readers discover that Charles is the son of a preacher's daughter, Lucy Vincent, and a mysterious man of whom his mother and her family only knew the name Beresford. Charles was born in Keswick and, after the death of his mother and grandfather, was raised by the town's new preacher, Mr Thornton. During his adolescence, Charles left his hometown due to conflicts with his guardian's new wife and stepson, Edward Saville. When the novel begins Charles is living in France and is described only as an honourable man, although without rank or money. In France, Charles makes the acquaintance of Belwin Fitzarran, his young new bride Constance, and his cousin, Lady Claudia Conway. The party had escaped from England so that Belwin and Constance could get married, because her father opposed their union due to Belwin being Catholic. By the time they meet Charles, Belwin and Constance have already married in a Catholic ceremony. In the conversation that ensues, they discover that some years prior Charles had saved Belwin from drowning, and from then onwards their friendship is sealed. They all start travelling together to Paris but are soon interrupted by Constance's father, Admiral Rusport, and Lord Henry Conway, Lady Claudia's brother, who resents his cousin Belwin because, despite his Catholic faith, he is to inherit the Earldom of Morrendale and Fitzarran Abbey. The Admiral takes advantage of a storm to 'rescue' his daughter, considering her marriage vows null because of his religious prejudices. Belwin is not willing to give up his bride and, with Charles' help, goes after them. To cover more ground, Belwin and Charles travel in different directions. Charles retraces their steps back to England, where he is eager to return, while Belwin proceeds to Paris, not before giving Charles letters addressed to his family to explain the situation.

Charles starts his journey back to England together with the Conway siblings, and thus the readers are better introduced to Lady Claudia Conway. She is the daughter of the Dowager Countess of Dromore and has two elder brothers, Lord Dromore (the Earl of Dromore), and Lord Henry Conway. The Dowager Countess is herself the daughter of the Earl of Morrendale, Belwin's grandfather, making Lady Claudia and her brothers Belwin's cousins on their mother's side. Lady Claudia is described as an open, kind-natured person, but also passionate and lacking in self-knowledge, more often giving way to fancy, imagination, and emotions than to judicious judgement, which often leads her astray. However, "she no sooner became aware she was in a wrong path than the desire to quit it was induced, and in the eagerness so to do she would strike into some collateral one...". In this manner, poor Lady Claudia seemed to be always involved in some kind of trouble or scandal, "the calm of her life was continually

broken, and her character left open to imputations of error which were more apparent than real...” (Grimstone 1832a, I:70–71)

Through the course of the novel, the readers get to know Lady Claudia’s character. She is often well-intentioned and has everyone’s best interest at heart, sometimes disregarding her own well-being in the process. Of all the characters, Lady Claudia is perhaps the most nuanced, constructed as a human with virtues and vices, the latter being imputed more to miscalculations and misjudgements on her part rather than to conscious immorality or iniquity. Her kind heart is in the right place, even if her overly passionate and confident nature sometimes gets her in trouble:

Lady Claudia was not one of those scrutinizers, who, when aid an individual in distress, deem themselves entitled to lift with a regardless curiosity the veil that yet unextinguished sensibility might throw over particular details; perhaps Lady Claudia had too little of this, and hence often extended to the vicious the aid she should have reserved for the virtuous. But it was one of her tenets that misery was misery, let it spring from what source it might; and that it was the duty of humanity to relieve it ... she would rather relieve a thousand stained by guilt, than, by overcaution, delay, or deny, assistance to one that was innocent. (Grimstone 1832b, II:225–26).

Lady Claudia falls in love with Charles and, more due to her imagination than any active response on his part, believes that he reciprocates her feelings. This creates a series of problems and misunderstandings throughout the novel, the first of which is a duel between Charles and Lord Conway when they are still in France, which results in the former being injured. Charles is left in France to recover while the Conway siblings, together with Admiral Rusport and his daughter, return to England. When Charles finally recovers, he travels to England and arrives at Fitzarran Abbey, where he meets Lady Fitzarran and her protégée, Ida Dorrington.

Lady Fitzarran is a devout Catholic, because “it had been the last injunction of her dying mother, that she should be reared in the faith of the church of Rome” (Grimstone 1832d, II:192). Her story is a mystery for most of the novel: the readers are given hints and clues throughout the first two volumes, but it is only in the third volume that we are presented with her past and the events that led her to marry Lord Ormond Fitzarran. She is not exactly a widow, as Lord Ormond left her soon after their marriage, before the birth of their son, and was never seen or heard of again. On account of these sufferings, her father-in-law, the old Earl of

Morrendale, permitted her "...to rear the heir of the earldom of Morrendale [Belwin] a catholic" (Grimstone 1832b, II:190)

Lady Fitzarran operates as the voice of reason and sense, always giving sound advice to her son, Belwin, her ward, Ida, and her niece, Lady Claudia. She is a kind woman, with a sorrowful past, who has found solace and happiness in her faith and in raising her son and her ward. For Lady Fitzarran, as she declares to Ida when she is first introduced to the readers, "The only approaches to happiness are through the avenues of religion and morality. I am no bigot in the one, no cynic in the other" (Grimstone 1832a, I:239). Plentiful evidence to support this statement, and of Lady Fitzarran's character, is found all through the novel. One example of her kind personality can be found in the fact that she had raised Ida as a daughter, but never forced Catholicism upon her:

Ida Dorrington, though thrown an orphan upon her ladyship's bounty, had been made no convert to the faith of her benefactress. The same spirit that supplied her temporal wants, left her free to seek salvation after the fashion of her forefathers; nor did the beauty and sweetness of her young protégée appear to her ladyship any way deteriorated because she knelt at a different altar. In all else her ladyship had assumed the presiding power of a parent; she had formed the mind, moulded the temper, and directed the views of Ida with anxious tenderness (Grimstone 1832a, I:242).

Ida, for her part, completes the triad of main characters as well as the almost-love triangle that ensues between her, Lady Claudia, and Charles Beresford. Although in the beginning Charles shows some curiosity towards Lady Claudia and offers her his honest friendship, his interest does not go further: "she [Lady Claudia] had inspired him [Charles] with a sentiment of affection in which no passion mingled, and a chaste familiarity, such as exists between attached relatives" (Grimstone 1832c, III:49). When Charles meets Ida and her gentle but firm disposition, their kindred souls and like-minded characters make them the perfect match. For most of the novel both Charles and Ida have doubts about confessing their feelings for one another, due to material considerations of rank and financial means. Their mutual feelings are finally accepted and revealed to each other in a conversation at the end of the second volume: "Charles did not plead in vain: in a long and uninterrupted walk the sentiments of either heart were fully developed, discovering that perfect accordance which gives the fairest promise of happiness" (Grimstone 1832b, II:277).

Ida is described as having a gentle soul and a rational mind. She always thinks before she acts, weighing the consequences of her actions. However, Ida has a soft spot for Rachel

Melburt, “the original protectress of her own orphanage, and the sole and faithful friend of her late mother” (Grimstone 1832b, II:141), which makes her take some risks like secretly meeting Rachel late at night and accepting letters from unknown men. Ida is also painfully aware of her precarious position in society. Being the orphan daughter of an actress, Clara Clifford, and a man identified only as Mr Dorrington, she is dependent on Lady Fitzarran’s charity. With no rank or money of her own, Ida was considered an unattractive candidate in the marriage market, where unions were not based on love but on the monetary means a woman could bring to the marriage, as well as considerations about titles and position in society.

Ida, however, is not willing to trade her principles for rank, or to compromise her idea of marriage as a union based on sympathy of character and commonality of interest. Hence, when Sir Constantine Grieves, Lady Dromore’s brother, starts courting her, she declines his intentions and declares firmly to Lady Fitzarran that she cannot accept his proposal because they are not compatible. Shortly after this conversation, Lady Fitzarran realises that the love between Ida and Charles is pure and that Lady Claudia’s infatuation with the latter will lead to suffering, in a perfect description of the failed love triangle:

Lady Fitzarran ... saw the beatitude of spirit that breathed over Charles and Ida, that they were alone conscious of the all-sufficient bliss of loving and being beloved. Unmixed had been her joy in their felicity, but that the Presence of Lady Claudia, more brilliant, and almost as happy as they, pained her heart with anticipated sorrow. She knew that the glowing imagination of her niece cherished a fatal, a delusive, dream; from which she would be awakened to a drear reality (Grimstone 1832c, III:24)

The love between Ida and Charles will be, however, put to the test by different trials and tribulations. First, it is discovered that Ida is the daughter of Lord Santon, a nobleman and heir to a dukedom, who in his reckless youth had abandoned his wife, Clara Clifford, and their daughter. Lady Fitzarran appeases Lord Santon’s fears of Ida’s rejection, reuniting father and daughter. With this discovery, Ida’s rank in society changes drastically, from a mere dependant to a noblewoman. Charles fears that Ida’s changed position could jeopardise their love, because now he has nothing to offer her, and marrying him would actually make her renounce her newfound station. Ida assuages his doubts by assuring him “that if her better fortune had made any change, it had been only to increase her tenderness and devotion” towards him (100).

Still one more challenge awaits them. Charles is arrested on charges of forgery and felony, accused of forging Lord Conway’s signature. Charles alleges his innocence, but some witnesses affirm that they have seen him trading the false note with Lord Conway's signature.

He is incarcerated and, at first, is supported only by Ida and Belwin. However, by a turn of fate, some letters from Lord Ormond to Lady Fitzarran, written to her on his deathbed, reveal that Charles is Lord Ormond's son from his marriage to Lucy Vincent. He had married her during his five-year absence from Fitzarran Abbey, when he was using the name Charles Beresford, thus making Charles, and not Belwin, the heir of Morrendale. The old Earl of Morrendale accepts this news, embracing his newfound grandson, while at the same time trying to protect Belwin by assuring him of another noble title: "Belwin shall lose no honours ... he is no longer the heir to an earldom; but there is a dormant barony, that has long lain in abeyance; it shall be revived in his person" (Grimstone 1832c, III:259).

Belwin is ecstatic to find a brother in Charles, who he already regarded as his saviour and friend. Also, Charles' new position as Lord Fitzarran, heir of Morrendale, changes public opinion in his favour. Still, during the trial, and notwithstanding his own defence, the testimonies of the witnesses seem to guarantee a conviction. However, at the last minute Rachel Melburt comes into court and asks to be heard. She reveals that everything was a scheme by Edward Saville who had used Guy Burroughs, Rachel's lover, to impersonate Charles and incriminate him of the crimes he was accused of. Burroughs bears an uncanny resemblance to Charles because he is the son of Hugh Vincent, the brother of Charles' mother, which makes them cousins. Rachel dies in court after giving her testimony. Charles is set free, and Saville and Burroughs are arrested.

Charles, now Lord Fitzarran, marries Ida, while the dowager Lady Fitzarran travels to the continent with Belwin, Constance, and Lady Claudia. Constance dies soon after giving birth to a daughter, and, a year later, Belwin becomes Baron of Elsam and marries Lady Claudia. Saville is convicted of his crimes and given the death penalty, while Burroughs and their other accomplices "crossed the South Pacific to redeem or renew in another hemisphere the crimes they had committed in this" (Grimstone 1832c, III:356).

2.1.3. *Character; or, Jew and Gentile: an overview*

This novel, as its title indicates, deals with the formation of character and whether it is determined by nature or nurture. It also touches on the argument of religious tolerance that Grimstone had already explored in her previous novel, but this time arguing for the acceptance of the Jewish community.

Nadia Valman has analysed some of the novel's arguments in favour of the acceptance of Jews in nineteenth-century British society. This makes *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* the

only one of Grimstone's novels to be included in existing studies of nineteenth-century English literary culture.

Although there is an underlying love story in the novel, the plot centres around filial and familial relations, focusing on two families, the Coverley-Beaucaires and the Trevors. The Jewish component of the story is present through the Mezrack family. Mrs Agnes Trevor is indisputably the moral voice of the story, and, as one contemporary review²⁹ affirmed, "an ideal portrait of the writer herself" (Grimstone 1832-?, citing *The Examiner's* review).

Of the three novels under analysis, *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* has the best-delineated characters, the number considerably reduced when compared to Grimstone's previous works. As for the plot itself, the novel begins around 1808 with the description of the Coverley-Beaucaire family: Mr Peter Coverley, an old bachelor and a banker; his nephew and ward, Ralph Beaucaire, now in charge of the banking affairs; and the wife of the latter, Amelia Beaucaire, who has just given birth to the couple's only child, Marmion Beaucaire.

The readers are soon introduced to Dr Clare, a wise old friend of Mr Coverley and a staunch defender of the importance of education in the formation of character. According to Dr Clare, "education, (in which I comprehend all the influencing circumstances of situation and association,) acting on the natural materials, determines character, as the architect does the nature of the fabric he builds" (Grimstone 1833a, I:19).

Dr Clare's daughter, Mrs Agnes Lennox, shares his ideas. Agnes is a young widow just recently returned from the West Indies. She is opinionated and passionate, and often discusses the nature of women and their rights with Mr Coverley. Mr Coverley is convinced of men's superiority and supremacy over women. Agnes, on her part, voices the opinions that Grimstone upheld throughout her work, that the differences between men and women were due to the dissimilar education the sexes received, which gave advantages to men and left women wanting. Agnes' opinions are also shared by Mr Trevor, Ralph Beaucaire's college friend, who, in one of his many discussions with Beaucaire and Mr Coverley, affirmed, "There is as noble metal in the breast of woman as in man, were it brought to the same proof." (Grimstone 1833a, I:57-58).

Mr Coverley, wanting to leave London, buys and renovates an estate in Rushmere, Suffolk, very near Dr Clare's home. The estate Mr Coverley bought had belonged to "a ruined

²⁹ This is one of the reviews that is reported in Grimstone's Scrapbook. Grimstone included a handwritten note below the newspaper clip that ascribes it to *The Examiner* and dates it Sunday 21st July 1833. Due to practical difficulties, it was not possible to corroborate the source as *The Examiner*. However, because it is pasted and not simply transcribed in the Scrapbook, even if its publication by *The Examiner* can be put into question, its content cannot be disputed and, consequently, it is taken as truthful.

fox-hunter, of the name of Melburn, who, on the wreck of a once considerable fortune, was preparing to emigrate with his family to North America” (Grimstone 1833a, I:81). Mr Melburn is described as a man who “was capable of giving way to the grossest abuse” (84). By contrast, his wife, poor Mrs Magdalene Melburn, is depicted as an “unobtrusive and excellent” being (81) who unfortunately had become the victim of her husband, “an abused wife and mother” with no one to appeal to (84-85), even if the fortune that Mr Melburn had ruined was originally hers.

Mrs Melburn and Agnes were dear friends. In their youth, they had also been friends with Ralph Beaucaire, who had been in love with young Magdalene. However, Magdalene’s family did not approve of their union. Mrs Melburn has only one consolation, the possibility to raise her children as she sees fit: “amid all my griefs, I have had one blessing, I have been permitted to be the sole educator of my children ... to that I dedicate my life, my strength” (Grimstone 1833a, I:96). In that enterprise one of her principles has been to “make no difference in the education of my boys and my girls; they shall both have the same mental and bodily exercise, the liberty of free air and inquiry” (97).

In her efforts, Mrs Melburn is accompanied by a Jewish woman who was found wandering desperately in the woods surrounding the estate. She was brought to the house to recover, and once she had done so she asked Mrs Melburn to call her Hagar and to allow her to become her handmaid. Hagar is depicted as having suffered deeply, although the reasons for her sorrow are not revealed. Still, she possesses a gentle, sympathetic, and intelligent soul, which makes Mrs Melburn affirm that “she will be to me as a sister” (Grimstone 1833a, I:103).

The Melburn family leaves for the United States and the Coverley-Beaucaires move to their new estate, renamed Vex’em Park. With the move the Coverleys effectively become neighbours of Dr Clare and his daughter. Shortly thereafter, Mr Trevor marries Agnes, who becomes Mrs Trevor. For a while the Trevors live in London, but after Dr Clare dies, they move back to Rushmere to live on what had been Dr Clare’s estate.

Moving forward some years, the readers are informed that Ralph Beaucaire had received “the honour of knighthood”, thus becoming Sir Ralph, a change that had negative effects on the couple's character: “Sir Ralph had become the slave of ambition, his wife had become the slave of fashion” (Grimstone 1833a, I:159, 162). Meanwhile, the Trevors have had many children and are living a quiet, happy life, first in London and then in Rushmere. Their eldest son, Arthur Trevor, is roughly the same age as Marmion Beaucaire. However, whereas Arthur has been raised by his reasonable and sensible parents, Marmion's education was left in the hands of his indulgent mother and uncle, making him a tyrant who worries only about his

own well-being and whose relationships are characterised by interest in rank and money, rather than any sentiment of real compatibility or sympathy:

The weak pride in which Marmion had been reared led him to seek aristocratic associates: the true principles in which Arthur had been bred induced him to seek intellectual companionship. Marmion refused none recommended by rank—accepted none that wanted it. Arthur confined himself to no class, knowing that worth and talent may be found in all. (Grimstone 1833a, I:169)

Marmion is also inclined to excesses, and he not only exceeds the allowance his father affords him but, circumventing Sir Ralph, takes money from both his uncle and mother and, when that is not enough, he seeks “other and more questionable means for raising supplies”, entering into more debt than he can ever repay (Grimstone 1833a, I:216). Both Arthur and Marmion studied in the same college, “but Marmion, who stood in the first rank at the University, was condescending, not conciliatory, to Arthur, who only occupied the second; thus, perhaps fortunately for the one, and unfortunately for the other, they never became strict friends” (Grimstone 1833a, I:169). Marmion divides his life between Rushmere and London, and in the latter gives free reign to his vices. He is considered a great match among the debutantes and their families, mainly because it is believed that he is a wealthy heir, and no one suspects the level of his debts:

Morally and materially Marmion was a splendid ruin; the former was suspected, but the latter was not; therefore he was still welcomed by the wealthy and courted by the fair...

Many a manoeuvring maid and mother had desired to assist him in the settlement of his fortune and affections, and it is to be feared that the first was the primary point... (Grimstone 1833a, I:218)

While in London, Marmion becomes infatuated with Esther Mezrack, “a beauty of the first order” and the daughter of Baron Mezrack (Grimstone 1833a, I:218). Both she and her father are Jewish, and she is proud of her heritage and religion. Marmion manages to seduce Esther, and she falls in love with him, to the point of seeking ways to recant the betrothal that had been arranged for her during her childhood.

Almost concomitant to these events, Mrs Melburn decides to return to England accompanied by her only surviving daughter, young Magdalene Melburn, and the always faithful Hagar. Their ship is wrecked when approaching the bay where, as fate would have it, the Trevors are taking a short holiday. Their second son, Hubert, helps save victims of the

disaster, including young Magdalene. Mrs Melburn dies, not before seeing her old friend Agnes one last time and asking her to take care of her daughter. Young Magdalene, together with Hagar, is then welcomed into the Trevors' home. A man named Ernest Malfort is also saved from the shipwreck, and, through cunning manipulations that only Mrs Trevor seems able to see, he soon becomes Mr Coverley's assistant.

By the end of the first volume the readers discover that Marmion often asks money from a Jewish loaner named Mezrack, but "so unreflecting was Marmion, that the coincidence of the name and faith of Esther never once struck him" (Grimstone 1833a, I:235). The old moneylender is, in fact, Esther's grandfather. Old Mezrack is portrayed as wise and humane, a man that has suffered much in life, who has now become an anonymous benefactor to many a destitute, without caring if they were Jewish or Gentile, because "where he saw misery he remembered only that its victim was man, he inquired not 'what matter of man'" (Grimstone 1833a, I:241). Still, when he discovers that Marmion has conquered Esther's heart and that she is willing to break her betrothal to join him, knowing the kind of person Marmion is, he tries to convince her to renounce her misplaced love. Old Mezrack confesses to Esther that he once had a daughter, one that always stood by his side, even in his hour of greatest need and debasement, but he had sacrificed her to a false Christian, who had betrayed both of their trust.

In the meantime, Marmion returns to Vex'em Park. Both Marmion and Arthur Trevor fall in love with young Magdalene, who is now living in Rushmere together with the Trevor family. While Magdalene seems to regard Arthur with sisterly love, she is captivated by Marmion. With no knowledge of Marmion's relationship with Esther Mezrack, Sir Ralph encourages a union between his son and Magdalene, as a way of reviving the love that once existed between him and the girl's mother. Arthur, for his part, decides to leave England for the Continent, in the hopes of forgetting Magdalene.

Mr Coverley dies, leaving Marmion as the sole heir to his fortune, but appointing Sir Ralph and Ernest Malfort as "joint guardians of [Marmion] Beaucaire, and joint executors of the will" until Marmion turns twenty-five (Grimstone 1833b, II:58). Marmion, only thinking of himself and infuriated by the fact that he cannot use his inheritance as he pleases, returns to London to "renew the dissipation of manners and distress of mind which, in their reaction, augmented each other". Even if he loves Magdalene, he is not willing to give up Esther because, "if no longer an object of love, [she] remained one of interest, and marriage might work the redemption he had hoped from his majority" (Grimstone 1833b, II:70–71).

For his part, even if old Mezrack did not reveal Esther's love for Marmion to his son, Baron Mezrack, he did decide to take matters into his own hands. He convinces his son "to

remove her [Esther] again, for a short time, from England”, while resolving to “bring Marmion's affairs into a crisis”. To do so, old Mezrack “easily drew into his own hands the power to crush that ill-guided young man” (Grimstone 1833b, II:71–72).

While all of this is happening in London, back at Vex'em Park Sir Ralph discovers that Lady Beaucaire has been betraying him with Malfort. He confronts the lovers, expelling them from his house. Immediately before this altercation, Sir Ralph had been met by old Mezrack, who had informed him of Marmion's intention to marry Esther. “In a state of mind that bordered madness”, Sir Ralph summoned Marmion and, accusing him in the most incensed tones, disowned him: “Go, sir, renounce the senate for the synagogue; go, and get the usurer's money bags, and pay your debts: cleave to his kindred, for you will be abjured by your own. I cast you off—I disown—I disinherit you!” (Grimstone 1833b, II:108–9, 117).

Marmion escapes to the woods. Soon the news reaches him that Sir Ralph has been found dead, probably murdered, which comes as a shock because he had left his father enraged but alive. Malfort manages to convince everybody that Sir Ralph killed himself, and with no one the wiser about his love affair with Lady Beaucaire, he becomes the “sole executor of Mr. Coverley's will, and sole guardian of Marmion” (Grimstone 1833b, II:139). Marmion confesses his love to Magdalene and plans to go into exile, taking her with him, abandoning Esther in the process. To fulfil his plans, Marmion asks Malfort to sell Vex'em Park and to procure him as much money as possible. Malfort agrees, selling the estate to no other than old Mezrack, but instead of sending the money to Marmion, who had gone to London to accompany his mother to her brother's house, Malfort “absconded, carrying off the whole of the money that he had realized” (Grimstone 1833b, II:162).

Due to his many debts, Marmion is arrested and sent to King's Bench prison. Without the money from his inheritance or the selling of Vex'em Park, Marmion “was now completely a beggar, and hopelessly a prisoner; cut off from the power of retrieving his fortune— of escaping his doom” (Grimstone 1833b, II:163). In jail Marmion meets a poor, sick man named Smith, who confesses to him that Malfort had always been a deceiver and had been such for many years, aided on numerous occasions by Smith himself and by Exmore, Lady Beaucaire's brother.

Marmion takes pity on Smith and decides to take care of him. For this reason, when Mrs Trevor and Hagar come to visit him in jail, they find Smith lying in agony in Marmion's bed, with his head turned and covered. Hagar decides to stay and help Marmion take care of the ill man. That same day old Mezrack goes to visit Marmion, and when he enters his room, he finds Hagar, in whom he recognises his long-lost daughter Ruth Mezrack. Hagar, who from

this point onwards is and will be referred to as Ruth, tells her father of her sufferings, revealing to old Mezrack how “the Gentile, to whom you trusted me ... tore from me the fruit of our guilty love, and left me to the scorn of the stranger”, and how “if a Christian ruined, a Christian also saved me—never was there a woman of our nation fairer, gentler, holier, than she with whom I sought refuge and found it” (Grimstone 1833b, II:191). When Ruth has finished her tragic story, Smith wakes up and faces them, claiming that he was that cruel Gentile who had betrayed their trust. He also confesses that he had sold their child “to the childless Lady Beaucaire” (Grimstone 1833b, II:195), thus making the disgraced Marmion Ruth’s son, old Mezrack’s grandson, and Esther's cousin.

At first, Marmion does not want to face the facts, but the power of money, which sets him free, makes him accept Ruth as his mother, at least in appearance, and he returns with her to Vex’em Park. During this time, Magdalene has had the chance to reflect on Marmion's declaration of love, and has decided not to accept his proposal because they are not compatible, and she will not ruin her life, unlike her mother before her. Esther has now come back to England with her father: her betrothal has been annulled and she has hopes of marrying Marmion. Esther and Magdalene meet, and the latter realises that Marmion had made a fool of her by promising her his love while he had already done much the same with Esther. This reassures her in her decision to not accept Marmion's proposal and instead, with more than a little encouragement from Mrs Trevor, starts to see Arthur as a possible and desirable prospect. Magdalene leaves for London with the Trevors, letting Marmion know “from her lips the sentiments of her pure heart and lofty mind” (Grimstone 1833b, II:227–28). Marmion feels betrayed, but when recovered from his surprise, “urged by resentment against Magdalene, rather than won by the deep love of Esther, he devoted himself with apparent ardour to the latter” (Grimstone 1833b, II:229).

However, on a trip to London Marmion sees Magdalene and Arthur together and is blinded by jealousy. In his rage, he writes a letter to Arthur challenging him to a duel for Magdalene's love, while at the same time sending a few hasty lines to Esther excusing himself from attending a breakfast party the next morning. However, the letters get mixed up, and, instead of Arthur, Marmion is met by an equally enraged Esther, who kills him and then takes her own life. Meanwhile, not knowing anything about the tragic event, Magdalene and Arthur get married.

When Ruth Mezrack is informed of her son’s end at the hands of her niece, instead of shutting “her heart up in the desolation of a selfish grief; she opened it unto all”, opening schools where all children, Jewish or Gentile, could study, develop their reason, and cultivate

their character (Grimstone 1833b, II:254–55). Ruth’s decision concludes the story. Still, Grimstone, in her didactic tone, decides to end the novel itself with the following admonition to her readers, “there are none so evil as to be utterly incapable of good, and none so prosperous in wickedness as to escape punishment” (1833b, II:256).

With these overviews I have tried to summarise as much as possible the plots of Grimstone’s novels, leaving out several characters and sub-plots in the process. In the next section I will explain how for Grimstone literature was not just a form of entertainment, but mainly a tool to achieve the improvement of society.

2.2. *The novel and the article as instruments of social reform*

For Grimstone, literature was not just a form of entertainment: its most important function was to educate society, in order to improve it. She shared this view with the Radical Unitarians, who believed “that literature should not be purely decorative but might perform a social and political function” (Gleadle 1995, 55). In this endeavour, novels could and should play a significant role. Even if Grimstone recognised that romances and (some) novels of her time did little more than inflame and enlarge sensations and feelings, she also asserted that they could raise the intellect above common vulgarity. The description of Mrs Brown in *Louisa Egerton* gives us an example of this approach:

To dress, walk, attend subscription balls, and *read novels and romances*, formed all the occupation of her life. This latter pursuit confirmed all the principles of affectation she had imbibed at school; her feelings became exquisite... and her ideas lofty and sentimental. *Her intellect, naturally acute, nevertheless experienced some cultivation from even this course of reading, which raised her above gross vulgarity* (Grimstone 1830, 39) (italics are mine)

With this description, Grimstone echoes what Wollstonecraft had already argued in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In her most relevant work, Wollstonecraft affirmed that “Novels, music, poetry and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed in the mould of folly...” (1792, 61). However, she also clarified that the little cultivation that novels could afford their readers, who were mainly women, was better than none:

when I exclaim against novels, I mean when contrasted with those works which exercise the understanding and regulate the imagination. For any kind of reading I think better than leaving a blank still a blank, because the mind must receive a degree of enlargement and obtain a little

strength by a slight exertion of its thinking powers; besides, even the productions that are only addressed to the imagination, raise the reader a little above the gross gratification of appetites, to which the mind has not given a shade of delicacy (Wollstonecraft 1988 [1792], 184)

Yet, if up until that point literature in general, and novels in particular, had served only to artificially heighten women's excessive sensibility by "disseminating distortions of truth concerning the real nature of women", they could also be used "for achieving female emancipation" by alerting "their audience to the character of woman under the present social system" (Gleadle 1995, 55). Grimstone seemed to have wholeheartedly shared this vision about the function that literature and a new kind of novel could play in both denouncing the degradation of women and promoting a new kind of society. In *Woman's Love*, her heroine, Ida Dorrington, defended both the novel as a new literary form, and its function as going beyond mere amusement. In the first volume, Ida and Charles Beresford discuss the evils or benefits of romances and novels. While for Beresford the novel was just a "flimsy dull" construction "full of fashion, etiquette and politics" (Grimstone 1832a, I:268), Ida contended that:

The novel may, I think, be regarded as an improvement on the romance; embracing (when well written) all that charms the imagination in the regions of fancy, as well as much that instructs the heart from the realities of life. It is a species of writing more true to nature, not only in rejecting supernatural agency, and all the list of horrors of which romances are made up, but in the verisimilitude of character... (Grimstone 1832a, I:269)

This ability of the novel to overcome the defects of romance and represent life in a verisimilar way— which Grimstone not only highlights in the passage above, but also tries to achieve in her writings— is what literary scholars have identified as the determining factor of this genre: "in most socio-historical studies of the novel, the genre's success is tied to its 'realism' — the formal qualities that allow it to reflect its own milieu accurately back to hungry readers" (Heydt-Stevenson and Sussman 2011, 22). Grimstone, together with other women writers of her time, did not confine herself to describing reality: she also wanted to change it, which is where the moralistic and even didactic function of her literature plays an important role. As Anne K. Mellor has pointed out, women writers and critics of the Romantic era "recognized that literature—the reading of good books— was essential to the rational education of young girls", and, as such, they "endorsed a literature that was necessarily didactic, that demonstrated the rewards of virtue, thrift, and self-control, while punishing the vices of wilful

impulse, irrationality, lack of foresight, excessive sensibility, and uncontrolled sexual desire” (2000, 88–89).

Grimstone is both part and heiress of this female literary tradition. As such, she used her novels and articles to stress the importance of education— in particular, of an adequate education for women— as well as the role that literature played in it. An example of this approach is the discussion between Ida and Lady Claudia about *The Foresters* in the second volume of *Woman’s Love*. While Lady Claudia criticised the author’s style, calling it full of mannerism and with “too little variety or versatility” (Grimstone 1832b, II:158), Ida recalled that John Wilson aimed not only to entertain but primarily to educate, “the writer we are canvassing has a higher aim than to impart mere amusement” (Grimstone 1832b, II:160). Grimstone would reiterate this idea of literature as moralising and educative in later writings, i.e., in the preface to *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* where she declared, “As I believe morals and amusement to be intimately blended, in the endeavour to advance the one, I adopt the medium of the other” (Grimstone 1833a, I:iv).

As Serena Baiesi has pointed out, this way of addressing their readers directly in the preface was a strategy used by women writers of the Romantic period “that allowed them to create emotional bonds between fictional characters and readers—but also to discuss questions of aesthetic and genre variation” (2019, 75). Grimstone, in debt to the Romantic tradition, employed this move to generate sympathy among her readers, whom she referred to as friends, explaining the reasoning behind her work. In her most celebrated novel, *Woman’s Love*, which was described by *The Spectator*³⁰ as “a work full of varied excellence, passages of which will always remain in our memory”, Grimstone also made use of the postscript to explain and justify her interest in the improvement of women’s conditions. However, she did feel the need to clarify, “I desire not the felicity of woman only, but the felicity of man also; they are in fact the same; in advancing the one you promote the other” (Grimstone 1832c, III:363). In it, she also recognised the importance of female writers, to whom she ascribed great moral power and the ability to pass judgement over the injustices of the world:

In equity, though not in law, she might now claim to play the judge, and call the lords of the creation to receive the measure they have meted to her; for though she may not hold the baton, but rarely grasps the sceptre, and may never be adjudged the mace, the pen, the most potent of any of the instruments of power, is in her hand ... and if, as is sufficiently evident,

³⁰ A copy of *The Spectator*’s review of *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, where *Woman’s Love* is praised and mentioned, can be found in Grimstone’s scrapbook.

physical force and political power must bow to moral greatness, it may be her turn to gain and to abuse ascendancy (Grimstone 1832c, III:370–71)

I argue that this postscript takes the form of an early feminist treaty. In it, Grimstone explains why she is so invested in the women's cause and why overcoming the debasement of women is in the best interest of everyone. She rejects the arguments about women's natural lack of logical reasoning, arguing instead, "The disproportion of cultivation, encouragement, and that ailment of intellectual energy—freedom, is perhaps fully sufficient to account for the ostensible disproportion of mind in the sexes" (Grimstone 1832c, III:359). Having rebutted that idea, Grimstone vindicates the importance of an adequate education for women, not only for their sakes but for the advancement and happiness of society at large. As her argument goes, if women, in their role as mothers, are responsible for the first impressions children receive, and these, in turn, will have an everlasting and profound effect on their character as adults, then women are "the true cultivator[s] of the moral soil" of society, which is why "the happiness of the world depends on female excellence" (Grimstone 1832c, III:368, 358). All of these ideas are present in her novels, which function as an educational and didactic tool to deliver her message of gender equality.

An exploration of the contemporary reviews of Grimstone's work might help us understand how she was perceived by her peers. As Baiesi has indicated, the magazines and journals of the time served as filters of the period's culture by mediating—with their opinions, praise, or criticism—between writers and readers (2002, 202). The reviews of Grimstone's novels tended to recognise and highlight the moral elements of her writings. According to her scrapbook³¹, *The Spectator* and *The Examiner* published reviews of *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* in July 1833. In the former, the novel is described as "a publication full of admirable morality" and Grimstone as "a philosopher" (Grimstone 1832-?, citing *The Spectator's* review), while the latter stated:

The authoress of *Character* is a moralist, who has chosen the form of a tale for the sake of the opportunities it presents for miscellaneous discussion...

...

³¹ Her scrapbook reports several contemporary reviews of her work. It has been possible to retrieve some of them. The ones that, due to practical restrictions, could not be confirmed as coming from the sources cited by Grimstone, are reported in this dissertation as coming from her scrapbook. This is the case of the reviews by *The Spectator* and *The Examiner*.

The tone of Mrs. Grimstone's opinion is that of a bold and original thinker, and shows that she is herself an example of the cause she would espouse, viz. the intellectual independence of the female sex...

...

On the whole, this book is to be strongly recommended to all lovers of truth and reason, and if it is commenced with just expectations it will be read through with pleasure and profit, perhaps more than once. (Grimstone 1832-?, citing *The Examiner's* review).

Tait's Edinburgh Magazine reviewed both *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* and *Cleone. A Tale of Married Life*, mainly praising Grimstone's moral character and giving her the title of "champion of her sex". The review of *Character...* stated:

The authoress of this tale is the champion of her sex, the eloquent and fearless advocate of the RIGHTS OF WOMAN ... She is consequently a radical reformer of the modern system of female education; a leveller of unjust masculine domination; and a denouncer of all the cant and conventionality which obstructs woman's advancement, and woman's moral and intellectual equality and independence of character. Taken altogether this is no common tale: It is calculated to make a sensation far beyond the novel-reading circles (1833, 664). (Uppercase in original)

And that of *Cleone* remarked:

In the composition of all her novels Mrs. Grimstone consults rather the permanent good of society than immediate approbation. She seeks to advance the cause of humanity, at all hazards of popularity with readers, and is the most notable champion of her own sex that graces the present era (1834, 207).

The review of *Cleone* published by *The Monthly Repository* also highlighted Grimstone's role as a moralist and social reformer:

We cannot treat Mrs. Grimstone merely as a novelist (...) we turn at once to her higher character of a moralist, and recommend her volumes to the attention of all who are interested in that social reform and progress, to which the amendment of political institutions is comparatively trifling, or of which it is symptomatic (1834, 300).

Thus, one may affirm that Grimstone's novels followed the steps of the Moral Tale epitomised by Maria Edgeworth's works, a writer that Grimstone seemed to have admired and

whom she cited in her own novels³². According to Corinna Russell, the Moral Tale, while sharing with other subgenres of the Romantic novel “an ideal of fiction as in the service of a more rationally oriented society, in which unjust and arbitrary social restraints are replaced by the voluntary and virtuous self-restraint of the individual”, also “sets out to present a new form of fiction committed to the reform of the glamorous Mysteries of aristocratic vice” (2005, 376). Also known as the novel of manners, this subgenre of the Romantic novel, which includes works by Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen –with whom Grimstone was compared by her contemporaries– relies on a didactic structure to interrogate political and cultural matters of the period, reflecting on “issues of conduct, education, virtue, self-knowledge, love, marriage and money”, which, as in the case of Austen's novels, included the questioning of “gender roles and women’s options in a patriarchal society” (Baiesi 2019, 83).

For Grimstone, novels served to reform and advance society, for which the adequate education of women and the reformation of the institution of marriage, as well as the abolition of other laws that kept women in an oppressed and subordinate condition, was paramount. For this reason, the characters and plots of her work deal with contemporary stereotypes of men and women, not only as individuals but primarily as members of complex domestic and social networks. She also concerned herself with other social problems of her time, condemning the exploitation of factory workers or the excesses of England’s penal system.

Grimstone saw society as capable of improvement but described her own time as one of semi-barbarism³³, due primarily to the oppression that women suffered. Early feminists shared this position and “argued that although civilisation had progressed, the relationships between men and women had not advanced at the same pace ... Therefore, unlike the Enlightenment writers, they did not believe that society had yet reached the peak of civilisation” (Gleadle 1995, 68). This way of measuring society's improvement through its treatment and valorisation of women can be seen in *The Monthly Repository*'s review of Grimstone’s novel *Cleone*, where it is highlighted how women did not yet occupy their rightful place in society as rational and moral beings equal to men, because prejudices coming from old barbaric and feudal ideas had prevented the due progress of civilisation:

The elevation of woman is the great object of Mrs. Grimstone's desire ... an elevation into her legitimate position, as an intellectual and moral being, the friend of man, the instructor of childhood, the object of the strongest emotions, the source of the brightest happiness, the

³² i.e., in the second volume of *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* Grimstone cited part of Edgeworth’s novel *Ormond*.

³³ In the preface to the second volume of *Cleone* Grimstone described her society in the following terms, “its existing state attest the semi-barbarism of the present period” (1834, II:iv–v).

living and lovely impulse to all that is wisest, noblest, and most blessed upon earth. *This position woman has not yet occupied.* Civilization and Christianity have done much for her; but they have not yet done all for her, any more than they have for man. Their influences are only in progress; and that *progress is often obstructed by prejudices which would have perpetuated barbarism, heathenism, and feudalism* (1834, 300) (italics are mine).

It was after this review that Grimstone started contributing political and social essays to journals like *The Monthly Repository*, *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, and *The New Moral World*. Although in 1833, after the reviews of *Character; or, Jew or Gentile*, Grimstone had already published some of her poems in *The Monthly Repository*, it was only from 1834 onwards that her contributions became regular, and primarily in prose. Her contributions were mainly of two kinds: social essays where she condemned women's position in society as eternal dependants, and short stories like her series "Sketches of Domestic Life", which she used to portray negative stereotypes of both men and women.

The start of Grimstone's serious and continued collaboration with the radical journals, particularly *The Monthly Repository*, also marked the end of her pursuits as a novelist, which culminated with the publication of *Cleone. A Tale of Married Life* in 1834. The mixed reviews of her work as a novelist might shed light on why she decided to focus her efforts on other genres. Although the journals of the time highlighted the moral content of her work (as shown above), they also criticised what they saw as an excessively didactic nature and lack of impartiality. For example, *The Spectator's* review of *Character: or, Jew And Gentile*, which had praised Grimstone as a philosopher, also warned her that "a philosophical lady is not a very popular character, and it is very possible that the work may share the consequences of this prejudice". About the charges of women's oppression at the hands of the men in the story, the review stated that "some truth there is here, but not the whole truth ... Mrs. LEMAN GRIMSTONE is a partisan, and as such is to taken up with her own side" (Grimstone 1832-?, citing *The Spectator's* review) (uppercase in original). The beautiful review of the same novel by *The Examiner*, which ended with a recommendation of the book "to all lovers of truth and reason", started with the following criticism:

The tale is the least part of its self: the writer overflows with opinion and argument, and pretty nearly swamps her text in commentary. There is original and really able thought in these two volumes to have amply furnished forth half a dozen modern novels; but it is much to be doubted whether this condensation of essential matter will not be found rather a drawback

that a recommendation ... Mrs. Grimstone must learn to dilute or to increase the bulk of her inventions (Grimstone 1832-?, citing *The Examiner's* review).

Grimstone was acutely aware of her critics. In the preface to the second volume of *Cleone*, she affirmed, "I have offended, and, if I live, I shall yet further offend ancient prejudice, by advancing (with what power I may) everlasting truths. I fearlessly trust my cause to posterity" (1834, II:iv). Yet, she also seemed to have been able to articulate some sort of self-criticism. In "The Sentimental", one of the short stories in her series "Sketches of Domestic Life", two women friends discuss the exaggerated sentimentality of a female neighbour and all the wrongs that it has caused to her and her family. When one of them diverges from the topic at hand by discussing the general position of women in society, the other stops her by affirming, "'Never, Maria, do you and I get on with a story,' said Pauline. 'You are too fond of the moral, I of the graphic; thus the mere incident is smothered or lost sight of, between us...'" (M. L. G. 1835f, 450). This accusation mirrors the assessment made by *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* about Grimstone's lack of clarity and concreteness, "we must acknowledge that we sometimes can only guess at what she [Grimstone] would precisely be at" (1834, 207).

As Baiesi mentions in her analysis of English literary magazines and their criticism of female writing, negative criticism could influence not only the reading public but also the production of the woman writer (2002, 210). Thus, it is possible to speculate that the mixed reviews of Grimstone's work as a novelist influenced, at least to some degree, her decision to experiment with other literary genres to convey her message, i.e., the necessary elevation of women from their oppressed and subordinate position in society through an adequate system of education and instruction, as well as a social reform of the institution of marriage.

According to Gleadle, Grimstone's "most significant contribution to feminist literature" during her collaboration with *The Monthly Repository* was her series of short stories "Sketches of Domestic Life", published between 1835 and 1836 (1995, 57). In them, through a series of stories of everyday life and the portrayal of stereotypical female and male characters, Grimstone denounced the degraded status of women due to their inadequate education, "drawing the relationship between women's negative character-traits and the cultural conditioning which had produced them" (Gleadle 1995, 57-58). This depiction started with the stories' titles. Grimstone named each short story after a particular negative female stereotype of the time: the fashionable, the coquette, the insipid, and so on.

"The Fashionable", for example, tells the story of a woman worried more about appearances and the fashion of the day, than about giving her daughters a proper education. In

“The Coquette”, the protagonist, Isabella Hervey, uses her time to conquer the attention of the men around her just for the fun of it, basking in their compliments and praise, but without any intention of a serious relationship. “The Insipid” is probably the most direct title. In it, Grimstone tells the story of Harriet Ward, described precisely as an insipid, that is, a woman who never offers an opinion of her own nor contradicts anyone in public, giving the impression of always being sensible and sweet. However, her pleasing façade, so perfectly constructed, creates a significant amount of trouble because she is not able nor willing to present her real self.

Both in her novels and her articles, whether they were essays or short stories, Grimstone entered into intertextual dialogues with other writers and female figures of her time. In *Louisa Egerton*, Grimstone cites Lucy Aikin’s poem *Epistles on Women* (1810) to support her own theorisation that “the qualities of men and women, be they good or bad, 'may differ in the mould, but they agree in the metal’”³⁴ (Grimstone 1830, 528). However, she does not reference Aikin by name, but with the formulation “one of the ornaments of her sex” (528). In *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, in a discussion between Mr. Coverley, his nephew Ralph Beaucaire, and Mr. Arthur Trevor about the merits and defects of women, the latter takes up the defence and affirms that Sarah Siddons and Johanna Baillie “are giving evidence of power of which the best brains of our beloved Oxford might be proud” (Grimstone 1833a, I:58). In the same novel, when Grimstone describes the commendable way in which one of her characters had raised her children, she cites the works of “the admirable Miss Edgeworth” to explain the kind of domestic politeness that Mrs Trevor was aiming at with her education of her children (Grimstone 1833b, II:43). Grimstone also entered into this kind of intertextual discussion in her “Sketches of Domestic Life”. In “The Imbecile”, the first story of the series, when Grimstone describes and criticises the weakness and lack of moral energy of her protagonist, she does so by explicitly citing the words of Madame de Staël, “I think with Madame de Stael, that ‘it is only in childhood that levity has a charm (...) but when time abandons man to himself, it is only in the

³⁴ Grimstone first presented this idea in her novel *The Beauty of the British Alps; or, Love at first sight*, with the following formulation: “Love and hatred, mercy and malignity, pity and revenge are alike in all, though mental power or physical beauty may vary the shades of expression; they may differ in the mould but agree in the metal” (Grimstone 1825, 184). She then included it in *Louisa Egerton*, as well as in the postscript to *Woman’s Love*, this time in the following terms: “if the male and female mind ‘differ in the mould, they agree in the metal’” (Grimstone 1832c, III:358). The last text in which Grimstone presented this idea with this formulation was in her article “National Education”, where she declared: “The form of education must be that which is best calculated to develop (sic) and exercise all the powers of human nature—a nature, how various soever in the detail, alike upon the whole; agreeing in the metal, differing only in the mould.” (Gillies 1847d, 227). In *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* Grimstone included a reflexion on the qualities of men and women that refers to fact that they are both made of the same metal, but the phrasing differs from the previous novels: “There is as noble metal in the breast of woman as in man, were it brought to the same proof” (Grimstone 1833a, I:57–58).

seriousness of his soul that he can find reflection, sentiment, and virtue.” (M. L. G. 1835c, 149).

Grimstone not only referenced other authors to reinforce her positions. She also used her talent to controvert old prejudices about the nature of the relationship between men and women. In “The Insipid”, Grimstone mocks the anti-feminist treaty “Woman as she is, and as she should be”, published anonymously in 1835, by using it to describe the character of her male protagonist, Mr Manning. Mr Manning thought so highly of his sex and so lowly of women that when choosing a wife, instead of aiming to find a sympathetic companion, he selected an insipid, a woman who never gave an opinion of her own and whom he saw only as “submission personified” (M. L. G. 1835h, 651). Manning's foolishness gets punished with a wife that “never contradicted her husband in word [but] never did otherwise in deed ... she never directly refused anything, but as little did she ever decidedly or promptly grant anything; indecision was both a principle of her mind and a habit of her conduct” (M. L. G. 1835h, 652). And so, by following the advice of the infamous treaty, Mr Manning effectively ruined his life.

Grimstone also discussed known and loved poems, like Milton's *Paradise Lost* and its verse “He for God only, she for God in him”. In “Female education”, one of her first essays published by *The Monthly Repository*, Grimstone called for women's independence, stating, “let her not cling from a principle of mercenary dependence ... nor from a faith in the presumptuous axiom that woman was made for man ... let her look to nothing but God and herself” (M. L. G. 1835a, 110). With this last phrase, she is demanding women's access to God and knowledge by themselves, without the gross medium of men, and thus obliquely responding to Milton's verse. Yet, Grimstone did not just reference this well-known ‘axiom’ indirectly. In “The Coquette” she answered to it directly, using a discussion between Mr Hervey and Mrs Walton about the debasement of women. The conversation starts with a reflection on the consequences of deficient education on people's character. When Mr Hervey directs his judgement only to ill-educated men, Mrs Walton, who is described as “a high-minded woman”, tells him that he should direct his views “to human nature, of which one sex is as important a part as the other”. She continues her discourse by explaining how man, in his quest for elevation and “finding it difficult to raise himself”, instead of aspiring to elevate the whole of humanity, “thought of the expedient of sinking woman” (M. L. G. 1835g, 560). It is at this point that Mr Hervey affirms “I suppose ... in future editions of Milton we must strike out this line of the book, in which he speaks of the conditions of the sexes // “*He* for God only, *she* for God in him”. Mrs Walton wisely answers as follows:

‘No, no;’ said Mrs. Walton, ‘touch not a line of John Milton’s. I love him as a poet and a republican; but be there notes appended to the text, to enlighten the purblind as to the defects of his moral philosophy. Let every being go for himself, or herself, as much as possible to the fountain-head of knowledge —seek, and accept no mediums, if they can help it; the further from the fount the less likely is the stream to be pure; and, I assure you,’ she added with a playfulness that reminded Mr. Hervey of her youth, ‘I assure you, whatever you and Milton may think and say, I do not deem you the most transparent and speckless medium through which we may look “through nature up to nature's God.” (M. L. G. 1835g, 561).

With this gentle confutation, Grimstone is at once conserving the integrity of a seminal poet and poem of the English tradition, while at the same time asserting women’s intrinsic equality with men and their right to knowledge and education on the simple basis of their humanity. This reasoning is part of a greater argument about reason being a way to God, an idea hailed by Rational Dissenters and Unitarians.

As explained in the previous section, Unitarians believed that open knowledge and inquiry were the true way to God and that everyone, including women, had been gifted by God with the ability to arrive at rational conclusions. This ability had to be carefully cultivated through adequate education and instruction, which is why Rational Dissenters, later known as Unitarians, created their own academies, some of which were open to women³⁵. Hence, it is no surprise that contemporary women advocates for women’s rights belonged to, or were closely related to, the Rational Dissenters and Unitarian communities. Mary Hays, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Lucy Aikin, and Harriet Martineau, to name but a few, were all related to or part of Unitarian circles. Even Mary Wollstonecraft was connected with the Rational Dissenters, and their religious beliefs influenced her feminism³⁶. Grimstone stands as an heiress to this tradition in her cause to vindicate women’s rights, citing on more than one occasion the women that came before her.

The following chapter will focus on the macro-arguments running through Grimstone’s work, mainly the importance of proper education for women and problems with the contemporary marriage system. For Grimstone, the arguments of education and marriage went

³⁵ For example, Anna Laetitia Barbauld was educated at the Warrington Academy, a leading Dissenting school.

³⁶ For an analysis of the influence that Radical Dissenters had in Wollstonecraft’s feminism, among others, see Taylor, Barbara. 2002. “The religious foundations of Mary's Wollstonecraft feminism.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, edited by Claudia L. Johnson, 99-118. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Taylor, Barbara. 2003. *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Michaelson, Patricia Howell. 1993. “Religious bases of Eighteenth-Century Feminism: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Quakers.” *Women's Studies* 22 (3): 281-295; Jacobs-Beck, Kim. 2012. “Dissenting Homiletics in Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman.” *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 29 (2): 62-79.

hand in hand. According to her reasoning, ill-educated men and women accounted for the many problems that could be found in married couples. Even though these two subjects are closely intertwined in her work, this dissertation aims to present them in a structured manner. However, references to marriage will be made in the course of the analysis of Grimstone's arguments about education, and vice versa, as calls for the proper education of women will be present in the study of Grimstone's criticisms of the institution of marriage.

Chapter 3. Women's Education, the Marriage Market, and Other Social Injustices

Grimstone's advocacy for women's rights focused on two main topics: women's education, and a staunch critique of marriage as it was conceived in her time. Her work also dealt with other social issues, like freedom of religion and the campaigns for religious emancipation, as well as England's colonising efforts. I will devote the present chapter mainly to Grimstone's arguments in favour of women's rights. Firstly, I will focus on her arguments in favour of an appropriate education for women. Secondly, I will present her critiques of the institution of marriage, showing how she was aware of the laws that regulated it. Finally, I will use the remaining two sections to briefly explain Grimstone's position with regard to religious tolerance and England's colonial expansion.

3.1. "*Bad education, private and public, domestic and social, makes villains*": *Proper Education for Women, Proper Education for All*

The main idea defended by Grimstone was that of the urgent need for proper education for women. She believed that character was formed by the conjunction of the different experiences and sensations a person received in their life, giving particular importance to those of early childhood. Her novel *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, intended precisely as a discussion on the formation of character, starts and ends with discussions and disquisitions on the matter. At the beginning, when Mr Coverley and Dr Clare are discussing the future of Ralph's newborn son, the latter affirms:

We are the creatures of education, receiving the word in its most extended sense. Everything we see, hear, and feel, is education—tends to form the mind to some prevailing bias. We can be no other than we are thus made, whatever else we may desire to be. (Grimstone 1833a, I:18)

Following this direction, in "Men and Women", an essay Grimstone published in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, she also declared, "Two great influences are in perpetual action upon us, -general government, domestic, scholastic, and national; and personal association, arising from proximity, sympathy, or necessity of some kind or other. Thus the growth of character is anything but voluntary" (M. L. G. 1834b, 101). It is clear then that for Grimstone education was just not a matter of formal instruction, but a compound of all the impressions, messages, and sensations a person received. As such, when she demanded an adequate education for

women, Grimstone was calling for a paradigm shift not only in their access to formal schooling but also, and primarily, in the way they were addressed and ‘moulded’ from early childhood onwards.

With this in mind, she determinedly advocated for women’s equality. For Grimstone, if “character, whether innate or acquired, or a mixture of both, can only be moulded or made by education” (Grimstone 1833b, II:255), then the so-called “inherently distinctive differences existing between men and women”, were actually few and “neither mental nor moral ones” (M. L. G. 1834b, 101). Instead, she argued that the alleged distinctions between men and women, which assign reason to the former and feelings to the latter, were to be ascribed to customs and social prejudices, not to any divine design:

But it is the craft of blind guides, not the creative hand of a benign deity, that has made these distinctions. Fortunately for man, the female mind, like his own, is capable of the highest elevation; fortunately for woman, the heart of man, like her own, is susceptible of the tenderest feelings. The sexes have only to join hand in hand, each seeking to remedy in the other the deficiencies that exist in both, only in consequence of false views and erroneous practice. I disclaim for my sex the presumed superiority of the heart, as I deny the imputed inferiority of the head. (M. L. G. 1834b, 102)

This line of reasoning was also upheld by Unitarians, radicals or not. British Unitarians saw education as the most important instrument for moral and social change. They believed that the adequate use of reason, applied to knowledge of the universe and its laws, was the only true way to God and salvation, and they applied this idea to the whole of human creation: that is, to both men and women. In their vision of the world, “woman was to be well-educated for her own salvation” as well as for the salvation of her children (Watts 1989, 37).

This was not a new idea. At the end of the seventeenth century Mary Astell³⁷ had already asked for an adequate education for women, based on the idea that reason was a gift from God and that every human being had the duty to develop it:

³⁷ For further study of Mary Astell’s ideas and her particular kind of feminism, see, among others, Perry, Ruth. 1986. *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Kolbrener, William, and Michal Michelson, eds. 2007. *Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith*. Aldershot: Ashgate. Apetrei, Sarah. 2010. *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Detlefsen, Karen. 2017. ‘Cartesianism and Its Feminist Promise and Limits: The Case of Mary Astell’. In *Descartes and Cartesianism: Essays in Honour of Desmond Clarke*, edited by Stephen Gaukroger and Catherine Wilson, 192–206. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Golinelli, Gilberta. 2018. *Gender Models, Alternative Communities and Women’s Utopianism: Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn and Mary Astell*. Bologna: Bononia University Press.

For since GOD has given Women as well as Men intelligent Souls, why should they be forbidden to improve them? Since he has not denied us the faculty of Thinking, why shou'd we not (at least in gratitude to him) employ our Thoughts on himself their noblest Object... Being the Soul was created for the contemplation of Truth as well as for the fruition of Good, is it not as cruel and unjust to preclude Women from the knowledge of the one, as well as from the enjoyment of the other? (Astell 2000 [1694-1697], 80)

Astell's theorisations were highly influenced by the Cambridge Platonists and their idea of *Recta Ratio*, which postulated that reason was a God-given attribute, "a spark of divine radiance which made it possible 'to attain an almost mystical awareness of God at the point where the rational and the spiritual merge'" (Apetrei 2010, 99). Although by Grimstone's time Astell's writings had been forgotten, the ideas of the Cambridge Platonists had survived, "particularly in the Rational Dissenting academies where their works were closely studied", having a strong presence in the works of Unitarians such as Richard Price, David Hartley, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld (Taylor 2003, 110).

Through the influence of the Rational Dissenters and Unitarians, these ideas are also present in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft. The central argument of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is that women are first and foremost rational creatures, and that reason is a God-given attribute that should be developed by the same means and to the same ends in men and women alike:

The nature of reason must be the same in all, if it be an emanation of divinity, the tie that connects the creature with the Creator; for, can that soul be stamped with the heavenly image, that is not perfected by the exercise of its own reason? (Wollstonecraft 1988 [1792], 53).

Kim Jacobs-Becks, who has studied the influence Richard Price had on Wollstonecraft's work, finds a neat alignment between Wollstonecraft's argument and Price's sermon "The Nature and Dignity of the Human Soul", in which he stated "It is knowledge that raises one being above another. It is what gives us our distinction as reasonable creatures... It [knowledge] is the light and guide of our minds, and the foundation of our whole dignity" (Price cited by Jacobs-Beck 2012, 70). This religious aspect of Wollstonecraft's postulations has also been highlighted by other scholars like Barbara Taylor, who has found that *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* "contains at least fifty discussions of religious themes, ranging from brief statements on one or other doctrinal point to extended analyses of women's place within a divinely-ordered moral universe" (2002, 99). Prior to this Ruth Watts, in her analysis of the relationship between Unitarian philosophy and female education, had already formulated that the basic

premiss of Wollstonecraft's work "was that God had created all human beings as rational creatures who therefore had a basic right, irrespective of sex, to develop that rationality through a liberal education" (1989, 38).

Consequently, it is of no surprise that Grimstone's feminism was also inspired by the idea of reason as a God-given attribute that everyone, men and women, could exercise appropriately if given the right instruments, i.e., the education to do it. This is a principle that Grimstone would re-state in most of her writings. In "Self-Dependence", one of her lesser cited articles, she referred to it as humanity's instinct to aim at perfectibility, "Among the principles of creation I perceive that the thing originated is not perfect, but instinct with the principle of perfectibility. This principle, decidedly perceptible in the human being, is latent in all, and through human agency developed in all" (M. L. G. 1835b, 597). In "The Coquette" she affirmed that "to aspire is the privilege of humanity", explaining how and why this capacity of reason had unfortunately developed differently in men and women:

The erect attitude, the perceptive powers, the reflective faculties, all attest how much man has the privilege of looking far beyond, far above himself; but the first aspiration of this sentiment (capable of illimitable expansion) was ignorant self-esteem — a vulgar desire of superiority, relatively, not really; finding it difficult to raise himself, he thought of the expedient of sinking woman, and so holding a comparative elevation at a safe and easy rate. Pitiful was the idea, and wretched have been the consequences (M. L. G. 1835g, 560)

Grimstone concluded her argument vindicating every person's right to seek and acquire knowledge for themselves, "Let every being go for himself, or herself, as much as possible to the fountain-head of knowledge — seek, and accept no mediums, if they can help it; the further from the fount the less likely is the stream to be pure" (M. L. G. 1835g, 561). Her call was aimed particularly at those who claimed that women were not capable of rational thinking and that every notion, including the love of God, had to pass through a male medium before getting into a woman's weaker mind. Grimstone had already asserted these notions in her political articles. In "Female education" she stated, "let her not cling from a principle of mercenary dependence ... let her look to nothing but God and herself" (M. L. G. 1835a, 110).

I posit that with these discourses, Grimstone anticipated, albeit in a less articulated way, Simone De Beauvoir's theory of subjects' intrinsic need of transcendence and women's eternal condemnation to immanence. In her pivotal work, *The Second Sex* (1949), De Beauvoir postulated that every individual has an "ethical urge ... to affirm his subjective existence", that is, to transcend (1956 [1949], 20). Women, however, are not constructed as subjects but as the

Other, because culturally “humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being ... He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other” (De Beauvoir 1956, 15–16). Therefore, women, who are not subjects but the ‘Other’, passive creatures always the object of another’s will, are condemned to immanence:

what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she -a free and autonomous being like all human creatures- nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego) - who always regards the self as the essential- and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential (De Beauvoir 1956 [1949], 27)

I argue that De Beauvoir’s ethical urge to transcend resembles Grimstone’s principle of perfectibility or privilege to aspire, both ascribed to humanity as a whole. In Grimstone’s claim that man sunk woman to attain a relative elevation, I see a precursor of De Beauvoir’s theorisations on woman constructed as the Other and condemned to immanence. Both these authors saw and explained that women— due to a lack of knowledge and resources— could find their position comfortable or convenient, thus becoming the accomplices of their own debasement. In “Female Education” Grimstone claimed, “to see what slavery will do for the slave—to this system women have not only submitted, this system they have assisted to uphold, and even now there are many think it moral and religious to uphold it” (M. L. G. 1835a, 108). This assertion echoes in the following statement from De Beauvoir:

along with the ethical urge of each individual to affirm his subjective existence, there is also the temptation to forgo liberty and become a thing ... it is an easy road; on it one avoids the strain involved in undertaking an authentic existence. When man makes of woman the Other, he may, then, expect her to manifest deep-seated tendencies towards complicity. Thus, woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the Other. (1956 [1949], 20)

This is not to say that De Beauvoir knew of or drew inspiration directly from Grimstone. Grimstone had been almost forgotten by the time De Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex*. Her

ground-breaking book cites the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, as well as those of Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters. However, other nineteenth-century English writers and activists known in their time, such as Hannah More, Harriet Martineau, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and Lucy Aikin are not referenced. These authors have only recently been rediscovered and are still being rescued from the oblivion of time, so their absence from De Beauvoir's work is expected, although unfortunate. The same is true of Mary Leman Grimstone, and it is unlikely that De Beauvoir had even heard of her, let alone her writings.

Nevertheless, the importance of these connections between Grimstone and De Beauvoir lies in how they show the travel of feminist ideas through time and space. They serve as evidence of women's ability to identify the existence of a gendered cultural, social, economic, and political structure, which we now call patriarchy, which has kept them— and still keeps them— subordinate and relegated to being second-class citizens. This system is not always explicit, nor is it always material, but it has had- and still has- substantial consequences for the lives of women everywhere, manifesting itself in different ways and generating, as a result, diverse responses and forms of resistance.

By the time Grimstone became active in her efforts to vindicate women's rights, an overt revolution of the cultural and social structure was out of the question. The effects of the French Revolution and the 'scandalous' life of Mary Wollstonecraft were still present in people's memories. Therefore, she had to present herself and her cause in a more demure and sedate manner, which is why her contemporaries described her as "a reformer, political and social, but aiming at changes less total and impracticable than some contemplated by the author of 'Caleb Williams,' more in the reform-not-revolution way ... ever manifesting far more ease, grace, and flexibility" (Fox 1833, 545–46). As Rogers has asserted, "Grimstone avoided the flamboyant self-representation of some advocates of women's rights, presenting the case for women in measured, reassuring tones" (2000, 129).

In doing so, Grimstone adopted a two-way strategy that declared women's intrinsic equality with men and their right to proper education, whilst also highlighting their mission as mothers and natural caregivers. The following sub-sections will describe and analyse these two facets of Grimstone's advocacy for women's right to an adequate education.

3.1.1. “*You have limited your voice, looks and actions, to this false standard of feminine sweetness...*”: *The Debasing of Women and the Proper Education to overcome it*

In “Acephala”, her first political article published in *The Monthly Repository*, Grimstone lamented the type of education women received, which made them, as her title indicates, “a kind of *acephala*, that is, an animal without a distinct head” (italics in original). She started her argument by asserting that women’s education was seen as secondary to that of men, calculated to guarantee men’s comfort and superiority, always measuring “how much a woman may be allowed to know, without trespassing on the mental preserves of man”. Thus, she concluded, “Her education is never considered otherwise than with reference to him; though his education is never considered with reference to her” (M. L. G. 1834a, 771).

Grimstone also denounced the fact that educational plans, whether they be public or private, although claiming the importance of moral and intellectual cultivation for all, referred only to boys and men. Female education was, in reality, never considered as a matter of national interest:

I must all my life have been under a mistake as to the meaning of the word ‘all.’ It is impossible that it can designate ‘the whole number; every body,’ as the dictionary gives it; and while I have fondly imagined that it meant the total, it must in fact only mean a moiety; for in what plan of education, public, private, or national, is female education even glanced at as a national or universal interest? Oh, no; feed the boys, and the girls will grow fat, is the principle upon which mental nourishment is purveyed (M. L. G. 1834a, 772)

This disquisition about the whole and the part predates what De Beauvoir and other twentieth-century philosophers and feminists identified as humanity being constructed as male, and men defining “woman not in herself but as relative to him; [because] she is not regarded as an autonomous being” (De Beauvoir 1956 [1949], 15). Grimstone was able to glimpse this underlying structure, even if she did not have all the elements to completely comprehend or denounce it. However, she did call for women to be regarded and educated as self-dependent beings, “The great end of education is to fit woman, as an individual, to create happiness for herself by means as purely self-dependent as the nature of things will admit” (M. L. G. 1834a, 773).

This call for independence included an appeal for individuality. In “Self-Dependence” Grimstone declared:

Women ... want individuality most lamentably. At first they are all girls, – a word which, in its conventional sense, gives me a confused compound idea of pianofortes, curl-papers, parade, an all that is most purposeless and specious. Then they are all ladies; and now ... I see drawing-rooms and decorations, vanity and inanity, littleness and lightness, manœuvring and marring. Then they are all mothers – petting, preventing, or neglecting their offspring. And all of these beings might be – were designed to be – WOMEN – each instinct with the spark of individual power derived from the Deity, and capable of agency due to the universe. (M. L. G. 1835b, 603)

With this need for individuality Grimstone once again anticipated current debates on women's subjectivity: that is, the need for women to be considered subjects, with different characteristics, interests, and desires, and not the monolith Woman. Grimstone declared “it is not alone as wives and mothers that women may be useful to the world, and happy and honourable in themselves” (M. L. G. 1835e, 319), and advocated for the possibility to exercise different professions: teachers, nurses, philanthropists, writers, police officers and, in due time, even participate in politics.

For Grimstone the differences between men and women, as well as women’s alleged vices, were to be ascribed to the kind of education both received. In “Men and Women” she declared, “Much is said about the inherently distinctive differences existing between men and women. I believe them to be few, and that they are neither mental nor moral ones” (M. L. G. 1834b, 101), explaining how “the deficiency, on the part of woman, arises from no incapacity but such as education creates or might obviate” (102). In “Self-Dependence”, she redoubled her arguments, declaring not only that differences between men and women were artificial, but that class differences were also to be ascribed to contemporary educational arrangements:

That striking differences have existed, and do exist, between the sexes, I admit; that they are natural or necessary, I deny ... The general differences which attach to sex *en masse* are artificial differences — as artificial as those of class, having their origin in similar causes, and flowing into similar consequences (M. L. G. 1835b, 601) (*italic original to the text*).

Grimstone had already presented this argument in her novels. In the Postscript to *Woman’s Love* she affirmed, “The disproportion of cultivation, encouragement, and that alimint of intellectual energy–freedom, is perhaps fully sufficient to account for the *ostensible* disproportion of mind in the sexes” (1832c, III:359) (*italics in original*).

Still, the best instrument she had was example. In her novels, Grimstone used three types of characters to make her case. One was that of feeble female characters who were either

ill-educated or uneducated women, with no opinions of their own, indulging in a variety of pleasures, worried only about the fashion of the day and securing a husband. In this group we can find Mrs Brown, Mrs Stubbs and her daughters, as well as Julia Egerton from *Louisa Egerton*; Constance Fitzarran, and Lady Bevill from *Woman's Love*; and Amelia Beaucaire from *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*. They represent the different consequences of the lack of education for women.

The present sub-section will focus its analysis on Mrs Brown, Mrs Stubbs and her daughters, and Constance Fitzarran, who better exemplify a certain form of women's education. The examination of Julia Egerton, Lady Bevill, and Amelia Beaucaire will be carried out in the following section, as their characters represent not only a criticism of education in itself, but also help illustrate its consequences in courting, the marriage market, and married life.

Mrs Hannah Brown was the daughter of small shopkeepers. She had been educated at a boarding school, which unfortunately was part of "the inferior order of seminaries for young ladies", and thus all of her accomplishments were of "superficial scale" (Grimstone 1830, 38). She is described as a person interested only in fashion, balls, and the like, with a vocabulary greater than her intellect, using words more for their sound than their meaning:

To dress, walk, attend subscription balls, and read novels and romances, formed all the occupation of her life. This latter pursuit confirmed all the principles of affectation she had imbibed at school; her feelings became exquisite, her language too refined for ordinary comprehension and her ideas lofty and sentimental. Her intellect, naturally acute, nevertheless experienced some cultivation from even this course of reading, which raised her above gross vulgarity; it gave her besides abundance of words, and although she did not make the most judicious arrangement of them, they sounded well; and there are not a few who attend more to sound than to sense (Grimstone 1830, 39)

Hannah married Zechariah Brown, thus becoming Mrs Brown. Mr Brown prospered to become a merchant, which only increased Mrs Brown's affectations. They had three daughters: Angelina, Lavinia, and Seraphina, whom "at the death of their father, were all marriageable, and were not merely evidences of their mother's years, but incumbrances on her not inconsiderable fortune" (Grimstone 1830, 41). Mrs Brown was ever preoccupied with old age and keeping her fortune: she strove to keep her daughters as children for as long as possible, all the while trying to secure for herself a new husband, because she believed "that a woman, whilst she remained unmarried, was in a state of reprobation" (43). For the girls' part:

not one of them exhibited the slightest symptom of any precocity of intellect in thought, word, or deed; nor did they ever for a moment meditate the unfilial act of pretending to womanhood. They had just instinct enough to see the wisdom of their mother, in keeping a few unimportant years in ambush, and they had too much vanity to desire to cut their teens (Grimstone 1830, 43)

All of this self-centred vanity ends badly. Mrs Brown's "avarice of flattery, surrounded her with many parasites, who endured her follies for the sake of her feasts" (Grimstone 1830, 44), including Miss Dickson, who had won a place in the Browns' house by promising Mrs Brown a connection with Lady Egerton. In the end, Mrs Brown is tricked into marrying a tailor "who had wooed and won her under the semblance of a French Count, and thenceforward did little else but fill her lachrymatory with her pellucid, or, as she termed them, her *polluted* tears" (760) (italics in original). If only Mrs Brown had paid more attention to substance, her destiny would not have been so grim. As for her daughters, we only get a glimpse of Lavinia's fate. Of the three daughters, she is the most confrontational and, after an argument with her mother, she decides to leave the family home under the protection of her uncle, Mr Barnaby Stubbs.

Mr Barnaby Stubbs had married Mr Brown's sister, and, in contrast to his late brother-in-law, was just a pawnbroker. However, he "was fully possessed with his own importance ... His temper, surly, selfish, and brutal, had established him in a sort of savage tyranny at home" (Grimstone 1830, 389). He regarded his sex as the superior one, as can be inferred by the way he treated his wife and favoured their son, Joshua, over their daughters. Nevertheless, he seemed to have a soft spot for his niece Lavinia and "her fifteen thousand pounds" dowery, so he "in spite of himself, could not look on her with the contempt with which he so liberally visited the sex; with him, she was a decided favourite, and he spared no pains to second Joshua's advances" (400). Having never been taught that marriage was supposed to be the union of sympathetic beings, where partners are meant to work in harmony to reach common goals as co-operators, Lavinia Brown saw marriage as a way of freeing herself from the domineering ways of her mother and accessing her inheritance:

[she] looked forward to marriage as a state, not to surround her with the dearest of all ties, and the most important of all duties; but as one in which she should enjoy unlimited liberty, and undisputed control; and the easiness with which she expected to govern Mr. Joshua Stubbs, was, perhaps, among the most potent of his charms. (Grimstone 1830, 413)

Lavinia confessed as much to Mrs Egerton, when she declared, “once I’m my own mistress, and have got my fortune, I’ll not care a button for any body. It shall be my turn, then – and I’ll make every body mind me” (413-14).

We are not informed of Lavinia's final fate, although it is possible to assume that, opinionated as she was and with the favour of her uncle, she fulfilled her desire to marry Joshua Stubbs. However, this does not necessarily mean she achieved her strongly-craved freedom. Joshua was still his father’s son, and Mr Stubbs firmly believed in the inferiority of women and in the principle of wives’ duty to submit to their husbands. Mrs Stubbs had fashioned herself according to her husband’s ill-views of women. She never contradicted him and always praised him, raising him up on an altar he did not deserve:

His wife [Mrs. Stubbs], who made up in cunning what she wanted in sense, administered to his domineering humour with the most slavish servility, finding it the only means by which her savage could be circumvented. As no flattery was too gross for him, she suffered no opportunity to pass unimproved, that was at all favourable to its application (Grimstone 1830, 389)

This attitude extended to the way the Stubbses treated their children. Mr Stubbs had decided that “His son, next to himself, was the person of most importance in the family ... He was placed there by the decision of his father, who held his sex to be a sufficient claim to superiority” (Grimstone 1830, 390). Mrs Stubbs seconded her husband’s opinion of their son, even if he was a “weakly, mean-spirited boy” (390). With this upbringing, it is not possible to deduce if the union between Lavinia Brown and Joshua Stubbs would have provided the former with her wanted freedom, reducing weak Joshua to a nullity or if, instead, she would have been reduced to a servile being like her aunt. Whatever the outcome, the moral of the story is that neither Lavinia nor Joshua had been raised to regard men and women as equals, and to see marriage as the union of beings with equal standing. According to Grimstone’s views, their union was condemned to failure from the start.

The Stubbs daughters, who are not even given proper names in the story, are described as being regarded only in as much as they could serve their father and brother. According to Grimstone, the girls “being, as their father had sagaciously discovered, ‘only women,’ were, of course, not of the least consequence, save as they were useful to him and their brother, and in the household” (Grimstone 1830, 391). Following the example of their mother, whom they had seen and even aided in outwitting their father by feigning complete subservience, these girls:

with minds totally uninformed ... decided, by a sort of instinctive reasoning, that apparently abject subservience, and high admiration of the other sex, was their true interest ... it at once decided their principles of conduct, and became the rule of their behaviour. Utterly silent in society, they had just sense enough to perceive when a booby wished to be thought witty, and when he wished to be thought wise ... In the whole circle of their male acquaintances, they were pronounced "nice girls," "sweet girls," and each had a lover, who, in due time, looked forward to be elected as an exclusive oracle. (Grimstone 1830, 391)

The Stubbs daughters had been educated, if their upbringing could be given that name, as inferior and subservient beings, servants to their father's wishes. Once married, it was then expected for them to become submissive wives chained to the false shrine of a tyrannical husband. The story of the Stubbs family ends with a sad note and commentary from the narrator on Mrs Stubbs' situation. If properly educated, she might have been an asset to her family and a real co-operator in her husband's affairs, instead of a snivelling nodding head to all his commands and wishes:

Mrs. Stubbs was a woman, who, if cultivated, would not have been destitute of talent; she had a considerable share of penetration, and which would often have been of service to her family, had she been permitted to make use of it; but she was never allowed to have an opinion of her own, far less to take any steps in the affairs of her house, save under the especial direction of the great Panjandrum himself ... Mr. Stubbs, who always opposed whatever did not emanate from himself, made it an especial point, of all people in the world, to contradict his wife; he thought it looked manly, proclaimed his unapproachable superiority, and kept her weak womanish intellect in proper check (Grimstone 1830, 397–98)

I argue then that Mrs Stubbs and her daughters stand for the stereotype of the ill-educated woman, one that could not, for lack of intellectual resources, aid her family or the advancement of society. They also serve to show that women's submission and inferiority is not natural, nor a commandment from God, but rather the result of old prejudices and the education that derived from them. Although the story of the Stubbs family might seem compelling, they are minor characters in the novel, which could have been constructed completely without them. They provide a moral and cautionary tale, but one that can easily get lost in the narration of all the misadventures of Louisa Egerton and her fiendish aunt, Lady Egerton.

In her next novel, *Woman's Love*, Grimstone amends the way she presents her criticisms of the contemporary system of female education by using Constance, an important

secondary character, to personify the evils of women's lack of proper instruction. Constance is the daughter of a Protestant military man, Admiral Rusport. Nothing is said of her mother, but it is fair to assume that she had died, because Constance lived with her paternal aunt while her father was in active service. According to the novel, Constance's education had been placed, consciously or unconsciously, in the hands of Esther Gray, a "repulsive woman" who served as her maid, and "to this woman some of the worst faults of Mrs. [Constance] Fitzarran's character might be traced" (Grimstone 1832a, I:78).

Constance falls in love with Belwin Fitzarran, the Catholic heir apparent to the Earldom of Morrendale. However, her father radically opposes this union based only on his religious prejudices, considering Belwin and his mother, Lady Fitzarran, as a "papist family" and Fitzarran Abbey as a "strong hold of idolatry and blasphemy" (Grimstone 1832a, I:51). Constance does not oppose her father directly, but surreptitiously plans her elopement with Belwin. She is described as a selfish and timid being, who through cunning and feigned obedience is used to getting exactly what she wants:

Constance had nothing of the heroine in her character: with a timidity that deprived her of all moral energy, she had a tenacity of adherence to her own ... The consequence of these two principles, acting together as they did, was to induce an apparently placid acquiescence with the dictates of parental authority, at the same time that every subterfuge was resorted to in order to obviate obedience, when it was repugnant to her inclination ...

...

...she at once gratified her own humour, and soothed her father by a seemingly implicit submission to his (Grimstone 1832a, I:53)

Constance and Belwin finally elope, getting married in France in a Catholic ceremony. However, they are soon discovered by Admiral Rusport who manages to separate the newlyweds, almost entirely because "Mrs. Fitzarran's usual habits of non-resistance to active and present power had induced her to submit passively to be borne away from her husband" (Grimstone 1832a, I:71). When Lady Claudia discovers that Constance had allowed her father to take her away, she chastises her friend for her passive obedience and fabricated submission, which makes her see for the first time the real deceitfulness of Constance's character:

I will tell you, Constance. I mean not to deny that you are naturally timid; but you have superinduced an artificial, upon your natural, character, which has tended to increase its original weakness. You have indulged an ambition of being the gentlest creature in existence; you thought it harmonized with the style of your beauty; like the tyrant who, when he could

not fit the bed to the prisoner, he fitted the prisoner to the bed. You have limited your voice, looks and actions, to this false standard of feminine sweetness, and have hazarded your happiness to preserve your reputation for subduing softness and gentle innocence. But for this, nature would have taught you to have made a vigorous stand at the side of your husband against your common foes, instead of leaving you, as now, no alternative but new stratagems, the difficulties of which are increased a hundred fold (Grimstone 1832a, I:75–76)

At the beginning of volume II, Constance is reunited with Belwin, but their congeniality does not last long. Constance, used to duplicity and hidden intentions, is jealous of the pious Ida Dorrington and her relationship with Belwin, not realising that they act like brother and sister, having been raised as such by Lady Fitzarran. Constance only manages to tolerate Ida because she believes her to be inferior, due to her obscure past and dependence on Lady Fitzarran's generosity. All of Constance's vices come to a head when it is discovered that Charles Beresford is actually Lord Fitzarran's son from a previous secret marriage, one that was never dissolved before he married Lady Fitzarran. Consequently, Charles, not Belwin, becomes the heir to the Earldom of Morrendale. Constance, instead of sharing her husband's feelings of love for this new-found brother, feels aggrieved:

The excessive self-love which made her alive only to her own gratification and advantage, was the principle that narrowed her sphere of enjoyment, and extended that of her griefs: Belwin's transport in finding a brother in his friend and preserver she did not share ... All Belwin's good qualities, all his mother's gentle virtues, were unregarded, whilst his illegitimacy and the invalidity of her marriage were remembered; these were circumstances that depreciated both in the eyes of Constance, in a manner she could not entirely hide, yet had not the boldness to avow. The creature of custom and opinion, she could have assigned no reason for the sentiment of aversion and discontent she was admitting to her breast: to the narrow view of Constance, her gentle mother-in-law was no longer worthy of the honour in which society held her, and Belwin seemed to have no place ... and thus she suffered her happiness to be infringed by mere imaginings, for in no real circumstance was her comfort or well-being invaded (Grimstone 1832c, III:295–96)

This aggravation joins Constance's irritation about Ida Dorrington's elevation as "the acknowledged daughter of a nobleman who was presumptive heir to a dukedom" (Grimstone 1832c, III:300). To add insult to injury, at least in Constance's eyes, was the probability of Ida becoming a countess through her marriage to Charles Beresford, "the very title that Constance had hoped to bear" (300). And so, "all the evil passion of a selfish, envious spirit burned with

unmitigated virulence” in Constance (300). However, because of her “habitual disingenuousness” (Grimstone 1832c, III:297), Constance did not verbalise her ill feelings and emotions, nor did she try to analyse them in any rational way. Instead, she took revenge on an easy target, poor Lady Claudia, refusing to visit her in her hour of need, and thus revealing her true nature.

Constance was not able to face or deal with her perceived loss of rank, nor the fact that it seemed to not affect her husband. She “urged for a change of scene”, and together with Belwin, Lady Fitzarran, and Lady Claudia, embarked for the continent. However, they “suffered shipwreck” and “Constance fell a sacrifice to her terrors, dying a few days after the premature birth of a daughter, who survived her” (Grimstone 1832c, III:355). If Constance had been taught to pay less attention to rank and plotting, and more to the blessings life had bestowed upon her, she could have enjoyed her life alongside Belwin, a man that loved her, and his family, all of whom were of sound character and were willing to accept her, at least at first. She was so blinded by envy that she did not even realise that her husband did not suffer from the loss of his presumptive title and that they would have had a beautiful, comfortable life either way.

Unlike the Stubbs family in *Louisa Egerton*, Constance is present throughout the whole story in *Woman’s Love* and is instrumental in the development of the plot. Her elopement with Belwin is the catalyst for the introduction of Charles Beresford and his involvement with the Fitzarran family. As such, the character is more compelling than her previous counterparts in relating the evils that come from a faulty education for women.

Mrs Stubbs, the Stubbs girls, and Constance are different representations of what Grimstone would term ‘the insipid’ in one of her short stories of the same title, a woman whose “first standing rule was never to have an opinion of her own, and, consequently, never to offer opposition to any one” (M. L. G. 1835h, 649). She might seem submissive and obedient, but is also cunning, hypocritical, and manipulative, “She never contradicted her husband in word; she never did otherwise in deed. Quiet as a calm at sea, she was also as provoking” (M. L. G. 1835h, 652). Grimstone's argument on this matter, as shown both by her novels and her short stories, was that none of these women had been born this way, but their character had been moulded from infancy into believing that apparent subservience was the best way to catch a husband, and that to marry was a woman's only destiny and salvation.

These female characters were accompanied by male characters that upheld, in different variations, the idea that men were superior to women, and thus that the latter were to submit to the former. These include Mr Stubbs and Lord Harry Arden from *Louisa Egerton*, Lord

Conway and Lord Dromore, the brothers of Lady Claudia, in *Woman's Love*, as well as Mr Coverley from *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*. They not only had a reproachable idea of women, somewhat prevalent at the time, but these male characters also embodied particular vices and wickedness, which makes them relevant for analysis.

Mr Stubbs and Mr Coverley, in their respective novels, are depicted as stubborn patriarchs that cannot be contradicted. Mr Stubbs, in *Louisa Egerton*, is constructed as unidimensional, a tyrant with no apparent redeeming qualities:

Mr. Stubbs was fully possessed with his own importance ... and infinite were the pains he took to impress the same opinion on his family, and every one with whom he came in contact ... His temper, surly, selfish, and brutal, had established him in a sort of savage tyranny at home (Grimstone 1830, 389)

This attitude had negative effects on all the members of his family. Mr Stubbs felt that he and his son were superior to everyone else, only because he “held his sex to be a sufficient claim to superiority”, even if Joshua Stubbs was, in reality, weak and narrow-minded, thus “too feeble to sustain the character assigned him” (Grimstone 1830, 390). As for Mrs Stubbs and their daughters, they were seen only as servants, with no rights or voice of their own, whose value was only measured in the amount and quality of services they could provide for their male counterparts.

Having evolved as a writer, Grimstone constructed Mr Coverley in *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* in a more nuanced way. This character is depicted as an old bachelor “too selfish in his habits” to sympathise with the happiness of others when it disturbed his own comfort, one that claimed he “never saw a woman do anything right in my life” (Grimstone 1833a, I:2, 4). Still, even if he was a stubborn patriarch, he also showed genuine appreciation for his immediate family, namely his late sister, his nephew, and his grandnephew. He had a particular soft spot for Marmion, whom he loved dearly. However, Mr Coverley’s example contributed more to the vices of the young man than to the development of a noble character:

Mr. Coverley had, perhaps, the largest share in forming the character of Marmion; for he really loved the child ... and his influence was proportionably great. All his characteristics, which time neither softened nor improved, were of the most striking order. A worse model could scarcely be presented to the observation of a young mind; nor could worse habits be adopted towards a child than Mr. Coverley indulged. It was one of his amusements to provoke Marmion's irascibility, because the boy's rage amused him; nor did he lose his relish for this exhibition, when respect for himself was merged in the angry feelings he excited ... Not

content with the conviction himself, he instilled it into Marmion, who had, very naturally, no objection to believe himself the eighth wonder of the world (Grimstone 1833a, I:166–67)

In the previous section we learnt of the sad and tragic end of Marmion Beaucaire, in which his defects of character played a decisive role. His great-uncle's views, which included the inferiority of women, were ingrained in Marmion's education and led him onto the path that took him to an early grave.

To this pair of despots, we can add a third, Lord Dromore from *Woman's Love*. He is the Earl of Dromore and is depicted as vain, with an “idle and ill-directed mind”, that will certainly direct his children towards habits of vice, because “impudence and vanity were being fostered [in them] with rank luxuriance” (Grimstone 1832a, I:323). He married out of interest, and he held women to be inferior beings incapable of true reasoning. According to him, “there are three principles, I should rather say passions or propensities (for women are incapable of either principle or opinion), that sway the whole sex; those are the love of admiration, the love of power, and the love of contradiction” (Grimstone 1832b, II:7). His ill-temper and misconceived notions about women are exemplified in a discussion he has with his wife about the education of their children. When Lady Dromore asks him for her right to properly educate their children, taking them away from the damaging and vitiating effects of (his) society, he refuses her plea by affirming that he is entitled to do as he sees fit with his own children, “... nonsense! This is the last time I shall listen to such lectures. Its a devilish hard thing that I cannot do what I like with my own children ... I shall suffer neither of them out of my sight” (Grimstone 1832a, I:328).

Lord Dromore is not only a despot when it comes to his wife and children, he is also a libertine who believes that it is a man's right and prerogative not only to admire women but to demand attention from them, only to reproach them for their vanity afterwards. Describing one of his friends, Lord Dromore rejoices in the fact that “*he* only stimulates a woman's vanity to sound it, laugh at it, and talk of it” (Grimstone 1832b, II:12) (*italics in original*). Lord Dromore has gone a step farther, entering into an extramarital affair with Lady Bevill, Sir John Bevill's wife. In the end, however, almost all of Lord Dromore's misdeeds go unpunished, except for the death of Lady Bevill.

Grimstone had already used the archetype of the despot libertine aristocrat in the creation of Lord Harry Arden from *Louisa Egerton*. Sir Harry is depicted as an abhorrent person in every way, driven only by his passions, with little or no regard for others, caring only about his personal gratification. Like Lord Dromore, Lord Arden married only out of interest and

believes that women are meant to be subservient and submissive, “we [men] were made for freedom—woman for obedience. Her sin drew it upon her as a curse, and 'tis her fairest virtue to turn it to a blessing” (Grimstone 1830, 278). His arrogance made him enter into a duel with the Marquis of Grandon, resulting in the death of the latter and Sir Harry's escape to avoid justice. He had an extramarital affair, but in his case, it was with the maiden Julia Egerton, who ran away to be with him, even if he had nothing to offer her except perdition and corruption. Not having learnt his lesson, Lord Arden falls in a duel, leaving behind a betrayed and unhappy wife, who in time honourably rebuilds her life with a man that truly loves her, and a sullied mistress, “who hurried into a sea of vice and dissipation” (Grimstone 1830, 760).

Grimstone puts these derogatory discourses about women in the mouths of male characters who might have had money or position but did not have good principles or morals. By doing so, she is guiding her readers into inferring that upholding women's inferiority is a vile trait, a character flaw that only small-minded, intolerant, and tyrannical individuals could want to perpetuate.

Grimstone did not only portray debased characters. She also depicted educated women who upheld women's intrinsic equality with men and helped in the construction of a better society. In this final group, we can find Lady Alicia from *Louisa Egerton*, Lady Fitzarran from *Woman's Love*, and Mrs Trevor from *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*.

Lady Alicia is the sister of Lord Eardley Herbert, Earl of Elville. She is described as smart, well-educated, and independent, although possessing a satirical, dark sense of humour that could sometimes get her in trouble. Thanks to her late father, Lady Alicia has money of her own, so she is not entirely dependent on her brother or on the hope of a future rich husband. Her state of self-dependence makes her a good character to embody Grimstone's feminist views. Lady Alicia is wary of the institution of marriage and is not willing to marry someone just for the sake of it, as she states in a conversation with Lady Egerton:

I am too wise to marry a fool, too good to marry a rake—I have too much heart to marry a fop, and not money enough to marry a beggar

...

...to tell you my serious feeling on the subject, I have never yet seen a man whom I could love, and if I ever do, I am determined I'll not marry him

...

Because out of love grows jealousy, and out of jealousy grows misery, and they would follow with me as naturally as darkness does light (Grimstone 1830, 143–44)

Whatever might have been her intentions and ideas, Lady Alicia does fall in love with Stafford Monteith, but it is not a blind, foolish, or egotistical love. As explained in the overview of *Louisa Egerton*, Lady Alicia was not willing to sacrifice her brother's happiness for a chance at her own. At the end of the novel, readers are informed that Lady Alicia did marry Monteith, and thanks to Grimstone's description of the latter throughout the story, readers can be sure that it was a union between equals. This is relevant because one of the ideas that Lady Alicia strongly defends is that men and women should be held accountable to the same moral standards. In a discussion with Mr Dudley, she declares:

I meet you on the same terms that you meet us—you demand the pure ore at our hands, why should we be content with base metal at yours? Our transgressions meet no lenity, our sentence of condemnation knows neither mitigation nor reversal; the lapse of virtue consigns us to banishment and oblivion from all the honours and felicities of innocence. I do not repine at this—I would not have the decree reversed; but I would not see my brother in iniquity return to society with impunity, and, though an equal sinner, be but a nominal sufferer (Grimstone 1830, 428)

This disquisition recalls Wollstonecraft's criticisms of the different standards of virtue and modesty set for the sexes, in which she claimed that the major source of female depravity was women's "impossibility of regaining respectability by a return to virtue, though men preserve theirs during the indulgence of vice" (Wollstonecraft 1792, 133). Even if, as explained before, Grimstone never acknowledged Wollstonecraft's influence in her writings, she is, nevertheless, strongly present. Through the voice of Lady Alicia, Grimstone also cites other supporters of women's rights. In a conversation with Sir Bernard, in which he was accusing women of having "no justice towards each other" (Grimstone 1830, 527), Lady Alicia once again takes up their defence by arguing that the envy Sir Bernard accused women of was not as prevalent as he thought and, furthermore, that the female vices he was enumerating were actually human vices, and as such also present in men:

It has long been the fashion to talk of the faults and the follies of women—but they are the faults and follies of human nature. The qualities of men and women, be they good or bad, 'may differ in the mould, but they agree in the metal.' It is the very true and sensible remark of one of the ornaments of her sex, 'that no talent, no virtue, is masculine alone; no fault, no folly, exclusively feminine; that there is not an endowment, or propensity, or mental quality of any kind, which may not be derived from her father to the daughter—to the son from his mother.' (Grimstone 1830: 528).

The “ornament of her sex” referred to by Lady Alicia is Lucy Aikin, a Unitarian feminist and the niece of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, whose best-known work is the one cited by Grimstone, the poem *Epistles on Women*, published in 1810. Aikin believed, together with other feminists of her time, that although men and women were capable of possessing the same talents, women were morally superior. Anne K. Mellor and Michelle Levy have analysed Aikin's work, affirming, in the introduction to their edition of her writings:

Aikin saves for the poem itself her final feminist salvo, namely that the female maternal instinct transforms women into beings even nobler and more virtuous than men ... Aikin finally aligns her poem with ... a belief in the innate moral superiority of the female sex (2010, 27)

The maternal role of women was omnipresent in contemporary literature about women's rights. According to Jane Rendall, during the nineteenth century the works of Locke, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi, among others, became central to discussions about the importance of child development, with part of the debate focusing on the precise role that parents, particularly mothers, played in the education of future generations. Thus, “maternal education', or the task of the mother as educator and as socialiser became the focus for much important work” (Rendall 1985, 108). Grimstone's writings are no exception, and she used women's role and their duties as mothers to demand their right to a proper education. Even if she repeatedly declared, “that striking differences have existed, and do exist, between the sexes, I admit; that they are natural or necessary, I deny” (M. L. G. 1835b, 601), she also highlighted women's roles as mothers and caregivers, as well as the importance of family. Therefore, it is not entirely surprising that the best examples of educated reasonable women created by Grimstone were also mothers: Lady Fitzarran and Mrs Trevor. The latter is the more nuanced and better constructed of the two characters. For this reason, the following sub-section will centre its analysis on Mrs Trevor, presenting her in relation to, and in contrast with, Grimstone's political essays.

3.1.2. *“The force of example is powerful with all, but particularly so with children... ”:*
Properly Educated Mothers raise Properly Educated Children

Jane Rendall, in her study of the origins of feminism in Britain, France, and the United States, remarks that the different concerns of early feminists were all related to their “central acceptance of the immensely important role which women played within their families, their

situation as mothers” (1985, 34). The importance of motherhood, as well as the role of mothers as the first and most important educators of their children, “became the focus for much important work” during the nineteenth century (Rendall 1985, 108), being discussed by conservatives, evangelicals, dissenters, and radicals alike, the differences among them being more a matter of degree. They all seemed to agree on the important role of mothers as educators and first socialisers. The discussion focused rather on the type and kind of education women had to receive to conscientiously exercise their duties. Another element of this discussion was whether women’s education should focus primarily on their duties as mothers or if, instead, it should concentrate on women as self-dependent rational creatures who also happened to be mothers. As Rendall also acknowledges, “the boundaries between feminists and conservatives, in their treatment of family roles, are not always easy to recognise” (1985, 34).

Another discussion from the time that justified women’s education related to their moral qualities. Authors like Mary Wollstonecraft claimed that the sexes were intrinsically the same and thus were to be held to the same standards of morality and virtue; others, like Hannah More, on the conservative side of the feminist spectrum of the time, upheld “the innate difference between the sexes. To women she assigned a greater delicacy of perception and feeling, and above all, a greater moral purity and capacity for virtue”. This view, however conservative it might seem in present times, had a strong influence on the quest for women’s education, because More, alongside others, supported a new kind of education for women, one that did not focus only on beauty and menial accomplishments, but on the “systematic development of the innate female capacity for virtue and piety” with the end goal of “a cultural redefinition of *female virtue*” (Mellor 2000, 26) (italics in original).

As Mellor has noted, between the liberal feminism of Wollstonecraft and the conservative reformation of manners championed by More, there was a middle ground of women³⁸, mostly dissenters, “whose religion (whether Quaker, Unitarian, or Methodist) had already granted them a degree of sexual equality based on their capacity for virtue, rationality, and religious leadership” (2002, 152). Mellor positions the Unitarian Anna Laetitia Barbauld

³⁸ During the Romantic Period several women appropriated the pen to expose their own ideas about the society they lived in. As Gioia Angeletti claims, women not only appropriated “male literary texts and models ... in an apparently simple emulation” (2007, 241). Instead, they revisited the moral and social codes of their time by using the accepted genres and styles to conceal reformist, revolutionary, and even subversive messages. In these way, women “succeeded in asserting their own voices as female, feminine, and, in some respects, feminist writers” (Angeletti 2007, 242). Angeletti exemplifies her argument through the writings of two contrasting, even antithetical female poets of the Romantic Era: Anna Seward and Lady Caroline Lamb. For her, “Seward and Lamb stood half way between the more conservative and the more radical female voices of the time. Many of their work are grafted on the dominant male tradition but, in most cases, the used this revisionist practice as a starting-point to create then new and original compositions” (Angeletti 2007, 257).

in this middle ground, showing how her views on women's proper role in society demanded not a revolution, but "a more gradual process of moral development, mutual sexual appreciation, tolerance, and love, a process in which middle-class women recognize and take seriously their ethical responsibilities and emotional capacities" (2002, 154).

Grimstone can also be positioned in this middle ground. Although she valued women's role as mothers, she strongly denounced the claim that women were morally purer than men. In "Men and Women", Grimstone directly attacks the notion that women possessed a greater acuteness of feelings, while men were more rational, by calling it a belief not based on facts or real knowledge:

Female faculties are allowed to be more early and rapidly developed than male intellect; and female feelings are supposed to be more tender and acute than those of the other sex. But then comes the indemnifying clause in favour of the latter; and a peculiar firmness and profundity of mind, and stability of principle and opinion, are awarded to man. All this is assertion. Where are the facts? "Oh!" I hear a thousand voices exclaim, "They are well known." I ask how? Again the thousand exclaim— "Everybody knows them." This indefinite personage knows these things as he knows a great many other things—that is not all—but he believes them. (M. L. G. 1834b, 101–2)

She continues her argument by claiming that each sex could accomplish what the other was valued for:

Fortunately for man, the female mind, like his own, is capable of the highest elevation; fortunately for woman, the heart of man, like her own, is susceptible of the tenderest feelings. The sexes have only to join hand in hand, each seeking to remedy in the other the deficiencies that exist in both, only in consequence of false views and erroneous practice. I disclaim for my sex the presumed superiority of the heart, as I deny the imputed inferiority of the head. (M. L. G. 1834b, 102)

Grimstone is trying to dismantle the notions of women's moral superiority, which for her also implied the acceptance of their mental inferiority. She claims that the women who uphold these ideas are taking the side of the oppressor, accepting their alleged weakness while at the same time cunningly claiming a superiority that takes them nowhere:

Woman has sought an invidious strength in the weakness imposed upon her; she has trod the subterranean path of subterfuge, instead of taking the high and direct road: but who shall blame her? It is of no use to appear at a turnpike, if unprepared to pay the toll. If power makes

unjust laws, ingenuity will be exerted to evade them; and thus are two agents, capable to produce the highest good, the abettors of the worst evils—oppression and deceit. (M. L. G. 1834b, 102)

However, even if this argument seems particularly strong-worded, in her novels Grimstone appears to have taken a different and more subtle approach. There are two moments in *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, in which it seems that Mrs Agnes Trevor argues in favour of the moral superiority of women. Early in the novel, when she is still Mrs Lennox, in an argument with Mr Coverley, she exclaims:

In the common points of character I have perceived little difference [among the sexes]: are you, for instance, less vain? ... While in all the rarer virtues, (of the few distinguished by them), the majority have been women. In the trials and temptations of life, are you as strong? Let the sick-bed of the male invalid, let the career of debauched sons, husbands, and fathers reply to you (Grimstone 1833a, I:71–72)

However, when Mr Coverley concedes the point of women's "superiority in *piety and morals*" (72), Agnes presents her real argument, according to which men were willing to concede women's moral superiority as long as they could claim superiority in everything else, thus maintaining their power and the status quo:

It is strange, how little jealous you show yourselves of the rivalry of goodness, though so very tenacious of that of greatness ... While you aim at securing for yourselves only temporal advantage, you permit us precedency, nay, if we like it, appropriation of all such as are spiritual (Grimstone 1833a, I:73).

Agnes continues her argument by claiming that with time and proper education women might prove to be as intelligent and rational beings as men. She also claims that if women have not proven it up to that point, it is only because men have kept women ignorant in their quest for relevant elevation:

On the ocean of truth, and in the degrees of mental polarity, we may prove as daring voyagers, and reach as high a latitude as any of our brothers. I think it might serve to abate some of your presumption to recollect, that the discovery of the most important facts have been the effect of accident, rather than sagacity

...

Throughout society to the fancied interests of a part, the real interests of the greater portion, or more properly speaking, of the whole, are sacrificed. The false views that affect the classes,

affect the sexes. You will not be less wise when we become more so; but so ignorantly, so selfishly averse are men to equalization, that they would sooner stand alone at a medium elevation, than together at the highest point. They cannot expand their hearts, so as to embrace a universal feeling, and perceive that that which adds to the happiness and intelligence of the whole, must give increase of advantages to every individual part. (Grimstone 1833a, I:79–81)

Grimstone had already presented these arguments in the postscript to *Woman's Love*, where she declared that women and men needed to advance at the same pace if the felicity of humanity as a whole was to be achieved, making women's improvement a prerequisite of society's development and ultimate happiness:

So long as man shall, as heretofore, seek his own advancement merely, woman will hang a dead weight, or act as a counteracting principle on his progress. It is only by a just division of advantages that the social machine will move onward with the celerity and certainty of a hopeful progression ... It will cost him some effort to sacrifice prejudices dear to him from habit, and venerable for their antiquity ... let none believe that true principles and cultivated reason can operate otherwise on woman than on man; as moral greatness makes him capable to enjoy, and powerful to produce good, so will it act on her; and the same means that has led the one to improvement will lead the other there also (Grimstone 1832c, III:364–65).

If the happiness and advancement of society depended on women, then it depended not on their innate qualities, but on their education and on the way that education could then mould the minds of their children. It is with this in mind that Grimstone makes her character, Mrs Trevor, declare:

in my opinion, and I say it with no arrogance, my own is the superior sex. Every woman trained to virtue, and prepared for the task of being a wife and a mother, consecrates herself to humanity ... she takes the infant being and moulds him to moral greatness, and fortifies him against the assaults of vice (Grimstone 1833b, II:218)

Reading this quote without the proper context may give the impression that Mrs Trevor is claiming the moral superiority of women. However, the second part of her discourse, together with the development of the novel as a whole and the rest of Grimstone's body of work, helps to dispel this notion. In the phrase just quoted the emphasis must be placed on the affirmations "trained to virtue" and "prepared for the task of being wife and mother". These actions, trained and prepared, referred to the proper education women must receive in order to be good mothers. Read in this light, rather than claiming that women possess innate moral superiority, Grimstone

seems to be arguing that women's duties as educators of their children, and therefore moral cultivators of society, are of a superior nature. Hence, women needed to be properly educated to fulfil these superior duties.

This way of presenting the argument was in line with the Radical Unitarian view that women did not necessarily possess any instincts which predisposed them to be naturally good mothers and homemakers. Instead, they believed and preached that women had to be properly educated and given the right instruments to become good mothers. As Gleadle states, "...many radical unitarians suggested that women did not have any predetermined instincts or abilities which naturally disposed them for such work [housework]. These skills, they insisted, had to be learned". This also explains why the early feminists associated with the Radical Unitarians "wished to persuade their public that they should not take for granted the natural propensity of women to make good mothers" (Gleadle 1995, 101, 102)

In *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, through Mrs Melburn and Mrs Trevor, Grimstone tried to show how the education of children by their mothers should aim at guaranteeing the formation of a good character, exemplifying how mothers should act. Mrs Melburn, whose only solace lies in educating her children, declares to Agnes before leaving for the Americas:

I shall make no difference in the education of my boys and girls: they shall both have the same mental and bodily exercise, the liberty of free air and free inquiry. I will teach them to examine everything, to trace effects to their causes, compounds to their constituents—to take nothing for granted. The same attention and examination a child is accustomed to bestow on a picture, it will, as an adult, bestow on the persons it meets in the intercourse of life; the same power of inquiry and analysis it is accustomed to exercise on objects abroad or at home, in the fields or at the fire-side, it will, as an adult, exercise on the affairs of life. Thus even though, as you fear, they meet no worthy mates, they have a chance, by possessing penetration, forethought, and power of calculation, to escape being duped by unworthy ones (Grimstone 1833a, I:97–98)

Even if at first Agnes does not seem to comprehend Mrs Melburn's intentions, when she becomes a mother, she devotes herself to the proper education of her children with the same attitude as her friend, trying to cultivate in both her boys and her girls the appropriate power of reason. In Agnes' case, she recognised early on that "the force of example is powerful with all, but particularly so with children, who observe much, but reflect little" (Grimstone 1833a, I:157). Thus, she endeavoured to foster in her children both love for effort and real politeness:

Two points Mrs. Trevor had especially devoted herself to effect for her children, and they had been attended by the happiest results. The first was to keep them continually employed: she thus realized a disposition to industry, and destroyed the whole train of mischiefs that spring out of listlessness and objectless leisure. The second was the cultivation of domestic politeness, the kindly courtesy that keeps affection from the shock of too rude familiarity, and preserves that which it overlays. (Grimstone 1833b, II:42–43)

The results of this mode of education are exemplified by young Magdalene Melburn and Arthur Trevor: reasonable, sensible, sober-headed beings who know how to value the world and the people around them. Their union at the end of the novel gives hope for a brighter future, where couples share feelings and interests, based on the common ground of education, which will raise a new and better generation.

Grimstone had already explained this theory in the postscript to *Woman's Love*, where she claimed:

Woman is the true cultivator of the moral soil. She traces the first impressions on humanity ... However much thinkers and theorists may differ about details, they all concur in acknowledging the indelibility of first impressions, and early associations. From whom are these derived to every being in the world? From Woman. Yet has she been left all these years under the contemptuous imputation of inferiority—under the influence of habits and institutions to make her that which she is imputed to be, with this mighty trust, the germinating moral world, in her hands! Are her powers the only powers on earth that cannot be improved and consolidated? Is education the only subject on which combined intelligence, and natural interests cannot be made to bear? Miscellaneous treatises, isolated schools, individual families have presented admirable instances of what education might do (Grimstone 1832c, III:368)

And in her social essays she would go on to share her vision of a better world, where better mothers would raise better children. In “Men and Women” Grimstone stated:

Oh that a new view, equally true and universal, might induce a greater attention to the education of the rising race of women, that the next generation may have mothers qualified and inclined to aid in a work, for which so few of the present day seem disposed, even though acute minds, and kind feelings, eminently fit them for it! (M. L. G. 1834b, 102)

This analysis might give the idea that Grimstone saw women only as mothers. Nonetheless, even if she relied, sometimes heavily, on the discourse of women's maternal role, Grimstone did not abandon her idea of women's education for their own sake, for self-

development and self-dependence. Motherhood was her point of entry, a way of introducing and laying the foundations for the importance of women's education, and although it could be presented as women's most important role, it was not the only one available or even desirable to them.

Before being daughters, wives, or mothers, women were women, beings "instinct with the spark of individual power derived from the Deity, and capable of agency due to the universe" (M. L. G. 1835b, 603). Women were to be educated for their own well-being, for their own interest and for the sake of their own capacity for reasoning and aspiring to God. This would benefit not only them but society as a whole, because the moral instruction of children had been placed in the hands of women. In this sense, Grimstone's theorisation was in line with that of Wollstonecraft, who, as Rendall explains, placed the emphasis "not merely on a woman's duty to society, but on her duty to herself" (1985, 63).

Grimstone saw women as citizens and as patriots, equally important "to the well-being of a country as the men" (Grimstone 1832c, III:369). However, she also knew her audience: the commonly used excuse to prevent an equal education for women was that if women were educated, they would usurp men's place in society. To respond to that fear, Grimstone relied once again on women's maternal role. She accepted that women's most common occupation was that of mother, and she also claimed that it was an occupation that took most of their time and energy. Hence, if women's first vocation was to be mothers, then their knowledge would not be used to become soldiers or lawyers or politicians, but to adequately shape and guide their children to be the greatest soldiers, judges, and protectors:

When the subject of the equal education of the sexes is entertained, there are even now not wanting superficial thinkers and shallow sneerers, who talk of female soldiers, female judges and legislators, —thus bringing into a strong light those circumstances, which would frequently operate as a bar to the exercise of these functions by women. But I would ask these worthies, what are the constituent principles of the mind of a great soldier, a great judge, a great statesman? ... Are they not foresight, firmness, fortitude, decision, sagacity, knowledge, and many more qualities that will suggest themselves? Let education be directed to the purpose of giving these, as far as possible, to every being—to women as well as men, and let there be no fear but that the world will be the better for it. Every being so endowed will find his fitting vocation. The commonest vocation of woman is that of a mother—one quite sufficient to employ the best part of her life and her finest faculties. The more she is essentially fit for a good soldier, a good judge, and a good statesman, the more likely is she to give her country brave defenders, able advocates, and true protectors (M. L. G. 1834b, 103)

Nevertheless, she did not preclude the possibility of women exercising different professions, if the need arose. The first example she used, one common in her time, was that of the widow, which had already been presented by other feminists such as Wollstonecraft. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft presents two types of widows, to exemplify the vices and dangers of ill-educated women and the virtues of properly educated ones. In the first case, she presents a woman “trained up in obedience”, who upon her husband’s death does not know how to administer his fortune nor how to raise their children because “she has never thought, much less acted for herself. She has only learned to please men, to depend gracefully on them” (Wollstonecraft 1988 [1792], 48). As a result, this uneducated widow “either falls an easy prey to some mean fortune-hunter, who defrauds her children of their paternal inheritance; or becomes the victim of discontent and blind indulgence” (49). In the second case, Wollstonecraft presents a woman who has a “tolerable understanding” of life, with a mind “gradually expanding itself to comprehend the moral duties of life” (50). Thus, when she loses her husband, instead of searching for a new man to supply her needs or abandoning herself to her sorrow, she honours her duties as a mother and raises her children with intelligence and virtue. In Wollstonecraft's words:

she is left a widow, perhaps, without a sufficient provision; she is not desolate! The pang of nature is felt; but after time has softened sorrow into melancholy resignation, her heart turns to her children with redouble fondness, and anxious to provide for them, affection gives a sacred heroic cast to her maternal duties...

...

...she lives to see the virtues which she endeavoured to plant on principles, fixed into habits, to see her children attain strength of character sufficient to enable them to endure adversity without forgetting their mother’s example (1988 [1792], 50-51)

This is the same idea that Grimstone expresses in the postscript to *Woman’s Love*. For her, when a woman is educated in the same way as a man in matters of politics, commerce, and science, she can support her husband's affairs as well as deal with domestic life. If she is unfortunately left a widow, then she can manage the family business instead of being at the mercy of strangers who will take advantage of her ignorance:

Behold her a widow. If she had been properly educated, if she had been the sympathizing, supporting, intelligent companion of her husband's professional, as well as his domestic, life, instead of standing at his death in utter ignorance of all beyond the kitchen, the nursery, and the drawing-room, (often at the mercy of strangers, who, taking advantage of her ignorance,

sink her, with her orphaned offspring, into poverty,) she might continue and superintend her deceased, husband's concerns till his children were of an age to be his active inheritors. (Grimstone 1832c, III:362–63)

Grimstone would further develop this idea that women could, and even should, exercise certain professions in her novels, her political essays, and her short stories. For example, in “Men and Women” she continued claims in favour of widows and other single women by affirming: “For those women whom early widow hood, or other causes, consign to celibacy, I see not why civil offices should not be open, especially chairs of science in colleges endowed for the education of their own sex” (M. L. G. 1834b, 103).

Teaching was an argument dear to Grimstone. It was also a contemporary debate, as Rendall suggests:

While the theme of 'maternal education' continued to be of fundamental importance, so was the evident need of women to support themselves. The most natural progression was to suggest that women should be trained for employment in that capacity nearest the maternal role: as a teacher of children (1985, 125)

In *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, the kind Ruth Mezrack, after the tragic death of her son, devotes herself to the establishment and endowment of “schools that had for their principle *the exclusion of none*” because “character, whether innate or acquired, or a mixture of both, can alone be moulded or made by education” (Grimstone 1833b, II:255) (italics in original). In the novel, poor Ruth, whom the readers also known as Hagar, dedicates her maternal instinct not to raising her own child, who was actually taken from her in infancy, but to help Mrs Melburn in raising hers. Once it is revealed that she is the lost daughter of rich old Mezrack, and he gives her part of his fortune, she turns her energies towards educating other children, in the hopes of attaining happiness for herself as well as for her pupils and, in turn, making a better world.

Another example of women as teachers can be found in her short story "The Fashionable". In it, Florence Paget starts as governess to the daughters of Mrs Vernon, a 'fashionista', a woman more concerned with her dresses, her social circle, and her drawing-room than with the education of her own children. Mrs Vernon is actually distressed by the idea that Florence is teaching the girls to think for themselves, relating to the governess her husband's ideas about the right education for young girls:

Mr. Vernon disapproves of some of your sentiments and opinions, —indeed, of your plans of education generally; he has learned that you urge Emma and Celia to think for themselves, and that you admire decision of character; he thinks nothing can be more unfeminine, more adverse to their prospects (M. L. G. 1835e, 317).

In the end, Florence decides to leave her service as governess and instead devotes “herself to the conduct of a school, the humble emoluments of which supplied her frugal wants”. She is joined by one of the Vernon girls, Emma, as her friend and as her colleague, both giving “proof that it is not alone as wives and mothers that women may be useful to the world, and happy and honourable in themselves” (M. L. G. 1835e, 319). This is a development of an earlier idea Grimstone had used in another of her short stories, where she had stated, “the feelings of wife, mother, daughter, and sister, may co-exist with those of the philosopher, philanthropist, and patriot” (M. L. G. 1835d, 230).

Teaching, as Rendall claims, “was by far the most appropriate and realistic possibility” for women and girls to find work outside the home in the early nineteenth century (1985, 125). However, Grimstone also presented other possibilities of professions for women. In *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, Grimstone made a case for women in the medical profession, particularly in the role of nurses. She claimed:

Nursing should be held as a profession, and its professors be endowed with a suitable education —be called to the exercise of its duties while yet in the vigour of life, and not after. Appointed to act as the adjunct of the surgeon and physician, ought they not to possess some kindred intelligence? How often, for the want of this, has the best medical advice proved nugatory. It is not contended or desired that women should supersede or rival the male practitioner, since excess of sympathy, it is to be feared, would ever be liable to endanger female efficiency. But as the assistant, the agent of the medical man, woman, under all circumstances of illness, is, beyond description, essential; but it must be cultivated woman, capable of comprehending the intelligence she acts with, and the necessities she acts on. (Grimstone 1833a, I:32–33)

Although it is a great pity that Grimstone conceded on the point regarding sensibility, stating that women should not try to compete with male practitioners because of their “excess of sympathy”, the fact that she called for the professionalisation of nurses so early in the nineteenth century is nevertheless commendable. One must remember that steps towards professionalising nursing in Britain started in 1860 with Florence Nightingale, who at the time of the novel’s publication was just a girl of about 12 or 13 years old.

In “Quaker Women”, inspired by the women that belong to the Society of Friends, Grimstone called for women’s endeavours in charity, claiming that they could use their knowledge in managing a house to act as guardians and helpers of the poor. She also proposed the creation of a female police force which, Grimstone predicted, would use its particular sensibility to deal with petty contraventions and prostitution, which she saw as the result of vice and folly:

Was there a female police, acting in conjunction, and under wise regulation, with male officers, the young victim of folly might find a friend and an adviser, where she now only finds a further betrayer. Women once invested, by education, opinion, and custom, with the power of exerting heart and mind in behalf of their fellow-creatures, instead of shrinking from the miserable prostitute, would pause and speak to her, and might, perhaps, often turn the sinner from her way of sorrow. (Grimstone 1835, 35).

All of these professions, even the female police officers envisaged by Grimstone, had a connection to women’s mission as mothers, or at least caregivers. If women were the moral cultivators of society, their moralising abilities should not be restricted to the home: they could be used in the public sphere, particularly by single women or women who did not have children, to ameliorate the conditions of their communities. As Rogers has indicated, “the social action of and between women was more easily authenticated by the rhetoric of woman's mission than by the discourse of labour” (2000, 146).

One last realm in which Grimstone contended that women should be involved was that of politics. Not only did she envision a time when women would be given the right to vote, but she also advocated for women's involvement in politics at large. As far as her enfranchisement argument went, she believed that once women were properly educated, they could be given the vote and actively participate in the legislative branch, as well as in other public offices:

I do not contend for public offices for women, but I do not therefore admit, when properly educated, their incapacity for them, or the inexpediency, in many cases, of their being admitted to them. While human society is compounded of the two sexes, so also should be human legislation. Suppose woman suddenly endowed with all which man presumes to be solely his own—how would he like to be the unvoiced, unregarded, unquestioned being which woman is—receiving from her laws and regulations without any inquiry being made how far they are consistent with his peculiar talents, feelings, and wishes? (M. L. G. 1835a, 110).

Some authors have criticised Grimstone's position on the matter, affirming that, "while this could be an emancipatory doctrine, it could also be profoundly anti-democratic" (Rogers 1994, 214). What they see as undemocratic is the prerequisite of 'properly educated', which would make the vote not a right but a privilege to be earned by proving oneself deserving of it. Nonetheless, these critics seemed to take for granted the concept of universal suffrage, which at the time, even with the changes introduced by the Great Reform Act of 1832³⁹, was only extended to a fraction of the population, all of whom were men. Instead, one must evaluate Grimstone's argument together with the rest of her work. She saw education as an equaliser and in her later writings demanded a national education scheme in which:

The form of education must be that which is best calculated to develope (sic) and exercise all the powers of human nature—a nature, how various soever in the detail, alike upon the whole; agreeing in the metal, differing only in the mould. The reasoning faculties, the moral feelings, the physical powers, demand equal development in all, without reference to social, any more than to local latitude. Every member of the state ought to have a mind trained to the exercise of reason and reflection—opened to the sense of rectitude and responsibility—and a frame developed by the appliances essential to health (Gillies 1847d, 227–28)

In this light, one can no longer read Grimstone's argument as simply demanding proof that women were properly educated in order to grant them the right to vote. Instead, what Grimstone seemed to be saying was that once a proper education system was established, in which all members of the nation, including women, could be properly educated in the use of their reason, there could be no excuse for not granting them the vote or the possibility to contend for public offices. It was not a matter of each individual woman proving that she deserved to vote (for example, by taking a test), it was an argument about the material conditions that should be met for extending the vote to everyone and guaranteeing a better society as a result.

As for women's participation in politics in general, Grimstone, answering a conservative writer who claimed that women should have 'no party', argued that politics was not separate from everyday life, but an element present in every aspect of human interaction. As such it required and demanded the attention of everyone, including women:

³⁹ The Representation of the People Act of 1832 gave the vote to small landowners, shopkeepers, and tenant farmers, among others.

[there is] a very common and a very mischievous mistake—a notion that politics are to be regarded as distinct from, and disconnected with the other branches of human economy; instead of being, as they are, intertissued with all human circumstances, and thus deserving, nay demanding, the vital attention of every rational creature from the dawn of intellect unto its decay. (M. L. G. 1836, 78–79)

Hence, Grimstone did not see women’s participation in politics as a mere option, but as their duty as rational creatures. By remarking that politics were enmeshed in every aspect of human life, Grimstone foresaw what the women's liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s would formulate as “the personal is political”, intending the term “political” not just as the electoral party process, but as a system of gendered power relationships (Millett 2016 [1969]; Hanisch 2006 [1970]).

With the idea that politics was “intertissued with all human circumstances”, the reforms that Grimstone called for were not limited to the public sphere: they were also closely related to a reorganisation of the domestic and family structure, in which both men and women were called to participate, as equals, in the roles of co-operators and co-architects of a better society.

3.2. *“Men and women would marry, not because one wanted a home and another a housekeeper....”*: *Condemnation of the Contemporary Institution of Marriage*

For Mary Leman Grimstone, matters of education and marriage were intimately related. As her argument went, for a relationship to work the couple needed to agree on certain common principles, values, and interests. However, that commonality could not exist between men and women because the education given to the latter differed abysmally from that afforded to the former. Grimstone upheld this idea in several of her articles, as well as in her novels. In “Self-Dependence”, she affirmed:

The sympathy of appreciation is surely essential to a union of affection or friendship; but how is this, still less the sympathy of affinity, to exist between beings so oppositely educated as men and women? Were they never destined to meet—were they never called on to co-operate in the business of life—some excuse for such a system might be framed; but when they are called to form the most intimate union, to co-operate in the most important duties, it is impossible not to brand the system with the name of insanity. (M. L. G. 1835b, 601)

In “Men and Women” Grimstone had already stated that both the improvement of the world and universal happiness depended upon the fact that the union of men and women in

marriage was “supported and preserved by INTELLECTUAL SYMPATHY” (M. L. G. 1834b, 102) (uppercase in original). For Grimstone, intellectual sympathy between the spouses would also guarantee fidelity, because husband and wife could then participate on equal terms in active and friendly conversation, and men would not need to find distractions outside the home. For this to happen, men and women needed to receive the same education and instruction: if the wife had not had the chance of a proper education before marriage, Grimstone argued that the husband should take upon himself the pleasure and duty of educating his wife as a way of guaranteeing real sympathy between them.

Therefore, for Grimstone marriage should not be an economic or political arrangement between the parties, but a union of love between partners who consider each other as equals in dealing with the business of life. In “The Insipid”, Grimstone declared:

Were all beings educated to be able to provide for themselves, to prefer a frugal self-dependence to pampered dependence on others; were all in thought, word, and deed as free as the nature of humanity admits, then, when the summer-time of love came upon the heart, neither lucre nor licentiousness would profane it: men and women would marry, not because one wanted a home and another a housekeeper, but because each required a shrine and a sanctuary for the superabundant affections flowering in the heart (M. L. G. 1835h, 647).

This way of conceiving the marriage union was common among Radical Unitarians. According to Gleadle, “central to the radical unitarian perception of marriage, then, was their insistence that it should be the union of two equal, and, just as important, *loving* partners” (1995, 115) (italics original to the text). Radical Unitarians considered loveless marriage a sin, and some even compared it to prostitution.

Although Grimstone's theorisations did not go as far as equating loveless marriage to prostitution, she did develop the idea that arranged marriages were a social malady. In this category, Grimstone placed not only those marriages that had been entirely arranged, but also those based on mercenary considerations of rank, money, or social standing. Because her criticisms came from a feminist standpoint, she also heavily condemned men's expectation of total submission and servility from women, once married.

It is possible to identify two ways in which Grimstone developed her criticisms of the contemporary institution of marriage. On the one hand, she criticised the idea of marriage based on material considerations of rank and money, that is, the marriage market. On the other, she analysed married life, showing examples of both good and bad marriages. These criticisms were inevitably intertwined. In Grimstone's stories, if the marriage had been entered into for

spurious or mercenary reasons, then it was almost certainly condemned to be an unhappy union. On the contrary, if the marriage had been celebrated because there was love and real sympathy between the spouses, who saw each other as equals, then the union would likely be a happy one.

3.2.1. *Of Courtship, the Marriage Market and all the Wrong Reasons to Get Married*

If marriage was to be based on love, then the reasons for entering into it had to be pure. The spouses had to be motivated by sentiments of mutual appreciation and sympathy, regardless of rank or money. They also had to see each other as equals, not searching for a servant in a wife or a master in a husband. Basing her writings on these ideas, Grimstone created stereotypical characters both in her novels and in her short stories that represented two different poles. One group of characters represents those that see marriage as a business transaction, a way of obtaining rank, money, or even securing a place in society. In this group readers can find Lady Egerton and her daughter Julia, as well as Lord Harry Arden, all from *Louisa Egerton*. Lady Bevill and Lord Dromore, the illicit lovers of *Woman's Love*, are also part of this first category. The other group of characters are the sensible, sound-minded ones who value sympathy as well as compatibility when entering the sacred union of marriage. In this second category are Ida Dorrington and Charles Beresford from *Woman's Love*, as well as young Magdalene Melburn from *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*.

As described in the overview of *Louisa Egerton*, Lady Egerton's greatest obsession was placing her daughter among the highest ranks of society by guaranteeing her marriage to Lord Eardley, which would make Julia a Countess. The union between Julia Egerton and Lord Eardley had been discussed by Sir William and the late Earl of Elville, who on his deathbed expressed his desire for the marriage to take place. However, fearing that Julia could see the match as an imposition, Sir William and Lady Egerton had never told her about the planned union. Also, Sir William was firm in his idea that "he never would compel his daughter to take any steps repugnant to her feelings", hoping, nevertheless, that Eardley could win Julia's heart (Grimstone 1830, 333).

Julia, for her part, is portrayed as a coquette and a fashionista, always worrying about shining the brightest, and being content with having a court of admirers around her:

Julia lived but in the gaze of the world, in the buzz of its applauses. She flew from scene to scene, with a restless desire of display...

Fickle and capricious by nature, the labours of vanity had rendered her versatile. As variety was to her the greatest of all charms, she thought she could not charm more than by combining a perpetual variety in herself. All the accomplishments which are the grand auxiliaries of beauty, and chief agents of coquetry, she had cultivated with the most indefatigable care ... on the wing for universal conquest and dominion, she determined to render her mind as brilliant as her form, and confirm by her wit the triumphs of her beauty.

...[But] she only sought to dazzle ... Julia had not the ground-work on which all that is most noble and amiable in humanity can be raised; she had no warmth of heart, no steadiness of mind; she was, in fact, an ignis fatuus, and beamed but to lead astray (Grimstone 1830, 64–65)

Of all of her admirers, Sir Harry Arden, “although a married man, was one of the most devoted of Julia’s adorers” (Grimstone 1830, 65). Although at one point Julia believes that she has fallen in love with Stafford Monteith, the course of the novel reveals that to her he was just one of her many conquests, whereas he thought they were both committed to their love. Lady Egerton, fearing that Julia would act on her infatuation with Monteith, “decided that the safest step, which, under existing circumstances, she could pursue, was to make Julia a partner in the scheme in which her own elevation was so deeply concerned” (Grimstone 1830, 495). With a little help from Miss Dickson, “A new light broke upon Julia ... The splendid destiny for which she appeared designed, drove from her mind every other thought, —from her heart every feeling, every wish, but such as fed the insatiate hopes of vanity and ambition” (502). Hence, she decided, at least in appearance, to focus all of her energies on conquering the Earl’s heart. However, Lord Eardley felt trapped by the promise he had made to his late father about marrying Julia: he could see that “her soul appeared the barren region of vanity” and that “much that in Louisa was real, in Julia was affected; but with an art so successful as to escape the detection of all but a peculiarly nice observer” (592-593).

All of Julia’s vanity and ambition succumbed, however, to her ill-informed mind and her fascination with Lord Harry Arden’s antics. Before her union with Lord Eardley could take place, she ran away with her lover, ruining her reputation and breaking her parents’ hearts. Lord Arden was a married man, a union he had entered under pressure from his late father. In her youth, Lady Arden had been the ward of Sir Harry’s father, who arranged the marriage between her and his son only to guarantee that all of her money remained within his family. It was an unhappy marriage from the beginning, and Lady Arden lived a sad, secluded life. By disappearing with Sir Harry, Julia could only hope to become his mistress and live a life of

vice. But they were both too much the products of fashion, variety, and whim to think beyond satisfying their more immediate desires and passions.

If the marriage between Julia and Eardley had gone ahead, it would have been an unhappy one, making both of them miserable, because it would have been contracted for all the wrong reasons. The wrong reason for getting married can be noble, as was the case with Lord Eardley and his promise to his dying father, or Louisa's refusal to recant her word to Major Selton. However, this does not alter the fact that the union is not based on love and sympathy. In this case, the reasons are not per se negative or mercenary: they are founded on a misplaced sense of duty, for which the end result will still be the suffering of the spouses, or, at least, of one of them.

The union between a coquette and a reasonable man, which would have occurred in *Louisa Egerton* with the marriage of Julia and Lord Eardley, is shown with the Bevills in *Woman's Love*. Lady Bevill is depicted as a "star in the hemisphere of fashion" and a "finished coquette" (Grimstone 1832a, I:338, 340). She had married Sir John Bevill because he offered her a position in society. While Sir John believed himself to have fallen in love, Lady Bevill did not love him: he was just her way of securing the titles of wife and Lady. They had nothing in common. While "Sir John was as quiet a piece of humanity as had ever been permitted to breathe, [and] would have been content to rest, like one of his own oaks, for ever, upon the spot that gave him birth" (339), Lady Bevill preferred the life of fashion, parties, and soirees. Her dissipation comes to a climax when she takes Lord Dromore as her lover. Lord Dromore himself was in a loveless marriage, having chosen his wife "from motives of interest, ambition and expediency" (Grimstone 1832a, I:324). Therefore, both the Dromores and the Bevills are constructed as examples of how the wrong reasons for getting married can make the spouses suffer.

Grimstone did not only depict negative examples. The most powerful instrument she used was to show how reason and sense could be the right counsellors when it came to matters of the heart. In *Woman's Love*, the union of Ida Dorrington and Charles Beresford represents a relationship between two kindred souls regardless of money, rank, or position, based solely on love and real compatibility. At first, both of them were afraid of what they could offer each other, neither having any real standing in society, but soon they realise that all that matters for a happy life together is accordance in character and interests. The conversation between the characters about their mutual feelings, which ends with their decision to join their destinies, best exemplifies the problems with the marriage market and what a union based on love meant for Grimstone.

When Charles first tries to declare his love for Ida, she attempts to persuade him against it because of her position as entirely dependant on Lady Fitzarran's generosity:

I feel honoured by your preference—flattered by it ... but I have, though undesignedly, perhaps, created a false impression regarding myself. In the companion of Lady Fitzarran, honoured and caressed as you behold me, you are perhaps unaware of the orphan, the portionless dependant you have honoured (Grimstone 1832b, II:273–74)

Charles feels almost insulted by Ida's answer. He does not seek her love for monetary reasons, but because he believes there is real sympathy between them:

Miss Dorrington ... When I offered you my heart, I did not tell you it was all I had to offer. Will you think the deep devotion of that sufficient? —I judge your nature by my own, I will not suppose myself less qualified to speak to you of love, because I can boast none of the advantages of fortune (Grimstone 1832b, II:275–76)

Ida is flattered by his declaration but still argues against their union, reminding him that “however the fortuneless may sympathise with, they rarely assist each other” (Grimstone 1832b, II:277). He does soften his plea, declaring:

...it is those who most fondly sympathize with us, that yield us the most faithful and efficient aid ... You are all I covet; in giving me yourself, you give me honour, happiness, and wealth. Tell me but that I may rely on such a reward, and I will not ask to appropriate the pearl till I can shrine it as it merits to be shrined. (Grimstone 1832b, II:277)

Finally, they both accept their love for each other, and “in a long and uninterrupted walk the sentiments of either heart were fully developed, discovering that perfect accordance which gives the fairest promise of happiness” (Grimstone 1832b, II:277). Soon after, Charles declares his honourable intentions towards Ida to Lady Fitzarran. The latter worries about Ida's future, because, notwithstanding her ward's wisdom, she sees Ida and Charles' reciprocal lack of fortune and rank as an impediment to their union. Therefore, with the utmost gentleness, Lady Fitzarran tries to direct Ida's feelings towards Sir Constantine, an aristocratic acquaintance who had also shown his interest in marrying Ida:

Mr. Beresford has his fortune to make, a precarious task, especially to a man of so independent a mind ... On the other hand, with fewer personal or mental claims it is true, yet worthy and well-informed, of established fortune and acknowledged connexion; there is Sir Constantine;

I must own, I should have been far better pleased to have found that you had favoured him
(Grimstone 1832b, II:284)

However, Ida does not care for fortune, rank, position, or connections. She believes that the foundation for a perfect union, or at least a good one, is compatibility of character and sympathy of affection, which are the elements she shares with Charles:

“There are few circumstances,” cried Ida, “in which I would not implicitly submit to your judgment; but in the present instance, were my promise yet to give, were I free as when first I came an orphan to your door, I could not, regarding the baronet, avail myself of it. I am decidedly averse to his character, and no advantages to be derived from rank and fortune can compensate the unhappiness attendant upon disaccordance. On the grounds of rank and fortune, I have no claims to make; but if I had, I would relinquish them in favour of a union in which I might be compelled to tax my own exertion to sustain existence, but in which my heart and judgment might be satisfied, rather than sit supinely down with wealth and distinction, and alienated sentiments...” (Grimstone 1832b, II:284–85).

Lady Fitzarran accepts Ida's decision (as already described in the overview of the novel in section 2.2.2.) and, more importantly, comes to terms with the fact that her ward and Charles are meant for each other. The doubts that each of the three characters had about Ida and Charles' union were all material ones, and not based on concerns about love or compatibility. With these discussions, Grimstone is trying to highlight the pervasive nature of the idea that marriage was not a matter of sympathy and compatibility, but, like other writers of time had suggested, “merely a matter of bargain and sale” (Gleadle 1995, 116 citing W.B. Adams).

Ida and Charles accepting their love for each other, regardless of their social standing, serves to exemplify that marriage should be based on a real affinity in terms of values, principles, and goals between the spouses. Later, when Ida decides to keep her promise despite her changed circumstances and the false accusations of forgery against Charles, this idea is fortified because it proves that their union is based on real love.

Grimstone reaffirmed her belief in the importance of marriage as a union based on love, understood as affinity and compatibility between husband and wife, in her other writings. In *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, this element and the fact that it should be considered before entering into the marriage contract is exemplified by young Magdalene Melburn and her discourse to Ruth Mezrack, to justify her rejection of Marmion's proposal:

I have listened to the history of my mother from your lips, from the lips of Mrs. Trevor; and I have vowed, in the secret chambers of my heart, I will not be, for want of heed, a martyr and a victim. I can master my passions. I feel the pride and power of the empire I have gained. I will not mate myself unequally—to one that is the slave of his. None would take on them the duty of a wife heedlessly that have thought upon it as I have done. Irrevocable and awful as it is, if not animated by enduring love and deep respect, what does it become? I could not continue to love where I had ceased to feel esteem—I should become a miserable bondwoman or a moral bankrupt, and either way I must suffer; for though baseness palliates it does not sanction abandonment (Grimstone 1833b, II:211–12)

This discourse has another function. It shows that love is not a matter of the heart, but of the mind. For Grimstone, love was not an irrational feeling of attraction, but a well-thought, rational decision based on recognisable sympathy and compatibility. What her novels try to demonstrate is that love has to be based on a sensible evaluation of each other's characteristics, aiming at determining congeniality and compatibility. Love is supposed to elevate, not to debase, but for this elevation to happen the union between two souls has to be based on true affinity and solid values.

Her characters, whether we are referring to Louisa Egerton and Lord Eardley, to Ida Dorrington and Charles Beresford, or to Magdalene Melburn and Arthur Trevor, did not marry out of an irrational and irresistible passion, but based on a sedate love, which came from a true understanding of their own minds and sentiments, as well as those of their future spouses. The characters that succumbed to their passions were ultimately condemned by them. Julia Egerton, by running off with Sir Harry Arden, condemned herself to a life of vice and perdition. Marmion Beaucaire, unwilling or unable to control his urges and his unjustified jealousy, died at the hands of the woman he betrayed.

3.2.2. *“Marriage is the most hazardous of all engagements...”: A Critique of the Contemporary Marriage Law*

Under common law, both in England and its colonies, marriage and the legal status of married women were governed by the institution of coverture and the legal fiction of the *femme covert*: once married, the legal personality of a woman was subsumed in that of her husband, becoming one subject under the law. As Zaher states:

Under coverture, a wife simply had no legal existence ... Any income from property she brought into the marriage was controlled by her husband, and if she earned wages outside the

home, those wages belonged to him. If he contracted debts, her property went to cover his expenses ... upon marriage the husband and wife became one—him. (2002, 460–61)

Coverture's origins can be traced to medieval English law. As Charles J. Reid explains, it is possible to find vestiges of this legal fiction in several thirteenth-century treaties, and by “the fourteenth century, the English common lawyers began to speak of a married woman as *feme covert*—this term meaning the absorption of the wife's legal personality into that of her husband's” (2012, 1128) (italics in original). The justification for coverture, which was as much legal as it was ideological, changed over the centuries, “with a wife variously understood to be the dependent subordinate of her husband or, indeed, to have become “one flesh” with him or one person at law” (Stretton and Kesselring 2013, 4). However, the effects remained the same: married women lost all rights to their property and were considered under the cover of their husbands, which ideologically justified their treatment as subservient and inferior. Most scholars concur on the fact that it was William Blackstone’s work, published in 1760, which “served to enshrine the principle of “unity of person” as being at the core of coverture” (Stretton and Kesselring 2013, 7). In his Commentaries, Blackstone described coverture as follows:

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our law-french a *feme-covert* . . . under the protection and influence of her husband, her baron, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture...

For this reason, a man cannot grant anything to his wife, or enter into covenant with her: for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence; and to covenant with her, would only be to covenant with himself...

The husband is bound to provide his wife with the necessaries by law, as much as himself; and, if she contracts debts for them, he is obliged to pay them...

If the wife be injured in her person or her property, she can bring no action for redress without her husband’s concurrence, and in his name, as well her own; neither can she be sued... But in trials of any sort they are not allowed to be evidence for, or against, each other: partly because it is impossible their testimony should be indifferent, but principally because of the union of person...

But though our law in general considers man and wife as one person, yet there are some instances in which she is separately considered; as inferior to him, and acting by his compulsion. And therefore all deeds executed, and acts done, by her, during her coverture,

are void... She cannot by will devise lands to her husband, unless under special circumstances for at the time of making it she is supposed to be under his coercion...

These are the chief legal effects of marriage during the coverture; upon which we may observe, that even the disabilities which the wife lies under are for the most part intended for her protection and benefit; so great a favourite is the female sex of the laws of England (Blackstone as cited by Zaher 2002, 460) (*italics in original*)

As Tim Stretton and Krista J. Kesselring indicate, Blackstone presented coverture as a human creation that benefited both parties, and even “suggested that wives consented to this subordination when they consented to marry” (2013, 14). Even if the material effects of coverture could be insignificant in day-to-day life, i.e., married women went to the market to provide their families with the necessary goods, effectively entering into different kinds of bargains on their own, and husbands continued to 'grant' gifts to their wives, its ideological weight and impact were enormous. As Reid affirms:

The vocabulary of coverture was intended to express and enforce a total and complete subordination of married women to men at common law. It was a teaching device and its lessons were profound and unambiguous. It told women that they were inferior, it sanctified their inferiority through religious faith, and then made their subordination complete through legal disability. (2012, 1127).

Coverture also included the husband's physical power over his wife. He could physically 'chastise' her, and she could not legally deny him sexual access. Therefore, this legal fiction “handed over to a recalcitrant or vindictive husband the keys to his personal kingdom” (Stretton and Kesselring 2013, 10).

The collection of essays edited by Stretton and Kesselring about the development, perpetuation, and reform of the fiction of coverture shows how it impacted the lives of women, married and single, in England and the common law world. They also demonstrate how the institution was established, circumvented, and resisted while providing “a final reminder that coverture, while not monolithic or insuperable, remained remarkably resilient and restrictive well into the nineteenth century” (Stretton and Kesselring 2013, 19).

In England, the first real change to the institution of coverture came with the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, which “gave women married after 1870 the right to own and control certain forms of property and thus provided them with the opportunity to gain control of a larger share of household resources and alter the distribution of resources within the household” (Combs 2006, 52). The Act was the result of a long political and parliamentary

debate on the matter, in which John Stuart Mill played a significant role in defending women's right to their own property. Some historians and scholars believe that the public debate around marriage laws in England started in the 1850s, when Barbara Leigh Smith “formed a Married Women’s Property Committee that in 1856 circulated and submitted to the House of Commons a petition demanding for married women the same rights over property that were enjoyed by *femes sole* and men” (Steinbach 2004, 253). However, Gleadle’s research shows that during the 1830s and 1840s “radical unitarians made repeated attacks upon the oppressive nature of the existing marriage laws”, “without which the campaigns of the 1850s cannot be fully understood” (1995, 109, 108). The way Grimstone treated the argument of marriage in her writings can be considered as part and consequence of the Radical Unitarian effort to abrogate the unjust marriage laws.

Both in her novels and in several of her articles, Grimstone rejected the legal fiction of coverture, both in its material and ideological effects. In *Character; or Jew and Gentile*, she uses a conversation between Mrs Melburn and Agnes to illustrate the injustices of the institution of marriage, directly referencing Blackstone. Mrs Melburn confesses to Agnes that she had authored many works but had had to conceal them in anonymity to keep her earnings, because otherwise her husband would certainly have appropriated and squandered her hard-earned money, as he was entitled to do by law. Agnes asks her why she conformed to this injustice. Mrs Melburn says that if there were any laws that attempted, in any way, to correct the social wrongs of marriage, she would have appealed to them. Agnes passionately responds that laws cannot help them, but the day will come when men realise that the laws which govern marriage are as evil and ignorant as sorcery:

...law only adds insult to injury — mortification to misfortune ... No, no, keep to the ambushade of deception, rather than the array of legal justice ... the day will be when men will look back upon it as they do now on sorcery and witchcraft, in spite of all that its apologists, with Blackstone at the head of them, can say in its defence (Grimstone 1833a, I:95).

In her previous novels, Grimstone had already given indications of her criticisms of the laws that governed married life. In *Louisa Egerton*, Stafford Monteith established a kind of trust in favour of his sister upon her marriage, one that was to “be settled upon herself” (Grimstone 1830, 754), to be managed and administered by herself and not by her husband, in opposition to what coverture laws ordered. And in *Woman’s Love*, Ida’s marital vows did not include the promise to obey Charles: “placing her hand in the hand of Charles, vowed ‘to love

him, to honour him, to keep him in sickness, and in health; to forsake all others, and cleave unto him alone.” (Grimstone 1832b, III:354). This reflected the view Radical Unitarians and other Dissenters had on traditional contemporary marriage vows, seeing them as an instrument that “perpetuated the notion of a relationship in which one partner could demand total submission from the other” (Gleadle 1995, 114).

Throughout *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* Grimstone continued to criticise the marriage laws of her time, using Agnes as her voice. In a discussion with Mr Coverley, Agnes ascribes to habit and custom the indifference with which the tyrannical institution of marriage is seen, “what but habit could make us regard with indifference anything so tyrannical in structure as the laws of marriage? Woman is a sacrifice to society, and to victimize her is made legal, and is, therefore, safe”. When Mr Coverley tries to rebuke her assertion against English law, she reminds him that “laws ... are everywhere made for the strong against the weak” (Grimstone 1833a, I:146–47). The argument about laws being made in favour of the rulers, and not those ruled over, would be a consistent one in Grimstone’s work. In “The Imbecile”, the first story in her series “Sketches of Domestic Life”, she declared:

...legislators of all sorts are ever without sympathy for those they govern; the old make laws for the young; the rich for the poor; the men for the women: thus laws are not adapted to the necessities, or congenial to the nature of those obliged to obey them, but of those who dispense them; hence law is continually only another name for tyranny; it is the legalized will of the powerful brought into operation on the powerless, who, by resistance, (which as naturally arises from oppression as heat from friction,) create an under current running against control; from this conflict have sprung all the moral diseases which doctors, divines, and lawyers, with their poisons, prisons, and mad-houses have been called to remedy. (M. L. G. 1835c, 148)

This last sentence, with its references to “moral diseases” and “mad-houses”, recalls more recent theories about how accusations of madness and wickedness against women were actually attempts to maintain the patriarchal structure and crush any attempts at resistance⁴⁰. It also vaguely evokes the argument of Wollstonecraft's last unfinished novel, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, where the protagonist, Maria, is imprisoned in an insane asylum after having suffered innumerable debasements and abuse at the hands of an evil, tyrannical husband.

⁴⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the construction of femininity and mental insanity see Showalter, Elaine. 1985. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830 - 1980*. New York: Penguin Books.

This possibility of abuse, that the legal fiction of coverture always left open, is the last and strongest argument that Agnes has against the injustices of the contemporary marriage laws. In the same discussion between her and Mr Coverley, Mr Trevor was also present. He, trying to conciliate and to defend his sex, affirms “there are few, among cultivated men, so selfish as to avail themselves of all the power they possess” (Grimstone 1833a, I:148). Agnes replies, conceding that men who will not use the full extent of the power at their disposal do exist, and that she hopes there will be more and more of their kind, in time. However, she also remarks that as long as laws exist that allow men to appropriate their wives’ properties and to treat them as second-class citizens, there will be no security for women:

“I am willing to believe there are such,” said Agnes, “and I am convinced their number will increase. Bad laws will be abrogated by disuse before they are repealed by Parliament. But there is no security, while they exist, that he that has a privilege, under some incitement of interest and temptation, may not be led to use it, in spite of equity and even custom...” (Grimstone 1833a, I:148–49)

These arguments show how at least some members of society were aware that the problem with the contemporary marriage laws and the legal fiction of coverture was not just a material one, but first and foremost ideological. The material consequences which could result in the story of poor Mrs Melburn— a woman losing everything, even the fortune that was originally hers, because of the abuse and excesses of her husband— might as well have been an exception. The ideological effects, which implied that men could become, at any time, undisputed potential tyrants in their homes, were pervasive and far more dangerous, because they kept women in a debased, secondary position.

With this in mind, through her articles Grimstone directly denounced and rejected the idea of unity at the base of the legal fiction of coverture. In "Self-dependence" she declared, “I utterly deny the so much talked-of notion of merging self in another” (M. L. G. 1835b, 596), while in her short story “The Notable” she made a direct appeal to her fellow women:

But the animating principle which has awakened the spirit of the working man, must be brought to bear upon the women of all classes ... in like manner must women find and prove that they were not created to feel and think at secondhand, and hardly that; that the tie which unites them to men does not merge them in their husbands, but that it is for women, as equally essential and indispensable co-agents in the work of human progression, to originate high thoughts and views, to advance useful and independent objects, and that the feelings of wife,

mother, daughter, and sister, may co-exist with those of the philosopher, philanthropist, and patriot. (M. L. G. 1835d, 229).

She also denounced the effects this legal fiction had on men's idea of women. In the same short story, Grimstone derides her protagonist for seeking a wife only because he wanted someone to “minister to his comfort [and] his vanity” (M. L. G. 1835d, 226). Dr Brennan, the protagonist of the story, was a secluded scholar who enjoyed tranquillity and quiet. When a fortune came his way, he secured for himself the service “of two or three servants” and tried to gather around him “a circle of admiring friends”. However, “he soon discovered that servants and friends disturbed his quiet and his studies”. By observing his neighbours, Dr Brennan decided that the solution to his problems was:

...to take unto himself a wife; that is, (acting with the views and from the feelings which the doctor did,) an upper servant, who, unlike every other servant, should have no power of obtaining, retaining, or possessing any independent property, nor any power of quitting her service, however unsuited to her it might be, unless for the coffin and the grave. (M. L. G. 1835d, 226)

Nevertheless, because his decision was based on petty considerations and a low appreciation of women's capacities, he chose a woman he believed “would superintend the economy of the kitchen and the comfort of the parlour, without interfering with the library” (M. L. G. 1835d, 227). This union ends badly because neither of the spouses took into account the necessary harmony that needed to exist between husband and wife. Mrs Brennan was not the quiet servant the doctor expected her to be, and was also, unfortunately, a malicious gossip. The story ends in tragedy when the couple's ward, Harold, who had been raised primarily by Mrs Brennan, a “narrow ignorant woman” (234), decides to poison the family dog in an outburst of rage and resentment against Dr Brennan. However, he mistakenly poisons Mrs Brennan, with all the suspicion falling on her husband. Consequently, Dr Brennan's ill-taken decision of marrying in search of an upper servant, condemned him, his wife, and their family to a sorrowful destiny.

Even if most of the examples in Grimstone's stories are of bad marriages, for her not everything was lost. The union of her protagonists at the end of each of her novels represents hope for the future, with couples that are compatible and spouses that regard each other as equals. However, the next stage of their married life is left to the imagination of the readers.

There is one exception, the marriage of Agnes and Mr Trevor. The Trevor family is constructed by Grimstone as an example of what a good marriage can accomplish.

Grimstone announces the possibility of Agnes and Mr Trevor's union by asserting their remarkable compatibility, which made them a perfect couple:

There was a singular concordance in their minds, manners, persons, and fortune. Both were of that range of intellect which is in advance of the age in which they live; both had that generous conciliation of manner that reconciles mankind to superiority; both had passed the first period of youth, and both had a mediocre share of personal advantages; while the fortune of each, being respectable, might, when united, with economy on her side, and skill on his, become considerable (Grimstone 1833a, I:129–30)

From then on, the relationship of the Trevors is described in direct contrast to the Beaucaire marriage. While the latter had been a “match more of prudence than passion” (Grimstone 1833a, I:13), the former was based on true sympathy, thus “Mr. and Mrs. Trevor designed to make the sweets of their union extend throughout the whole of their lives” (Grimstone 1833a, I:156). Whereas the Trevors truly enjoyed one another's company, entering into lively conversations and reflections, because they saw each other as equals, Ralph Beaucaire refused to hold any kind of serious conversation with his wife, affirming, “I would much rather not speak to her at all than speak to her of that which she does not understand, and I cannot talk about what she does” (Grimstone 1833a, I:49). This attitude is frowned upon by both Mr Trevor and Agnes. Mr Trevor, in direct answer to Ralph Beaucaire's assertion, entreats him to dedicate himself to the education of his wife. Agnes, in a separate discussion with Ralph Beaucaire, scolds him for his complaints about his wife, when he has done nothing to help her improve:

You took to wife, as matter of convenience it should seem, a weak girl. Was it her fault she was such, or that you chose her? Six years she has been yours; in that time you have discovered all her deficiencies—tried to remedy none. If it is your calamity that you are married to a woman you do not love, is it none that she is married to a man that does not love her? It is fruitless to regret the past—it is material to improve the present—to prepare at least prospective and comparative happiness. Mrs. Beaucaire may be directed to better things, would you become her guide (Grimstone 1833a, I:133–34)

Unfortunately, Ralph Beaucaire refuses once again to do it, claiming “I am not the one to do it. I want patience, perseverance, and forbearance— to me, of all men, such an effort were

most impracticable” (Grimstone 1833a, I:134). Both Mr Trevor and Agnes argue that failing to educate Mrs Beaucaire would have dreadful results in the upbringing and education of Marmion: however, Mr Beaucaire does not listen to them. Grimstone would stress the idea that husbands could and should educate their wives, which would ensure the improvement not just of women, but of the couple as a whole. In her poem "The Poor Woman's Appeal to her Husband", the protagonist pleads for knowledge and her husband's attention:

...I would ask some share of hours that you at clubs bestow—
Of knowledge that you prize so much, may I not something know?
Subtract from meetings among men, each eve, an hour for me—
Make me companion of your soul, as I may surely be!
...
And if we be not rich and great, we may be wise and kind;
And as my heart can warm your heart, so my mind your mind
(M. L. G. 1834c, 351–52)

According to Gleadle, “This poem evoked a powerful response from the readership”, and Charles Cowden Clarke, an English author and scholar well known at the time, even wrote to Grimstone “claiming it had awakened his mind” (Gleadle 1995, 143). This interest in women’s education was part of a greater agenda to reform the world through better wives and mothers, in which husbands and fathers also had to play their part. Therefore, in Grimstone’s parallel between the Beaucaires and the Trevors, their role as parents is also scrutinised.

When Ralph Beaucaire receives a knighthood, this elevation in social status decreases his and his wife’s virtues while augmenting their vices and the distance between them: “Sir Ralph desired to be a man of consequence, his wife desired to be a woman of fashion; each prescribed the line in which they resolved to move, and retired into it” (Grimstone 1833a, I:163). This also increased the enormous differences that already existed between Mrs Agnes Trevor and Lady Amelia Beaucaire, “Energy and satisfaction marked Mrs Trevor's life; languor and dissipation divided the profitless days of Lady Beaucaire. The first was a happy mother without vanity, the latter was a vain mother without happiness” (Grimstone 1833a, I:163–64). It also impacted the relationship between Sir Ralph and Mr Trevor:

A parallel no less striking could be drawn between Sir Ralph and Mr. Trevor. The one had the show, the other the substance of felicity ... The first was nominally a father, and a husband; the latter was really such. Pride, vanity, and self-interest sometimes appealed to the knight by these titles; truth, tenderness, and devotion always addressed Trevor by those

names. Wealth without riches, and riches beyond wealth; luxury without enjoyment, and enjoyments beyond luxury, were the distinctions existing between the fate and fortune of the friends, who had, to use the beautiful simile of Coleridge, left the mountain brow of youth a united current, but parting into separate streams in their course, diverged, never to unite again. (Grimstone 1833a, I:164)

This emphasis on the role of men as committed husbands and fathers aligns with Radical Unitarian efforts to “promote new ideas of parenthood”, which included positing “progressive notions of fatherhood” (Gleadle 1995, 103). Therefore, the early feminists who were part of the Radical Unitarian circle “projected a vision of paternity whereby men shared with women the caring familial role” (Gleadle 1995, 103). These ideas also serve as the context for the speech Mrs Trevor gives to young Magdalene Melburn about how to wisely chose a husband:

We are dazzled by a polished surface, but the moral substance is alone of real consequence. The personal advantages, the wit, the grace that blaze in the assembly and make the favourite of society, depend on the excitements that society furnishes; the being distinguished by these graces is, at the domestic hearth, often the antithesis of what he is in the public room. Beware of those meteor-men that are favourites with women and good fellows with their own sex ... They are, like many actors, slovens and sullens at home, to atone to themselves for their overstrained exertions abroad ... The character to which I allude is everything to the world, to which he is as nothing; and nothing at home, to which he should be everything (Grimstone 1833b, II:220–21)

Grimstone is calling attention to the idea that men could shine in the public sphere while being excused from performing their duties at home. The reform that Grimstone was asking for demanded change not only in the law, but also in homes and the domestic sphere. Like other Radical Unitarians, Grimstone rejected the idea of separate spheres and, instead of wishing to eliminate the family, she wanted to transform it (Gleadle 1995, 106). For Grimstone, as she declared in the preface to *Cleone*, homes “ought to be the candlesticks on which the light should be placed that would give light unto the world; instead of being, as homes too often are, the bushels under which the light is hid – sometimes extinguished” (Grimstone 1834, II:vii).

In her calls for the reformation of the home, Grimstone went as far as asking men to be actively involved in doing housework that was traditionally assigned to women. In her essay “An Appeal to the Better Order of Men in behalf of the Women of the Factory Districts”, Grimstone argues that if factory women had to go out to work while their husbands were

unemployed or worked far fewer hours than them, then women should not bear the burden of housework alone. She proposed, instead, that husbands could and should help their wives in undertaking household duties, “since woman has unfortunately been removed from her proper sphere, home, I think man might there, in some degree, supply her place” (Gillies 1847a, 134). Although Grimstone uses the term “proper sphere” to refer to a woman's place in the home, what she proposed was actually quite revolutionary for the time. As Anna Clark highlights, Grimstone’s argument that “under- or unemployed laboring men ought to assist their wives in domestic labor ... was rarely heard” in nineteenth-century debates about male and female labour (1995, 250).

In one of her first articles for *The People’s Journal*, “A Happy New Year to the People”, Grimstone deplores the division of the home between the public and the private sphere. She states that the sympathy that ought to exist between spouses is “often shut out from the connubial contract”, when the wife is given the inside and the husband the outside, “or in other words, delivering him to the external world for the exercise of his intellectual energies, and leaving her to the narrow scope of the kitchen and the closet, which move little, if any, intellectual power at all” (Gillies 1846a, 39). She believes that the only way of cultivating “sympathy of aims and community of thought” between husband and wife is by giving and demanding the possibility for both men and women to act and be engaged in the public and the private sphere. According to Rogers, with this vision of the union between public and domestic lives, Grimstone was imagining “a public sphere rejuvenated by close ties with the domestic sphere and by the co-operation of reformers from different social classes” (1999, 68).

But more than creating ties and bridges between the public and the private spheres, I posit that Grimstone was aiming at the elimination of the rigid frontiers that seemed to exist between the two. If, as she declared in the 1830s, politics were enmeshed in every aspect of life, then the so-called domestic or private sphere could not, and should not, be separated from the discussions that were taking place in public spaces. This is why she declares “it is not ‘monster meetings,’ but fire-side virtues that will best show and establish the people's power” (Gillies 1846a, 39).

3.3. “*We are all Brethren*”: the Importance of Religious Tolerance

In line with her association with the Radical Unitarians, religious tolerance and the right to practice one’s religion freely, without repercussions or restrictions, had an important presence in Grimstone’s work. She mainly dealt with this argument in her novels, while in her

articles she praised some denominations different from her own, particularly the Society of Friends⁴¹. In *Woman's Love*, Grimstone dealt with the disabilities imposed on Catholics, while in *Character: or, Jew and Gentile*, as its title implies, she argued in favour of the acceptance of the Jewish community.

In *Woman's Love* Grimstone makes several references to Catholic disabilities, describing them as “many and grievous” (Grimstone 1832a, I:313). She makes an effort to portray Catholics in a positive light, through the characters of Lady Fitzarran and her son, Belwin Fitzarran. Lady Fitzarran is a devout Catholic, and she raised her son, the heir to the Earldom of Morrendale, in her faith. However, she is also respectful of other faiths, and never imposed her beliefs on her ward, Ida Dorrington, who was always free to practice her Protestant faith. Lady Fitzarran, as explained in the overview of the novel, functions as the voice of reason and sense, always giving sound advice to the people around her. Belwin, for his part, is presented as a young man with a kind heart, incapable of holding a grudge or fostering feelings of envy or vengeance. This is particularly evident in his reaction to the discovery that Charles Beresford is the eldest son of his father and, as such, has to be recognised as the legitimate heir to the Earldom. Instead of lamenting the loss of his title and rank, Belwin welcomes Charles as a brother with open arms.

In contrast to the good nature of the Catholic characters, Grimstone presents the evils of religious prejudice through two Protestant secondary characters: Admiral Rusport, who represents the prejudice against Catholics by Protestant Dissenters, and Lord Henry Conway, who is part of the Establishment. Admiral Rusport is described as belonging “to a school of the severest sectaries” and having an “intolerant and vindictive spirit” (Grimstone 1832a, I:57, 86). He vehemently opposes the marriage of his daughter, Constance, to Belwin Fitzarran and goes as far as denying the value of their Catholic marriage vows. His religious prejudice and animosity towards Catholics are best described in the following passage:

The first circumstance that occurred to derange this happy equilibrium of his [Admiral Rusport's] spirits was the discovery of his vicinity to a papist family. Fitzarran Abbey was a blot on the fair view on which he looked out. Under the deforming influence of religious prejudice; its stately towers, instead of being beheld as an embellishment to the scene amid which they rose, appeared to him only the strong hold of idolatry and blasphemy. Constance

⁴¹ See, for example, her article “Quaker Women”, published in *The Monthly Repository* in 1835. P. 30–37.

was forbidden to hold any communication with its inhabitants, or to accept any overture of friendship from them (Grimstone 1832a, I:51).

Lord Henry Conway, on his part, is envious of his cousin and enraged at the fact that, notwithstanding his Catholic faith, Belwin is to inherit the title of Earl of Morrendale, and Fitzarran Abbey:

The announcement of Lady Fitzarran induced Lord Conway to rise. Always obnoxious to his severe and illiberal prejudices, since the measure of Catholic Emancipation had been carried, both her ladyship and her son were viewed with increased abhorrence by his lordship, who prepared to withdraw, by a back staircase, to avoid any risk of meeting the gentle disciple of another faith (Grimstone 1832c, III:252-53).

I posit that the novel's emphasis on the positive traits of Catholics, and the religious prejudice of some Protestants, both within the Anglican Church (represented by Lord Henry Conway) and Protestant Dissent (represented by Admiral Rusport), can be read as part of the larger campaign in favour of Catholic Emancipation. Although *Woman's Love* was first published in 1832, three years after the Roman Catholic Relief Act⁴² was passed in Parliament, according to Grimstone the novel was actually written while she was away in Van Diemen's Land. Grimstone had left England in 1825, when the campaigns to eliminate the many restrictions placed upon non-Anglican Christians, including Dissenters and Catholics, were well underway. Her physical distance from England must have made it difficult for Grimstone to keep track of the developments of the repeal and emancipation campaigns. However, as I will explain, both these movements were of the utmost importance for Unitarians and, as such, might have had an impact on Grimstone's take on the world.

Since the Reformation and the foundation of the Church of England, both Dissenters and Catholics had been subject to many political and civil restrictions in England, first due to the penal laws against recusants and then by the Test and Corporations Acts passed by Parliament at the end of the seventeenth century. As R.W. Davis recalls:

The Corporation Act of 1661 and the Test Act of 1673 barred all who did not conform to the Church of England, whether Catholic or Protestant, both from municipal offices and from all military, executive, and administrative offices under the crown. Only in their right to sit in

⁴² This Act allowed Catholics to sit in Parliament at Westminster.

parliament were the Dissenters in a superior position to the Catholics, the Test Act of 1678 never having applied to Dissenters⁴³ (1966, 374)

Some Dissenters had been able to circumvent the Acts by practicing what was termed “occasional conformity”, which, together with the practice of Parliament to pass “an annual amnesty to Dissenters who had infringed the Acts”, had allowed them to hold public office (Halévy 1961a, 403; 1961b, 263). However, by the end of the eighteenth century Dissenters were determined to obtain the total repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, a campaign that ran parallel to the movement for the emancipation of Catholics. According to Davis, the repeal campaign was at first dominated by the views of the Rational Dissenters, for whom “True religious freedom meant the freedom to hold any religious opinions—including Catholic opinions—with complete impunity” (1966, 375). As I have already explained, Unitarians were the main inheritors of the ideas preached by Radical Dissenters and, as such, they held freedom of religion as one of their pillars.

As Mineka states, Unitarians were particularly consistent in their “support of political and religious freedom ... and may be said to have supported every movement in the direction of greater political and religious freedom in the period culminating in the Reform Bill of 1832” (1944, 22–23). This also means that “Unitarians fought zealously for the emancipation of Catholics” even after the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, which had covered all Protestant Dissenters (Mineka 1944, 24).

According to Halévy’s historical research, Unitarians were the first Dissenters to pass “a formal resolution in favour of Catholic Emancipation” in 1825 (1961b, 264). A review of *The Monthly Repository* during those years clearly shows the Unitarians’ position in regard to religious disabilities, the repeal of the Test Acts and the emancipation of Catholics. In an essay published in 1823, Walter Wilson highlighted the political nature of all Dissenters, calling upon them to take any action in their power to criticise and discuss the injustices committed against those who did not belong to the Church of England:

A Dissenter, whatever may be his theological opinions, or however strongly he may feel the supreme importance of religion, is eminently a political character, being made so by the state. It is his duty, therefore, never to lose sight of his situation, nor to forego any fair opportunity for urging its amelioration. In order to inoculate society with just sentiments, he should

⁴³ The Test Act of 1678 required all members of Parliament, both in the House of Lords and in the House of Commons, to make a declaration against the mystery of transubstantiation and the invocation of saints, making it impossible for a Catholic to occupy a seat in Parliament. (The clarification is mine).

frequently bring forward for discussion such topics as the injustices and impolicy of penal laws upon account of religion; the impropriety of connecting Christianity with the state, and thereby rendering it subservient to political purposes; the distinct objects of religion and civil government; the irreligious tendency of test laws... (1823, 394)

A year later, Robert Aspland, the then editor of *The Monthly Repository*, heavily criticised the incongruence of the Protestant Society for Religious Liberty, which had accepted a £20 subscription from the Irish Catholic Association while at the same time opposing the Unitarians Association's proposal to launch a campaign against the Corporation and Test Acts, that would have had a positive impact on the position of Catholics (Davis 1966, 380). Aspland claimed:

The [Catholic] Association has voted a subscription of £20 to the Society in London for defending Religious Liberty ... Is the "Protestant Society" meant, of which Mr. Wilks is one of the Secretaries? If so, we presume the subscription will be returned; this Society, as a body, being known to be so inimical to the Catholic claims, that, rather that they should be granted, they would willingly continue, as Protestant Dissenters, under the oppression of the Corporation and Test Acts (Aspland 1824, 758)

In 1825, a piece entitled "Conduct of Dissenters with regard to Catholic Claims", contained the following admonition to Protestant Dissenters:

If any one class of his Majesty's subjects ought to be less forward than another in opposing the claims of the Roman Catholics, it was the class called Protestant Dissenters ... Did they [the Protestant Dissenters] forget that every public office which they held was by connivance? Did they forget that they were continually liable to be proceeded against, and were only protected from such proceeding by an annual Indemnity Bill? ... Why then should the Dissenter turn round to the Roman Catholic, and say, True it is that I hold office by connivance—true it is, that I am only protected from punishment by the annual Indemnity Bill, yet I am determined that you shall not have extended to you either equal emolument or equal protection? (Aspland 1925, 442)

It was amidst these discussions that Grimstone left England in 1825. Thus, it is possible to suggest that during her time in Van Diemen's Land and while she was writing *Woman's Love*, one source of inspiration came from the campaigns to repeal the Test Acts and obtain Catholic emancipation. Based on the evidence presented, I postulate that Grimstone may have

originally conceived her novel as an instrument to support freedom of religion in general, and Catholic Emancipation in particular.

The difference between the novel's year of publication and the year in which Catholic Emancipation was obtained might be explained, as E. Morris Miller claimed, by the fact that "when composing her novel in Hobart, Mrs. Grimstone would not be aware of the actual year in which the political agitation to remove Roman Catholic disabilities would finally achieve its purpose" (1958, 16). As a result, it is plausible to imagine that following her arrival in England, and after recovering from her nervous breakdown, Grimstone had to make some adjustments to the story to make it fit the political events that had occurred between the writing process and the publication of the novel, while also maintaining the importance of religious tolerance. This last element was important to Grimstone because, even if the Catholic Relief Act of 1829 had granted Catholics full civil rights, including the right to be elected to Parliament, religious prejudice and anti-Catholic sentiment was still present in British society⁴⁴.

In her next novel, *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, Grimstone kept presenting arguments in favour of religious freedom and tolerance, but this time arguing for the acceptance of the Jewish community. As with other themes present in the story, the positive and open attitude towards the Jewish is embodied by Mrs Trevor. Following a description of her temperament and her acceptance of people from all classes, backgrounds, and religious creeds in her house, Mrs Trevor declares:

"We call ourselves Christians," she added, "but where do we recognize our brethren as the children of a common parent, as beings alike powerless at birth, and perishable in death, and filling the intervening space as we can, and not as we would? Exclusiveness is the vice of pride. Better would it please our God to make this world a place of common fellowship, than, like the costly cathedral, with its gilded pews and seatless aisles, a place of invidious distinctions. Even the common of religion has been parcelled out by pride; the selfish line of demarcation drawn where God himself says all are equal! I cannot re-model society; but I may regulate my own house: and my practice shall exemplify my principle. I will endeavour to imitate the Great Master, and say, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,'

⁴⁴ For an in-depth analysis of nineteenth century British anti-Catholicism see, among others, Paz, D. G. 1992. *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press; Hickman, Mary J. 1995. *Religion, Class and Identity: The State, the Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain*. Aldershot: Avebury; Wolfe, John. 1991. *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain 1829–1860*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Wheeler, Michael. 2006. *The Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in Nineteenth-Century English Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

not to learn *of* me, but to learn *with* me, and to learn that greatest, most consolatory of all truths—that we are all brethren.” (Grimstone 1833b, II:233) (italics original to the text).

Her defence was praised by *The Monthly Repository's* review of the novel, in the following terms:

These volumes are well-timed, and it would not be amiss that those peers should read them who are yet deliberating on the legislative conduct towards our Jewish brethren. Not that they will find any direct discussion of the policy of conceding civil rights to the children of Abraham, but they may learn some beautiful lessons on tolerance, for which both their heads and heart will be all the better, and therefore their senatorial conduct more satisfactory (Fox 1833, 550)

The senatorial conduct alluded to in the review refers to the campaign to obtain Jewish Emancipation, which had started in 1829 after the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act. According to Valman: “In view of the apparent tendency towards religious liberalisation evidenced by Catholic Emancipation and by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts ... a group of prominent British Jews ... decided that the climate was right to launch their own campaign” (Valman 2000, 94). From 1830 onwards, fourteen Bills were presented, attempting to remove the disabilities that affected the Jewish community and prevented them from holding public office: “The first bill brought to Parliament in 1830 did not pass the Commons. That of 1833 passed the reformed House of Commons but failed in the House of Lords. Twelve successive bills suffered the same fate” (Sorkin 2019, 211).

According to David Sorkin, “Tories, High Churchmen, and some Liberals opposed them [the Jewish] to defend the nation’s Christian character” (2019, 211). Valman recalls that some Tories also used nationalist arguments to oppose the Jewish campaigns, claiming that “Jews were loyal firstly to other Jews” and not to the British Nation (2000, 94). For their part, some Whigs advocated in favour of Jewish Emancipation, affirming “the right of every free-born citizen to be treated equally before the law in all matters which did not threaten the security of the state, and that any restriction of their liberties constituted ‘persecution’” (Valman 2000, 94–95). Sorkin’s research also claims that the Jewish elite, in campaigning for Jewish emancipation, made alliances with the Radicals, the Nonconformists, and the Whigs to launch “a step-by-step” action to gradually abolish the Jewish disabilities (2019, 211–12).

It is within this turmoil that Grimstone’s novel and its call for brotherhood among all people must be read, even if some of her contemporaries did not seem to have gotten the

message. One of the reviews that Grimstone reported in her scrapbook lamented the insertion of Jewish characters in the plot, saying: “though some Jews are brought in to perform some high parts in the drama they might as well have been allotted to Christians” (1833).

I contend that this review failed to understand the point Grimstone was trying to make. If the virtues and vices ascribed to the Jewish characters could have been attributed to Christian ones, then there is no intrinsic difference between devotees of either faith, and Grimstone’s conclusion “that character, whether innate or acquired, or a mixture of both, can alone be moulded or made by education” (1833b, II:255) is actually strengthened. As Valman recognizes:

Reaching beyond the scope of law in the direction of more comprehensive cultural change, and casting the question of Jewish rights in terms of Enlightenment thinking about the social construction of character, Grimstone locates as much responsibility for the progress of humanity in domestic education as in institutional reform (2000, 109)

Notwithstanding this praise of Grimstone’s novel, in a later work Valman interprets Esther’s last desperate action, killing Marmion and then committing suicide after finding out about his betrayal, as the representation of the alluring Jews who can drive society to unreason, almost deflecting Grimstone’s call for religious tolerance:

...if Jews, in Grimstone’s tale, remind the reader of the universal values of Enlightenment, the carnal Jewess, tantalisingly desirable and fatally desirous, stands for the peril of uncontrolled passion. Not easily reducible to the labels antisemitic or philosemitic, the text tells two different stories at once. Shadowing the civilised, benevolent male Jew and the educated, civic-minded mother, the Jewess represents the potential of both for unreason. (Valman 2007, 16)

However, I argue that Valman fails to recognise that Esther is not the only Jewish woman represented in the story, nor the most relevant. Ruth Mezrack, known for much of the novel only as Hagar, is a noble, educated, and intelligent woman, who without renouncing her faith has found solace within a Christian family, helping and being instrumental in the formation of young Magdalene Melburn's character. When Magdalene discusses her future with Ruth, and whether or not she will accept Marmion's proposal, both recognise the role that Ruth, then Hagar, had played in her education. Magdalene affirms, addressing Ruth: “I have listened to the history of my mother from your lips ... and I have vowed, in the secret chambers of my heart, *I will not be, from want of heed, a martyr or a victim...*”, to which Ruth answers:

“I feel a pride, too, Magdalene, that I have helped to put these weapons into your hand, though ’tis against my own son you use them” (Grimstone 1833b, II:211–12).

Ruth, as a Jewish woman, stands to show that reason is not the exclusive realm of either men or Christians. As such, following the death of her son at the hands of her niece, Ruth “took unto her alike the child of Jew and Gentile, and endowed schools that had for their principle the exclusion of none; for she thought, as God hath mercy unto all, unto all should man have charity” (Grimstone 1833b, II:255).

Therefore, I contend that Grimstone makes her argument in favour of the Jewish community not through Esther Mezrack, but through her grandfather, old Mezrack, and her aunt, Ruth Mezrack.

The Catholic characters in *Woman’s Love*, together with the Jewish characters in *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, show the importance that religious tolerance and religious freedom had for Grimstone. Both novels take the side of the weak, showing that a different faith does not signify wickedness or wretchedness, and that goodness, kindness, sense, and reason can be found in all: all that is needed is the right kind of instruction and education.

3.4. “*The sun never sets on the standard of England*”: Grimstone and English Colonialism

In 1989, Gayatri Spivak demanded that feminist literary criticism take into consideration the matter of imperialism when analysing women’s texts and the cultural representation they offered. According to her, “imperialism, understood as England’s social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English”. Thus, if literature was understood as having a significant role “in the production of cultural representation”, then any analysis of nineteenth-century British literature that did not take into account England’s imperialist and colonial programme would only end up reproducing “the axioms of imperialism” (Spivak 1989, 175).

Imperialism and colonialism are to be understood not only as the material acts of conquering and settling in ‘new territories’ but, more importantly, as a discursive practice. by this I mean, following Mohanty (2003), a series of practices in which ‘the other’ is appropriated, codified, and defined according to the necessities of the Western coloniser, who, in turn, is given the status of subject and civiliser.

This perspective is important in the analysis of any nineteenth-century English literary text, and becomes particularly relevant when analysing figures like Grimstone, who travelled

within the Empire and had a first-hand perspective of the process of colonisation and settlement in the Australian territories.

As stated earlier, Grimstone left England with her sister Lucy and her brother-in-law, Stephen Adey, in 1825 to settle in Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania. According to Roe, "Mary seems to have been a reluctant migrant" (2012, 190), driven to leave England by "financial and emotional stress" (1989, 12). Grimstone led a secluded life once on the island, considering the colony an uncultured place. Grimstone used her time in the colony to write. There is evidence that she wrote *Louisa Egerton* and *Woman's Love* during her journey and while she was living in Van Diemen's Land. According to her scrapbook, she also wrote several poems, contributing them anonymously to the few newspapers available on the island.

One such poem is "The Native's Lament", published anonymously in the *Colonial Times* on 5 May 1826. The poem is written from the perspective of a Tasmanian Aboriginal who laments the loss of his land at the hands of strangers, who have brought only sadness and destruction:

Oh! My country, the stranger has found thy fair clime,
And he comes with the sons of misfortune and crime;
He brings the rude refuse of countries laid waste,
To tread thy fair wilds, and thy waters to taste;
He usurps the best lands of thy native domains,
And thy children must fly, or submit to his chains.
...
Away to the mountains, and leave them the plains,
To pursue their dull toils, and to forge their dark chain (Colonial Times 1826)

In this poem, Grimstone put herself in the place of the Australian Aboriginals, criticising the fact that English colonists had effectively taken their lands, driving them away or trying to enslave them. When the poem's author was still unknown, Elizabeth Webby described "The Native's Lament" as "the first of many aboriginal laments for the coming of white civilization—seen not as a blessing but as a curse" (1980, 46). As it stands, it seems that Grimstone's poem, with its "flat rejection of white civilization", started a trend in early Australian literature in which writers not only expressed "white guilt over treatment of the aboriginal" but also attempted a "detailed depiction of the aboriginal way of life" (Webby 1980, 47).

John O’Leary, building upon Webby’s theorisations, considers that this type of poetry, which he identifies as an Aboriginal lament, was a way in which early English colonisers addressed “the marginalization of Australia’s indigenous people in the face of rapidly expanding European settlement”. According to O’Leary, poetry became a small, circumscribed space “in which conscience-stricken settlers could voice concern over a controversial aspect of colonization” (2011, 47).⁴⁵

This approach to English settlement in Australia, and the suffering of the Aboriginals as a result, seems in line with Grimstone’s concern over different facets of social and moral oppression. Although she focused her energies on denouncing the wrongs suffered by women, she also condemned the abuses present in other aspects of human life, like the class system or the plight of the men and women who worked in the factory districts. For Grimstone, “the principle of wrong and injury is the same in all cases” (M. L. G. 1835a, 107). Different forms of oppression were just different faces of the same malady, of human and moral degradation:

The intelligence which exposes the abuse of power in one department will search it out in others; —the moral courage which rises in behalf of an oppressed people, will take cognizance of the cause of degraded and insulted woman, of the suffering stultified schoolboy, of the back-branded, spirit-broken soldier and sailor. Reviewing all this, it will say— ‘Here is evidence of what power, whether physical or political, when uncombined with benevolence, intelligence, and knowledge, ever effects; against such power all who think rationally, or feel kindly, must prosecute a crusade...’ (M. L. G. 1835a, 106–7)

However, there are no other references to the suffering of the Australian Aboriginals in Grimstone's body of work. In the articles she published after her return to England, Grimstone seems to have actually praised the colonial efforts and used them as a vehicle to highlight the moralising force of women.

In “Self-dependence”, Grimstone describes England’s imperial presence with nonchalance, as if it was only normal for the English to expand their ruling everywhere possible:

It has been observed that the sun never sets on the standard of England; before his evening rays have left the shores of Ireland, his morning beams have gilded the spires of Quebec; it is light on the blue hills of Australia before darkness has closed on Lake Ontario; and the

⁴⁵ For further research on early Australian literature and its depiction of the Aboriginal population see: Elizabeth Webby. 1980. ‘The Aboriginal in Early Australian Literature’, *Southerly* 40, no. 1: 45–63; O’Leary, John. 2011. *Savage Songs & Wild Romances: Settler Poetry and the Indigene, 1830-1880*. New York: Brill | Rodopi.

reveilléo has sounded at Calcutta before the retreat has beaten at Sidney (M. L. G. 1835b, 604).

This kind of description seems to confirm Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose's assertion that the "empire was, in important ways, taken-for-granted as a natural aspect of Britain's place in the world and its history", and that, at the time, "no one doubted that Great Britain was an imperial nation state" (2006, 2). This seems to have been Grimstone's attitude towards the Empire in her novels. She includes references to the Empire in an unquestioning manner, as a normal element of English life. In *Louisa Egerton* there are many references to India. The most relevant one relates to Lady Arden. She had been born in India under the name Miss Corbett, but as a child had been sent to England as a ward of Lord Arden, who married her to his son as soon as she became a young lady (Grimstone 1830, 56-7). Lady Arden is always accompanied by a faithful Indian maid, named Anna (a Western name), who is described as follows: "She was of a superior cast, and possessed all the indications of that temperament which belongs to her climate, as well as some evidences of superior intelligence" (Grimstone 1830, 223). However, Grimstone does not question Anna's uprooting from her home country. India is also where Major Selton carried out his military service, and where some of Lady Alicia's relatives, the Duke and Duchess of Ancaster, were stationed. All these references are made in a matter-of-fact tone, never questioning the English presence overseas.

In *Woman's Love* the English colonial enterprise is alluded to at the end of the novel, when Grimstone mentions the penalty of exile to the South Pacific Islands for Burroughs and his other accomplices. In *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* the Empire is present through references to the West Indies, where Agnes had spent some years, before returning to England. All these remarks are made in a descriptive tone, which show that the Empire and its colonial expansion were taken as a normal part and natural element of England's role in the world.

Nevertheless, in her articles Grimstone not only described the Empire, but she also marked English moral and social missions as an element of, and justification for, colonial expansion. Following her description in "Self-dependence", she called upon the English character to bring morality everywhere the English went:

Would that, in like manner, moral light might everywhere attend the presence of the English! I do not the less desire that they should give the free frank hand of fraternity to all, that I desire that it should be the unexceptionable hand of high personal and national character (M. L. G. 1835, 604).

Grimstone also used the argument of women's mission as moral cultivators to justify their actions and presence in the English colonial settlements in Australia. In all three of her short stories about the English colonisation of the South Pacific Islands, the protagonist is a woman who, with her high moral standards, serves as an example or even as a 'social mother' both to the settlers that went there voluntarily and the prisoners who were sent to the penal colonies.

In "The Settlers of Van Dieman's Land"⁴⁶ the protagonist, Marion, saw herself as a moral mother to the residents of the island. She "devoted herself to the moral amelioration of the people", because she believed that a "woman's power, and woman's privilege [was] to put her hand to the moral regeneration of the world" (The Author of 'Woman's Love' 1832, 229; Gillies 1846b, 291).

In "The Heroine of the Huon", Bridget Ryan, who always "had a kind word for every one, and a helping hand for all who needed her aid" (Gillies 1846c, 50), is deemed a heroine for her moral strength: it is precisely her moral character which gave her the courage to save her infant child and that of her late friend from the wreck that hit their vessel just short of arriving in Van Diemen's Land. In her last story on the matter, "Kate of Kildare", published in two parts in *The People's Journal*, Kate, the protagonist, becomes the moral force that transforms her husband from the criminal sent to the colonies to a moral man, impressing all the civil authorities with her determination (Gillies 1847b; 1847c).

According to Jane Rendall, these short stories could be considered as "moral and didactic tales" which engaged with the enterprise of colonisation as a matter of civilisation (2006, 111–12). For his part, Haywood affirms that in these stories, particularly in the first, "the task of civilising the wilderness and stabilising colonialism is here made a particular female prerogative" (2004, 198).

Consequently, it seems that although Grimstone was able to see and denounce other oppressions and injustices apart from those based on sex, she failed to do so when it came to England's colonising practices and imperial expansion. A deeper analysis of the connections, and even dissonances, between women's position at home and abroad within the English Empire in the nineteenth century and of how women, including some of those who in England fought for women's rights and in favour of other oppressed groups, supported the colonial enterprise, exceeds the scope of the present dissertation. However, I hope that the brief analysis

⁴⁶ Published first in 1832 by *The Court Magazine* and reprinted in 1846 by *The People's Journal* under the title "A Passage of Domestic History in Van Dieman's Land".

I have just presented serves to open a line of studies of Grimstone's work that can, and should, put together feminist and postcolonial criticism.

The analysis of Grimstone's body of work sheds new light on existing feminist literary criticism, as well as studies on nineteenth-century English literature. It answers Adrienne Rich's call for "looking back ... seeing with fresh eyes ... entering an old text from a new critical direction ... not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (Rich 1972, 18–19). It takes us out of the single-story of the existence of undisputed separate spheres (the public and the private) in nineteenth-century England. Thus, it reinforces what Anne K. Mellor had already shown in her research on Hannah More (2000), that women writers of the time actively participated in the so-called public sphere, impacting not only the debates of their time, but also policy. By moving just a little further along the timeline delineated by Mellor, we can find new authors and new texts that will help us in reading the past anew, as in Grimstone's case. In doing so, we can find new women's texts that could, and should, be included in existing literary studies on the "ground of their historical or "sociological" interest" (Kolodny 1976, 832).

It is not possible to identify a single cause that could explain why Grimstone is still a little-known and little-studied figure. Instead, I posit that this lack of recognition is due to the confluence of different factors, both personal and social. As has been already explained, Grimstone changed her surname several times, making it difficult to trace her work. For example, if an exercise of tracing women writers of the past would take Hunt's *Blue-Stocking Revels; or The Feast of the Violets* as its starting point, then one would be presented with the name "Mrs. Gillies", not the name Grimstone, which would point to the articles penned during the 1840s and not to her novels or her articles of the 1830s. Also, because Grimstone and her stepdaughter shared their first name: Mary, and they both wrote social essays for the same kind of journals during the 1840s, it is possible to take one for the other, as has already happened to Haywood in his analysis of the journals of popular culture (2004, 199). Not only do the changes of her name make it difficult to find and identify her work, but her novels have also not been re-edited and just recently have been digitalised. Hence, tracing her work requires the added effort of going through physical and digital archives.

Apart from the difficulties regarding Grimstone's name and signature, together with the lack of availability of her work, we must also consider the fact that she was part of a minority within a minority. She was not just associated with the Unitarians, but with the Radical Unitarians, that is, with the group that orbited around William J. Fox and the South Place Chapel. As Kathryn Gleadle explains,

Taking the Unitarian propensity for freedom of thought to new extremes, the progressive set which began to evolve at South Place derived strength from its sheer eclecticism. It was a loose, fluid coterie whose adherents were not formally attached to Unitarianism, but who embraced its central tenets and ethos (1995, 33).

The most striking difference between mainstream Unitarians and Radical Unitarians was that the latter's "attack on the conventional attitudes and social oppression of women was vehement and comprehensive" (Gleadle 1995, 34), as shown in the articles published in the *Monthly Repository* under Fox's editorship. According to Gleadle, "most mainstream Unitarians proved hostile to this development from its very inception and soon sought to distance themselves from it" (1995, 34). Grimstone was pretty much the spearhead of the Radical Unitarians' feminist efforts, and her radicalism was maintained and strengthened over the years, as we have seen in the analysis of her work. In an 1847 article, Grimstone even dare to suggest that men could take upon themselves part of the burden of taking care of the house while their wives were at work (Gillies 1847a). However, as Anna Clark explains, this was a rarely heard argument even among Radicals and Chartists, who instead "precluded any exploration of creative domestic division of labor ... [and even] blamed women for working men's brutality" (1995, 250). The predominant argument of the period was to praise women's domesticity and their mission as wives and mothers. As we have seen, although Grimstone sometimes availed herself of the argument of women's role as a mother to further her agenda in favour of women's rights, for her women should not be constricted or limited to the domestic sphere because "the feelings of wife, mother, daughter, and sister, may co-exist with those of the philosopher, philanthropist, and patriot" (M. L. G. 1835d, 230). Therefore, it is possible to say that her ideas were, in some regards, too progressive for her own time.

Moreover, it is also necessary to account for the fact that Grimstone wrote during the transition between the Romantic and the Victorian eras, which as Cronin describes it, "is a shadowy stretch of time sandwiched between two far more colourful periods" (2002, 1). These years, from the 1820s to the 1840s, do not constitute a period in themselves, they are rather the disputed borderlines between what should be considered Romantic and what instead should be treated as Victorian. As such, a writer like Grimstone, whose work is placed squarely in this muddy middle-ground, mainly in the 1830s, is difficult to place and easily falls into the crack of oblivion.

However, these factors do not diminish the fact that Grimstone's novels, essays and short stories are important and should be studied. As has been shown throughout the present

dissertation, her texts provide evidence of the nuances, strategies, and even contradictions within the struggle for the recognition of women's dignity, humanity, and rights that took place between the 1820s and 1840s, a long-overlooked period of English social and literary history. Therefore, I hope that this thesis, together with the few historical studies that deal with Grimstone's figure, serves as a frontrunner to further the research on her work.

Part III. “Pero, ¡la pobre mujer sin más que un destino en el mundo!, ¿qué hará, qué será cuando no puede ser lo que únicamente le está permitido?”: A Feminist Re-vision of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s Prose

María Gertrudis de los Dolores Gómez de Avellaneda y Arteaga (1814-1873), simply known as Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and affectionately referred to as “Tula”, is a well-known and beloved name in Spanish literary studies, both those centred around Spain and those which focus their research on Latin America. As Evelyn Picon Garfield stated at the beginning of her study on Avellaneda:

Desde 1840, año en que se estrena su primer drama *Leoncia*, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda y su obra han sido tema de reseñas, comentarios, e investigaciones que problematizan su identidad genérica y nacional. Tanto los admiradores como los detractores contemporáneos han emitido juicios confusos sobre cuestiones de la sexualidad y del patriotismo, tanto de su persona como de su producción literaria (1993, 9)

[Since 1840, the year in which her first drama *Leoncia* premiered, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and her work have been the subject of reviews, commentaries, and investigations that problematise her gender and national identity. Contemporary admirers and detractors alike have made confused judgments on questions of sexuality and patriotism, both of her person and of her literary output]⁴⁷

Not only do both sides of the Atlantic claim her as their own, but their main focus has also been on a specific part of her body of work.

In Spain, during her lifetime Gómez de Avellaneda was primarily recognised as a poet and as one of the most successful dramaturgs of her time. The following statement by Emilio Cotarelo y Mori attests to that fact: “Doña Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda es, no solamente la primera poetisa de España sino una de las más grandes, acaso la más, entre las que han sobresalido en todo el mundo, en los géneros lírico y dramático” (1930, 5) [Mrs Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda is not only Spain’s first woman poet, but also one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest, of all those who have excelled throughout the world, in the lyric and dramatic genres].

However, her prose, particularly her novels, was not considered as relevant as her poetry and her plays. In this regard Cotarelo y Mori’s statement is telling: “poco importa que en otros ramos de la literatura, como la novela, no haya alcanzado tanto relieve” (1930, 5) [it does not matter that in other branches of literature, such as the novel, she had not achieved such

⁴⁷ The translation of this text and any other text in Spanish is mine, unless stated otherwise.

a high profile]. As Picon Garfield states, the nineteenth-century Spanish public could not comprehend the message of her first novel *Sab* (1993, 55), and in some ways disregarded it because of its colonial elements. According to Susan Kirkpatrick, “the exoticism of her colonial origins, like the difference of her gender, was double-edged: both attracted pleased, not to say titillated, attention, but at the same time they were regarded as marks of inferiority in relation to the norm” (1989, 161).

It would take more than a century for Avellaneda’s novels to be considered as important as her poetry and her work as a dramaturg. During the second half of the twentieth century, especially from the 1980s onwards, her novels started to be the object of important scholarly analyses in the field of Spanish-written literature. *Sab* (1841) in particular, but also *Dos Mujeres* (1842), caught the attention of several researchers within Latin American studies. Two pioneers in this field are Lucía Guerra and Doris Sommer. Guerra emphasises Avellaneda’s Hispano-American origins in her analysis of how the writer constructed her romantic subjects in her novels (1985). For her part, Sommer considers *Sab* as a foundational novel of the nascent Latin American nations. She sees in *Sab* a ground-breaking and revolutionary novel, in which “the violence is directed above all against the rhetorical system that organized races into a rigid hierarchy of color, from lightest to darkest”, while also relaxing the “implied binary system of gender coding” prevalent at the time (Sommer 1991, 121).

In Spain the work of Kirkpatrick, *Las Románticas: Women Writers and Subjectivity in Spain, 1835-1850*, played a key role in the re-evaluation of Avellaneda’s prose. Kirkpatrick includes Gómez de Avellaneda as one of the leading Spanish Romantic writers, offering a detailed analysis of her autobiography and her novels *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres*, as well as of her poetry. She recognises “Gómez de Avellaneda’s colonial origins”, highlighting how, as an upper-class *criolla*⁴⁸, Gómez de Avellaneda had a more liberal education and upbringing than the young Spanish women raised in the Peninsula. For Kirkpatrick, Gómez de Avellaneda’s origins and superior education “help to explain her willingness and ability to modify and in some respects to challenge the dominant models found in Spanish Romanticism” (Kirkpatrick 1989, 134).

In Cuba, as Cira Romero (2015) explains, it was Mary Cruz who started rediscovering Avellaneda as, first and foremost, a Cuban writer⁴⁹. Cruz, in the prologue to her anthology of

⁴⁸ *Criolla/Criollo* is intended as someone of Spanish descent who was born in the American colonies. At the time the term did not imply mixed-race relations or descendants. The simple fact of being born in the Americas to Spanish parents or descendants meant the person was regarded as *criolla/criollo*.

⁴⁹ Not within the Island but from exile, some Cuban and Latin American scholars were already recognising Gómez de Avellaneda’s importance as a Cuban writer. For example, see: Cabrera, Rosa M., and Gladys Zaldívar, eds. 1981.

Avellaneda's work, *Obra Selecta*, calls her “[la] gran figura de Nuestra América” (1990a, IX) [the great figure of Our America], describing her as follows:

Cubana, latinoamericana, la Avellaneda tiene innegables afinidades con los que nacimos y habitamos en esta región del planeta, obvias en sus novelas como *Sab*, *Guatimozín*, y *Los cuatro cinco de junio* y en numerosos poemas cuya raíz está en el suelo que pisamos y la historia que compartimos; y afinidades menos aparentes, aunque no menos ciertas, en obras localizadas en otras latitudes y en tiempos remotos (1990a, X)

[Cuban, Latin American, Avellaneda has undeniable affinities with those of us who were born and live in this region of the planet, obvious in her novels such as *Sab*, *Guatimozín*, and *Los cuatro cinco de junio* and in numerous poems whose roots are in the soil we walk on and the history we share; and less apparent affinities, though no less certain, in works located in other latitudes and in remote times]

It is possible to state that in-depth studies on Avellaneda's feminism began in the 1980s. However, some scholars had already started to recognise her feminist side during the previous decade: “Al hablar del feminismo de la Avellaneda, nos referimos en esencia a la protesta social que la ilustre cubana incluye en algunos de sus ensayos y en algunas de sus novellas” (Cárdenas 1975, 33) [When we speak of Avellaneda's feminism, we are essentially referring to the social protest that the illustrious Cuban includes in some of her essays and in some of her novels].

Although Cárdenas recognises Avellaneda's feminism, he does not go beyond a superficial assessment of her work. In contrast, Guerra's 1985 article represents one of the first attempts to reveal the feminist impulse and content of Avellaneda's work. She analyses Avellaneda's first two novels, *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres*, arguing that as a writer she subverted the Romantic forms of her time to give voice to a subordinated feminine position. According to Guerra, in *Sab* Avellaneda constructed a palimpsest through the figure of the slave to denounce the oppressed condition of women, while in *Dos Mujeres* she appropriated Romantic formulas to create an active female subject that destabilised the categories of angel and monster.

Susan Kirkpatrick also carries out a comprehensive analysis of Avellaneda's work from a gender perspective. By focusing on three women writers of the Spanish Romantic period, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Carolina Coronado and Cecilia Böhl de Faber, Kirkpatrick demonstrates how women writers in Spain appropriated Romantic forms to express and delineate a new female subjectivity. She describes Avellaneda as “a pioneering literary

Homenaje a Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda: memorias del simposio en el centenario de su muerte. Miami, Florida: Ediciones Universal.

woman” who “broke new ground by constituting herself as a writing subject whose gender was female” (1989, 133).

In 1993 Evelyn Picon Garfield published the first study on Avellaneda from a post-structuralist perspective. She analyses Avellaneda from a position of double subalternity as a woman and as a colonial, which according to her creates a “dislocación doble [que] induce a Gómez de Avellaneda a interrogar y subvertir las estructuras culturales del centro, haciendo de la marginación una fuente insuperable de energía creativa” (Picon Garfield 1993, 10) [double dislocation [which] induces Gómez de Avellaneda to question and subvert the cultural structures of the centre, turning marginalisation into an unstoppable source of creative energy].

Hence, it is possible to affirm, as Brígida Pastor does, that the vast majority of studies on Avellaneda’s work from the 1980s onwards, “are unmistakably feminist in their approach and examine the representation of gender in her work and its constitution through language” (2003, 4). Pastor, who has focused her critical work on Gómez de Avellaneda’s prose, claims that “Avellaneda representa una de las primeras mujeres que, a través de la pluma, inició el debate feminista tanto en Cuba como en España” (2002, 16) [Avellaneda represents one of the first women who, through her pen, initiated the feminist debate in both Cuba and Spain].

Following in the footsteps of the feminist research that has preceded me, in the present dissertation I will mainly analyse three of Avellaneda’s novels: *Sab*, *Dos Mujeres* and *El Artista Barquero, o los cuatro cinco de junio* (1861). I will try to weave a web between Avellaneda, her context, and her work by studying the arguments that I believe are transversal to her prose.

I will devote Chapter 4 to a brief biography of Avellaneda and a description of her context, focusing on two important debates regarding her gendered position and her national belongingness. Chapter 5 starts with an explanation of how Avellaneda used literature as an instrument for social criticism. Then, I will focus on the study of some macro-arguments I have identified which are present transversally in Avellaneda’s prose: the possibility of an alliance between the oppressed, criticisms of the institution of marriage, and some notes on the construction of a different kind of feminine and masculine paradigms.

Chapter 4. Following the Traces Left Behind by *La Peregrina*

Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda⁵⁰ was born in Puerto Principe⁵¹, Cuba on 23 March 1814. Her father was an impoverished Spanish military man from Seville, Lieutenant Manuel Gómez de Avellaneda, and her mother a young *criolla* from a rich Cuban family, Francisca de Arteaga y Betancourt. According to Avellaneda's autobiography⁵², her parents' marriage had been an arranged one, and her mother was never happy during the union. Her father died in 1823. Only ten months later her mother married another Spanish military man, Lieutenant Coronel Gaspar Isidoro de Escalada y López de la Peña.

Avellaneda described her education as the best any person could have had in Cuba: “Dábaseme la más brillante educación que el país proporcionaba, era celebrada, mimada, complacida hasta en mis caprichos, y nada experimenté que se asemejase a los pesares en aquella aurora apacible de mi vida” (2007 [1907], 16) [I was given the most brilliant education the country afforded, I was celebrated, pampered, indulged even in my whims, and I experienced nothing that resembled sorrows in that peaceful dawn of my life]. Several scholars recognise that Gómez de Avellaneda had a superb education in Cuba, both from private tutors, and by means of access to books and cultural spaces that allowed for autodidactic learning.

⁵⁰ This brief biography is based on the following texts: Cotarelo y Mori, Emilio. 1930. *La Avellaneda y Sus Obras: Ensayo Biográfico y Crítico*. Madrid: Tipografía de Archivos; Cruz, Mary. 1990. ‘Aproximación Biográfico-Crítica’ and ‘Vida y Obra de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’ In *Obra Selecta de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*, by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, edited by Mary Cruz, IX–XXIV. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho. González del Valle, Luis T. 2015. ‘Introducción’. In *Antología. Novelas y Ensayo de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*, by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro. Kirkpatrick, Susan. 1989. *Las Románticas: Women Writers and Subjectivity in Spain, 1835-1850*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pastor, Brígida M. 2002. *El Discurso de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda: Identidad Femenina y Otridad*. Alicante: Universidad de Alicante. Pastor, Brígida M. 2003. *Fashioning Feminism in Cuba and beyond: The Prose of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*. New York: Peter Lang. Picón Garfield, Evelyn. 1993. *Poder y Sexualidad: El Discurso de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. Servera, José. 2014. ‘Introducción’. In *Sab*, by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Undécima edición, 9–85. Madrid: Catedra. To avoid unnecessary repetition, only direct quotes will be referenced within the text.

⁵¹ Today, Camagüey.

⁵² In 1907, over thirty years after Gómez de Avellaneda's death, Lorenzo Cruz de Fuentes published several letters that Gómez de Avellaneda had sent over the years to Ignacio de Cepeda, a man she had always loved and who never fully returned her undying devotion. Among the letters there is an autobiography written by Gómez de Avellaneda and sent to Cepeda in 1839, hence the book title: *Autobiografía y cartas de la ilustre poetisa*. The letters were made public by Cepeda's widow, María de Córdoba, who, upon his death, gave them to Cruz de Fuentes and financed the first edition of the book. In the references and bibliography, the autobiography is cited according to its year of publication, that is, 1907. However, the reader must keep in mind that its content was written around the year 1839. The quotes of this text keep the original grammar and spelling. Although this is not the main focus of the present dissertation, it is important to recognise that Cruz de Fuentes' edition of Avellaneda's letters to Cepeda has been criticised for having altered and censored some of the content of the original letters (For example see Milena Rodríguez Gutiérrez's essay “La correspondencia de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda a Cepeda: problemas en torno a la transmisión del texto” in *Entre el cacharro doméstico y la Vía Láctea. Poetas cubanas e hispanoamericanas* (Renacimiento, 2012. P. 40-64)). In 2021 Cristina Ramos edited a new version in a volume entitled *Pasiones epistolares. La correspondencia amorosa entre la Avellaneda e Ignacio de Cepeda*, in which she published Avellaneda's letters uncensored and, for the first time, Cepeda's letters as well. Due to the very recent publication date of this last edition, I was not able to consult it, thus the quotes contained in the present dissertation refer to the edition by Cruz de Fuentes.

According to Kirkpatrick, “her indulgent mother and doting grandfather supplied the precocious young Gertrudis with what she wanted, namely tutors ... and books. A young Spanish woman of her class ... would have had neither the leisure nor the permission to read what Gertrudis did” (1989, 134). Among her tutors, for example, was José María Heredia, one of the greatest Cuban poets. Cruz, citing José Lezama Lima, also points to the fact that the Camagüey region, where Gertrudis was raised, had a certain cultural atmosphere in which rich families had access to literary gatherings, the theatre, and private libraries. This milieu was the breeding ground in which Avellaneda developed her love for letters, a considerable knowledge of both French and Spanish literature, as well as a liberal outlook and capacity for critical thinking.

This liberal upbringing was not, however, free of the social expectations for her sex. When Avellaneda was about fifteen years old, her mother and stepfather tried to arrange her marriage to a distant relative. Even if at first Avellaneda seemed to agree with the union, soon enough she realised that the man her parents had chosen was not who she had imagined, and she refused to marry him. Soon after her refusal, her grandfather died and her extended maternal family blamed Gertrudis for his death, which led her into a depression and drove her to isolate in the countryside.

This situation coincided with her stepfather’s desire to return to Spain. Avellaneda, disenchanted by her family’s mistreatment and eager to visit the land of her father, helped Escalada in convincing her mother to move to the Peninsula. On 9 April 1836, when she was twenty-two years old, Gómez de Avellaneda left Cuba together with her family. After arriving in France and staying for a short period in Bordeaux, the family travelled to Galicia, where Escalada’s family was from. Once there, Avellaneda suffered under her stepfather and his family, particularly his female relatives, from whom she differed markedly. She then went to Andalusia with her brother Manuel, where they met their paternal relatives. They stayed in their father’s hometown for about three months, during which time their uncle tried to arrange a marriage between Gertrudis and a rich landowner. After that, Avellaneda and her brother moved to Seville.

Although Gómez de Avellaneda had published some verses while in Cuba, it was in Seville where she started to write and be published in different newspapers and magazines under the pseudonym *La Peregrina* [The Female Pilgrim]. In Seville, Gómez de Avellaneda became acquainted with important Andalusian poets and her house became the place for important literary gatherings where she shared her own verses. It was also in Seville where she

met Ignacio de Cepeda, the man with whom she fell madly in love, but who never really reciprocated her attentions.

In June 1840, her first drama, *Leoncia*, was staged in a Sevillian theatre. The play was then performed throughout Andalusia, having considerable success⁵³. Soon after, Avellaneda moved to Madrid. Once there she was introduced to the city's different literary circles and Juan Nicasio Gallego, her mentor, helped her enter the *Liceo de Madrid*⁵⁴. In 1841 she published her first book of poetry *Poesías*, as well as her first novel *Sab*, which she had started writing several years prior. In 1842 she published her second novel *Dos Mujeres*. Cuba's royal censor banned copies of both *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres* from entering the Island, the first "por contener doctrinas subversivas del sistema de esclavitud de esta Isla y contrarias a la moral y las buenas costumbres, y la segunda, por estar plagada de doctrinas inmorales" [for containing doctrines subversive of the system of slavery of this Island and contrary to morality and decency, and the second, for being full of immoral doctrines] (Cruz 1990b, 300 citing the Censor's decree).

As González del Valle affirms, Avellaneda's time in Madrid, from 1840 to 1859⁵⁵, was her most prolific period. She contributed to several periodicals, and published poetry, novels, plays and short stories, some of which were revisitations of old legends⁵⁶. In 1844 Avellaneda won both prizes in the contest that the *Liceo de Madrid* had organised in honour of Queen Isabel II. In her personal life, that year marked the start of Avellaneda's passionate but short relationship with Gabriel García Tassara. Their love affair resulted in the birth of a sickly baby girl that Tassara refused to meet or recognise as his own. The child died at seven months old, without having met her father. In May 1846 Avellaneda married Pedro Sabater, a Valencian

⁵³ According to the entry dedicated to Avellaneda in the *Diccionario universal de historia y geografía*, due to the success of *Leoncia* she was named "primera consiliaria del Liceo de Sevilla" (Mellado 1846, 262) [first female councillor of the Lyceum of Seville]. Although the *Diccionario* was edited by Francisco de Paula Mellado, who listed as its authors himself and other illustrious men, Cotarelo y Mori claims that Avellaneda wrote her entry herself, albeit in the third person (1930, 9). Ángeles Ezama Gil affirms, however, that she has not been able to confirm Avellaneda's designation as *primera conciliaria* with other sources different from the *Diccionario* (2015, 38).

⁵⁴ *Liceos* [Lyceums] were recreational societies with a social and cultural purpose. Unlike other types of societies, *Liceos* allowed women to become members, and did not segregate them in separate female sections (Ezama Gil 2015, 32–33).

⁵⁵ From 1840 up until 1859 Avellaneda established herself almost permanently in Madrid. During those years she travelled several times to other Spanish regions and to France. She also lived for short periods of time in Seville, although her point of reference was Madrid.

⁵⁶ In chronological order: In 1844 Avellaneda wrote the introduction for the book *Viaje a la Habana* by La Condesa de Merlin and published *Espatolino*, a historical novel set in Italy, and two plays: *Alfonso Munio* (later renamed *Munio Alfonso*) and *El príncipe de Viana*. In 1845 she published the tragic drama *Egilona*. In 1846 Avellaneda published *Guatimozín, último emperador de Méjico*, a historical novel about the Spanish conquest of Mexico, in which she condemned the violence of the conquest, as well as the Inquisition. From 1847 onwards she contributed a number of pieces, both in prose and in verse, to several periodical publications in Madrid. In 1849 her biblical tragedy *Saúl* was published and staged for the inauguration of the theatre *Español*. In 1850 she published a new book of poetry titled *Poesías de la excelentísima señora D^a. Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda de Sabater*. In 1851 she published the novel *Dolores: páginas de una crónica de familia*. Between 1851 and 1859 several of her plays were staged in different theatres in Madrid, including the biblical drama *Baltazar*, which was an enormous success.

politician. Unfortunately, Sabater suffered from a serious affliction to his larynx and died soon after. To cope with her grief Avellaneda took refuge in the Convent of *Nuestra Señora de Loreto*. There she started writing her first *Devocionario* [Devotional], which, however, was not published because the printing printer she gave it to went bankrupt and did not return the originals. It would take until 1975 for Carmen Bravo-Villasante to publish it under the title *Manual del Cristiano*.

In January 1853 Juan Nicasio Gallego died, vacating a seat at the *Real Academia Española* (RAE). Avellaneda aspired to fill that seat and presented her candidacy. If the RAE had accepted it, she would have become the first woman to be appointed a full member of the Academy. Instead, the members of the board, before they even considered Avellaneda's request and her merits, decided that women could not be part of the Academy. This refusal to admit her as a full member of the *Real Academia Española*, not because of a lack of merit but solely because she was a woman, left an open wound in Avellaneda. In the articles she dedicated to the position of women in society in *El Album Cubano de lo Bueno y lo Bello*, Avellaneda strongly criticised the Academy's position:

Si la mujer ... aún sigue proscrita del templo de los conocimientos profundos, no se crea tampoco que data de muchos siglos su aceptación en el campo literario y artístico: ¡ah! ¡no! También ese terreno le ha sido disputado palmo a palmo por el exclusivismo varonil, y aún hoy en día se la mira en él como una intrusa y usurpadora, tratándose, en consecuencia, con cierta ojeriza y desconfianza, que se echa de ver en el alejamiento en que la mantiene de las academias *barbudas*. ... Ella [la barba] ha venido a ser la única e insuperable distinción de los literatos varones, quienes, viéndose despojados cada día de otras prerrogativas que reputaban exclusivas, se aferran a aquella con todas sus fuerzas de sexo fuerte, haciéndola prudentísimamente el *sine qua non* de las académicas glorias. (Gómez de Avellaneda 2015 [1860], 561–62) (*italics in original*).

[If woman ... is still banned from the temple of profound knowledge, let it not be thought that her acceptance in the literary and artistic field dates back many centuries: ah, no! This field too has been fought over inch by inch by male exclusivism, and even today she is regarded there as an intruder and usurper; and is consequently treated with a certain suspicion and distrust, which can be seen in the distance she is kept from the *bearded* academies ... It [the beard] has become the sole and unsurpassed distinction of the male literati, who, seeing themselves stripped every day of other prerogatives which they considered exclusive, cling to it with all the strength of the *strong sex*, prudently making it the *sine qua non* of academic glories].

I believe that Avellaneda's criticism is eloquent, showing how her exclusion and that of other women from the higher places of knowledge was not a matter of merit or ability, but

was rooted in a patriarchal and sexist conception of society which did not allow women to enter certain spaces. It would take more than a century for the *Real Academia Española* to accept a woman as a full member, with the election of Carmen Conde in 1978⁵⁷. Displeased, but not defeated, Avellaneda continued with her literary endeavours, focusing primarily on her work as a dramaturg.

In 1855 Avellaneda married Domingo Verdugo y Massieu, who was Colonel of the Army, King's Adjutant and a Member of Parliament. In 1859, General Serrano, an old friend of Verdugo, was named Captain-General of Cuba. Serrano asked Verdugo to join him in Cuba and he accepted. Consequently, on 31 October 1859 Avellaneda embarked for Cuba, together with her husband and all of Serrano's entourage. They arrived at the port of Havana on 24 November 1859. The following 8 December there was a party in Avellaneda's honour and on 27 January 1860 the *Liceo de la Habana* crowned Avellaneda in the *Gran Teatro Tacón*. Avellaneda was lauded as a great Cuban poet not only in Havana, but also in the different towns and cities she visited or stayed in. However, she was also accused, by a minority, of having betrayed the Island by leaving for Spain and publishing most of her work in the Peninsula. José Fornaris, for example, published a sonnet on her arrival which accused Avellaneda of being ungrateful, describing her as a slave at the hands of a *verdugo* [executioner], playing with the surname of her husband:

Hoy vuelve a Cuba, pero a Dios le plugo

Que la ingrata torcaz camagüeyana

Tornara esclava, en brazos de un verdugo (Cotarelo y Mori 1930, 346 citing Fornaris)

[Today she returns to Cuba, but it pleased God / That the ungrateful Camagüeyan dove / Came back a slave, in the arms of an executioner]

Despite these minor attacks, Avellaneda's sojourn on the Island where she was born was mainly positive. There, she founded the *Album Cubano de lo Bueno y de lo Bello*⁵⁸, a bi-weekly magazine which was the first and “único periódico en la Isla dirigido por una mujer para un público femenino” (Picon Garfield 1993, 19) [only newspaper on the Island run by a

⁵⁷ Before Conde and after Avellaneda many women presented their candidacy or were considered, at least informally, as possible candidates to fill vacancies in the *Real Academia Española*. Among them was Emilia Pardo Bazán. In 1889, more than twenty-five years after Avellaneda's death, the journal *El Correo* published some of Avellaneda's unreleased letters concerning her candidacy to the *Real Academia Española*. According to Isabel Burdiel, the publication of these letters had the purpose of attacking Emilia Pardo Bazán and her relationship with Benito Pérez Galdós, who was being considered for the Academy at the time (2019, 374–75). Pardo Bazán was quick to take the hint, and in February 1889 published two letters in *La España Moderna* addressed to Avellaneda in the afterlife, titled “*La Cuestión Académica. A Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (en los Campos Elíseos)*”.

⁵⁸ For an in-depth analysis of *Album Cubano* see Picón Garfield, Evelyn. 1993. *Poder y Sexualidad: El Discurso de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

woman for a female readership]. The magazine was first published in February 1860 and ran for six months, arriving at just twelve issues. Avellaneda contributed several pieces, among which were the articles she dedicated to the contemporary condition of women, such as “*La Mujer*”, and her series “*Galeria de mujeres célebres*”, devoted to the biographies of great women like Santa Teresa de Jesús, *Reina Isabel la Católica* [Queen Isabella I of Castile], Aspasia, Queen Catherine II of Russia (Catherine the Great), among others.

In 1861 Avellaneda published her last novel: *El Artista Barquero, o los cuatro cinco de junio*. It was the only novel that she wrote and published while in Cuba. On 28 October 1863 Verdugo died in Cuba and seven months later, on 21 May 1864, Avellaneda left the Island. She arrived in Spain, after a short stay in the United States, in October of that year.

Once in Spain, Avellaneda decided to re-edit and republish all her work. Between 1869 and 1871 she published five volumes which she called *Obras Literarias de la Señora Doña Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*. She rewrote several of her poems, published some new texts that she had written while in Cuba, like the short story *El Cacique de Turmequé*, and omitted three of her novels: *Sab*, *Dos Mujeres* and *Guatimozín*. Several scholars have tried to justify this omission in different ways. Cruz, for example, seems to suggest that it was just a matter of lack of time: “habían llegado los días en que se consideraba ‘ya casi fuera de la vida’. Ni la vista, ni el ánimo, ni los achaques de la diabetes le permitirían continuar la revisión de sus obras. Lamentablemente, la colección no sería *completa*” (1990a, XVIII) (italics in original) [The days had come when she considered herself 'almost out of life'. Neither her eyesight, nor her spirits, nor the ailments caused by her diabetes would allow her to continue revising her works. Unfortunately, the collection would not be *complete*]. Picon Garfield argues that it was an exercise of self-censorship, in an attempt to avoid the volumes being banned in Cuba, as had happened when *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres* were first published (1993). For his part, Teodosio Fernández claims that there were political reasons behind Avellaneda’s decision to exclude those three novels from her collection of works (2014, 2). Whatever the reasons Avellaneda had for omitting these three novels, fortunately for us and for posterity, they survived this exclusion, becoming the most studied pieces of Avellaneda’s prose.

By 1872 she was too sick and too tired to continue writing. In August of that year, sensing that death was near, she made a new will and testament. Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda died in Madrid on 1 February 1873.

Avellaneda is still an important and iconic figure in Spanish-language literature. Her work was a great expression of resistance, freedom, and the fight against oppression. She did not waver, despite her critics, and although she refused the title at the end of her articles “La

Mujer”, we can call her, without the fear of being wrong, “a champion of her sex”. Because of the force of her writing, many critics of her time, both friend and foe, referred to Avellaneda as a *poeta*, not a *poetisa*. Still, Avellaneda wrote as a woman, with a voice of her own. She was also criticised for what some of her contemporaries saw as a lack of *cubanidad* [Cuban-ness], although she vehemently defended herself as a proud daughter of Cuba.

I will devote the next two sections to exploring both of these critiques, that is: 1) her position regarding Cuba and Spain which, I contend, endowed her with a double identity which, in turn, formed and impacted her feminist views as well as the way she represented society; and 2) the gendering of her work as masculine by the critics of her time. Related to this second point, I will finish the chapter with a discussion of Avellaneda’s strategies for entering the male-dominated literary world, through a brief analysis of her use of the prologue in *Sab, Dos Mujeres*, and *El Artista Barquero*.

4.1. From Cuba to Spain at the Crumbling of the Spanish Empire

After the conquest of its American territories, and expansion throughout Europe, Africa, and even some parts of Asia and the Pacific, Spain became a great European Empire. Under the rule of Carlos V, Spain was “the most powerful single force in Europe” (Pagden 1990, 6). Fray Francisco de Ugalde described sixteenth-century Spain as “el imperio en el que nunca se pone el sol” [the empire where the sun never sets]⁵⁹. In the words of Anthony Pagden:

For nearly two centuries, despite the decline that began in the 1590s, the Spanish Monarchy was the largest single political entity in Europe. Even after the division of the Habsburg lands by Charles V in 1556 and the effective loss of the northern Netherlands in 1609, it still controlled, until the War of Succession, more than two-thirds of Italy and the whole of Central and South America (1990, 2).

However, by the time Avellaneda was born in 1814, Spain was a kingdom in decline. Due to the Dutch Revolt, also known as the Eighty Years’ War, the Netherlands had obtained their independence in 1648, and by the end of the eighteenth century Spain had lost control over its other European territories of Belgium, Luxembourg, and the southern parts of Italy. Moreover, most of the American colonies, partially taking advantage of the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in 1808, had declared their independence from the Spanish crown by 1810.

⁵⁹ Since then, this phrase has been used to describe different European empires, the last of which was the British Empire during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as referred to in the previous chapter.

By the time Avellaneda moved to Spain with her family in 1836, only Cuba and Puerto Rico, in the Atlantic, and the Philippines, in the Pacific, remained as Spanish colonies overseas (Pagden 1990).

Due to these socio-political conditions, and the fact that Avellaneda wrote and published most of her work in Spain, despite being born and raised in Cuba, her allegiances as well as her influences were brought into question more than once. As a result, no small number of articles and critical texts have been dedicated to attempts to elucidate Avellaneda's national belongingness (or un-belongingness).

The criticism around her national allegiance started when she was still alive. As Picon Garfield points out: “los cubanos la ven como española mientras que muchos españoles, también deseosos de menospreciar su éxito en la metrópoli, la consideran cubana” (1993, 33) [Cubans see her as Spanish while many Spaniards, also eager to belittle her success in the metropolis, consider her Cuban]. Ángeles Ezama Gil also affirms:

En el caso de Gómez de Avellaneda la discusión se ha centrado en tratar de dilucidar la condición española o cubana de la escritora. Su cubanidad ha sido a menudo cuestionada. Los contemporáneos le dirigieron no pocos reproches acusándola de haber abandonado su patria y de indiferencia hacia ella, de neutralidad; Avellaneda, como desagravio, dedicó a la isla de Cuba sus obras publicadas entre 1869 y 1871, y protestó en varios escritos contra su exclusión de la literatura cubana (2009, 477)

[In the case of Gómez de Avellaneda, the discussion has focused on trying to elucidate the writer's Spanish or Cuban status. Her Cuban-ness has often been questioned. Her contemporaries reproached her with many accusations of having abandoned her homeland and of indifference towards it, of neutrality; Avellaneda, as reparation, dedicated her works published between 1869 and 1871 to the island of Cuba, and protested in several writings against her exclusion from Cuban literature]

Here, Ezama Gil is referring to events that unfolded during the 1860s, a period that encompasses Avellaneda's return to Cuba after a twenty-three-year absence and her decision to go back to Spain in 1864 after her husband's death. During those years José Fornaris and other literary figures of the Island started to criticise Avellaneda for having left Cuba as a young woman and for publishing most of her work in Spain. This attitude even resulted in Avellaneda's exclusion from Fornaris' anthology of Cuban poets *La Lira Cubana*, considering her more Spanish than Cuban (Picon Garfield 1993, 32; Loynaz 1953). According to Milena Rodríguez Gutiérrez:

pocos escritores en la isla han sido tan cuestionados como Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, acaso porque se atrevió, en su época, siendo mujer, no sólo a expresarse con éxito en varios géneros literarios, sino también a conciliar su identidad en dos países y a considerarlos suyos; o mejor, dicho, tuvo la osadía (¿no era acaso lo que señalaba la propia realidad en que habitaba?) de pensarse y sentirse cubana y española (2011, 20–21)

[Few writers on the island have been questioned as much as Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, perhaps because she dared, in her time, as a woman, not only to express herself successfully in various literary genres, but also to reconcile her identity in two countries and to consider them her own; or rather, she had the audacity (was it not the very reality in which she lived?) to think and feel herself Cuban and Spanish]

Avellaneda penned strong-worded responses to the attacks that claimed she was not Cuban enough. In a letter to Luis Pichardo, reported by Dulce María Loynaz in her speech “La Avellaneda, una cubana universal”, Avellaneda contested the charges that tried to exclude her from Cuban literature in the following terms:

...no es posible que pretendan negarme mi derecho de nacimiento en Puerto Príncipe; lo que han querido significar es que no me conceptúan cubana de corazón, que no me conceden índole de poeta cubana...

...

Un célebre escritor madrileño, encargado por cierta Sociedad editorial de preparar material para la publicación de una grande obra, cuyo objeto era coleccionar composiciones escogidas de los más notables poetas y publicistas modernos, tanto peninsulares como hispanoamericanos, vino a verme expresamente para hablarme de dicha obra, consultándome sobre si sería o no conveniente que los escritores hispanoamericanos figurasen todos juntos o si se pondrían a los cubanos entre los peninsulares y no entre los demás escritores hispanoamericanos. Yo les dije, sencillamente, mi verdadera opinión en tal punto, y fue que me parecía lo mejor que los americanos todos figurásemos juntos, porque sólo así se daría una idea de la índole especial de la literatura hispanoamericana, que yo hallaba muy semejante, pero no idéntica en condiciones a la peninsular ... al repasar la lista de escritores hispanoamericanos que debían formar la colección especial de obras pertenecientes a nuestra literatura, eché de ver que faltaban nombres muy dignos ... Creí de mi deber, como americana que se honra en serlo y desea el mayor brillo y gloria de la parte del mundo en que nació, reclamar aquellos ilustres nombres para la literatura hispanoamericana, a la que corresponden en justicia.

Mi contrincante no accedió a dicha reclamación, diciendo que Vega, Pezuela y otros americanos, que aunque nacidos allá, habían vivido y escrito en España, debían figurar entre

los escritores peninsulares, porque para España y en España habían publicado sus obras. Al oír tan singular idea, no pude menos de hacerle observar que si, en efecto, los escritores pertenecían, no a su país, sino al país en donde escriben, España tendría que ceder algunas de sus glorias literarias a otras naciones, y que con semejante principio, ni aún Heredia, ni aún yo, deberíamos figurar entre los americanos ... Él se empeñaba en que Vega y los otros escritores que quería colocar en la literatura peninsular no podían mirarse como glorias literarias hispanoamericanas ... En fin, recuerdo que dije muy enfadada: "Lo que es yo, prohíbo que nadie se permita tomar mi nombre para colocarlo a su capricho. Si es verdad que se quiere presentar un cuadro fiel del estado de las letras castellanas en la América, póngase todos los escritores de valía que le pertenecen a la América que es o fue española, y si no se quiere sino rebajar la literatura hispanoamericana, quitándole muchas de sus glorias para dárselas a la Península, que no se deje mi nombre, tampoco en tal caso, pues no me agrada ... o se le dejan a América sus hijos, cualquiera que sea el punto en que hayan vivido y escrito, o si arbitrariamente le quitan los que quieren, sepan que yo retiro mi nombre, y no autorizo a nadie a colocarlo a su arbitrio..." (Loynaz 1953 citing Avellaneda's letter to Luis Pichardo dated 13 november 1867)

[...it is not possible that they are trying to deny me my birth right in Puerto Príncipe; what they meant is that they do not consider me Cuban at heart, that they do not grant me the status of a Cuban poet...

...

A famous writer from Madrid, commissioned by a certain publishing company to prepare material for the publication of a large work, the purpose of which was to collect selected compositions by the most notable modern poets and publicists, both Spanish and Latin American, came to see me expressly to talk to me about this work, consulting me about whether or not it would be convenient for Latin American writers to appear all together or whether the Cubans should be included among the Spanish writers and not among the other Latin American writers. I simply told him my true opinion on this point, and that was that I thought it best that we Americans should all be listed together, because this was the only way to give an idea of the special nature of Spanish-American literature, which I found very similar, but not identical in conditions to that of the peninsulars.... I thought it my duty, as an American who is honoured to be one and desires the greater brilliance and glory of the part of the world in which she was born, to reclaim those illustrious names for Spanish-American literature, to which they justly belong.

My opponent did not accept this claim, saying that Vega, Pezuela, and other Americans, who, though born there, had lived and written in Spain, ought to be reckoned among the peninsular writers, because they had published their works for Spain and in Spain. On hearing such a singular idea, I could not but make him observe that if, indeed, writers belonged, not to their country, but to the country where they write, Spain would have to cede some of its literary glories to other nations, and that on such a principle, not even Heredia, nor even I, should figure among the Americans ... He insisted that Vega and the other writers he wanted to place in peninsular literature could not be regarded as Spanish-American literary glories ... In short, I remember that I said very angrily: "For what concerns me, I

forbid that anyone should be allowed to take my name to place it at their whim. If it is true that one wants to present a faithful picture of the state of Castilian letters in America, put in all the writers of worth that belong to the America that is or was Spanish, and if one wants only to demean Spanish-American literature, taking away many of its glories to give them to the Peninsula, let my name not be left, either in such a case, because I do not like it ... either they leave America her children, whatever they may have lived and written, or if they arbitrarily take away those they want, know that I withdraw my name, and I do not authorise anyone to place it at their discretion...]

Avellaneda repeated her argument about her belonging to Cuban literature in a letter to *Conde de Pozos Dulces*, editor of *El Siglo*, the Cuban newspaper that had promoted the polemic about whether she was Cuban enough or not. In it she declared:

Según tengo entendido ... lo que se ha dicho es que se me excluía del número de los escritores cubanos por no ser yo cubana sino madrileña ... Visiblemente se desprende que lo que significa es que no se me juzga cubana por el corazón; que se me cree hija desnaturalizada del país a quien tanto debo...; en una palabra, la exclusión que se hace de mí, más carácter tiene de una queja, de un resentimiento, de un castigo que se reputa justo ... decir que el poeta no pertenece al país donde nace, sino a aquél en que escribe, es sofisma tan pueril que, no pudiendo persuadirme recurran a él mis compatriotas por inexplicable afán de desposeerme de mis escasos merecimientos literarios, me veo forzada a suponer que hay en el fondo de tal sofisma algo que lo disculpe y lo origine, y que ese algo oculto corrobora la idea de que la exclusión de que se trata es un castigo, una muestra ostensible de que se me juzga ingrata para con mi país, y en tal concepto, indigna de ser contada entre sus hijos ilustres (Loynaz 1953 citing Avellaneda's letter to the editor of *El Siglo* published on 3 January 1868)

[As I understand it ... what has been said is that I was excluded from the number of Cuban writers because I am not Cuban but *Madrileña* [from Madrid] ... It is clear that what it means is that I am not judged Cuban at heart; that I am believed to be a denaturalised daughter of the country to which I owe so much ... In a word, the exclusion of me is more in the nature of a complaint, a resentment, a punishment that is considered just ... to say that the poet does not belong to the country where they are born, but to that in which they write, is such a puerile sophistry that, not able to persuade myself that my compatriots resort to it out of inexplicable eagerness to dispossess me of my meagre literary merits, I am forced to suppose that there is at the bottom of such sophistry something that excuses it and gives rise to it, and that this hidden something corroborates the idea that the exclusion in question is a punishment, an ostensible sign that I am judged ungrateful to my country, and as such, unworthy of being counted among its illustrious children]

Avellaneda proceeded to retell the story about the famous writer and his intention to publish a collection of texts written in Spanish, stating once again: “me parecía que la naciente literatura hispanoamericana tenía sus condiciones propias, sus defectos y sus bellezas juveniles,

que requerían un cuadro aparte del que ocupara la experta y antigua literatura propiamente española” (Loynaz 1953 citing Avellaneda's letter to the editor of *El Siglo* published on 3 January 1868) [it seemed to me that the nascent Spanish-American literature had its own conditions, its defects and its youthful beauties, which required a separate picture from the one occupied by the expert and ancient Spanish literature itself]. She also explained, as she had done in the previous letter, that during the conversation with the famous writer about whether what counted was place of birth or the place where the work was published:

...llegó un joven cubano, que, por desgracia, se cuidó menos de indagar el motivo y objeto de la disputa que de interpretar a su manera algunas palabras de las que oyó y no entendió ... El joven cubano comprendió tan al revés mis palabras, que se permitió reconvenirme, como suponiendo que yo me desdeñaba de figurar entre mis compatriotas... (Loynaz 1953 citing Avellaneda's letter to the editor of *El Siglo* published on 3 January 1868)

[...a young Cuban arrived, who, unfortunately, took less care to inquire into the motive and object of the dispute than to interpret in his own way some of the words he heard and did not understand ... The young Cuban understood my words so backwards that he allowed himself to reproach me, as if he supposed that I was disdainful to appear among my compatriots....]

Avellaneda seems to blame the whole dispute about her national belongingness to the young Cuban misunderstanding her words, and this is how Mary Cruz reports the incident in the biographical introduction to her anthology of Avellaneda's work (1990a, XIX). What I would rather highlight about this controversy is the fact that if Avellaneda had not left Cuba and established herself in Spain this discussion would not exist. In other words, if Avellaneda had stayed in Cuba, even if the Island was still a Spanish colony, she would be considered only, and undisputedly, a Cuban writer. Hence, I believe that affirmations like the one made by Cotarelo y Mori stating that, simply because Cuba was still a colony, Avellaneda should be considered a Spanish writer, should be analysed in a more nuanced manner.

In his biography of Avellaneda, Cotarelo y Mori claimed: “así cuando nació como cuando murió, la Avellaneda era siempre española” (1930, 347) [both when she was born and when she died, Avellaneda was always Spanish]. He redoubled his argument by dismissing the controversy about Avellaneda's belongingness in the following terms:

Esta cuestión ha retoñado varias veces y aun en tiempos recientes con extrañas derivaciones tocantes en la paradoja. La cuestión nos parece tan pueril como impertinente. La Avellaneda fue una escritora española y cubana, que en aquella época era lo mismo, como Pérez Galdós fue español y canario y Maura español y balear, y los tres forman una gran trinidad gloriosa,

ante todo para España, madre común, y luego gloriosa para cada una de las islas en que nacieron (Cotarelo y Mori 1930, 366)

[This question has flared up several times and even in recent times with strange derivations touching on paradox. The question seems to us as puerile as it is impertinent. Avellaneda was a Spanish and Cuban writer, which at the time was the same thing, just as Pérez Galdós was Spanish and Canary Islander and Maura Spanish and Balearic, and the three form a great glorious trinity, first of all for Spain, their common mother, and then glorious for each of the islands on which they were born]

I believe that Cotarelo y Mori's views are imbued with a form of restorative nostalgia (Boym 2001, chap. 4) that sees the Spanish Empire as something to be proud of, without acknowledging the damage it caused or the way the Spanish crown treated *Criollos* as second-class subjects, not to mention the annihilation of native communities and the slave trade it upheld.

Javier Krauel writes that “for late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iberian intellectuals, Spain’s expansion into the Americas did not have the troubling, traumatic, and catastrophic connotations that are evident in, for example, the Latin American essayistic tradition”. He continues by claiming that for those intellectuals, “the imperial past is a myth that provides not only “a rich legacy of memories” and “a heroic past, great men, [and] glory” (Renan 19), but also fodder for an intellectual and political debate” (Krauel 2013, 4, 6).

I am drawing on Krauel’s arguments to assert that this is the image of the Spanish Empire that Cotarelo y Mori had in mind when he claimed Avellaneda primarily for the glory of Spain. When he refers to Spain as the common mother of Avellaneda, Pérez Galdós and Maura, Cotarelo y Mori is calling upon the myth of Spain as a great Empire, which, in his time, did not have the negative connotations that it has today. Instead, “at that time, having an empire was the hallmark achievement of Western nations” (Krauel 2013, 7). Therefore, highlighting Avellaneda’s Spanish-ness fitted neatly into the prevalent discourse of the time, which aimed at creating a strong national identity.

Carlos M. Rama affirms that during the second half of the nineteenth century, even if Spain had renounced the dream of reconquering American lands, it had however started a pan-Hispanic movement⁶⁰ with the following goals:

⁶⁰ During this same period (the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth), while Spain was trying to create its pan-Hispanic movement, Latin American writers were already seeing and capturing in their work the decline of the former empire. In this regard, Alessandra Ghezzani, in her analysis of Rubén Darío’s “*crónicas*”, claims: “la primera impresión que se recibe al adentrarse en la lectura de las crónicas de *España contemporánea* es la de estar asistiendo al desalentador espectáculo del apocalíptico fracaso de una potencia, a la catástrofe de una época feliz” (2013, 77) [the first impression one gets when reading the *crónicas* of *España Contemporánea* is that of witnessing the discouraging spectacle of the apocalyptic failure of a power, the catastrophe of a happy era].

En primer lugar, crear una fraternal coalición de las naciones que hablan español de ambos lados del Atlántico (en lo que está implícita en cierta medida la nostalgia del antiguo Imperio). En segundo lugar, postular la idea «raza española» apelando a los orígenes de un amplio sector de los hispanoamericanos... (Rama 1982, 174–75)

[First, to create a fraternal coalition of Spanish-speaking nations on both sides of the Atlantic (in which nostalgia for the old Empire is to some extent implicit). Secondly, to postulate the idea of the "Spanish race" by appealing to the origins of a large section of Spanish Americans...]

Juana Martínez Gómez and Almudena Mejías Alonso, in their studies about Latin American women in Madrid between 1800 and 1936, corroborate this idea. According to them, during the Bourbon Restoration period (1874-1931) “ese ‘panhispanismo’ respondía a un plan gubernamental de acercamiento renovado a los países hispanoamericanos, después de los consecuentes distanciamientos de principio de siglo” (1994, 53) [this 'pan-Hispanicism' responded to a governmental plan for a renewed rapprochement with the Spanish-American countries, after the consequent distancing at the beginning of the century].

For this reason, I identify the appropriation of Avellaneda as mainly being a Spanish writer with a form of restorative nostalgia: as Svetlana Boym explains, “this kind of nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths” (2001, chap. 4). An in-depth analysis of this phenomenon exceeds the scope of the present dissertation. Still, I believe it helps explain why it was so important for certain Spanish scholars to emphasise Avellaneda’s Spanish-ness over her Cuban identity.

This does not mean that I am proposing that Gómez de Avellaneda was not (in part) Spanish. What I want to posit is that she was a different kind of Spaniard to those born and raised in the Peninsula. I also argue that she was both Cuban and Spanish, and that neither identity could be subsumed in the other. Therefore, I propose a different and more nuanced kind of analysis, one based on contemporary studies on the creation of national identities and their relationship with gender. This recent scholarship shows that American colonies had an identity of their own, different from that of the metropolis, and that there was a strong gender element enmeshed in the construction of those identities.

The first element that I have taken into account is the fact that *Criollos* were not legally considered full Spaniards. As Benedict Anderson recognises in *Imagined Communities*, for the children of Spanish parents born in the Americas:

The accident of birth in the Americas consigned [them] to subordination - even though in terms of language, religion, ancestry, or manners [they were] largely indistinguishable from the Spain-born Spaniard. There was nothing to be done about it: [they were] *irremediably* a Creole ... hidden inside the irrationality was this logic: born in the Americas, [they] could not be a true Spaniard (Anderson 2006 [1983], 58) (italics in original)

If this difference generated discrimination against *Criollos*, it was also the breeding ground for them to create an identity of their own, separate from that of Spaniards. The restrictions on mobility and commerce between the different *Virreinos* [Viceroyalties], as well as the fact that each developed its own printing culture, allowed for the establishment of differentiated imagined communities in each of them (Anderson 2006 [1983]). In other words, by the nineteenth century the inhabitants of each colony felt themselves attached to that particular land, bearers of their own specific characteristics, different from those of Spaniards born in Spain.

Although I believe Benedict Anderson's statements to be accurate, I also contend, as previous feminist scholars have claimed, that the construction of the nation-state as an imagined community must be problematised in the case of women. As Deniz Kandiyoti explains, national projects and the birth of nation-states imply particular gender regimes in which "women can, at the same time, participate actively in, and become hostages to" (2004 [1991], 47). Moreover, Norma Alarcón, Caren Kaplan, and Minno Moallem affirm that "as excentric (sic) subjects, women have had a problematic relationship to the modern nation-state and its construction of subjectivity" (1999, 1).

In the case of Latin America, Mary Louise Pratt states:

Desde el momento en que el republicanismo negaba a las mujeres los mismos derechos políticos y legales de los hombres, la relación de las mujeres hacia las ideologías de la nación y la comunidad fraternal imaginaria estuvo fuerte y permanentemente diferenciada de la de los hombres (1993, 54)

[From the moment that republicanism denied women the same political and legal rights as men, women's relationship to the ideologies of the nation and the imagined fraternal community was strongly and permanently differentiated from that of men]

For this reason, Pratt contends that women's relationship with the imagined national community is built upon the "ambigüedad de su ciudadanía" (1993, 54) [ambiguity of their citizenship]. This ambiguity was caused by their exclusion from the rights and prerogatives of citizenship, which, as Pratt explains, was everything but casual: "en el caso latinoamericano,

los escritos de los intelectuales independentistas del siglo XIX revelan abiertamente el impulso para limitar la ciudadanía de las mujeres y renovar su subordinación bajo la independencia nacional” (1993, 54) [In the case of Latin America, the writings of nineteenth-century independence intellectuals openly reveal the impulse to limit women's citizenship and renew their subordination under national independence].

In the case of Cuba, Adriana Méndez Rodenas affirms that while the Island was constructing its own nationalist discourse, it also created a discourse about women. She also claims that both discourses contributed to the formation of the nascent Cuban national identity:

A mediados del siglo XIX, surge en Cuba un discurso fundador, casi arqueológico, de y sobre la mujer, que coincide con el surgimiento del discurso nacionalista, el que forja el sentido de identidad nacional y de pertenencia a la “comunidad imaginada” que es la patria criolla (2002, 13)

[In the mid-nineteenth century, a founding, almost archaeological, discourse of and about women emerged in Cuba, coinciding with the emergence of the nationalist discourse, which forged a sense of national identity and of belonging to the "imagined community" that is the Creole homeland]

This has a profound impact on the analysis of Avellaneda's identity. Born in Cuba, Avellaneda identified herself as a Cuban *criolla*, not as a Spaniard. As we can see in her novels, for her being Cuban meant having particular characteristics, different from those of Europeans in general, and especially Spaniards. For example, she describes Josefina, the female protagonist of *El Artista Barquero*, in the following terms: “sus formas mórbidas y perfectas; su tez delicada y un poco morena; sus magníficos ojos negros de largas pestañas y acariciadoras mirada, y cierta voluptuosa dejadez en todos sus movimientos, caracterizaban la especial belleza de la criolla” [her soft and perfect forms; her delicate and slightly dark complexion; her magnificent black eyes with long eyelashes and caressing gaze, and a certain voluptuous ease in all her movements, characterised the special beauty of the *criolla*]. Avellaneda also described her character as having “un delicado piecécito –de aquellos que solo produce Cuba–” [a delicate little foot –one of those that only Cuba produces–] (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 79).

However, Avellaneda did not conform to the ideal of a submissive, subordinate woman. She was, instead, an independent woman, with a room of her own, to paraphrase Woolf's well-known work, who had acquired fame on her own and on the other side of the Atlantic. This, together with several facets of Avellaneda's personal and professional life, made her, unwillingly, the ‘perfect’ target for her contemporaries' accusations of lack of Cuban-ness.

Avellaneda had moved from Cuba to Spain when she was twenty-two years old. It was in Spain that she wrote and published most of her work, which was not openly republican or in favour of Cuba's independence. As Davies highlights, Avellaneda "did not publicly support Cuban independence during the early insurrections in the 1830s and 1840s ... or explicitly towards the end of her life, during the First War of Independence" (2003, 428). Furthermore, when she returned to Cuba twenty-three years later, she did so as the wife of a Spanish official. The verses Fornaris dedicated to Avellaneda upon her return to Cuba exemplify the feelings of betrayal some of her contemporaries, unjustly, must have felt. Fornaris called Avellaneda an *ingrata torcaz*, that is, an ungrateful dove, who returned to the Island as the slave of a *verdugo* [tormentor], which, I believe, was not only a pun on her husband's surname (Verdugo) but also referred to the fact that, as a Spanish official, he represented Cuba's oppressor.

Picon Garfield affirms that contemporary Cuban opposition to Avellaneda was due "no tanto a su residencia en España como a la envidia que despierta una mujer famosa, quien por añadidura rompe la imagen burguesa de la mujer virtuosa y doméstica" (1993, 33) [not so much to her residence in Spain as to the envy aroused by a famous woman who, moreover, breaks the bourgeois image of the virtuous and domestic woman]. Although I agree with the gendered element of Picon Garfield's analysis, I believe that there is more to it than simple envy.

As Catherine Davies explains, in times of turmoil, such as the struggle for independence, literary traditions play an important role in determining national imagery. Literary traditions and other cultural devices are used to create a cohesive image of the nation, through which individuals are led to believe in shared common values which differentiate them from other societies. Hence, as Alarcón, Kaplan and Moallem claim, the construction of the imagined community that unifies the nation is built upon an unstable balance between identification and differentiation in which "there is denial of sexual or racial difference or both, and simultaneous universalization of difference" (1999, 2). In this sense, to include, in a national literary tradition, names that are seen as patriots or martyrs, even if they lived abroad, is better for the nationalistic project than to "include writers who were born on home ground but apparently colluded with the enemy" (Davies 2003, 424). Who gets labelled, fairly or unfairly, as having colluded with the enemy is far more nuanced in the case of women.

Kandiyoti affirms, "the very language of nationalism singles women out as the symbolic repository of group identity", which is why "women may be controlled in different ways in the interests of demarcating and preserving the identities of national/ethnic collectivities" (2004 (1991), 50–51). This overlap between gender and nation, that is, the

gendered construction of the imagined community, has a strong meaning in the case of Avellaneda.

As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, although she was born in Cuba, she was the daughter and stepdaughter of Spanish officials, and her love for her father and his homeland made her, as she confessed in her autobiographical letters to Cepeda, actively aid her stepfather in his plans to move the family to Spain. Thus, her voluntary expatriation to the metropolis is seen as the first act of betrayal on Avellaneda's part, even if at the time her family travelled to Spain "Gómez de Avellaneda era menor de edad y de todos modos, hubiera tenido que conformarse con los deseos de su padrastro español de volver con la familia a España" (Picon Garfield 1993, 33) [Gómez de Avellaneda was a minor and would have had to conform to her Spanish stepfather's wishes to return with his family to Spain anyway]. To add insult to injury, at least in the eyes of the nascent Cuban nationalists, Avellaneda had married not once but twice with Spanish officials, first with Sabater and then with Verdugo, returning to Cuba with the latter "as part of the official entourage of her close friends, the new Spanish Governor, General Francisco Serrano, and his Cuban wife" (Davies 2003, 427). All these factors certainly did not help to create the image of the loving daughter of Cuba Avellaneda felt she was.

Her personal life was not the only element that created resentment. Although with *Sab* Avellaneda had criticised Cuba's slaveocracy, and with *Guatimozin* she had questioned the cruelty of the conquest of Mexico, diverging from the discourse of Cortes' heroism that was prevalent at the time, some of her contemporaries found her stance on Cuba's independence to be lacking. In her writings, Avellaneda did not directly support Cuban independence efforts, and she did not take a side. Mary Cruz describes this apparent dilemma in Avellaneda's character in the following way:

Hija de padre andaluz, y mucho más apegada a él por razones de afinidad temperamental que a la madre cubana, había aprendido a amar la patria española sin plantearse la disyuntiva independentista. Su caso no era único. A las mujeres les estaba "vedada" la política. La Avellaneda no pareció advertir la contradicción metrópoli-colonia sino mucho después (1990a, XI)

[Daughter of an Andalusian father, and much more attached to him for reasons of temperamental affinity than to her Cuban mother, she had learned to love his Spanish homeland without considering the independence dilemma. Her case was not unique. Women were "banned" from politics. Avellaneda did not seem to notice the colonial-metropolis contradiction until much later]

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that what her contemporaries were asking from Avellaneda was in opposition to what was expected of women at the time. Women were not considered political subjects and did not have civil rights. They were not supposed to participate in the public realm and, as Pratt claims, citing a poem by José María Heredía, the prevalent discourse at the time was “el sujeto femenino debe alejarse de ‘la política y la historia’” (1993, 55) [the female subject must move away from 'politics and history']. Consequently, in the words of Davies, Avellaneda “was constrained as a woman, but expected to behave as a man, to make free choices and engage in political activism” (2003, 430).

I contend that for Avellaneda, as for other women writers, this ambiguity signified a need to write in an oblique manner. She could not openly support Cuba’s independence because she could not openly discuss politics. However, Avellaneda always defended her belongingness to Cuba as something different from simply being a Spaniard. As Rodríguez Gutiérrez claims in her essay about Avellaneda’s poem «A S. M. La Reina Doña Isabel segunda», Cuba was always present in Avellaneda’s mind and work. Both versions of the poem, the one from 1843, which was published in 1850 in Avellaneda’s collection of poems, and the final version included in the first volume of Avellaneda’s *Obras Literarias* in 1869, contain a last verse that refers explicitly to Cuba. For Rodríguez Gutiérrez, this reference to Cuba:

denota, en ambos casos, el recuerdo siempre presente de su isla natal en Gómez de Avellaneda, ya que puede afirmarse que esa especie de «coda» cubana tiene la función de hacer presente a Cuba en España y resulta, tanto en una como en otra versión, algo forzada o, al menos ajena, en buena medida, a la temática del poema (2013, 207)

[denotes, in both cases, the ever-present memory of her native island in Gómez de Avellaneda, since it can be affirmed that this sort of Cuban "coda" has the function of making Cuba present in Spain and is, in both versions, somewhat forced or, at least to a large extent, alien to the poem's subject matter]

As Rodríguez Gutiérrez explains, the last verse changes radically from one version to the other. This is the last verse in the 1843-1850 version:

¡Salud, regia beldad! virgen divina!

Su magnánima frente

A tu planta inocente

La nación fiera de Pelayo inclina:

Y allá en el Occidente

La perla de los mares mejicanos,

Al escuchar de nuestro aplauso el grito

Entre el hervor de sus inquietas olas,

En las alas del viento

Con eco fiel devolverá el acento

Que atruena ya las playas españolas! (Gómez de Avellaneda 1850, 196)

[Hail, royal beauty! virgin divine! / Its magnanimous forehead / To thy innocent plant / The fierce nation of Pelayo bows: / And there in the West / The pearl of the Mexican seas, / Hearing of our applause the cry / Amid the boiling of its restless waves, / On the wings of the wind / With faithful echo will return the accent / That already thunders on the Spanish shores!]

In the 1869 version, Gómez de Avellaneda wrote:

Salud, ¡jóven real! Mientras su frente

A tu planta inocente

Esta patria del Cid gozosa inclina,

Recuerda que en los mares de Occidente,

– Enamorando al sol que la ilumina –

Tienes de tu corona

La perla más valiosa y peregrina;

Que allá, olvidada en su distante zona,

Do libre ambiente a respirar no alcanza,

Con ansia aguarda que la lleve el viento

– De nuestro aplauso en el gozoso acento –

La que hoy nos luce espléndida esperanza (1869, 163–64)

[Hail, young royal! While its forehead / To your innocent plant / This homeland of the Cid joyfully bows, / Remember that in the seas of the West, / –Enamouring by the sun that illuminates it– / Thou hast from thy crown / The most valuable and pilgrim pearl; / That there, forgotten in its distant zone, / Where free atmosphere to breathe it cannot reach, / Eagerly waits for the wind to carry it away / –Of our applause in the joyful accent– / The one that today shines for us splendid hope]

While in the first version Cuba is the pearl of the Mexican seas that faithfully echoes the Spanish praise to Queen Isabel II, in the second version Cuba is presented as a peregrine pearl, the most valuable of them all, which, forgotten in the transatlantic distance, cannot fully breathe the air of freedom. This last reference to free air, which the Island cannot breathe, can be read as Avellaneda's call for independence and democracy for her nation.

Cotarelo y Mori heavily criticises the changes that Gómez de Avellaneda made to the poem: for him, Avellaneda committed “una grande y notoria falsedad, al afirmar que había dicho a la Reina cosas que ni por sueño se le ocurrieron” (Cotarelo y Mori 1930, 85) [a great

and notorious falsehood, in asserting that she had told the Queen things that she had not dreamed of]. Rodríguez Gutiérrez rebuts Cotarelo y Mori's assertions, explaining that the problem is not with the content of the poem itself, which Avellaneda did change, but with the fact that she did not change the note that accompanies the poem. The poem was originally written and read by Avellaneda to Queen Isabel II in 1843. In the version published in 1850 Avellaneda included the following note:

Esta composición fue escrita para el *Album* que el Liceo Artístico y Literario de Madrid tuvo la honra de regalar a S. M. la Reina, a cuya augusta presencia fue leída por la autora, en la sesión solemne celebrada por el Liceo en honor del fausto acontecimiento a que se refiere la Oda (1850, 191) (*Italics in original*)

[This composition was written for the *Album* that the Liceo Artístico y Literario de Madrid had the honour of presenting to H. M. the Queen, in whose august presence it was read by the author, at the solemn session held by the Liceo in honour of the happy event to which the Ode refers]

The note is transcribed in the 1869 version in an almost unaltered form, which means it still claimed that the poem was read in the presence of Queen Isabel II⁶¹. Therefore, there is some truth to Cotarelo y Mori's criticism with regard to the note, but not with the content of the poem itself. As Rodríguez Gutiérrez explains:

Resulta lógico que en 1869, destronada ya la Reina Isabel II, con La Gloriosa en España y con los comienzos de la guerra de Independencia en Cuba, a la autora le resultara falso o caduco el poema de 1843 y que en 1869 reclamara para Cuba lo que, por otra parte, en ese momento empezaba a disfrutar España: libertad, democracia (2013, 208)

[It is logical that in 1869, with Queen Isabel II dethroned, with La Gloriosa in Spain and with the beginning of the war of Independence in Cuba, the author found the 1843 poem false or outdated and that in 1869 she demanded for Cuba what, on the other hand, Spain was beginning to enjoy at that time: freedom, democracy]

Following Rodríguez Gutiérrez's analysis, I contend that both texts are true, with both being the result of the context in which they were written and revised. For Rodríguez Gutiérrez, both versions and their changes reveal how Avellaneda had to mediate between her double

⁶¹ “Esta composición fue escrita para el Album que el Liceo Artístico y Literario de Madrid tuvo la honra de regalar a S. M. la Reina, a cuya presencia fue leída por la autora, en la sesión solemne celebrada por el Liceo en honor del acontecimiento a que se refiere la oda” (Gómez de Avellaneda 1869, 160) [This composition was written for the Album that the Liceo Artístico y Literario de Madrid had the honour of presenting to H. M. the Queen, in whose presence it was read by the author, at the solemn session held by the Liceo in honour of the event to which the ode refers].

identity as both Cuban and Spanish. For the purposes of the present dissertation, Rodríguez Gutiérrez's assertion about the 1869 version is particularly important:

el patriotismo (cubano) de la versión de 1869, supone también la conversión de la cubanidad en lejanía, como si al ponerse en evidencia las distancias «espirituales», se multiplicaran las distancias físicas; como si al quedarse aislada y distante de España, la identidad cubana fuera también una identidad más difícil de asir para la escritora (2013, 209)

[the (Cuban) patriotism of the 1869 version also implies the conversion of Cuban-ness into remoteness, as if by highlighting "spiritual" distances, physical distances were multiplied; as if by remaining isolated and distant from Spain, Cuban identity was also an identity more difficult for the writer to grasp]

I believe that the feelings Rodríguez Gutiérrez identifies in the 1869 version of the poem « A S. M. *La Reina Doña Isabel segunda*» can be related to the nostalgia present in Avellaneda's last novel *El Artista Barquero, o los cuatro cinco de junio*, which also happens to be the only one she wrote and published on Cuban soil.

The novel takes place in France, but Cuba is omnipresent through the characters of Josefina, a young Cuban *criolla*, her father, Monsieur Caillard, and their servant and former slave Niná. For Mirta Suquet Martínez, the fact that Avellaneda represented Cuba as a memory in the only novel she wrote while on the Island mirrors Avellaneda's own relationship with her homeland, which, after more than twenty years of absence, she could only see as the country she had lost:

Aún residiendo en Cuba en el momento de la escritura de *El artista barquero*, Avellaneda se resiste a abandonar los contextos europeos, y por esta razón se sitúa desde una perspectiva transatlántica para enfocar la isla, como si sólo a través de esta mirada exotópica –consolidada en más de veinte años de vivir fuera de Cuba– pudiera representar con autenticidad su relación con la patria perdida. En *El artista...*, la autora resalta en definitiva la imposibilidad de recuperar la Isla como espacio físico concreto (Suquet Martínez 2014, 8)

[Even though she was living in Cuba at the time she wrote *El artista barquero*, Avellaneda is reluctant to abandon European contexts, and for this reason she situates herself from a transatlantic perspective to approach the island, as if only through this exotopic gaze –consolidated in more than twenty years of living outside Cuba– could she authentically represent her relationship with her lost homeland. In *El artista...*, the author ultimately highlights the impossibility of recovering the island as a concrete physical space]

In this impossibility of recovering a concrete physical space some critics, like Luisa Campuzano, José Antonio Cancino Alfaro and Gabriela Flores Pérez, have seen examples of both restorative and reflective nostalgia. These concepts were first proposed by Svetlana Boym. Restorative nostalgia “proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps” (Boym 2001, chap. 4), while reflective nostalgia “is more concerned with historical and individual time ... The focus here is not on recovery of what is perceived to be an absolute truth but on the meditation on history and passage of time” (Boym 2001, chap. 5). In other words, “restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space” (Boym 2001, chap. 5).

For Campuzano, Mr. Caillard's obsession with finding a painting that could faithfully represent the lost gazebo, a symbol of his love for his late wife and of the Cuba he has lost, represents a form of restorative nostalgia: “como nostálgico restaurador M. Caillard es un monomaniaco ... obsesionado por devolver a su estado original, mediante el arte, el templete destruido ... Para él las ruinas del templo del amor constituyen un testimonio del fracaso de su vida emocional” (2016b [2002], 50) [as a restorative nostalgic M. Caillard is a monomaniac ... obsessed with restoring the destroyed temple to its original state through art ... For him the ruins of the temple of love are a testimony to the failure of his emotional life]. Cancino Alfaro and Flores Pérez share Campuzano's appreciation of Mr. Caillard's role: “Mr. Caillard materializa en la novela ... la nostalgia restaurativa, aquella que intenta reconstruir totalmente el hogar perdido, azuzada por un sentido de pérdida de cohesión y comunidad” (2016, 66) [Mr. Caillard embodies in the novel ... restorative nostalgia, that which attempts to fully reconstruct the lost home, fuelled by a sense of loss of cohesion and community].

Regarding the elements of the story relating to reflective nostalgia, Campuzano affirms that Josefina represents it: “como nostálgica reflexiva Josefina es la que narra, plenamente consciente de que pertenece a un ayer cancelado, la historia cubana de la familia ... en su nueva vida no solo exhibe las huellas de haber sido cubana, sino que parece seguir siéndolo a su modo” (2016b [2002], 52) [as a reflective nostalgic Josefina is the one who narrates, fully aware that she belongs to a cancelled yesterday, the Cuban history of the family ... in her new life she not only exhibits the traces of having been Cuban, but seems to continue to be so in her own way].

I posit that Josefina and her reflective nostalgia represent Avellaneda's own nostalgia for her homeland, to which she finally returned but could no longer totally grasp. Avellaneda, like Josefina, was Cuban in her own way, not in the way her contemporaries demanded of her.

She never forgot her roots or her motherland, but as a woman, that is, a marginal, oppressed subject, the literary characters she constructed were situated “en las fronteras de las ideologías nacionalistas, con un pie dentro de ellas y otro afuera” (Pratt 1993, 56) [on the borderlines of nationalist ideologies, with one foot inside and one foot outside them].

I argue that it is from these borderlines— that allow for a particular vision of the world— that Avellaneda’s work must be read. In the case of *El Artista Barquero*, the narrative construction of Cuba from outside the Island, through the memories of Josefina, Mr. Caillard and Niná, and its ultimate representation in painting by Huberto, who has never seen it, symbolises the way Avellaneda sees herself in relation to her country, which she can only grasp from afar and through art. In the words of Suquet Martínez: “la escritura de la novela es en sí misma el acto de recuperación de la patria mediado por la fabulación narrativa. Una patria que no son los restos del presente, sino el recuerdo idealizado del pasado y estetizado por el arte” (2014, 9) [the writing of the novel is in itself the act of recovering the homeland mediated by narrative fabulation. A homeland that is not the remains of the present, but the idealised memory of the past and aestheticised by art].

In this regard, Rodríguez Gutiérrez, focusing on Avellaneda’s poetry⁶² and building upon Severo Sarduy’s theorisations, states that Avellaneda started a form of writing that “construye lo cubano como lejanía” (2011, 30) [constructs the Cuban as remoteness]. I suggest that this remoteness, this building of Cuba from afar, is precisely a form of restorative nostalgia. In it, Avellaneda takes the fragments of her memories of her beloved Cuba to bring to herself the place she has lost, not to ritualise it but to cherish it. This way of remembering and loving Cuba, not in a nationalistic way, but an emotive one, is also what allows Avellaneda to consider herself not only Cuban but also Spanish.

Continuing with the example of Josefina, it is possible to say that the character was both Cuban and French in the same way Avellaneda was both Cuban and Spanish. In this sense, Sommer argues that Avellaneda “was a Spaniard both because of her father’s family and then largely by choice. She was Cuban more as a matter of sentimental allegiance” (1991, 134). I agree with Sommer’s assertion that Avellaneda was Spanish mainly as a matter of choice.

As Cruz claims, when Avellaneda was in Cuba, and particularly after the death of her husband, she understood that the Island she dearly loved could no longer provide her with the “afectos familiares de sus primeros años ni los incentivos para la creación literaria” (1990a,

⁶² See: Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Milena. 2015. ‘El Deseo y el cocuyo: sobre lo cubano en la poesía de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’. *Romance Studies* 33 (1): 44–55. <https://doi.org/10.1179/0263990415Z.00000000085>

XV) [family affections of her early years nor the incentives for literary creation]. For this reason, she decided to go back to Spain, a land to which she also belonged, just in a different way. It was in Spain that Avellaneda had her greatest successes as well as her greatest sorrows, both personally and professionally. Avellaneda was particularly attached to the memory of her father, and although not always on the best of terms with her paternal relations, she was dearly interested in his side of the family, dedicating at least two of her works to her paternal lineage, the play *Alfonso Munio* (1844), included in her *Obras Literarias* as *Munio Alfonso*, and the novel *Dolores: página de una crónica de familia* (1851).

Therefore, I find myself concurring with Méndez Rodenas when she affirms that Avellaneda upheld “en su vida y obra el precario equilibrio de la doble nacionalidad o de la doble identidad” (2002, 14) [in her life and work the precarious balance of dual nationality or dual identity], as both Cuban and Spanish. Rodríguez Gutiérrez also recognises this double belongingness, pointing to Avellaneda as the first woman writer transplanted from Latin America to Spain (2011, 23), with “a nacionalidad e identidad doble, elaborada y reelaborada en su escritura” (Rodríguez Gutiérrez 2009, 117) [a nationality and dual identity, elaborated and re-elaborated in her writing]. In this sense, Pastor, although claiming that Avellaneda’s national belongingness is a secondary factor in the analysis of her work, also states:

el hecho de que GGA [Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda] formara parte de una y otra cultura intensificó y estimuló su firme actitud de protesta no sólo contra la sociedad cubano-española, sino contra la sociedad patriarcal que discriminaba contra la mujer y que caracterizaba a las sociedades hispánicas del siglo XIX (2000, 123)

[the fact that GGA [Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda] was part of both cultures intensified and stimulated her firm attitude of protest not only against the Cuban-Spanish society, but also against the patriarchal society that discriminated against women and that characterised the Hispanic societies of the 19th century]

I agree with this assertion by Pastor, in the sense that I believe Avellaneda’s double identity as Cuban and Spanish, as well as the concessions and mediations she had to make throughout her life to keep the precarious balance between the two, gave her a particular point of view from which she was able to analyse and criticise the societies in which she lived.

This particular way of seeing the world was a feminine one, that, as Picon Garfield proposes, was determined by Avellaneda’s double position of alterity as a woman and as a colonial, however much she integrated, rather successfully, into Spanish society. Nevertheless,

several critics of her time claimed that Avellaneda's texts were masculine in nature, appropriating the dominant position in society through works created by an "othered" subject.

4.2. "¡Es mucho hombre esa mujer!": And still she wrote

Since the publication of her first book of poetry, Gómez de Avellaneda was regarded by Spanish critics as having a manly disposition. In the prologue to *Poesías*, Juan Nicasio Gallego wrote:

Todo en sus cantos es nervioso y varonil; así cuesta trabajo persuadirse que no son obra de un escritor del otro sexo. No brillan tanto en ellos los movimientos de ternura, ni las formas blandas y delicadas propias de un pecho femenino y de la dulce languidez que infunde en sus hijas el sol ardiente de los trópicos que alumbró su cuna (Gallego 1869 [1841], XI)⁶³

[Everything in her verses is nervous and manly; thus, it is hard to persuade oneself that they are not the work of a writer of the opposite sex. The movements of tenderness, the soft and delicate forms of a female bosom, and the sweet languor which the tropical burning sun, which illuminated her cradle, instils in its daughters, do not shine in them]

These considerations about her manly temperament followed her throughout her life and even after her death. Cotarelo y Mori reports that Manuel Bretón de los Herreros, a poet and dramatist, and contemporary of Avellaneda, pronounced the phrase that serves as the title for this section: "Es mucho hombre esta mujer" [This woman is too much a man] (1930, 77). It became a commonplace statement among critics of the time. Antonio Ferrer del Río in his *Galería de la Literatura Española*, published in 1846, described Avellaneda in the following terms:

Señorita Doña Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. Al frente de las poetisas españolas se encuentra Carolina Coronado: no es la Avellaneda poetisa, sino poeta: sus atrevidas concepciones, su elevado tono, sus acentos valientes, son impropios de su sexo. Escribe odas y tragedias: como novelista luce mas en *Espatolino* y en *Guatimozín* que en *Sab* y las *Dos Mujeres*. Ha alcanzado triunfos escénicos en *Alfonso Munio* y el *Príncipe de Viana*: en un solo certamen ha merecido dos premios: de *Saúl*, tragedia bíblica, nos han contado maravillas.

⁶³ I am quoting the prologue of Juan Nicasio Gallego as reproduced by Gómez de Avellaneda in her edition of her works in 1869. Due to Covid-19 restrictions I could not have access to a first edition of Avellaneda's *Poesías*, for which the prologue was first written. However, thanks to the *Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes'* digitalisation work, I was able to consult the facsimiles of the five volumes of Gómez de Avellaneda's compilation of her own work, which include Gallego's prologue. It is possible to visit the site that the *Biblioteca Virtual* dedicates to Gómez de Avellaneda at the following link: http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/gertrudis_gomez_de_avellaneda/

Corresponde la altivez y soberbia de su carácter al mérito de sus composiciones: su vida tendría muchos puntos con la de Jorge Sand si la sociedad marileña se asemejase en todo a la sociedad parisiense (Ferrer del Río 1846, 309)

[Miss Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. At the head of the Spanish poetesses⁶⁴ is Carolina Coronado: Avellaneda is not a poetess, but a poet: her daring conceptions, her elevated tone, her courageous accents, are inappropriate to her sex. She writes odes and tragedies: as a novelist she shines more in *Espatolino* and *Guatimozín* than in *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres*. She has achieved stage triumphs with *Alfonso Munio* and the *Príncipe de Viana*: in a single competition she has won two prizes: we have been told marvellous things about *Saul*, a biblical tragedy. The haughtiness and arrogance of her character correspond to the merit of her compositions: her life would have many points with that of George Sand if Madrid's society resembled Parisian society in everything]

Only two years after her death, José Martí, in an article published in Mexico in *Revista Universal*, declared that Gómez de Avellaneda could not be considered as the great representative of Latin American women poets, because “no hay mujer en Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda” [there is no woman in Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda] (Martí 2010 [1875], 97). Martí contrasts the figure of Avellaneda with that of Luisa Pérez de Zambrana, another Cuban poet, claiming that the latter and not the former should be considered as the greatest Latin American woman poet because of her feminine tenderness and shyness⁶⁵:

Hay un hombre altivo, a las veces fiero, en la poesía de la Avellaneda: hay en todos los versos de Luisa un alma clara de mujer. Se hacen versos de la grandeza; pero solo del sentimiento se hace poesía. La Avellaneda es atrevidamente grande; Luisa Pérez es tiernamente tímida.

Ha de preguntarse a más, no solamente cuál es entre las dos la mejor poetisa, sino cuál de ellas es la mejor poetisa americana. Y en esto, nos parece que no ha de haber vacilación.

No hay mujer en Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda: todo anunciaba en ella un ánimo potente y varonil: era su cuerpo alto y robusto, como su poesía ruda y enérgica: no tuvieron las ternuras miradas para sus ojos, llenos siempre de extraño fulgor y de dominio: era algo así

⁶⁴ In order to keep the meaning behind the Spanish terms *poeta* and *poetisa*, I have decided to use the terms *poet* and *poetess* in the English translation of the text. *Poetess* is a dated English term used to refer to women writers/poets, in a similar way that in Avellaneda's time a distinction was made by calling her a *poeta* and not a *poetisa*.

⁶⁵ For a deeper analysis of Martí's comparison between Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and Luisa Pérez de Zambrana and the consequences it had for Cuban women poets, see Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Milena. 2011. 'Introducción ¿Por Qué Una Antología de Poetas Cubanas?' In *Otra Cuba Secreta: Antología de Poetas Cubanas Del XIX y Del XX*, 17–52. Colección Ensayo. Madrid: Editorial Verbum; and Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Milena. 2014. 'Que yo las nubes resistir no puedo: las respuestas de Carolina Coronado y Luisa Pérez de Zambrana ante la polémica en torno al género en Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (Una lectura transatlántica)'. *Arbor* 190 (770): a183. <https://doi.org/10.3989/arbor.2014.770n6004>. In these essays, Rodríguez Gutiérrez claims that the comparison has deeply patriarchal roots: “cuánto de patriarcal había, por cierto, en ese Martí que elogiaba a Luisa Pérez porque había permanecido soltera después de enviudar, mientras censuraba a Gómez de Avellaneda por haberse casado dos veces y no haber hecho de la viudez un estado permanente” (2011, 25) [how patriarchal, by the way, was the Martí who praised Luisa Pérez because she had remained single after she had become a widow, while he censured Gómez de Avellaneda for having married twice and not having made widowhood a permanent status].

como una nube amenazante: Luisa Pérez es algo como nube de nácar y azul en tarde serena y bonancible. Sus dolores son lágrimas: los de la Avellaneda son fierrezas. Más: la Avellaneda no sintió el dolor humano: era más alta y más potente que él: su pesar era una roca: el de Luisa Pérez, una flor. Violeta casta, nelumbio quejumbroso, pasionaria triste (Martí 2010, 96–97) [There is a haughty man, sometimes fierce, in Avellaneda's poetry: there is in all Luisa's verses a clear woman's soul. Verses are made from greatness; but only from sentiment is poetry made. Avellaneda is boldly great; Luisa Pérez is tenderly shy.

It must be asked, moreover, not only which of the two is the better poetess, but which of them is the better American poetess. And in this, it seems to us, there should be no hesitation

There is no woman in Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda: everything in her announced a powerful and manly spirit: her body was tall and robust, like her rough and energetic poetry: her eyes, always full of strange brilliance and dominion, had no tenderness in them: she was something like a threatening cloud: Luisa Pérez is something like a cloud of mother-of-pearl and blue in a serene evening. Her sorrows are tears: those of Avellaneda are fierceness. More: Avellaneda did not feel human pain: she was taller and more powerful than it: her sorrow was a rock: that of Luisa Pérez, a flower. Chaste violet, plaintive lotus, sad passionflower]

What were the reasons for the critics of her time to repeatedly refer to Avellaneda in these terms, and even attack her for it? Why qualify her and her work as manly? And even more so, why put her in contrast and in competition with other women poets of her time?

A general answer to these questions can be found in Joanna Russ' study *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. According to Russ, even if by the nineteenth century women were not formally denied the possibility of writing, the lack of formal prohibitions did “not preclude the presence of powerful, informal ones” (2018 [1983], 6). Following Russ' arguments, one of the instruments used to stop women from entering the realm of literature is by delegitimising their writing, denying their agency. There are many ways in which this denial of agency occurs, the most obvious one being the claim that because women do not have the capacity to write great literature, “someone else (a man) must have written it” (Russ 2018, 22). However, this kind of affirmation might be too strong, bringing with it accusations of plagiarism. Hence, the patriarchal society has found more subtle ways of denying women's agency. The first is the formula “It wrote itself” (Russ 2018 [1983], 24), as if a text could magically appear on paper through an equally magical inspiration that has no relation to the subject who wrote it. Another way of denying agency, the one that has most to do with Avellaneda's case, is to claim: “the man inside her wrote it”, which, as Russ explains, is “a subtler version that appears to restore agency to the female author while actually insisting that some “he” had to write it” (2018 [1983], 25).

I argue that this is precisely what happened with Avellaneda. The male critics of her time could not understand, nor accept, that a woman could be the author of such great pieces of literature, so good that they rivalled their own. Therefore, to make it make sense within the dominant and universalist discourse of the time, the male critics appropriated Avellaneda's work by claiming that she was actually one of them, a man in the body of a woman. This analysis applies to how Avellaneda was seen on both sides of the Atlantic. She was, as Rodríguez Gutiérrez asserts, “una mujer transgresora, demasiado atrevida para su época” (2011, 24) [a transgressive woman, too daring for her time]. This daring side of her personality made her one of the greatest writers of her time, precisely because she managed to “sobrepasar las normas de las sociedades en las que [vivió]” (Rodríguez Gutiérrez 2012a, 21) [surpass the norms of the societies in which [she lived]].

Consequently, the only way the pervasive masculine Hispanic culture –both in Cuba and in Spain– had to understand and somehow accept this transgressive woman was by discursively transforming her into one of them. In this regard, Picon Garfield argues, “El universalismo del discurso masculino intenta incorporar, de este modo mecánico y superficial, la voz de Gómez de Avellaneda a la suya, con el fin de neutralizar y re-autorizar su discurso en vez de comprenderlo por su diferencia” (1993, 16) [The universalism of male discourse attempts to incorporate, in this mechanical and superficial way, Gómez de Avellaneda's voice into its own, in order to neutralise and re-authorise her discourse instead of understanding it for its difference].

Carolina Coronado, another Spanish woman writer of Avellaneda's time, expressed the same opinion in a three-part essay published in the newspaper *La América* between March and April 1862. In her essay Coronado tackles the critics' decision to refer to Gómez de Avellaneda as a *poeta*, and not a *poetisa*: “Los otros hombres del tiempo antiguo negaban el genio de la mujer; hoy los del moderno, ya que no pueden negar al que triunfa, le metamorfosean” [The other men of ancient times denied the genius of women; today the men of modern times, since they cannot deny the one who triumphs, metamorphose her] (1861, 10).

Coronado's rebuttal has been studied with great lucidity by Rodríguez Gutiérrez. She argues that Carolina Coronado and Luisa Pérez de Zambrana, the two women Avellaneda was compared to by Ferrer del Río and Martí, respectively, were able to see through the patriarchal strategies used to delegitimise Avellaneda. For Rodríguez Gutiérrez, both Coronado and Pérez de Zambrana understood those strategies as a way to not only attack the Cuban writer, but also to keep other women, including them, from entering the literary realm in the way Avellaneda had done:

En los textos de ambas [Carolina Coronado y Luisa Pérez de Zambrana] no solo hay notables testimonios de la gran admiración hacia Avellaneda, sino también evidentes signos de que las dos *poetisas* se sintieron en algún momento de sus vidas fuertemente atraídas por ese modelo que representaba la *poeta*; modelo que, al contrario de la crítica masculina, ellas no leyeron como signo de masculinización, altivez o soberbia, sino como símbolo de la mujer que se atreve a asumir y a defender su libertad creativa y vital ... la renuncia a encarnar dicho modelo no fue una decisión libre y espontánea para las *poetisas*, sino una resolución tomada a posteriori, como consecuencia de la toma de conciencia sobre las limitaciones que padecía la mujer en la sociedad; resolución que supone entonces una dosis de sufrimiento y un taponar del deseo; un signo, en fin, de impotencia, de falta de fortaleza, de derrota (Rodríguez Gutiérrez 2014, 10) (*italics in original*)

[In the texts of both [Carolina Coronado and Luisa Pérez de Zambrana] there is not only notable evidence of great admiration for Avellaneda, but also clear signs that the two poetesses felt at some point in their lives strongly attracted to the model represented by the poet; a model which, contrary to male critics, they did not read as a sign of masculinisation, haughtiness or pride, but as a symbol of the woman who dares to assume and defend her creative and vital freedom.... the renunciation of incarnating this model was not a free and spontaneous decision for the poetesses, but a decision taken a posteriori, as a consequence of the awareness of the limitations suffered by women in society; a decision which then added a dose of suffering and a blocking up of desire; a sign, in short, of impotence, of lack of strength, of defeat]

For her part, it seems that Avellaneda sometimes partly accepted the criticism that classified her as manly, calling herself a *poeta* and not a *poetisa*, and admitting to having masculine traits:

...Mi posición es indudablemente la más libre y desembarazada que puede tener un individuo de mi sexo en nuestra actual sociedad. Viuda, poeta, independiente por carácter, sin necesitar de nadie, ni nadie de mí, con hábitos varoniles en muchas cosas, y con edad bastante para que no pueda pensar el mundo que me hacen falta tutores, es evidente que estoy en la posición más propia para hacer cuanto me dé la gana sin más responsabilidad que la de dar cuenta a Dios y a mi conciencia... (Gómez de Avellaneda 1989, 316–17)⁶⁶

[...My position is undoubtedly the freest and most untrammelled that an individual of my sex can have in our present society. A widow, a poet, independent by character, needing no one, and no one from me, with manly habits in many things, and old enough for the world not to think me in need of tutors,

⁶⁶ I am referencing the date of the edition by Elena Catena. This was a letter written by Avellaneda to Antonio Romero Ortiz in 1853. It was revealed to the public in 1975 in a publication titled *Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. Cartas inéditas existentes en el Museo del Ejército*, edited by José Priego Fernández del Campo.

it is evident that I am in the most proper position to do whatever I please without any other responsibility than that of giving an account to God and to my conscience....]

However, she also disputed this narrative. Avellaneda claimed that it was not so much that she had a masculine temperament, but that in her position she could see and understand things in ways that men could not, having the need and ability to express them with all the strength of her soul. An extract from an article she published in the Cuban newspaper *El Almendares*, cited by Picon Garfield, shows how Avellaneda felt about herself:

Don Juan Nicasio Gallego ha dicho de mis poesías que ... sus cualidades sobresalientes eran la altura y energía de los pensamientos y el varonil vigor de la expresión. Otros críticos han dicho también que yo no era poetisa, sino *poeta*: que mi talento era eminentemente varonil. Yo creo que no es exactamente verdad: que ningún hombre ve ciertas cosas como yo las veo, ni las comprende como yo las comprendo; per no niego por esto que siento que hay vigor en mi alma... (Picón Garfield 1993, 47 citing Gómez de Avellaneda) (italics in original)

[Don Juan Nicasio Gallego has said of my poetry that ... its outstanding qualities were the height and energy of the thoughts and the manly vigour of the expression. Other critics have also said that I was not a poetess, but a *poet*: that my talent was eminently manly. I believe that this is not exactly true: that no man sees certain things as I see them, nor understands them as I understand them; but I do not deny that I feel that there is vigour in my soul....]

For Picon Garfield, Avellaneda tried to dislocate the dominant patriarchal discourse, but was still trapped by the dichotomy between masculine and feminine (1993, 47). I argue that Avellaneda, as well as the male critics of her time and the women writers who tried to oppose Avellaneda's appropriation by the male canon, were all enmeshed in the hierarchical patriarchal and gendered system created by the sexual politics of their time, to borrow the term coined by Kate Millett. As Millett explains in her pivotal work, sexual politics create a hierarchical gendered system which assigns particular temperaments, roles, activities, and codes of conduct to men and women according to their sex, which in turn creates gendered personalities. In this patriarchal system, characteristics like "aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy" are assigned to the male, while "assivity, ignorance, docility, 'virtue,' and ineffectuality" are assigned to the female (Millett 2016 [1969], 26).

Avellaneda was a woman, but instead of following the social mandates of being passive, ignorant, docile, and virtuous, she was active, intelligent, and fierce. She not only wrote sentimental poetry –the socially-accepted realm for women within the gendered hierarchy dominant in Spain– but she was also a dramaturg, an essayist, and a novelist. She actively

participated in the public sphere as a professional writer, that is, as Rodríguez Gutiérrez reminds us, as one that “gana dinero y que puede vivir, como algunos escritores (no todos) de su trabajo” (2014, 4) [earns money and can live, like some (not all) writers, from her work]. Avellaneda also had a personal life that did not conform to the socio-cultural rules assigned to her sex. She refused the marriages that different family members tried to arrange for her, and instead married for love twice, unapologetically had at least two lovers, and a child out of wedlock. She was a figure in sharp contrast with the chaste ideal of the angel of the house, the passive faithful wife who remains an eternal widow after her husband’s death as, for example, Luisa Pérez had done.

These two situations are something that the patriarchal society, which needs women to depend economically and emotionally on men, cannot easily accept. “Una mujer con ‘habitación propia’, que triunfa como autora y gana dinero con su trabajo, es, sin duda, mucho más *peligrosa* y supone una competencia mayor que una *poetisa*” (Rodríguez Gutiérrez 2014, 4). [A woman with a ‘room of her own’, who succeeds as an author and earns money from her work, is undoubtedly much more *dangerous* and more of a competition than a *poetess*] (italics in original).

Referring to Avellaneda as manly and masculine was the only way the critics of her time had to accept her genius. Accepting, at least partially, this description of herself was the only way in which Avellaneda could maintain that ‘room of her own’ she had so fiercely worked for, thus gaining the acceptance of her peers.

4.3. Avellaneda’s prologues as ploys of the weak

Avellaneda was well aware that being a woman in a male-dominated world meant facing social and cultural constraints, as well as criticism that her male peers would not have had to endure. In order to tackle those critics beforehand, Avellaneda included a prologue to her novels in which she apparently apologised for her work and diminished its power and impact.

In *Sab*, Avellaneda included a prologue called “*Dos palabras al lector*” [Two words to the reader], referring to herself in the third person as *la autora*. In this prologue Avellaneda described her book as a *novelita*, not in the sense of novella or novelette, but of a small, almost irrelevant piece of work. She claimed to have written it only to distract herself in moments of idleness and melancholy and then she affirmed: “tres años ha dormido esta novelita casi olvidada en el fondo de su papelera” [for three years this little novel has slept almost forgotten

at the bottom of her wastepaper basket], a reason for which she “la publica sin ningún género de pretensiones” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 97) [publishes it without any pretensions whatsoever]. Avellaneda also claimed that some of her ideas had changed since the *novelita* was first written, but that:

Sea por pereza, sea por la repugnancia que sentimos en alterar lo que hemos escrito con verdadera convicción (aunque esta llegue a vacilar), la autora no ha hecho ninguna mudanza en sus borradores primitivos, y espera que si las personas sensatas encuentran algunos errores esparcidos en estas páginas, no olvidarán que han sido dictadas por los sentimientos algunas veces exagerados pero siempre generosos de la prima juventud (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 97)

[Whether out of laziness, or because of the repugnance we feel in altering what we have written with real conviction (even if this conviction wavers), the author has made no alterations of her early drafts, and hopes that if sensible people find some errors scattered through these pages, they will not forget that they have been dictated by the sometimes exaggerated but always generous feelings of early youth]

In this prologue Luisa Campuzano sees “un contrato de lectura sin el cual una cubana no hubiera podido correr el riesgo de publicar este libro en el Madrid paradójicamente liberal de 1841” (Campuzano 2016a [2002], 38; 2006, 112) [a reading contract without which a Cuban woman could not have taken the risk of publishing this book in the paradoxically liberal Madrid of 1841].

Campuzano traces the writing process of the novel and its prologue, focusing on the time that elapsed between the conclusion of the novel and its publication, as stated by Avellaneda herself. She does this to posit a possible explanation as to why Avellaneda felt the need to include a prologue in which she seems to discourage the reading of her own novel (Campuzano 2016a [2002], 39; 2006, 112). In the prologue, Avellaneda affirms that three years had elapsed between the writing process and the publication of the novel. It would be at the end of these three years that Avellaneda decided to write the prologue. For Campuzano (2006), these three years and the doubts Avellaneda raises about the content of the novel, have to do with contemporary debates about the abolition of slavery in Cuba, and the treaties between England and Spain to limit the slave trade that had been signed since 1817. Thus, even if Avellaneda did not change the content of her novel, she sought to soften the subversive nature of its message through her prologue.

For her part, Ana Peluffo claims that Avellaneda’s prologue is a *treta del débil* [ploy of the weak], a term coined by Josefina Ludmer to analyse Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's answer to Sor Filotea. For Peluffo, Avellaneda used the prologue:

para distanciarse a través de un complejo malabarismo retórico del impacto que la novela pueda tener en el momento de su publicación. En el mismo paratexto trata de suavizar el posible impacto de su propuesta cuando afirma que no escribió la novela para intentar tener un efecto político en el debate sobre la esclavitud sino para “[...] distraerse de momentos de ocio y melancolía” (2016, 694)

[to distance herself through a complex rhetorical juggling act from the impact the novel might have at the time of its publication. In the same paratext she tries to soften the possible impact of her proposal when she states that she did not write the novel to try to have a political effect on the slavery debate but to “[...] distract herself from moments of idleness and melancholy”]

That is, Avellaneda constructed the prologue as a means of distancing herself, at least rhetorically, from the public debate about slavery and abolition. However, this strategy was not enough and in Cuba the royal censor banned the novel, considering its doctrines to be subversive of the system of slavery. In Spain, where the novel was published and freely distributed, the peninsular public was not able to really grasp its revolutionary message.

Going back to the prologue and its purpose, and taking Ludmer’s theorisation as a starting point, I must agree with both Campuzano and Peluffo in contending that it should be understood as a ploy of the weak. For Ludmer, the ploys of the weak “combina[n], como todas las tácticas de resistencia, sumisión y aceptación del lugar asignado por el otro, con antagonismo y enfrentamiento, retiro de colaboración” (1985, 51–52) [combine, like all tactics of resistance, submission and acceptance of the place assigned by the other, with antagonism and confrontation, withdrawal from collaboration]. Although Ludmer restricted her analysis to the work of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, I posit that the term ploys of the weak can be applied to other women writers of the past.

In the case of Avellaneda, we can see how with her prologue to *Sab* she seemed to accept her place in the gendered patriarchal system by claiming that she wrote her novel just as a form of entertainment, to assuage her idleness, with no other expectation whatsoever. Nevertheless, she also made it clear that she had not changed her text, because she had written it with the force of conviction and the generosity of youth. With this last statement, as Pastor (2003) claims, Avellaneda was subtly antagonising the royal censor and her critics, who she ironically referred to as “*personas sensatas*” [sensible people]. By giving them the qualification of “sensible”, Avellaneda was making it harder for critics to openly attack her work, because if they were real people of sense, then they had the capacity and obligation to grasp the true meaning of her novel while letting slide any “minor errors” on her part. Hence, as Campuzano claims, this prologue was a strategy of survival (2016a [2002], 39).

Avellaneda repeated her ploys of the weak in the prologue to *Dos Mujeres*. In it, she claimed:

...la presente obrita ... Más humilde y menos profunda, se ha limitado a bosquejar caracteres verosímiles y pasiones naturales; y los cuadros que ofrece su novela, si no son siempre lisonjeros, nunca son sangrientos.

...

La autora no se cree en la precisión de profesar una doctrina, ni reconoce en sí la capacidad necesaria para encargarse de ninguna misión, de cualquier género que sea. Escribe por mero pasatiempo y sería dolorosamente afectada si algunas de sus opiniones, vertidas sin intención, fuesen juzgadas con la severidad que tal vez merece el que tiene la presunción de dictar máximas doctrinales (Gómez de Avellaneda 2015a [1842], 169)

[...the present little work ... More humble and less profound, she has limited herself to sketching plausible characters and natural passions; and the pictures her novel offers, if not always flattering, are never gory.

...

The author does not believe that she has the precision to profess a doctrine, nor does she recognise in herself the necessary capacity to undertake any mission, of whatever kind. She writes for mere pastime and would be painfully affected if some of her opinions, unintentionally expressed, were judged with the severity which he who presumes to dictate doctrinal maxims perhaps deserves....]

Once again Avellaneda referred to herself in the third person, and once again she called her work an “*obrita*”, a little piece of work. She repeated the argument of writing for mere pleasure, without meaning to establish a doctrine or embark on any kind of mission. This sort of apology is particularly telling, because *Dos Mujeres* is, by far, Avellaneda’s most feminist work, in which she advances critiques not only of the institution of marriage, but of women’s lack of options in society, where love is the only realm available for them. Thus, as Picon Garfield claims, with this prologue Avellaneda seems to “invalidar la ambición de una mujer que escribe sobre ambición femenina” (1993, 128) [invalidate the ambition of a woman that writes about female ambition]. However, even if Avellaneda stated that her writings did not intend to establish a particular doctrine, she also asserted that the opinions expressed in the novel were her own. The reference to “her opinions” can be taken as a way of announcing a particular kind of feminine writing, which could not be enunciated or spoken about because it had no place in the symbolic patriarchal order (Pastor 2003, 112).

These two prologues embody not only Avellaneda’s ploys of the weak but, as both Picon Garfield (1993) and Pastor (2003) have already recognised, also show her anxiety of

authorship. According to Gilbert and Gubar, because the Western literary world in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was “overwhelmingly male –or, more accurately, patriarchal–”, women writers of the past suffered from what they termed “anxiety of authorship”, defined as “an anxiety built from complex and often only barely conscious fears of that authority which seems to the female artist to be by definition inappropriate to her sex” (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 47, 51). Avellaneda knew she was going to face criticism for the arguments she dealt with in her writings, she knew she was abandoning the restricted realm of feelings and sentiments assigned to women, and, despite the anxieties expressed in her prologues, she went ahead and wrote.

Unlike the prologues of *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres*, in *El artista barquero* Avellaneda included a *Dedicatoria* [dedication] to another *criolla*. Avellaneda dedicated her last novel to “*la Exma. Sra. Condesa de San Antonio*”, also known by the title *Duquesa de la Torre*. This last prologue has, in general, a different tone to the previous two. Dedicated to a woman who, like her, was a Cuban *criolla* who lived primarily in Spain, Avellaneda seemed to have wanted to create a sense of sorority between the two, which allowed her to highlight their Cuban-ness:

¿No es V. a sus ojos, como a los míos, la síntesis perfecta del bello secso⁶⁷ cubano? ¿No admira en su bondad nativa, en su rica imaginación tropical, en su belleza llena de gracia púdica, en su dignidad dulce y melancólica, ese admirable tipo de la mujer criolla, sin igual en el mundo? ¿Quién, pues, mejor que V., puede recibir como representante de todas nuestras compatriotas el homenaje tierno de mi admiración y simpatía? (Gómez de Avellaneda 1861, 8–9)

[Are you not, in your eyes, as in mine, the perfect synthesis of the Cuban fair sex? Do you not admire in your native goodness, in your rich tropical imagination, in your beauty full of modest grace, in your sweet and melancholic dignity, that admirable type of *criolla* woman, without equal in the world? Who, then, better than you, can receive as representative of all our female compatriots the tender homage of my admiration and sympathy?]

However, towards the end of her *Dedicatoria*, Avellaneda repeats her strategy of lowering the value of her work by referring to her last novel as “*librito*” [little book] and “*insignificante trabajo*” [insignificant work] (Gómez de Avellaneda 1861, 11), voicing once again her anxiety of authorship.

⁶⁷ I have kept the original spelling of the word. Avellaneda tended to write words phonetically, changing the ‘x’ for a ‘cs’, writing “secso” instead of “sexo”. As I am quoting from the original text, I have decided to leave it in the original form.

Despite these prologues, which serve both as a vehicle to express her anxieties and as a ploy to distract her critics, Avellaneda's writings never ceased to denounce the oppressions existing in her society, in particular those suffered by her sex. Avellaneda appropriated the pen with a voice of her own, circumventing the dominant discourse in creative and forceful ways. This allowed her to express strong criticisms of the hegemonic systems of power, while at the same time claiming and keeping a place among the great writers of her time, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Chapter 5. The defence of the oppressed, the humiliated, and the vilified in Avellaneda's prose

Although Avellaneda, through her prologues, presented her writings as a mere form of entertainment, the content of her novels shows that she used literature as a medium for socio-cultural criticism. In other words, I believe that Avellaneda's prose, as well as the other genres in which she wrote, represents, as Cruz claimed, her "arremetida sin tregua contra toda la opresión" (1990a, XVII) [relentless onslaught against all oppression].

Rodríguez Gutiérrez, analysing Avellaneda's poetry, claims that her writings can and should be taken as a form of political philosophy made not from the spaces of philosophy itself (the public sphere), but from the margins, from the spaces women were allowed to occupy: "una filosofía construida desde la esfera privada, desde el *tocador*, aunque con el propósito de escuchar dicho discurso en muchas habitaciones, y aún fuera de casa" (2014, 16)⁶⁸ [a philosophy constructed from the private sphere, from the *boudoir*, though with the purpose of listening to such discourse in many rooms, and even outside the home] (italics in original).

I agree with Rodríguez Gutiérrez, adding, however, that this philosophy can be found not only in Avellaneda's poetry but also in her prose. Furthermore, it is in her prose, particularly in her novels and in her articles, that we can find Avellaneda's strongest feminist stands. In this regard, already in the 1970s Cárdenas affirmed: "tanto en los artículos que la Avellaneda escribió sobre la mujer así como en dos de sus novelas, la Avellaneda nos presenta una fuerte y vigorosa protesta contra el mal trato social que recibían las mujeres durante su época" (Cárdenas 1975, 33) [Both in the articles Avellaneda wrote about women and in two of her novels, Avellaneda presents us with a strong and vigorous protest against the poor social treatment of women during her time]. Picon Garfield⁶⁹ and Pastor⁷⁰ have focused their attention

⁶⁸ Rodríguez Gutiérrez bases her argument on Ludmer's theorisations in the essay "Tretas del débil", in which she claims: "Ante la pregunta de por qué no ha habido mujeres filósofas puede responderse entonces que no han hecho filosofía desde el espacio delimitado por la filosofía clásica sino desde otras zonas, y si se lee o se escucha su discurso como discurso filosófico, puede operarse una transformación de la reflexión. Lo mismo ocurre con la práctica científica y política" (Ludmer 1985, 53) [To the question of why there have been no women philosophers, it can be answered that they have not done philosophy from the space delimited by classical philosophy but from other areas, and if their discourse is read or listened to as philosophical discourse, a transformation of reflection can take place. The same is true of scientific and political practice].

⁶⁹ Picon Garfield proposes "una lectura de la obra de Gómez de Avellaneda en que se reafirma la existencia de una voz alternativa que, en este caso, patentiza estrategias apropiadoras y transformadoras del discurso hegemónico de su época, negándole su poder totalizador" (1993, 10) [a reading of Gómez de Avellaneda's work in which the existence of an alternative voice is reaffirmed, which, in this case, reveals strategies that appropriate and transform the hegemonic discourse of her time, denying it its totalising power].

⁷⁰ For Pastor "while [Avellaneda's] plays also express feminist ideas, and on occasion her poems, it is in her novels that these concerns are most consistently and overtly expressed" (2003, 2).

precisely on the feminism exposed in Avellaneda's novels, the first also analysing some of her articles and plays.

I believe that to fully understand Avellaneda's message, it is important to recall who and what inspired her. She was deeply influenced by the Enlightenment. She avidly read Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Pascal, as well as Byron, Madame de Staël and George Sand. Although they all impacted her writing, Staël and Sand played a key role in the way Avellaneda saw, analysed, and represented society. For example, Kirkpatrick claims that "the plot line of *Dos Mujeres* closely follows that of *Corinne* [by Madame de Staël], highlighting the problematic of a female subject that transgresses the social norms" (1989, 165).

An aspect of Avellaneda's literary inspiration that, while perhaps not overlooked, has been at the very least minimized or misinterpreted, is her spirituality. In several of her texts, starting with *Sab*, Avellaneda calls upon a Divine design according to which all humans, men and women, masters and slaves, have been created equally, being the laws of man and not the word of God, which create inequality and injustice in the world. This idea is present in Sab's letter to Teresa, where he states:

¿la virtud puede ser relativa? ¿La virtud no es una misma para todos los hombres? ... ¿No tienen todos las mismas necesidades, las mismas pasiones, los mismo defectos? ... Dios, cuya mano suprema ha repartido sus beneficios con equidad sobre todos los países del globo, que hace salir el sol para toda su gran familia dispersa sobre la tierra, que ha escrito el gran dogma de la igualdad sobre la tumba, ¿Dios podrá sancionar los códigos inicuos en los que el hombre funda sus derechos para comprar y vender al hombre, y sus intérpretes en la tierra dirán al esclavo; «tu debes sufrir: la virtud del esclavo es olvidarse de que es hombre, renegar los beneficios que Dios le dispensó, abdicar la dignidad con que le ha revestido, y besar la mano que le imprime el sello de la infamia?» No, los hombres mienten: la virtud no existe en ellos (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 265)

[Can virtue be relative? Is not virtue the same for all men? ... Have they not all the same needs, the same passions, the same defects? ... God, whose supreme hand has distributed his benefits with equity over all the countries of the globe, who makes the sun rise for all his great family scattered over the earth, who has written the great dogma of equality on the grave, will God sanction the iniquitous codes on which man bases his rights to buy and sell man and his interpreters on earth will say to the slave; "You must suffer: The virtue of the slave is to forget that he is a man, to deny the benefits which God has bestowed upon him, to abdicate the dignity with which He has clothed him, and to kiss the hand which stamps him with the seal of infamy? "No, men lie: virtue does not exist in them]

Sab here is claiming that virtue must be the same in everyone because it is an emanation of God's divinity. He continues his just argument against the unequal society that men have created by claiming:

si no es Dios, Teresa, si son los hombres los que me han formado este destino, si ellos han cortado las alas que Dios concedió a mi alma, si ellos han levantado un muro de errores y preocupaciones entre mí y el destino que la providencia me había señalado ... Si son los hombres los que me han impuesto este horrible destino, ellos son los que deben temer al presentarse delante de Dios (2014, 269–70)

[if it is not God, Teresa, if it is men who have formed this destiny for me, if they have clipped the wings that God has given to my soul, if they have erected a wall of mistakes and worries between me and the destiny that providence had appointed for me ... If it is men who have imposed this horrible destiny on me, they are the ones who should be afraid to stand before God]

For Guerra, it is precisely this idea of God-ordained equality that leads Sab to question and condemn the society created by men. For her, Sab's discourse shows how "La esclavitud viene a ser así no sólo una condición humana en contra de la armonía divina, sino también una fuente constante de alienación y enajenamiento con respecto a un ámbito natural que es reflejo y creación de Dios" (Guerra 1985, 712) [Slavery thus becomes not only a human condition contrary to divine harmony, but also a constant source of alienation and estrangement from a natural realm that is God's reflection and creation].

A few lines later Sab condemns the condition of women, equating it to that of the slave, by claiming:

¡Oh!, ¡las mujeres! ¡Pobres y ciegas víctimas! Como los esclavos, ellas arrastran pacientemente su cadena y bajan la cabeza bajo el yugo de las leyes humanas. Sin otra guía que su corazón ignorante y crédulo eligen un dueño para toda la vida. El esclavo, al menos, puede cambiar de amo, puede esperar que juntando oro comprará algún día su libertad: pero la mujer, cuando levanta sus manos enflaquecidas y su frente ultrajada, para pedir libertad, oye al monstruo de voz sepulcral que le grita: «En la tumba» (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 270–71)

[Oh! women! Poor, blind victims! Like slaves, they patiently drag their chains and bow their heads under the yoke of human laws. With no other guide than their ignorant and credulous heart they choose a master for life. The slave, at least, can change his master, can hope that by gathering gold he will one day buy his freedom: but the woman, when she raises her weakened hands and her outraged brow, to ask for freedom, hears the monster with the sepulchral voice crying out to her: "In the grave"!]

Taking into consideration Sommer's identification of Sab with Avellaneda⁷¹, I dare to assert that by equating the situation of women to that of slaves, Avellaneda, through Sab's voice, is declaring that women's condition of oppression is also against the Divinely ordain. In this way, equality among all members of the human family becomes a Godly imperative and the hierarchisation of society based on sex, gender, race, or other conditions, which grants rights to the powerful (men/masters) and only assigns duties to the oppressed (women/slaves), goes against the natural Divine order of things.

This was not the only time Avellaneda referred to the manifestation of God in the human world. In her magazine *Album Cubano de lo Bueno y de lo Bello*, Avellaneda applies the Neoplatonic concept of reason as a gift from God. In its first issue, Avellaneda explained what she meant by *Bueno* (good) and *Bello* (beautiful), claiming that both concepts were the manifestation the soul's aspiration towards God in the moral and aesthetic worlds, respectively. Hence, she declared,

...lo bueno y lo bello a que consagramos sus columnas; esto es, las obras del sentimiento moral que nos proponemos fomentar y enaltecer, y las obras del sentimiento artístico que pretendemos estimular y difundir, no son en resumen sino dos manifestaciones de una sola verdad: la aspiración del alma hacia Dios (Gómez de Avellaneda 1860, 4) (italics in original).
[...the good and the beautiful to which we consecrate its columns; that is to say, the works of moral sentiment which we intend to foster and exalt, and the works of artistic sentiment which we intend to stimulate and disseminate, are but two manifestations of a single truth: the soul's aspiration towards God]

Picon Garfield also see a Neoplatonic inspiration in Avellaneda's argument. For her, Avellaneda "mantiene que todo conocimiento es una emanación de Dios y un paso hacia el conocimiento perfecto" (Picon Garfield 1993, 31)⁷² [maintains that all knowledge is an emanation of God and a step towards perfect knowledge]. As we have seen in Part II, this was also a religious argument at the base of the feminist reasoning of early British feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Leman Grimstone.

This religious and spiritual inspiration is also present in other texts by Avellaneda, whether her personal letters⁷³, her poetry, or her articles condemning the condition of women.

⁷¹ For Sommer, Gómez de Avellaneda "was Sab", identifying them "through their shared productive function, their literary labor conditioned in both by the need to subvert and to reconstruct" (1991, 114–15).

⁷² Picon Garfield attributes Avellaneda's neo-platonic philosophy to the influence of Victor Cousin, a philosopher widely read in Cuba, particularly by Domingo del Monte's circle (1993, 31)

⁷³ For example, in a letter to Cepeda, date 21st of April 1840, Avellaneda wrote: "el principio eterno de vida, que sentimos en nosotros y que vemos, por decirlo así, flotar en la naturaleza, ese soplo de la Divinidad, que circula en sus criaturas,

In her articles “*La Mujer*”, published in *Album Cubano...* in 1860, Avellaneda condemned women’s position in society, demanding a better appreciation of their qualities and abilities. She started precisely by presenting religious arguments in favour of women’s worth, and then proceeded to show evidence of women’s merits in the public sphere, whether it was ruling a nation or exercising liberal professions.

At first it seems that Avellaneda availed herself of the argument of women’s moral superiority to advance her position, by claiming “nadie puede, de buena fe, negar a nuestro sexo la supremacía en los afectos, los títulos de su soberanía en la inmensa esfera del sentimiento” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2015 [1860], 545) [no one can, in good faith, deny to our sex the supremacy in the affections, the titles of its sovereignty in the immense sphere of sentiment]. However, I suggest that Avellaneda used the argument of moral superiority to flip the hegemonic patriarchal discourse in her favour, by claiming that women’s high sentiments rather than constituting a disadvantage, put them in a privileged position to rule and to learn. Hence, in the next instalment of her essay Avellaneda declared: “Siendo la potencia afectiva fuente y motora de otras, resalta la consecuencia de que la mujer, que privilegiadamente la posee, en vez de hallarse incapacitada de ejercer otro influjo que el exclusivo del amor, debe a ella y tiene en ella una fuerza asombrosa” (2015 [1860], 552) [Since the affective power is the source and driving force of others, it follows that the woman, who possesses it in a privileged way, instead of being unable to exert any influence other than that of love alone, owes to it and has in it an astonishing power]. She explained how the problem was not in women’s great capacity for affection, but in their inadequate and inappropriate education, which resulted in women’s great power being used in an unworthy and regrettable manner⁷⁴.

Avellaneda also presented arguments and examples against the prevailing ideas of women’s natural weakness and inability to reason, as well as against their alleged inability to rule. On this last point, after mentioning the examples of Queen Elizabeth of England, Queen Isabella of Castile, and Empress Maria Theresa, among others, Avellaneda even declared: “los individuos de nuestro sexo que han regido naciones, están en exigua minoría comparativamente a los del otro, y atendida esta diferencia, son más los nombres regios femeninos que consagra la historia, que los nombres regios varoniles” (2015 [1860], 560) [the individuals of our sex

no puede ser sino amor” (2007 [1907], 81) [the eternal principle of life, which we feel in us and which we see, as it were, floating in nature, that breath of the Divinity, which circulates in its creatures, cannot be anything but love]

⁷⁴ “El poder del corazón es, por tanto, origen y centro de otras muchas facultades, y ... aunque mal educado y dirigido, como lo está por lo común en la mujer, suela emplearse indigna y lastimosamente, no por eso no es permitido rebajar su incomparable importancia” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2015 [1860], 552) [The power of the heart is, therefore, the source and centre of many other faculties, and ... though miseducated and misdirected, as it usually is in women, it is often used unworthily and pitifully, yet its incomparable importance must not be demeaned].

who have ruled nations are in a small minority compared to those of the other sex, and in view of this difference, there are more female royal names that history has consecrated than male ones]. Her last article of the series “*La Mujer*” was dedicated to women’s artistic and scientific capacities. It is in this last essay that Avellaneda attacks, not in a completely veiled manner, the decision of the scholars of the *Real Academia Española* not to accept women among them, thus excluding her candidacy without evaluating her merits. She referred contemptuously to this kind of institution as “*academias barbudas*” [*bearded academies*], claiming that men, in their desperate attempt to deny women intellectual equality, cling to the only difference they can still claim in their favour: their beards.

Consequently, I believe, as Picon Garfield states in her analysis of *Album Cubano*, that these articles reveal how Avellaneda managed to appropriate and manipulate the prevailing patriarchal discourse in defence of her sex⁷⁵.

For the purpose of this dissertation, it is now important to analyse how Avellaneda subverted the predominant patriarchal discourse of her time through her novels, starting with a brief description of the plot of the three under examination.

5.1. *The plot of the novels*

In order to fully understand Avellaneda’s revolutionary and subversive message, I believe it is necessary to know the plot of her novels, because in their simplicity also lies Avellaneda’s ability to convey her philosophical and political stands.

5.1.1. *Sab*

The story takes place in Cuba, between the city of Puerto Príncipe and the town of Cubitas. The plot focuses on two love triangles, the first between Sab, a *mestizo* slave, owned by the *familia de B.*, Carlota, a beautiful and innocent *criolla*, daughter of Don Carlos de B., and Enrique Otway, the son of a rich English merchant who has established himself and his business in the Island. Sab –who was raised as a family slave and is discovered to be the illegitimate son of Don Carlos' brother and an enslaved black woman who was a princess back in Africa– is deeply in love with Carlota, but has never confessed his feelings to his mistress. For her part, Carlota loves Enrique, whom she sees as her romantic hero. Enrique courts

⁷⁵ For an in-depth analysis of *Album Cubano de lo Bueno y de lo Bello*, see Picón Garfield, Evelyn. 1993. *Poder y Sexualidad: El Discurso de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, particularly chapter I.

Carlota, and asks her to marry him, but, in reality, he is only after her dowry. The second love triangle is between Carlota, Enrique, and Teresa, the poor, illegitimate cousin of Carlota who has been raised by Carlota's parents. Teresa secretly loves Enrique but knows that her social condition does not allow her to aspire to marry him.

Sab, Carlota, and Teresa are described as having noble, elevated, generous souls, while Enrique, is portrayed as having a poorer soul, guided by materialistic and monetary interests, albeit with some minor hesitations. The otherness that Sab and Teresa represent allows them to see what others can and would not. They recognize the greed that guides Enrique's actions, as well as the fact that Sab is in love with Carlota and Teresa with Enrique. The latter, upon finding out that Don Carlos de B., Carlota's father, has lost most of the family fortune, is willing to break up the engagement.

The story reaches its climax when Sab wins the lottery and, instead of using the money to buy his freedom, tries to convince Teresa to keep the prize. According to Sab's reasoning, if Teresa keeps the prize, Enrique will choose her over Carlota and Sab will be able to declare his love for the latter. However, Teresa, the voice of reason, tells Sab that the actions he is proposing will only destroy Carlota, making her deeply unhappy. Instead, Teresa tries to convince Sab to take the prize and leave the Island, offering herself as his wife and companion. In the end, Sab exchanges his lottery ticket for Carlota's, making her believe that it is she who has won. All these events happen in the countryside; thus, Sab uses all his energies to go and find Enrique in the city and let him know that Carlota is rich again.

Sab, having reached Enrique and then the house of his adoptive mother, Martina –a slave who claims to be a direct descendant of the indigenous population that originally inhabited the island– dies from the effort and a broken heart. Teresa, knowing that happiness is not to be found in marriage, decides to enter a convent, and lives out her days in a peaceful and friendly sisterhood. Carlota marries Enrique, only to discover, after the indissoluble union, the true character of her husband. Carlota seeks refuge in her cousin and Teresa, on her deathbed, gives her the letter that Sab had addressed to her before he died. The letter reveals his love for Carlota as well as Sab's discourse comparing the situation of slaves with that of women, in which he indicates how the situation of the latter is even worse than that of the former because women cannot free themselves in any way from the yoke of marriage, except in death.

The readers are not informed of Carlota's destiny. The author claims that although she has tried to ask after Carlota's faith, she was not able to gain any information regarding it, thus she speculates that Carlota might be living away in a European city.

5.1.2. *Dos Mujeres*

The readers are once again presented with a love triangle, this time between the innocent Luisa, young Carlos, and the vibrant Catalina. The story begins with the arranged marriage of Carlos and Luisa by their respective parents. Carlos' father, Don Francisco de Silva and his sister, Doña Leonor, Luisa's mother, have planned their children's union since early childhood. Carlos had been away in France for eight years, getting an education, while Luisa had stayed in Seville being raised as a good young catholic lady. Once Carlos returns to the paternal home, Doña Leonor starts insisting on formalizing the union between him and Luisa. Don Francisco would like to send Carlos to Madrid to experience court life before he gets married, but Doña Leonor is eager to see her daughter settle as soon as possible. Doña Leonor prevails through a series of scheming actions, and the marriage is soon celebrated.

The union, at first, seems to be a happy one. This marital bliss, however, is not meant to last. Carlos must leave for Madrid to solve some problems with the inheritance of a distant relative, while Luisa stays behind in Seville taking care of her mother who has fallen ill. In Madrid, the Silva family has two female relatives by marriage, now widows, who can help Carlos while he is in Court: Doña Elvira de Sotomayor and Doña Catalina, *Condesa de S*. Doña Leonor appreciates the first, with whom she has had a long epistolary relation, however she despises the second. For Doña Leonor, Catalina, who was born and raised in France, is just a foreigner who has nothing good to offer.

Once in Madrid, Carlos makes the acquaintance of Elvira and they become good friends. Although Elvira is a close friend of Catalina's, Carlos tries to avoid her company considering that the bright, young, and beautiful Countess is just a tease and a coquette. His impression changes when Elvira falls ill, and Catalina helps him take care of their mutual friend. It is then that Carlos realises that Catalina has a noble heart and that the impression she has given him thus far is just a façade. Catalina has a noble and superior soul, suffocated by the role society has assigned to women, who, having found neither love nor peace, has resigned herself to a life of ephemeral charms.

Carlos and Catalina fall in love with each other, and although they try to fight their feelings, they finally become lovers. Carlos suffers to the point of getting physically ill, for loving two women and for betraying them both in different ways. To keep their love a secret, Carlos and Catalina start planning to leave for some place in the new-formed nations of The Americas and, as a result of the passionate love, Catalina falls pregnant.

In the meantime, Doña Leonor dies. Luisa and Don Francisco travel to Madrid to meet Carlos. Don Francisco starts working to obtain a diplomatic post for Carlos in a European country. Carlos, for his part, is never home, spending all his time with Catalina at the countess' country house. Luisa, left alone by her husband and her father-in-law, starts suspecting that Carlos has taken a mistress. After a meeting with Elvira and an apparently innocent conversation with Carlos, Luisa discovers that Catalina is her husband's mistress. Luisa falls ill with a high fever, and, in her delirium, Carlos discovers that she knows the truth. At that moment, Carlos decides to take advantage of his father's plans and obtains a posting as a Secretary of the Spanish Embassy in England, where he believes he can live together with Catalina, leaving Luisa behind.

Luisa asks Elvira to help her and decides to meet Catalina. When they arrive at the countess' country house, Luisa, instead of recriminating Catalina, gives her blessing to the Countess' union with Carlos, knowing that in this way at least one of them could be happy. Luisa helps Catalina plan how she will meet Carlos in England, and they leave each other as sworn friends. Despite their plans, Catalina cannot bear the guilt that consumes her and commits suicide by suffocating herself. Carlos and Luisa remain married, but deeply unhappy.

5.1.3. *El Artista Barquero, o los cuatro cinco de junio*

The novel takes place in France during the second half of the eighteenth century between Marseilles and Paris⁷⁶. It starts in 1752 by telling the story of Huberto Robert. Huberto has been forced to interrupt his artistic studies and work as a *barquero* [boatman] to help support his mother and sisters while his father is held prisoner in a foreign country. One day Huberto transports an old, elegant man in his boat, who wonders why Huberto is working as a boatman. Huberto tells him his story, as well as the fact that he is in love with a young girl, the daughter of a wealthy merchant who made his fortune in the Spanish Antilles. When the ride finishes, the stranger gives Huberto a small bag full of gold. Huberto assumes that the stranger must have been mistaken but is unable to find him to return the bag.

After trying, unsuccessfully, to find the stranger, Huberto goes to the house of his beloved, Josefina. She is a young *criolla* born in Cuba to a French father, monsieur Caillard, and a Cuban mother. Huberto has been admiring her from afar for some time, and Josefina has

⁷⁶ Avellaneda availed herself of real-life figures, like Madame de Pompadour and Hubert Robert, a famous painter during Louis XVI reign, to construct her story, but the plot does not necessarily coincide with real-life events.

noticed his interest. They finally meet for the first time on a fifth of June, and Josefina tells him her story. She had spent her childhood in Cuba and there, over a small hill, her parents had built a *templete* [gazebo] to honour their love. Unfortunately, when Josefina was just nine years old her mother died while giving birth to a child that did not survive. Her father felt ill shortly after that, with an ailment that lasted more than a year. When Mr Caillard gained some strength, he decided to return to France, taking Josefina and her nanny Niná, a former slave, with him.

Not long after they arrived in France, Mr Caillard started to call Cuba his true home and decided to go back. However, when Mr Caillard and Josefina went back to the Island, nothing was as they remembered. This fact destroyed Mr Caillard's soul, turning him into a bitter, angry man obsessed with reproducing through art the sublime memories of the gazebo he had built to honour his wife. Huberto resolves to paint the landscape Mr Caillard dreams of, as a way of winning his approval and the hand of his daughter. When Josefina's father finds out about Huberto and his humble occupation as a boatman, he forbids Josefina to ever see him again. Josefina decides to obey her father but asks Huberto to meet her every fifth of June in the same place they met for the first time until they can change her father's mind.

Later Huberto receives a surprise that his father has been released from his foreign captivity thanks to the good offices of the mystery man he had transported. Huberto is informed that the stranger has also paid for him to continue his artistic studies for the next two years with his former master, which means Huberto must leave for Paris as soon as possible. Once in Paris Huberto meets another student who comes from Cuba and had seen the gazebo. He asks his colleague for help in making Mr Caillard's desired painting. One day Madame de Pompadour, King Louis XV's favourite mistress, visits the workshop and is impressed by Huberto's sketches. Through her influence, Huberto moves to Court and is named Keeper of the King's Pictures and Designer of the Royal Gardens⁷⁷.

Madame de Pompadour thinks she has fallen in love with Huberto. However, she soon realises that he loves Josefina and is completely faithful to her. After some misunderstandings, Huberto produces the longed-for painting of the hill and the gazebo. With the painting, Huberto finally wins Josefina's hand. They get married with Madame de Pompadour as their witness. By the end of the novel, Huberto finally discovers that his mystery benefactor had been Carlos de Secondat, *Barón de Montesquieu*, who had died on February 10th, the same day he had married Josefina.

⁷⁷ The real Hubert Robert was indeed appointed Keeper of the King's Pictures and Designer of the King's Gardens, but not of King Louis XV but of his successor, King Louis XVI (Chilvers 2004).

As we can see, the plots of the novels are simple. They have the exact number of necessary characters, with no unnecessary surplus and they follow a single storyline. I posit that it is the simplicity of the plot that allows for the profoundness of the underlying political and philosophical message to stand out, making each of these stories an example of strong socio-cultural criticism veiled under the disguise of writing for mere entertainment. Consequently, it is thanks to those messages that these novels have survived the test of time and even the attempt of cancelling them by the author herself, standing as great pieces of literature written in Spanish.

5.2. *Alliances between the Oppressed*

Both *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres* portray a series of characters affected by different axes of oppression. In the first novel we find Sab, oppressed by his race and condition as a slave; Carlota and Teresa, oppressed by their sex and, in the case of the latter, also by her lack of financial means (her class); and, finally, we have Martina, oppressed by all three axes: her sex, her race and her class. In *Dos Mujeres*, the oppressed subjects are represented by Luisa, Catalina, and Elvira, all oppressed based on their sex, while Luisa and Elvira are also affected by the kind of education they have received. I believe that the relations forged between these characters portray different kinds of alliances between the oppressed, either possible or factual, which have the potential to subvert or, at least, destabilise and counterbalance the predominant patriarchal discourse.

In the case of *Sab*, several scholars have already identified the subversive potential of the relations between the oppressed subjects. Stacey Schlauf has highlighted the relationship between Sab and Teresa, explaining how they both "concretely epitomize the marginalized status of those outside the social spheres of power", which makes them "twin souls in the narrative" (1986, 499). Sommer seems to have analysed Teresa and Sab's relationship in a similar manner. For her the characters are bonded by their shared condition of *hijos naturales* (natural children) –a Spanish phrasing used to not so veiledly indicate bastard children–, which together with their condition of being a slave and a dependant-orphan, respectively, makes them outsiders looking in (Sommer 1991, 118). Schlauf sees Teresa as the "true heroine of *Sab*" because by choosing to enter a convent and becoming a nun, Teresa managed to "avoid some of the dangers and disadvantages allotted to her sex", as well as the "perils of reification to which women have historically been subjected" (1986, 499). In the action of taking the veil, Schlauf sees a way for Teresa to transcend "her otherness" and take control of her life, by

dissolving “the bonds that forced her into a marginal position” (1986, 500). In this way, Teresa “achieves salvation [and] lives out her life fulfilled, and at peace” (Schlau 1986, 500). Picon Garfield also sees a liberating attitude in Teresa’s decision to enter a convent: “Teresa voluntariamente se refugia en el convento, rechazando así ser el objeto del comercio entre los hombres quienes la desvalorizan por su falta de herencia, de legitimidad y de belleza” (1993, 65) [Teresa voluntarily takes refuge in the convent, thus refusing to be the object of trade among men who devalued her for her lack of inheritance, legitimacy and beauty].

I agree with these previous analyses of Teresa's character, wishing to add that her development and final decision of becoming a nun would not have been possible if it were not for her conversation with Sab, in which their mutual otherness is revealed. I referred particularly to the moment in the conversation in which Teresa proposes to Sab take the lottery money and leave Cuba for a better place where he can be happy and find a loving companion: “busca otro cielo, otro clima, otra existencia... busca también otro amor...; una esposa digna de tu corazón” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 220) [look for another sky, another climate, another existence... look also for another love...; a wife worthy of your heart]. Sab’s anguished answer is to deny the possibility of any woman ever loving him: “ninguna mujer puede amarme, ninguna querrá unir su suerte a la del pobre mulato, seguir sus pasos y consolar sus dolores” (220) [no woman can love me, no woman will want to join her fate to that of the poor mulatto, follow in his footsteps and comfort his sorrows]. It is at this moment that Teresa offers herself to Sab as his wife and life companion:

–¡Yo! –exclamó–, yo soy esa mujer que me confió a ti: ambos somos huérfanos y desgraciados... aislados estamos los dos sobre la tierra y necesitamos igualmente compasión, amor y felicidad. Déjame, pues, seguirte a remotos climas, al seno de los desiertos... ¡Yo seré tu amiga, tu compañera, tu hermana! (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 220)

[–I! –she exclaimed–, I am that woman who entrusts herself to you: we are both orphans and wretched... we are both isolated on earth, and we need compassion, love, and happiness in equal measure. Let me, then, follow you to remote climes, to the bosom of deserts... I will be your friend, your companion, your sister!]

Sab refuses Teresa’s offering, but recognises in her a noble, higher soul which he cannot condemn to be tied to his crushed, suffering heart: “¡Eres una mujer sublime, Teresa! No, no legaré a un corazón como el tuyo mi corazón destrozado ... ¡Yo soy indigno de ti! ... ¡Dios, sólo Dios es digno de tu grande alma!” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 221) [You are a

sublime woman, Teresa! No, I will not bind to a heart like yours my broken heart ... I am unworthy of you! ... God, God alone is worthy of your great soul!].

I believe that this conversation, together with Sab's letter, solidifies Teresa's decision to join a convent. Not so much because of Sab's last statement about God being the only one worthy of her sublime soul, but because she realizes that in the world ruled by white men, in which women are just chips for bargaining and selling, she will never find a noble and honest soul as the one Sab and herself share. They might not love each other, but they are truly twin souls, bound together by their shared tragedy. A few pages later, when Teresa is reflecting upon the conversation she is having with Sab, the narrator gives us a glimpse of her thoughts:

se preguntó a si misma que hubiera podido ser el hombre dotado de pasiones tan ardientes y profundas, si bárbaras preocupaciones no le hubiesen cerrado todos los caminos de una noble ambición ... «No –pensaba Teresa–, no debías haber nacido esclavo... el corazón que sabe amar así no es un corazón vulgar» (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 224)

[she asked herself what could have been of the man endowed with such ardent and deep passions if barbarous preoccupations had not closed to him all the ways to a noble ambition... «No –thought Teresa–, you should not have been born a slave... the heart that knows how to love like this is not a vulgar heart»]

For me, while Teresa is pondering on Sab's wretched faith, she is also considering her own. Like him, she has been condemned by society for conditions completely out of her control, mainly her birth out of wedlock and her impossibility to rely on a family fortune. As Sab, Teresa cannot aspire to noble ambitions and, worse yet, she cannot even aspire to the only destiny society has left open for women: love. For this reason, I agree with Sommer when she claims that "Teresa is the only one who understands Sab's sublime feelings and catches it like a liberating fever" (Sommer 1991, 121).

In her letter to Carlota explaining her decision, Teresa claims that although she had been thinking about joining the convent for some time, "hoy me arrastra hacia ese santo asilo un impulso irresistible del corazón" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 252) [today I am drawn to that holy asylum by an irresistible impulse of the heart]. It is only after her conversation with Sab and the events that unfolded, that is: Sab's death, his letter to Teresa, and Carlota's marriage to Enrique, that Teresa finds the strength to act upon her resolution of becoming a nun. Teresa herself refers to her decision as wanting to establish her own fate, and that is precisely what she does, as Schlau and Picon Garfield have already stated, when she renounces the miserable world of men to live in sorority with other women who have also taken the veil.

For this reason, I claim that the definitive moment for Teresa to achieve her freedom is the alliance forged between her and Sab.

However, it is important to highlight that Teresa's freedom is still within the boundaries of the patriarchal society she lives in. Convents were, at least in theory, ruled by the norms imposed by male ecclesiastics, who in this way tried to control the organization and life within these religious female cloisters and, thus, the nuns' lives as well. Nevertheless, it is important to remember, as a recent study by Ángela Atienza López has shown, that even if the masculine ecclesiastical powers try to rule and control the convents, the religious women that lived within these communities fought, directly and indirectly, to govern themselves and their destinies:

Las religiosas trabajaron y también se esforzaron en la defensa y en la reivindicación de cotas de autonomía ... sostuvieron su competencia, su idoneidad y su capacidad para el gobierno y la dirección de sus comunidades sobre la base de su experiencia y de un conocimiento y unos saberes mucho más solventes de la realidad de sus propias comunidades religiosas (Atienza López 2019, 8)

[Religious women worked and also strove to defend and claim a measure of autonomy ... they maintained their competence, suitability and capacity for the governance and direction of their communities based on their experience and of a much more reliable knowledge and understanding of the reality of their own religious communities]

The novel does not describe in detail the life inside the convent, only claiming that the life led by the nuns was “monótona y triste” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 256) [monotonous and sad]. I postulate that this description is a concession to a society that believes that women cannot be happy unless they participate in society as the object of men's desire. If we analyse the assertions about Teresa's experiences within the convent, we found that they contradict the previous description of religious life as pitiful. The first thing the narrator lets the readers know is that Teresa is surrounded by the love of her sisters: “Sor Teresa era amada generalmente ... mil pequeños servicios que en diversas circunstancias había prestado a cada una de sus compañeras, con la inalterable aunque fría bondad que la caracterizaba, la habían granjeado el afecto de todas” [Sister Teresa was generally loved ... a thousand little services which in various circumstances she had rendered to each of her fellow-sisters, with the unalterable, albeit cold, kindness which characterised her, had won her the affection of all of them]. Furthermore, the readers are informed that Teresa is in fact happy, a happiness she would not have found in the materialistic, outside world: “Teresa había alcanzado aquella felicidad tranquila y solemne que da la virtud. Su alma activa y fuerte había dominado su

destino y sus pasiones ... su ambición, teniendo por único objeto la virtud, había sido para ella un móvil útil y santo” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014, 257–58) [Teresa had attained that calm and solemn happiness which virtue gives. Her active and strong soul had mastered her destiny and her passions ... her ambition, having virtue as its only object, had been for her a useful and holy motive].

Hence, it is possible to affirm that Teresa did achieve her purpose in life by living in peaceful sorority. By aspiring and obtaining virtue –understood as an objective universal value–, outside the codes of mandatory marriage, Teresa defied the codes that condemned her to love as the only valid ambition for women.

If the alliance between Sab and Teresa meant ultimate freedom for the latter, then what significance did it have for the former? It is to Teresa that Sab confesses his true feelings, not only regarding Carlota but also, and maybe more importantly, about the injustices of society. It is in their conversation and in his letter to Teresa that Sab exposes the wrongs men have committed and continue to commit against not only blacks and mulattos, condemned to a life of material slavery, but also against women, condemned to their own kind of eternal servitude. Moreover, it is by revealing his truth to Teresa that Sab decides to give up his life for the happiness of his beloved, concluding that having loved as passionately as he loves Carlota is, for him, the only possible path: "Mi amor, este amor insensato que me devora, principió con mi vida y solo con ella puede terminar: los tormentos que me causa forman mi existencia: nada tengo fuera de él, nada sería si dejase de amar ... ya he amado, ya he vivido... ¡Cuántos mueren sin poder decir otro tanto!" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 (1841), 221) [My love, this senseless love that devours me, began with my life and can only end with it: the torments it causes me shape my existence: I have nothing apart from it, I would be nothing if I stopped loving... I have already loved; I have already lived... How many die without being able to say as much!].

This alliance then has defining consequences for the fate of the two characters⁷⁸. However, perhaps the most important effect of this alliance is in the imagery that it creates or

⁷⁸ For a different but nevertheless correlated analysis of the relationship between Sab and Teresa, see Peluffo, Ana. 2016. 'Alianzas líquidas en la novela anti-esclavista del siglo XIX'. *Revista Iberoamericana* LXXXII (257): 687–702. <https://doi.org/10.5195/REVIBEROAMER.2016.7421>. In this essay, Peluffo posits: “En el *tableau* protagonizado por Teresa y Sab la disposición visual de los cuerpos subraya una hermandad afectiva en la que el esclavo, reclinado a los pies de Teresa, ocupa inicialmente un polo jerárquicamente inferior ... El secreto, el ardor y la liquidez son algunos de los tropos que Gómez de Avellaneda elige para aludir de forma oblicua a la intensidad emocional de una cita en la que Teresa se contagia de la fogosidad de Sab ... A medida que las lágrimas de Sab caen sobre la piel de Teresa ésta “se olvida del color y de la clase de Sab” reconociendo que un corazón como el de Sab es lo que ella necesitaba. La parte más atrevida del *tableau* es aquella en que Teresa le pide que la deje fugarse con él” (2016, 696) (italics in original) [In the *tableau* starring Teresa and Sab, the visual arrangement of the bodies underlines an affective brotherhood in which the slave, reclining at Teresa's feet, initially occupies a hierarchically inferior pole ... Secrecy, ardour and liquidity are some of the tropes that Gómez de Avellaneda chooses to obliquely allude to the emotional intensity of a date in which Teresa is infected by Sab's fieriness.... ... As Sab's tears fall on Teresa's skin, she "forgets Sab's colour and class",

seeks to create in the readers. As Peluffo states, “existe un consenso de que el mensaje más radical [de la novela] es el concerniente a la representación del erotismo inter-racial, focalizado fundamentalmente en la relación entre Teresa y Sab” (2016, 696) [there is a consensus that the most radical message [of the novel] concerns the depiction of inter-racial eroticism, focusing primarily on the relationship between Teresa and Sab].

In the love Sab feels for Carlota and in Teresa’s offering to Sab to marry him, Avellaneda is changing the accepted terms for *mestizaje* (miscegenation) in Latin American culture and literature. In this regard, Picon Garfield states: “la sociedad cubana callaba y censuraba enlaces de una mujer blanca con un hombre negro, aunque permitía los del hombre blanco con una mujer negra, incluso contra la voluntad de ésta” (1993, 67) [Cuban society was silent and censored the liaisons of a white woman with a black man, although it allowed those of a white man with a black woman, even against her will]. Sommer’s own analysis confirms this appreciation, extending it to the generality of the Hispanic American world by claiming: “Spanish American novels that describe interracial affairs have often been a loving or eroticized of the white man’s burden. They describe an active lover who is both male and white (the liberal bourgeoisie) and the yielding object of his galvanizing attention who is often a mulatta” (1991, 125)

I suggest that by inverting the sexes of the proposed interracial relationship, Avellaneda is making *mestizaje* a matter of choice. In the relations between a white male and an indigenous or black woman, traditional of other Latin American novels of the time, *mestizaje* can take place even without the woman's consent because the man, taking advantage of his socio-cultural superiority as male and white, can impose himself unto the doubly oppressed racialized woman. In the case of *Sab*, only a conscious decision on Teresa’s or Carlota’s part can materialise the desired interracial relationship.

It could be argued that because Teresa is “un personaje femenino marginal” (Peluffo 2016, 696) [a marginal female character], putting her in place of Carlota as the catalyser for a successful interracial relationship was a discursive strategy to, at least in appearance, diminish or defuse the subversive message of her novel. In fact, as Picon Garfield retells in a footnote, there had already been cases in which the Spanish Crown had accepted an established relationship between a mulatto man and a white woman on the count of the woman having been born out of wedlock and, thus, “la ilegitimidad de la mujer blanca compensa[ba] la raza

recognising that a heart like Sab's is what she needed. The most daring part of the tableau is when Teresa asks him to let her elope with him].

inferior del hombre” (1993, 67 n13). [the illegitimacy of the white woman compensate[d] for the inferior race of the man].

I believe that their conversation is, instead, the most revolutionary moment of the novel. Teresa offers herself to Sab because she has seen his soul, she has recognised his humanity and has understood that, beyond passionate love, there is a stronger tie connecting them: the understanding that virtue is one and the same for all members of the human family, the knowledge that their precarious conditions have nothing to do with a Divine design but with the unjust rules created by men.

For Picon Garfield in this conversation the differences of race and class are forgotten, in a sort of culmination of Avellaneda’s attempt to “borrar la identidad racial de Sab” (1993, 72) [erase Sab's racial identity]. This erasure however is not a whitening of the character and, I dare to add, not a colour-blindness neither from Avellaneda’s part nor from her characters. Instead, the novel recognises that different positions in society create different forms of oppression (even if their consequences might be similar). This recognition can be seen in Teresa’s musings on Sab’s condition, when she recognises that Sab’s sufferings are caused by the unfair limits his condition as a slave have imposed onto him. This is why she affirms to herself: “aquella alma ponderosa obligada a devorar sus inmensos tesoros, se había entregado a la única pasión que hasta entonces había probado, y aquella pasión la había subyugado” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 224) [that mighty soul compelled to devour its immense treasures, had given itself up to the only passion it had ever tasted, and that passion had subdued it]. Teresa also sees herself mirrored in Sab’s condition, because acutely aware of her condition as a poor, illegitimate woman she has had to repress her passions and ambitions. Nonetheless, while Sab succumbs to his passion for Carlota and dies trying to give her at least ephemeral happiness; Teresa, has been able to sublimate her passion in compassion and intelligence, showing “that compassion and love, the shared subjectivity of the oppressed, provide the only consolation in a hard mercenary world, the only antidote to solitary despair” (Kirkpatrick 1989, 152).

Although the interracial relationship does not materialise, the hope that it carries does. I believe that when Teresa gives Sab's letter to Carlota, she triggers a series of events that, despite Sab's death, materialise the possibility of a loving union between him and Carlota, that is, a loving and consensual union between different races. When Carlota receives the letter, she has already discovered the real nature of Enrique's petty and calculating character, she has thus realised her mistake and the fact that her noble soul will be forever bonded to a lesser, materialistic being. Reading the letter Carlota finally becomes aware not only of Sab's feelings

but of his noble soul, which if it was not for the crux of his birth as mulatto and slave, would have made of them the perfect match. At that moment, Carlota, within the small frame of freedom that she is allowed to have as a married woman, decides to consecrate herself to Sab's memory, visiting his grave every night and gifting him her tears. In this realization, with this hindsight of the events that had unfolded, lies the hope for a society where *mestizaje* is a real and desired possibility, the one that would lead to a better world and a prosperous nation. Instead, the reality of what had occurred: Carlota marrying a foreigner, Sab dying, and Teresa joining a convent, had left Cuba without its best children, without the opportunity of creating a more just society.

That just society also involved the indigenous population thought to be exterminated by the conquerors. It is for this reason that Avellaneda included Martina, Sab's adoptive mother, who claims to be a direct descendant of the *Cacique Camagüey*, that is, from indigenous royalty. For Sommer, through this filial-like relation "the orphaned Sab is spiritually related to the aboriginal masters" (1991, 118). Martina also stands as the only mother of the story and is the memory of the violent conquering process that obliterated the indigenous population. It is she who announced the revenge of the slaves against their masters, not only for themselves but also in the name of their annihilated indigenous brothers and sisters. Sab retells Don Carlos de B. Martina's harrowing predictions, in which she claims: "La tierra que fue regada con sangre una vez lo será aún otra: los descendientes de los opresores serán oprimidos, y los hombres negros serán los terribles vengadores de los hombres cobrizos" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 168) [The land that was drenched with blood once will be drenched with blood again: the descendants of the oppressors will be oppressed, and the black men will be the terrible avengers of the brown men].

Martina's prediction or desire is, in any case, somewhat tempered-down throughout the novel. One must remember that, at that time, the memory of the violent black revolt that took place in Haiti between 1791 and 1806, which had led not only to the independence of the former French colony and the abolition of slavery but for it to be ruled by the formerly enslaved population, was strongly present among Cuban *criollos*. Hence, Avellaneda had to assuage any idea of a revolution, just like the Haitian one taking place in Cuba, not only for her readers but also for herself. The first strategy Avellaneda used to diminish the strength of Martina's statement is introducing her as somewhat crazy, thus indirectly attributing her claims to a sort of delirium and exaltation, and not a real desire. The second strategy is far more direct, consisting of Sab's refusal to start a revolution. In the first part of his conversation with Teresa, Sab explicitly declares as much: "tranquilizaos, Teresa, ningún peligro os amenaza; los

esclavos arrastran pacientemente su cadena: acaso sólo necesitan para romperla, oír una voz que les grite: «¡sois hombres!» Pero esa voz no será la mía, podéis creerlo” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 206–7) [Be calm, Teresa, no danger threatens you; the slaves patiently drag their chain: perhaps they only need, in order to break it, to hear a voice crying out to them, «You are men!» But that voice will not be mine, you can believe it].

The importance of Martina’s character and discourse lies then elsewhere. For me, what Martina’s discourse does, as Claudette Williams claims, is to put the indigenous heritage “on an equal footing with Cuba’s white and black ethnic heritage” (2008, 168), adding then a new and needed element to the *mestizaje* announced by the desired but not materialised union between Sab and either Carlota or Teresa. I believe this is the reason why Sommer asserts that it is Martina who “hold[s] out the promise, or the memory, of an alternative order to the slavocratic patriarchy” (1991, 119).

Martina’s claim of indigenous descent is not the only connection to the original aboriginals that calls for a *mestizaje* between the three races. Upon Sab's death, the first one to mourn his passing was Martina, until she succumbed to her own sorrows. When Carlota reads the letter and finds out the truth, it is she who every night goes to Sab's grave to mourn his loss. The inhabitants of Cubitas take Carlota's visits to Sab's grave as the manifestation of Martina's spirit:

La vieja india, al cabo de medio año de estar enterrada, volvía todas las noches a su paseo habitual, y ... se la veía arrodillarse junto a la cruz de madera que señalaba la sepultura de Sab, exactamente a la misma hora en que lo hacía mientras vivió ... los que la habían sorprendido en su visita nocturna aseguraban que no era ya vieja, ni flaca, ni de color aceitunado, sino joven, blanca y hermosa cuanto podía conjeturarse, pues siempre tenía cubierto el rostro con una gasa (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 273–74)

[The old Indian woman, after half a year of being buried, returned every night to her usual walk, and ... she was seen kneeling by the wooden cross that marked Sab's grave, at exactly the same time as she did when she was alive ... those who had surprised her on her nocturnal visit assured them that she was no longer old, skinny or olive-coloured, but young, white and beautiful as far as could be guessed, for she always covered her face with a gauze]

I see this not so much as a confusion, but as Carlota embodying, in the imagery of the novel, the indigenous past that Martina once did. This embodiment is not factual but desired. Carlota considers herself not simply a *criolla*, which refers to her Spanish heritage, but as a daughter of the island, and as such, in some ways, the only one capable of passing on the history and the memory of its inhabitants. In the story, Carlota is the last one with the ability to do so,

because she is the only survivor of the ordeal. As Picon Garfield claims, having “interiorizado el sacrificio del mulato Sab, de la indígena Martina y de la mujer blanca Teresa” [internalised the sacrifice of the mulatto Sab, of the indigenous woman Martina and of the white woman Teresa], Carlota becomes “el receptáculo destinado a recordar la experiencia subalterna colonial” [the receptacle for remembering the colonial subaltern experience] (Picon Garfield 1993, 81).

It is then, in the tragic end of the novel, where its hope for the future really lies. In other words, it is not in what happened, but in what should have happened in a just, virtuous society, where neither race nor gender determined people's fate, that the message of the novel is subversive and revolutionary. If Carlota had been able to see past Sab's race and slave condition, as Teresa did, if their noble souls had been able to join together, then a new society, based on a chosen and free *mestizaje*, meant to liberate and not to oppress, might have been born.

The alliance between oppressed subjects is also present in *Dos Mujeres*. In this novel, it refers particularly to the relationship between the two female protagonists: Luisa and Catalina and, I contend, it also extends to their relations with Elvira. The nature of the relation between Luisa and Catalina has been recognised by several critics, like when Kirkpatrick states: “the insistences that we observed in *Sab* on shared subjectivity as source and preserver of value in a degraded world surfaces in this novel [*Dos Mujeres*] as specifically female solidarity” (1989, 171). In this sense, their alliance has been primarily understood as a form of female bonding or female solidarity, studied as part of a greater analysis of the construction of the female self in the novel and its challenge of the angel/monster dichotomy. Regarding this last point, Guerra states:

Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, desde su perspectiva femenina, rechaza [la] dicotomía arquetípica propia del patriarcado, que en la tradición cristiana asume la forma de la Virgen María *versus* Eva Pecadora, para hacer de sus personajes femeninos figuras que representan a la mujer dentro de dos alternativas históricas. (1985, 718)

[Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, from her feminine perspective, rejects [the] archetypal dichotomy proper to patriarchy, which in the Christian tradition takes the form of the Virgin Mary *versus* Sinful Eve, to make her female characters figures that represent women within two historical alternatives]

Pastor shares this idea, claiming that *Dos Mujeres* “exposes the struggle of two very different women who finally develop a bond based on a realisation of their shared victimisation as women in (male) culture”, challenging in the process “the stereotypical representation of the

female sex as defined by the bipolar angel/monster paradigm of the dominant male discourse” (2003, 109). In this last regard, Janet N. Gold, who has paid close attention to the relationships between the female characters of Avellaneda’s novels⁷⁹, claims:

the convergence of the two women's lives at the end of *Dos mujeres* registers both a reversal or awakening in the women's characters and a special kind of bonding, a solidarity of victimization ... In recognizing their common plight, Luisa and Catalina establish the primary bonds of a sisterhood of suffering (1989, 87).

I agree with both Pastor and Gold in their interpretation that the female bonding occurs when Luisa and Catalina finally meet and recognise the plight each other is facing. However, instead of a sisterhood based on suffering, I propose that it is a sorority based on empathy, generosity, and love, not the passionate love they both feel for Carlos, but a sisterly love between Luisa and Catalina born out of their mutual recognition as women and thus, of their condition as oppressed subjects in a patriarchal society. Considering that the novel's original title was *Dos hermanas* (two sisters) (Kirkpatrick 1989, 171), I believe that the sisterly element of the story was always part of Avellaneda’s plan and, as such, plays a central role in the understanding of its message.

Luisa and Catalina are constructed not only as rivals but as opposites, both physically and behaviourally. Luisa is blond, young, innocent, and submissive, she is only sixteen years old and on more than one occasion is referred to as *niña* (child), which serves to indicate both her immaturity and her complete lack of experience of the world. Catalina is, in contrast, a vibrant brunette, a widow and an experienced woman who knows perfectly well how to carry herself out in the public sphere, attracting both admiration and fear.

However, as readers we soon learn that Catalina was once as innocent as Luisa is. When Catalina reveals her life story to Carlos, she tells him that she married her first husband following her mother’s wishes:

A la edad de dieciséis años me sacó mi madre del colegio en que me había educado para casarme con el conde de S.***. Se me habló del matrimonio como de un contrato por el cual una mujer daba su persona a un hombre, en cambio de una posición social que recibía de él,

⁷⁹ Gold does an interesting analysis that compares the roles of Carlota and Teresa in *Sab*, Luisa and Catalina in *Dos Mujeres* and Josefina and Madame de Pompadour in *El Artista Barquero*. For her, each dyad represents and defies the archetypes of women as either angel or monster, with Carlota, Luisa, and Josefina on one side of the dichotomy and Teresa, Catalina, and Madame de Pompadour on the other. However, Gold argues that each couple of female characters manages to defy the stereotypes and create forms of female bonding.

y esta posición que se me ofrecía era brillante (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000b [1842], II:78–79)

[At the age of sixteen my mother took me out of the school where I had been educated to marry the Count of S.***. I was told of marriage as a contract by which a woman gave her person to a man, in exchange for a social position which she received from him, and this position which was offered to me was a brilliant one]

Catalina was also told that marriage, for a woman of her noble social stance, was not a matter of love but of convenience and, thus, she married *Conde de S.*, a much older man who was not capable of loving and who had a “corazón de hielo” (2000b [1842], II:82) [heart of ice], When Carlos tries to recriminate her for having chosen position instead of love, Catalina reminds him that she knew nothing at the time about the world and that she did what her elders told her was best for her: “Ud. olvida que yo no conocía el amor, y que al salir del colegio me presentaron como una suerte envidiable aquel espantoso destino” (2000b [1842], II:84–85) [You forget that I did not know love, and that when I left school I was presented with that dreadful destiny as an enviable fate].

Carlos also conveniently forgets that his own marriage is an arranged one. While it is true that both he and Luisa believed to be in love, neither of them had really experienced the world when they tied the nuptial knot. Also, even if they had not developed feelings for each other, Doña Leonor had raised Luisa to believe that marriage was her only option. Doña Leonor’s only obsession was to “asegurar cuanto antes a su hija un protector” [to secure a protector for her daughter as soon as possible], trembling “al pensar que podía morir sin haber colocado a su hija” [at the thought of dying without having placed his daughter] (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a [1842], I:35). Hence, Doña Leonor forced the union and would have done so regardless of her daughter's feelings.

However, while Catalina, although condemned to a loveless marriage, is given the opportunity to study and grow by no other than her cold-hearted husband, which in turn gives her the chance of becoming, to borrow an Irigarayan term (1986) also used by Pastor (2003), Luisa is left alone in Seville nursing a dying mother and at the mercy of a caring but condescending uncle/father-in-law.

In her solitude, as Pastor has analysed (2003), Luisa does her own process of growth, of learning about the world and its injustices. This growth comes to a climax the moment she meets Catalina when, rather than confronting her, Luisa understands their predicament and, knowing that Carlos will never love her the way he loves Catalina, renounces her rights as a wife, giving them instead to the countess:

-Señora -dijo Luisa con patético acento-, mi muerte puede solamente dejar libre a Carlos, y yo la imploro en este momento de la piedad del cielo... //...Mientras tanto, vivan ustedes en el país extranjero que han escogido ... Y no moriré, señora, sin alcanzar antes para Ud. y para *él* gracia y perdón (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000c [1842], III:214–15) (italics in original)

[–Madam –said Luisa with a pathetic accent–, only my death can set Carlos free, and I implore it at this moment of heaven's mercy... //...In the meantime, live in the foreign country you have chosen... And I will not die, madam, without first obtaining, for you and for *him*, grace and pardon]

Some critics, like Pastor⁸⁰ and Lucía Stecher Guzmán⁸¹, claim that the moment of transformation for Luisa comes when she discovers that Catalina is pregnant. Luisa indeed pronounces her absolutory words once she realises that Catalina is expecting a child. However, Luisa's sentiments when she had decided to confront the countess were already noble.

Just before the encounter between Luisa and Catalina, Luisa, in a moment of extreme grief, had told everything to her father-in-law, and Don Francisco, full of rage, decided to confront his son and the countess of S.: “Apareceré entre ellos como la venganza del Dios a quien ofenden, y pisaré con mis pies a esa cortesana impúdica, y traeré arrastrando hasta los tuyos a ese esposo criminal. Sí, sí, yo les arrancaré la máscara: ¡Deshonra y oprobio sobre ellos!” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000c [1842], III:198) [I will appear among them as the vengeance of the God whom they offend, and I will stamp my feet on that impudent courtesan, and I will drag that criminal husband of yours to your feet. Yes, yes, I will tear off their mask: Disgrace and reproach fall upon them!]. Luisa, upon seeing the fury of her father-in-law, understands her mistake and runs to Elvira asking for her help to save both Carlos and Catalina: “¡Vamos adonde estén ellos: A salvarles! ¡Ella es amiga de Ud. y él es mi esposo!” (2000c [1842], III:202) [Let's go to where they are: to save them! She is your friend and he is my husband!]. When they arrive at Catalina's house, before even realizing that Catalina is pregnant, Luisa affirms more than once that she has not come to recriminate or condemn Catalina, but to forgive her “No, no vengo a insultar al caído: ¡perdone Dios a Ud., señora, como yo la perdono!” (2000c [1842], III:209) [No, I am not here to insult the fallen: may God forgive you, madam, as I forgive you!]. When, full of anguish and despair, Catalina refuses to listen to Luisa's words, Elvira sweetly scolds her insisting: “No es así como debes hablarla.

⁸⁰ Pastor states: "When she [Luisa] finds out that Catalina is pregnant by Carlos, she experiences a total transformation from being the "angel of the hearth", passive and resigned, to a strong, self-confident character, capable of conscious sacrifice" (2003, 128)

⁸¹ Stecher Guzmán asserts: “Luisa cambia totalmente de actitud cuando descubre que su rival está embarazada” (2016, 45) [Luisa completely changes her attitude when she discovers that her rival is pregnant].

Ella te compadece y ha venido a salvarte” (2000c [1842], III:210) [This is not how you should talk to her. She has compassion for you and has come to save you].

Therefore, I would suggest that even before knowing that Catalina was pregnant, Luisa's intention when going to meet her was to find a solution to their shared predicament that did not necessarily involve a confrontation but an exercise of understanding and compassion. Even if Luisa's intentions and piety reach their peak of self-sacrifice when she realises that Providence has blessed Catalina with a gift She has not yet bestowed upon her: the possibility of motherhood, I believe that it was never Luisa's intention to hurt Catalina. Luisa does not have a sudden change of heart, her personality has been building up to that precise moment, when her faith, her love, her compassion, and her new-found understanding of the world made her realise that Catalina had a claim on Carlos that she did not have: “¡ella [Catalina] es realmente su esposa!, ¡la naturaleza la ha concedido un derecho de que me ha privado!” (2000c [1842], III:213) [She [Catalina] is really his wife! Nature has granted her a right that she has deprived me of!].

Catalina, who at first refuses any attempt of Luisa to reach her soul, finally understands the noble heart she is dealing with, accepting her proposal and sacrifice: “La condesa comprendió, sin duda, toda la sublimidad de aquella incomparable abnegación, pues el llanto brotó entonces con violencia en sus ojos” (2000c [1842], III:214) [The Countess undoubtedly understood the sublimity of this incomparable abnegation, for tears welled up in her eyes].

This sublime moment of female bonding and solidarity ends with a hug between the two women who were supposed to be rivals, and who, instead of fighting, comfort each other:

Iba a salir Luisa. La condesa se levantó y la detuvo. // Vaciló un momento... Luego se arrojó a sus pies. // Luisa la abrió los brazos y una en el seno de la otra lloraron ambas largo rato... // Dos corazones, dos nobles corazones ligados en aquel momento por todos los sentimientos generosos se confiaron el uno al otro. ¡Y eran dos corazones de mujer sin embargo! (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000c [1842], III:215–16)

[Luisa was about to leave. The Countess got up and stopped her. // She hesitated for a moment... Then she threw herself at her feet... // Luisa opened her arms to her, and one in the bosom of the other they both wept for a long time... // Two hearts, two noble hearts bound at that moment by all generous sentiments, entrusted themselves to each other. And they were two women's hearts nonetheless!]

For Pastor, this body language between Luisa and Catalina “allows both women to find within themselves compassion and understanding for each other”, becoming, thus, a strategy that “articulates a female inter-dependence that virtually negates the importance of Carlos in

their life” (2003, 129). Despite Luisa’s renunciation, Catalina is not able to deal with her own guilt and, in the ultimate act of self-sacrifice, commits suicide. As Stecher Gúzman states, with this last desperate action “la pecadora, la intrusa que destruye un matrimonio feliz, sale de escena y restablece el equilibrio inicial: Luisa y Carlos vuelven a estar juntos. Sin embargo ... lo que le espera a la pareja es una vida de desencuentro e insatisfacción” (2016, 42) [the sinner, the intruder who destroys a happy marriage, leaves the scene and restores the initial balance: Luisa and Carlos get back together. However, ... what awaits the couple is a life of misunderstanding and dissatisfaction].

Although these interpretations and analyses are of paramount importance, I believe that they have left mainly untouched the other female character of the story, the one who operates not only as testimony but also as the bearer of memory and experience to pass on to the next generation: Elvira.

The first positive female bond we are presented with within the novel is precisely that between Elvira and Catalina. Elvira is described as a sweet and complacent person, who enjoys the theatre and social life. At first, Carlos thinks that Elvira is wasting away her late husband’s fortune, however he is soon informed

que aquella mujer despilfarradora e imprevisora, en su concepto, había salvado la herencia de sus hijas a costa de grandes sacrificios y privaciones, que había satisfecho en pocos años deudas considerables que quedaron a la muerte de su marido, y que era tan activa y apta para hacer productivos sus bienes que sus dispendios siempre eran inferiores a sus rentas (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a [1842], I:157)

[that this spendthrift and improvident woman, in her opinion, had saved her daughters' inheritance at the cost of great sacrifices and privations, that she had satisfied in a few years considerable debts left on the death of her husband, and that she was so active and apt to make her property productive that her expenditure was always less than her income]

During Elvira’s illness, when she is first hit by a delirious fever, she confesses to Carlos that it was Catalina who saved her from ruin:

Que venga Catalina: que vayan a traerla al momento... Quiero recomendarle a mis hijas. ¿No sabe Ud., caballero, que ella es su madre más que yo? Sí, señor, porque ellas y yo estábamos arruinadas... Los acreedores llovían y no había remedio. ¡Estábamos arruinadas!... // ¿No fue ella quien salvó a mis hijas de la ruina? ¿No fue ella quien pagó muchas de mis deudas, quien me perdonó las que tenía mi marido con el suyo, quien administró mis bienes hasta

entregármelos libres, aumentados...? ¿No es ella quien ha sido constantemente mi bienhechora, mi consuelo, mi apoyo...? (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000b [1842], II:41–42)

[Send for Catalina: send for her at once... I want to recommend my daughters to her; do you not know, sir, that she is their mother more than me? Yes, sir, because we were ruined... The creditors were raining down on us and there was no remedy. We were ruined!... // Was it not she who saved my daughters from ruin? Was it not she who paid many of my debts, who forgave me the debts my husband had with her husband, who administered my property until she gave it to me free, increased...? Is it not she who has constantly been my benefactor, my consolation, my support...?]

Carlos had already seen how Catalina devoted herself to the care of her friend, and now he finally understood the sacredness of their bond. Elvira was willing to leave her daughters with Catalina because she was a noble, educated soul who had used her knowledge of the world, not only to save herself when she became a widow, but also to help her friend and relative, Elvira, when she found herself in the same circumstances.

This passage, if only indirectly, also highlights the importance of proper education for women. When the readers are first introduced to Elvira it is through the description doña Leonor gives of her, claiming that she has been raised "como Dios manda" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a, I:116) [as God commands]. Considering the education Doña Leonor gave Luisa, we know that "criada como Dios manda" meant knowing "los secretos de la economía doméstica ... el bastidor y la almohadilla ... los primeros rudimentos de la aritmética y la geografía" [the secrets of home economics ... the frame and the pad ... the first rudiments of arithmetic and geography], as well as, reciting by heart some passages of sacred and common history (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a [1842], I:23). It also meant submission and complete obedience to one's husband, as Doña Leonor commanded of Luisa after her marriage. But it did not involve any knowledge of how to deal with affairs in the public realm, nor what to do in case the husband, for any reason, was out of the picture.

Therefore, when the tragedy of widowhood struck Elvira, she did not know how to manage her late husband's affairs, she had not been raised to do so. Without the help of Catalina who, instead, had received an education that allowed her to confidently move in the public sphere, Elvira would have been, as she herself declared, ruined⁸². This created a bond of gratefulness and friendship between the two women, which Elvira repaid every opportunity she had by showing unyielding support to Catalina.

⁸² As I have explained in the previous Part, the problems created by widowhood was an argument used by both Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Leman Grimstone to advocate for an adequate education for women.

Pastor, for example, has recognised this close friendship between Elvira and Catalina, but has mainly discarded Elvira as “a tangential character whose main role throughout the novel is as a vehicle to inform and link Catalina with the other main characters” (2003, 131). I, however, think that Elvira stands for more than just the sidekick who helps introduce Catalina to the rest of the main characters. Elvira represents lasting empathy, memory and, through her daughters, hope for the future.

Elvira is the one Luisa goes to when she needs help, and she only agrees to take Luisa to Catalina because she knows this encounter will help her dear friend. She cries together with the two women when they join in the sisterly hug that seals their bonding: “también lloraba Elvira, único testigo de aquella patética escena” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000c, III:215) [Elvira, the only witness to the pathetic scene, was also crying]. She supports Luisa when all is said and done and cries with her when they meet again years later.

Furthermore, after her last encounter with Luisa, Elvira promises her daughters, who are almost the reincarnation of our protagonists: “la mayor, que cumplía apenas trece años, era una rubia angelical; la segunda, que tenía diez, era una morena de ojos de fuego que se llamaba Catalina” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000d, IV:71) [the eldest, who was just thirteen, was an angelic blonde; the second, who was ten, was a brunette with fiery eyes called Catalina], to tell them “la historia de *dos mujeres*, ambas muy generosas, muy bellas y muy desventuradas. Esa historia será para vosotras una lección provechosa” (2000d, IV:71) (*italics in original*) [the story of *two women*, both very generous, very beautiful and very unfortunate. This story will be a useful lesson for you].

Avellaneda does not reveal if Elvira actually told her daughters the story of Luisa and Catalina, concluding only with the ominous phrase: “acaso nada les dijo, nada les reveló, sino que la suerte de la mujer es infeliz de todos modos” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000d, IV:72) [maybe she told them nothing, revealed nothing to them, but that woman’s lot is an unhappy one in any case]. For this reason, Picon Garfield claims that “mediante ese incógnito, la autora borra la memoria histórica y maternal de la voz didáctica que enseña a la próxima generación femenina la herencia triste de su sexo” (1993, 145) [through this unknowing, the author erases the historical and maternal memory of the didactic voice that teaches the next female generation the sad heritage of their sex].

However, I prefer and agree with Stecher Gúzman’s interpretation of this last scene. For her,

lo que la conciencia autorial parece esperar para ellas es que aprendan la lección que deja la historia de Luisa y Catalina: que no son ellas las que deben esforzarse por adaptarse a un mundo que de todas maneras las condena a la infelicidad, sino que es la sociedad la que debe cambiar para no repetir en todas sus mujeres el destino de las protagonistas de la novela (Stecher Guzmán 2016, 48)

[what the authorial conscience seems to hope for them is that they learn the lesson of the story of Luisa and Catalina: that it is not they who must make the effort to adapt to a world that in any case condemns them to unhappiness, but that it is the society that must change so as not to repeat the fate of the protagonists of the novel in all its women]

The first step to achieve this is to educate women not to accept the submissive, secondary role society has allotted them. We know from the beginning of the novel that Elvira's daughters are being educated outside of the family home: "tenía Elvira dos hijas, pero ambas se educaban fuera de su casa" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a, I:137) [Elvira had two daughters, but both were educated outside the home]. I see in this decision a way for Elvira to guarantee a better education for her daughters than the one that she had received, one more similar to that which Catalina had access to. This, together with the hope that she did actually tell them about Luisa and Catalina, is what represents the hopeful message of the novel.

Both *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres* end tragically, however, they both have a seed of hope. In the case of *Sab*, that hope is represented by what might have been. In *Dos Mujeres*, hope is placed in an unknown future, in what is yet to come.

Some, like Gold, have tried to claim that *El Artista Barquero* also offers a kind of female bonding between Josefina and Madame de Pompadour, materialised when Madame de Pompadour renounces her love for Huberto at the realisation that he loves Josefina. According to Gold, Madame de Pompadour "elects to sacrifice her own possible happiness with the hero to insure that of the other woman" (1989, 87). I, however, do not agree with Gold's interpretation. Madame de Pompadour does not give up on her love for Huberto in favour of Josefina, she capitulates her imaginary claim on our hero because she realises that he has always loved Josefina and always will, seeing Madame de Pompadour only as the King's mistress ("la querida del rey" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 165)). In this sense, I believe that Madame de Pompadour capitulates to love itself, to the abstract sentiment that she recognises in Huberto and which she had imagined destined for herself, and not because she wants to favour some supposed rival.

When Madame de Pompadour discovers that she will never be the object of Huberto's love, she, after a moment of pain and hesitation, does not succumb to despair. Instead, she turns

to ways of redeeming herself, because she understands that her decision of becoming the King's mistress has stained her reputation forever in the eyes of the patriarchal society she belongs to. Thus, she decides to help couples whose financial situation does not allow them to get married despite their love, by guaranteeing dowries for the brides in need. She first helps two couples just after Huberto leaves the Court to go to Marseilles, and asks her servants to keep bringing her maidens in need of help:

casadlos pronto, y proporcionadme otros muchos en análogas circunstancias. Es preciso que haya enlaces de amor, uniones felices. ¡Hartas víctimas han hecho y seguirán haciendo los que tienen por fundamento miserables intereses! ¡Sean bendecidas por Dios las privilegiadas mujeres que le han debido la suerte de hallar —a sus primeros pasos por el mundo— al esposo que pueden amar para siempre...! (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 168)

[Marry them soon, and provide me with many others in similar circumstances. There must be bonds of love, happy unions... So many victims have been made and will continue to be made by those who have miserable interests as their foundation! May God bless the privileged women who have had the good fortune to find - at their first steps in the world - the husband whom they can love forever...!]

In this regard, I must agree with Pastor when she claims that Madame de Pompadour, through her enormous generosity to the poor, “is able to get back in touch with her own sense of herself and finds the cure for disillusionment” (2003, 175).

However, even if Madame de Pompadour's generosity can be read as a form of solidarity, even as a form of abstract female bonding (because she is helping brides in need), it does not constitute an alliance between oppressed subjects, unlike the relationships between Sab and Teresa, and Sab and Martina in *Sab*; or that of Luisa, Catalina, and Elvira in *Dos Mujeres*.

The actions of Madame de Pompadour, as well as those of the Baron of Montesquieu, are, instead, examples of top to bottom solidarity, which has its own value and importance. Cancino Alfaro and Flores Pérez see the relationship between Huberto and Madame de Pompadour as one of patronage, thanks to which Huberto is able to follow his dream and become an artist “aunque siempre subordinado, en este caso, a los deseos de la marquesa” (2016, 63) [although always subordinate, in this case, to the wishes of the Marquise]. We must also remember that Huberto would not have been able to escape his tragic fate as a frustrated boatman artist if it were not for the generous donation of his anonymous benefactor, whose identity is revealed only at the end of the novel. Hence, in *El Artista Barquero*, more than an

alliance between oppressed or marginalised subjects, what we can find is allies willing to help from their position of power.

Therefore, I propose that while *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres* represent the importance of forging alliances between oppressed subjects in order to overcome the injustices of society. For its part, *El Artista Barquero* shows that it is also useful to have allies among subjects who, not only find themselves in positions of power but who, from those positions, are able to identify and empathise with social injustices.

Pastor proposes another kind of female solidarity within *El Artista Barquero*, that between Josefina and Niná, which she describes as follows: “In Irigarayan terms, their relationship represents ‘a woman-to-woman relationship of reciprocity’, as mother-daughter” (2003, 178). For Pastor, the relationship between Josefina and Niná is one “between equals, in which they help each other, protect each other from the male oppressive order, and express their distinctly female subjectivity” (2003, 179).

This scholar proposal of a female bonding between Josefina and Niná in mother-daughter terms seems to come from the way Josefina and the narrator sometimes referred to Niná as a second mother. This first occurs when Josefina in is dire need of retrieving a letter Huberto has sent her and thus, resorting to what for me amounts to emotional bribery, whether Josefina realises it or not, she asks the former slave: “¡Tu me traerás la carta! ¡Oh, sí, saldrás ahora mismo para traérmela, *Niná mía, mi segunda madre!* ¡Cuánto te lo agradeceremos los dos!” (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 95) [You will bring me the letter! Oh, yes, you will go out right away to bring it to me, *my Niná, my second mother!* How grateful we will both be to you!] (Italics are mine).

The second time Niná is referred to as a mother is by the narrator, in the following terms: “Niná, la humilde liberta, que tenía para ella el corazón de madre; Niná, a quien amaba con la ternura de hija; Niná, su compañera casi inseparable...” (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 156) [Niná, the humble freedwoman, who had for her the heart of a mother; Niná, whom she loved with the tenderness of a daughter; Niná, her almost inseparable companion...]. Although this seems to be a sweet description of the relationship between Josefina and Niná, I believe we must not lose focus on the first adjective used to describe Niná, she is a *liberta*, a former slave and now the faithful servant of Monsieur Caillard and his daughter.

For this reason, I regret to disagree with Pastor, who has done so much in the study and recognition of Avellaneda’s prose, about the nature of the relationship between Niná and Josefina. Their relationship cannot be one between equals, because, borrowing the term used by Gayatri Spivak to describe Christophine in her analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Niná is “a

commodified person” (Spivak 1989, 185). Niná is not just oppressed because of her condition as a woman, oppression that, as Pastor claims, she shares with Josefina, she is also traversed by other axes of oppression: she is a *mulata*, a former slave and a servant, oppressed not only by Monsieur Caillard but even by Josefina herself who, no matter how much she loves or claims to love Niná, will always have the power as mistress over her.

Readers get to know Niná’s (hi)story almost by chance. When Josefina is telling the story of her parents and how her father had saved her grandfather from a fire, gaining thus her mother’s hand, readers are informed in passing that Niná was Josefina’s mother’s “*camarera*” (maid) and that she referred to Josefina’s mother as “*ama*” (mistress/owner). Hence, we can infer that Niná passed from one family to another when Josefina’s mother married her father, always taking care of the children that came, exactly as a commodity. This is reinforced by the first and last description that the narrator gives of Niná. When readers are first introduced to Niná her tenderness towards Josefina is described in the following terms: “*esa familiaridad cariñosa que usan en nuestras Antillas con los hijos de la casa las esclavas nacidas y envejecidas en ellas*” (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 79) [that affectionate familiarity used in our West Indies with the children of the house by the *female slaves* born and aged in them] (Italics are mine). In mimetic terms, the last reference of her is once again as the caring subject/object in charge of taking care of her mistress’ children “*Ocupando los asientos del frente, veíase a una corpulenta mulata, ya algo vieja pero frescota aún, entreteniendo con figurillas de movimiento a cuatro preciosos niños que la rodeaban*” (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 196) [Occupying the seats at the front, a stout mulatto woman, already a little old but still fresh, was entertaining four beautiful children who surrounded her with moving figures].

Furthermore, we are not informed of how Niná came to be in France, but we can infer that the journey was not of her choosing, she was uprooted from her motherland, from the Island of Cuba, just as her ancestors had been stolen from the shores of Africa, to serve the purposes of a white family. We see the longing of Niná for Cuba in her exclamations when she sees Huberto’s painting: “¡Ah!... ¡mi tierra!... ¡mi cielo!... ¿No estoy soñando? (...) ¡Ah, Cuba mía! ¡tierra bendita! ¡tierra de mis padres y de mis amos! ¿Cómo has venido aquí? ¿Quién te ha arrancado de los brazos del mar para traerte á perfumar con tus flores los aires del destierro?” (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990, 178) [Ah!... my land!... my sky!... Am I not dreaming? (...) Ah, my Cuba! blessed land! land of my fathers and my masters! How did you come here? Who plucked you from the arms of the sea to bring you to perfume the air of exile with your flowers?]. The reference to *destierro* (uprooting) can be taken as her having left Cuba without

any choice in the matter or even against her will, and her excitement as the expression of the longing for a place she thought she would never see again.

This analysis does not mean to imply that Niná does not play an important role in the novel. She is, in fact, Josefina's comfort and companion, as well as her last tangible connection with Cuba and with her mother. In this sense, I do agree with Pastor when she claims that "Niná's influential and fundamental role in Josefina's early development is crucial to Josefina's later success in realising her identity" (2003, 178). However, this influence is not made within a relationship of equals, it happens at the expense of Niná herself, who is never given the chance to develop her own subjectivity, and is perennially condemned to immanence as a woman, as a slave, and as a person of colour.

Reading Niná's position and representation in contrast to the other oppressed subjects penned by Avellaneda can be illuminating. In *Sab*, Avellaneda was able to recognise different axes of oppression, creating a delicate balance between the mulatto slave (Sab), who although oppressed by his colour and his condition as a slave, somehow maintained an axis of power as a man, and the poor, white woman (Teresa), who although oppressed as a woman and due to her social status, still maintained an axis of power due to her race. In contrast, in *El Artista Barquero*, Avellaneda seemed unable to realise that those same axes of oppression that she had so cleverly and beautifully delineated in *Sab*, could all come together in the same person. Niná's development has been repressed by all the different oppressions that intersect her existence. However, Gómez de Avellaneda, in her position as a *criolla blanca* (white creole), was unable to see the ultimate otherness that a black slave woman represented. Thus, she could not narratively create a subjectivity for Niná, as she had done for other oppressed women in her other novels, or like she did for Josefina and Madame de Pompadour in *El Artista Barquero*.

This critique does not aim at pointing an accusatory finger at Avellaneda's writings or her persona. What I wish to highlight is how we all, in one way or another, are enmeshed in different structures of power and oppression that allow us to see and denounce some injustices, whilst making us blind regarding others. Avellaneda's message is still important and in other regards is still powerful, but identifying the blind spots of her own discourse, can, maybe, help us identify our own misperceptions of reality.

5.3. Critiques to the Institution of Marriage

During the nineteenth century both in Spain and in Hispanic colonies in America the condition of women within marriage was regulated mainly by *Las Siete Partidas de Alfonso X*,

which dated back to the middle of the thirteenth century, and *Las Leyes de Toro*, passed in 1505. Other legal texts that impacted the lives of married women were *La Nueva Recopilación de las Leyes de Castilla* (1567) and *La Novísima Recopilación de las Leyes de España* (1805) (Deere and León 2005a; Álamo Martell 2011; Pestaña Ruíz 2016).

Las Siete Partidas were the cornerstone of Castilian law, and according to Celia Pestaña Ruíz, they established the condition of women as the weaker sex, by stating that “el varón debe gobernar a la mujer (Partida III, 2, 5) por su mejor condición (Partida IV, 23, 2)” (2016, 5) [the man must rule over the woman (*Partida* III, 2, 5) because of his better condition (*Partida* IV, 23, 2)]. While *Las Siete Partidas* laid out the principles that ruled the relationship between spouses, *Las Leyes de Toro* were the ones that concretely established what married women could and could not do. According to Carmen Diana Deere and Magdalena León, the legal regimen created by *Las Leyes de Toro* made married women relatively incapable subjects: “they could not enter into contracts or initiate lawsuits without their husband's permission. But a husband could give his wife general or specific permission to enter into contracts, as could a judge in his absence, and [also] could ratify contracts she had made after the fact” (2005b, 648).

Unlike the common law stipulations that ruled in England, which I have already delineated in Part II of the present dissertation, married women in Spain and Spanish colonies did not lose their legal personality, they were still subjects under the law, just incomplete ones, referred to legally as *relativamente incapaces* (relatively incapable). Like adolescents still under the guardianship of their fathers, women were considered under the legal guardianship of their husband, a system that came to be known as *potestad marital* and, because of the husband's ability to give his wife general or particular permission to perform certain acts, mainly contracts, also as *licencia marital* (Deere and León 2005b; Pestaña Ruíz 2016). Deere and León sum up this system in the following terms:

Three interrelated aspects ... defined the husband as the head of household and the sole legal representative of the family: he administered both the couple's community property and his wife's property; he had paternal authority over the children; and his wife enjoyed limited juridical capacity (2005b, 647)

Spanish law, which ruled both in Spain and in colonial Hispanic America, did not abide by the principle of unity at the base of the legal fiction of coverture under common law. As a result, “the default marital regimen” was that of “partial community property” (Deere and León 2005b, 650). According to this system, each spouse was entitled to his or her individual property, which mainly consisted of “what each owned prior to marriage and any inheritances

or donations acquired during the marriage"; while "earnings from individual property (such as rent and interest), as well as assets purchased with ordinary income from "work or industry" during the marriage, constituted the couple's community property" (Deere and León 2005b, 650–51).

Normally the dowry, a sum of money the wife's parents had provided "to contribute toward the new couple's expenses" and *arras*, which "represented a gift from the groom to the bride", were both considered to be the wife's property, even if under the administration of the husband (Deere and León 2005b, 651). The dowry, in particular, gave some leverage to the wife, because "if her husband mismanaged it, she could file suit to have its management revert to her or a third party" (Deere and León 2005b, 651). Women were also entitled to what was called *bienes parafernales* (paraphenary goods). These goods were normally simple goods, like clothing and jewellery, which were not part of the dowry. They were considered as part of the wife's personal property and she could administer them.

This system, at least on paper, seemed to be less restrictive than the one imposed by the legal fiction of coverture under common law. Women did not lose their legal personality and although men were the sole administrator of the family assets, including their wives' property, a married woman could, at least in theory, "initiate a lawsuit against her husband for poor or fraudulent administration of her dowry or to initiate an ecclesiastical divorce" (Deere and León 2005b, 648).

However, women still owed obedience to their husbands, and husbands had control over what their wives could or could not do (Scanlon 1986). It was still a prerogative of the husband to decide whether to give his wife general or specific permission to act or celebrate contracts, and he could always withhold that possibility. A husband could sell his wife's property without her permission, leaving her in ruins and although the most fortunate or educated could go to the courts to try and defend their rights, social constrictions and the fear of social scandal deterred many of them from doing so (Scanlon 1986, 137).

Consequently, it is possible to claim that even if the Spanish and Colonial marriage regime was more flexible than the one imposed by coverture under common law, the ideological consequences over women's lives were very similar. For this reason, Geraldine Scanlon, in her feminist analysis of the institution of marriage in Spain from the nineteenth century onwards, referred to it as a form of legal slavery for women:

Las presiones sociales y psicológicas ejercidas sobre la mujer para que cumpliera su destino matrimonial, que abocaban a una caza del marido casi universal, crearon la irónica situación

de que un número enorme de mujeres se entregaran voluntaria e incluso entusiásticamente a la esclavitud legal (Scanlon 1986, 126)

[The social and psychological pressures exerted on women to fulfil their marital destiny, which led to almost universal husband-hunting, created the ironic situation that a huge number of women willingly and even enthusiastically surrendered themselves to legal slavery]

Gómez de Avellaneda was particularly vocal against the institution of marriage and what it represented for women. Her critiques of marriage are present in all three novels under analysis. In *Sab* they are enunciated, in *Dos Mujeres* they are developed, and in *El Artista Barquero* they are implicit.

5.3.1. “¡Oh!, ¡las mujeres! ¡Pobres y ciegas víctimas! ... Sin otra guía que su corazón ... eligen un dueño para toda la vida”: *Marriage as form of Slavery for Women*

The first of Avellaneda’s critique of the institution of marriage is made at the end of *Sab* through the letter that Sab sends to Teresa in his last dying moment. In this letter, after condemning men for the society they have created against God’s commandments, in which slaves have no right whatsoever to any kind of ambition or happiness, doomed instead to a life of servitude and humiliation where blind obedience and self-degradation are presented as their only way to virtue, Sab compares the situation of women to that of the slave:

¡Oh!, ¡las mujeres! ¡Pobres y ciegas víctimas! Como los esclavos, ellas arrastran pacientemente su cadena y bajan la cabeza bajo el yugo de las leyes humanas. Sin otra guía que su corazón ignorante y crédulo eligen un dueño para toda la vida. El esclavo, al menos, puede cambiar de amo, puede esperar que juntando oro comprará algún día su libertad: pero la mujer, cuando levanta sus manos enflaquecidas y su frente ultrajada, para pedir libertad, oye al monstruo de voz sepulcral que le grita: «En la tumba» (Gómez de Avellaneda 2014 [1841], 270–71)

[Oh! women! Poor, blind victims! Like slaves, they patiently drag their chains and bow their heads under the yoke of human laws. With no other guide than their ignorant and credulous heart they choose a master for life. The slave, at least, can change his master, can hope that by gathering gold he will one day buy his freedom: but the woman, when she raises her weakened hands and her outraged brow, to ask for freedom, hears the monster with the sepulchral voice crying out to her: "In the grave"!]

In this discourse, made not by the women of the story –who are its recipients– but by Sab, the slave, Avellaneda is not only equating women’s condition to slavery, but she is also claiming that being a woman in the patriarchal society she and her characters lived in was

worse than being a slave. Women, in Avellaneda's view, could not free themselves in any way from the yoke of marriage, except by death, while slaves could at least foster the hope of one day buying their freedom.

For some critics, this last part of Sab's discourse served as proof that the novel's main intention was not to denounce slavery, but that it used the abolitionist rhetoric as a vehicle for Avellaneda's feminist ideas. In this regard, Guerra affirms that "el ideologema abolicionista resulta ser únicamente un paradigma estratégico que nutre un ideologema feminista de mayor importancia" (1985, 708–9) [the abolitionist ideologeme turns out to be only a strategic paradigm that nurtures a feminist ideologeme of greater importance]. Kirkpatrick is also of this idea, as she claims that "the issue of slavery was from the start secondary to that of women, even a mask for feminist protest" (1989, 156–57). She goes as far as affirming that this strategy stands to show that, at the time, it was easier and safer for Avellaneda to uphold anti-slavery ideas than to openly confront women's discrimination:

Gómez de Avellaneda found it easier to express abolitionist sentiments, which were considered so subversive by the Spanish colonial government in Cuba that it would not permit *Sab* to be published there, than to broach directly the issues of sexual inequality implied in its structure ... Gómez de Avellaneda was more fearful of openly representing female ambition and rebelliousness than she was of acknowledging the justice of Sab's anger with her own class and race (Kirkpatrick 1989, 158–59)

Pastor seems to agree with this view when she claims:

Avellaneda's main purpose was not to narrate a conflictive love story, nor to present a denunciation of slavery, but to express her feminist ideology, establishing the parallelism between the situation of black slaves and the oppression of white women in the bourgeois society of her time ... for her, slavery was nothing more than a metaphor to convey her feminism, her prime and sole message in *Sab* (1997, 187)

Other researchers revindicate the abolitionist⁸³ nature of the novel. As early as 1962 Helena Percas Ponseti defended the anti-slavery elements of *Sab*. She claimed: "el carácter antiesclavista de la obra es sobradamente marcado... [pero] debido a que otros aspectos de la novela ... están expuesto con mayor vigor, en contraste, el aspecto antiesclavista no resalta tanto" (Percas Ponseti 1962, 349) [the anti-slavery character of the work is more than marked...

⁸³ For a study on the antislavery novels developed in Cuba see: Luis, William. 1981. "The Antislavery Novel and the Concept of Modernity". *Cuban Studies* 11 (1): 33–47.

[but] because other aspects of the novel ... are more vigorously set out, in contrast, the anti-slavery aspect does not stand out so much]. Stacey Schlau also makes a case defending the novel's elements in favour of the abolition of slavery. For her, "the narrative equates and then integrates all forms of slavery, physical and mental, thus analyzing the condition of all those marginalized into assuming a colonized status" (Schlau 1986, 495). More recently, Julia C. Paulk has argued that the novel is both feminist and abolitionist, stating that "while the rights of women are clearly a priority for her [Avellaneda], the writer's denunciation of all forms of coercion is driven by a unified Romantic philosophy countering multiple forms of oppression". In other words, Paulk claims that "the critique of all forms of legal oppression permeates Gómez de Avellaneda's text, allowing it to promote multiple, overt denunciations of social injustices" (2017, 134).

Although I understand the arguments by Guerra, Kirkpatrick, and Pastor, and I do agree that for Avellaneda the condition of women took precedence over other forms of oppression, I believe that this should not be taken as an element to disregard *Sab's* abolitionist connotations. For me, Percas, Schlau, and Paulk are right in stating that Avellaneda was able to identify and integrate into her criticism of society different kinds of oppression and social injustices. An example of this is how she constructed the main female characters of the novel, Carlota and Teresa: Although they are both women and live in the same house, raised by the same parents, they have a different experience of the world and, thus, a different understanding of the axes of power and oppression that affect their lives. It is for this reason, as I have stated in the previous section, that Teresa is the first one capable of understanding Sab's sufferings.

Also, it is the abolitionist, anti-slavery message of the novel which allows theorists like Sommer and Picon Garfield to see in *Sab* a foundational fiction that proposes a kind of utopic society based on *mestizaje*, an argument we have already analysed. In this sense, it is important to remember Picon Garfield's interpretation of the novel's aims:

Gómez de Avellaneda manipula en su novela la realidad de la miscegenación del pueblo cubano ... la basa ... en las mujeres blancas fictivas, Teresa y Carlota quienes resultan ser lectoras de la realidad indígena y negra y traductoras del mensaje mulato.

Gómez de Avellaneda sienta las bases de su visión utópica sobre una solidaridad entre los marginados por razones de sexo y raza (1993, 80–81)

[Gómez de Avellaneda manipulates in her novel the reality of the miscegenation of the Cuban people ... she bases it ... on the fictive white women, Teresa and Carlota, who turn out to be readers of the indigenous and black realities and translators of the mulatto message.

Gómez de Avellaneda lays the foundations of her utopian vision on a solidarity between those marginalised for reasons of sex and race].

Therefore, I dare to postulate not only that the novel is, indeed, both feminist and abolitionist, but that, in some ways, it unprecedentedly anticipates what we now call intersectional feminism, a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989; 1991) and developed thanks to the work of black women and women of colour from the 1980s onwards⁸⁴. I propose this way of reading *Sab* because, in it, Avellaneda not only proposes and develops different forms of alliances between oppressed, marginalised subjects, but she also understands that identity is not determined only by one axis or structure of power, like the sex division, but by different categories like those of race and class, and the way they all interact to create a complex, even sometimes contradictory subject.

After this brief digression about the nature of *Sab*, what matters for the present dissertation is that the novel did, in fact, enunciated a strong critique of the institution of marriage. When Avellaneda, through Sab's discourse, claims that, by choosing a husband, women are accepting a master for life, what she is asserting is that what is sold to women as their only desired destiny: love and marriage, is, in reality, a life-long condemnation to an existence of eternal servitude and expected blind-obedience.

Avellaneda would go on to develop her argument against marriage in her next novel: *Dos Mujeres*. According to Guerra, this novel inverts the dominant values regarding marriage and adultery. For her, *Dos Mujeres* accuses marriage of opposing nature –by creating bonds that cannot be broken– and, contrastingly, presents adultery not as a whim caused by irrational passion, but as a place for the expression of true, meaningful love (Guerra 1985, 717–18). Kirkpatrick sees *Dos Mujeres* as a further development of “the moral and psychological critique of the institution of marriage and of the restricting social codes of feminine behavior” that Avellaneda had already outlined in *Sab* (1989, 161). She also agrees with Guerra’s analysis by affirming that with this novel Avellaneda’s intention inverted “the conventional moral lessons concerning love and marriage” (Kirkpatrick 1989, 164).

An important element of Kirkpatrick's analysis, also present in Pastor's own studies of the novel, is that marriage does not only oppresses women but also has detrimental consequences for men. For Kirkpatrick, the sufferings of the three main characters are not "the

⁸⁴ Based on Crenshaw’s theorisations and the works of other black women and women of colour feminists, I understand intersectionality as a way of navigating the world which recognises identity as a multifaceted and multidimensional process, in which different subjects occupy different positions which can either signify privilege or oppression, according to their historical particularities and context. For an explanation of how the concept was developed and which scholars influenced my own understanding of it, see Chapter I.

consequence of Carlos's fall from virtue into vice or of the seduction of an evil temptress", but instead "are due to the unnatural social law imposed on the human heart in marriage" (1989, 163). For her part, Pastor contends that the novel "goes beyond an attack on the institution of marriage to present oppressive patriarchal laws as an obstacle which attempts to repress individual (both male and female) growth" (2003, 108–9). However, even if marriage oppresses both parties involved, the greatest burden of this social institution is always placed on women's shoulders. As the end of the novel demonstrates, while men can find other forms of development and ambition outside of the nuptial bond –as Carlos does with his diplomatic carrier–, there is nothing left for women outside of marriage because society has decided that their only destiny is love, and, without it they there are doomed, like Catalina and Luisa exemplify. In this sense, I must agree with Stecher Gúzman when she claims that *Dos Mujeres* condemns the marriage institution as the “pilar fundamental del poder patriarcal” (2016, 40) [fundamental pillar of patriarchal power], because it always leaves women at an open disadvantage.

The critiques to the institution of marriage in *Dos Mujeres* are obliquely present from the beginning, becoming more and more pressing and direct as the story develops. The first volume of the novel focuses on the arranged marriage between Carlos and Luisa, and on doña Leonor’s insistence on it happening as soon as Carlos gets back from France. Luisa was a good match in her mother’s eyes: beautiful, raised as a good Catholic girl should have, in the duties of a wife, and endowed with a substantial dowry. These conditions lead the narrator to assume “que no faltarían muchos interesados por su mano” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a [1842], I:35) [that there would be no shortage of potential suitors for her hand]. However, the complete isolation in which doña Leonor had raised and kept Luisa, together with the fact that the siblings’ plan of uniting their respective offsprings was common knowledge, “no habían permitido hasta entonces que [ningún pretendiente] se presentase como aspirante” (2000a [1842], I:35) [had hitherto not allowed [any suitor] to present himself as a contender]. Therefore, doña Leonor was obsessed with settling Luisa as Carlos wife and through a series of machinations⁸⁵, she manages to rush their marriage.

⁸⁵ These machinations included letting Carlos and Luisa briefly get reacquainted just so that she could separate them, once the spark of interest had been ignited, arguing that Luisa’s honour was at risk by Carlos’ visiting her without the concretization of the marital union: “aunque nadie ignora la intención que hace muchos años tenemos ambos hermanos de estrechar más nuestros vínculos, por medio de un enlace entre nuestros dos hijos, todos extrañan, y con razón, el que sin ningún motivo conocido se retarde tanto la realización de este matrimonio. El honor de mi hija exige, pues, que se limite vuestro trato hasta que no haya obstáculo que se oponga a vuestra unión” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a [1842], I:91–92) [Although no one is unaware of the intention which we have had for many years, both siblings, to bring us closer together by a union between our two children, everyone is surprised, and rightly so, that for no known reason the

The ceremony is described by the narrator in the following mournful terms: “a las siete de la mañana se celebró en la catedral la ceremonia que unía a dos personas hasta la muerte. Ceremonia solemne y patética en el culto católico, y que jamás he presenciado sin un enternecimiento profundo mezclado de terror” (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a [1842], I:98) [At seven o'clock in the morning, the ceremony that united two people until death took place in the cathedral. A solemn and pathetic ceremony in Catholic worship, and one that I have never witnessed without a deep emotion mixed with terror]. The use of the word *patética* (pathetic) to describe the wedding ceremony, together with the sentiment of terror it ignites in the narrator, give the reader a strong glimpse of how marriage is conceived within the novel. This description is followed by doña Leonor's admonition to Luisa to always submit and obey her husband: "no olvides nunca que después de Dios tu primer amor debe ser tu marido: ámale, obedécele en todo aquello que no se oponga a la salvación de tu alma" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000a, I:101) [never forget that after God your first love must be your husband: love him, obey him in everything that does not oppose the salvation of your soul], which reiterates the message of eternal condemnation to servitude already enunciated in *Sab*.

Personally, the scenes that led to the wedding of Carlos and Luisa, together with the admonitions that follow the union, show, as Stecher Guzmán has already stated, that “el matrimonio es una institución con una perversa doble faz: oficialmente se presenta como protectora de las mujeres, pero en la práctica actúa como un instrumento de opresión y dominio absolutos” (2016, 43–44) [Marriage is a perverse two-faced institution: officially it presents itself as a protector of women, but in practice it acts as an instrument of absolute oppression and domination]. However, because at first Carlos and Luisa's union is described as a blissful one, the greatest critiques to the institution of marriage come from the relationship between Carlos and Catalina.

Throughout volume II readers are taken on a journey into Catalina's soul, which also shows how society's expectation about women and the limited role it has reserved them –love and marriage–, condemn them to a life of dissatisfaction and impossible self-realisation. These reflections first take form in Catalina's story about her life, which starts with her forced marriage, at age sixteen, to the count of S. According to Kirkpatrick, Catalina's marriage marks the point of departure "from innocence to experience", introducing her to "adult life" (1989, 167). Catalina then goes through several stages, from being dazzled by the shining aristocratic

marriage has been so long delayed. My daughter's honour demands, therefore, that you should be limited in your dealings until no obstacle stands in the way of your union].

world around her, to realising that the pleasures that world offered could not satisfy her soul and inner needs. Then, Catalina decides to retreat to the countryside, where, at the suggestion of her husband, she reads Rousseau's *Julia* and Goethe's *Werther*. Her readings, together with her connection with nature, help Catalina develop her intellect and sensibility, and, as Pastor claims, "from this moment onwards Catalina begins a journey of self-discovery as an autonomous and independent woman" (2003, 133). When she abandons her country retreat and goes back to an active life in society, Catalina soon realises that her newfound individuality and intelligence is a threat to the patriarchal world she lived in:

Mis afectos fueron decepciones, mis esperanzas locuras, mis mismas virtudes llegaron a serme fatales. La experiencia de cada día, de cada hora, me mostraba que todo lo bueno, grande y bello que había en mi alma, era un obstáculo para mi ventura: que mi entusiasmo me extraviaba, que mi credulidad me hacía el juguete de las gentes llamadas sagaces, que mi sublime imprudencia me atraía la censura de personas que hacían gala de sensatez y aplomo, que mi incapacidad de mentir era llamada indiscreción, mi ambición de afectos coquetería insaciable... En fin, Carlos, mi misma inteligencia, ese inapreciable don que nos acerca a la divinidad, era para los espíritus medianos una cualidad peligrosa, que tarde o temprano debía perderme (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000b [1842], II:101–2)

[My affections were disappointments, my hopes follies, my very virtues became fatal to me. The experience of each day, of each hour, showed me that all that was good, great and beautiful in my soul was an obstacle to my fortune: that my enthusiasm led me astray, that my credulity made me the plaything of people called astute, that my sublime imprudence attracted the censure of people who boasted common sense and aplomb, that my inability to lie was called indiscretion, my ambition for affection was viewed as insatiable coquetry... In short, Carlos, my very intelligence, that priceless gift which brings us closer to divinity, was for average spirits a dangerous quality, which sooner or later I was bound to lose]

She tries to isolate herself once again, and this time she embarks on a journey of self-instruction "leyendo las obras de los grandes moralistas y filósofos antiguos y modernos" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000b [1842], II:105) [reading the works of the great moralists and philosophers of ancient and modern times]. Still, in the end, this just caused her more pain, and she decides to go back to her public life in society. It is in this moment that Catalina professes her greatest critique of the society in which she was born and forced to live:

La sociedad es para mí un mal necesario. Yo que no puedo aceptar su código no me revelo contra él ... Cuando se llega a este estado, Carlos, en el cual las ilusiones del amor y de la felicidad se nos han desvanecido, el hombre encuentra abierto delante de sí el camino de la

ambición. Pero, ¡la mujer!, ¿qué recurso le queda cuando ha perdido su único bien, su único destino: el amor? ... Cuando se siente todavía fecundo el pensamiento, el alma sedienta, y el corazón no nos da ya lo que necesitamos, entonces es muy bella la ambición. Entonces es preciso ser guerrero o político, es preciso crearse un combate, una victoria, una ruina ... Pero, ¡la pobre mujer sin más que un destino en el mundo!, ¿qué hará, qué será cuando no puede ser lo que únicamente le está permitido?

Hará lo que yo hago, y como yo será desventurada, sin que su desventura pueda ser confiada ni comprendida ... Necesito parecer feliz porque no puedo serlo (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000b, II:108–11)

[Society is for me a necessary evil. I who cannot accept its code do not rebel against it ... When we reach this state, Carlos, in which the illusions of love and happiness have vanished, man finds the path of ambition open before him. But. Woman! what resource is left to her when she has lost her only good, her only destiny: love? ... When thoughts are still fertile, the soul thirsty, and the heart no longer gives us what we need, then ambition is truly beautiful. Then it is necessary to be a warrior or a politician, it is necessary to create for oneself a combat, a victory, a ruin ... But the poor woman with only one destiny in the world! What will she do, what will she be when she cannot be what she is only allowed to be?

She will do what I do, and like me, she will be unhappy, and her misfortune cannot be trusted or understood ... I need to appear happy because I cannot be happy]

Picon Garfield claims that this moment of Catalina's confession, which attacks love as woman's only destiny in society, is the most explicit form of feminist criticism within the novel. According to her, in it "la condesa sugiere que la opresión social de la mujer influye en su represión sexual, que la tensión entre libre albedrío y determinismo social es una problemática femenina, y que la ambición sin poder es odiosa" (Picon Garfield 1993, 123) [the countess suggests that the social oppression of women influences their sexual repression, that the tension between free will and social determinism is a feminine problem, and that ambition without power is obnoxious].

In my opinion, Catalina's discourse about women being condemned to just one destiny, with no noble ambitions available for them, recalls Sab's discourse about the limits of his own ambition, put in place not by any Divine design, but by the unjust laws of men. In this sense, Catalina's reasoning reinforces the idea that women are the ultimate slaves of society, because they can never escape their destiny.

This moment of heart-wrenching despair about the miserable conditions of women in society is also, if read retrospectively, an omen about the tragic fate of our three protagonists at the end of the novel. In her discourse, Catalina highlights how men, when they have lost

their illusions of happiness and love, can, nonetheless, find a new ambition in politics or war, that is, in public life. However, women, when they have lost the only destiny that has been allotted to them: love, are left with nothing, they have nowhere else to turn to direct their energies, desires, and ambitions. As we have seen, this is precisely what happened to Carlos, Luisa, and Catalina: love ruined them all, but while Carlos could turn his despair into energy and ambition for his diplomatic career, Luisa was left with nothing, not even the blessing of motherhood, and Catalina, after sacrificing her own life, is not even referred to by name but only referenced as "una querida" (a mistress) whose death caused great sorrow to Carlos (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000d [1842], IV:67).

It is only after Catalina has bared her soul to Carlos that he is able to accept his feelings for her, falling madly in love with her noble soul. From this point forward, the novel presents the readers with the images of Carlos' doubts and sufferings for loving two women who are equally noble and sublime. Both Carlos and Catalina try to physically escape their feelings for each other by leaving Madrid, only to realise that they have taken the same coach to leave the capital and, intoxicated by their love, they decide not to abandon each other and to unite their lives, which are connected by a sublime, spiritual bond stronger than any social norm that might judge them: "¡Catalina! ¡Mujer adorada! Sí, el amor que tú sientes, que tú inspiras, no es un amor sujeto a leyes generales. Tu alma sublime le engrandece y le purifica. ¡Pues bien! No hables de separarnos. ¡Sé, mi amiga, mi hermana!, pero no me dejes nunca" (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000b [1842], II:228) [Catalina! Adored woman! Yes, the love that you feel, that you inspire, is not a love subject to general laws. Your sublime soul magnifies and purifies it. Well then! Speak not of parting us; be, my friend, my sister, but never leave me!].

From that moment Carlos and Catalina decide to live out their love, first publicly and then intimately in the retreat of the countess' country house. There is a definitory moment of their relationship in which Carlos falls ill at the prospect of having to decide between Catalina and Luisa. In the end, however, he chooses his mistress because their love is pure and sublime, even if society condemns it and them. The discourse of Catalina when Carlos gets better summarises the triumph of love over any social convention:

Cualquier rincón del nuevo mundo nos dará un asilo. Soy rica, y los amantes dichosos muy poco necesitan. ¡Bien! Huyamos de esta sociedad que hace un crimen de los sentimientos que ella no autoriza, que ella no mide con su compás de hielo. Bajo el cielo de la joven América seremos libres, seremos virtuosos..., ¡viviremos oscuros e ignorados, pero viviremos! ¡Ah! No es vivir la eterna lucha de la naturaleza con las leyes humanas, Carlos, amigo mío, no hay,

no puede haber crimen para el corazón sino en la falsedad y en la perfidia, no puede ser virtud la hipocresía. Arrojemos su máscara cobarde, y pues no hemos podido ser ángeles, sepamos al menos ser hombres. Amarnos es una desgracia, pero engañar sería una infamia. Tengo bastante amor para seguirte a donde quieras, a donde pueda vivir como tu esposa (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000c [1842], III:75–76)

[Any corner of the new world will give us asylum. I am rich, and happy lovers need very little. Good! Let us flee from this society that makes a crime of feelings that it does not authorise, that it does not measure with its icy compass. Under the sky of young America we shall be free, we shall be virtuous..., we shall live obscure and ignored, but we shall live! Ah! It is not living the eternal struggle of nature with human laws, Carlos, my friend, there is no, there can be no crime for the heart but in falsehood and perfidy, there can be no virtue in hypocrisy. Let us cast off its cowardly mask, and since we have not been able to be angels, let us at least know how to be men. To love one another is a disgrace, but to deceive would be an infamy. I have enough love to follow you wherever you wish, wherever I can live as your wife]

This is the definitive moment in which the social principles about love, marriage and adultery are inverted. Although under the eyes of society, under the law and the church, Carlos owes his love, his faithfulness, and his loyalty to Luisa, by the rules of nature and fate he has consecrated those feelings to Catalina. Their bond, born out of true knowledge of each other, is stronger than any forced union, even if the latter has been sanctioned by the law and the former is condemned by it.

When all seems set and done, Luisa comes to Madrid and, as we have already seen, decides to confront Catalina. Nevertheless, this confrontation brings with it a reversal of the patriarchal values in which our protagonists live. Firstly, instead of fighting for the love of a man, Luisa and Catalina join in a sisterly hug, making their encounter "un momento de encuentro y solidaridad entre mujeres" (Stecher Guzmán 2016, 49) [a moment of encounter and solidarity among women]. Secondly, and maybe more importantly, is the assertion by Luisa that Catalina's pregnancy gives her more rights over Carlos than their legal and religious bond ever could. The narrator tells us that when Luisa realised that Catalina was expecting a child she understood "los derechos de su rival sobre el corazón de su marido" [the rights of her rival upon her husband heart], recognising and respecting them as "sagrados derechos" [sacred rights]. For this reason, Luisa declares, referring to Catalina, "¡ella es realmente su esposa!" [she is his real wife!] (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000c, III:212–13).

Here, Luisa is not referring to the social bond that unites her and Carlos, but to the divine, the natural bond between him and Catalina, crystallised in Catalina's pregnancy.

According to Luisa's discourse, the pregnant mistress, when the affair has been founded in noble, sublime feelings, like those that existed between Carlos and Catalina, has even more rights over a man than the ones his legal wife can ever claim. I agree with Stecher Gúzman when she affirms that this is one of the most transgressive arguments of the novel (2016, 44).

As Scanlon reminds us, Spanish law made sure that illegitimate children could not jeopardise their father's patrimony or social stance, particularly when they were the result of adultery:

La ley española clasificaba a los hijos ilegítimos en: 1) naturales –hijos de padres que estaban en condiciones de casarse con la madre–, y 2) no naturales –hijos de padres que no podían casarse–; estos últimos estaban a su vez clasificados en cuatro categorías: adulterinos, incestuosos, sacrílegos y mánceres ... La ley prohibía la investigación de los hijos ilegítimos no naturales; de este modo un hombre casado podía ser padre de todos los hijos que quisiese sin temor a las consecuencias legales (Scanlon 1986, 134)

[Spanish law classified illegitimate children into 1) natural children - children of fathers who were able to marry the mother, and 2) unnatural children - children of fathers who could not marry; the latter were in turn classified into four categories: adulterous, incestuous, sacrilegious, and *mánceres*... The law prohibited the investigation of illegitimate unnatural children; thus, a married man could father as many children as he wished without fear of legal consequences]

The child of Carlos and Catalina, due to Carlos' marriage to Luisa and his impossibility to legally access a divorce and marry Catalina, would have been an *hijo no natural adulterino* (unnatural adulterous child). Hence, Catalina would have never been able to claim or prove the paternity of the child, and the child's future existence would not have signified any moral or legal obligation on Carlos' part. However, these legal and social rules do not matter for Luisa, for her, the fact that nature and Divine Providence had bestowed the blessing of motherhood upon Catalina was merit enough for her to have a better claim upon Carlos: the claim of a real wife. Therefore, Luisa renounces her own rights, pledging also eternal friendship to Catalina and helping her plan her escape with Carlos:

Quedó determinado que la condesa iría a reunirse con su amante ocho días después de la partida de éste, y que para desvanecer si era posible las hablillas que circulaban en descrédito de Catalina y evitar el que fuese comprendido el verdadero objeto de su partida, Luisa la visitaría públicamente en Madrid, adonde debía volver la condesa antes de su marcha y se

daría la posible publicidad a la amistad que en aquel momento se juraron (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000c, III:216–17)

[It was determined that the Countess would go to join her lover eight days after his departure and that to dispel, if possible, the gossips that were circulating in discredit of Catalina, and to prevent the true object of her departure from being understood, Luisa would visit her publicly in Madrid, where the countess was to return before her departure, and the possible publicity would be given to the friendship which at the time they had sworn to each other]

Notwithstanding Luisa's capitulation of her rights, it is Catalina the one who carries out the ultimate sacrifice by committing suicide. Catalina's death re-establishes, at least apparently, the patriarchal order and the adulterer has no other option but to go back to his (not so) innocent wife. In this tragic story, everyone is unhappy at the end.

The last lesson of the story is left to the reflections of its narrator, who claims that no matter what women do, their fate will always be an unhappy one:

La suerte de la mujer es infeliz de todos modos ... la indisolubilidad del mismo lazo con el cual pretenden nuestras leyes asegurarles el porvenir, se convierte no pocas veces en una cadena tanto más insufrible cuanto inquebrantable. Seres apasionados y débiles, ya ofensoras, ya ofendidas, ellas son las que salen destrozadas, y en sus propios yerros, como en aquéllos de que son víctimas, ellas son siempre las que presentan al mundo, que las contempla con indiferente egoísmo o con fría severidad, el espectáculo de aquellos silenciosos dolores, de aquellas profundas desventuras que pudieran servir de expiación para mil crímenes.

La culpable encuentra por doquier jueces severos, verdugos implacables. La virtuosa pasa desconocida y, a veces, ¡ay!, calumniada. ¡Y la culpable y la virtuosa ambas son igualmente infelices, y acaso también igualmente nobles y generosas! (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000d, IV:72–73)

[The fate of a woman is unhappy in any case ... the indissolubility of the very bond by which our laws claim to secure her future, often becomes a chain all the more insufferable because it is unbreakable. Passionate and weak beings, whether offenders or offended, they are the ones who come out shattered, and in their own wrongs, as in those of which they are victims, they are always the ones who present to the world, which contemplates them with indifferent selfishness or with cold severity, the spectacle of those silent pains, of those deep misfortunes which could serve as expiation for a thousand crimes. The guilty find everywhere severe judges, implacable executioners. The virtuous are unknown, and sometimes, alas, slandered; and the guilty and the virtuous are both equally unhappy, and perhaps equally noble and generous!]

With the last statement, which refers to the 'guilty' woman and the 'virtuous' woman as equally noble and generous, Avellaneda gives the final blow to the social and literary

stereotypes that divide women into 'angel of the home' and 'seductive monster'. Throughout the novel, she has broken this dichotomy, showing how Catalina, the one that is supposed to represent the 'monster', is also a noble, sublime soul; while Luisa, who at the beginning of the novel stands for the innocent 'angel', has grown into a full woman aware of the injustices of society and capable of her own rational decisions.

It is possible to conclude that these two novels show the evils of marriage, particularly for women who, no matter the reason, are always the losing party. Nonetheless, there is one element which I believe has been somewhat overlooked in the previous analyses of how Avellaneda represented marriage in her novels: both the marriage between Carlota and Enrique in *Sab*, and the one between Carlos and Luisa in *Dos Mujeres* were celebrated in a rushed and not fully meditated manner, the latter also being an arranged union. What would have happened if the unions had been fully thought through? What if the parties had had a chance to evaluate all the options, to grow as individuals and only then had they decided to go through with their respective marriages? I suggest that a possible answer can be found in Avellaneda's last novel, where the protagonists, due to a series of events not always in their control, are given the time and the possibility to meditate on their decision to unite their lives, finally coming into marriage as a matter of choice and not guided by petty sentiments (Enrique), uncontrolled passions (Carlota), or the desire of third parties (Carlos and Luisa).

5.3.2. *Marriage as a matter of Love and Experience*

El Artista Barquero starts with the infatuation that Huberto and Josefina feel for each other. I call it infatuation and not love because they have not really met each other, they have just seen each other from afar, conscious of each other's gaze. When they finally meet, that first fifth of June, Josefina tells Huberto her sad story and the next day he sends her a letter telling her his. That same day, Josefina's father, Monsieur Caillard, finds out that Josefina met Huberto and that he is a humble boatman, angrily forbidding her to ever see that "pilluelo" (ragamuffin) again (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 94). Josefina falls ill but manages to send Huberto a letter in which she explains what has happened, claiming that she will obey her father's wishes even if her happiness depends on "ser vuestra para siempre" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 103) [being yours forever]. Josefina, however, asks this from Huberto: "prometedme que mientras seáis libre, mientras no améis a otra, vendréis cada año, el cinco de junio, al mismo sitio de nuestra dulce entrevista, para trocar una mirada de esperanza y un suspiro de recuerdo con vuestra desgraciada" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 103)

[promise me that as long as you are free, as long as you do not love another, you will come every year, on the fifth of June, to the same place of our sweet interview, to exchange a glance of hope and a sigh of remembrance with your unfortunate]. This request coincides with Huberto leaving for Paris to train as a painter under his former master thanks to the generosity of the anonymous benefactor. Huberto answers Josefina, agreeing to meet her every fifth of June, but omits to tell her that he is going away. This omission gives way to a series of events in which Josefina, feeling abandoned by Huberto, can develop her own personality.

I believe, as I will explain in the following lines, that their time apart allowed for Huberto and Josefina to grow as individuals. When they finally meet again and are able to get married, their love has not dwindled, but they have a better understanding of the world and of their sentiments and passions. Their union is then not a rushed one, neither one guided by petty nor egotistical feelings, but by true, well thought through love. For this reason, their marriage differs from those portrayed in the previous novels, and their happiness can be ascertained by the glimpse the narrator gives us about their marital life.

In the last page of the novel, readers are informed that Josefina, instead of having suffered the tragic fate of both Carlota and Luisa, is “una bellísima dama” [a beautiful lady] blessed with “cuatro preciosos niños” [four precious children] portrayed as “un coro de ángeles” [a choir of angels] (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 196). She and Huberto are still accompanied by the faithful Niná and are returning to France, after having spent the last nine years in Rome, where Huberto was perfecting his artistic studies. In Paris, they are lovingly awaited by both Monsieur Caillard and the Robert family, and their reunion is described with the following words: "excusado es decir que fue inmenso el general regocijo en aquella reunión, tanto tiempo anhelada" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 196) [I am excused to say that the general rejoicing at that long-awaited meeting was immense]. Let us then analyse what led to this happy ending.

Huberto seems to follow the traditional path of the romantic hero, transitioning from innocence to experience throughout the novel. His loss of innocence is already visible at the beginning of the story. Due to his father's imprisonment in a foreign country, he has had to renounce his artistic studies to work as a *lapidario* (lapidary) and as a boatman to help support his mother and sisters. This has stunted his individual growth in favour of his family's well-being. However, once his father is free and he is able to resume his artistic studies, Huberto's individuality is restored. His journey will take him from his master's workroom to the shimmering and enchanting fascinations of Court life, and back again to Marseilles to fulfil his destiny as a great artist and Josefina's husband, always guided by his idealisation of his beloved.

Brígida Pastor, who has analysed the novel from a gender perspective, claims that this traditional reading of the novel is misguided. She proposes, instead, that the narrator's voice is an "ironic, indeed on occasion comic" one (Pastor 2003, 153). For her, while the narrator avails itself of the conventionalities of romanticism, they are actually needed to show how women, represented by Josefina and Madame de Pompadour, are "significantly different from the image that men, particularly Huberto, have of men" (Pastor 2003, 153). In other words, the novel serves as a vehicle to show the discrepancies between the idolised woman that only inhabits in the imagination of men, and the embodied women that experience the world.

I avail myself of some of Pastor's theorisations to claim that it is not so much Huberto's growth or becoming, but Josefina's development the one that constitutes the definitive element for the happy ending of the novel.

According to Pastor, the definitive moment in Josefina's process of growth happens after the second fifth of June, when Huberto, after arriving late at their yearly meeting, suddenly leaves her to run after a stranger that he thinks is his anonymous benefactor, ruining their encounter. Before running after the stranger, Huberto was about to explain to Josefina that he has been living away in Paris studying to become an artist. When he went back to the place of their meeting, Josefina had already left, and he resolved to leave her a letter in their secret spot explaining everything, in the hopes that she would find it. However, what Niná found the next day was not the hasty letter Huberto had written to Josefina, but a letter that his master had addressed to Huberto urging him to come back to Paris and reprimanding him for having gone back to Marseilles only to "cumplir empeños tontos de amorcillos de niños" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 128) [to fulfil foolish pledges of childish love]. The letter also referenced a mysterious woman who is interested in Huberto and had even given him a watch.

The readers know that the woman is none other than Madame de Pompadour, but because the letter does not contain her name, what Josefina assumed when she read it is that Huberto had found another interest and did not love her anymore. The narrative voice describes Josefina's feelings in the following way: "Huberto era, pues, un embustero, un falso, un infiel, un monstruo de perfidia, de ingratitud y de dolor" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 151) [Huberto was, therefore, a liar, a deceiver, an infidel, a monster of perfidy, ingratitude and deceit]. In that moment Josefina lost all her faith in Huberto and his love, she tore up the old letters she had kept from him and "se postró en seguida a su dolor, pasando el resto de la noche entre gemidos, convulsiones y lágrimas" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 152) [immediately prostrated herself to her pain, spending the rest of the night in moans, convulsions and tears]. She spent the next three months consumed by sorrow, but

Josefina era altiva, y comenzó a sentirse humillada a sus propios ojos por los largos pesares que consagraba su alma a la pérdida de un amante indudablemente indigno, en su concepto. Quiso á todo trance sobreponerse a la situación lastimosa de mujer sacrificada y emprendió lucha heroica contra el abatimiento que la postraba (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990, 152–53)

[Josefina was proud, and she began to feel humiliated in her own eyes by the long sorrows which her soul was devoting to the loss of a lover, in her opinion, undoubtedly unworthy of her. She wanted at all costs to overcome the pitiful situation of the self-sacrificing woman, and she undertook a heroic struggle against the despondency that was bowing her to the ground]

I believe, this is the development that makes Pastor affirm: "Josefina's loss of her illusions about Huberto marks the recovery of her wits and her ability to judge her own situation, which is the essence of a growing-up moment" (2003, 180). I agree with Pastor in her appreciation of this moment as pivotal in Josefina's becoming process. Still, I maintain that her path from an innocent child under the overbearing orders of a patriarchal father to a woman that thinks and acts for herself starts earlier. During the brief moments she manages to speak to Huberto during their interrupted encounter, Josefina confesses to him that although she has kept her daughter's promise not to actively look for him or to write him, she, however, has found a way to leave the seclusion her father had so far imposed upon her to go to the theatre and other public, respectable places in hopes of running into him as if by chance:

Si el deber de hija me ordenaba no veros todos los días de fiestas –como antes–, ni sostener con vos correspondencia, el corazón me exigía también que procurase favorecer la casualidad que podía proporcionar un encuentro anhelado, y he hecho por mi parte cuanto me ha sido posible ... Sí, yo –tan retraída del trato habitualmente–, he asistido con una amiga respetable a los teatros, a los paseos más concurridos, con el solo objeto de encontraros (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 129)

[If my duty as a daughter ordered me not to see you every holiday, as before, nor to correspond with you, my heart also demanded that I should try to favour the chance that might bring about a longed-for meeting, and I have done all I could ... Yes, I –so withdrawn in my usual dealings– have gone with a respectable friend to the theatres, to the most crowded walks, for the sole purpose of meeting you]

I believe that these actions, even if apparently within the boundaries of what was allowed for women at the time, are, nevertheless, the first act of rebellion from Josefina. She takes it upon herself to find a way of bending the rules that forbade her to meet her beloved. She does not passively wait to be rescued by him in her guarded mansion, she frees herself by using the tools at her disposal to obtain what she wants from life.

Furthermore, these actions are the ones that allowed her to recover after her illusions were shattered. Because she had already created a female bond with that *amiga respetable*, who the readers soon find out is named Madame d'Hericourt, when Josefina decides it is time to take control of her life again, she has someone to turn to:

Ocupóse de nuevo del cuidado de su persona; volvió á adornarse con la elegante sencillez que le era natural; a hacer y a recibir visitas; a amenizar con su presencia la pequeña tertulia diaria de la señora d'Hericourt, a quien tambien acompañó algunas veces a mas numerosas reuniones (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 153)

[She again took care of her person; she again adorned herself with the elegant simplicity which was natural to her; she again made and received visitors; she again entertained Madame d'Hericourt's little daily gatherings with her presence, and sometimes accompanied her to more numerous meetings]

Josefina finds a new suitor in Madame d'Hericourt's nephew who, if perhaps not as wonderful as she had once imagined Huberto to be, was nevertheless described as a "*buen partido*" [good match] and came from a noble family (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 153). Marrying *caballero de S.*, Madame d'Hericourt's nephew, was Josefina's revenge and her way of reclaiming her life back from the man she thought had betrayed her, even if it meant condemning herself to a life of sorrow⁸⁶. If love was the only ambition society offered her, she was going to lose it, fake it or pledge it in her own terms.

When Huberto finds out, by chance, that Josefina is getting married to another man, he goes into a delirious frenzy in which he decides to finish the painting of the gazebo as a wedding gift to her. Meanwhile, Niná finally discovers the remains of the letter Huberto had written to Josefina explaining everything, giving them to Josefina. Our heroine discovers the truth about why Huberto had left Marseilles as well as the name of the mysterious woman, understanding at once that she had misunderstood the information contained in Huberto's master letter. She also realises that she had made a grave mistake not only in judging Huberto so harshly but also in accepting the engagement with *caballero de S.* Still, there is nothing to be done, the marriage is happening.

On the third fifth of June Huberto takes his painting to Josefina's house, having already been informed by Niná of the events that led to Josefina giving her hand to another. As we know Monsieur Caillard is impressed by the painting, and although he offers his eternal gratitude to Huberto, neither he nor Josefina are willing to take their word back and risk the

⁸⁶ "Ella en su venganza de mujer, había inmolado su corazón, condenándose a perenne tristeza" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 159) [she, in her woman's revenge, had immolated her heart, condemning herself to perennial sadness].

family's honour. Huberto's heart is shattered: "amado de ella, querido de vos, cifrando toda mi ventura en esos sentimientos que pago con idolatría, ¿he de permitir que todo se inutilice; que todo se me arrebate por una mano intrusa?" (Gómez de Avellaneda 1990 [1861], 184) [beloved by her, dear to you, counting all my fortune on those feelings which I pay for with idolatry, shall I allow everything to be rendered useless; everything to be taken away from me by an intrusive hand?].

However, by a twist of fate or, to be more precise, by the hand of *caballero de S.*'s relative who also happens to be Huberto's secret benefactor, *caballero de S.* breaks off the engagement with Josefina, and our hero and heroine can finally get married. They arrive at this union changed by the experiences and events that have unfolded in the last three years. They have grown, going through their respective processes of becoming and thus, are joining their lives as equals, not as the idealised version each used to have of the other, but as individuals capable of great achievements as well as of great mistakes, the first of which was Huberto not trusting Josefina with the truth from the beginning.

It is for this reason that I believe that in *El Artista Barquero* marriage is not only a matter of love, but also of trust and experience. I dare to posit that Avellaneda herself had come to this conclusion in her own life. When she wrote *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres* she had experienced her family trying to arrange a marriage for her not once, but twice, the first by her mother and stepfather when they were still in Cuba, and the second by her paternal uncle when she went to visit him in Andalusia. She had also seen how unhappy her mother had been in her arranged marriage to Avellaneda's father, and how tyrannical Escalada, her mother's second husband, could be. Then, it comes as no surprise that for her marriage only meant a condemnation to an eternal life of suffering, a valley of tears where women's self-development was thwarted with no way of escaping or asking for help. However, by the time she wrote *El Artista Barquero* she had been married twice and was still married to her second husband: Verdugo. It seems that she dearly and truly loved her husbands⁸⁷, and by the fact that she kept writing and dealing

⁸⁷ For example, Mary Cruz describes Gómez de Avellaneda's relationship with Sabater in the following terms: "el amor, el amor verdadero, llegó sorpresivamente a su vida en aquel enlace de 1846 con Sabater" (Cruz 1990a, XIII) [love, true love, came as a surprise into her life in that 1846 marriage to Sabater]. And about Avellaneda's marriage to Verdugo, Cruz claims: "a los cuarenta y un años (1855), habiendo hallado un nuevo amor, contrajo matrimonio con el Coronel Domingo Verdugo y Massieu ... Hugo para ella // Estaba hecho de amistad, de respeto y de admiración el sentimiento que la unía a su Hugo. Él era hombre a la altura de su dignidad, de sus intereses, de su femineidad, de su independencia de carácter, de su afectuosa naturaleza y de sus talentos" (1990a, XIII) [at the age of forty-one (1855), having found a new love, she married Colonel Domingo Verdugo y Massieu ... Hugo for her // The feeling that united her to her Hugo was made of friendship, respect and admiration. He was a man equal to her dignity, her interests, her femininity, her independence of character, her affectionate nature and her talents]. About the nature of the relationship between Avellaneda and Verdugo, Campuzano argues that Avellaneda successfully influenced her husband's attitude towards the condemnation of slavery and his action against the abuses committed by Cuban white Creole slavers: "durante su estancia de cinco años en Cuba, entre 1859 y 1864, Avellaneda se ocupó, silenciosamente, pero con efectividad, y desde

with editors, theatre owners and the like, it is possible to assume that as a married woman she successfully managed to circumvent the limitations imposed on women by the Spanish marriage regime.

I would further suggest that in both her marriages she had a general permission from her husband to keep acting and signing contracts. Cotarelo y Mori's biography of Avellaneda accounts for the fact that after her marriage to Verdugo in 1855, Avellaneda kept dealing personally with theatre owners, directors, and editors. For example, in 1857 Avellaneda dealt directly with the magazines *La América* and *El Album de la Zarzuela*. At the beginning of 1858 she "presentó simultáneamente dos obras, una en el teatro de Novedades y otra en el del Circo" (Cotarelo y Mori 1930, 290) [simultaneously presented two plays, one at the Teatro de Novedades and the other at the Teatro del Circo]. We also know that once in Cuba Avellaneda founded and edited for six months *El Album Cubano de lo Bueno y de lo Bueno* in 1860. As a married woman, Avellaneda would not have been able to act publicly and arrange the necessary contracts for her work to be published and her plays to be enacted if she did not have her husband's permission. The numerous examples of Avellaneda acting autonomously in the public sphere after she got married, allow me to infer that the permission her husband gave her was of the general kind. Also, given the nature of their relationship, I believe it was just a formality between them because their union was one among individuals that consider each other as equals.

Hence, it is possible to affirm that by the time Avellaneda wrote *El Artista Barquero*, she had found a way in which marriage was not a deterrent for women's dreams and ambitions. Nonetheless, this was only possible if the woman had developed her personality and found her individuality before entering into the nuptial bond, as Avellaneda herself had done. In this sense, only by guaranteeing that her heroine also found her way before marriage, as Josefina did in *El Artista Barquero*, was Avellaneda able to offer a happy ending.

un espacio doméstico activado como *locus* político, de promover el curso de las denuncias y el castigo de los crímenes de la esclavitud que recibía su marido, Domingo Verdugo. Tanto la historiadora Gloria García Rodríguez, como Manuel Barcia sostienen que fue Verdugo el alto funcionario de gobierno (teniente gobernador) que más atención brindó, en toda nuestra historia colonial, a las denuncias por malos tratos a esclavos, incoando procesos y dirigiendo investigaciones contra algunos de los más ricos hacendados de su tiempo" (2006, 123) (*italic in original*) [During her five-year stay in Cuba, between 1859 and 1864, Avellaneda worked quietly but effectively, and from a domestic space activated as a political *locus*, to promote the course of complaints and the punishment of the crimes of slavery that were brought before her husband, Domingo Verdugo. Both the historian Gloria García Rodríguez and Manuel Barcia maintain that Verdugo was the highest government official (lieutenant governor) in our colonial history who paid most attention to complaints of slave abuse, initiating proceedings and directing investigations against some of the richest landowners of his time]. In my opinion, this influence would only have been possible if their relationship was one of friendship and mutual respect between equals.

I hope that this analysis of Gómez de Avellaneda's main feminist novels: *Sab*, *Dos Mujeres*, and *El Artista Barquero*, will contribute to a better understanding of her revolutionary message, as well as of the strategies she used to condemn the oppressed condition of women and other marginalised subjects. I also expect that this work can be used as a tool to understand that even if women were not considered to be political subjects, this did not stop them from speaking up about their rights and demanding the full recognition of their individuality.

Conclusions

As has been shown throughout this thesis, both Mary Leman Grimstone and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda were staunch defenders of women's rights, in their respective contexts and times. For this reason, I agree with the existing literature in considering them feminist pioneers and, to use a common term of their time, champions of their sex.

However, the way in which they framed their feminist advocacy was different. Grimstone openly claimed that her goal was to improve women's conditions, which in turn would guarantee the advancement of society as a whole. As explained in chapter II, Grimstone stated her purpose in the prologues and postscripts to her novels, as well as in her articles. For example, in the postscript to *Woman's Love* Grimstone declared, "I glow with zeal for the cause of my own sex" (1832c, III:357), before proceeding to explain why fighting for the recognition of women as the equals of men, by guaranteeing the former the same education and instruction offered to the latter, was of paramount importance for society at large, because "the depreciation of the female intellect is an evil of no limited extent; it acts and reacts fatally on all the institutions and relations of social life" (1832c, III:360). Even if she recognised that her work had a limited reach, she also highlighted how a simple spark could create the necessary changes in society: "in the great temple of reformation I hold but a taper, but a taper may kindle torches and even beacon fires" (Grimstone 1832c, III:363). When she was criticised for her overly zealous defence of women, instead of backing down she rebutted her critics by claiming: "I have offended, and, if I live, I shall yet further offend ancient prejudices, by advancing (with what power I may) everlasting truths. I fearlessly trust my cause to posterity" (Grimstone 1834, II:iv).

For her part, Gómez de Avellaneda resorted to what I have identified as ploys of the weak, following Josefina Ludmer's theorisations (1985). While her critiques of Cuban and Spanish society were substantial and significant, she tried to soften them, or at least distract her critics, by claiming that she was writing as a mere form of entertainment, with no pretence whatsoever of establishing any kind of doctrinal truth. As explained in Chapter IV, in the prologue to *Sab* Avellaneda explicitly claimed: "por distraerse de momentos de ocio y melancolia han sido escritas estas páginas" [for distraction from moments of leisure and melancholy these pages have been written], adding that she published them "sin ningún género de pretensiones" [without any pretensions whatsoever] (2014 [1841], 97). She repeated this strategy in the prologue to *Dos Mujeres*, where she declared: "la autora no se cree en la precisión de profesar una doctrina ... Escribe por mero pasatiempo" (Gómez de Avellaneda

2015a [1842], 169) [The author does not believe that she has the precision to profess a doctrine ... She writes for mere pastime]. These ploys, however, did not entirely save Avellaneda from critiques of her work. As we have already seen, *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres* were censored in Cuba and the revolutionary and subversive message of both novels was not completely understood by the audience of her time. It would take almost twenty years for Avellaneda to openly declare her advocacy in favour of women's rights, through her articles entitled "La Mujer".

These differences in their advocacy are also reflected in their styles. Gómez de Avellaneda was able to convey her message through simple but powerful stories, in which the revolutionary content was counterbalanced and veiled by the Romantic conventions she adopted. Avellaneda did not sacrifice aesthetics for the sake of her message: rather, she was cleverly able to combine both elements. On the contrary, Grimstone tended to place excessive emphasis on the message, sometimes losing sight of the aesthetics. Hence, her novels contain a surplus of characters that were not always necessary for the development of the story, but only served to highlight one or more points of her political message, making the plots unnecessarily convoluted. The Stubbs family in *Woman's Love* is an example of this.

While Avellaneda did not capitulate to the expected happily-ever-after kind of ending, concluding both *Sab* and *Dos Mujeres* in a tragic way that reinforced the subversive nature of her writing, Grimstone did end her stories with the happy marriage of her protagonists, thus yielding to the conventions of her time. The only novel in which Grimstone deviated from the script of a happy ending was in *Character: or, Jew and Gentile*, which finishes with the death by murder-suicide of Marmion and Esther, even if in the background readers are informed of the serene nuptial union between young Magdalene Melburn and Arthur Trevor. Of Grimstone's three novels under analysis, *Character; or, Jew and Gentile* is, in my opinion, the most interesting and powerful one. Here she managed to convey her political message and social criticism without sacrificing the story, and the surplus of characters and side storylines is reduced to a minimum. Contrastingly, *El Artista Barquero*, the only novel in which Avellaneda gave the story a happy ending, was considered by the critics, even if aesthetically pleasing and accomplished, as her most conventional work. Consequently, its feminist message was overlooked for a long time.

When it comes to the similarities between the authors, the first one I wish to highlight is the spiritual element they shared. They both believed that all humans had been created as equals, that virtue was a universal value that should be judged under the same parameters for all, and that reason was a God-given attribute that everyone had the right to develop through proper instruction and education. This element is far more explicit in Grimstone's work than in

Avellaneda's, although there are references to it in Sab's discourse and letter in *Sab*, in Catalina's confession in *Dos Mujeres* and Avellaneda's presentation of *Album Cubano de lo Bueno y de lo Bello*. In Grimstone's case this element is present throughout her work, taking a prominent role in articles such as "Self-Dependence" and "Female Education", and in her series of short stories "Sketches of Domestic Life". Grimstone summarised her idea of intrinsic equality between all members of the human family and, thus, between men and women, with the aphorism: "The qualities of men and women, be they good or bad, 'may differ in the mould, but they agree in the metal.'" (Grimstone 1830, 528), which she included in most of her novels and even some of her articles.

Still, the greatest point of connection between Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda is their assessment of, and critiques of, the institution of marriage. As we have seen in Chapters III and V, the legal structures that regulated marriage and the condition of married women differed from one context to the other. Under common law, married women were considered *femme covert* and the legal fiction of coverture made them lose their legal personality, which was subsumed in that of their husbands, based on the principle of unity. All material possessions that the wife had before marriage now belonged to her husband, and he was the sole administrator. Her dowry also belonged to him. Furthermore, because husband and wife were considered the same person under the law, a wife could not start any legal action against her husband. Under Spanish law, married women were considered *incapaces relativas*, and although they did not lose their legal personality, they could not act without the express permission of their husbands, which could either be general, granted for all the acts a person could legally perform, or special, that is, limited to only a particular act or subject. Each spouse retained ownership of the property they possessed before the marriage, as well as any inheritances they might receive. Only the goods and assets obtained during the union were considered common property, but the husband was the sole administrator of everything, both the common property and the property of his wife. Nevertheless, as she retained a legal personality (albeit a restricted one as an *incapaz relativa*) and her goods and dowry remained hers, the wife could, at least in theory, bring a court case against her husband if she thought he was mismanaging her property. This theoretical legal action was practically the only case in which the wife did not need her husband's permission to act.

Even if the Spanish system was, at least in theory, far more flexible than the English one, the ideological consequences of both were very similar, if not identical. Married women were, in either case, at the mercy of their husbands, who could have a noble heart or a petty soul, be a true equal companion or a tyrant in search only of money and a perpetual servant.

Moreover, even if one did not assume the worst and allowed that most men would not dare to avail themselves of all the powers the law gave them, the possibility was always there, like a sword hanging over the heads of married women that could fall and strike at any moment. For this reason, in *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, Grimstone, through the voice of Agnes, claims “but there is no security, while they [the laws] exist, that he that has a privilege, under some incitement of interest and temptation, may not be led to use it, in spite of equity and even custom” (1833a, I:149). It is also on account of this system that privileged the husband over the wife, making him the sole administrator and decision maker within the family, that Avellaneda stated in *Sab*, in the mulatto slave's letter: “¡Oh!, ¡las mujeres! ¡Pobres y ciegas víctimas! ... ¡Sin otra guía que su corazón ignorante y crédulo eligen un dueño para toda la vida” (2014 (1841), 270–71) [Oh! Women! Poor, blind victims! ... With no other guide than their ignorant and credulous heart they choose a master for life].

The regulation of the institution of marriage was not, however, the only problem. It was not just the fact that law and society made marriage a cage that trapped women and did not let them develop their potential. The underlying issue was that the nuptial bond was sold as women's only option and ambition, as their best and only chance in life, and women, without the proper education and instruction, fell for this deceitful trick. Therefore, as we have seen in Parts II and III, an argument that went hand in hand with their critiques of the institution of marriage was that of the importance of an adequate education for women. That education had to let women see and evaluate the world as it was, guide them into taking the right decisions about their future, and let them develop as whole human beings, not as mere appendages of their fathers and husbands.

Both Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda built a discourse regarding the right education for women. An analysis of their novels shows that in this regard Grimstone was more explicit. She presented several examples of both well- and ill-educated women in her stories, underlining how the way they had been brought up was the determining factor in whether or not they were able to make the right decisions for themselves and others. In *Woman's Love*, it was the solid education provided by Lady Fitzarran that led Ida Dorrington to prefer Charles Beresford over Sir Constantine Grieves, even if the latter seemed to guarantee her a better and more stable social position than the former could ever offer. What was important for Ida was that she and Beresford were compatible souls, shared similar values, and could become real companions. It was following this same kind of consideration that young Magdalene Melburn chose Arthur Trevor over Marmion Beaucaire in *Character; or, Jew and Gentile*, which also offers the best example of a well-educated, rational woman in Mrs Agnes Trevor. There are

also the characters that represent ill-educated women: the insipid ones, exemplified by Mrs Stubbs and the Stubbs daughters in *Louisa Egerton*, and by Constance Fitzarran in *Woman's Love*, as well as the coquette, illustrated most prominently by Julia Egerton from *Louisa Egerton*.

Avellaneda's critiques were more subtle but at the same time more powerful because she managed to highlight a point to which Grimstone would only arrive at later⁸⁸, with her social and political essays. In *Dos Mujeres*, the critiques of women's education are implicit in the way doña Leonor raised Luisa, leaving her without any real knowledge of the world, with barely the abilities to manage a house, and with the conviction that her only destiny was marriage and complete obedience to her husband. These critiques are also present in Elvira's delirium when she confesses that, upon widowhood, she did not know how to manage her husband's affairs, and that she would have been ruined if it was not for the help of Catalina. Catalina exemplifies the educated woman. In her youth, she had received the same education every girl received, and naively enough had entered into a marriage without love, favouring the social position it offered her, following the advice of her mother. However, she soon became an autodidact, she learnt from the Romantic writers, from past and contemporary philosophers, and she knew perfectly well how to manage the affairs of the world. Nevertheless, she was still trapped in the oppressive stereotypes and roles that society assigned to women, without any real possibility to aspire to anything else:

Pero, ¡la mujer!, ¿qué recurso le queda cuando ha perdido su único bien, su único destino: el amor? Ella tiene que luchar cuerpo a cuerpo, indefensa y débil, contra los fantasmas helados del tedio y la inanición. ¡Oh! Cuando se siente todavía fecundo el pensamiento, el alma sedienta, y el corazón no nos da ya lo que necesitamos, entonces es muy bella la ambición. Entonces es preciso ser guerrero o político, es preciso crearse un combate, una victoria, una ruina. El entusiasmo de la gloria, la agitación del peligro, la ansiedad y el temor del éxito, todas y aquellas vivas emociones del orgullo, del valor, de la esperanza y el miedo... Todo eso es una vida que no comprendo. Sí, momentos hay de mi existencia en que concibo el placer de las batallas, la embriaguez del olor de la pólvora, la voz de los cañones; momentos en que penetro en el tortuoso camino del hombre político, y descubro las flores que en el poder de la gloria presentan para él las espinas que hacen su posición más apetecible... Pero, ¡la pobre mujer sin más que un destino en el mundo!, ¿qué hará, qué será cuando no puede ser lo que únicamente le está permitido? (Gómez de Avellaneda 2000b [1842], II:109–10).

⁸⁸ This "later" refers to Grimstone's own development as a writer, not to a general historical timeline because Grimstone's texts were written mainly before Avellaneda wrote her own.

[But, woman, what resource is left to her when she has lost her only good, her only destiny: love? She has to fight body to body, defenceless and weak, against the icy phantoms of boredom and starvation. Oh, when the thought still feels fertile, the soul thirsty, and the heart no longer gives us what we need, then ambition is very beautiful. Then it is necessary to be a warrior or a politician, it is necessary to create for oneself a fight, a victory, a ruin. The enthusiasm of glory, the agitation of danger, the anxiety and fear of success, all those lively emotions of pride, courage, hope and fear... All that is a life I do not understand. Yes, there are moments in my existence when I conceive the pleasure of battles, the intoxication of the smell of gunpowder, the voice of cannon; moments when I penetrate the tortuous path of the political man, and discover the flowers which in the power of glory present to him the thorns which make his position more palatable... But the poor woman with nothing but a destiny in the world, what will she do, what will she be when she cannot be the only thing she is allowed to be?]

Avellaneda thus understood that it was not just a matter of education. The right education and instruction were not enough if women were not allowed to aspire to be something else than wives and mothers, something more than the specular “other” onto whom men unloaded all their insecurities to feel more powerful in an ever-changing world. Grimstone, in the development of her own ideas regarding women and education, would arrive later at a similar conclusion.

While in her novels Grimstone highlighted the type of education women ought to receive, it was in her articles, particularly those published in the 1830s, where she proposed a similar idea to the one expressed by Avellaneda through Catalina’s discourse. In “Female Education” Grimstone stated, “let her not cling from a principle of mercenary dependence ... let her look to nothing but God and herself” (M. L. G. 1835a, 110), and in several of her “Sketches of Domestic Life”, she emphasised that “to aspire is the privilege of humanity” (M. L. G. 1835g, 560). Hence, for her, every man and every woman had the right to aspire, to develop their minds and God-given reason with no limits except those imposed by their own abilities. However, Grimstone stated that the laws and customs of men had limited women’s development because man “finding it difficult to raise himself, he thought of the expedient of sinking woman” (M. L. G. 1835g, 560). For this reason, she called upon women to stop feeling and thinking “at secondhand”, and to realise that the:

tie which unites them to men does not merge them in their husbands ... that it is for women, as equally essential and indispensable co-agents in the work of human progression, to originate high thoughts and views, to advance useful and independent objects, and that the

feelings of wife, mother, daughter, and sister, may co-exist with those of the philosopher, philanthropist, and patriot (M. L. G. 1835d, 230)

After having analysed both their texts and their contexts, I am confident in claiming that the specific location Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda occupied in their respective societies was a decisive factor in their ability to see their cultural milieu with critical eyes. In turn, this ability allowed them to formulate the different socio-political critiques that I have discussed in the present dissertation. Furthermore, I believe that their location also implied a particular multipositionality where different axes of power and oppression intersected, which gave them the possibility to detect not only the oppression suffered by women, but also that experienced by other marginalised groups of their time, like members of religious minorities, in the case of Grimstone, or enslaved people, in the case of Gómez de Avellaneda.

This is not to say that their analyses were always flawless. As we have seen in Chapter III, even if Grimstone was able to identify the plight of the Australian aboriginals facing English colonisation and settlement on their land, she capitulated her concerns in favour of a moralistic view of English expansion. In this way, once back in England, instead of republishing her poem “The Native’s Lament”, she wrote and published several short stories in which English settlement in Van Diemen’s Land was shown as an opportunity for women to prove their moral strength. In the case of Avellaneda, we can say that she was able to construct a delicate balance between oppression and privilege in *Sab*, creating a novel that contains the seed of intersectionality, a concept formulated and coined more than a century later (Crenshaw 1989; 1991). However, as I have explained in Chapter V, when she created a character in which all the different axes of oppression came together in a single person, Niná in *El Artista Barquero*, Avellaneda fell short of the task, failing to see and to show how Niná’s individuality and subjectivity had been sacrificed in favour of those in power.

Nevertheless, I still believe that studying Grimstone’s and Gómez de Avellaneda’s writings from different angles, keeping in mind our own preconceptions and ideas, takes us one step closer to our mother’s gardens. It is an invaluable exercise necessary to know our history and our past, to remember our foremothers who appropriated the pen regardless of the consequences, opening the path for us to do the same. Analysing them also reminds us that not so long ago women were not considered full legal subjects, that we have earned our individuality and subjectivity inch by inch, one word at a time, and that if we do not keep our guard up, all can be lost in a second.

Grimstone and Gómez de Avellaneda never met, and it is more than likely that they never knew of each other's work. However, as I have shown, there are many points of connection between their clear analyses and powerful critiques of their respective societies. They were both able to identify the gendered hierarchical system in which they lived, representing it in their writings, which serve not only as a mirror for their contemporaries but also as a testimony for our times. By placing them in dialogue, I hope to have shown how feminist ideas develop in different geopolitical locations, how they sometimes coincide and sometimes differ, while always maintaining the common thread of denouncing the oppression of women and fighting for the recognition of women's rights.

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