

CASTA ESTEBAN, CAROLINA LAMAS DE LETONA, AND BLANCA DE GASSO: THREE WOMEN FROM THE SPANISH SECOND ROMANTICISM

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ABSTRACT. *Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona, and Blanca de Gassó: Three Women from the Spanish Second Romanticism.* This paper represents the first step towards recovering some women writers from the Spanish Second Romanticism: Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona, and Blanca de Gassó, who come to join Rosalíade Castro. All these writers were read and highly appreciated by the male members of this Group.

Keywords: *Second Romanticism, Spain, Spanish, women writers, Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona, Blanca de Gassó, Rosalía de Castro.*

REZUMAT. *Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona, și Blanca de Gassó: trei reprezentante ale celui de-al doilea romantism spaniol.* Lucrarea de față reprezintă un prim pas spre recuperarea unor scriitoare reprezentative pentru cel de-al doilea romantism spaniol, și anume Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona, și Blanca de Gassó, care se alătură Rosalíadei Castro. Aceste scriitoare au fost citite și foarte apreciate de către reprezentanții masculini ai acestui Grup.

Cuvinte cheie: *Al doilea romantism, Spania, spaniol, scriitoare, Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona, Blanca de Gassó, Rosalía de Castro.*

One of the basic tasks of historians and scholars of the twenty-first century literature is to recover those female writers who contributed to the formation of paradigms and literary models that subsequently fell into oblivion. The nineteenth century in Spain was a period noted for its complexity, not only in the social and

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political sense but also in the literary sense. Against this dynamic backdrop, some women rose to prominence in the arts. One such woman was Rosalía de Castro, whose role as founder of Galician literature, assured her a place amongst the most critically acclaimed authors of the time. Other authors, such as Carolina Coronado and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, also left something of a mark for posterity, but not all of them were so fortunate.

When studying nineteenth-century Spanish literature, especially Romanticism, we should bear in mind that one of the most fundamental periods in the gestation of modern poetry has been obscured, or at the very least diminished by fluctuations and disagreements between critics². The absence of a clear delimitation over a long period of time meant that the group of poets who wrote between the 1850s and 1880s was limited to two fundamental figures: Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer and Rosalía de Castro, who, while representing the culmination of a movement, were not its only members. In order to fill this gap, the Second Spanish Romanticism group was formed (Regueiro Salgado, 2010), embracing a series of authors³ characterised by their search in German and British Romanticisms and popular literature for new models of simpler, more spontaneous poetry. The work of these authors was also typified by the predominant place given to reflection on poetry itself, by the negative view on life caused by the disappointment of not being able to satisfy vague and impossible longings, and by their support for the beautification of reality through the filter of dreams and memories.

² There are several theories on this. The first is related to the view of Peers, who defines Spanish poetry as inherently romantic. The second comes from a school of thought that maintains that Spain never had Romanticism. This includes critics like Ángel del Río or Donald L. Shaw, who consider that Spanish Romanticism was a fashion that was not very widespread, rather than a deep and sustained radical conception of the world. The third theory is that of Russel P. Sebold. According to this critic, there would have been an early High Romanticism in Spain. Taking the definition of romanticism as sentimental metaphysics and a pantheistic concept of the universe centred on the ego, the critic finds similar features in eighteenth-century Spanish writers, especially Cadalso, Jovellanos and Meléndez Valdés. Consequently, the passage from Neoclassicism to Romanticism in Spain would be an evolution rather than a revolution, with the eighteenth-century Romantics exerting a very real influence on those of the nineteenth century, and the continuity of a movement of osmosis and interpretation from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The final theory is the idea that there was a late, but respectable, substitute: Modernism and the '98 Generation, a thesis defended, amongst others, by Edmund L. King. According to this critic, the delay was due to the fragility of the Spanish Enlightenment, which had not been strong enough to provoke the liberal reaction that constituted Romanticism in Europe.

³ Authors included up to now in the Second Romanticism group are: Antonio Trueba (1821-1889), José Selgas y Carrasco (1822?-1882), Manuel Cañete (1822-1891), Eulogio Florentino Sanz (1825?-1881), Ángel María Dacarrete (1827-1904), Antonio Arnao (1828-1889), Vicente Barrantes (1829-1898), Juan Antonio de Viedma (1831-1869), Luis García Luna (1834?-1867?), Arfides Pongilioni (1835-1882), Narciso Campillo (1835-1900), Augusto Ferrán (1835?-1880), Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870), Julio Nombela (1836-1919) and Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885).

The idea of the group was to bring together the names of the authors belonging to it in different studies and contexts, such as, for example, authors influenced by Heine or post-romantic authors⁴. In some cases, the name of Rosalía de Castro appeared in her own right, but no other names of women authors were cited. Given the characteristics of the century in question and the advances made by female writers, it seems odd that no other woman was included in this group. The work of the three writers I propose to study here sets out to demonstrate this. Before discussing them, a brief review of the situation of women writers in the nineteenth century seems appropriate in order to examine the different postures they adopted with respect to their function in society.

We should begin by pointing out that in the nineteenth century little change had taken place in the situation of Spanish women as compared to previous centuries, and that women continued to be confined to the domestic space, albeit for reasons different from those of the seventeenth century. According to a doctrine separating different spheres of life, which was in force in Spain between 1845 and 1900, public life was considered to be the domain of vice, perversion, and impure thoughts. Therefore, woman had to stay in the domestic space and keep away from all forms of corruption; by retaining her purity and being in contact with nature, she could provide spiritual support to man, who survived in this hostile territory thanks to his supposedly superior strength, intelligence, and moral character. Given this state of affairs, any influence a woman had on society was associated with the influence she had on her husband and sons, for whose upbringing she was indispensable. This position conferred her certain power as she was responsible for shaping the language of subjective experience and controlling the desires of others, but any moral authority based on the emotional and sentimental strength of the woman was counterbalanced by the idea that women were physically and intellectually weak. As regards their reclusion in the home, we may recall that in

⁴ José Pedro Díaz talks of the “appearance of a group of poets who have a new conception of poetry and whose political experience already follows in the direction provided by Bécquer” (Díaz: 1971: 133). Likewise, Frutos Gómez de las Cortinas (1959) talks of “the origin and development of a school in which Bécquer was the most representative figure” (Gómez de las Cortinas, 1950: 77). Alborg (1980) mentions Barrantes, Selgas, and Trueba as pioneers and talks of Augusto Ferrán and Ángel María Dacarrete in relation to Bécquer’s literary milieu. Cossio (1960) includes Barrantes, Trueba, Selgas, Arnao, Eulogio Florentino Sanz, Julio Nombela, Augusto Ferrán y Forniés, Dacarrete, Pongilioni, Luis García de Luna and many others in the “Neo-romanticism” group. Aullón de Haro (1989) also groups together the most significant authors of the “Second Romantic period” and mentions Trueba, Barrantes, Selgas, Arnao, Florentino Sanz, Augusto Ferrán, Dacarrete, Pongilioni, and Juan Antonio de Viedma. Some of these names are grouped together by Díez-Canedo and, still in the nineteenth century, by Emilia Pardo Bazán (1886) as being influenced by Heine. Many other authors, such as Dámaso Alonso, García Montero, Jesús Costa Ferrandis, Francisco López Estrada, Joan Estruch Tobella, J. M. Díez-Taboada, Ángeles Cardona, and Marina Mayoral, have, for various reasons, grouped together authors of the Second Romanticism, although this has often been done either without going into too much detail, on a limited scale or in isolation.

Émile, Jean-Jacques Rousseau already talked of woman as a being who was adapted, psychologically, morally and intellectually, for the primary purpose of reproduction and this determined both the way she was educated and her role in society. Such an idea was taken up by Spanish hygienists, such as Monlau, who defined woman in relation to her womb⁵. Finally, because of this special relationship with the ability to create, it is worth noting that, although woman was considered to be destined for maternity, any erotic drive or passion was condemned as though it would turn her into something monstrous. Equally condemned were her lack of modesty and her taste for luxury.

As pointed out, prohibiting woman from feeling any passionate impulse had repercussions when it came to legitimising her participation in the world of literature. On the one hand, Romanticism opened the door to the feminine voice by identifying poetry with feelings and not with reason, but, on the other, the door closed as soon as there was any mention of passion as the driving force of creativity or of archetypal characters who either crossed the boundaries of desire, like Prometheus, or showed irrepressible energy in their desire for freedom and power, like Lucifer (cf. Kirkpatrick, 1989). The immediate consequence of this contradiction was that women writers were obliged to seek their own subjectivity and their own voice. In this respect, writers such as George Sand or Madame Stäel pioneered the way and some Spanish women writers took them as models to justify their poetic output and their voice, while others sought other ways of legitimising themselves.

Therefore, by accepting certain European women writers as leaders, we can establish one of the dividing lines separating two models of women writers in Spain. On the one hand, we have the writers that some critics (cf. Mayoral, 1990 and Kirkpatrick, 1990) have defined as *protofeminists*. These authors follow the Sand and Stäel model and are inspired by J. Stuart Mill and Ernest Lagouvé (Arce Pineda: 33). On the other, there are those whom Sánchez Llamas (2000) calls “Isabelline women writers” or “the 1843 Generation”. These writers are linked to the neo-Catholic sector⁶, which provides the institutional support allowing them to pursue their literary activities, while avoiding the sexist criteria affecting other women writers. Moreover, unlike other writers, they condemn the model of the strong woman, Lamartine’s⁷ *Méditations poétiques* (1820), and Chateaubriand’s *Génie du Christianisme* (1802) offer them models. According to the profile established

⁵ Monlau, Pedro Felipe, *Higiene del matrimonio o el libro de los casados*, 3.ed. Madrid: 1865, 129; cited in Aldaraca: 1991: 73.

⁶ The neo-Catholics or “neos” were the quintessential anti-liberal group. They were associated with the political parties of the Carlists, the traditionalists and the absolutists, who were on the extreme right. Their main figure was Aparisi y Guijarro. The term “neo” was applied particularly to the moderate sector of the party, made up of pure moderates or neo-Catholics in the strict sense, a group which, according to Valera, was more modern and open to new ideas than the traditionalist party.

⁷ It is surely no coincidence that Lamartine trivialised George Sand’s talent, as would the women writers belonging to this group.

by Sánchez Llamas, these women belong to an Isabelline middle class; they live in the most important urban centre of the times and are associated with the neo-Catholic “High Culture” (Sánchez Llamas: 223). Likewise, as an echo of Lamartine, these writers consider that the aim of feminine intellectual authorship should be to transmit virtue, the religious sentiment, and modesty (idem: 232), meaning that literature should have a pious and moralising element in order to get recognition and publication. According to Sánchez Llamas, the three writers who best represent this trend are Gras de Cuenca, Sáez de Melgar, and Sinués de Marco. As can be deduced from the above, these authors are antifeminist, but they defend the incorporation into the workplace of women in need, as proposed by Anglo-Saxon domestic literature.

In order to better appreciate the differences between the women writers that are the focus of our study, it is worth taking a look at their writing. In “*El camino de la dicha*” (*The Road to Happiness*), published in *El ángel del Hogar* (*The Angel in the Home*) on April 16th, 1867, María del Pilar Sinués states:

una mujer que escribe, tiene la obligación de escribir para instruir y mejorar: para curar llagas, no para descubrir las ocultas; para enseñar a soportar la vida con alegría y valor, no para quejarse ellas misma en sus escritos: para enseñar la prudencia, la modestia, la abnegación y la práctica de todas las virtudes silenciosas y cristianas (cit en Sánchez Llamas. 242-243).

a woman who writes is under the obligation to write in order to instruct and improve: to cure sores, not uncover hidden ones; to teach how to face life with happiness and courage, not air personal complaints in her writings; to teach prudence, modesty, self-denial, and the practice of all silent and Christian virtues (cited in Sánchez Llamas. 242-243).

She also makes her position clear with respect to the literary models followed by *protofeminists*:

¿Cuál es la vida de la escritora española? Pasar el día cuidando de sus hijos, cosiendo o zurciendo sus vestidos y aplanchando [sic] sus gorritos. Pasar la noche mientras que sus niños duermen, escribiendo junto a sus cunas que mece con el pie [...] Ahora bien, ¿al lado de esos ángeles que duermen, podrán brotar *novelas de pasiones*, como las que escribe George Sand, o como las que se escriben después de una noche de aventuras? ¡Ah, no! Y ahí tenéis el secreto de la moralidad de las escritoras españolas. La madre tierna y cristiana, en fin, la esposa casta y fiel, no puede escribir volúmenes que las madres no darían a sus hijas [cursivas de la autora]

What is the life of the Spanish woman writer? Spending the day looking after her children, sewing or darning their garments and ironing their bonnets. Spending the night, when her children are asleep, writing at the side of their cradles which she rocks with her foot [...] At the side of those sleeping angels, is it really possible for novels of passion to burst forth, like those written by

*George Sand, or those written after a night of adventure? Alas, no! And here you have the secret of the morality of Spanish women writers. The tender Christian mother, in other words, the chaste and faithful wife, cannot write books that mothers would not give to their daughters [author's own italics]*⁸

In relation to this, we have the testimony of Rosalía de Castro, who has already been mentioned. In her article *Las literatas (Women of Letters)* (1866) she talks about what it means to be a woman writer:

...pero sobre todo, amiga mía, tú no sabes lo que es ser escritora. Serlo como Jorge Sand vale algo; pero de otro modo, ¡qué continuo tormento! (Rosalía de Castro, *Las Literatas*, 1866).

...but above all, my friend, you do not know what it is to be a woman writer. Being a writer like George Sand is worth something; but otherwise, what constant torment! (Rosalía de Castro, *Las Literatas*, 1866).

Let us return to the writers of the Second Romanticism, especially the women writers who are the main object of this study. When I began this study, I briefly listed the defining features of the writers of this period. We can now add that the only the woman who belongs to this group so far is characterised by the belligerent attitude with which she defends women. Both in explicit statements and the quotes that accompany her texts, her admiration for George Sand is constantly reiterated.

Therefore, when it comes to looking for new women writers who can be categorised as belonging to the Second Romanticism, a number of factors should be taken into account. First, it is essential that they show signs of a view of the world and a series of philosophic and aesthetic tendencies similar to those of other authors, i.e. coinciding with Rosalía de Castro in certain aspects related to women's writing and the conception about woman. On the other hand, it is important to establish a relationship between these women writers and the rest of the group (whose bonds of friendship and literary cooperation were proven). According to these criteria, the first three writers we can include in this group are: Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona and (although with some reservations) Blanca de Gassó y Ortiz.

Casta Esteban y Navarro was born in Torrubia del Campo on September 10th 1841, Her father, Francisco Esteban, was a doctor. Her mother's name was Antonia Navarro. I am not particularly interested in the details of her life but what is highly relevant is that on May 19th, 1861 she married Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, the greatest representative of nineteenth-century lyrical poetry and the leading figure in the Spanish Second Romanticism. Casta and Gustavo Adolfo lived separately

⁸ Pilar Sinués de Marco, *Biografía de la señora Faustina Sáez de Melgar*, Madrid, Printed by Bernabé Fernández, 1860: 80-81. Cited in Sánchez Llama: 2000: 229.

for some years. After the poet died, she remarried Manuel Rodríguez Bernardo (who also died a few months later). Nevertheless, she presented her book *Mi primer ensayo* (*My First Essay*) as the work of “Casta Esteban, widow of Gustavo A. Bécquer” thus emphasising her bond to the writer.

The literary quality of the book is questionable and it did not receive very positive reviews, but there was undeniable interest in its content. The full title of the work, published in 1884, was *Mi primer ensayo. Colección de cuentos con pretensiones de artículos* (*My First Essay. A Collection of Stories Aspiring to be Articles*), and it included a dedication to the Marchioness of Salar, an introduction titled “*Dos palabras a mi sexo*” (*Two Words to My Sex*) and a series of stories of differing lengths. As I have already pointed out, right from the beginning, Bécquer’s “presence” is obvious. Casta puts herself under his protection in the introduction, but recurring intertextual references follow throughout the stories. On more than one occasion, we find stories that open with quotations by the poet, and in “*Un encuentro feliz y desgraciado*” (*A Happy and Unfortunate Encounter*), she reproduces in full the rhyme “*Hoy la tierra y los cielos me sonrían...*” (Today, the earth and the heavens are smiling on me...). There are also frequent echoes of Bécquer’s work, although the tone she adopts when it comes to social criticism resembles more that of Selgas.

One of the elements she shares with the Second Romanticism is the search for the ideal. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, one of the characteristics of the Second Romanticism is Neo-Platonism, which prompts a search for elements of the ideal. As inheritors of Kantian philosophy and historic German Romanticism, these writers start from the idea of the duality of being and the primacy of the soul over the body. The soul infinite and unlimited which overwhelms the body and may even become separated from it through the process of transmigration, aspires to gain access to IDEAS. From this arises the yearning that spans the whole world without referring to anything specific; the restlessness that drives the search for something that nobody knows what it is and which, therefore, cannot be found. At times, what a person seeks may be built up in the imagination (love or the ideal woman, for example), according to Bécquer mannequin theory⁹, but, as the fruit

⁹ In the story of “*Los maniqués*” (*The Mannequins*) (1862) by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, we read:

No hay ser humano que no lleve en el laboratorio de su alma un mundo de creaciones que desean ser hermosísimas realidades.

There is not a human being who does not have in the laboratory of his soul a world of creations that desire to be beautiful realities.

Lo mismo el hombre que la mujer, antes de amar, crean en su mente el tipo físico dentro del cual han de encerrarse todas sus felicidades.

Both man and woman, before they love, create in their mind a physical figure in which to lock in all their happiness.

(...)

of imagination, it vanishes at its first contact with reality, giving way to the pain of disappointment. During the Second Romanticism this disappointment was tinged with special features. If the disappointment of the first Romanticists came from real battles lost, that of the authors of the Second Romanticism is in response to an almost existentialist sentiment in which there is no concrete defeat. The second Romanticists, who were raised in a climate of pessimism, failed in their struggle with reality. This is why their texts reflect a reality that clips their wings and prevents them from finding what they are looking for. They either have absurd reflections on their sublime ideas or reduce everything to a moon beam. The search for the ideal (or the building of the ideal) and romantic disappointment both appear in the work of Casta Esteban:

(...)

Yo había soñado siempre con ese ser ideal que nuestra mente crea en momentos felices de la vida, vistiéndole con las galas de nuestra rica fatasía, esa preciosa poesía del ideal del alma, que riega nuestro ser con las brillantes perlas que el corazón dulcemente concibe al calor de la destemplada ilusión de nuestra loca mente, y después de darle las formas galanas que nuestro deseo halaga, las hallé reunidas en mi adorada Lola; por esta razón la vi y la amé (264-265).

I had always dreamed about this ideal being that our mind creates in life's happy moments, clothing it with the finery of our rich fantasy, that lovely poetry from the ideal of the soul which showers our being with shiny pearls that the heart sweetly conceives in the heat of the harsh illusion of our mad souls and, after giving it the elegant forms flattered by our desire, I found them all gathered together in my adored Lola; this is why I saw her and loved her (...) (264-265).

¡Todo es ficticio y engaños mil! Veo la virtud por el suelo, la honra entre el fango, cubiertas de lodo vil.

Everything is fictitious, with a thousand disappointments! I see virtue cast on the ground and honour in the mire, covered in vile mud

El acto de quedarse desnudo el maniquí que cada hombre ha adornado, es lo que el hombre llama fatalidad, desgracias, y echa la culpa a la providencia, al maniquí, a todo, menos a sí mismo, loco de atar, empeñado en que siempre el hábito hace el monje! (Bécquer: 2004:306-307).

When the mannequin that each man has adorned ends up naked, man calls it fate or misfortune and puts the blame on providence, the mannequin, everything but himself, crazily insisting that clothes always make the man! (Bécquer: 2004:306-307).

In other words, the theory of the mannequins refers to the way human beings build up an ideal from existing elements that bear hardly any resemblance to it or even lack any basis, as it happens in "El rayo de luna" (*The Moonbeam*) (1862) by the same author. This construction inevitably ends in disappointment when reality is seen through the veil of fantasy.

(...) El mundo, los parientes, los amigos y hasta el mismo amor, todo es mentira, engaño fatal, triste realidad, pero llena de verdad por desgracia (22)

(...) *The world, the family, friends, even love itself, everything is a lie, a terrible disappointment, sad reality, but unfortunately full of truth (22)*

A consequence of disappointment may be melancholy - *vanitas vanitatis* - with those authors who are strong Catholics, or nihilism. Whatever the case, all options entail a negative view of life which is linked to the perception of the passage of time as a robber of illusions and death as something positive and liberating. All this can also be found in the work of Casta Esteban:

vino a fijarse en los inocentes niños que con sus diminutas manos se complacían en echar pedacitos de pan partido a los peces y patos que sustentan las aguas de dicho estanque. ¡Que felices son!- exclamé yo para mí.- ¡Dios sabe lo que os estará reservado para vuestro provenir! ¡Gozad hoy de la dicha que tenéis; mañana quizás sufriréis, como todos padecemos! (...) (225-226).

...noticing the innocent children, who took delight, with their tiny hands, in throwing pieces of torn up bread to the fish and the ducks that lived off the waters of that pond. "How happy they are!" I said to myself. "God knows what the future has in store for you. Enjoy the happiness you have today; maybe tomorrow you will suffer, like we all suffer! (...) (225-226).

¡Esta es la vida! Nuestra alma sueña, el corazón delira y la cabeza engaña, quedando nuestro destino al ímpetu de la caprichosa suerte, como la débil barquilla, que arrojada en alta mar, es juguete de las fuertes y poderosas olas del Océano" (285)

This is life! Our soul dreams, our heart is delirious and our head deceives, leaving our destiny to be driven by the capriciousness of fate, like the fragile little boat, tossed on the high seas, that becomes a toy of the strong and mighty waves of the Ocean (285).

¡Qué hermosa eres! ¡Bendita muerte que a nuestros labios llega! Si en la tierra supieran cómo eres, ¡oh! Entonces, el mundo sin almas se quedara para seguirte a ti (204).

How beautiful you are! Blessed the death that comes to our lips! If they knew on earth what you were like, then the world without souls would stay to follow you (204).

Related to this desolate view of life is the use of embellishing filters to make reality more tolerable. Hope, memory, and distance are used to cover what is real with a veil and make it appear more beautiful, the same way as the imagination and dreams are used to expand it and build a space in which things occupy the place where they belong.

Although in the case of Casta Esteban the expansion of reality is not particularly evident, she speaks with the same tone used by Bécquer when he talked about things seeming more beautiful when seen from a distance.

es la fascinación del teatro, donde el espectador se impresiona bajo su farsa, rodeada de paisajes de pintada lona, cuyo lejos agrada y su cerca enfada: o como las reinas de bastidores con pintado rostro y empolvados brazos, aplaudimos frenéticamente, y la fuerza de la ilusión nos hace creer ser tales reinas, y nos vemos que dos horas después, arrojando su cetro de lata y su corona de talco, quizás duerma en pobre lecho, sobre piso de cuarto y en su real estómago bullan inquietas algunas mal guisadas judías (239-240).

that is the fascination of the theatre, where the spectator is impressed by its farce, surrounded by landscapes painted on canvas which what lies in the distance is pleasing and what is seen at close quarters is annoying; or where we give frenzied applause to the queens in the wings, with their painted faces and powdered arms, and the strength of the illusion makes us believe we are those queens, then two hours later, when the tin sceptre and the talc crown have been thrown down, we find they may sleep on some poor bed on a fourth floor, with badly cooked green beans churning around in their real stomach (239-240).

As far as the social commitment is concerned, we find two different but complementary positions in the Second Romanticism authors. One can be defined as humanitarian or sentimental. It focuses particularly on the grievances of the most disadvantaged groups, such as children, women, and emigrants. The other sort of social commitment is concerned with criticising and denouncing the bad habits of the time, its main champion being José Selgas. With respect to Casta, her criticism almost takes on the steel-like tones found in some of Selgas' texts. She has some harsh words to say on such issues as the inefficiency of company organisation (particularly that of the railways) and influence peddling. What is new, however, is that, in addition to this criticism, we find a more humanitarian attitude, since she gives prominence to the consequences of these practices on ordinary workers:

La sociedad moderna, que todo lo dora superficialmente con la mentira y el engaño, levanta soberbios y suntuosos palacios en el interior de las poblaciones, y los pobres y clases poco acomodadas tienen que huir a los extremos y arrabales para caer en manos de sus cancheros, que con el nombre de caseros y el título de propietarios, los hacen pagar por mazmorras modernas un precio exagerado con relación al punto y habitación que ocupan (50).

Modern society, which everything gilds superficially with lies and deceit, erects splendidly opulent palaces inside the towns, and the poor and not so-well-off have to flee to the poorer outlying areas, where they fall into the hands of their doorkeepers, who, as landlords and property owners, make them pay for modern dungeons and charge an exorbitant price for the place and the room they occupy (50).

...los jornales son cortos, la vida larga, las substancias caras y el trabajo escaso (50).

...a day's pay is low, life is long, goods expensive and work in short supply (50).

Así es, que los de arriba aprietan a los de abajo para trabajen mucho y bien; pero como eso no es posible, porque nadie puede dar lo que no tienen, para conseguir este resultado se emplea el rigor, esto es, multas y descuentos (...)

Pero en cambio se da el escandaloso caso de pagar a los inspectores salidas, que quizá no salgan, y casas, que no pagan por ser algunas de su propiedad (...) (163)

This is the way it is: those above putting pressure on those below to work hard and efficiently; but as this is not possible, because no one can give what they have not got, harshness is used, in other words, fines and deductions (...)

On the other hand, it is scandalous that there are inspectors who are paid for visits they may not make, and houses they do not pay for because they are part of their property (,,) (163).

Another distinctive feature of the Second Romanticism is the unequal relationship that the authors established with the Church. Although at the time there was a reawakening of a Catholicism that extolled aesthetic values, and a re-evaluation of the religious sentiment linked to God through inspiration, the relation of writers with the Church, or even with God (in the case of Rosalía), was sometimes a troubled one. Accusations against the Church by writers, such as Rosalía de Castro and Narciso Campillo, were related to this institution's desire to play a part in political life, or the scant charity it showed towards the poor. Unlike other authors of steadfast faith and unswerving support for the Catholic Church (such as Arnao), Casta passed judgement alongside her fiercest critics on those who encouraged and took advantage of the superstitions of the people.

Hora es ya que la fría razón se abra paso por sí sola (...).

It is high time that cold reason opened the way on its own (...).

Cierto y muy cierto es, [sic] que Dios un día nos llama para sí y nos pide estrecha cuenta de nuestras acciones en la vida; en aquel día, su fallo es inapelable, su recompensa grande y su castigo eterno.

It is true, and very true, that God will call us to Him one day and will ask us to give Him a close account of our actions in life; on that day, His decision is final, His reward is great and His punishment eternal.

En ese día quizás pueda llevarnos el diablo, pero antes no. ¿Qué cuenta darán los que ciegos por sus pasiones políticas explotan la religión con la careta del cristianismo? ¡Ellos tendrán su castigo!" (145-146)

On that day, we may be taken by the devil, but not before. What explanation will be given by those who, blinded by political passion, exploit religion under the mask of Christianity? They will have their punishment! (145-146)

The fact that the author adopts this critical posture is important because, as mentioned already, it brings her closer to some of the writers of the Second Romanticism, but at the same time distances her from the Isabelline writers discussed at the beginning of this study.

Finally, we should remember that the Second Romanticism is characterised by a formal change that advocates the use of a simpler, more condensed and suggestive language in contrast to the verbosity of some of the first Romantics. This renewal was based on traditional poetry and German poetry by authors such as Heine (who in turn imitated German traditional poetry). We shall see later that other women writers, such as Blanca de Gassó, used German poetical forms: for instance, the ballad. In the case of Casta, though her work may not have been poetic, popular poetry appeared in some of her stories. Couplets were reproduced. A relevant example is: “*¡La Boda H!*” (*The H Wedding*) which contains three poems, including the following:

Suponiendo sea un juego
de lotería el amor,
no es un beso el premio grande
pero es la aproximación. (70)

*Supposing love is a lottery game,
the big prize is not a kiss
but an approximation. (70)*

Casta Esteban's treatment of love is connected to the ways love was presented by the writers of the Second Romanticism, especially Rosalía¹⁰. The analysis of other women writers' work shows that this is a common feature of the women we include in this movement. The problem will be tackled later in more detail.

Carolina Lamas de Letona is another author to have been obviously accepted by Second Romanticism writers. A reference to this writer, characterised as proto-feminist by Kirkpatrick (1990), is found in *Impresiones y recuerdos* (*Impressions and Memoirs*), namely in the memoirs of Julio Nombela. The author gives some biographical data on Carolina, niece of Don Antonio López de Letona,

¹⁰ In works from the Second Romanticism we find passionate love, ideal love, conventional love linked to marriage and certain eroticism. What most interests us in this case is passionate love, defined as a type of love that clouds reason and leads to an irrational behaviour that knows no boundaries. This sort of love is observed from a critical point of view and is judged to be something negative with dire consequences, both for the person consumed by it and the one who is the object of it. Particular emphasis is put on its implications for young girls who having been seduced by such passionate love, end up either abandoned and mad, in the best case scenario, or dead.

“who, some years later, became an army general and one of the most illustrious writers in Spain” (228):

Vivía Carolina con su madre, viuda, en una modesta medianía, y para dar expansión a su alma y expresión a sus tristezas, había escrito poesías de una sencillez y una sinceridad encantadoras. (...) Acaso ignoraba que existía la alegría; pero en su corazón rebosaba el sentimiento, había en él adivinaciones de cosas celestiales, y al expresar sus emociones, sus deseos, sus esperanzas, inspiraba pena y cariño, cautivaba e imponía una especie de devoción (1976:228).

Carolina lived with her widowed mother in humble mediocrity and in order to cultivate her soul and give expression to her feelings of sadness, had written poems that were delightfully simple and sincere. (...) Maybe she was unaware of the existence of happiness, but her heart abounded with feeling and celestial predictions and when she expressed her emotions, her desires and her hopes, she inspired pity and affection, and captivated, and imposed a kind of devotion (1976:228).

However, what interests us most in Nombela’s testimony is how he judges her poems, given that he uses very similar terms to those used by the Second Romanticism authors themselves when they talk of her poetry. This is also the case of Bécquer in the prologue to *La Soledad (Loneliness)* by Ferrán¹¹:

¹¹ In the prologue to *La Soledad* (1861), Bécquer distinguishes two types of poetry that he defines thus:

Hay una poesía magnífica y sonora; una poesía hija de la meditación y el arte, que se engalana con todas las pompas de la lengua, que se mueve con una cadenciosa majestad, habla a la imaginación, completa sus cuadros y la conduce a su antojo por un sendero desconocido, seduciéndola con su armonía y su hermosura.

There is a poetry that is magnificent and sonorous, a poetry that is the daughter of meditation and art, that is festooned with all the pomp of language that moves with a majestic lilt, talks to imagination and completes its pictures before leading language at its fancy along an unknown path, seducing it with its beauty and harmony.

Hay otra natural, breve, seca, que brota del alma como una chispa eléctrica, que hiere el sentimiento con una palabra y huye, y desnuda de artificio, desembarazada dentro de una forma libre, despierta, con una que las toca, las mil ideas que duermen en el océano sin fondo de la fantasía.

There is another that is natural, brief, terse springing from the soul like an electric spark, hurting the feelings with a word and then fleeing and awakening stripped of artifice, unobstructed within a free form, awakens, (...) the thousand ideas that sleep in the bottomless ocean of fantasy.

La primera tiene un valor dado: es la poesía de todo el mundo.

The first has a given value: it is the poetry of all the world

La segunda carece de medida absoluta, adquiere las proporciones de la imaginación que impresiona: puede llamarse la poesía de los poetas (Bécquer: 2004: 488).

The second lacks absolute measure; it takes on the proportions of the imagination that impresses: it could be called the poetry of the poets (Bécquer: 2004: 488).

...lo que no se ha borrado de mi alma es la impresión que produjeron las poesías que a fuerza de ruegos me dio a leer aquella joven que apenas contaría dieciséis años, sencillas, naturales, ingenuas, latidos del corazón más que palabras, puras, diáfanas, tan distintas de las esculturales, sonoras y un tanto rebuscadas, más para fascinar la imaginación que para despertar el sentimiento de los poetas a quienes hoy calificamos de clásicos (...).

...what has not been erased from my soul is the impression produced by the poems that, after much pleading, that young girl, who was hardly sixteen years old, gave me to read, They were simple, natural, unsophisticated, heartbeats more than words, pure, translucent, so different from those that are resonant, sculptured and somewhat more interested in captivating the imagination than awakening the feeling of the poets we nowadays consider classical (...)

Aquella era la poesía natural, la que sin ritmo satura las palabras o, mejor aún, los gritos con que las madres expresan el amor (...).

This was natural poetry that, without rhythm, saturates the words, or even better, the cries with which mothers express love (...)

La lectura de aquellos versos influyó mucho en mi ánimo, persuadiéndome de que la verdadera poesía no necesita galas para impresionar, y de que vale más que una oda con brillantes imágenes la desaliñada copia que expresa un sentimiento o consuela un dolor (228-229).

The reading of those verses greatly influenced my state of mind and persuaded me that true poetry does not need to be dressed in finery to impress, and that an untidy copy that expresses a feeling, or comforts pain, is worth more than a brilliantly illustrated ode (228-229).

The author talks of the year 1854, long before he starts writing his memoirs, which gives us real reason to believe that it was widely known that Carolina's poems had impressed him. We find the poet's words in the poem Carolina dedicates to him "A la música. Oda dedicada a mi buen amigo el poeta Don Julio Nombela y Tabáres" (*To Music. Ode dedicated to my good friend, the poet Don Julio Nombela y Tabáres*), written in 1854.

The surviving book by Carolina, *Album poético Dedicado A S. A. R, la serenísima señora infanta D^a Luisa Fernanda de Borbón, duquesa de Montpesier* (*Poetic Album dedicated to Her Serene Royal Highness, the Infanta Luisa Fernanda of Bourbon, Duchess of Montpesier*), was published in Seville in 1856 and contained poems written in the 1840s and 1850s. Before analysing it, it is worth noting that certain biographical data can be obtained from what the author writes in some of her poems. She was born in Seville but must have lived in Valladolid for a few years, perhaps between 1846 and 1874 if we trust the dates of the poems that refer to this: "Aniversario" (*Anniversary*), written a year after her arrival, and "Despedida de Valladolid" (*Farewell to Valladolid*), written in 1874. Both the poet's dedications and the poems dedicated to her prove her close relationship with her

aunt Dolores López de Letona, most likely following the death of her mother (“*A mi adoptiva madre y amada tía doña Dolores López de Letona en sus días...*” [To my adoptive mother and beloved aunt, Doña Dolores López de Letona in her times...]).

The text of the book is irregular as the poems were written over a period of two decades. The predominant style in the early poems is that of the First Romanticism: long poems full of exclamations, rhetorical questions, and a preference for words with the stress on the third-to-last syllable. With regard to their subject matter, we find poems that champion the recognition of people on the margins (“*El sueño del Esclavo*” [*The Slave’s Dream*]), medieval legends written in verse (“*Leyenda del tiempo del rey don Pedro*” [*Legend from the time of the King, Don Pedro*]) and poems with typically romantic settings, such as tempests and cemeteries. We also find poems from this early period that have a classicist origin, such as “*A mi adoptiva madre y amada tía doña Dolores López de Letona en sus días...*” mentioned above. The poems that most interest us, however, are those that demonstrate the defining features of the Spanish Second Romanticism. In Carolina’s poems, as we saw with Casta Esteban, we find romantic disappointment associated with the passage of time, the rejection of reality or the idea that life, which is disillusion and pain, is counterbalanced by rest bringing death:

¿Qué es el mundo?- Un tirano.-¿Qué es la vida?
 -Una senda de espinas escabrosas.
 -¿Qué la grandeza?- Vanidad mentida.
 -¿Y las dichas?-Fantasmas engañosas.
 -¿qué las glorias do va la fama asida?
 -Sombras también...no obstante, muy hermosas.
 -¿Con qué [sic] es superficial todo en la tierra?
 -Todo...menos la nada, que en sí encierra. (67)

*“What is the world?” - A tyrant, “What is life?”
 “A path of jagged thorns.”
 “What is greatness?” “False vanity.”
 “And good fortune?” “Ghosts of deception.”
 “What are the glories that fame clings to?”
 “Shadows as well...yet, very beautiful ones.”
 “So is everything on earth is superficial?
 “Everything...except the nothingness that encloses it.” (67)*

**

¿Y eres tú vana existencia
 de continuo padecer
 la que teme fenecer?
 ¡Oh...ilumina tu creencia!
 ¿Qué eres tú sino un ensueño
 de imponderables rigores?
 ¿De qué nos sirven tus flores
 Si las marchita el beleño?

(...)
Porque la ilusión engaña...
Porque la esperanza hiera...
Porque quien en vida muere
¡ay! solo el pesar no extraña.
En tu huesa está el reposo
Mansión de infausta verdad;
en ti mora la piedad
para el justo venturoso.

*And are you vain existence
of continuous suffering,
afraid of expiring?
Oh... illuminate your belief!
What are you if not a dream
of incalculable harshness?
What use are your flowers
If the henbane wilts them?
(...)
Because illusion is deceptive...
Because hope hurts...
Because he who dies in life,
alas, only sorrow does not surprise.
Rest is in your grave,
That mansion of ill-fated truth;
in you dwells the mercy
of the righteous and fortunate. (88)*

As a filter for beautifying reality, Carolina Lamas uses the dream. The idea she champions in this poem is similar to that of Rosalía de Castro when she says: "No importa que los sueños sean mentira" ("It does not matter that dreams are lies")¹².

¡Ah! Fue un sueño no más...pero ¡qué sueño!
¡Bendita sea mil veces su ilusión!...
Duerme el amor entre mortal beleño
mirando satisfecha su ambición.
Goza el poeta en su dorado ensueño
al ver simpatizar su inspiración,
y aunque despiertan ¡ay! en su amargura
tal vez queda una forma...una figura. (76)

¹² No importa que los sueños sean mentira,
ya que al cabo es verdad
que es venturoso el que soñando muere
infeliz el que vive sin sonar
(*En las orillas del Sar*, 1993: II, 466)

*It does not matter that dreams are lies
since in the end it is true
that he who dies dreaming is fortunate,
he who lives without dreaming is unhappy
(En las orillas del Sar, 1993: II, 466)*

*Ah! It was no more than a dream...but what a dream!
 May its illusion be a thousand times blessed! ...
 Love sleeps amid deadly henbane
 gazing with satisfaction at its ambition.
 The poet takes pleasure in his golden dream
 on seeing sympathy for his inspiration,
 and although, alas, they awaken, in their bitterness
 maybe a shape...a figure... remains. (76)*

With respect to literary models, we also find echoes of traditional poetry in Lamas de Letona. The typical mother-daughter dialogue usually found in popular songs is reproduced in the poems “*Pregunta*” (*Question*) and “*Respuesta*” (*Answer*).

What distinguishes Carolina from Casta Esteban is that she was a poet and maybe this was why she shared with other Second Romanticism writers certain concerns that we did not find in Casta: identifying poetry with feelings, the deficiencies of language, or the essence of the poet. It should be remembered that, perhaps because of the changes taking place in poetry and poetic thought, together with more general changes affecting society, which were increasingly positivist and oriented towards literary genres such as the novel, almost all poets at that time felt the need to ask themselves what poetry was and why it was important¹³. Some of the conclusions reached by all the Second Romanticists referred to the essence of poetry, which was now to be found in feelings and elements that were external to the poet but capable of moving emotions through beauty or sentiments (such as dusks or bells calling to prayer...). The poet was, therefore, someone who was able to capture these sensations and, through the use of reason, keep them contained in words, with the certainty that words would never be able to reproduce the exact feeling.

In the poems that open the book by Carolina, even before the book proper begins, almost by way of paratexts, we find poetry identified with feeling rather than knowledge. This idea is not only linked to what has been shown by the poets of the Second Romanticism, but also to the justification women used in order to be accepted as writers.

No es ese inmenso manantial fecundo
 Que una vida de estudios profundiza
 De las ciencias e historia, que en el mundo
 Hoy su corriente límpida desliza,
 El que intento explotar [sic]; no, yo no fundo
 Glorias que inmortalicen mi ceniza.
 Mi poesía (...)
 Sus laureles descuellan en la calma.
 (contraportada del libro)

¹³ Bécquer, Trueba and Campillo are three clear representatives of this trend. Rosalía, although she does ask herself what poetry is, does wonder “*E ben, ¿para qué escribo?*” (So, what do I write for?) (de Castro: 1993: II: 277).

*It is not that vast and fruitful spring
Deepened by a lifetime of studies
In science and history, whose limpid waters flow
In today's world
That I try to exploit; no, I do not found
Glories to immortalise my ashes.
My poetry [...]
Its laurels stand out in the calm.
(Back cover of the book)*

Likewise, Carolina Lamas considers the essence of the poet and her answer approaches that of Antonio Trueba. She states that this essence consists of discovering the beauty in life:

*no la que el sabio llama fementida
al narrar sus acervos desengaños.
Sino esa do encontró su recompensa
mirando en el zénit un sol radiante,
que ofrezco de continuo al consonante
alimento precioso, gloria inmensa” (105)*

*not that which the sage calls perfidious
when narrating his disappointing heritage.
But that where he found his reward
looking at a radiant sun above,
I now offer to the precious
consonant food, immense glory” (105)*

Carolina Lamas de Letona also talks of the essence of the woman and rejects the sort of love that might commit her.

The third woman writer is **Blanca de Gassó**. As we have already said, although this poet shows timid signs of some of the features that define the Second Romanticism, ideologically she seems to fit in more closely with the Isabelline writers discussed at the beginning of this article¹⁴. While it is true that we also find in the Second Romanticism male authors who adopted totally conservative and ultra-Catholic views (some of them were associated with the *neos*, such as José Selgas and Antonio Arnao), as far as women were concerned, the line followed by the ones we have analysed so far and who were led by Rosalía de Castro, seems closer to more liberal postures.

If we analyse Blanca de Gassó, we do not find such clear proof that her work was accepted by the authors of the Second Romanticism. The regular publication of her work in *La Guirnalda* (*The Garland*), a women's journal, seems to indicate that she was accepted, since Manuel Cañete, Eulogio Florentino Sanz,

¹⁴ The fact that the introduction to her first book is signed by Angela Grassi, a poet who fits this particular trend, reinforces this impression.

Luis García Luna and Julio Nombela, they all wrote in the same publication. There is no record of her date of birth, but we do know that she died in tragic circumstances at the hands of her father in 1877. The titles of her published books influenced the idea of the Isabelline woman writer that we already mentioned. She justified her literary creation through her work as a teacher and instructor of children and young women. Gassó's work includes *Corona de la infancia. Lecturas poéticas y canciones para niños* (*Crown of Childhood: Poetic Readings and Songs for Children*) (1867), with a prologue, already mentioned, by Ángela Grassi, and *Cien cantares a los ojos* (*A Hundred Poems on Eyes*) (1871), where we can see how the tendency towards what was popular brought her closer to the Second Romanticism.

The publication of songs links Gassó to the trend towards popular poetry that we find in Second Romanticism authors, especially in Augusto Ferrán (with whom Francisco Linares Valcárcel systematically relates her in his study) and Antonio Trueba. Besides popular songs and odes, she also published several ballads in *La Guirnalda*, which clearly showed the influence of German poetry on her poems. Linares Valcarcel points out the relationship between some of her verses and Bécquer's *Rimas* (*Rhymes*).

One of the recurring themes of Gassó's poetry is religion. This is dealt with from a traditional and conservative point of view. Life is associated with suffering, the passage of time with disappointment and death with rest.

...
 ¡Cual se alejan las horas!
 ¡rápidas vuelan!
 las grat as ilusiones
 huyen con ellas
 ¿Á dó caminan?
 Para siempre se pierden:
 ¡Eran mentidas!
How the hours recede!
How quickly they fly!
Pleasant illusions flee with them.
Where do they go to?
They are lost for ever:
They were false!
 (*La Guirnalda*, February 1st, 1870)

The theme of death as rest appears in several poems, such as "*Al fallecimiento de un niño*" (*On the Death of a Child*) from *Corona...*, or "*A la muerte del niño poeta Jesús Rodríguez Cao*" (*On the Death of the Child Poet Jesús Rodríguez Cao*), published in *La Guirnalda* on July 16th, 1871.

On the other hand, particularly with reference to the book *Corona de la infancia*, Linares Valcárcel brings up the problem of meta-poetry in the poems. A good example is "*Lo que son cantares*" (*What Poems Are*) in which the relationship between poetry and feeling is also made explicit.

Los cantares son suspiros
de alegría o de dolor;
son bellos trinos de ave,
son ecos del corazón (160).

*Poems are sighs
of happiness or pain;
they are the beautiful warbling of birds,
they are echoes of the heart (160)*

We, therefore, have to accept that her poetry contains the elements that make her another woman writer of the Second Spanish Romanticism. What we now need to know is what she has in common with the other writers of this movement, and what distinguishes her from them. The importance of Rosalía de Castro denouncing the situation of women has been demonstrated in a series of studies which demonstrate her adamant feminism¹⁵. I have already mentioned that Casta Esteban and Carolina Lamas de Letona also deal with certain topics that reflect the demands or, at least, the concerns of women. Thus we have, for example, the defence of strong women, the role of women writers in society, the rejection of love (and the implications of this rejection for a being that, according to the hygienists of the time, was created for love and procreation), and even an attempt at self-definition. As regards the defence of physically and intellectually strong women, we find numerous references in Casta's prologue "*Dos palabras a mi sexo*" (*Two Words to my Sex*) which, apart from encouraging women to support each other, contains examples of women who stood out in different spheres, either intellectually or as warriors and revolutionaries. Of particular significance in the case of Carolina Lamas de Letona is the poem "*Letrilla suplicada en contestación a la de Quevedo en su comedia ¿Quién es ella?*" (*Lyrical poem in humble response to that of Quevedo in his comedy "Who Is She?"*) (141-143). The poem uses attack strategies for defence, the author defending women by answering the question, "Who is he?". It should be pointed out, however, that Carolina Lamas de Letona does not blindly defend women; she condemns those attitudes she considers to be wrong in the same way Rosalía criticized the idle and pretentious women of the bourgeoisie in *Ruinas* (*Ruins*) (1865-1866) or *El caballero de las botas azules* (*The Gentleman in Blue Boots*) (1867)¹⁶. In the same way, Casta criticises the lack of solidarity among women in some situations, which can have devastating consequences for certain women. Carolina distances herself from those feminine attitudes she cannot relate to, such as idleness and materialism.

¹⁵ Among the critics who discuss Rosalía's feminism are Nidia A. Díaz in *La protesta social en la obra de Rosalía* (1976); Matilde Albert Robatto in *Rosalía de Castro e a condición femenina* (1981), and Shelley Stevens in his doctoral thesis: *Rosalía de Castro: Literary and Social Origins of the Galician Poetry* (1985).

¹⁶ For a more detailed analysis of topics relating to Rosalía de Castro, see Regueiro, 2010 or "*Mujeres reales y escritoras en la obra del Segundo Romanticismo español*" in *Cuadernos para la investigación de la literatura española*, in print.

Y más tarde os extrañáis de que esa misma mujer (...) al verse abandonada y escarnecida por su sexo, donde debió hallar apoyo y esa protección cristiana, basada en la caridad, para disculpar sus errores, llegue un día que busque en el hombre el cariño y protección que nosotras la negamos, y es ese día, ¡desgraciada! El hombre es cual la araña que teje y teje su tupida red sin descanso, para en su día cazar a la imprudente o cándida mosca que a su paso toque. El hombre nos brinda su veneno en copa de oro, y una vez bebido, sus resultados son inevitables, y después de satisfecho su apetito, nos arroja de su lado llamándonos ¡sexo débil y cabezas sin sentido !¿Y sabéis por qué? Porque no estamos unidas y conformes; la unión es la fuerza, y la fuerza la forma la voluntad y el deseo de conseguirlo, por aquello de *querer es poder* (Esteban: 1884: 11).

And later you are surprised that this same woman (...), finding herself abandoned and mocked by her own sex, when she ought to have found support and that Christian protection, based on charity, to excuse her mistakes, should one day seek in a man the very affection and protection we denied her, and that is the day, poor thing! Man is like the spider that keeps weaving its thick web non-stop so as one day to trap the careless or naive fly that happens to be passing by. Man offers his poison in a golden goblet, and, once this is drunk, the inevitable happens, and after he has satisfied his appetite, he dumps us, calling us the weak sex, and empty-headed! And do you know why? Because we aren't united and in agreement; unity is strength, and strength is formed by the willingness and desire to achieve it, as in where there's a will there's a way (Esteban: 1884: 11).

**

Se juntan mis compañeras
de sexo ¡qué majaderas!
Van a bostezar de tedio
(...)

No hay duda que no poseo
el don de gentes; tal creo.

No sé fingir ni adular,
Ni en visita bostezar,

(...)

*My friends of the same sex
get together; What idiots!
They are going to yawn with boredom*
(...)

*There's no doubt I don't possess
a way with people; that's what I think.
I don't know how to pretend or praise
Or yawn when visiting,*

(...)

(Lamas de Letona, 1856: 178)

Giving up love or avoiding the kind of love that may entail commitment for the woman is a topic that appears in the work of all three writers, just as it did with Rosalía. In the case of Carolina Lamas, the warning is repeated in numerous poems, but this is perhaps especially significant in the poem titled "*Una pastora a un zagal*" (*A Shepherdess to a Shepherd Boy*) (166-170), written in 1853. In this poem, the shepherdess rejects the boy on several occasions, not because of lack of love, but out of fear of disappointment and the possible consequences of that love. In Blanca Gassó's poem "*Cúpido dormido*" (*The Sleeping Cupid*), published in *La Guirnalda* on January 16th, 1871, the girl steals the arrows of the winged god so that he cannot hurt her. Casta, who wrote her book after several failed love affairs, gives priority to the advice not to let oneself be carried away by passionate love but seek the calmness that is more akin to friendship than to love.

...y si no es amor lo que profeso, al menos es simpatía y gratitud, que, una vez uidas las dos en el corazón humano, forman un conjunto, que si no es amor, puede pasar por tal, para en su día serlo con más verdad que las pasiones que son formadas al choque de dos almas ardientes que, cual tormenta de verano, empiezan fuerte y terminan pronto (287).

... and if it isn't love I profess, at least it is sympathy and gratitude, which, once joined together in the human heart, form a union, which cannot easily pass as love, but in time it becomes a much truer love than the passions that result from the collision of two amorous souls, which, like a summer storm, begins strongly and is soon over (287).

Nevertheless, as in the case of Rosalía, despite their outbursts in favour of women, these writers still felt the need to justify their writing and hide behind an exaggerated modesty. Casta talks about "my first poor production (...) full of a thousand mistakes and errors" (9), and Carolina's poems are full of recurring expressions like "my poor stanzas". Similarly, both Carolina Lamas and Casta Esteban hide behind masculine voices in some of their poems and stories, just as Rosalía had done. Strangely, Blanca de Gassó does not resort to these methods so often, one possible explanation being that her poetic voice could already be justified within the framework of teaching along the lines of the Isabelline writers, as we saw at the beginning.

These aspects emphasized in the analysis of the three writers, as well as Rosalía de Castro, could be considered the characteristics of the Second Romanticism women writers. The only difference, and not altogether a trivial one, might be that, despite the fluctuations sometimes found in the work of all of them, when it comes to defining women or women writers, Rosalía de Castro, Casta Esteban and Carolina Lamas de Letona tend to adopt profeminist postures that champion women's liberation and their worth beyond motherhood. On the other hand, Blanca de Gassó follows the tendency of Isabelline women writers who justify their writing through teaching within the

channels of official masculine thought and who define woman as “an angel of the home” . In this respect, the text “*La misión de la mujer*” (*A Woman’s Mission*), published in *La Guirnalda* on August 1st 1873, is particularly clear.

Finally, we can draw two basic conclusions. The first is that the literary revolution brought about by the qualitative change in Spanish Romanticism in the fifth decade of the nineteenth century also affected women writers. Their works expressed the same concerns as those of Bécquer and Ferrán, for example. They sought the same formal renewal based on the influence of German models and traditional poetry. We can now say that, while Rosalía de Castro was probably the best, she was, by no means, the only one. Besides her, there were also, at the very least, Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona, and Blanca de Gassó.

Secondly, if we take into account not only their association with a literary trend but also the way they considered their identity as women writers, we could say that these women shared a series of features that both individualised and united them as a group or subgroup. They were somehow distant from the traditional woman, the “angel of the home” that other women writers defended. We have discussed the defence of the strong woman, so evident in the works of Rosalía de Castro and Casta Esteban. These two writers, together with Carolina Lamas de Letona, also reflected the conscience of women writers and defended their right to write. At the same time, renouncing love in a society that defined woman through this sentiment was an act of rebellion and independence that could not be underestimated and which was also seen in Blanca de Gassó.

It is clear that there is still a long way to go. It may well be that other women writers will be added to this group of four, but for now we can safely say that if the nineteenth century was characterised by the appearance of great women writers and a proliferation of feminine pens throughout Europe and America, Spain and the Second Romanticism were no different. From among the ranks came one of the great figures of literature, Rosalía de Castro. However, she is not an exception; Casta Esteban, Carolina Lamas de Letona, and Blanca de Gassó joined her.

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