Love and death in Felicia Hemans’s *Records of Woman*
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Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ 3

Contents ....................................................................................................................... 4

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 5

1. Introduction to the Victorian Era. ............................................................................. 10

1.1. Victorian Poetry. .................................................................................................... 12

1.2. Women in Victorian Poetry. .................................................................................. 13

1.3. Female versus male poetry. .................................................................................. 14

2. Felicia Dorothea Browne Hemans ........................................................................... 17

2.1. Her Life .................................................................................................................. 17

2.2. Literary career: chronology and features of Felicia Hemans’s work. ......................... 21

2.2.1. Chronology ...................................................................................................... 21

2.2.2. Features of Hemans’s work. ........................................................................... 22

2.2.3. Hemans’s and the audience’s “taste” ............................................................... 28

3. Records of Woman .................................................................................................... 29

3.1. Introduction .......................................................................................................... 29

3.2. Analysis of Records of Woman. ............................................................................ 34

3.2.1. Death ............................................................................................................... 34

3.2.2. Love ............................................................................................................... 66

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 101

Works cited .................................................................................................................... 102

Attachment .................................................................................................................... 105
Introduction

Felicia Hemans was without any doubt a very remarkable poet during her lifetime (1793-1835). Even today she appeals to the modern reader, because of her clear representation of everyday life and other aspects of the Victorian era in her work. As Nanora Sweet explains “she was a remarkably productive and self-questioning writer who richly endows our self-questioning now about gender, culture, and the work of poetry” ¹. But how popular was she? Has she always been popular? And why have scholars only recently started to investigate her life, almost two centuries after her death? Catherine Robson points out:

Numerous critics have charted the major phases in the reception of Hemans’s poetry, showing how a rising nineteenth-century popularity came to founder in a long but eventually interrupted period of neglect in the twentieth century. ²

Some researchers claim that the reason for Hemans’s previous omission from literary studies is that only now people are willing to read her work, whereas before they were rather sceptical about it and were not inclined to make an effort to understand it. The period in which we live today almost accepts any genre. We live in very an open-minded time. This, however, has not always been the case. Sweet and Melnyk, for instance, consider the modernist period to be (partly) responsible for the relative ‘lack of interest’ in Hemans’s poetry:

Perhaps modernism’s prolonged ‘crisis in state’ has numbed us into this ‘collective’ amnesia – until now. Certainly Hemans’s substantial yet elusive poetry is no modernist ‘verbal icon’ of ‘well-wrought urn’, but rather a voluminous, intertextual

² Catherine Robson, p. 151.
poetry that we are only now learning to read, a poetry redolent with cultural implication, composed in an inter-artistic vocabulary. ³

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hemans was one of the most popular poets in Britain and the United States. She was successful enough to live off her pen. Between 1808 and 1835, the year in which she died, nineteen volumes of her work were published, some even appeared in multiple editions:

By the 1820s, with increasingly appreciative reviews in the establishment press and a regular presence in popular magazines and ornate annuals, “Mrs. Hemans” had emerged as England’s premier “poetess,” celebrated as its epitome of “feminine” excellence. This icon sentimentalized a success born of industry and facility, business acumen and alertness to the literary market, as well as talent. Adept in a range of genres and verse forms, [...] literate, imaginative, and intellectually appetitive, Hemans fashioned popular themes with a transhistorical, international range of subjects, drawing on literatures past and present, English and Continental. ⁴

Hemans was very flexible in her choice of themes and verse forms. This resulted in a large readership – men as well as women – of all walks of life: “Her books were cherished gifts and prizes; many poems were public favourites, memorized and anthologized, illustrated and set to music”. ⁵ In the second half of the nineteenth century, she was still successful, but already less so than at the beginning of that century. When feminism and new historicism gained ground, the interest in her work gradually increased again:

Her work was attracting interest not as a historical curiosity from the shop of outworn tastes, but for its currency, for its sounding of dissonances in nineteenth-century cultural ideals. Her perspectives, moreover, seemed to cast in new lights the traditional canon of male “Romantic” poets. [...] Her celebrity in her own day became

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⁴ Susan J. Wolfson, *Felicia Hemans*, xiii.
⁵ Wolfson, , xiii
her curse in literary history, and the modern recovery, in no small part, has been a project of rescuing her from the terms of her nineteenth-century popularity.  

We can conclude that Felicia Hemans was very successful in her time, but sank into oblivion after her death. Only at the end of the twentieth century did people come to recognize her poetic abilities and importance again, which led to a renewed interest into the poet’s life and work. In the late twentieth century, researchers such as Stuart Curran started exploring who the real Mrs. Hemans was, and what her real intentions were. Later analysis became more and more convinced that her poems had a hidden meaning, not only her more troubling work, but even the old anthologies’ favourites:

The difficulty of reviving Hemans is felt even by readers who take her seriously, such as Stuart Curran. In his pioneering essay of 1988 he hoped to identify a complicated poet, arguing that while Hemans’s contemporaries made her “synonymous with the notion of a poetess, celebrating hearth and home, God and country in mellifluous verse that relished the sentimental and seldom teased anyone into thought”, there were “other and darker strains […] that seemed to subvert the role [she] claimed and invite a sophisticated reconsideration.”

Like Curran, a number of researchers tried to discover the – according to them – other and thus primary meaning of her work. These explanations will nevertheless always remain speculative.

The idea to devote my master dissertation to Felicia Hemans’s poetry was suggested by Professor Demoor, as she knew I was interested in writing about Victorian poetry after having taken the course of English Literature: Older period. Given that little research has been done about this poet, she thought it would be fascinating to learn more about Felicia

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6 Wolfson, xiv.
7 Wolfson, xv.
Hemans’s poems. Because of the vastness of her oeuvre, it is however not possible to analyse all of the poet’s works in the scope of a master dissertation. Therefore, I have decided to limit my research to one of the most significant collections published by Hemans: *Records of Woman*. My motivation for choosing this particular work is that this collection of poems best reflects her personal feelings. As she states in a letter to Mary Russel Mitford, a close friend of hers: “I have put my heart and individual feelings into it more than any thing else I have written.”.

While reading these poems, it struck me that the themes of love and death occur frequently in Hemans’s poetry and I decided to investigate her work in light of those two themes. The presence of love and death in her work can be explained in many ways. First of all, both concepts play a crucial role in most of the writings published during this period. Secondly, it is clear that death had an enormous impact on the author’s emotional persona. After the death of her mother, a year before *Records of Woman* was published, Hemans had no one to rely on anymore, as her husband had left her a long time ago and the rest of the Hemans’s family had started their own households. Because of these dramatic events, the poet had to adapt her lifestyle. This is also noticeable in her work. Until her husband’s abandonment and her mother’s death, Felicia Hemans was seen as a poet of “hearth and home”, but since she was no longer able to live this ideal herself, she could not translate them into her work either.

If we look at previous analyses of *Records of Woman*, we note that it is research of a general kind. Authors such as Paula R. Feldman and Susan J. Wolfson describe only the broad contents of the poems or give an overview of this work with some additional notes. There seems to be an enormous gap in the current state of research from the point of view of the

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8 Wolfson, p. 498.
diverse themes which appeared in her work. Therefore, I will try to clarify this deficiency for
the themes of death and love, more specifically through the imagery Felicia Hemans uses in
order to elucidate her thoughts. Although these are not the only two themes present in
Hemans’s poetry - the theme of loneliness would have been an interesting subject as well -
love and death appear in almost all of the poems that constitute Records of Woman.

By means of a close reading of the source material, this paper first traces specific
passages in which love and death appear. Secondly, I will discuss the imagery Hemans uses
to signal the imagery that she inserted into her work. In treating themes and tropes in
Hemans’s poems, I aim to demonstrate the significance and overall presence of love and
death in Felicia Hemans’s Records of Woman.

My dissertation is divided into four chapters. A first chapter discusses particular
aspects of the Victorian age such as the customs and insights, as well as the position of
Victorian poetry, especially of the female poets. In the second chapter I will discuss Felicia
Hemans’s life and her literary career. A third section offers a detailed analysis of Records of
Woman, focussing on the themes of death and love.
1. Introduction to the Victorian Era

The Victorian Period can be called an era of great complexity and chaos, and the Victorian wave is often defined as intrinsically repressed, prudish and old fashioned. But, paradoxically, it was also an era characterised by an immense growth in wealth, power and culture. Progress was to be seen in different aspects of the life of the Victorians.

Where religion was concerned, its impact became doubtful. New technological inventions, as well as advanced research in science - especially Darwin’s theory of evolution - undermined prominent religious values which caused a decrease of the significance of the church:

Organized religion had simply been bested in performing that function by the natural sciences. Consequently, its popularity dropped considerably. Such an understanding had prompted Comte’s philosophy of Positivism, which asserted that mankind was progressing from a point when it would rely on science for understanding instead of "superstition". 9

Initially, the relationship between science and religion seemed very harmonious, but as time passed, it became more complicated. Throughout the Victorian age, both experienced drastic adaptations according to the needs that arose at that particular point in time. As a consequence, the power balance between the realm of science and that of religion shifted repeatedly. These turning points were still observable in the twentieth century:

During the nineteenth century, the entities we refer to as 'science' and 'religion' both underwent dramatic changes. It would consequently be naïve to expect to be able to find one simple and unchanging relationship between the two. The relationship has varied across time and geography, and from one individual to another. In addition to

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the historical interest of the nineteenth century debates between science and religion, there is a great historiographical significance. The way in which science and religion have been perceived in the twentieth century was heavily influenced by the writings of late nineteenth-century historians of science and religion, whose influence we have only recently begun to move beyond. 10

Other considerable alterations could be perceived on the level of politics, sociology and ideology, such as the rise of feminism, socialism and democracy. People were more and more inclined to stand up for themselves, to defend their rights. They strove to improve their conditions, such as the working conditions. Although their efforts made some difference, not everyone had the ability to fight for privileges:

In mid-century skilled workers had acquired enough power to enable them to establish Trade Unions (Socialism became an increasingly important political force) which they used to further improve their status, while unskilled workers and the underclass beneath them remained much more susceptible to exploitation, and were therefore exploited. 11

One of the most significant remarks concerning the Victorian Period is that it was certainly not a unified or easily definable era. Because of its long duration, the Victorian Age was spread over different periods, which caused several social, scientific and religious changes in the course of time.

1.1. Victorian Poetry

Victorian poetry was equally influenced by the changes that occurred in the realms of theology, philosophy, science and politics. One may distil two traditions of poetry on the basis of the themes the poems dealt with: one which stands for a democratic, radical approach, another represents the conservative mode of writing. A profound study of the various products of Victorian poetry demonstrates the great degree of complexity inherent in these categories. The poetry of the era was endowed with enormous sophistication and delicacy:

It is a poetry, whether it belongs to democratic or conservative formations, which asks more demanding and radical questions of its culture than other genres of the period, experimenting with forms and poetic language commensurate with this complexity. [...] Victorian culture is our precursor culture, but, like the duck/rabbit, with its mutually exclusive configurations, we find in it important affinities – and differences which are just as important. 12

Victorian poetry is situated between Romantic poetry and modernism, and could accordingly be seen as a period of transition, using features of both genres while still not belonging to either of them:

It is on the way somewhere. It is either on the way from Romantic poetry, or on the way to modernism. It is situated between two kinds of excitement, in which it appears not to participate. What has been called the ‘genetic’ history of continuous development through phases and periods, a form of history which the Victorians themselves both helped to create and to question, sees Victorian poetry as a gap in that development. Modernism, in spite of its desire to see itself in terms of a break with history, actually endorses that continuity, for a radical break must break with something. And correspondingly it endorses the gap which Victorian poetry is seen to

12 Isobel Armstrong, p. lx.
inhabit. The anxieties of modernism, trying to do without history, repress whatever relations the Victorians may seem to bear to twentieth-century writing.¹³

Victorian poets saw themselves as modern and new, yet not in the way that twentieth-century modernism did, which defined itself as bringing a drastic rupture with the previous period. Isobel Armstrong claims that this modernism manifests itself because of the changes they had to go through:

To see yourself as modern is actually to define the contemporary self-consciously and this is simultaneously an act which historicises the modern. Victorian modernism sees itself as new but it does not, like twentieth-century modernism, conceive itself in terms of a radical break with a past. Victorian modernism, as it emerges in its poetics, describes itself as belonging to a condition of crisis which has emerged directly from economic and cultural change. In fact, Victorian poetics begins to conceptualise the idea of culture as a category and includes itself within the definition.¹⁴

1.2. Women in Victorian Poetry

During the Victorian period, a professional woman author was finally able to make a living with her profession. With their own revenue, earned by literary effort only, female writers could mostly live a comfortable middle class life.

The work of middle-class women writers became increasingly noteworthy in the Victorian age. They were even introduced into the literary circles through editions of their writings. Working class women, on the other hand, did not have that opportunity. It is often said that women writers of the lower classes were non-existent. But this is probably

¹³ Armstrong, p. 1.
¹⁴ Armstrong, p. 3.
incorrect: these authors unfortunately did not have the opportunity to persuade others of their potentials, since they did not have the means or the possibilities to publish.

One of the themes under discussion here is that of sexual politics. The goal feminist activists wanted to achieve was to address organizations and traditions which kept women from broadening their cultural interests. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to assume that the purpose of all women writings was to assault oppressive establishments:

Yet it is too easy to describe the work of these very different women as a women’s tradition based on a full frontal attack on oppression. Though such an attack undoubtedly often existed, a concentration on moments of overt protest can extract the content of a direct polemic about women’s condition in a way which retrieves the protest, but not the poem. It is sometimes tempting to extrapolate such material from the poems (because they supply it in such abundance), personalising, psychologising or literalising by translating this material back into what is known or constructed as socioeconomic patriarchal history in a univocal way, so that all poems become poems about women’s oppression. In this way the nature of the particular language and form of individual poems becomes obliterated by the concentration on a single theme. 15

It is undeniable that the subject of the ‘woman question’ often returned in the work of women writers, which makes it even more tempting to interpret all poems by female authors as dominated by it -however it can certainly not be seen as the only important topic of that era.

1.3. Female versus male poetry

The Victorians made a clear distinction between the poetry of women and men. Earlier in this work, I have explained how women writers became a more significant group, although

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15 Isobel Armstrong, p. 319.
this does not mean that they were put on the same level of intellectuality and importance as their male colleagues.

The overall opinion of the public shows us that they believed a difference could be perceived in the choice of the major focus in these poems. Whereas women chose the more ‘sensitive’ themes, men turned their attention to the more ‘serious’ aspects of life such as politics and economy. Authors of the other sex were expected or even obliged not to transgress the boundaries of those subjects, otherwise it was possible that the public would not accept them. One could argue that it was as if men were anxious women would become important too, and that they consequently would have more contestants threatening their intellectual significance:

This is why the question of ‘learning’ – including classical literature and subject-matter as well as poetic devices and prosody – necessarily involves a larger ideological argument over women’s education that reveals the widespread anxiety among the male literary and critical establishment over the possibility that such education might open up avenues for incursion into traditional bastions of male prerogative – including serious poetry.  

In that period, a great deal of prejudices made about women on various subjects created an enormous disadvantage for them. Male writers continued to believe that their female partners reacted in different ways on particular matters. Almost nothing would make them change their mind about that. As Frederic Rowton says in his Introductory Chapter in *The Female Poets of Great Britain*:

Man is bold, enterprising, and strong; woman cautious, prudent, and steadfast. Man is self-relying and self-possessed; woman timid, clinging and dependent. Man is suspicious and secret; woman confiding. Man is fearless; woman apprehensive. Man arrives at truth by long and tedious study; woman by intuition. He thinks; she feels.

\[\text{\footnotesize 16 Susan J. Wolfson, , p. 98.}\]
He reasons; she sympathises. He has courage; she patience. He soon despairs; she always hopes. The strong passions are always his; [...] The mild affections hers; [...] Intellect is his; heart is hers. [...] Female intellect seem[s] to be rather negative than positive: [...] fitted more for passive endurance than for aggressive exertion. 17

Still, by making this distinction and emphasizing the unique female tradition, you automatically admit there actually was a difference between male and female poets, as Armstrong points out:

This was a distinction frequently made by women poets themselves and by male critics in the nineteenth century, but it is necessary to be wary of it because, while it gave women’s writing a very secure place in literary culture, it amounts to a kind of restrictive practice, confining the writing of women to a particular mode or genre. 18

17 Frederic Rowton, p. xxiv-xxv.
18 Isobel Armstrong, p. 320.
2. Felicia Dorothea Browne Hemans

2.1. Her Life

Felicia Dorothea Browne Hemans was born in 1793 in Liverpool. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, her father, a merchant, experienced problems with business reversals and closed his shop to move to a coastal village in North Wales. The beauty and serenity of this place became an important influence for the budding poet.

Another major influence in Felicia’s life was her mother, who encouraged her to make use of the large home library:

She read avidly, memorized poetry, studied music and art, and learned French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian from her mother, Latin from the local vicar, and later, German.¹⁹

By the age of fourteen, she began to write poetry. Managed by her mother, her first work Poems was published in 1808. The income obtained from this edition was meant to support the family to pay for her education. This work was not received positively by everyone, but Hemans refused to quit writing even after the negative commentary.

In 1809, the author met Captain Hemans (an army friend of her brothers, who were in Spain, fighting against Napoleon) and she fell in love with him. One year later her father left for Canada, in search for a new start, where he died two years later. In 1812, Hemans – who was nineteen years old at that point – married Captain Hemans, one year after he had come back from war. Unfortunately, the Captain’s financial situation deteriorated, which meant the couple and their first baby were obliged to move in with her mother in Wales. Even in these hard times Hemans did not stop writing. Around this period she had her first

¹⁹ Susan J. Wolfson, , p. xxi.
success in the literary field with *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy*. Its subject was the victorious emergence of Britain as a world power after the fall of Napoleon. There even appeared a second edition of this work.

In 1818, Mrs Hemans’s husband left for Italy, never to return. At this moment she already had four boys and one on the way. The reason why he left to this day remains vague, though it is often suggested that he had health problems and therefore had to go to Italy. Other sources, however, argue that he found it hard to accept he had to live on his wife’s income. Felicia Hemans’s ideal of hearth and home suddenly was torn apart:

The idealism of hearth and home for which “Mrs. Hemans” would become famous was haunted by these desertions, even as the Captain’s departure strengthened her determination to support her family with her writing.  

From that moment on she had to write even more to sustain the needs of her family. Fortunately she still had her mother, sister and brothers close to her, on whom she could count during the time she wrote. In this manner she managed to combine her household with her work, and her career took off.

In the 1820s, Felicia Hemans participated in various prize competitions and as a consequence became even more successful.

The publication of a new periodical, the *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, gave her even more opportunity to publish poetry. The author rapidly became aware of the importance of these magazines, particularly for women’s poetry. She supported the idea of an increase of women’s writings in mainstream British journals because according to her, literary institutions were too male-dominated. In the meantime, her fame grew with

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20Susan J.Wolfson, , p. xxii.
masterpieces such as *The Forest Sanctuary &c* (1825 and 1829), *Records of Woman &c* (1828) and *Songs of the Affections &c* (1830).

Paradoxically, her private life was one of the factors which explained her popularity. Her position as a poet living under “the maternal wing”, *at* home and not only *of* home as cited in diverse sources provided her with the reputation of a loving daughter and a warm person, and this only added to her success.

After her mother’s death in 1827, her family situation changed for the worst with siblings getting married or moving away and her oldest sons leaving home to study. She could not cope with this solitude and moved to a village in close proximity to Liverpool with her younger children. Regrettably, after a short time she had to move to Dublin closer to her brother George and his wife because of her emotional and physical deterioration. In 1834, however, she was confined to bed and died in 1835, a few months before her birthday.

In some of her poems, Felicia Hemans refers to the tragic moments she had to experience. Through her writing she was able to express her feelings about particular aspects of her life which left an immense impression on her. She was a strong woman, partly also because of her supportive family.

By readers of her period, Hemans was perceived as a poetic genius and example:

For her nineteenth-century readership, the evidence of Mrs. Hemans poetic genius was the familiar assumption of her suffering person wed to her passionately restrained lines of familial verse. Hemans was taken as a spokeswoman for particular respectable British families strewn across the empire in a particular moment of time; and of the whole human family, whose ultimate experience the empire desired to tutor, rule, and represent.  

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21 Susan J. Wolfson, *p. xiv-xv.*
Blackwood, the second editor of the poet’s work, undertook several attempts to convince her that she would be better off writing prose, since this would deliver her more profit, but notwithstanding all his efforts she never agreed to his proposal:

Blackwood was pleased with the performance of Hemans’s books, though he thought her sales potential higher and he continued to press her for prose, stressing the interrelationship between her magazine publications and her book sales. [...] As late as 1834, she told him her next work would be a small volume of prose, but despite all his urging on this point, Hemans knew her forte was the lyric; she never went Blackwood any prose. 22

Felicia Hemans chose to remain faithful to poetry because she knew this was her calling, even though she could earn much more with prose. The importance of being a respectable writer prevailed on the wish to earn more money, even if she needed it.

Hemans has been described both as the last Romantic and as the first Victorian poet, depending on the analysis. Tricia Lootens explains that “Hemans’s verse is never simply Victorian, however; and where it is most Victorian, it is perhaps least simple.” 23 For some she is the result of Romanticism and the rise of women’s poetry, for others she is the Romantic forerunner to be overtaken by Victorian women poets who ‘write against the heart’:

Among ‘Romantic’ women poets – who now number over sixty and are sometimes taken as a ‘countercanon’ – she appears both excessive and controversial. Among ‘standard’ male poets, her ‘difference’ remains a subordinate womanhood again offset by ‘excessive’ sales and a competitive standard ranking. 24

22 Paula R.Feldman, p. 89-90.
23 Tricia Lootens, p. 239.
24 Nanora Sweet & Julie Melnyk, p. 4.
Felicia Hemans was never fully satisfied with her work. She was disillusioned by the fact that she could have attained a higher level of writing if only she had had a better education. Also, as Paula R. Feldman observes, she herself argues that one of the major reasons for this deficit was her monetary situation. Notwithstanding her own disappointment, she cannot be left out of any meaningful overview of the Victorian era, as Tricia Lootens insists:

Although Felicia Hemans never fulfilled her dying desire to compose a noble and complete work, no fully satisfying account of nineteenth-century poetry’s contributions to the construction of English national identity, and particularly feminine identity, can afford to ignore her work. 25

2.2. Literary career: chronology and features of Felicia Hemans's work

2.2.1. Chronology

Felicia Hemans’s literary career can be divided into three main episodes. From 1808 to 1823, she writes mainly public and largely occasional poetry. Her work comprised narrative as well as dramatic work. The subject matter concerned the pressures of geopolitics and history on family and vice versa. Not only her knowledge of seven languages and her familiarity with both Continental literature, but also her awareness of the Napoleonic Wars had a positive influence on her poems.

The work she wrote and published in the second episode (1823 to 1830) can be characterised as lyrical and haunting. This period has received the most critical attention. There was a shift in the way her poetry was published: Publication in book form was

replaced by periodicals, annuals, and sheet-music markets. Hemans abandoned her
publisher Murray and had books published in Ireland, America and Scotland.

In the third period, 1830 to 1835, Hemans focused more on religious aspects, rather
than defending women’s poetry to liberate it from its restraints.

As we can observe, these shifts follow the crucial changes she underwent in her life.
The subject matters differ enormously from each other, as Christophe Bode also states:

She [Hemans] is not only the poetess of British patriotism, but also the poetess of the
‘domestic affections’, of the quiet suffering and the unsung heroism of those left
behind, women mostly, and she hardly ever leaves any doubt as to what her message
is.  

2.2.2. Features of Hemans’s work

There are certain features which are specific of Hemans’s way of writing. One of the most
central aspects is the centrality of women. Felicia Hemans struggled for improved women’s
rights during her whole career. According to her, women were capable of the same things as
men. Sweet and Melnyk believe that:

[I]ike other women writers of her time, Hemans represents women in a variety of
characters with noble souls, implying the capacity and thence right of women to
acquire, by experience and education (in the broad sense) the subjectivity necessary
for participation in the modern state, albeit from a basis in domesticity.  

Women could write entrant their emotions, as well as the more serious aspects of
life. Hemans wanted to liberate female writers from the social restraints and the reputation
that women writers could only write about certain objects. As Brandy Ryan mentions:

26 Christophe Bode, p. 67.
27 Nanora Sweet & Julie Melnyk, p. 203.
Hemans uses her poetry to negotiate a space between public acceptance of feminine writing and private desire to be a poet, with the added negativity of assumed ambition and public exposure that such a role entails.  

Not only the gender issue was discussed, but also the social class. In the Victorian period, it was taken for granted that only women of a high social class were able to write. By this prejudice, only a small part of this sex was left over to write, and even the more privileged women were not always granted the possibility to do so. Felicia Hemans did not agree with this – as we are aware of her own status as a middle-class woman.

An important event which took place in 1821 was that she was the winner of a poetry prize organised by the Royal Society of Literature. This organization wanted to give equal opportunities to everyone who desired to participate in the competition. This was an exceptional occasion for poets like Felicia Hemans, since for once neither gender nor social class mattered:

This notion was supported by the regulations for the poetry competition, which stipulated that the entries were to be anonymous. All the competitions were required to enclose a sealed envelope [...] containing their name. Thus the judges could not be influenced in any way by the name of the poet, which was significant for a woman writer whose work was often prejudged because of her gender. In this instance Hemans was competing on equal terms with any male competitors.

Already before the winner was announced, male writers attacked the system used by the organization, especially because they now had more competitors to stand up against. Felicia Hemans won the poetry prize. This greatly enhanced her popularity. The author was of course very pleased with the success and planned to use it to her advantage, and to that of all women writers of all social classes, since this contradicted the general negative
assumptions about those groups. The Society unfortunately cancelled all further such contests without any explanation, probably because of the vast amount of criticism of their way of working.

The next subject which drew Hemans’s attention, was that of politics. Because she was a woman, the patriarchal society was very suspicious about what she intended to write. As mentioned before, women’s writing was only allowed in so far as it was an expression of feelings. Women were not bright enough to understand and give their opinion concerning crucial political matters. In fact, men made sure women remained in the dark about particular subjects so as to preserve their ignorance. Hence, women could not express their opinion, because they were not able to acquire the information required. Yet, Felicia Hemans frequently alluded to political matters in her poetry. Sweet and Melnyk point out that:

[t]he Royal Society of Literature, which claimed to be apolitical but invited poems on politically sensitive subjects and offered a specific place for ‘distinguished female writers’, seemed to provide a safe platform for her to take part in contemporary debates. 30

Another feature typical of the author is her endeavour to move beyond cultural boundaries. In a great deal of her work, Felicia Hemans assembles narratives from several countries covering different historical periods. This can be analysed as a ‘search for the exotic’, as Isobel Armstrong explains:

This insistent figuring of movement across and between cultural boundaries, with its emphasis on travel, could be seen as a search for the exotic, an escape from restrictions into the ‘other’ of bourgeois society. Allied, as it so frequently is, with a metaphor of the prison, or of slavery, it could be seen as an attempt to transcend

30 Nanora Sweet & Julie Melnyk., p. 118.
restrictions in fantasy, or an effort to discover a universal womanhood which
crosses cultural differences. But it is rather to be associated with an attempt to
discover ways of testing out the account of the feminine experienced in western
culture by going outside its prescriptions. The flight across the boundary is often
associated the examination of extreme situations – of imprisonment, suffering, or
captivity and slavery – and with an overdetermined emphasis on race and national
culture, as if an enquiry is being conducted into the ways in which the feminine can
be constituted. 31

Felicia Hemans also often makes use of the theme of Romantic death in her poems,
and does so in several ways. This subject was crucial for ideological and influential work in
the Victorian age, a period in which the consequences of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic
crises of Europe, its empires, and former colonies had an enormous impact on the nation.
Romantic death was opposed to the purposelessness of mass death which represented the
Napoleonic period and the Revolution. It emphasized the significance of a meaningful death:

In particular, Romantic death was an important theme and figure for the
representation of subjectivity in the Revolutionary aftermath. As such, Romantic
death enabled the sublation of earlier, Sentimental and Revolutionary,
representations of subjectivity, and thereby participated in the construction of the
sovereign subject of the modern liberal state. Romantic death was not a monolithic
theme and figure, however, but rather a field of struggle between varying groups
contending to define the sovereign subject and thus the liberal state. 32

An important element of the Romantic death, to which Felicia Hemans contributed
significantly, is the shifting and controversial definitions of gender. The impact of her
involvement and that of other women writers is paradoxical. On the one hand this
intervention provided her with a great deal of popularity: Hemans became the chief female

31 Isobel Armstrong, p. 325.
poet of her age. On the other hand, she was now perceived as a fundamentally female poet, which limited the purpose of her work:

On the one hand Hemans’s wide readership and particularized recognition, like that accorded other women writers working in the same vein, could be argued to have contributed to the founding of the modern liberal state by representing and disseminating widely the model of subjectivity on which that state depended. On the other hand, this influence did not result in women being accorded the same sovereign subjectivity, the same capacity to represent themselves, in culture, society, or the processes of the modern liberal state, including suffrage.  

As mentioned before, the author uses several strategies to develop the theme of Romantic death. She for example situates it in history, which stands for a sequence of crises, turning points, and revolutions that demonstrate how mass death menaces individual death. Mostly mass death is represented by the ‘masculine’ with characteristics such as domination, conflict and destruction, while individual death stands for the ‘feminine’ and is characterised by sentiments, experience and knowledge.

Another feature that characterizes Felicia Hemans, is the construction of the poet as a poetic matron. Even though her work was predominantly profiled as feminine, she also wrote poems of a more general disposition:

Though her point of view and central themes were acceptably feminine within the gendered conventions of literary discourse in her time, she also took on subjects ambitious in scope; she echoes and alludes to the leading British male poets of the day, including Byron, Moore, Shelley, and Campbell, thereby claiming poetic affinity with them; and she quotes, translates, imitates, and alludes to a wide range of recent and contemporary European male poets, thereby claiming a cosmopolitan (and implicitly liberal) poetic identity.  

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34 Sweet & Melnyk, p. 199.
We could say that Hemans tries to make a name for herself in a mainly male world of poetry by making use of aspects which dominate the work of male poets and, furthermore, by reproducing or translating poems by European male poets. Still, the significance of the female voice outweighed the rest to such a degree that the other features were often used to promote the most important purpose of her poems:

By assuming this role in a variety of poetic discourse, Hemans claims an authoritative voice in figuring repair of the breach in discourse, in subjectivity and sociality, temporality and space, effected by Revolutionary violence and death, especially mass death. Hemans’s task was to give that mission a particularly and centrally, though problematically, ‘feminine’ character, as part of the wider project of founding, in the Revolutionary aftermath, the modern liberal nation-state and empire.  

The last element which marks Felicia Hemans’s writing is her use of the dramatic voice. It is often said that it was difficult for women to get their poetry accepted by the literary establishment. Therefore, they frequently used this voice as a disguise to protect themselves against the exposure of feminine subjectivity:

A number of poems by women testifying to a refusal to be regarded as an object have been described by feminine critics, but by using a mask a woman writer is in control of her objectification and at the same time anticipates the strategy of objectifying women by being beforehand with it and circumventing masculine representations.  

We could say that this mask is almost a sort of travestying of femininity in order to make it possible for their poetry to become an item of examination. It is sometimes even seen as indispensable to adopt this strategy if a woman wanted her work to be known and discussed.

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36 Isobel Armstrong, p. 326.
2.2.3. Hemans’s and the audience’s “taste”

The society to which Hemans belonged had an enormous interest in the upcoming culture of books. As Sweet and Melnyk argue, people started to comprehend that books were very useful in order to preserve the past in a more reliable way. Music and visual arts were overtaken by the medium of print. Also very crucial was the fact that books now came within reach of a larger part of the population because of their diminishing price:

Hemans emerged in that period when the culture of the books was probably at its apogee; when ‘the eternal energies of mind’ were seen as encased and preserved through printed books; when the expressive power of even the visual arts and music, thought to be literature’s closest rivals, were disseminated most broadly and efficiently through the medium of print; when new magazines and journals constituted the latest word in society, religion, science, politics, and the arts; when books were finally cheap enough and accessible enough to help determine social-class formation and yet also to cause crossover and confusion among genteel, bourgeois, and popular predilections. 37

Writers like Hemans played a crucial role. Since so many people read her books, the author may have had an influence on their view of particular cultural concepts, such as the characterization of the national taste of Britain and the Anglophone America in the Victorian age:

[...] Hemans’s corpus, in which art and form were always put at the service of some higher sense of collective duty. [...] Hemans’s insistent repetitions of rhythms, rhymes, images, concepts, and words [...] greatly appealed to nineteenth-century readers even as or perhaps because they bodied for her continuity with the family hearth, the familiar motherland, the literary tradition, her affinity with other popular women poets, with any poet of either sex seeking popularity and respect, and with civilizing conventions imagined to be established as to be unassailably permanent, though fearfully permeable by savage others. 38

37 Nanora Sweet & Julie Melnyk, p. xi.
38 Nanora Sweet & Julie Melnyk,, p. xii.
3. Records of Woman

3.1. Introduction

*Records of Woman* contains nineteen poems which can be categorised as “women’s lives”, a popular genre in the Victorian period. The volume was published in May 1828 by William Blackwood and describes the lives of both celebrated and ordinary women. While the source for the greater part of these poems were historical events, we have to bear in mind that, as Feldman states, “Hemans sees history as the recording not so much of grand occurrences but of human emotions and its implications”. Nearly all of the work collected in this compilation had already been published earlier in magazines such as the *New Monthly Magazine*.

*Records of Woman* is considered to be one of Hemans’s most successful publications for several reasons, not only if we look at her popularity in her own time, but also because her work still interests critics today. First of all, by this time, Hemans had gained a considerable amount of fame, and as a consequence there was an increased interest in her works, including those published years before she achieved success. This resulted in several reprintings. No volume of poetry brought such an enormous profit to Hemans as *Records of Woman*, which was issued in four British, as well as in diverse American editions over a period of six years.

Today, *Records of Woman* is being rediscovered by literary critics and appreciated for the fascinating ways in which it deals with issues that were at the heart of nineteenth-century women’s lives. As Feldman argues:

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39 Feldman, xxi.
It is of special interest to readers today not only for its remarkable lyricism and exploration of psychological states but also for the way it both engages and paradoxically defies stereotypical nineteenth-century view about the character, history and emotional resources of women.  

The work describes the bravery and graciousness, as well as the tragedy of women’s lives. Most of the female characters are depicted as self-righteous and courageous, quite the opposite of what Hemans herself claims to stand as an advocate of, to borrow the title of another one of her poetry collections, “domestic affections”. In these poems, there should be a peaceful and safe atmosphere, but the opposite is true, as Peter Simonsen explains:

Just like Rossi uses Ariadne as an idealized version of herself to provoke the desired response from the beloved, so Hemans uses Rossi as a model for herself and as a way to express her tragic sense of opposition between, on the one hand, women’s artistic accomplishment, fame and immortality in the public sphere, and, on the other hand, their achievement of a life of love and happiness in affectionate domesticity in the private sphere.

A possible explanation for this may be found in her personal life. Since Felicia Hemans’s own household was falling apart, especially after she was abandoned by her husband, she was no longer able to draw strength from the values of “hearth and home”. Clare Brant states that “Hemans’s representation of failed marriages, for instance, is linked to her own separation from her husband”. Therefore, writing about lonely, yet strong and independent women may have been a way for her to try and make poetic sense out of the difficulties of her new situation. Kathleen Lundeen gives an interesting remark concerning this kind of empathy with one’s characters:

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40 Feldman, p. xi.
41 Peter Simonsen, p. 332.
42 Clare Brant, p. 578.
Like metaphor, empathy claims that something is like, but is not, something else, so that even when openly expressed, it is at once a condition of sympathy and alienation. Or, to put it another way, empathy manifests the apparent affinity one person has with another, but in so doing it magnifies the differences between them.

The final and probably most important reason for the success of Records of Woman is that Felicia Hemans herself admitted in a letter to her close friend Mary Russell Mitford as well as in another letter to her publisher William Blackwood that, next to the hope for profit, she was able to put a great deal of her personal emotions into this work. To Mitford she wrote: “I have put my heart and individual feelings into it more than any thing else I have written; but, whether it will interest my friends more for this reason, remains to be seen.”

When her work was about to be published, Hemans decided to contribute it to her colleague Joanna Baillie, whose work, like hers, voiced their author’s personal hardships. Baillie too had endured the loss of several family members, which had changed her life drastically in the sense that she now had to take up more responsibilities so as to be able to support her household. A hard task was put upon Baillie and her daughters in running a household without men after the death of her husband when she was only sixteen years old and the departure of her son Matthew, with whom she had a close relationship.

Yet, the most important person whom Hemans wanted to commemorate through Records of Woman was her beloved mother, Felicia Dorothea Wagner Browne, who had died about a year before she started writing the poems and without whom she felt very lonely. Hemans’s mother meant a lot to her, because she could always rely on her after the

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43 Kathleen Lundeen, “Who Has the Right to Feel?: The Ethics of Literary Empathy”. Style 32: 2 (1998): 261-277, http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=2&hid=101&sid=70cc920d-a730-4ef8-8422168c1dc1438a%40sessionmgr111&bdata=JnNpdGU9UGF0aW9uL0JpZ2h0aW9uL0N0c3VlbWVyZS12c2VyaWZuceGw%3d%3d#db=afh&AN=3237101 [28/07/09].
44 Wolfson, p. 498.
departure of her husband. She encouraged Felicia to keep writing, supporting her in every possible way. Losing her mother left an enormous emptiness in her life. As she attempted to translate these feelings into her poems, the collection essentially turned into an elegy for her deceased mother.

The theme of death occurs in almost all of these poems, both in a positive and negative way. Feldman writes that “death, as Hemans sees it, may be at times a woman’s most forceful adversary but can also be her salvation” 45 The loneliness is also due to the separation from other relatives who have left their warm family nest to start a household of their own. As a consequence, Hemans was left alone, and had to take life into her own hands from then on. From a letter written on the 23 March 1828 to Mitford, it is clear that she was struggling with this unwelcome independence:

I have been a drooping creature for months, ill and suffering much from the dispersion of a little Band of Brothers and Sisters, amongst whom I had lived, and who are now all scattered –and, strange as it may seem to say, I am now for the first time in my life holding the reins of government – independent – managing a Household myself – and I never liked any thing less than “ce triste empire de Soi-même”. 46

In this analysis of Records of Woman, two themes are accentuated and discussed extensively: love and death. There is a main motive that can be given to justify this choice.

When I was reading the poems, it became clear to me that these subject matters recurred frequently. Most of the time they were even present simultaneously in one poem. This is not a coincidence if we look at the contents of Hemans’s writings. Most of the poems are about the death of a loved one, which results in loneliness and sometimes even drives the person left behind to suicide if the mourner is incapable of coping with this solitude.

45 Paula R. Feldman, p. xxi.
46 Susan J. Wolfson, p. 501.
We could say that these themes can be associated with several troubles Felicia Hemans went through in her personal life. The most crucial and traumatic experience, as mentioned before, was the death of her mother. Sometimes there is only a reference to death, sometimes it strikes certain people during the evolvement of the story. There is a logical link between this theme and the other one in the way that after the death of a close friend, family member or lover, the chance exists that one is overwhelmed by loneliness because of the absence of this person. Felicia Hemans herself was very lonesome after her mother’s death, especially when her siblings left the house to get married and that she had to run her household all by herself. Another important moment of solitude was when her husband left her never to return, through which she was left alone with five children to educate. Luckily she still had her mother to rely on. To experience such feelings, your love for this person must have been very intense, which brings us to the theme of love, either for the dead or for the living. Whenever Hemans uses the word “mother” in her poetry, it is almost always in a positive way, linked with elements of love and happiness, which could lead to the conclusion that she loved her mother very much. In her life, just as in most of these poems, this love gets lost, sometimes because of the passion dies, but mostly as a consequence of a physical separation through death.
3.2. Analysis of Records of Woman

3.2.1. Death

In the nineteen poems of *Records of Woman*, the theme of death is omnipresent, sometimes in a very direct way, sometimes more subtly. I have divided them in two subcategories: “death as a result of drama” and “death as relief”, according to the utterance of Paula R. Feldman that “Death, as Hemans sees it, may be at times a woman’s most forceful adversary but can also be her salvation”. 47

3.2.1.1. Death as a result of drama

Death is often the consequence of a dramatic event, and appears very frequently in Felicia Hemans’s writings.

The first poem, *Arabella Stuart*, tells the story of two people, Arabella Stuart and William Seymour, who marry secretly but shortly afterwards are separated from each other and put in jail by Elizabeth I, who fears that Arabella might claim the throne once she has legitimate children. They both flee, agreeing to meet at a particular place, but Arabella never makes it there. She is recaptured and brought back to prison, where she begs God to let her die. She cannot overcome the drama of the lost hope to see her beloved husband again, and does not want to live anymore. As Paula R. Feldman states: “the poem is an extraordinary imaginative reconstruction of the human psyche under almost unbearable stress. If love is

all, then for Stuart all hope is lost.” 48 She wants this pain and madness to stop, and the only way is to go to heaven:

Father in Heaven! Thou, only thou, canst sound
The heart’s great deep, with floods of anguish fill’d,
For human line too fearfully profound.
Therefore, forive, My Father! if Thy child,
Rock’d on its heaving darkness, hath grown wild,
And sinn’d in her despair! It well may be,
That Thou shouldst lead my spirit back to Thee
By the crush’d hope too long on this world pour’d,
The stricken love which hath perchance ador’d
A mortal in Thy place! Now let me strive
With Thy strong arm no more! Forgive, forgive!
Take me to peace!

[...

Down to my voiceless chamber; for thy love
Hath been to me all gifts of earth above,
Tho’ bought with burning tears! It is the sting
Of Death to leave that vainly-precious thing
In this cold world! What were it then, if thou,
With thy fond eyes, wert gazing on me now?
Too keen a pang!-Farewell! And yet once more,
Farewell – the passion of long years I pour
Into that word: thou hear’st not,-but the wo
And fervour of its tones may one day flow
To thy heart’s holy place; there let them dwell –
We shall o’ersweep the grave to meet-Farewell!
(ll. 199-220; 248-59)

Arabella Stuart has given up the hope of ever being reunited with her husband, and as a consequence has no goal in life anymore. She prefers to die rather than to go insane as a result of this unbearable feeling of having to live without Seymour. In this poem, the situation is still hopeful in the beginning, but deteriorates when we reach the end of it.

48 Feldman, p. xxiii.
Remarkable here, as well as in most of the poems in *Records of Woman*, is the religious aspect. As we can observe in this passage, the poet uses words with a capital letter to refer to God but also to certain terms and concepts that are connected to God, such as “Father”, “Heaven” and “Thy”. Religion played a key role in Felicia Hemans’s life, as it did in the lives of so many of her contemporaries.

In *The Bride of the Greek Isle*, the bride’s lover, Ianthis, gets killed on their wedding day during the feast. All of a sudden, there is an attack and he is murdered:

Hush! Be still!—was that no more
Than the murmur from the shore!
Silence!—did thick rain-drops beat
On the grass like trampling feet? –
Fling down the goblet, and draw the sword!
The groves are filled with a pirate-horde!
Thro’ the dim olives their sabres shine;
Now must the red blood stream for wine!

The youths from the banquet to battle sprang,
The woods with the shriek of the maidens rang;
Under the golden-fruitèd boughs
There were flashing poniards, and darkening brows:
Footsteps, o’er garland and lyre that fled;
And the dying soon on a greensward bed.

Eudora, Eudora! Thou dost not fly!
She saw but Ianthis before her lie,
With the blood from his breast in a gushing flow,
Like a child’s large tears in its hour of wo,
And a gathering film in his lifted eye,
That sought his young bride out mournfully.—
She knelt down beside him, her arms she wound,
Like tendrils, his drooping neck around,
As if the passion of that fond grasp
Might chain in life with its ivy-clasp.
But they tore her thence in her wild despair,
The sea’s fierce rovers — they left him there;
They left to the fountain a dark-red vein,
And on the wet violets a pile of slain,
And a hush of fear thro’ the summer-grove, -
So clos’d the triumph of youth and love!
(ll. 125-154)

To announce the upcoming danger, the poet uses sounds. She uses the silence which is in contrast with the music and joy of the festivities. Repetitively Eudora orders the guests to be quiet, because she senses something is wrong. The sound grows stronger and stronger, and eventually ends in a battle, where the sound explodes with a mixture of different very dramatic noises, as for example “the shriek of the maidens” (134). As Diego Saglia remarks, sounds is crucial in Hemans’s poems:

Thanks to the performative quality proper to her use of voices and sounds, the public-themed poems of the 1820s remove the woman poet’s voice from the dimension of the private affections and project it decidedly towards the public sphere. Her laureate voice is thus intimately bound up with the possibilities opened up by the sonic paradigm. 49

Hemans also changes positive images into negative ones to emphasize the changing atmosphere. The violets, which symbolize love, are killed (152), and the fountain, whose water could be a symbol for purity and innocence, is polluted and has become red from the bloodshed (153).

The description of the death of Ianthis is horrifying and shows the cruelty and bitterness of the sea-rovers, who are characterized as dark creatures in opposition to the lightness of Eudora and Ianthis. From the sentence “With the blood from his breast in a gushing flow” (141), there is no doubt that this man has little or no chance to survive. Also remarkable in the passages of fighting and killing is the increased tempo of the action. This

49 Diego Saglia, p. 360.
could be a way of making the passage more tragic and stands in contrast to the tranquil moments of the feast.

In *Gertrude, or Fidelity till Death*, the protagonist’s husband is unjustly accused of being involved in the assassination of the Emperor Albert and awaiting his death sentence. Gertrude is terrified and completely distressed, but does not want to leave his side so as to keep him comfort in his last hours. She still hopes for a miracle that saves her husband, for it is too early for him to depart from earth:

“And bid me not depart,” she cried,  
“My Rudolph, say not so!  
This is no time to quit thy side,  
Peace, peace! I cannot go.  
Hath the world aught for me to fear,  
When death is on thy brow?  
The world! What means it? – *mine* is *here* –  
I will not leave thee now.

I have been with thee in thine hour  
Of glory and of bliss;  
Doubt not its memory’s living power  
To strengthen me thro’ this!  
And thou, mine honour’d love and true  
Bear on, bear nobly on!  
We have the blessed heaven in view,  
Whose rest shall soon be won.”
(9-24)

The approaching death manifests itself in “when death is on thy brow” (14) and “we have the blessed heaven in view” (23). Significant is the religious vocabulary when the poet refers to death. It is almost taken for granted that Gertrude’s husband is going to heaven when he succumbs.
The story of *Imelda* describes the love between two people that is forbidden because of their families’ different political views. They were supporters of two of the most important—and also the most conflicting—factions in Italian politics, the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. An interfamilial relationship would be unthinkable and scandalous for both families. Therefore, when Imelda’s brother finds out her secret love affair, he takes measures and kills Bonifacio:

But change came o’er the scene. A hurrying tread
Broke on the whispery shades. Imelda knew
The footstep of her brother’s wrath, and fled
Up where the cedars make yon avenue
Dim with green twilight: pausing there, she caught –
Was it the clash of swords? – a swift dark thought
Struck down her lips’ rich crimson as it pass’d,
And from her eye the sunny sparkle took
One moment with its fearfulness, and shook
Her slight frame fiercely, as a stormy blast
Might rock the rose. Once more, and yet once more,
She still’d her heart to listen,—all was o’er;

[...]

I What did Imelda there? She sought the scene
Where love so late with youth and hope had been;
Bodings were on her soul— a shuddering thrill
Ran thro’ each vein, when first the Naiad’s rill
Met her with melody—sweet sounds and low;
We hear them yet, they live along its flow—
Her voice is music lost! The fountain-side
She gain’d— the wave flash’d forth— ‘twas darkly dyed
Ev’n as from warrior-hearts; and on its edge,
Amidst the fern, and flowers, and moss-tufts deep,
There lay, as lull’d by stream and rustling sedge,
A youth, a graceful youth. Oh! Dost thou sleep?
“Azgo!” she cried, “my Azzo! Is this rest?”
But then her low tones falter’d: - “On thy breast
Is the stain, - yes ‘tis blood! – and that cold cheek—
That moveless lip!-thou clost not slumber? – speak,
Speak, Azgo, my belov’d! – no sound — no breath—
What hath come thus between our spirits? – Death!
Death? – I but dream – I dream!”
(29-39; 67-85)
Felicia Hemans dramatizes the scene in which Bonifacio is attacked by Imelda’s brother using verbs of movement (e.g.: “hurrying” in line 29), which show that the velocity is moving up. Imelda’s ignorance of what has happened makes the reader assume that something terrible occurred. Again, the further development of the story can be predicted through sound. During the fight, Imelda takes notice of a lot of noises, but cannot determine what it is that she hears. She thinks that she perceives sounds such as a “clash of swords” (34), which disconcerts her. All of a sudden, everything becomes still. It is immediately clear that someone has been killed. We could say that silence here represents death.

When Imelda finds Bonifacio dead, she does not want to believe that the love of her life has been killed. First she thinks that he is sleeping: “my Azzo! Is this rest?” (79). When she notices the blood on his breast and the coldness of his cheek, the protagonist tries to negate his death by convincing herself that she is dreaming: “Death? – I but dream – I dream!” (85). It seems impossible that such a young and joyful person came to his end.

Death is also announced by Naiad, a nymph notable for her beautiful singing. In the beginning of the poem, Hemans makes use of her music to refer to happiness and afterwards, when no more of her music is heard, this stillness proclaims the sphere deteriorates into misery. As in The Bride of the Greek Isle, the water of the fountain is spoiled and dark, which makes it clear that innocence is destroyed. We can clearly see this in “The fountain-side he gain’d – the wave flash’d forth – ‘twas darkly dyed” (73-74).

The theme of death occurs also in Edith, a Tale of the Woods, where the female protagonist wanders through the woods and comes across a place where there has been a terrible fight. The place is dark, scary, full of blood and dead people, but she overcomes her fears to search
for the one she loves and eventually finds him, seriously injured. Nothing can be done to help Edith’s husband and he dies in her arms:

Yet, in that hour, midst those green wastes, there sate
One young and fair; and oh! How desolate!
But undismay’d; while sank the crimson light,
And the high cedars darken’d with the night.
Alone she sate: tho’ many lay around,
They, pale and silent on the bloody ground,
Were sever’d from her need and from her wo,
Far as Death severs Life. O’er that wild spot
Combat had rag’d, and brought the valiant low,
And left them, with the history of their lot,
Unto the forest oaks. A fearful scene
For her whose home of other days had been
Midst the fair halls of England! But the love
· Which fill’d her soul was strong to cast out fear,
And by its might upborne all else above,
She shrank not – mark’d not that the dead were near.
Of him alone she thought, whose languid head
Faintly upon her wedded bosom fell;
Memory of aught but him on earth was fled,
While heavily she felt his life-blood well
Fast o’er her garments forth, and vainly bound
With her torn robe and hair the streaming wound,
Yet hoped, still hoped!-Oh! From such hope how long
Affection wooes the whispers that deceive,
Ev’n when the pressure of dismay grows strong,
And we, that weep, watch, tremble, ne’er believe
The blow indeed can fall! So bow’d she there,
Over the dying, while unconscious prayer
Fill’d all her soul! Now pour’d the moonlight down,
Veining the pine-stems thro’ the foliage brown,
And fire-flies, kindling up the leafy place,
Cast fitful radiance o’er the warrior’s face,
Whereby she caught its changes: to her eye,
The eye that faded look’d through gathering haze,
Whence love, o’ermastering mortal agony,
Lifted a long deep melancholy gaze,
When voice was not: that fond sad meaning pass’d
She knew the fullness of her wo at last!
(8-46)
The poet tries to communicate the horrifying events to the reader in a realistic manner by using a vocabulary that is very dramatic, especially in the choice of adjectives. The bodies lie “pale and silent on the bloody ground” (13), and her husband’s “languid head” (25) falls “faintly upon her wedded bosom” (26) as she “vainly” (29) binds “with her torn robe and hair the streaming wound” (30). Also noteworthy is the contrast between darkness and light found in the image of night and day. Hemans situates this scene during the night and so connects the darkness with death in contrast with the light of the daily scenes which are linked with brightness. Another element that stands in close relation to death which already appeared in the previous poems, is silence. When Edith’s husband passed away, she became aware of his decease by his voicelessness. His familiar voice was no longer to be heard and he did not breathe anymore. But in this story, the departure of this man is even more perceptible in his eyes: “The eye that faded look’d through gathering haze, whence love, o’er mastering mortal agony, lifted a long deep melancholy gaze” (42). Edith notices that her husband’s sight is not sharp anymore and that he is not really looking but rather gazing. From that moment, she knows that he is not with her any longer, he has crossed to the other side. In line 15 we can observe that the words “Death” and “Life” are written with a capital letter, which could mean that the poet makes an association with religiosity. Many writers of that period used capitals if they wanted to refer to God or a particular religious thought. Felicia Hemans probably saw life and death as two elements under the control of God and therefore, as in almost all of her work, used this method.

In *The Indian City*, a boy who is on a pilgrimage with his mother is attacked by the Brahmins because he bathed in their holy water. These people are very religious and punish every sacrilege severely. He dies because of his wounds. The action again takes place at night:
The moon rose clear in the splendour given
To the deep-blue night of an Indian heaven;
The boy from the high-arch’d woods came back –
Oh! What had he met in his lonely track?
The serpent’s glance, thro’ the long reeds bright
The arrowy spring of the tiger’s might?
No! – yet as one by a conflict worn,
With his graceful hair all soil’d and torn,
And a gloom on the lids of his darken’d eye,
And a gash on his bosom – he came to die!
He look’d for the face to his young heart sweet,
And found it, and sank at his mother’s feet.

“Speak to me! – whence doth the swift blood run?
What hath befall’n thee, my child, my son?’
The mist of death on his brow lay pale,
But his voice just linger’d to breathe the tale,
Murmuring faintly of wrongs and scorn,
And wounds from the children of Brahma born:
This was the doom for a Moslem found
With foot profane on their holy ground,
This was for sullying the pure waves free
Unto them alone-‘twas their God’s decree.

A change came o’er his wandering look –
The mother shriek’d not then, nor shook:
Breathless she knelt in her son’s young blood
Rending her mantle to staunch its flood;
But it rush’d like a river which none may stay;
Bearing a flower to the deep away.
I That which our love to the earth would chain,
Fearfully striving with Heaven in vain,
That which fades from us, while yet we hold,
Clasp’d to our bosoms, its mortal mould,
Was fleeting before her, afar and fast;
One moment–the soul from the face had pass’d!
(63-96)

The mother of the victim becomes aware of the very bad condition by the changes in
his facial features. The boy, who once was so radiant and beautiful, is becoming pale. His
eyes are darker and his hair is soiled and torn from the attack. But this is not the only way in
which Hemans makes clear that he is dying, since she describes also very explicitly the manner in which the blood flows out of his body: “Breathless she knelt in her son’s young blood rending her mantle to staunch its flood; But it rush’d like a river which none may stay” (87-89). His blood “rushes” out of his body, by which we presume he will not have much longer to live. The adjective “young” that is added to the substantive blood again shows that this innocent boy was not at an age to die. The strength of his voice decreases as a result of which he can only murmur. This is a sign of his weakening as well.

Another element which can be connected to death is distance. Through the decease, the person who was always so close to his mother is now going so far away from her. Death has separated him from the one he loved the most: “That which fades from us, while yet we hold, clasp’d to our bosoms, its mortal mould, was fleeting before her, afar and fast;” (93-95).

The next poem in which death appears as a result of a dramatic event is Pauline, which tells us the story of a mother, Pauline, who loses her child Bertha in a fire. Pauline managed to escape, but when she searches for her baby girl, Bertha is nowhere to be found, and she is trapped in the sea of fire:

Who spoke of evil, when young feet were flying
In fairy rings around the echoing hall?
Soft airs thro’ braided locks in perfume sighing
Glad pubes beating unto music’s call?
Silence! – the minstrels pause – and hark! A sound,
A strange quick rustling which their notes had drown’d!

And lo! A light upon the dancers breaking –
Not such their clear and silvery lamps had shed!
From the gay dream of revelry awaking,
One moment holds them still in breathless dread:
The wild fierce lustre grows – then bursts a cry –
Fire! Thro’ the hall and round it gathering – fly!

And forth they rush – as chased by sword and spear –
To the green coverts of the garden-bowers;
A gorgeous masque of pageantry and fear,
Startling the birds and trampling down till’ flowers:
While from the dome behind, red sparkles driven
Pierce the dark stillness of the midnight heaven.

And where is she, Pauline? – the hurrying throng
Have swept her onward, as a stormy blast
Might sweep some faint o’erwearied bird along
Till now the threshold of that death is past
And free she stands beneath the starry skies,
Calling her child – but no sweet voice replies

“Bertha! Where art thou? – Speak, oh! Speak, my own!”
Alas! Unconscious of her pangs the while,
The gentle girl, in fear’s cold grasp alone,
Powerless hath sunk within the blazing pile;
A young bright form, deck’d gloriously for death,
With flowers all shrinking from the flame’s fierce breath!

The word “evil” (31) already announces the drama that is about to come and is contrary to the “young feet” (31) and “fairy rings” (32), with which the poet wants to emphasize that normally there should not be a logical connection between these words. Young people represent innocence and joy and they are not supposed to die.

The opposition between silence and noise is also important in this passage. First of all, Hemans orders silence just before the scene in which the fire breaks out (35) so as to proclaim that something horrible is going to happen. There is no movement at all at this particular moment; the guests do not have a clue what will strike them and wait breathlessly for what is about to come. When fate strikes, the silence is broken and substituted by sounds of panic and powerlessness. Further on in this passage, when Pauline calls for her
child but gets no response, the silence of Bertha symbolizes death, and stands in stark contrast to her smile and kind voices mentioned in the beginning of the poem.

The beautiful scenery, which represents freedom and peace, is destroyed by the frightened guests who flee from the danger. The devastation could refer to the obliteration of the harmony between nature and man, also since fire is a natural element that has laid violent hands on the human world.

In the previous poems that I have discussed, light was always a symbol of hope and happiness, a sign telling the reader that better times were coming. This is not the case in *Pauline*, where the light produced by the fire is perceived as dangerous and threatening.

In *The American Forest-Girl*, the actual death is not accomplished. This poem narrates the story of a man who is about to be killed by red warriors, but is saved by a divine-like woman who is able to inspire the enemies with awe so that they release him out of fear. The forest-girl effectively wards off the drama that could have occurred. Yet, several elements are referred to which announce the upcoming death scene:

Wildly and mournfully the Indian drum
On the deep hush of moonlight forests broke –
“Sing us a death-song, for thine hour is come,” –
So the red warriors to their captive spoke.
Still, and amidst those dusky forms alone,
A youth, a fair-hair’d youth of England stood,
Like a Icing’s son; tho’ from his cheek had flown
The mantling crimson of the island-blood
And his press’d lips look’d marble. – Fiercely bright,
And high around him, blaz’d the fires of night,
Rocking beneath the cedars to and fro,
As the wind pass’d, and with a fitful glow
Lighting the victim’s face

[...]
He started and look’d up: – thick cypress boughs
Full of strange sound, wav’d o’er him, darkly red
In the broad stormy firelight; – savage brows,
With tall plumes crested and wild hues o’erspread,
Girt him like feverish phantoms; and pale stars
Look’d thro’ the branches as thro’ dungeon bars,
Shedding no hope. – He knew, he felt his doom –

[...]

To the stake
They bound him; and that proud young soldier strove
His father’s spirit in his breast to wake,
Trusting to die in silence! He, the love
Of many hearts! – the fondly rear’d, – the fair,
Gladden ing all eyes to see! – And fetter’d there
He stood beside his death-pyre, and the brand
Flamed up to light it, in the chieftain’s hand.
He thought upon his God.
(1-13; 30-36; 41-49)

The colours as well as the transition between light and darkness that Felicia Hemans uses in this poem contribute to the distance between life and death. When she describes this young gentleman who is about to be killed, the poet emphasizes how different he has become. In great contrast to his usual brightness, the colour of his face has disappeared and his lips have turned marble. It is as if his light is extinguishing and has chosen the side of death. Remarkable also is the repetition of the colour red. Hemans speaks about the “red warriors” (4). This colour can be used to allude to blood since these warriors are very cruel. Automatically, the link with death is nearby. In some occasions Hemans adds the adjective “dark” (e.g. in line 8) to this colour, which emphasizes the negative atmosphere into which this man is secluded. The pallid colour of the forest-girl’s face does not have a negative, but a rather positive connotation. Her paleness can be compared to that of a saint to demonstrate her purity and divine-like features.
Together with the fading colours of the victim’s face, his silence also alludes to the proximity of death. He is too proud to utter any sound, he wants to die peacefully as a token of respect for his father. Men were not supposed to express emotions, even not when they were so close to death. Showing your feelings was only done by women, for, as men claimed, they were the weaker sex who could not suppress their emotions. If we examine the rest of the sounds, they vary towards the end of the poem. Whereas in the beginning only noises such as mourning, strange sounds and silence were audible, everything changes when the young and sweet voice of the forest-girl is heard.

The various characteristics both of the boy and the warriors are described by means of natural elements. When Felicia Hemans writes about the features of the warriors, she links them with storm and wilderness, while, in contrast, she writes about flowers and soothing atmospheres to refer to the boy. A very symbolic act in the end is the extinguishing of the fire on the cypress tree. As the cypress represents grief and mourning, this action serves as a manner of showing the period of sadness is over.

As in *Edith, a Tale of the Woods*, war causes the drama in the poem *Costanza*. This woman is in love with a young, bright soldier, who is seriously injured during a fight. Costanza takes care of him and before his death he shortly regains consciousness and shows gratitude to her for what she has done. He even sees her as a divine individual, which again emphasizes the importance of religiosity in Hemans’s poetry:

```
there enter’d hurrying feet,
Dark looks of shame and sorrow; mail-clad men,
Stern fugitives from that wild battle-glen,
Scaring the ringdoves from the porch-roof, bore
A wounded warrior in: the rocky floor
```
Gave back deep echoes to his clanging sword,
As there they laid their leader, and implor’d
The sweet saint’s prayers to heal him; then for flight,
Thro’ the wide forest and the mantling night,
Sped breathlessly again. – They pass’d – but he
The stateliest of a host – alas! To see
What mothers’ eyes have watch’d in rosy sleep
Till joy, for very fullness, turn’d to weep,
Thus changed! – a fearful thing! His golden crest
Was shiver’d, and the bright scarf on his breast –
Some costly love-gift – rent: – but what of these?
There were the clustering raven-locks – the breeze
As it came in thro’ lime and myrtle flowers,
Might scarcely lift them – steep’d in bloody showers
So heavily upon the pallid clay
Of the damp cheek they hung! The eyes’ dark ray –
Where was it? – and the lips! – they gasp’d apart,
With their light curve, as from the chisel’s art,
Still proudly beautiful! But that white hue –
Was it not death’s? – that stillness – that cold dew
On the scarr’d forehead? No! His spirit broke
From its deep trance ere long, yet but awoke
To wander in wild dreams; and there he lay,
By the fierce fever as a green reed shaken,
The haughty chief of thousands – the forsaken
Of all save one! – She fled not. Day by day –
Such hours are woman’s birthright – she, unknown,
Kept watch beside him, fearless and alone;
Binding his wounds, and oft in silence laving
His brow with tears that mourn’d the strong man’s raving.

[...]

But o’er his frame
Too fast the strong tide rush’d-the sudden shame,
The joy, th’ amaze!-he bow’d his head-it fell
On the wrong’d bosom which had lov’d so well;
And love still perfect, gave him refuge there, –
His last faint breath just wav’d her floating hair.
(50-84; 115-120)

The name “Costanza” is Italian for constancy, steadiness and loyalty, which alludes to
her divine-like characterization. Just like in the previous poems, the fading colours and the
darkening of the eyes stand for the departure from earth. We can see his bright armour and
body grow dim: “his golden crest was shiver’d” (63-64) and “The eyes’ dark ray – Where was it? – and the lips! – they gasp’d apart” (70-71).

The velocity of the narrative increases when Costanza comes into contact with the injured man and describes him, until he wakes up. As I have remarked before, Hemans often changes the tempo of a scene to denote approaching death.

The sounds of the war and death scenes are of a completely different kind from those of the nature scene in the beginning of the poem. In the former, the poet uses dull and sad noises such as “echoes” (55) and “crying”, in the latter musical aspects like “floating song”. At the end of the poem, when Cesario dies, silence drowns out all sounds.

In the poem Madeleine, a Domestic Tale, a woman leaves her home to marry the love of her life. Unfortunately, fate strikes and her husband dies. This is an enormous shock for Madeleine. She does not see the use of life anymore and falls into loneliness. Only in her dreams she is able to be happy:

Alas! We trace
The map of our own paths, and long ere years
With their dull steps the brilliant lines efface
On sweeps the storm, and blots them out with tears.
That home was darken’d soon: the summer breeze
Welcom’d with death the wanderers from the seas,
Death unto one, and anguish how forlorn!
To her, that widow’d in her marriage-morn,
Sat in her voiceless dwelling, whence with him,
Her bosom’s first belov’d, her friend and guide,
Joy had gone forth, and left the green earth dim,
As from the sun shut out on every side,
By the close veil of misery! – Oh! but ill,
When with rich hopes 0’ erfraught, the young high heart
· Bears its first blow! – it knows not yet the part
Which life will teach – to suffer and be still,
And with submissive love to count the flowers
Which yet are spared, and thro’ the future hours
To send no busy dream!-She had not learn’d
Of sorrow till that hour, and therefore turn’d,
In weariness from life: then came th’ unrest,
The heart-sick yearning of the exile’s breast,
The haunting sounds of voices far away,
And household steps; until at last she lay
On her lone couch of sickness, lost in dreams
Of the gay vineyards and blue-rushing streams
In her own sunny land, and murmuring oft
Familiar names, in accents wild, yet soft.
(47-74)

In Madeleine, death is projected through different elements of nature, in particularly through the sea. The water could be a reference to the belief found in several religions that when a person dies, he has to cross a sea or river to go to the empire of the dead. We can also observe the sadness of Madeleine in descriptions such as “left the green earth dim” (57) and “As from the sun shut out on every side, by the close veil of misery” (58-59). In this way, we get a clear-cut view of how she feels about this situation. She does not feel at home in this world now that her husband has crossed over, she feels empty inside and has no goal anymore.

When the atmosphere converts into drama, this is again perceptible by means of sound and light. The poet literally says that “the home was darkened soon” (51) and that Madeleine “sat in her voiceless dwelling” (55). The darkness already foreshadows that the happiness of the beginning of the poem will soon come to an end. And after her husband dies, the protagonist falls into silence because of the recent loss she went through.
3.2.1.2. Death as relief

Sometimes people have difficulties coping with the loss of their loved ones as a result of which they cannot think of any advantages to keep on living anymore. The suffering can manifest itself in various ways such as loneliness or madness. Lonesome people perceive an inconsolable emptiness and therefore prefer to pass away, hoping for a reunion with their beloved. They are not afraid of dying and rather see it as a relief, a way of becoming one with themselves as well as with their dearest again. Hemans frequently addresses this theme, especially to put emphasis on the previous subcategory, death as a result of drama. As the majority of her female protagonists are dreadfully cut up by the terrible loss of their husbands, the importance of the tragedy is accentuated through dying out of heart-ache or killing themselves for example.

After Eudora, the protagonist of *The Bride of the Greek Isle*, has been captured by the sea-rovers who killed her husband, they take her with them to their ship. But this woman seeks revenge for the murder of her deceased lover and sets the boat on fire. Through this act, she creates the opportunity both to avenge Ianthis and to kill herself in order to be reunited with him. As Tirica Lootens states “Hemans’s evocation of suttee in this poem suggests that the bride may stand as a torch to marital misery, an embodiment of preemptive self-sacrifice”. 50 In this scene, she even appears to be mightier than the forces of nature:

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To rest? – the waves tremble! – what piercing cry
Bursts from the heart of the ship on high?
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50 Tirica Lootens, 243.
What light through the heavens, in a sudden spire,  
Shoots from the deck up? Fire! ‘tis fire!  
There are wild forms hurrying to and fro,  
Seen darkly clear on that lurid glow;  
There are shout, and signal-gun, and call,  
And the dashing of water; – but fruitless all!  
Man may not fetter, nor ocean tame  
The might and wrath of the rushing flame!  
It hath twined the mast like a glittering snake.  
That coils up a tree from a dusky brake;  
It hath touch’d the sails, and their canvass rolls  
Away from its breath into shrivell’d scrolls;  
It hath taken the flag’s high place in air,  
And redden’d the stars with its wavy glare  
And sent out bright arrows, and soar’d in glee,  
To a burning mount midst the moonlight sea.  
The swimmers are plunging from stern and prow –  
Eudora, Eudora! Where, where art thou?  
The slave and his master alike are gone –  
Mother! Who stands on the deck alone?  
The child of thy bosom! – and lo! A brand  
Blazing up high in her lifted hand!  
And her veil flung back, and her free dark hair  
Sway’d by the flames as they rock and flare,  
And her fragile form to its loftiest height  
Dilated, as if by the spirit’s might,  
And her eye with an eagle-gladness fraught, –  
Oh! could this work be of woman wrought?  
Yes! ‘twas her deed! – by that haughty smile  
It was her’s!–She hath kindled her funeral pile!  
Never might shame on that bright head be,  
Her blood was the Greek’s, and hath made her free.

Proudly she stands, like an Indian bride  
On the pyre with the holy dead beside;  
But a shriek from her mother hath caught her ear,  
As the flames to her marriage-robe draw near,  
And starting, she spreads her pale arms in vain  
To the form they must never infold again.  
One moment more, and her hands are clasp’d,  
Fallen is the torch they had wildly grasp’d,  
Her sinking knee unto Heaven is bow’d,  
And her last look rais’d thro’ the smoke’s dim shroud,  
And her lips as in prayer for her pardon move –  
Now the night gathers o’er youth and love!  
(181-226)
Eudora is capable of holding the fire in her hand which could make the reader dwell on the fact whether this woman is maybe more than just human, if maybe she has some supernatural, divine power. In almost all of Hemans’s poems, a frequent occurrence of religious references is noticeable, at times more directly than other times. In The Bride of the Greek Isle, it is possible that the poet makes use of the water in order to underline the importance of religious conviction. Hemans presumably sees it as a way to move over to the afterlife. Eudora’s mother is standing on the shore and watches her daughter go up in flames. The water creates a distance between mother and child, it disperses the dead from the living. The significance of religiosity is also evident words such as “Heaven” (223), written with a capital letter, and “prayer” (225).

Just as in the previous subcategory, the contrast between light and darkness projects the life - death opposition. While the festivities are held during daytime, when everything is bright and the sun shines, the death-scene takes place in the middle of the dark and gloomy night.

In Properzia Rossi, the protagonist and narrator of the story wants to be put out of her misery, for she is madly in love with a man who does not love her back. As her love remains unrequited in life, she seeks solace in death. Before ending her life, however, she creates a painting in an attempt to show him the depth of her profound love and adoration. Her passion and despair are demonstrated in the following dramatic monologue:

One dream of passion and of beauty more!
And in its bright fulfilment let me pour
My soul away! Let earth retain a trace
Of that which lit my being, tho’ its race
Might have been loftier far. – Yet one more dream!
From my deep spirit one victorious gleam
Ere I depart! For thee alone, for thee!
May this last work, this farewell triumph be,
Thou, lov’d so vainly! I would leave enshrined
Something immortal of my heart and mind,
That yet may speak to thee when I am gone,
Shaking thine inmost bosom with a tone
Of lost affection; – something that may prove
· What she hath been, whose melancholy love
On thee was lavish’d; silent pang and tear,
And fervent song, that gush’d when none were near,
And dream by night, and weary thought by day
Stealing the brightness from her life away, –
While thou – Awake! not yet within me die,
Under the burden and the agony
Of this vain tenderness, – my spirit, wake!
Ev’n for thy sorrowful affection’s sake,
Live! In thy work breathe out! – that he may yet,
Feeling sad mastery there, perchance regret
Thine unrequited gift.

[...]

Yet I leave my name –
As a deep thrill may linger on the lyre
When its full chords are hush’d – awhile to live,
And one day haply in thy heart revive
Sad thoughts of me: – I leave it, with a sound,
A spell o’er memory, mournfully profound,
I leave it, on my country’s air to dwell, –
Say proudly yet – “Twas her’s who lov’d me well!”
(1-25; 121-128)

Whereas in the poems discussed earlier there was a clear connection between the afterlife and silence, sound is now associated with death. More specifically, this woman leaves a sound behind while she embarks on her voyage to the spirit world. Her body is gone, yet her voice remains so that she may be remembered by the living.

The next poem which I will discuss is Imelda, in which a woman, just as in The Bride of the Greek Isle, does not see the use in living anymore after her lover has been killed by her
brother. She deems suicide a way to be reunited with him, as well as a way to return to a
state of happiness. Their love is so strong that even a fearful thing such as death cannot stop
them from being together. On the contrary, it will bring them back together. This is why she
is not afraid of dying; she knows great love is waiting for her on the other side:

There came swift courage! On the dewy ground
She knelt, with all her dark hair floating round,
Like a long silken stole; she knelt, and press’d
Her lips of glowing life to Azzo’s breast,
Drawing the poison forth. A strange, sad sight!
Pale death, and fearless love, and solemn night! –
So the moon saw them last

The morn came singing
Thro’ the green forests of the Appenines,
With all her joyous birds their free flight winging,
And steps and voices out amongst the vines.
What found that day-spring here? Two fair forms laid
Like sculptured sleepers; from the myrtle shade
Casting a gleam of beauty o’er the wave,
Still, mournful, sweet. Were such things for the grave?
Could it be so indeed? That radiant girl,
Deck’d as for bridal hours! – long braids of pearl
Amidst her shadowy locks were faintly shining,
As tears might shine, with melancholy light;
And there was gold her slender waist entwining;
And her pale graceful arms – how sadly bright!
And fiery gems upon her breast were lying,
And round her marble brow red roses dying –
But she died first! – the violet’s hue had spread
O’er her sweet eyelids with repose oppress’d,
She had bow’d heavily her gentle head,
And, on the youth’s hush’d bosom, sunk to rest.
So slept they well! – the poison’s work was done;
Love with true heart had striven – but Death had won.
(97-124)
This story resembles Shakespeare’s story *Romeo and Juliet*, in which two lovers die because of a relationship that is made impossible by their families. Both couples decide to cross over to the afterlife in the same manner, i.e. by committing suicide with poison.

Generally, nature and sound deteriorate when death has struck, yet here we notice a positive description of the fauna and flora. We hear singing, and positive adjectives such as “radiant” (111) are added to words such as “birds” (105). It is the reverse of how a death scene should normally looks like in Romantic and Victorian literature. This has to do with the fact that the protagonist is relieved when she departs from the earthly life. For Imelda, death is not a punishment or something to be afraid of, it is a reward. By killing herself, she is forever joined with her the object of her affection. The prospect of this joy is reflected in nature. The lovers experience rest now that they are together again. This is also noticeable in the usage of the word “slept” in line 123, which refers to the death of Imelda and Bonifacio. By this choice of words, Felicia Hemans links the scene with the peaceful atmosphere described in the beginning of the fragment. Another possible explanation for the preference of positive elements of nature is that it could already be a description of Eden in order to announce Imelda’s death.

We hear singing and favourable adjectives such as “joyous” (105) are added to words such as birds. These birds, symbols of liberty and freedom, refer to the fact that the protagonist is relieved by death. She at last feels free from all worldly oppressions and is able to live happily ever after with her lover in the other world.

Just as in the other poems, an increase in speed can be observed in the scene in which the protagonist kills herself. Actions succeed one another very quickly when a significant change takes place.
Another poem in which death is experienced as relief is *Edith, a Tale of the Woods*. After the death of her husband, Edith's only wish is to follow her lover. Even when an Indian couple takes care of her and tries to make her happy, the only thing she thinks of is her lost love. She is grateful for their help and concern, but makes it clear to them that for her, joy cannot be found on earth anymore. Edith does not feel at ease in life any longer:

The parting sigh  
of autumn thro' the forests had gone by,  
And the rich maple o'er her wanderings lone  
Its crimson leaves in many a shower had strown,  
Flushing the air; and winter's blast had been  
Amidst the pines; and now a softer green  
Fring'd their dark boughs; for spring again had come,  
The sunny spring! But Edith to her home  
Was journeying fast. Alas! We think it sad  
To part with life, when all the earth looks glad  
In her young lovely things, when voices break  
Into sweet sounds, und leaves and blossoms wake:  
Is it not brighter then, in that far clime  
Where graves are not, nor blights of changeful time,  
If *here* such glory dwell with passing blooms,  
Such golden sunshine rest around the tombs?  
So thought the dying one. 'Twas early day,  
And sounds and odours with the breezes' play,  
Whispering of spring-time, thro' the cabin-door,  
Unto her couch life's farewell sweetness bore;  
Then with a look where all her hope awoke,  
"My father!" – to the grey-hair'd chief she spoke –  
"Know'st thou that I depart?" – "I know, I know,"  
He answer'd mournfully, "that thou must go  
To thy belov'd, my daughter!" – "Sorrow not  
For me, kind mother!" with meek smiles once more  
She murmur'd in low tones; "one happy lot  
Awaits, us, friends! Upon the better shore;  
For we have pray'd together in one trust  
And lifted our frail spirits from the dust,  
To God, who gave them. Lay me by mine own,  
Under the cedar-shade: where he is gone  
Thither I go. There will my sisters be,  
And the dead parents, lisping at whose knee  
My childhood's prayer was learn'd, – the Saviour's prayer
Which now ye know, – and I shall meet you there,
Father, and gentle mother! – ye have bound
The bruised reed, and mercy shall be found
By Mercy’s children.” – From the matron’s eye
Dropp’d tears, her sole and passionate reply;
But Edith felt them not; for now a sleep,
Solemnly beautiful, a stillness deep,
Fell on her settled face. Then, sad and slow,
And mantling up his stately head in wo,
“Thou’rt passing hence,” he sang, that warrior old,
In sounds like those by plaintive waters roll’d.

[...]

The song had ceas’d – the listeners caught no breath,
That lovely sleep had melted into death.
(145-190; 227-228)

By means of a particular choice of words to express Edith’s facial expression, Felicia Hemans demonstrates the protagonist’s comfort of finally being able to reach the other side. Her “settled face” (187) signifies that she has found rest at last. As in the previous poem, sleeping and dying are linked, although we must remark on a difference. In the story of Edith, sleep is a kind of preparation for the actual decease, whereas in the previous poem, falling asleep is synonymous with dying.

In the excerpt quoted above, Edith tries to flee from the arousing beauty of nature, as she does not want to be part of this. Nature represents life, but she feels no connection with it anymore. This again emphasizes her will to die. We can also see the relief that death brings in the contrast between light and darkness. When we usually think of death, we associate it with darkness. In this passage, however, the “golden sunshine” (160) also rests “around the tombs” (160). The passage to the afterlife changes into something promising and positive in this poem.
For the protagonist, religion is crucial to help her in this difficult moment. By praying, Edith feels more secure and has the courage to rejoin her husband because she knows God is protecting her and giving her strength: “For we have pray’d together in one trust and lifted our frail spirits from the dust, to God, who gave them” (173-175). Also on other occasions the importance of Christian faith is stressed, such as in the conversion of the Indian couple who helped Edith. These two people become her family after they become Christians. She even refers to them as her mother and father towards the end.

In *The Indian City*, the woman whose child has been murdered, has no reason to live anymore and desires death. Before she will be able to rest peacefully, however, she wants to avenge her son by corrupting the Brahmins’ name. They were responsible for this cruelty. When she realizes that she will attain her goal, a sudden rest falls over her and she dies:

The bright sun set in his pomp and pride,
As on that eve when the fair boy died;
She gazed from her couch, and a softness fell
O’er her weary heart with the day’s farewell;
She spoke, and her voice in its dying tone
Had an echo of feelings that long seem’d flown
She murmur’d a low sweet cradle song,
Strange midst the din of a warrior throng,
A song of the time when her boy’s young cheek
Had glow’d on her breast in its slumber meek;
But something which breathed from that mournful strain
Sent a fitful gust o’er her soul again,
And starting as if from a dream, she cried –
“Give him proud burial at my side!
There, by yon lake, where the palm-boughs wave,
When the temples are fallen, make there our grave.”

And the temples fell, tho’ the spirit pass’d,
That stay’d not for victory’s voice at last;
When the day was won for the martyr-dead,
For the broken heart, and the bright blood shed.
The woman’s voice “in its dying tone” (199) hints at the woman’s passing away. Only some murmuring and dull noises are heard, which can be related to death. These dull sounds stand in sharp contrast with the beautiful and resounding music at the beginning of the poem, which represents the joy of life: “And a cool sweet plashing was ever heard, as the molten glass of the wave was stirr’d;” (23-24).

Through the description of the softness that falls over the woman’s “weary heart” (198) who is lying on her couch waiting for death, Hemans puts the emphasis on the fact that this mother is pleased to be reunited with her son in death. She obtained her goal and is now finally able to overcome this horrible event.

*The Peasant Girl of the Rhône* tells the story of the death of a young man. This person has a secret lover who keeps refreshing the flowers on his grave, which makes his family and friends curious about who is responsible for this. Because of a different background, the young man and the girl were obliged them to keep their relationship secret. The mystery is revealed when one day the girl is found lying in the grave, together with her lover. There is no actual evidence that this woman died because she wanted to be together with her dead lover, yet it is a plausible assumption. Maybe the woman could not live without him and died out of grief, but the fact that she is found lying next to her lover in the same grave, strongly suggests suicide:

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Whose gentle nurture brought, from hidden dells,  
That gem-like wealth of blossoms and sweet bells,  
To blush thro’ every season? – Blight and chill  
Might touch the changing woods, but duly still,
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For years, those gorgeous coronals renewed,
And brightly clasping marble spear and helm,
Even thro’ mid-winter, filled the solitude
With a strange smile, a glow of summer’s realm.
Surely some fond and fervent heart was pouring
Its youth’s vain worship on the dust, adoring
In lone devotedness!

One spring-morn rose,
And found, within that tomb’s proud shadow laid –
Oh! not as midst the vineyards, to repose:
From the fierce noon – a dark-hair’d peasant maid:
Who could reveal her story? – That still face
Had once been fair; for on the clear arch’d brow,
And the curv’d lip, there lingered yet such grace
As sculpture gives its dreams; and long and low
The deep black lashes, o’er the half-shut eye –
For death was on its lids – fell mournfully.
But the cold cheek was sunk, the raven hair
Dimm’d, the slight form all wasted, as by care.
Whence came that early blight? – Her kindred’s place
Was not amidst the high De Couci race;
Yet there her shrine had been! – She grasp’d a wreath –
The tomb’s last garland! – This was love in death!

In death, the young man and the peasant girl are reunited. The woman’s love lasted,
even after her lover passed away, and will continue in death: “This was love in death” (98).
Nothing can inhibit their feelings for each other, not even death.

The girl is represented as a divine creature. Her beauty is beyond earthly splendour
and her perfection does not match the reality of life. Religion takes an important place in
this poem, as it also does in Hemans’s other work. But the marvellous characteristics of her
appearance soon deteriorate so as to accentuate her death.

The “tomb’s last garland” (98) represents the flowers which will no longer be
refreshed since the peasant girl is dead. Flowers are often placed on graves as a way of
demonstrating that the deceased is not forgotten. The girl’s death obviously leads to the fact
that these flowers will not be replaced anymore. Brandy makes an interesting remark about the symbolism of withering flowers in the Victorian period:

the evanescence of flowers becomes a symbolic identification for women. To have a "vain" love for something that while beautiful, cannot last, suggests an unconsciously acute premonition of the fate of nineteenth-century women's poetry.  

In the following poem, *The Indian Woman’s Death Song*, death as relief has a different meaning than in the previous poems. Here, the protagonist’s husband has left her for another woman and she cannot cope with his departure, as Lundeen explains:

In "Indian Woman's Death-Song," death appears to be little more than conveyance to a happier, safer place. Thus, the mother leaves the earth singing, as if art can transport her child and her into another world.

She prefers dying over having to suffer from this loss, which is visible in her death song:

Roll swiftly to the Spirit’s land, thou mighty stream and free!  
Father of ancient waters, roll! And bear our lives with thee!  
The weary bird that storms have toss’d, would seek the sunshine’s calm,  
And the deer that hath the arrow’s hurt, flies to the woods of balm.

Roll on – my warrior’s eye hath look’d upon another’s face,  
And mine hath faded from his soul, as fades a moonbeam’s trace;  
My shadow comes not o’er his path, my whisper to his dream,  
He flings away the broken reed – roll swifter yet, thou stream!

The voice that spoke of other days is hush’d within his breast,  
But mine its lonely music haunts, and will not let me rest;  
It sings a low and mournful song of gladness that is gone,  
I cannot live without that light – Father of waves! Roll on!

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51 Ryan Brandy, 256.
Will he not miss the bounding step that met him from the chase?
The heart of love that made his home an ever sunny place?
The hand that spread the hunter’s board, and deck’d his couch of yore? –
He will not! – roll, dark foaming stream, on to the better shore!

Some blessed fount amidst the woods of that bright land must flow,
Whose waters from my soul may leave the memory of this wo;
Some gentle wind must whisper there, whose breath may waft away
The burden of the heavy night, the sadness of the day.

[...]

She bears thee to the glorious bowers where none are heard to weep,
And where th’ unkind one hath no power again to trouble sleep;
And where the soul shall find its youth, as wakening from a dream, –
One moment, and that realm is ours – On, on, dark rolling stream!
(16-35; 40-43)

None of the poems mentioned before assigns such a crucial role to water. This natural element is the symbol for the journey to the afterlife, but it also has a more religious connotation, i.e. that of innocence and purity. References are made to water and streams throughout the story, such as “Father of waves” (27) and “dark foaming stream” (31).

In opposition to the poems cited above, the atmosphere is described in a completely different way. Whereas in the works already mentioned, nature is always quiet and peaceful, we remark a stormy and turbulent ambience in this particular poem. A possible reason for this is that in contrast to the peasant girl, for example, this woman has no lover who is waiting for her on the other side. She is relieved that death is near, but only because of the troubles she has on earth, and not because of a possible reunion with her lover after her death. The woman wants her life to end as soon as possible and therefore constantly instigates the water to move faster and faster. This velocity emphasizes the restlessness of the Indian woman’s mind.
We could say that when Pauline, the protagonist of the poem by the same title, runs back into the fire to go and look for her child, she implicitly shows that a life without her baby girl is unthinkable and that if she dies, she wants to pass away together with her daughter. This is made clear in line 71 and 72 of the following excerpt, in which Felicia Hemans wonders whether mother and daughter died in each other’s arms:

But oh! thy strength, deep love! – there is no power
To stay the mother from that rolling grave,
Tho’ fast on high the fiery volumes tower,
And forth, like banners, from each lattice wave
Back, back she rushes thro’ a host combined –
Mighty is anguish, with affection twined!

And what bold step may follow, midst the roar
Of the red billows, o’er their prey that rise?
None! – Courage there stood still – and never more
Did those fair forms emerge on human eyes!
Was one brief meeting theirs, one wild farewell?
And died they heart to heart? – Oh! who can tell?

[...]

And bore the ruins no recording trace
Of all that woman’s heart had dared and done?
Yes! There were gems to mark its mortal place,
That forth from dust and ashes dimly shone!
Those had the mother on her gentle breast,
Worn round her child’s fair image, there at rest.

And they were all! – the tender and the true
Left this alone her sacrifice to prove,
Hallowing the spot where mirth once lightly flew,
To deep, lone, chasten’d thoughts of grief and love.
Oh! we have need of patient faith below,
To clear away the mysteries of such wo!
(61-72; 79-90)
In this passage, there is a clear distinction between the fast sequence of actions during the dramatic act, and the return of “rest” (84) afterwards. The fire spreads quickly, which also shows Pauline has to hurry if she wants to save her child.

Here again, the word “death” is replaced by “rest” (84). This could allude to the peaceful mood in which the ashes of the bodies are found. They have made their way to the afterlife in a serene way. Even the ashes of woman and child are found together so that we can assume they are still living together, although in another life.

We can also observe a contrast between the absence of colour immediately after this tragic event and the dimly shining ashes, which could refer to the saint-like character of Pauline and her child, as divine individuals are often portrayed in a bright way.

3.2.2. Love

The importance of love is linked with the previous theme. Love can be so profound that people sometimes react foolishly in particular situations. We can see this in their despair after the death of someone they loved, but also in desperate reactions such as suicide.

If we analyse this theme in depth, we can distinguish between two different kinds of love in *Records of Woman*: familial love and love for the spouse or lover. We could, however, also categorise “love for the spouse” under familial love, but as Hemans mentions this kind of love more specifically, I have chosen to classify it together with “love for the lover”.

3.2.2.1. Familial love

In many of her poems, Felicia Hemans refers to the importance of the affection and love received from and given to one’s closest family members. As mentioned before, the poet pays a lot of attention to bonding with her relatives. Unfortunately, Hemans was often disappointed by her failure to maintain a warm and cosy nest, which is for example caused by the death or departure of family members. She may be said to have reproduced her thoughts about this disillusionment into her work. Usually the collapse of the family is accompanied by loneliness. The poet herself had to bear a terrible solitude on several occasions, such as the abandonment by her husband, or the death of her mother, as mentioned before.

In *The Bride of the Greek Isle*, the protagonist leaves her family to get married. The language that is used makes clear that this woman had a very good relationship with her relatives and is afraid of leaving the trusted nest to start all over again:

She look’d on the vine at her father’s door,
Like one that is leaving his native shore;
She hung o’er the myrtle once call’d her own,
As it greenly wav’d by the threshold stone
She tum’d – and her mother’s gaze brought back
Each hue of her childhood’s faded track.
Oh! hush the song, and let her tears
Flow to the dream of her early years
Holy and pure are the drops that fall
When the young bride goes from her father’s hall;
She goes unto love yet untried and new,
She parts from love which hath still been true;
Mute be the song and the choral strain,
Till her heart’s deep well-spring is clear again!

She wept on her mother’s faithful breast,
Like a babe that sobs itself to rest;
She wept – yet laid her hand awhile
In his that waited her dawning smile,
Her soul’s affianced, nor cherish’d less
For the gush of nature’s tenderness!
She lifted her graceful head at last –
The choking swell of her heart was past;
And her lovely thoughts from their cells found way;
In the sudden flow of a plaintive lay.

(19-42)

To emphasize the significance of the home, the poet uses diverse images of nature, such as the “shore” (20). The shore in particular is often used to describe homecoming and stands in opposition to the water which represents movement and adventure, in short: change. Here, the bride is compared to “one that is leaving his native shore” (20), as she moves away from her father, mother and siblings. Another action associated with water, though in a different way, is crying. The bride’s sobbing triggers the memory of her childhood. The tears of a child can be seen as a symbol of innocence and religion: “Oh! hush the song, and let her tears flow to the dream of her early years, holy and pure are the drops that fall when the young bride goes from her father’s hall.” (25-28)

In this poem, there is a very explicit reference to love: “She goes unto love yet untried and new, she parts from love which hath still been true;” (29-30). Hemans again demonstrates that the protagonist replaces warm and cherished familial love with unknown spousal love.

If we look at the general tone of the poem, we observe an overall peaceful and quiet ambience, emphasizing the cosiness and warmth of the family nest.

In The Switzer’s Wife, little reference is made to familial love. Yet, one remarkable element that needs to be mentioned is that the male protagonist is driven by his motivation to
protect his family. At first he does not see any reason for who or why to fight anymore, but his wife is able to put him on the right track. She encourages him and gives him new strength:

“Are we thus oppress’d?
Then must we rise upon our mountain-sod,
And man must arm, and woman call on God!

I know what thou wouldst do, – and be it done!
Thy soul is darken’d with its fears for me.
Trust me to Heaven, my husband! – this, thy son,
The babe whom I have born thee, must be free!
And the sweet memory of our pleasant hearth
May well give strength – if aught be strong on earth.
(76-84)

This woman recalls the past, which was so joyful and lovely, in order to persuade her man to persevere in this battle. Especially the word “hearth” (83) refers to a warm and cosy home, the house of a happy family. The Switzer’s wife wants the situation to be just as it was before.

In Edith, a Tale of the Woods, the protagonist develops a feeling of love for the Indian couple who took care of her after her husband’s death. They literally become her family after a while, as she addresses them with ‘mother’ and ‘father’. The Indians try to make her happy, but Edith makes them cheerful as well by her presence. The Indians see her as a substitute for their lost daughter. While this situation might not correspond to a traditional concept of familial love, it is comparable to it. In the end, the family bonds however are not strong enough to keep Edith on earth. The spousal love therefore predominates familial love:
And life return’d,
Life, but with all its memories of the dead,
To Edith’s heart; and well the sufferer learn’d
Her task of meek endurance, well she wore
The chasten’d grief that humbly can adore,
Midst blinding tears. But unto that old pair,
Ev’n as a breath of spring’s awakening air,
Her presence was; or as a sweet wild tune
Bringing back tender thoughts, which all too soon
Depart with childhood. Sadly they had seen
A daughter to the land of spirits go,
And ever from that time her fading mien,
And voice, like winds of summer, soft and low,
Had haunted their dim years; but Edith’s face
Now look’d in holy sweetness from her place,
And they again seem’d parents. Oh! the joy,
The rich, deep blessedness — tho’ earth’s alloy,
Fear, that still bodes, be there — of pouring forth
The heart’s whole power of love, its wealth and worth
Of strong affection, in one healthful flow,
On something all its own! — that kindly glow,
Which to shut inward is consuming pain,
Gives the glad soul its flowering time again,
When, like the sunshine, freed. — And gentle cares
Th’ adopted Edith meekly gave for theirs
Who lov’d her thus: — her spirit dwelt, the while,
With the departed, and her patient smile
Spoke of farewells to earth; — yet still she pray’d,
Ev’n o’er her soldier’s lowly grave, for aid
One purpose to fulfil, to leave one trace
Brightly recording that her dwelling-place
Had been among the wilds; for well she knew
The secret whisper of her bosom true,
Which warn’d her hence.
(82-115)

The seasons to which the poetic voice refers are spring and summer, periods that can be associated with happiness and positive feelings. In this way, Felicia Hemans emphasizes the contrast with the previous passage in which Edith’s husband died, the general atmosphere of which was reminiscent of autumn or winter.
The vividness of this love is also presented by the particular usage of sound. We can only observe descriptions of sweet and optimistic noises, such as “a sweet wild tune” (89) and “and voice, like winds of summer, soft and low” (94).

Furthermore, the brightness of the scene contributes to the general impression of familial love and happiness the reader gets from this scene. During the previous description, when her husband died, it was night and everything was dark, whereas in this passage we see a lot of energy due to the clarity of the day and the season.

Another notable aspect is the importance of Christian belief in the poem. By converting the Indian couple, a close bond is set up between Edith and the latter. Before, she only saw them as strange people with dark faces, but after they changed their belief, she is able to accept them as her family. Religion thus strengthens familial love in the poem.

The most clearest example of familial love can be found in The Indian City. The strong relationship between mother and son is immediately perceptible. They always stay in each other’s neighbourhood and can be seen as soul mates. The most significant passage, in which Hemans shows the grandeur of the mother’s feelings, takes place when, after the death of her son, she wants to avenge him. The Brahmins harmed her proper flesh and blood by attacking her child and therefore she feels the need to take actions against these cruelties:

And what deep change, what work of power,  
Was wrought on her secret soul that hour?  
How rose the lonely one? – She rose  
Like a prophetess from dark repose!  
And proudly flung from her face the veil,  
And shook the hair from her forehead pale,  
And ’midst her wondering handmaids stood,
With the sudden glance of a dauntless mood.
Ay, lifting up to the midnight sky
A brow in its regal passion high,
With a close and rigid grasp she press’d
The blood-stain’d robe to her heaving breast,
And said – “Not yet – not yet I weep,
Not yet my spirit shall sink or sleep,
Not till yon city, in ruins rent,
Be piled for its victim’s monument.
– Cover his dust! Bear it on before!
It shall visit those temple-gates once more.”

And away in the train of the dead she turn’d,
The strength of her step was the heart that burn’d;
And the Bramin groves in the starlight smil’d,
As the mother pass’d with her slaughter’d child.
(121-142)

Faith plays a crucial role here, just as in the previous poem. The woman is depicted as a “prophetess” (124) who protects her family and friends. She wants to go and tell this horrible story to as many people as possible so that everybody would understand how cruel these murderers really are. The mother-son relationship is so strong that this woman would do anything for her child.

The killers’ facial expression also reveals a bit of their character. It seems as if they enjoyed killing this innocent boy, as the poet describes their smiling faces when the mother passes with the corpse of her dead son: “And the Bramin groves in the starlight smil’d, as the mother pass’d with her slaughter’d child” (141-142). We could assume that the religious conviction of these men is so extreme that they do not even feel remorse anymore. The portrayal of such cold people contrasts with the familial warmth and love of the mother and her child.
In *Indian Woman’s Death-Song*, the protagonist’s love for her child can be seen in the fact that she does not want her child to undergo the same troubles and despair that she went through. She therefore takes her with her to the land of the dead, as Norma Clarke explains:

Taking to the river with her female baby at her breast, dauntless and proud, with ‘a strange gladness’, even triumph, she determines to go at once to the better world. Death is preferable to life for a daughter, ‘born, like me, for woman’s weary lot’. ⁵³

Though perhaps an extreme way of familial love, the woman’s decision turns out to be the only solution she can think of in order to stay close to her baby girl:

> And thou, my babe! Tho’ born, like me, for woman’s weary lot,  
> Smile! – to that wasting of the heart, my own! I leave thee not;  
> Too bright a thing art thou to pine in aching love away,  
> Thy mother bears thee far, young Fawn! From sorrow and decay.  
> (32-35)

The child is compared to a fawn, which emphasizes the importance of natural imagery in Hemans’s poems and which symbolizes the innocence and helplessness of the child. The “babe” (32) is completely dependent on other people. Also in spiritual circles young animals are often used as an image of purity.

The significance of familial love is also noticeable in *Joan of Arc, in Rheims*, in which the protagonist is overjoyed to see her family again after a difficult period, for Joan of Arc had to disguise herself like a man in order to be able to obtain her goals as well as to interfere in certain political debates. Miriam Elizabeth Burstein explains that:

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⁵³ Norma Clarke, p. 80.
Hemans represents domesticity as an enfolding, but this enfolding too marks what is lost, not the promise of a return. Joan’s “free thoughts” may naturally run in the “track” of innocent home life, but her calling to historical greatness will ultimately leave her standing alone.  

As mentioned in the first chapter, women did not have the same rights as men in the Victorian era. Some of them would not accept this and consequently tried everything to change this unequal situation. Yet when she was discovered to be a woman, this provoked quite a polemic. The discussion arose whether this woman could maintain her position or not. A number of men were even jealous of her, which thwarted her plans and provoked her prosecution. The only people with whom Joan could really be herself, was her family. In their presence, she could express herself in the way she wanted to and did not need to put up a mask so as to protect herself:

Daughter of victory! – A triumphant strain,  
A proud rich stream of warlike melodies,  
Gush’d thro’ the portals of the antique fane,  
And forth she came. – Then rose a nation’s sound –  
Oh! what a power to bid the quick heart bound,  
The wind bears onward with the stormy cheer  
Man gives to glory on her high career!  
Is there indeed such power? – far deeper dwells  
In one kind household voice, to reach the cells  
Whence happiness flows forth! – The shouts that fill’d  
The hollow heaven tempestuously, were still’d  
One moment; and in that brief pause, the tone,  
As of a breeze that o’er her home had blown,  
Sank on the bright maid’s heart. – “Joanne!” – Who spoke  
Like those whose childhood with her childhood grew  
Under one roof? – “Joanne!” – that murmur broke  
With sounds of weeping forth! – She turn’d – she knew  
Beside her, mark’d from all the thousands there,  
In the calm beauty of his silver hair,  
The stately shepherd; and the youth, whose joy  
From his dark eye flash’d proudly; and the boy,

54 Miriam Elizabeth Burstein, p. 75.
The youngest-born, that ever lov’d her best:
"Father! And ye, my brothers!" – On the breast
Of that grey sire she sank – and swiftly back,
Ev’n in an instant, to their native track
Her free thoughts flowed. – She saw the pomp no more –
The plumes, the banners: – to her cabin-door,
And to the Fairy’s fountain in the glade,
Where her young sisters by her side had play’d,
And to her hamlet’s chapel, where it rose
Hallowing the forest unto deep repose,
Her spirit turn’d. – The very wood-note, sung
In early spring-time by the bird, which dwelt
Where o’er her father’s roof the beech-leaves hung,
Was in her heart; a music heard and felt,
Winning her back to nature. – She unbound
The helm of many battles from her head,
And, with her bright locks bow’d to sweep the ground
Lifting her voice up, wept for joy, and said –
"Bless me, my father, bless me! And with thee,
To the still cabin and the beechen-tree,
Let me return!"
(46-87)

Joan of Arc revisits her past by means of the memory triggered by a fountain. As seen in the previous poems discussed in this dissertation, water often represents innocence. In her childhood, she did not have to pretend to be someone else. During one’s infancy, one is free from discomfort, one does not have big responsibilities. This woman only has positive souvenirs of her early years as a child and becomes homesick. As Christophe Bode argues:

Home is where your heart is and happiness lies on your own doorstep – only sometimes we do not realize this and delude ourselves in thinking we must search for it abroad and go far away, thereby paradoxically putting an even greater distance between ourselves and our happiness. ⁵⁵

She wishes to be happy and carefree like a child again, just as she was when she was living with her family. This is accentuated by the use of references to nature such as water.

⁵⁵ Christophe Bode, p. 66.
Another characteristic of this remembrance is that the scene is laid in spring-time, a season in which everything starts to bloom and animals start to multiply. This once more serves to indicate the positive atmosphere of the moment. The allusion to birds most likely symbolizes freedom and in Joan of Arc’s case this means to be free from any sort of disguise, to be yourself.

In the course of this flashback, the protagonist also uses other elements to heighten the loveliness of this time, such as sound. Joan speaks of music and of the singing of the birds, all very cheerful noises which contribute to the lively situation: “The very wood-note, sung in early spring-time by the bird,” (77-78).

At a particular moment, the protagonist takes off her helmet, which is emblematic of stepping out of her own shadow. She wants to show who she really is in order to be joyful again, without having to lie about her sex or background. This woman is fed up with constantly having to hide and wishes to behave in the same way in the outer world as she does with her family.

The next poem in which the importance of familial love comes to the fore is Pauline. As discussed in the previous theme, this mother makes a terrible sacrifice by dying in an attempt to save her child. There is no better example to demonstrate how significant family – and more specifically, the mother-child relationship – can be. It also illustrates what one is willing to sacrifice to maintain such a beautiful relationship. This mother gives up her own life in order to stay with her child:

But oh! thy strength, deep love! – there is no power
To stay the mother from that rolling grave,
Tho’ fast on high the fiery volumes tower,
And forth, like banners, from each lattice wave
Back, back she rushes thro’ a host combined –
Mighty is anguish, with affection twined!

And what bold step may follow, midst the roar
Of the red billows, o’er their prey that rise?
None! – Courage there stood still – and never more
Did those fair forms emerge on human eyes!
Was one brief meeting theirs, one wild farewell?
And died they heart to heart? – Oh! who can tell?
(61-72)

Pauline cannot think of a life without her daughter and prefers to die with her.
Everything she lives for is gone. We can become aware of the strength of the mother’s love
for her child through the questions Hemans inserts in her poem about how they died,
whether it was “heart to heart” (72) or not.

In The American Forest-Girl, the man who is about to be killed still looks very strong and the
speaker asks herself what he is thinking of. The man probably thinks of his family in order to
soothe and forget the horrible situation he finds himself in. The atmosphere, as well as his
mother and sisters, are depicted in a positive way, which is in opposition to the description
of the “dark ground of mortal agony” (18) of his current condition. The contrast between the
joyful past and the horrible present is central to this passage:

But who could tell
Of what within his secret heart befel
Known but to heaven that hour? – Perchance a thought
Of his far home then so intensely wrought,
That its full image, pictured to his eye
On the dark ground of mortal agony,
Rose clear as day! – and he might see the band,
Of his young sisters wandering hand in hand,
Where the laburnums droop’d; or haply binding
The jasmine, up the door’s low pillars winding;
Or, as day clos’d upon their gentle mirth,
Gathering with braided hair, around the hearth
Where sat their mother; – and that mother’s face
Its grave sweet smile yet wearing in the place
Where so it ever smiled! – Perchance the prayer
Learn’d at her knee came back on his despair;
The blessing from her voice, the very tone
Of her “Good-night” might breathe from boyhood gone!
(13-30)

It is clear that this man experienced a home full of warmth and love. The poet therefore uses certain elements that convey this particular ambience, such as a hearth, which was present in most of the homes of that period and which is generally situated in the living room, a place where the whole family comes together and enjoys each other’s company. This object makes the room even more comfortable as it gives warmth and creates a sort of comfortable feeling. In doing so, the family members feel at ease in this place and the bond between them is strengthened. This is for instance also put forward by the choice of particular verbs and adverbs like “happily binding” (21).

In this passage, reference is made to joyful sounds, such as the sweet voice of the mother. This is connected to her everlasting smile, another positive element, but it also alludes to the family’s religious beliefs such as for instance the prayers the man “learn’d at her knee” (28).

Furthermore, Felicia Hemans makes use of nature to emphasize the constructive and cheerful ambience going on at the moment of the protagonist’s flashback. She especially uses colourful plants and flowers, such as the laburnum, which is a tree with yellow flowers, but also the rose and the jasmine. Colours and brightness frequently represent joyful moments as well.
Familial love is also visible in the parents’ sadness caused by the departure of a child from the domestic house, as is the case in *Madeline, a Domestic Tale*. In the beginning of this story, a mother laments her daughter’s leaving. The daughter is about to leave the warm nest to marry the man she loves and to start a family of her own. The strong connection between mother and daughter is shown by both women’s distress when the daughter finally has to take off. Madeline’s mother casts her mind back to how joyful things were when they were still a family. On the one hand, this makes clear that everything will change from the moment the daughter leaves the house. On the other hand, the mother also tries to soothe her child’s sadness by saying that a beautiful life awaits her:

“My child, my child, thou leav’st me! – I shall hear
The gentle voice no more that blest mine ear
With its first utterance; I shall miss the sound
Of thy light step amidst the flowers around,
And thy soft-breathing hymn at twilight’s close,
And thy “Good-night” at parting for repose.
Under the vine-leaves I shall sit alone,
And the low breeze will have a mournful tone
Amidst their tendrils, while I think of thee,
My child! And thou, along the moonlight sea,
With a soft sadness haply in thy glance,
Shalt watch thine own, thy pleasant land of France,
Fading to air. – Yet blessings with thee go!
Love guard thee, gentlest! And the exile’s wo
From thy young heart be far! – And sorrow not
For me, sweet daughter! In my lonely lot,
God shall be with me. – Now farewell, farewell!
Thou that hast been what words may never tell
Unto thy mother’s bosom, since the days
When thou wert pillow’d there, and wont to raise
In sudden laughter thence thy loving eye
That still sought mine: – those moments are gone by,
Thou too must go, my flowed – Yet with thee dwell
The peace of God! – One, one more gaze-farewell!”

This was a mother’s parting with her child,
A young meek Bride on whom fair fortune smil’d,
And wooed her with a voice of love away
From childhood’s home;
(1-28)

Madeline’s mother recalls everyday moments to talk about how happy they were
together. She mentions her daughter’s “step amidst the flowers” (5) and her saying
goodnight before she went to sleep. In this narration there are several references to nature
to underline the significance of freedom, such as the allusion to the “light step amidst the
flowers” (4) and the “vine-leaves” (8). And when someone feels free, he or she is cheerful.

Another important element is sound. The departure of Madeline turns beautiful
sounds into sad noises: “the low breeze will have a mournful tone” (9). The bond between
Madeline and her mother was so intense that even the wind acquires a sorrowful attitude.
The mother’s voice too sounds distressed, accentuating her melancholy. Yet she still
expresses her tender affection for her child “and wooed her with a voice of love away” (27).

This woman tries to explain how empty the house will be now that the bond is torn
apart as life moves on. She, however, wishes her child to be happy and therefore tells her
that she will be alright and that there is no need to worry. The wish for Madeline to have a
good life is more important than her own grief about her daughter’s departure.

The last poem in Records of Woman that concerns familial love is The Memorial Pillar. In this
narrative, the poet writes about a mother who had a close relationship with her daughter,
but who is frightened that, now that she has passed away, she will be forgotten by her child.
The story takes place at the memorial pillar which was put up by her daughter in order to
remember where they parted. But in the course of time, the daughter visits this location less
frequently than before. Because of this, the anxiousness of the mother increases. This
woman actually desires to go back to times where she was still together with her child. In the first paragraphs, Felicia Hemans aims to make clear how strong the connection between mother and daughter was, yet the relationship seems to be less powerful now that death has come between them:

Mother and child! Whose blending tears
Have sanctified the place,
Where, to the love of many years,
Was given one last embrace;
Oh! ye have shrin’d a spell of power,
Deep in your record of that hour!

A spell to waken solemn thought,
A still, small under-tone,
That calls back days of childhood, fraught
With many a treasure gone;
And smites, perchance, the hidden source,
Tho’ long untroubled-of remorse.

For who, that gazes on the stone
Which marks your parting spot,
Who but a mother’s love hath known
The one love changing not?
Alas! And haply learn’d its worth
First with the sound of “Earth to earth”?
(1-18)

Already in the first line we notice the strength of the mother-daughter relationship in the words “blending tears” (1). They had such an intense bond that even their tears merged. Felicia Hemans puts emphasis on the fact that all the joyful moments of the past are gone. They still exist in their memories, but are fading away little by little.

Finally, we can also examine the intensity of this connection through the repetition of the word “love” itself. If we only look at this small excerpt, we already count this word three times.
3.2.2.2. Love for the spouse or lover

The second type of love is the love for the spouse or lover, depending on the situation. Sometimes this love is requited, at other times it is rejected. In Hemans’s poems, both the former and the latter kind of love appear regularly, probably because this was also a crucial element in her personal life. The poet herself had been head over heels in love with her husband, but unfortunately she had to endure a lot of misery too when he left her, as I have discussed in chapter two. Probably because of her consciousness of the universal aspect of this theme, Felicia Hemans’s poems treat both the joy and the melancholy that love brings along. This theme appears even more frequently than familial love. In some of the poems little reference is made to it, in others it is the essence of the story.

This theme is the crucial element around which the story of *Arabella Stuart* is constructed. As mentioned before, this woman expresses her love for her husband by means of a dramatic monologue. Arabella has been separated from her spouse and her attempt to be reunited with him has failed because she has been recaptured. The tragic nature of this monologue conveys to the reader that their love must have been very passionate. In the following passage, Arabella has just been recaptured by king James I:

Upon the deck I stood,
And a white sail came gliding o’er the flood,
Like some proud bird of ocean; then mine eye
Strained out, one moment earlier to descry
The form it ached for, and the bark’s career
Seem’d slow to that fond yearning: It drew near,
Fraught with our foes! – What boots it to recall
The strife, the tears? Once more a prison-wall
Shuts the green hills and woodlands from my sight,
And joyous glance of waters to the light,
And thee, my Seymour, thee!

I will not sink!
Thou, thou hast rent the heavy chain that bound thee;
And this shall be my strength – the joy to think
That thou mayst wander with heaven’s breath around thee,
And all the laughing sky! This thought shall yet
Shine o’er my heart, a radiant amulet,
Guarding it from despair. Thy bonds are broken,
And unto me, I know, thy true love’s token
Shall one day be deliverance, tho’ the years
Lie dim between, o’erhung with mists of tears.
(105-124)

In analysing this excerpt, we can see that the only thing that gives this woman the
strength to carry on and to fight for her life, is her husband.

Felicia Hemans expresses failure of their reunion by referring to images of nature that
symbolize the longing for freedom. The protagonist’s sight is prohibited from “the green hills
and woodlands” (113), which refers to her imprisonment and to a lack of freedom. Being
imprisoned, she is not able to meet her lover. The poet also develops the opposition
between light and darkness which respectively stand for love and loneliness. When Arabella
says that she is excluded from the “joyous glance of waters to the light” (114), the reader
infers that she feels lonely in this dark and cold prison.

After the Bride of the Greek Isle took leave of her family, she went to live with her future
husband. They love each other deeply and are grateful to have found one another. The
excerpt cited below is situated just before the drama in which the bride’s husband is about
to be killed. It describes the serene circumstances in which they find themselves,
demonstrating the cheerfulness of love and preceding the upcoming tragedy:
Still and sweet was the home that stood
In the flowering depths of a Grecian wood,
With the soft green light o’er its low roof spread,
As if from the glow of an emerald shed,
Pouring thro’ lime-leaves that mingled on high,
Asleep in the silence of noon’s clear sky.
Citrons amidst their dark foliage glow’d,
Making a gleam round the lone abode;
Laurels o’erhung it, whose faintest shiver
Scatter’d out rays like a glancing river;
Stars of the jasmine its pillars crown’d,
Vine-stalks its lattice and walls had bound,
And brightly before it a fountain’s play
Flung showers thro’ a thicket of glossy bay,
To a cypress which rose in that flashing rain,
Like one tall shaft of some fallen fane.

And thither Ianthis had brought his bride,
And the guests were met by that fountain-side;
They lifted the veil from Eudora’s face,
It smiled out softly in pensive grace,
With lips of love, and a brow serene,
Meet for the soul of the deep wood-scene. –
Bring wine, bring odours! – the board is spread –
Bring roses! A chaplet for every head!
The wine-cups foam’d, and the rose was shower’d
On the young and fair from the world embower’d,
The sun look’d not on them in that sweet shade,
The winds amid scented boughs were laid;
(95-122)

The positive atmosphere that the poet created in the poem is enhanced by three different images: nature, sound and colour.

First of all, by the description of the flourishing fauna and flora such as the jasmine and the rose, the reader assumes that the story takes place in spring or summertime, seasons which are often linked with feelings such as joy and love.

Secondly, the sounds depicted in this passage are of a quiet and peaceful kind. Felicia Hemans mentions the “still and sweet” (95) home and the “silence of noon’s clear sky” (100)
to describe the serenity of the moment. The bride and her husband feel comfortable and are thrilled to start their life together.

Finally, an abundance of colour appears to the reader when reading the description of the beautiful nature. Hemans makes use of colourful plants in order to convey the overwhelming feeling of love and happiness. This aspect is connected to the brightness of the picture, as if literally high-light-ing the pleasure of this particular moment.

The relationship between husband and wife in The Switzer’s Wife is of a somewhat strange nature. In the beginning of the story it seems as if these two people do not have a good understanding. They behave in a very cold way to one another, especially when addressing each other. Nevertheless, after a while, the Switzer’s wife vocabulary changes, which is noticeable in her use of words such as “my belov’d” (95). In the following passage, the woman tries to encourage her husband to pull himself together and to fight for her, so that they can pick up their gentle and quiet lives of before:

I know what thou wouldst do, – and be it done!  
Thy soul is darken’d with its fears for me.  
Trust me to Heaven, my husband! – this, thy son,  
The babe whom I have born thee, must be free!  
And the sweet memory of our pleasant hearth  
May well give strength – if aught be strong on earth.

Thou hast been brooding o’er the silent dread  
Of my desponding tears; now lift once more,  
My hunter of the hills! Thy stately head,  
And let thine eagle glance my joy restore!  
I can bear all, but seeing thee subdued, –  
Take to thee back thine own undaunted mood.

Go forth beside the waters, and along  
The chamois-paths, and thro’ the forests go;  
And tell, in burning words, thy tale of wrong
To the brave hearts that midst the hamlets glow.
God shall be with thee, my belov’d! – Away!
Bless but thy child, and leave me, – I can pray!”
(79-96)

The wife suspects that this is not her husband’s normal reaction and she helps him to remind him of what he would normally do. As Lootens argues:

Meek, devout, and Madonna-like, the Switzer's wife mediates between epic and pastoral modes. Armed by the "sweet memory of our pleasant hearth," her husband has "strength – if aught be strong on earth"; her (good) name is "armour" for his "heart" (42, 43).

This hints at the close relationship between these two people, as the Switzer’s wife seems to know her husband better than he does himself. This excerpt can be read as a sort of glorification of the Switzer. His wife really wants to portray a positive image of him, because that is who he really is.

In the next poem, Properzia Rossi, the love is of a different nature. In contrast to the poems described above, the love of this woman remains unanswered. She tried to show her feelings to the man she wanted as her partner, yet he does not seem interested and ignores her advances. Peter Simonsen states that:

Most of the poem is taken up with Rossi’s reflections on the intentions and emotional motivations of her last work, as well as with rendering the creative process itself. Little space is devoted to a formal description of the finished relief sculpture compared to the description of its conception and creation.

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56 Tricia Lootens, p. 244.
57 Peter Simonsen, p. 330.
As already described, she feels heartbroken and dies in the end. Yet, she leaves a painting in the hope that one day he will understand how she felt and regret the fact that he did not return her love. Her passion for this man is manifest throughout the poem:

May this last work, this farewell triumph be,
Thou, lov’d so vainly! I would leave enshrined
Something immortal of my heart and mind,
That yet may speak to thee when I am gone,
Shaking thine inmost bosom with a tone
Of lost affection; – something that may prove
What she hath been, whose melancholy love
On thee was lavish’d; silent pang and tear,
And fervent song, that gush’d when none were near,
And dream by night, and weary thought by day,
Stealing the brightness from her life away –
While thou – Awake! not yet within me die,
Under the burden and the agony
Of this vain tenderness, – my spirit, wake!
Ev’n for thy sorrowful affection’s sake,
Live! In thy work breathe out! – that he may yet,
Feeling sad mastery there, perchance regret
Thine unrequited gift.
(8-25)

It is clear that this woman is madly in love and that she tries to convey this message to her loved-one in every possible way, even after her death. As she is an artist, communicating her feelings by way of her art seems most natural to her.

The protagonist’s voice sounds very distressed, which demonstrates her despair and melancholy. She does not want to live if her love remains unrequited, since life would then be devoid of all meaning.

Her sadness is shown by means of the fading away of “the brightness from her life” (18). Because of the continuing disappointment, the darkness in her life increases and takes away all light and hope.
Another way of expressing her feelings is by means of sound, or rather the absence of sound. The more sorrowful she becomes, the more silence prevails over joyful music. This calm could also be a reference to the eternal silence, i.e. her approaching death.

The enormous impact of feelings can also be seen in Gertrude, or Fidelity till Death. The title already refers to the subject of this poem. As Feldman argues:

The central character in Gertrude is unable to stop the slow death by torture of the one she loves, but she musters strength to attend the dreadful event and heroically provides comfort while she herself is comfortless.  

Gertrude is so faithful to her husband that even when he awaits his dying hour, she stands beside him and keeps supporting him through this terrible moment. Her love is so strong, that she cannot leave him to his fate:

Her hands were clasp’d, her dark eyes rais’d,
The breeze threw back her hair;
Up to the fearful wheel she gaz’d –
All that she lov’d was there.
The night was round her clear and cold.
The holy heaven above,
Its pale stars watching to behold,
The might of earthly love.

“And bid me not depart,” she cried,
“My Rudolph, say not so!
This is no time to quit thy side,
Peace, peace! I cannot go.
Hath the world aught for me to fear,
When death is on thy brow?
The world! What means it? – mine is here –
I will not leave thee now.

1 have been with thee in thine hour

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Of glory and of bliss;
Doubt not its memory’s living power
To strengthen me thro’ this!
And thou, mine honour’d love and true,
Bear on, bear nobly on!
We have the blessed heaven in view,
Whose rest shall soon be won.”
(1-24)

In this work, the word “love” is frequently repeated, so as to emphasize its effect on the protagonist. Her affection for her husband conquers everything, even her fear of death. Although the setting of the scene would make anyone want to take off as soon as possible, Gertrude overcomes her anxiety. The darkness of the night does not make the place very attractive, and neither does the coldness, but even these frightening aspects of nature cannot refrain her from helping her man.

The role of religion is also accentuated by references to the “holy heaven above” (6) and the “blessed heaven” (23). Because of the couple’s religious conviction, the husband’s deacease seems a little more bearable. They know that he will be in good hands in heaven and that their love will last, even after Rudolph’s departure.

Another kind of love is the forbidden love between two people, as is described in *Imelda*. This woman kills herself after her brother has killed her lover, because of the relationship she had with him. Burstein states that:

Such sympathetic identification with the beloved translates emotions into physical effects, and suggests, somewhat bizarrely, that there may be a “proper” form of violence against the body after all: actions motivated by love opens up the lover’s body to the vicarious experience of the beloved’s pain. Imelda, knowing that her brother has killed her lover with a “venom’d point,” “pressed/Her lips of glowing life to Azzo’s breast,/Drawing the poison forth...” In this quasi-erotic exchange of deadly
bodily fluids, Imelda willingly transgresses physical and social boundaries for true union with her lover in death.  

Imelda does not want to live without him and thus follows him into death so that they can continue loving each other with no danger of being torn apart. In the beginning of the poem we can already notice the fondness these two people have for each other:

A fair girl met  
One whom she lov’d, by this lone temple’s spring,  
Just as the sun behind the pine-grove set,  
And eve’s low voice in whispers woke, to bring  
All wanderers home. They stood, that gentle pair,  
With the blue heaven of Italy above,  
And citron-odours dying on the air,  
And light leaves trembling round, and early love  
Deep in each breast. – What reck’d their souls of strife  
Between their fathers? Unto them young life  
Spread out the treasures of its vernal years;  
And if they wept, they wept far other tears  
Than the cold world wrings forth. They stood, that hour,  
Speaking of hope, while tree, and fount, and flower,  
And star, just gleaming thro’ the cypress boughs,  
Seem’d holy things, as records of their vows.  
(13-28)

The joy of their being together can be seen in nature. Hemans describes the elements of nature as flourishing and bright, which underlines the glorious moment of their reunion. Some examples are “the blue heaven” (18), the “citron-odours” (19) and the “light leaves”.

In contrast to the allusion to tears already discussed in previous poems, the tears of this loving couple are of another kind, with which the poet most likely means tears of joy.

The event is also situated during springtime, a bright season in which everything awakens after winter. Another interpretation is that their love is aroused through the

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59 Burstein, p. 76.
positive atmosphere of the moment and the place, a cheerful, though mysterious location.

The passion between Imelda and her secret lover is possibly even more intense because they were prohibited from loving each other.

Although the story of *Edith, a Tale of the Woods*, the overall subject of this poem concerns the immeasurable love for her dead husband. Their feelings for each other must have been so tremendous that this woman does not see any reason to live anymore now that her husband has passed away. Even though the Indians have treated her as if she was their own child, she cannot overcome her grief and desire to be reunited with her man:

And gentle cares
Th’ adopted Edith meekly gave for theirs
Who lov’d her thus: – her spirit dwelt, the while,
With the departed, and her patient smile
Spoke of farewells to earth, – yet still she pray’d,
Ev’n o’er her soldier’s lowly grave, for aid
*One* purpose to fulfil, to leave one trace
Brightly recording that her dwelling-place
Had been among the wilds; for well she knew
The secret whisper of her bosom true,
Which warn’d her hence.
And now, by many a word
Link’d unto moments when the heart was stirr’d,
By the sweet mournfulness of many a hymn,
Sung when the woods at eve grew hush’d and dim,
By the persuasion of her fervent eye,
All eloquent with child-like piety,
By the still beauty of her life, she strove
To win for heaven, and heaven-born truth, the love
Pour’d out on her so freely.
(105-123)

When we analyse this passage, we note the restlessness of Edith. She is not able to have peace of mind on earth any longer and constantly thinks of her lost love. “The secret
whisper of her bosom true” (114) refers to her heart that stimulates Edith to join her husband in the afterlife. It is as if the conversion of this Indian couple is a way for her to be sure that she would be received into Heaven. She wanted to accomplish one last good deed before leaving the earthly life.

In the second half of this excerpt, Hemans illustrates the coming of death through the darkening ambience. When the protagonist goes singing into the woods at eve, suddenly everything turns dark and silent, two aspects regularly linked with death. Edith wants to take part in this scene, she is not afraid of this gloomy setting. Therefore, the poet still describes her as a figure with radiant external characteristics, such as her “fervent eye” (119), “child-like piety” (120) and the “still beauty of her life” (121). In the darkness and stillness of the woods, she feels comfortable.

Just as in Imelda, the relationship between the Peasant Girl of the Rhone and her lover would never be approved by the man’s family because of their different backgrounds. Whereas the man’s father neglects visiting his son’s grave after a while, mysteriously, fresh flowers are deposited there every day. The woman’s passion for her lover predominates the familial love, just as in the story of Edith. Even when the man’s death leaves this girl deserted on earth, she tries to be as close as possible to him by visiting his grave and by keeping this place alive:

Forgotten? – not of all! – the sunny smile
Glancing in play o’er that proud lip erewhile,
And the dark locks whose breezy waving threw
A gladness round, whene’er their shade withdrew
From the bright brow; and all the sweetness lying
Within that eagle-eye’s jet radiance deep,
And all the music with that young voice dying,
Whose joyous echoes made the quick heart leap
As at a hunter’s bugle – these things lived
Still in one breast, whose silent love survived
The pomps of kindred sorrow. – Day by day,
On Aymer’s tomb fresh flowers in garlands lay,
Thro’ the dim fane soft summer-odours breathing,
And all the pale sepulchral trophies wreathing,
And with a flush of deeper brilliance glowing
In the rich light, like molten rubies flowing
Thro’ storied windows down. The violet there
Might speak of love – a secret love and lowly,
And the rose image all things fleet and fair,
And the faint passion-flower, the sad and holy,
Tell of diviner hopes. But whose light hand,
As for an altar, wove the radiant band?
Whose gentle nurture brought, from hidden dells,
That gem-like wealth of blossoms and sweet bells,
To blush thro’ every season? – Blight and chill
Might touch the changing woods, but duly still,
For years, those gorgeous coronals renewed,
And brightly clasping marble spear and helm,
Even thro’ mid-winter, filled the solitude
With a strange smile, a glow of summer’s realm.
Surely some fond and fervent heart was pouring
Its youth’s vain worship on the dust, adoring
In lone devotedness!
(51-83)

The aspects of nature included in this passage all represent liveliness and joy. Unlike in the other poems, the change of the seasons does not matter here, because even in winter there is light and colour thanks to the positive attitude of this girl. She brings sunshine to the grave, no matter what time of the year it is: “Blight and chill might touch the changing woods, but duly still, for years, those gorgeous coronals renewed” (75-77)

The use of colourful flowers contributes to the vivacity of this scene. Hemans even mentions what these flowers symbolize. The violet stands for love, the rose for “all things fleet and fair” (69) and the passion flower represents “diviner hopes” (71). These are all
optimistic characteristics to make clear that this woman still sees the love between her and her lover as something alive and hopeful.

These, however, are not the only elements that Felicia Hemans pays attention to in order to talk about the sparkling hope found in that location. She also writes about the sweet and soft sounds heard at the graveyard, such as the music, “joyous echoes” (58) and “sweet bells” (74). These sounds again emphasize the positive character of the excerpt.

One could say that all gloomy elements and feelings are substituted by benign ideas and actions: “And brightly clasping marble spear and helm, even thro’ mid-winter, filled the solitude with a strange smile, a glow of summer’s realm.” (78-80). There is only light in this scene, darkness is kept away.

In *The Indian Woman’s Death-Song*, the poet demonstrates another kind of love: desperate love. The Indian woman’s husband has left her for another wife. She is not able to cope with this situation and therefore kills herself, as well as her child. To undertake such actions, one must really be without any spark of hope. If she cannot win back the heart of her man, life makes no sense for her and she prefers to die. In the following passage, the Indian woman explains the interest of her husband in another woman, as well as the way in which he abandoned her to pursue this new passion in his life:

Roll on! – my warrior’s eye hath look’d upon another’s face,
And mine hath faded from his soul, as fades a moonbeam’s trace;
My shadow comes not o’er his path, my whisper to his dream,
He flings away the broken reed – roll swifter yet, thou stream!

The voice that spoke of other days is hush’d within his breast,
But mine its lonely music haunts, and will not let me rest;
It sings a low and mournful song of gladness that is gone,
I cannot live without that light – Father of waves! Roll on!
Will he not miss the bounding step that met him from the chase?
The heart of love that made his home an ever sunny place?
The hand that spread the hunter’s board, and deck’d his couch of yore? –
He will not! – roll, dark foaming stream, on to the better shore!
(20-31)

The woman asks herself whether her husband will remember all the beautiful moments they spend together and comes to the conclusion that he will not. He is moving on with his life without any thoughts of the past. She is the only one who stays behind with this feeling of loneliness.

We can observe the Indian woman’s distress about her abandonment through her deteriorating appearance. She becomes pale, her husband cannot hear her whispers any longer and he does not even see her shadow. He has completely forgotten her, while she is not able to let him go: “The voice that spoke of other days is hush’d within his breast, but mine its lonely music haunts, and will not let me rest;” (24-25). The sound of her voice is the crucial element of this story, as we can already infer from the title. This woman is singing her death-song, and even in that moment the one she loves does not have an eye or an ear for her.

The next poem that considers spousal love is of a very particular kind. Juana, the protagonist of this story, is sitting next to her husband’s death bed, but does not want to accept the fact that he has passed away. Extraordinary about this work is that this couple did not really had an intense relationship before the husband’s death because of the latter’s indifference towards his wife. But now that he is dead, Juana wants him to wake up again so that they could start all over again and that she could prove what a good wife she can be. It seems as
if she regrets their lack of intimacy and that she realizes it is too late now. She stays by his bedside the whole time, hoping that he will open his eyes again:

“Thou yet wilt wake,
And learn my watchings and my tears, belov’d one! For thy sake.

They told me this was death, but well I knew it could not be;
Fairest and stateliest of the earth! Who spoke of death for thee?
They would have wrapt the funeral shroud thy gallant form around,
But I forbade – and there thou art, a monarch, rob’d and crown’d!

With all thy bright locks gleaming still, their coronal beneath,
And thy brow so proudly beautiful – who said that this was death?
Silence hath been upon thy lips, and stillness round thee long,
But the hopeful spirit in my breast is all undimm’d and strong.

I know thou hast not lov’d me yet; I am not fair like thee,
The very glance of whose clear eye threw round a light of glee!
A frail and dropping form is mine — a cold unsmiling cheek,
Oh! I have but a woman’s heart, wherewith thy heart to seek.

But when thou wak’st, my prince, my lord! And hear’st how I have kept
A lonely vigil by thy side, and o’er thee pray’d and wept;
How in one long deep dream of thee my nights and days have past,
Surely that humble, patient love must win back love at last!
(15-32)

In contrast with the previous poems discussed, this woman puts herself into an inferior position with regard to her husband for him to have mercy on her: “I know thou hast not lov’d me yet; I am not fair like thee” (25). Juana talks about herself as “a frail dropping form” (27), facing “the very glance of whose clear eye threw round a light of glee” (26) when mentioning her better half. She tries to explain her weakness by means of her being a woman and therefore she is not to blame. Juana’s own limitations are opposite to the description of the extraordinary characteristics she attributes to her husband. From her depiction of him, it seems as if he were still alive, which is the one thing she desires at that
moment. This woman talks about his “bright locks gleaming still” (21), his “brow so proudly beautiful” (22). This description makes the reader wonder whether she worships him. Even though he is dead, everything around him is connected to brightness and happiness, the opposite of what death is usually associated with.

In The American Forest-Girl, the woman’s love for a man who is about to be killed drives her towards risking her life for him. Because of the strength of her affection, the girl succeeds in liberating her beloved one. The courage of undertaking such an action shows how intense the relationship between these two people really is. With her divine-like appearance she has scared off the red warriors and as a result they release their prisoner:

She had sat gazing on the victim long,  
Until the pity of her soul grew strong;  
And, by its passion’s deepening fervour sway’d,  
Ev’n to the stake she rush’d, and gently laid  
His bright head on her bosom, and around  
His form her slender arms to shield it wound  
Like close Liannes; then rais’d her glittering eye  
And clear-toned voice that said, “He shall not die!”

“He shall not die!” – the gloomy forest thrill’d  
To that sweet sound. A sudden wonder fell  
On the fierce throng; and heart and hand were still’d,  
Struck down, as by the whisper of a spell.  
They gaz’d, – their dark souls bow’d before the maid,  
She of the dancing step in wood and glade!  
And, as her cheek flush’d thro’ its olive hue,  
As her black tresses to the night-wind flew,  
Something o’ermaster’d them from that young mien –  
Something of heaven, in silence felt and seen;  
And seeming, to their child-like faith, a token  
That the Great Spirit by her voice had spoken.  

(59-78)
The warriors are afraid of this woman because they see her as the child of God. They believe that she is His messenger and they become conscious of the cruelty of the crime they are committing.

Different images are used to communicate the divergence between the killers and the innocent woman. One of the most important elements is the distinction between light and darkness in connection with the “glittering eye” (65) of the girl and the “dark souls” (71) of the villains. Such oppositions allow the reader to see that, in opposition to the innocent boy and girl, these warriors do not know love.

Religion plays an important role in this story, as well in the way that it strengthens love. Because of her faith, the woman is able to save this man’s life. Religion, in this poem, thus helps the girl to obtain her goals. Moreover, the forest-girl’s and God’s voice share the same characteristics; it is as if she becomes the embodiment of the Great Spirit.

The love of the protagonist in the next poem, Costanza, is also reinforced by her religious conviction. Her love for a young man gives her the perseverance to stay by his side in his dying hour. This woman has always loved him, yet he abandoned her and broke all contact with her. Now that he is seriously injured she gets the chance to demonstrate her affection for him. Before dying this man shortly regained his consciousness and wanted to know who nursed him so well. When he sees the girl, he becomes aware of her love and devotion, even after all those years, and regrets not having treated her in a more loving way before. After asking her for forgiveness, he only wants to die:

At last faint gleams
Of memory dawn’d upon the cloud of dreams,
And feebly lifting, as a child, his head
And gazing round him from his leafy bed,
He murmur’d forth, 'Where am I? What soft strain
Pass’d, like a breeze, across my burning brain?
Back from my youth it floated, with a tone.
Of life’s first music, and a thought of one –
Where is she now? And where the gauds of pride
Whose hollow splendour lured me from her side?
All lost! – and this is death! – I cannot die
Without forgiveness from that mournful eye!
Away! The earth hath lost her. Was she born
To brook abandonment, to strive with scorn?
My first, my holiest love! – her broken heart
Lies low, and I – unpardon’d I depart.”

But then Costanza rais’d the shadowy veil
From her dark locks and features brightly pale,
And stood before him with a smile – oh! ne’er
Did aught that smiled so much of sadness wear –
And said, “Cesario! Look on me; I live
To say my heart hath bled, and can forgive,
I loved thee with such worship, such deep trust
As should be Heaven’s alone – and Heaven is just!
I bless thee – be at peace!
(91-115)

In the end, the girl forgives him for what he has done, which could also be an allusion to the ever-forgiving God. No matter how horrible your mistakes are, He will always forgive you. The woman’s facial features have a celestial hue as well, as Felicia Hemans describes her as “brightly pale” (108). The love of this woman is so strong, that it even overcomes death.

The last poem discussed with reference to spousal love is Madeline, a Domestic Tale. The largest part of this story concerns the love between mother and daughter, as we have already seen, but Madeline also leaves her mother to start a family with the man she loves. The couple seems very happy together, but unfortunately, their joy only lasts a short time, as her husband dies soon afterwards and she ends up alone. Because of her husband’s death,
she becomes depressed. The next passage describes the arrival of Madeline at her new home:

The sounding ocean-solitudes were pass’d,
And the bright land was reach’d, the youthful world
That glows along the West: the sails were furl’d
In its clear sunshine, and the gentle bride
Look’d on the home that promis’d hearts untried
A bower of bliss to come.
(42-47)

Nature contributes to the depiction of the cheerful atmosphere when the poetic voice talks about the end of the “ocean-solitudes” (42), the “bright land” (43) and the “clear sunshine” (45). It announces the joyful period to come. The brightness of this description also conveys this impression. Everything is shiny and light, there are no dark thoughts. Whereas the ocean represents solitude and uncertainty, the “promised land” gives hope for a new life.
Conclusion

This dissertation investigates the themes of death and love in *Records of Woman* by Felicia Hemans, paying close attention to the imagery she used to express her subject matter. As I have demonstrated, these two themes are present in almost all of the poems collected in the volume.

In my analysis of the theme of death I distinguish two different kinds of death: death as the result of a drama and death as relief. The imagery used to refer to this subject or to aspects which are associated with it are very diverse, yet some reappear regularly, such as darkness and mostly deteriorating aspects of nature. The atmosphere in the passages concerned with death is very gloomy. Yet, one specific image of nature recurs more frequently than others, namely water, as this element is used to depict the passage of the dead to the afterlife. Also remarkable is that, at the moment of the death scene, the speed of the narration increases in several of the poems.

The second theme concerns love, the analysis of which I also divided into two subcategories: familial love and love for the spouse or lover. Hemans makes use of the images of brightness and of a colourful, flourishing nature to talk about love in general. We observe that Hemans consistently creates a positive and peaceful ambience when alluding to this topic. Furthermore, the poet tries to make clear the cheerfulness of loving people by inserting vivid colours into her descriptions.

As a result of my analysis it is clear that love and death are crucial themes in Felicia Hemans’s poems and that she uses a variety of recurring images to refer to them. This is only a part of the research that can be done about this work, but I hope that by means of my analysis, among others, more people will show interest in investigating this poet’s work.
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"THE LADY ARABELLA," as she has been frequently entitled, was descended from Margaret, eldest daughter of Henry VII., and consequently allied by birth to Elizabeth, as well as James I. This affinity to the throne proved the misfortune of her life, as the jealousies which it constantly excited in her royal relatives, who were anxious to prevent her marrying, shut her out from the enjoyment of that domestic happiness which her heart appears to have so fervently desired. By a secret, but early-discovered union with William Seymour, son of Lord Beauchamp, she alarmed the cabinet of James, and the wedded lovers were immediately placed in separate confinement. From this they found means to concert a romantic plan of escape; and having won over a female attendant, by whose assistance she was disguised in male attire, Arabella, though faint from recent sickness and suffering, stole out in the night, and at last reached an appointed spot, where a boat and servants were in waiting. She embarked; and, at break of day, a French vessel engaged to receive her, was discovered and gained. As Seymour, however, had not yet arrived, she was desirous that the vessel should lie at anchor for him; but this wish was overruled by her companions, who, contrary to her entreaties, hoisted sail, "which," says D'Israeli, "occasioned so fatal a termination to this romantic adventure. Seymour, indeed, had escaped from the Tower;—he reached the wharf, and found his confidential man waiting with a boat, and arrived at Lee. The time passed; the waves were rising; Arabella was not there; but in the distance he descried a vessel. Hiring a fisherman to take him on board, he discovered, to his grief, on hailing it, that it was not the French ship charged with his Arabella; in despair and confusion he found another ship from Newcastle, which for a large sum altered its course, and landed him in Flanders."—Arabella, meantime, whilst imploring her attendants to linger, and earnestly looking out for the expected boat of her husband, was overtaken in Calais Roads by a vessel in the King's service, and brought back to a captivity, under the suffering of which her mind and constitution gradually sank.—"What passed in that dreadful imprisonment, cannot perhaps be recovered for authentic history,—but enough is known; that her mind grew impaired, that she finally lost her reason, and, if the duration of her imprisonment was short, that it was only terminated by her death. Some effusions, often begun and never ended, written and erased, incoherent and rational, yet remain among her papers."—D'ISRAELI's Curiosities of Literature.—The following poem, meant as some record of her fate, and the imagined fluctuations of her thoughts and feelings, is supposed to commence during the time of her first imprisonment, whilst her mind was yet buoyed up by the consciousness of Seymour's affection, and the cherished hope of eventual deliverance.

And is not love in vain,
Torture enough without a living tomb?

BYRON.
I.
'TWAS but a dream!–I saw the stag leap free,
Under the boughs where early birds were singing,
I stood, o'ershadowed by the greenwood tree,
And heard, it seemed, a sudden bugle ringing
Far thro' a royal forest: then the fawn
Shot, like a gleam of light, from grassy lawn
To secret covert; and the smooth turf shook,
And lilies quiver'd by the glade's lone brook,
And young leaves trembled, as, in fleet career,
A princely band, with horn, and hound, and spear,
Like a rich masque swept forth. I saw the dance
Of their white plumes, that bore a silvery glance
Into the deep wood's heart; and all pass'd by
Save one–I met the smile of one clear eye,
Flashing out joy to mine. Yes, thou wert there,
Seymour! a soft wind blew the clustering hair
Back from thy gallant brow, as thou didst rein
Thy courser, turning from that gorgeous train,
And fling, methought, thy hunting-spear away,
And, lightly graceful in thy green array,
Bound to my side; and we, that met and parted,
Ever in dread of some dark watchful power,
Won back to childhood's trust, and fearless-hearted,
Blent the glad fulness of our thoughts that hour,
Even like the mingling of sweet streams, beneath
Dim woven leaves, and midst the floating breath
Of hidden forest flowers.

II.
'Tis past!–I wake,
A captive, and alone, and far from thee,
My love and friend!–Yet fostering, for thy sake,
A quenchless hope of happiness to be,
And feeling still my woman's spirit strong,
In the deep faith which lifts from earthly wrong
A heavenward glance. I know, I know our love
Shall yet call gentle angels from above,
By its undying fervour; and prevail,
Sending a breath, as of the spring's first gale,
Thro' hearts now cold; and, raising its bright face,
With a free gush of sunny tears, erase
The characters of anguish. In this trust,
I bear, I strive, I bow not to the dust,
That I may bring thee back no faded form,
No bosom chill'd and blighted by the storm,
But all my youth's first treasures, when we meet,
Making past sorrow, by communion, sweet.

III.
And thou too art in bonds!—yet droop thou not,
Oh, my belov'd!—there is one hopeless lot,
But one, and that not ours. Beside the dead
There sits the grief that mantles up its head,
Loathing the laughter and proud pomp of light,
When darkness, from the vainly-doting sight,
Covers its beautiful! If thou wert gone
To the grave's bosom, with thy radiant brow,—
If thy deep-thrilling voice, with that low tone
Of earnest tenderness, which now, ev'n now,
Seems floating thro' my soul, were music taken
For ever from this world,—oh! thus forsaken,
Could I bear on?—thou liv'st, thou liv'st, thou'rt mine!
—With this glad thought I make my heart a shrine,
And, by the lamp which quenchless there shall burn,
Sit, a lone watcher for the day's return.

IV.
And lo! the joy that cometh with the morning,
Brightly victorious o'er the hours of care!
I have not watch'd in vain, serenely scorning
The wild and busy whispers of despair!
Thou hast sent tidings, as of heaven.—I wait
The hour, the sign, for blessed flight to thee.
Oh! for the skylark's wing that seeks its mate
As a star shoots!—but on the breezy sea
We shall meet soon.—To think of such an hour!
Will not my heart, o'erburdened by its bliss,
Faint and give way within me, as a flower
Borne down and perishing by noontide's kiss?
–Yet shall I fear that lot?–the perfect rest,
The full deep joy of dying on thy breast,
After long-suffering won? So rich a close
Too seldom crowns with peace affection's woes.

V.
Sunset!–I tell each moment–from the skies
The last red splendour floats along my wall,
Like a king's banner!–Now it melts, it dies!
I see one star–I hear–'twas not the call,
Th' expected voice; my quick heart throb'd too soon.
I must keep vigil till yon rising moon
Shower down less golden light. Beneath her beam
Thro' my lone lattice pour'd, I sit and dream
Of summer-lands afar, where holy love,
Under the vine or in the citron-grove,
May breathe from terror.

   Now the night grows deep,
   And silent as its clouds, and full of sleep.
   I hear my veins beat.—Hark! a bell's slow chime.
   My heart strikes with it.—Yet again–'tis time!
   A step!–a voice!–or but a rising breeze?
   –Hark! haste!–I come, to meet thee on the seas.
* * * * * * * *

VI.
Now never more, oh! never, in the worth
Of its pure cause, let sorrowing love on earth
Trust fondly–never more!–the hope is crush'd
That lit my life, the voice within me hush'd
That spoke sweet oracles; and I return
To lay my youth, as in a burial-urn,
Where sunshine may not find it.–All is lost!
No tempest met our barks–no billow toss'd;
Yet were they sever'd, ev'n as we must be,
That so have lov'd, so striven our hearts to free
From their close-coiling fate! In vain–in vain!
The dark links meet, and clasp themselves again,
And press out life.–Upon the deck I stood,
And a white sail came gliding o'er the flood,
Like some proud bird of ocean; then mine eye
Strained out, one moment earlier to descry
The form it ached for, and the bark's career
Seem'd slow to that fond yearning: it drew near,
Fraught with our foes!—What boots it to recall
The strife, the tears? Once more a prison-wall
Shuts the green hills and woodlands from my sight,
And joyous glance of waters to the light,
And thee, my Seymour, thee!

I will not sink!
Thou, thou hast rent the heavy chain that bound thee;
And this shall be my strength—the joy to think
That thou mayst wander with heaven's breath around thee;
And all the laughing sky! This thought shall yet
Shine o'er my heart, a radiant amulet,
Guarding it from despair. Thy bonds are broken,
And unto me, I know, thy true love's token
Shall one day be deliverance, tho' the years
Lie dim between, o'erhung with mists of tears.

VII.
My friend! my friend! where art thou? Day by day,
Gliding, like some dark mournful stream, away,
My silent youth flows from me. Spring, the while,
Comes and rains beauty on the kindling boughs
Round hall and hamlet; Summer, with her smile,
Fills the green forest;—young hearts breathe their vows;
Brothers, long parted, meet; fair children rise
Round the glad board; Hope laughs from loving eyes;
—All this is in the world!—These joys lie sown,
The dew of every path. On one alone
Their freshness may not fall—the stricken deer,
Dying of thirst with all the waters near.

VIII.
Ye are from dingle and fresh glade, ye flowers!
By some kind hand to cheer my dungeon sent;
O'er you the oak shed down the summer showers,
And the lark's nest was where your bright cups bent,
Quivering to breeze and rain-drop, like the sheen
Of twilight stars. On you Heaven's eye hath been,
Thro' the leaves pouring its dark sultry blue
Into your glowing hearts; the bee to you
Hath murmur'd, and the rill.—My soul grows faint
With passionate yearning, as its quick dreams paint
Your haunts by dell and stream,—the green, the free,
The full of all sweet sound,—the shut from me!

IX.
There went a swift bird singing past my cell—
O Love and Freedom! ye are lovely things!
With you the peasant on the hills may dwell,
And by the streams; but I—the blood of kings,
A proud unmingling river, thro' my veins
Flows in lone brightness,—and its gifts are chains!
—Kings!—I had silent visions of deep bliss,
Leaving their thrones far distant, and for this
I am cast under their triumphal car,
An insect to be crushed.—Oh! Heaven is far,—
Earth pitiless!

Dost thou forget me, Seymour? I am prov'd
So long, so sternly! Seymour, my belov'd!
There are such tales of holy marvels done
By strong affection, of deliverance won
Thro' its prevailing power! Are these things told
Till the young weep with rapture, and the old
Wonder, yet dare not doubt,—and thou, oh! thou,
Dost thou forget me in my hope's decay?—
Thou canst not!—thro' the silent night, ev'n now,
I, that need prayer so much, awake and pray
Still first for thee.—Oh! gentle, gentle friend!
How shall I bear this anguish to the end?

Aid!—comes there yet no aid?—the voice of blood
Passes Heaven's gate, ev'n ere the crimson flood
Sinks thro' the greenward!—is there not a cry
From the wrung heart, of power, thro' agony,
To pierce the clouds? Hear, Mercy! hear me! None
That bleed and weep beneath the smiling sun,
Have heavier cause!—yet hear!—my soul grows dark—
Who hears the last shriek from the sinking bark,
On the mid seas, and with the storm alone,
And bearing to th' abyss, unseen, unknown,
Its freight of human hearts?—th' o'er-mastering wave!
Who shall tell how it rush'd—and none to save?

Thou hast forsaken me! I feel, I know,
There would be rescue if this were not so.
Thou'rt at the chase, thou'rt at the festive board,
Thou'rt where the red wine free and high is pour'd,
Thou'rt where the dancers meet!—a magic glass
Is set within my soul, and proud shapes pass,
Flush ing it o'er with pomp from bower and hall;—
I see one shadow, stateliest there of all—
Thine! What dost thou amidst the bright and fair,
Whispering light words, and mocking my despair?
It is not well of thee!—my love was more
Than fiery song may breathe, deep thought explore;
And there thou smilest while my heart is dying,
With all its blighted hopes around it lying;
Ev'n thou, on whom they hung their last green leaf—
Yet smile, smile on! too bright art thou for grief.
Death!—what, is death a lock'd and treasur'd thing,
Guarded by swords of fire? a hidden spring,
A fabled fruit, that I should thus endure,
As if the world within me held no cure?
Wherefore not spread free wings—Heaven, Heaven! control
These thoughts—they rush—I look into my soul
As down a gulf, and tremble at th' array
Of fierce forms crowding it! Give strength to pray,
So shall their dark host pass.

The storm is still'd.
Father in Heaven! Thou, only thou, canst sound
The heart's great deep, with floods of anguish fill'd,
For human line too fearfully profound.
Therefore, forgive, my Father! if Thy child,
Rock'd on its heaving darkness, hath grown wild,
And sinn'd in her despair! It well may be,
That Thou wouldst lead my spirit back to Thee—
By the crush’d hope too long on this world pour’d,
The stricken love which hath perchance ador’d
A mortal in Thy place! Now, let me strive
With Thy strong arm no more! Forgive, forgive!
Take me to peace!

And peace at last is nigh.
A sign is on my brow, a token sent
Th’ o’erwearied dust, from home: no breeze flits by,
But calls me with a strange sweet whisper, blent
Of many mysteries.

Hark! the warning tone
Deepens—its word is Death. Alone, alone,
And sad in youth, but chasten’d, I depart,
Bowing to heaven. Yet, yet my woman’s heart
Shall wake a spirit and a power to bless,
Ev’n in this hour’s o’ershadowing fearfulness,
Thee, its first love!—oh! tender still, and true!
Be it forgotten if mine anguish threw
Drops from its bitter fountain on thy name,
Tho’ but a moment.

Now, with fainting frame,
With soul just lingering on the flight begun,
To bind for thee its last dim thoughts in one,
I bless thee! Peace be on thy noble head,
Years of bright fame, when I am with the dead!
I bid this prayer survive me, and retain
Its might, again to bless thee, and again!
Thou hast been gather’d into my dark fate
Too much; too long, for my sake, desolate
Hath been thine exiled youth; but now take back,
From dying hands, thy freedom, and re-track
(After a few kind tears for her whose days
Went out in dreams of thee) the sunny ways
Of hope, and find thou happiness! Yet send,
Ev’n then, in silent hours, a thought, dear friend!
Down to my voiceless chamber; for thy love
Hath been to me all gifts of earth above,
Tho’ bought with burning tears! It is the sting
Of death to leave that vainly-precious thing
In this cold world! What were it, then, if thou,
With thy fond eyes, wert gazing on me now?
Too keen a pang!—Farewell! and yet once more,
Farewell!—the passion of long years I pour
Into that word: thou hear'st not,—but the woe
And fervour of its tones may one day flow
To thy heart's holy place; there let them dwell—
We shall o'ersweep the grave to meet—Farewell!

THE BRIDE OF THE GREEK ISLE.

Fear!—I'm a Greek, and how should I fear death?
A slave, and wherefore should I dread my freedom?
   *     *     *     *    *
I will not live degraded.
   Sardanapalus.

COME from the woods with the citron-flowers,
Come with your lyres for the festal hours,
Maids of bright Scio! They came, and the breeze
Bore their sweet songs o'er the Grecian seas;—
They came, and Eudora stood rob'd and crown'd,
The bride of the morn, with her train around.
Jewels flash'd out from her braided hair,
Like starry dews midst the roses there;
Pearls on her bosom quivering shone,
Heav'd by her heart thro' its golden zone;
But a brow, as those gems of the ocean pale,
Gleam'd from beneath her transparent veil;
Changeful and faint was her fair cheek's hue,
Though clear as a flower which the light looks through;
And the glance of her dark resplendent eye,
For the aspect of woman at times too high,
Lay floating in mists, which the troubled stream
Of the soul sent up o'er its fervid beam.

She look'd on the vine at her father's door,
Like one that is leaving his native shore;
She hung o'er the myrtle once call'd her own,
As it greenly wav'd by the threshold stone;
She turn'd—and her mother's gaze brought back
Each hue of her childhood's faded track.
Oh! hush the song, and let her tears
Flow to the dream of her early years!
Holy and pure are the drops that fall
When the young bride goes from her father's hall;
She goes unto love yet untried and new,
She parts from love which hath still been true;
Mute be the song and the choral strain,
Till her heart's deep well-spring is clear again!
She wept on her mother's faithful breast,
Like a babe that sob's itself to rest;
She wept—yet laid her hand awhile
In his that waited her dawning smile—
Her soul's affianced, nor cherish'd less
For the gush of nature's tenderness!
She lifted her graceful head at last—
The choking swell of her heart was past;
And her lovely thoughts from their cells found way
In the sudden flow of a plaintive lay.

THE BRIDE’S FAREWELL.
Why do I weep?—to leave the vine
Whose clusters o'er me bend,—
The myrtle—yet, oh! call it mine!—
The flowers I lov'd to tend.
A thousand thoughts of all things dear,
Like shadows o'er me sweep,
I leave my sunny childhood here,—
Oh, therefore let me weep!

I leave thee, sister! we have play'd
Thro' many a joyous hour,
Where the silvery green of the olive shade
Hung dim o'er fount and bower.
Yes, thou and I, by stream, by shore,
In song, in prayer, in sleep,
Have been as we may be no more,—
Kind sister, let me weep!
I leave thee, father! Eve's bright moon
    Must now light other feet,
With the gather'd grapes, and the lyre in tune,
    Thy homeward step to greet.
Thou, in whose voice, to bless thy child,
    Lay tones of love so deep,
Whose eye o'er all my youth hath smiled—
    I leave thee! let me weep!

Mother! I leave thee! on thy breast,
    Pouring out joy and wo,
I have found that holy place of rest
    Still changeless—yet I go!
Lips, that have lull'd me with your strain,
    Eyes, that have watch'd my sleep!
Will earth give love like yours again!
    Sweet mother! let me weep!

And like a slight young tree, that throws
The weight of rain from its drooping boughs,
Once more she wept. But a changeful thing
Is the human heart, as a mountain spring,
That works its way, thro' the torrent's foam,
To the bright pool near it, the lily's home!
It is well!—the cloud, on her soul that lay,
Hath melted in glittering drops away.
Wake again, mingle, sweet flute and lyre!
She turns to her lover, she leaves her sire.
Mother! on earth it must still be so,
Thou rearest the lovely to see them go!
They are moving onward, the bridal throng,
Ye may track their way by the swells of song;
Ye may catch thro' the foliage their white robes' gleam,
Like a swan midst the reeds of a shadowy stream.
Their arms bear up garlands, their gliding tread
Is over the deep-vein'd violet's bed;
They have light leaves around them, blue skies above,
An arch for the triumph of youth and love!

II.
Still and sweet was the home that stood
In the flowering depths of a Grecian wood,
With the soft green light o'er its low roof spread,
As if from the glow of an emerald shed,
Pouring thro' lime-leaves that mingled on high,
Asleep in the silence of noon's clear sky.
Citrons amidst their dark foliage glow'd,
Making a gleam round the lone abode;
Laurels o'erhung it, whose faintest shiver
Scatter'd out rays like a glancing river;
Stars of the jasmine its pillars crown'd,
Vine-stalks its lattice and walls had bound,
And brightly before it a fountain's play
Flung showers thro' a thicket of glossy bay,
To a cypress which rose in that flashing rain,
Like one tall shaft of some fallen fane.
And thither Ianthis had brought his bride,
And the guests were met by that fountain-side;
They lifted the veil from Eudora's face,
It smiled out softly in pensive grace,
With lips of love, and a brow serene,
Meet for the soul of the deep wood-scene.—
Bring wine, bring odours!—the board is spread—
Bring roses! a chaplet for every head!
The wine-cups foam'd, and the rose was shower'd
On the young and fair from the world embower'd;
The sun looked not on them in that sweet shade,
The winds amid scented boughs were laid;
And there came by fits, thro' some wavy tree,
A sound and a gleam of the moaning sea.

Hush! be still!—was that no more
Than the murmur from the shore?
Silence!—did thick rain-drops beat
On the grass like trampling feet?—
Fling down the goblet, and draw the sword!
The groves are fill'd with a pirate horde!
Thro' the dim olives their sabres shine;—
Now must the red blood stream for wine!
The youths from the banquet to battle sprang,
The woods with the shriek of the maidens rang;
Under the golden-fruitèd boughs
There were flashing poniards and dark'ning brows,
Footsteps, o'er garland and lyre that fled,
And the dying soon on a greensward bed.

Eudora, Eudora! thou dost not fly!—
She saw but Ianthis before her lie,
With the blood from his breast in a gushing flow,
Like a child's large tears in its hour of wo,
And a gathering film in his lifted eye,
That sought his young bride out mournfully.—
She knelt down beside him, her arms she wound,
Like tendrils, his drooping neck around,
As if the passion of that fond grasp
Might chain in life with its ivy-clasp.

But they tore her thence in her wild despair,
The sea's fierce rovers—they left him there;
They left to the fountain a dark-red vein,
And on the wet violets a pile of slain,
And a hush of fear thro' the summer grove,—
So clos'd the triumph of youth and love!

III.
Gloomy lay the shore that night,
When the moon, with sleeping light,
Bath'd each purple Sciote hill,—
Gloomy lay the shore, and still.
O'er the wave no gay guitar
Sent its floating music far;
No glad sound of dancing feet
Woke, the starry hours to greet.
But a voice of mortal wo,
In its changes wild or low,
Thro' the midnight's blue repose,
From the sea-beat rocks arose,
As Eudora's mother stood
Gazing o'er th' Egean flood,
With a fix'd and straining eye—
Oh! was the spoilers' vessel nigh?
Yes! there, becalm'd in silent sleep,
Dark and alone on a breathless deep,
On a sea of molten silver, dark,
Brooding it frown'd that evil bark!
There its broad pennon a shadow cast,
Moveless and black from the tall, still mast,
And the heavy sound of its flapping sail,
Idly and vainly wooed the gale.
Hush'd was all else:—Had ocean's breast
Rock'd e'en Eudora that hour to rest?

To rest?—the waves tremble!—what piercing cry
Bursts from the heart of the ship on high?
What light through the heavens, in a sudden spire,
Shoots from the deck up? Fire! 'tis fire!
There are wild forms hurrying to and fro,
Seen darkly clear on that lurid glow;
There are shout, and signal-gun, and call,
And the dashing of water,—but fruitless all!
Man may not fetter, nor ocean tame
The might and wrath of the rushing flame!
It hath twined the mast like a glittering snake,
That coils up a tree from a dusky brake;
It hath touch'd the sails, and their canvass rolls
Away from its breath into shrivell'd scrolls;
It hath taken the flag's high place in air,
And redden'd the stars with its wavy glare;
And sent out bright arrows, and soar'd in glee,
To a burning mount midst the moonlight sea.
The swimmers are plunging from stern and prow—
Eudora! Eudora! where, where art thou?
The slave and his master alike are gone.—
Mother! who stands on the deck alone?
The child of thy bosom!—and lo! a brand
Blazing up high in her lifted hand!
And her veil flung back, and her free dark hair
Sway'd by the flames as they rock and flare;
And her fragile form to its loftiest height
Dilated, as if by the spirit's might,
And her eye with an eagle-gladness fraught,—
Oh! could this work be of woman wrought?
Yes! 'twas her deed!—by that haughty smile
It was hers—She hath kindled her funeral pile!
Never might shame on that bright head be,
Her blood was the Greek's, and hath made her free!

Proudly she stands, like an Indian bride
On the pyre with the holy dead beside;
But a shriek from her mother hath caught her ear,
As the flames to her marriage-robe draw near,
And starting, she spreads her pale arms in vain
To the form they must never infold again.
One moment more, and her hands are clasp'd,
Fallen is the torch they had wildly grasp'd,
Her sinking knee unto Heaven is bow'd,
And her last look rais'd thro' the smoke's dim shroud,
And her lips as in prayer for her pardon move:—
Now the night gathers o'er youth and love! *

THE SWITZER'S WIFE.

Werner Stauffacher, one of the three confederates of the field of Grutli, had been alarmed by the envy with which the Austrian Bailiff, Landenberg, had noticed the appearance of wealth and comfort which distinguished his dwelling. It was not, however, until roused by the entreaties of his wife, a woman who seems to have been of an heroic spirit, that he was induced to deliberate with his friends upon the measures by which Switzerland was finally delivered.

Nor look nor tone revealeth aught
Save woman's quietness of thought;
And yet around her is a light
Of inward majesty and might.
M.J.J.
* * * * *

Wer solch ein herz an seinen Busen drückt,
Der kann fur herd und hof mit freuden fechten.
WILLHOLM TELL.

IT was the time when children bound to meet
Their father's homeward step from field or hill,
And when the herd's returning bells are sweet
In the Swiss valleys, and the lakes grow still,
And the last note of that wild horn swells by,
Which haunts the exile's heart with melody.

And lovely smil'd full many an Alpine home,
Touch'd with the crimson of the dying hour,
Which lit its low roof by the torrent's foam,
And pierced its lattice thro' the vine-hung bower;
But one, the loveliest o'er the land that rose,
Then first look'd mournful in its green repose.

For Werner sat beneath the linden-tree,
That sent its lulling whispers through his door,
Ev'n as man sits, whose heart alone would be
With some deep care, and thus can find no more
Th' accustom'd joy in all which Evening brings,
Gathering a household with her quiet wings.

His wife stood hush'd before him,—sad, yet mild
In her beseeching mien;—he mark'd it not.
The silvery laughter of his bright-hair'd child
Rang from the greensward round the shelter'd spot,
But seem'd unheard; until at last the boy
Rais'd from his heap'd-up flowers a glance of joy,

And met his father's face; but then a change
Pass'd swiftly o'er the brow of infant glee,
And a quick sense of something dimly strange
Brought him from play to stand beside the knee
So often climb'd, and lift his loving eyes
That shone through clouds of sorrowful surprise.

Then the proud bosom of the strong man shook;
But tenderly his babe's fair mother laid
Her hand on his, and with a pleading look,
Thro' tears half quivering, o'er him bent, and said,
"What grief, dear friend, hath made thy heart its prey,
That thou shouldst turn thee from our love away?"
It is too sad to see thee thus, my friend!
Mark'st thou the wonder on thy boy's fair brow,
Missing the smile from thine? Oh! cheer thee! bend
To his soft arms, unseal thy thoughts e'en now!
Thou dost not kindly to withhold the share
Of tried affection in thy secret care."

He looked up into that sweet earnest face,
But sternly, mournfully: not yet the band
Was loosen'd from his soul; its inmost place
Not yet unveil'd by love's o'ermastering hand.
"Speak low!" he cried, and pointed where on high
The white Alps glitter'd thro' the solemn sky:

"We must speak low amidst our ancient hills
And their free torrents; for the days are come
When tyranny lies couch'd by forest-rills,
And meets the shepherd in his mountain-home.
Go, pour the wine of our own grapes in fear,
Keep silence by the hearth! its foes are near.

The envy of th' oppressor's eye hath been
Upon my heritage. I sit to-night
Under my household tree, if not serene,
Yet with the faces best-beloved in sight:
To-morrow eve may find me chain'd, and thee—
How can I bear the boy's young smiles to see?"

The bright blood left that youthful mother's cheek;
Back on the linden-stem she lean'd her form,
And her lip trembled, as it strove to speak,
Like a frail harp-string, shaken by the storm.
'Twas but a moment, and the faintness pass'd,
And the free Alpine spirit woke at last.

And she, that ever thro' her home had mov'd
With the meek thoughtfulness and quiet smile
Of woman, calmly loving and belov'd,
And timid in her happiness the while,
Stood brightly forth, and steadfastly, that hour,
Her clear glance kindling into sudden power.
Ay, pale she stood, but with an eye of light,
And took her fair child to her holy breast,
And lifted her soft voice, that gathered might
As it found language:—"Are we thus oppress'd?
Then must we rise upon our mountain-sod,
And man must arm, and woman call on God!

"I know what thou wouldst do: And be it done!
Thy soul is darken'd with its fears for me.
Trust me to Heaven, my husband!—this, thy son,
The babe whom I have born thee, must be free!
And the sweet memory of our pleasant hearth
May well give strength—if aught be strong on earth.

Thou hast been brooding o'er the silent dread
Of my desponding tears; now, lift once more,
My hunter of the hills! thy stately head,
And let thine eagle glance my joy restore!
I can bear all, but seeing thee subdued,–
Take to thee back thine own undaunted mood.

Go forth beside the waters, and along
The chamois paths, and thro' the forests go;
And tell, in burning words, thy tale of wrong
To the brave hearts that midst the hamlets glow.
God shall be with thee, my belov'd!—Away!
Bless but thy child, and leave me:—I can pray!"

He sprang up, like a warrior-youth awaking
To clarion-sounds upon the ringing air;
He caught her to his breast, while proud tears breaking
From his dark eyes, fell o'er her braided hair;–
And "Worthy art thou," was his joyous cry,
"That man for thee should gird himself to die.

My bride, my wife, the mother of my child!
Now shall thy name be armour to my heart:
And this our land, by chains no more defiled,
Be taught of thee to choose the better part!
I go—thy spirit on my words shall dwell,
Thy gentle voice shall stir the Alps:—Farewell!"

And thus they parted, by the quiet lake,
   In the clear starlight: he, the strength to rouse
Of the free hills; she, thoughtful for his sake,
   To rock her child beneath the whispering boughs,
Singing its blue half-curtain'd eyes to sleep,
With a low hymn, amidst the stillness deep.

PROPERZIA ROSSI.

Properzia Rossi, a celebrated female sculptor of Bologna, possessed also of talents for poetry
and music, died in consequence of an unrequited attachment.—A painting, by Ducis,
represents her showing her last work, a basso-relievo of Ariadne, to a Roman Knight, the
object of her affection, who regards it with indifference.

—Tell me no more, no more
   Of my soul's lofty gifts! Are they not vain
To quench its haunting thirst for happiness?
Have I not lov'd, and striven, and fail'd to bind
   One true heart unto me, whereon my own
Might find a resting-place, a home for all
   Its burden of affections? I depart,
Unknown, tho' Fame goes with me; I must leave
The earth unknown. Yet it may be that death
Shall give my name a power to win such tears
   As would have made life precious.

I.
ONE dream of passion and of beauty more!
And in its bright fulfillment let me pour
My soul away! Let earth retain a trace
Of that which lit my being, tho' its race
Might have been loftier far.—Yet one more dream!
From my deep spirit one victorious gleam
Ere I depart! For thee alone, for thee!
May this last work, this farewell triumph be,—
Thou, lov'd so vainly! I would leave enshrined
Something immortal of my heart and mind,
That yet may speak to thee when I am gone,
Shaking thine inmost bosom with a tone
Of lost affection;—something that may prove
What she hath been, whose melancholy love
On thee was lavish'd; silent pang and tear,
And fervent song, that gush'd when none were near,
And dream by night, and weary thought by day,
Stealing the brightness from her life away,—
While thou—Awake! not yet within me die,
Under the burden and the agony
Of this vain tenderness—my spirit, wake!
Ev'n for thy sorrowful affection's sake,
Live! in thy work breathe out!—that he may yet
Feeling sad mastery there, perchance regret
Thine unrequited gift.

II.

It comes,—the power
Within me born, flows back; my fruitless dower
That could not win me love. Yet once again
I greet it proudly, with its rushing train
Of glorious images:—they throng—they press—
A sudden joy lights up my loneliness,—
I shall not perish all!

The bright work grows
Beneath my hand, unfolding, as a rose,
Leaf after leaf, to beauty; line by line,
I fix my thought, heart, soul, to burn, to shine,
Thro' the pale marble's veins. It grows—and now
I give my own life's history to thy brow,
Forsaken Ariadne! thou shalt wear
My form, my lineaments; but oh! more fair,
Touched into lovelier being by the glow
Which in me dwells, as by the summer-light
All things are glorified. From thee my wo
Shall yet look beautiful to meet his sight,
When I am pass'd away. Thou art the mould,
Wherein I pour the fervent thoughts, th' untold,
The self-consuming! Speak to him of me,
Thou, the deserted by the lonely sea,
With the soft sadness of thine earnest eye,
Speak to him, lorn one, deeply, mournfully,
Of all my love and grief! Oh! could I throw
Into thy frame a voice, a sweet, and low,
And thrilling voice of song!—when he came nigh,
To send the passion of its melody
Thro' his pierced bosom—on its tones to bear
My life's deep feeling as the southern air
Wafts the faint myrtle's breath,—to rise, to swell,
To sink away in accents of farewell,
Winning but one, one gush of tears, whose flow
Surely my parted spirit yet might know,
If love be strong as death!

III.

Now fair thou art,
Thou form, whose life is of my burning heart!
Yet all the vision that within me wrought,
I cannot make thee! Oh! I might have given
Birth to creations of far nobler thought,
I might have kindled, with the fire of heaven,
Things not of such as die! But I have been
Too much alone; a heart, whereon to lean,
With all these deep affections that o'erflow
My aching soul, and find no shore below,
An eye to be my star; a voice to bring
Hope o'er my path like sounds that breathe of spring,
These are denied me—dreamt of still in vain,—
Therefore my brief aspirations from the chain,
Are ever but as some wild fitful song,
Rising triumphantly, to die ere long
In dirge-like echoes.

IV.

Yet the world will see
Little of this, my parting work, in thee,
Thou shalt have fame! Oh, mockery! give the reed
From storms a shelter,—give the drooping vine
Something round which its tendrils may entwine,—
Give the parch'd flower a rain-drop, and the meed
Of love's kind words to woman! Worthless fame!
That in his bosom wins not for my name
Th' abiding place it ask'd! Yet how my heart,
In its own fairy world of song and art,
Once beat for praise!–Are those high longings o'er?
That which I have been can I be no more?–
Never, oh! never more; tho' still thy sky
Be blue as then, my glorious Italy!
And tho' the music, whose rich breathings fill
Thine air with soul, be wandering past me still,
And tho' the mantle of thy sunlight streams
Unchang'd on forms instinct with poet-dreams;
Never, oh! never more! Where'er I move,
The shadow of this broken-hearted love
Is on me and around! Too well they know,
Whose life is all within, too soon and well,
When there the blight hath settled;–but I go
Under the silent wings of Peace to dwell;
From the slow wasting, from the lonely pain,
The inward burning of those words–"in vain,"
Sear'd on the heart–I go. 'Twill soon be past,
Sunshine, and song, and bright Italian heaven,
And thou, oh! thou, on whom my spirit cast
Unvalued wealth,–who know'st not what was given
In that devotedness,–the sad, and deep,
And unrepaid–farewell! If I could weep
Once, only once, belov'd one! on thy breast,
Pouring my heart forth ere I sink to rest!
But that were happiness, and unto me
Earth's gift is fame. Yet I was form'd to be
So richly bless'd! With thee to watch the sky,
Speaking not, feeling but that thou wert nigh:
With thee to listen, while the tones of song
Swept ev'n as part of our sweet air along,
To listen silently;–with thee to gaze
On forms, the deified of olden days;–
This had been joy enough;–and hour by hour,
From its glad well-springs drinking life and power,
How had my spirit soar'd, and made its fame
A glory for thy brow!–Dreams, dreams!–the fire
Burns faint within me. Yet I leave my name–
As a deep thrill may linger on the lyre
When its full chords are hush'd–awhile to live,
And one day haply in thy heart revive
Sad thoughts of me:—I leave it, with a sound,
A spell o'er memory, mournfully profound—
I leave it, on my country's air to dwell,—
Say proudly yet—"'Twas hers who lov'd me well!"

GERTRUDE, OR FIDELITY TILL DEATH.

The Baron Von Der Wart, accused, though it is believed unjustly, as an accomplice in the assassination of the Emperor Albert, was bound alive on the wheel, and attended by his wife Gertrude, throughout his last agonizing hours, with the most heroic devotedness. Her own sufferings, with those of her unfortunate husband, are most affectingly described in a letter which she afterwards addressed to a female friend, and which was published some years ago, at Haarlem, in a book entitled "Gertrude Von Der Wart, or Fidelity unto Death."

**JOANNA BAILLIE.**

Dark lowers our fate,
And terrible the storm that gathers o'er us;
But nothing, till that latest agony
Which severs thee from nature, shall unloose
This fix'd and sacred hold. In thy dark prison-house,
In the terrific face of armed law,
Yea, on the scaffold, if it needs must be,
I never will forsake thee.

HER hands were clasp'd, her dark eyes rais'd,
The breeze threw back her hair;
Up to the fearful wheel she gaz'd—
All that she lov'd was there.
The night was round her clear and cold,
The holy heaven above,
Its pale stars watching to behold
The might of earthly love.

"And bid me not depart," she cried,
"My Rudolph, say not so!
This is no time to quit thy side,
Peace, peace! I cannot go.
Hath the world aught for me to fear,
When death is on thy brow?
The world!—what means it?—mine is here—
I will not leave thee now.

I have been with thee in thine hour
Of glory and of bliss;
Doubt not its memory's living power
To strengthen me thro' this!
And thou, mine honour'd love and true,
Bear on, bear nobly on!
We have the blessed heaven in view,
Whose rest shall soon be won."

And were not these high words to flow
From woman's breaking heart?
Thro' all that night of bitterest woe
She bore her lofty part;
But oh! with such a glazing eye,
With such a curdling cheek—
Love, love! of mortal agony,
Thou, only thou, should'st speak!

The wind rose high—but with it rose
Her voice, that he might hear:
Perchance that dark hour brought repose
To happy bosoms near;
While she sat striving with despair
Beside his tortured form,
And pouring her deep soul in prayer
Forth on the rushing storm.

She wiped the death-damps from his brow
With her pale hands and soft,
Whose touch upon the lute-chords low
Had still'd his heart so oft.
She spread her mantle o'er his breast,
She bath'd his lips with dew,
And on his cheek such kisses press'd
As hope and joy ne'er knew.

Oh! lovely are ye, Love and Faith,
Enduring to the last!
She had her meed—one smile in death—
And his worn spirit pass'd.
While ev'n as o'er a martyr's grave
She knelt on that sad spot,
And, weeping, bless'd the God who gave
Strength to forsake it not!

IMELDA.

—Sometimes

_The young forgot the lessons they had learnt,
   And lov'd when they should hate,—like thee, Imelda!_

_Italy, a Poem._

_Passa la bella Donna, e par che dorma._

_TASSO._

WE have the myrtle's breath around us here,
   Amidst the fallen pillars;—this hath been
Some Naiad's fane of old. How brightly clear,
   Flinging a vein of silver o'er the scene,
Up thro' the shadowy grass, the fountain wells,
   And music with it, gushing from beneath
The ivy'd altar!—that sweet murmur tells
   The rich wild-flowers no tale of wo or death;
Yet once the wave was darken'd, and a stain
Lay deep, and heavy drops— but not of rain—
On the dim violets by its marble bed,
And the pale shining water-lily's head.

Sad is that legend's truth.—A fair girl met
   One whom she lov'd, by this lone temple's spring,
Just as the sun behind the pine-grove set,
   And eve's low voice in whispers woke, to bring
All wanderers home. They stood, that gentle pair
   With the blue heaven of Italy above,
And citron-odours dying on the air,
   And light leaves trembling round, and early love
Deep in each breast.—What reck'd their souls of strife
Between their fathers? Unto them young life
Spread out the treasures of its vernal years;
And if they wept, they wept far other tears
Than the cold world wrings forth. They stood, that hour,
Speaking of hope, while tree, and fount, and flower,
And star, just gleaming thro' the cypress boughs,
Seem'd holy things, as records of their vows.

But change came o'er the scene. A hurrying tread
Broke on the whispery shades. Imelda knew
The footstep of her brother's wrath, and fled
Up where the cedars make yon avenue
Dim with green twilight: pausing there, she caught—
Was it the clash of swords?—a swift dark thought
Struck down her lip's rich crimson as it pass'd,
And from her eye the sunny sparkle took
One moment with its fearfulness, and shook
Her slight frame fiercely, as a stormy blast
Might rock the rose. Once more, and yet once more,
She still'd her heart to listen—all was o'er;
Sweet summer winds alone were heard to sigh,
Bearing the nightingale's deep spirit by.

That night Imelda's voice was in the song,
Lovely it floated thro' the festive throng
Peopling her father's halls. That fatal night
Her eye look'd starry in its dazzling light,
And her cheek glow'd with beauty's flushing dyes,
Like a rich cloud of eve in southern skies,
A burning, ruby cloud. There were, whose gaze
Follow'd her form beneath the clear lamp's blaze,
And marvell'd at its radiance. But a few
Beheld the brightness of that feverish hue,
With something of dim fear; and in that glance
Found strange and sudden tokens of unrest,
Startling to meet amidst the mazy dance,
Where thought, if present, an unbidd'n guest,
Comes not unmask'd. Howe'er this were, the time
Sped as it speeds with joy, and grief, and crime
Alike: and when the banquet's hall was left
Unto its garlands of their bloom bereft,
When trembling stars look'd silvery in their wane,
And heavy flowers yet slumber'd, once again
There stole a footstep, fleet, and light, and lone,
Thro' the dim cedar shade; the step of one
That started at a leaf, of one that fled,
Of one that panted with some secret dread:—
What did Imelda there? She sought the scene
Where love so late with youth and hope had been;
Bodings were on her soul—a shuddering thrill
Ran thro' each vein, when first the Naiad's rill
Met her with melody—sweet sounds and low;
We hear them yet—they live along its flow—
Her voice is music lost! The fountain-side
She gain'd—the wave flash'd forth—'twas darkly dyed
Ev'n as from warrior-hearts; and on its edge,
Amidst the fern, and flowers, and moss-tufts deep,
There lay, as lull'd by stream and rustling sedge,
A youth, a graceful youth. "Oh! dost thou sleep,
Azzo?" she cried, "my Azzo! is this rest?"
—But then her low tones falter'd:—"On thy breast
Is the stain—yes, 'tis blood!—and that cold cheek—
That moveless lip!—thou dost not slumber?—speak,
Speak, Azzo, my belov'd—no sound—no breath—
What hath come thus between our spirits?—Death!
Death?—I but dream—I dream!"—and there she stood,
A faint, frail trembler, gazing first on blood,
With her fair arm around yon cypress thrown,
Her form sustain'd by that dark stem alone,
And fading fast, like spell-struck maid of old,
Into white waves dissolving, clear and cold;
When from the grass her dimm'd eye caught a gleam—
'Twas where a sword lay shiver'd by the stream,—
Her brother's sword!—she knew it; and she knew
'Twas with a venom'd point that weapon slew!
Wo for young love! But love is strong. There came
Strength upon woman's fragile heart and frame,
There came swift courage! On the dewy ground
She knelt, with all her dark hair floating round,
Like a long silken stole; she knelt, and press'd
Her lips of glowing life to Azzo's breast,
Drawing the poison forth. A strange, sad sight!
Pale death, and fearless love, and solemn night!--
So the moon saw them last.

The Morn came singing
Thro' the green forests of the Appenines,
With all her joyous birds their free flight winging,
   And steps and voices out amongst the vines.
What found that day-spring here? Two fair forms laid
Like sculptured sleepers; from the myrtle shade
Casting a gleam of beauty o'er the wave,
Still, mournful, sweet. Were such things for the grave?
Could it be so indeed? That radiant girl,
Deck'd as for bridal hours!—long braids of pearl
Amidst her shadowy locks were faintly shining,
   As tears might shine, with melancholy light;
And there was gold her slender waist entwining;
And her pale graceful arms—how sadly bright!
And fiery gems upon her breast were lying,
And round her marble brow red roses dying.—
But she died first!—the violet's hue had spread
   O'er her sweet eyelids with repose oppress'd,
She had bow'd heavily her gentle head,
   And on the youth's hush'd bosom sunk to rest.
So slept they well!—the poison's work was done;
Love with true heart had striven—but Death had won.

EDITH, A TALE OF THE WOODS.

Du Heilige! rufe dein Kind zurück!
Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück,
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.

WALLENSTEIN.

THE woods—oh! solemn are the boundless woods
Of the great Western World, when day declines,
And louder sounds the roll of distant floods,
More deep the rustling of the ancient pines;
When dimness gathers on the stilly air,
And mystery seems o'er every leaf to brood,
Awful it is for human heart to bear
   The might and burden of the solitude!
Yet, in that hour, midst those green wastes, there sate
One young and fair,—and oh! how desolate!
But undismay'd; while sank the crimson light,
And the high cedars darken'd with the night,
Alone she sate; tho' many lay around,
They, pale and silent on the bloody ground,
Were sever'd from her need and from her wo,
   Far as Death severs Life. O'er that wild spot
Combat had rag'd, and brought the valiant low,
   And left them, with the history of their lot,
Unto the forest oaks. A fearful scene
For her whose home of other days had been
Midst the fair halls of England! but the love
   Which fill'd her soul was strong to cast out fear,
And by its might upborne all else above,
   She shrank not—mark'd not that the dead were near.
Of him alone she thought, whose languid head
   Faintly upon her wedded bosom fell;
Memory of aught but him on earth was fl
While heavily she felt his life-blood well
Fast o'er her garments forth, and vainly bound
With her torn robe and hair the streaming wound,
Yet hoped, still hoped!—Oh! from such hope how long
   Affection wooes the whispers that deceive,
Ev'n when the pressure of dismay grows strong,
   And we, that weep, watch, tremble, ne'er believe
The blow indeed can fall! So bow'd she there
Over the dying, while unconscious prayer
Fill'd all her soul. Now pour'd the moonlight down,
Veining the pine-stems thro' the foliage brown,
And fire-flies, kindling up the leafy place,
   Cast fitful radiance o'er the warrior's face,
Whereby she caught its changes: to her eye,
   The eye that faded look'd through gathering haze,
Whence love, o'ermastering mortal agony,
   Lifted a long, deep, melancholy gaze,
When voice was not: that fond, sad meaning pass'd—
She knew the fulness of her wo at last!
One shriek the forests heard,—and mute she lay,
And cold; yet clasping still the precious clay
To her scarce-heaving breast. O Love and Death!
Ye have sad meetings on this changeful earth,
Many and sad! but airs of heavenly breath
Shall melt the links which bind you, for your birth
Is far apart.

Now light, of richer hue
Than the moon sheds, came flushing mist and dew;
The pines grew red with morning; fresh winds play'd,
Bright-colour'd birds with splendour cross'd the shade,
Flitting on flower-like wings; glad murmurs broke
From reed, and spray, and leaf, the living strings
Of Earth's Eolian lyre, whose music woke
Into young life and joy all happy things.
And she too woke from that long dreamless trance,
The widow'd Edith: fearfully her glance
Fell, as in doubt, on faces dark and strange,
And dusky forms. A sudden sense of change
Flash'd o'er her spirit, ev'n ere memory swept
The tide of anguish back with thoughts that slept;
Yet half instinctively she rose, and spread
Her arms, as 'twere for something lost or fled,
Then faintly sank again. The forest-bough,
With all its whispers, wav'd not o'er her now,—
Where was she? Midst the people of the wild,
By the red hunter's fire: an aged chief,
Whose home look'd sad—for therein play'd no child—
Had borne her, in the stillness of her grief,
To that lone cabin of the woods; and there,
Won by a form so desolately fair,
Or touch'd with thoughts from some past sorrow sprung,
O'er her low couch an Indian matron hung;
While in grave silence, yet with earnest eye,
The ancient warrior of the waste stood by,
Bending in watchfulness his proud grey head,
And leaning on his bow.

And life return'd,
Life, but with all its memories of the dead,
To Edith's heart; and well the sufferer learn'd
Her task of meek endurance, well she wore
The chas'ten'd grief that humbly can adore,
Midst blinding tears. But unto that old pair,
Ev'n as a breath of spring's awakening air,
Her presence was; or as a sweet wild tune
Bringing back tender thoughts, which all too soon
Depart with childhood. Sadly they had seen
A daughter to the land of spirits go,
And ever from that time her fading mien,
And voice, like winds of summer, soft and low,
Haunt'd their dim years; but Edith's face
Now look'd in holy sweetness from her place,
And they again seem'd parents. Oh! the joy,
The rich deep blessedness—tho' earth's alloy,
Fear, that still bodes, be there—of pouring forth
The heart's whole power of love, its wealth and worth
Of strong affection, in one healthful flow,
On something all its own!—that kindly glow,
Which to shut inward is consuming pain,
Gives the glad soul its flowering time again,
When, like the sunshine, freed.—And gentle cares
Th' adopted Edith meekly gave for theirs
Who lov'd her thus: her spirit dwelt the while,
With the departed, and her patient smile
Spoke of farewells to earth;—yet still she pray'd,
Ev'n o'er her soldier's lowly grave, for aid
One purpose to fulfil, to leave one trace
Brightly recording that her dwelling-place
Had been among the wilds; for well she knew
The secret whisper of her bosom true,
Which warn'd her hence.

And now, by many a word
Link'd unto moments when the heart was stirr'd,
By the sweet mournfulness of many a hymn,
Sung when the woods at eve grew hush'd and dim,
By the persuasion of her fervent eye,
All eloquent with child-like piety,
By the still beauty of her life, she strove
To win for heaven, and heaven-born truth, the love
Pour'd out on her so freely.—Nor in vain
Was that soft-breathing influence to enchain
The soul in gentle bonds: by slow degrees
Light follow'd on, as when a summer breeze
Parts the deep masses of the forest shade
And lets the sunbeam through:—her voice was made
Ev'n such a breeze; and she, a lowly guide,
By faith and sorrow rais'd and purified,
So to the Cross her Indian fosterers led,
Until their prayers were one. When morning spread
O'er the blue lake, and when the sunset's glow
Touch'd into golden bronze the cypress-bough,
And when the quiet of the Sabbath time
Sank on her heart, tho' no melodious chime
Waken'd the wilderness, their prayers were one.
—Now might she pass in hope, her work was done!
And she was passing from the woods away;
The broken flower of England might not stay
Amidst those alien shades; her eye was bright
Ev'n yet with something of a starry light,
But her form wasted, and her fair young cheek
Wore oft and patiently a fatal streak,
A rose whose root was death. The parting sigh
Of autumn thro' the forests had gone by,
And the rich maple o'er her wanderings lone
Its crimson leaves in many a shower had strown,
Flushing the air; and winter's blast had been
Amidst the pines; and now a softer green
Fring'd their dark boughs; for spring again had come,
The sunny spring! but Edith to her home
Was journeying fast. Alas! we think it sad
To part with life, when all the earth looks glad
In her young lovely things, when voices break
Into sweet sounds, and leaves and blossoms wake:
Is it not brighter then, in that far clime
Where graves are not, nor blights of changeful time,
If here such glory dwell with passing blooms,
Such golden sunshine rest around the tombs?
So thought the dying one. 'Twas early day,
And sounds and odours with the breezes' play,
Whispering of spring-time, thro' the cabin-door,
Unto her couch life's farewell sweetness bore;
Then with a look where all her hope awoke,
"My father!"—to the grey-hair'd chief she spoke—
"Know'st thou that I depart?"—"I know, I know,"
He answer'd mournfully, "that thou must go
To thy belov'd, my daughter!"—"Sorrow not
For me, kind mother!" with meek smiles once more
She murmur'd in low tones; "one happy lot
Awaits us, friends! upon the better shore;
For we have pray'd together in one trust,
And lifted our frail spirits from the dust
To God, who gave them. Lay me by mine own,
Under the cedar-shade: where he is gone,
Thither I go. There will my sisters be,
And the dead parents, lisping at whose knee
My childhood's prayer was learn'd—the Saviour's prayer
Which now ye know—and I shall meet you there,
Father and gentle mother!—ye have bound
The bruised reed, and mercy shall be found
By Mercy's children."—From the matron's eye
Dropp'd tears, her sole and passionate reply;
But Edith felt them not; for now a sleep,
Solemnly beautiful, a stillness deep,
Fell on her settled face. Then, sad and slow,
And mantling up his stately head in wo,
"Thou'rt passing hence," he sang, that warrior old,
In sounds like those by plaintive waters roll'd.

"Thou'rt passing from the lake's green side,
And the hunter's hearth away;
For the time of flowers, for the summer's pride,
Daughter! thou canst not stay.

Thou'rt journeying to thy spirit's home,
Where the skies are ever clear!
The corn-month's golden hours will come,
But they shall not find thee here.

And we shall miss thy voice, my bird!
Under our whispering pine;
Music shall midst the leaves be heard,
But not a song like thine.
A breeze that roves o'er stream and hill,  
    Telling of winter gone,  
Hath such sweet falls—yet caught we still  
    A farewell in its tone.

But thou, my bright one! thou shalt be  
    Where farewell sounds are o'er;  
Thou, in the eyes thou lov'st, shalt see  
    No fear of parting more.

The mossy grave thy tears have wet,  
    And the wind's wild moanings by,  
Thou with thy kindred shalt forget,  
    Midst flowers—not such as die.

The shadow from thy brow shall melt,  
    The sorrow from thy strain,  
But where thine earthly smile hath dwelt,  
    Our hearts shall thirst in vain.

Dim will our cabin be, and lone,  
    When thou, its light, art fled;  
Yet hath thy step the pathway shown  
    Unto the happy dead.

And we will follow thee, our guide!  
    And join that shining band;  
Thou'rt passing from the lake's green side—  
    Go to the better land!"

The song had ceas'd–the listeners caught no breath,  
That lovely sleep had melted into death.

THE INDIAN CITY.

What deep wounds ever clos'd without a scar?  
The heart's bleed longest, and but heal to wear  
    That which disfigures it.

Childe Harold.
I.
ROYAL in splendour went down the day
On the plain where an Indian city lay,
With its crown of domes o'er the forest high,
Red as if fused in the burning sky,
And its deep groves pierced by the rays which made
A bright stream's way thro' each long arcade,
Till the pillar'd vaults of the Banian stood,
Like torch-lit aisles midst the solemn wood,
And the plantain glitter'd with leaves of gold,
As a tree midst the genii-gardens old,
And the cypress lifted a blazing spire,
And the stems of the cocoas were shafts of fire.
Many a white pagoda's gleam
Slept lovely round upon lake and stream,
Broken alone by the lotus-flowers,
As they caught the glow of the sun's last hours,
Like rosy wine in their cups, and shed
Its glory forth on their crystal bed.
Many a graceful Hindoo maid,
With the water-vase from the palmy shade,
Came gliding light as the desert's roe,
Down marble steps to the tanks below;
And a cool sweet plashing was ever heard,
As the molten glass of the wave was stirr'd;
And a murmur, thrilling the scented air,
Told where the Bramin bow'd in prayer.

There wandered a noble Moslem boy
Through the scene of beauty in breathless joy;
He gazed where the stately city rose
Like a pageant of clouds in its red repose;
He turn'd where birds thro' the gorgeous gloom
Of the woods went glancing on starry plume;
He track'd the brink of the shining lake,
By the tall canes feather'd in tuft and brake,
Till the path he chose, in its mazes wound
To the very heart of the holy ground.
And there lay the water, as if enshrin'd
In a rocky urn, from the sun and wind,
Bearing the hues of the grove on high,
Far down thro' its dark still purity.
The flood beyond, to the fiery west
Spread out like a metal-mirror's breast,
But that lone bay, in its dimness deep,
Seem'd made for the swimmer's joyous leap,
For the stag athirst from the noontide chase,
For all free things of the wild-wood's race.

Like a falcon's glance on the wide blue sky,
Was the kindling flash of the boy's glad eye,
Like a sea-bird's flight to the foaming wave
From the shadowy bank was the bound he gave;
Dashing the spray-drops, cold and white,
O'er the glossy leaves in his young delight,
And bowing his locks to the waters clear—
Alas! he dreamt not that fate was near.

His mother look'd from her tent the while,
O'er heaven and earth with a quiet smile:
She, on her way unto Mecca's fane,
Had staid the march of her pilgrim train,
Calmly to linger a few brief hours
In the Bramin city's glorious bowers;
For the pomp of the forest, the wave's bright fall,
The red gold of sunset—she lov'd them all.

II.
The moon rose clear in the splendour given
To the deep-blue night of an Indian heaven;
The boy from the high-arch'd woods came back—
Oh! what had he met in his lonely track?
The serpent's glance, through the long reeds bright?
The arrowy spring of the tiger's might?
No!—yet as one by a conflict worn,
With his graceful hair all soil'd and torn,
And a gloom on the lids of his darken'd eye,
And a gash on his bosom—he came to die!
He look'd for the face to his young heart sweet,
And found it, and sank at his mother's feet.

"Speak to me!—whence doth the swift blood run?
What hath befall'n thee, my child, my son?"
The mist of death on his brow lay pale,
But his voice just linger'd to breathe the tale,
Murmuring faintly of wrongs and scorn,
And wounds from the children of Brahma born:
This was the doom for a Moslem found
With a foot profane on their holy ground;
This was for sullying the pure waves, free
Unto them alone—'twas their God's decree.

A change came o'er his wandering look—
The mother shriek'd not then, nor shook:
Breathless she knelt in her son's young blood,
Rending her mantle to staunch its flood;
But it rush'd like a river which none may stay,
Bearing a flower to the deep away.
That which our love to the earth would chain,
Fearfully striving with Heaven in vain,
That which fades from us, while yet we hold,
Clasp'd to our bosoms, its mortal mould,
Was fleeting before her, afar and fast;
One moment—the soul from the face had pass'd!

Are there no words for that common wo?
—Ask of the thousands, its depths that know!
The boy had breathed, in his dreaming rest,
Like a low-voiced dove, on her gentle breast;
He had stood, when she sorrow'd, beside her knee,
Painfully stilling his quick heart's glee;
He had kiss'd from her cheek the widow's tears,
With the loving lip of his infant years;
He had smiled o'er her path like a bright spring-day—
Now in his blood on the earth he lay,
Murder'd!—Alas! and we love so well
In a world where anguish like this can dwell!
She bow'd down mutely o'er her dead—
They that stood round her watch'd in dread;
They watch'd—she knew not they were by—
Her soul sat veil'd in its agony.
On the silent lip she press'd no kiss,
Too stern was the grasp of her pangs for this:
She shed no tear as her face bent low,
O'er the shining hair of the lifeless brow;
She look'd but into the half-shut eye,
With a gaze that found there no reply,
And shrieking, mantled her head from sight,
And fell, struck down by her sorrow's might!

And what deep change, what work of power,
Was wrought on her secret soul that hour?
How rose the lonely one?—She rose
Like a prophetess from dark repose!
And proudly flung from her face the veil,
And shook the hair from her forehead pale,
And 'midst her wondering handmaids stood,
With the sudden glance of a dauntless mood.
Ay, lifting up to the midnight sky
A brow in its regal passion high,
With a close and rigid grasp she press'd
The blood-stain'd robe to her heaving breast,
And said—"Not yet—not yet I weep,
Not yet my spirit shall sink or sleep,
Not till yon city, in ruins rent,
Be piled for its victim's monument.
—Cover his dust! bear it on before!
It shall visit those temple-gates once more."

And away in the train of the dead she turn'd,
The strength of her step was the heart that burn'd;
And the Bramin groves in the starlight smil'd,
As the mother pass'd with her slaughter'd child.

III.
Hark! a wild sound of the desert's horn
Thro' the woods round the Indian city borne,
A peal of the cymbal and tambour afar—
War! 'tis the gathering of Moslem war!
The Bramin look'd from the leaguer'd towers—
He saw the wild archer amidst his bowers;
And the lake that flash'd through the plantain shade,
As the light of the lances along it play'd;
And the canes that shook as if winds were high,
When the fiery steed of the waste swept by;
And the camp as it lay like a billowy sea,
Wide round the sheltering Banian tree.

There stood one tent from the rest apart—
That was the place of a wounded heart.
—Oh! deep is a wounded heart, and strong
A voice that cries against mighty wrong;
And full of death as a hot wind's blight,
Doth the ire of a crush'd affection light!

Maimuna from realm to realm had pass'd,
And her tale had rung like a trumpet's blast;
There had been words from her pale lips pour'd,
Each one a spell to unsheath the sword.
The Tartar had sprung from his steed to hear,
And the dark chief of Araby grasp'd his spear,
Till a chain of long lances begirt the wall,
And a vow was recorded that doom'd its fall.

Back with the dust of her son she came,
When her voice had kindled that lightning flame;
She came in the might of a queenly foe,
Banner, and javelin, and bended bow;
But a deeper power on her forehead sate—
There sought the warrior his star of fate;
Her eye's wild flash through the tented line
Was hail'd as a spirit and a sign,
And the faintest tone from her lip was caught,
As a Sybil's breath of prophetic thought.

Vain, bitter glory!—the gift of grief,
That lights up vengeance to find relief,
Transient and faithless!—it cannot fill
So the deep void of the heart, nor still
The yearning left by a broken tie,
That haunted fever of which we die!

Sickening she turn'd from her sad renown,
As a king in death might reject his crown;
Slowly the strength of the walls gave way—
She with'er'd faster, from day to day.
All the proud sounds of that banner'd plain,
To stay the flight of her soul were vain;
Like an eagle caged, it had striven, and worn
The frail dust ne'er for such conflicts born,
Till the bars were rent, and the hour was come
For its fearful rushing thro' darkness home.

The bright sun set in his pomp and pride,
As on that eve when the fair boy died;
She gazed from her couch, and a softness fell
O'er her weary heart with the day's farewell;
She spoke, and her voice, in its dying tone
Had an echo of feelings that long seem'd flown.
She murmur'd a low sweet cradle song,
Strange midst the din of a warrior throng,
A song of the time when her boy's young cheek
Had glow'd on her breast in its slumber meek;
But something which breathed from that mournful strain
Sent a fitful gust o'er her soul again;
And starting as if from a dream, she cried—
"Give him proud burial at my side!
There, by yon lake, where the palm-boughs wave,
When the temples are fallen, make there our grave."

And the temples fell, tho' the spirit pass'd,
That stay'd not for victory's voice at last;
When the day was won for the martyr-dead,
For the broken heart, and the bright blood shed.

Thro' the gates of the vanquish'd the Tartar steed
Bore in the avenger with foaming speed;
Free swept the flame thro' the idol fanes,
And the streams flow'd red, as from warrior-veins,
And the sword of the Moslem, let loose to slay,
Like the panther leapt on its flying prey,
Till a city of ruin begirt the shade,
Where the boy and his mother at rest were laid.

Palace and tower on that plain were left,
Like fallen trees by the lightning cleft;
The wild vine mantled the stately square,
The Rajah's throne was the serpent's lair,
And the jungle grass o'er the altar sprung–
This was the work of one deep heart wrung!

THE PEASANT GIRL OF THE RHONE.

There is but one place in the world:
—Thither where he lies buried!
* * * * * * *
There, there is all that still remains of him,
That single spot is the whole earth to me.
COLERIDGE's Wallenstein.
Alas! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert.
Child Harold.

THERE went a warrior's funeral thro' the night,
A waving of tall plumes, a ruddy light
Of torches, fitfully and wildly thrown
From the high woods, along the sweeping Rhone,
Far down the waters. Heavily and dead,
Under the moaning trees, the horse-hoof's tread
In muffled sounds upon the greensward fell,
As chieftains pass'd; and solemnly the swell
Of the deep requiem, o'er the gleaming river
Borne with the gale, and with the leaves' low shiver
Floated and died. Proud mourners there, yet pale,
Wore man's mute anguish sternly;—but of one,
Oh! who shall speak? What words his brow unveil?
A father following to the grave his son!
That is no grief to picture! Sad and slow,
Thro' the wood-shadows, moved the knightly train,
With youth's fair form upon the bier laid low,
Fair even when found, amidst the bloody slain,
Stretch'd by its broken lance. They reached the lone
Baronial chapel, where the forest gloom
Fell heaviest, for the massy boughs had grown
Into thick archways, as to vault the tomb.
Stately they trod the hollow ringing aisle,
A strange deep echo shuddered thro' the pile,
Till crested heads at last, in silence bent
Round the De Coucis' antique monument,
When dust to dust was given:--and Aymer slept
Beneath the drooping banners of his line,
Whose broider'd folds the Syrian wind had swept
Proudly and oft o'er fields of Palestine:
So the sad rite was clos'd. The sculptor gave
Trophies, ere long, to deck that lordly grave,
And the pale image of a youth, arrayed
As warriors are for fight, but calmly laid
In slumber on his shield.---Then all was done,
All still around the dead.---His name was heard
Perchance when wine-cups flow'd, and hearts were stirr'd
By some old song, or tale of battle won,
Told round the hearth: but in his father's breast
Manhood's high passions woke again, and press'd
On to their mark; and in his friend's clear eye
There dwelt no shadow of a dream gone by;
And with the brethren of his fields, the feast
Was gay as when the voice whose sounds had ceas'd
Mingled with theirs.---Ev'n thus life's rushing tide
Bears back affection from the grave's dark side:
Alas! to think of this!---the heart's void place
Fill'd up so soon!--so like a summer-cloud,
All that we lov'd to pass and leave no trace!---
He lay forgotten in his early shroud.
Forgotten?---not of all!---the sunny smile
Glancing in play o'er that proud lip erewhile,
And the dark locks whose breezy waving threw
A gladness round, whene'er their shade withdrew
From the bright brow; and all the sweetness lying
Within that eagle-eye's jet radiance deep,
And all the music with that young voice dying,
Whose joyous echoes made the quick heart leap
As at a hunter's bugle:--these things lived
Still in one breast, whose silent love survived
The pomps of kindred sorrow.--Day by day,
On Aymer's tomb fresh flowers in garlands lay,
Thro' the dim fane soft summer-odours breathing,
And all the pale sepulchral trophies wreathing,
And with a flush of deeper brilliance glowing
In the rich light, like molten rubies flowing
Thro' storied windows down. The violet there
Might speak of love—a secret love and lowly,
And the rose image all things fleet and fair,
And the faint passion-flower, the sad and holy,
Tell of diviner hopes. But whose light hand,
As for an altar, wove the radiant band?
Whose gentle nurture brought, from hidden dells.
That gem-like wealth of blossoms and sweet bells,
To blush through every season?--Blight and chill
Might touch the changing woods, but duly still.
For years, those gorgeous coronals renewed,
And brightly clasping marble spear and helm,
Even thro' mid-winter, filled the solitude
With a strange smile, a glow of summer's realm.
--Surely some fond and fervent heart was pouring
Its youth's vain worship on the dust, adoring
In lone devotedness!

One spring-morn rose,
And found, within that tomb's proud shadow laid--
Oh! not as midst the vineyards, to repose
From the fierce noon—a dark-hair'd peasant maid:
Who could reveal her story?--That still face
Had once been fair; for on the clear arch'd brow,
And the curv'd lip, there lingered yet such grace
As sculpture gives its dreams; and long and low
The deep black lashes, o'er the half-shut eye--
For death was on its lids--fell mournfully.
But the cold cheek was sunk, the raven hair
Dimm'd, the slight form all wasted, as by care.
Whence came that early blight? Her kindred's place
Was not amidst the high De Couci race;
Yet there her shrine had been!—She grasp'd a wreath—
The tomb's last garland!—This was love in death.

INDIAN WOMAN'S DEATH-SONG.

An Indian woman, driven to despair by her husband's desertion of her for another wife, entered a canoe with her children, and rowed it down the Mississippi towards a cataract. Her voice was heard from the shore singing a mournful death-song, until overpowered by the sound of the waters in which she perished. The tale is related in Long's Expedition to the source of St. Peter's River.

Non, je ne puis vivre avec un coeur brisé. Il faut que je retrouve la joie, et que je m'unisse aux esprits libres de l'air.
Bride of Messina,
Translated by MADAME DE STAËL.
Let not my child be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman.
The Prairie.

DOWN a broad river of the western wilds,
Piercing thick forest glooms, a light canoe
Swept with the current: fearful was the speed
Of the frail bark, as by a tempest's wing
Borne leaf-like on to where the mist of spray
Rose with the cataract's thunder.—Yet within,
Proudly, and dauntlessly, and all alone,
Save that a babe lay sleeping at her breast,
A woman stood. Upon her Indian brow
Sat a strange gladness, and her dark hair wav'd
As if triumphantly. She press'd her child,
In its bright slumber, to her beating heart,
And lifted her sweet voice that rose awhile
Above the sound of waters, high and clear,
Wafting a wild proud strain, her Song of Death.

Roll swiftly to the Spirit's land, thou mighty stream and free!
Father of ancient waters, roll! and bear our lives with thee!
The weary bird that storms have toss'd would seek the sunshine's calm,
And the deer that hath the arrow's hurt flies to the woods of balm.
Roll on!—my warrior’s eye hath look’d upon another’s face,
And mine hath faded from his soul, as fades a moonbeam’s trace;
My shadow comes not o’er his path, my whisper to his dream,
He flings away the broken reed—roll swifter yet, thou stream!

The voice that spoke of other days is hush’d within his breast,
But mine its lonely music haunts, and will not let me rest;
It sings a low and mournful song of gladness that is gone,—
I cannot live without that light—Father of waves! roll on!

Will he not miss the bounding step that met him from the chase?
The heart of love that made his home an ever sunny place?
The hand that spread the hunter’s board, and deck’d his couch of yore?—
He will not!—roll, dark foaming stream, on to the better shore!

Some blessed fount amidst the woods of that bright land must flow,
Whose waters from my soul may lave the memory of this wo;
Some gentle wind must whisper there, whose breath may waft away
The burden of the heavy night, the sadness of the day.

And thou, my babe! tho’ born, like me, for woman’s weary lot,
Smile!—to that wasting of the heart, my own! I leave thee not;
Too bright a thing art thou to pine in aching love away,
Thy mother bears thee far, young Fawn! from sorrow and decay.

She bears thee to the glorious bowers where none are heard to weep,
And where th’ unkind one hath no power again to trouble sleep;
And where the soul shall find its youth, as wakening from a dream,—
One moment, and that realm is ours.—On, on, dark rolling stream!

**JOAN OF ARC, IN RHEIMS.**

Jeanne d’Arc avait eu la joie de voir à Chalons quelques amis de son enfance. Une joie plus ineffable encore l’attendait à Rheims, au sein de son triomphe: Jacques d’Arc, son père, y se trouva, aussitôt que de troupes de Charles VII. y furent entrées; et comme les deux frères de notre Héroïne l’avaient accompagnés, elle se vit, pour un instant au milieu de sa famille, dans les bras d’un père vertueux. 
*Vie de Jeanne d’Arc.*

**Thou hast a charmed cup, O Fame!**

*A draught that mantles high,*
And seems to lift this earth-born frame
Above mortality:
Away! to me—a woman—bring
Sweet waters from affection's spring.

THAT was a joyous day in Rheims of old,
When peal on peal of mighty music roll'd
Forth from her throng'd cathedral; while around,
A multitude, whose billows made no sound,
Chain'd to a hush of wonder, tho' elate
With victory, listen'd at their temple's gate.
And what was done within?—within, the light
Thro' the rich gloom of pictur'd windows flowing,
Tinged with soft awfulness a stately sight,
The chivalry of France their proud heads bowing
In martial vassalage!—while midst that ring,
And shadow'd by ancestral tombs, a king
Receiv'd his birthright's crown. For this, the hymn
Swell'd out like rushing waters, and the day
With the sweet censer's misty breath grew dim,
As thro' long aisles it floated o'er th' array
Of arms and sweeping stoles. But who, alone
And unapproach'd, beside the altar-stone,
With the white banner, forth like sunshine streaming,
And the gold helm, thro' clouds of fragrance gleaming,
Silent and radiant stood?—The helm was rais'd,
And the fair face reveal'd, that upward gaz'd,
Intensely worshipping;—a still, clear face,
Youthful, but brightly solemn!—Woman's cheek
And brow were there, in deep devotion meek,
Yet glorified with inspiration's trace
On its pure paleness; while, enthron'd above,
The pictur'd Virgin, with her smile of love,
Seem'd bending o'er her votaress.—That slight form!
Was that the leader thro' the battle storm?
Had the soft light in that adoring eye,
Guided the warrior where the swords flash'd high?
'Twas so, even so!—and thou, the shepherd's child,
Joanne, the lowly dreamer of the wild!
Never before, and never since that hour,
Hath woman, mantled with victorious power,
Stood forth as thou beside the shrine didst stand,
Holy amidst the knighthood of the land;
And beautiful with joy and with renown,
Lift thy white banner o'er the olden crown,
Ransom'd for France by thee!

The rites are done.
Now let the dome with trumpet-notes be shaken,
And bid the echoes of the tomb awaken,
And come thou forth, that Heaven's rejoicing sun
May give thee welcome from thine own blue skies,
Daughter of Victory!—A triumphant strain,
A proud rich stream of warlike melodies,
Gush'd thro' the portals of the antique fane,
And forth she came.—Then rose a nation's sound—
Oh! what a power to bid the quick heart bound
The wind bears onward with the stormy cheer
Man gives to Glory on her high career!
Is there indeed such power?—far deeper dwells
In one kind household voice, to reach the cells
Whence happiness flows forth!—The shouts that fill'd
The hollow heaven tempestuously, were still'd
One moment; and in that brief pause, the tone,
As of a breeze that o'er her home had blown,
Sank on the bright maid's heart.—"Joanne!"—Who spoke
Like those whose childhood with her childhood grew
Under one roof?—"Joanne!"—that murmur broke
With sounds of weeping forth!—She turn'd—she knew
Beside her, mark'd from all the thousands there,
In the calm beauty of his silver hair,
The stately shepherd; and the youth, whose joy
From his dark eye flash'd proudly; and the boy,
The youngest-born, that ever lov'd her best:
"Father! and ye, my brothers!"—On the breast
Of that grey sire she sank—and swiftly back,
Ev'n in an instant, to their native track
Her free thoughts flowed.—She saw the pomp no more—
The plumes, the banners:—to her cabin-door,
And to the Fairy's Fountain in the glade,
Where her young sisters by her side had play'd,
And to her hamlet's chapel, where it rose
Hallowing the forest unto deep repose,
Her spirit turn'd. The very wood-note, sung
In early spring-time by the bird, which dwelt
Where o'er her father's roof the beech-leaves hung,
Was in her heart; a music heard and felt,

Winning her back to nature.—She unbound
The helm of many battles from her head,
And, with her bright locks bow'd to sweep the ground,
Lifting her voice up, wept for joy, and said,–
"Bless me, my father, bless me! and with thee,
To the still cabin and the beechen-tree,
Let me return!"

Oh! never did thine eye
Thro' the green haunts of happy infancy
Wander again, Joanne!—too much of fame
Had shed its radiance on thy peasant-name;
And bought alone by gifts beyond all price,
The trusting heart's repose, the paradise
Of home with all its loves, doth fate allow
The crown of glory unto woman's brow.

PAULINE.

To die for what we love!—Oh! there is power
In the true heart, and pride, and joy, for this;
It is to live without the vanish'd light
That strength is needed.

Così trapassa al trapassar d'un Giorno
Della vita mortal il fiore e'l verde.
TASSO.

ALONG the star-lit Seine went music swelling,
Till the air thrill'd with its exulting mirth;
Proudly it floated, even as if no dwelling
For cares or stricken hearts were found on earth;
And a glad sound the measure lightly beat,
A happy chime of many dancing feet.
For in a palace of the land that night,
   Lamps, and fresh roses, and green leaves were hung,
And from the painted walls a stream of light
   On flying forms beneath soft splendour flung:
But loveliest far amidst the revel's pride
Was one, the lady from the Danube-side.

Pauline, the meekly bright!—tho' now no more
   Her clear eye flash'd with youth's all tameless glee,
Yet something holier than its dayspring wore,
   There in soft rest lay beautiful to see;
A charm with graver, tenderer sweetness fraught—
The blending of deep love and matron thought.

Thro' the gay throng she moved, serenely fair,
   And such calm joy as fills a moonlight sky,
Sate on her brow beneath its graceful hair,
   As her young daughter in the dance went by,
With the fleet step of one that yet hath known
Smiles and kind voices in this world alone.

Lurk'd there no secret boding in her breast?
   Did no faint whisper warn of evil nigh?
Such oft awake when most the heart seems blest
   Midst the light laughter of festivity:—
Whence come those tones!—Alas! enough we know,
To mingle fear with all triumphal show!

Who spoke of evil, when young feet were flying
   In fairy-rings around the echoing hall?
Soft airs thro' braided locks in perfume sighing,
   Glad pulses beating unto music's call?
Silence!—the minstrels pause—and hark! a sound,
A strange quick rustling which their notes had drown'd!

And lo! a light upon the dancers breaking—
   Not such their clear and silvery lamps had shed!
From the gay dream of revelry awaking,
   One moment holds them still in breathless dread;
The wild fierce lustre grows–then bursts a cry–
Fire! thro' the hall and round it gathering–fly!

And forth they rush–as chased by sword and spear–
To the green coverts of the garden-bowres;
A gorgeous masque of pageantry and fear,
Startling the birds and trampling down the flowers:
While from the dome behind, red sparkles driven
Pierce the dark stillness of the midnight heaven.

And where is she, Pauline?–the hurrying throng
Have swept her onward, as a stormy blast
Might sweep some faint o'erwearied bird along–
Till now the threshold of that death is past,
And free she stands beneath the starry skies,
Calling her child—but no sweet voice replies.

"Bertha! where art thou?–Speak, oh! speak my own!"
Alas! unconscious of her pangs the while,
The gentle girl, in fear's cold grasp alone,
Powerless hath sunk within the blazing pile;
A young bright form, deck'd gloriously for death,
With flowers all shrinking from the flame's fierce breath!

But oh! thy strength, deep love!–there is no power
To stay the mother from that rolling grave,
Tho' fast on high the fiery volumes tower,
And forth, like banners, from each lattice wave.
Back, back she rushes thro' a host combined–
Mighty is anguish, with affection twined!

And what bold step may follow, midst the roar
Of the red billows, o'er their prey that rise?
None!–Courage there stood still–and never more
Did those fair forms emerge on human eyes!
Was one brief meeting theirs, one wild farewell?
And did they heart to heart?–Oh! who can tell?
Freshly and cloudlessly the morning broke
On that sad palace, midst its pleasure-shades;
Its painted roofs had sunk–yet black with smoke
And lonely stood its marble colonnades:
But yester-eve their shafts with wreaths were bound—
Now lay the scene one shrivell’d scroll around!

And bore the ruins no recording trace
Of all that woman’s heart had dared and done?
Yes! there were gems to mark its mortal place,
That forth from dust and ashes dimly shone!
Those had the mother, on her gentle breast,
Worn round her child’s fair image, there at rest.

And they were all!—the tender and the true
Left this alone her sacrifice to prove,
Hallowing the spot where mirth once lightly flew,
To deep, lone, chasten’d thoughts of grief and love.
—Oh! we have need of patient faith below,
To clear away the mysteries of such wo!

**JUANA.**

Juana, mother of the Emperor Charles V., upon the death of her husband, Philip the Handsome of Austria, who had treated her with uniform neglect, had his body laid upon a bed of state in a magnificent dress, and being possessed with the idea that it would revive, watched it for a length of time incessantly, waiting for the moment of returning life.

It is but dust thou look’st upon. This love,
This wild and passionate idolatry,
What doth it in the shadow of the grave?
Gather it back within thy lonely heart,
So must it ever end: too much we give
Unto the things that perish.

THE night-wind shook the tapestry round an ancient palace-room,
And torches, as it rose and fell, waved thro’ the gorgeous gloom,
And o’er a shadowy regal couch threw fitful gleams and red,
Where a woman with long raven hair sat watching by the dead.

Pale shone the features of the dead, yet glorious still to see,
Like a hunter or a chief struck down while his heart and step were free;
No shroud he wore, no robe of death, but there majestic lay,
Proudly and sadly glittering in royalty's array.

But she that with the dark hair watch'd by the cold slumberer's side,
On her wan cheek no beauty dwelt, and in her garb no pride;
Only her full impassion'd eyes as o'er that clay she bent,

A wildness and a tenderness in strange resplendence blent.
And as the swift thoughts cross'd her soul, like shadows of a cloud,
Amidst the silent room of death, the dreamer spoke aloud;
She spoke to him who could not hear, and cried, "Thou yet wilt wake,
And learn my watchings and my tears, belov'd one! for thy sake.

They told me this was death, but well I knew it could not be;
Fairest and stateliest of the earth! who spoke of death for thee?
They would have wrapp'd the funeral shroud thy gallant form aroun
But I forbade—and there thou art, a monarch, robed and crown'd!

With all thy bright locks gleaming still, their coronal beneath,
And thy brow so proudly beautiful—who said that this was death?
Silence hath been upon thy lips, and stillness round thee long,
But the hopeful spirit in my breast is all undimm'd and strong.

I know thou hast not loved me yet; I am not fair like thee,
The very glance of whose clear eye threw round a light of glee!
A frail and drooping form is mine—a cold unsmiling cheek,—
Oh! I have but a woman's heart, wherewith thy heart to seek.

But when thou wak'st, my prince, my lord! and hear'st how I have kept
A lonely vigil by thy side, and o'er thee pray'd and wept;

How in one long, deep dream of thee my nights and days have past,
Surely that humble, patient love must win back love at last!

And thou wilt smile—my own, my own, shall be the sunny smile,
Which brightly fell, and joyously, on all but me erewhile!
No more in vain affection's thirst my weary soul shall pine—
Oh! years of hope deferr'd were paid by one fond glance of thine!

Thou'lt meet me with that radiant look when thou com'st from the chase,
For me, for me, in festal halls it shall kindle o'er thy face!
Thou'lt reck no more tho' beauty's gift mine aspect may not bless; 
In thy kind eyes this deep, deep love, shall give me loveliness.

But wake! my heart within me burns, yet once more to rejoice
In the sound to which it ever leap'd, the music of thy voice:
Awake! I sit in solitude, that thy first look and tone,
And the gladness of thine opening eyes, may all be mine alone."

In the still chambers of the dust, thus pour'd forth day by day,
The passion of that loving dream from a troubled soul found way,
Until the shadows of the grave had swept o'er every grace,
Left midst the awfulness of death on the princely form and face.

And slowly broke the fearful truth upon the watcher's breast,
And they bore away the royal dead with requiems to his rest,
With banners and with knightly plumes all waving in the wind,—
But a woman's broken heart was left in its lone despair behind.

THE AMERICAN FOREST GIRL.

A fearful gift upon thy heart is laid,
Woman!—a power to suffer and to love,
Therefore thou so canst pity.

WILDLY and mournfully the Indian drum
On the deep hush of moonlight forests broke;—
"Sing us a death-song, for thine hour is come,"—
So the red warriors to their captive spoke.
Still, and amidst those dusky forms alone,
A youth, a fair-hair'd youth of England stood,
Like a king's son; tho' from his cheek had flown
The mantling crimson of the island-blood,
And his press'd lips look'd marble.—Fiercely bright,
And high around him, blaz'd the fires of night,
Rocking beneath the cedars to and fro,
As the wind pass'd, and with a fitful glow
Lighting the victim's face:—But who could tell
Of what within his secret heart befel,
Known but to heaven that hour?—Perchance a thought
Of his far home then so intensely wrought,
That its full image, pictur'd to his eye
On the dark ground of mortal agony,
Rose clear as day!—and he might see the band,
Of his young sisters wand'r'ing hand in hand,
Where the laburnums droop'd; or haply binding
The jasmine, up the door's low pillars winding;
Or, as day clos'd upon their gentle mirth,
Gathering with braided hair, around the hearth
Where sat their mother;—and that mother's face
Its grave sweet smile yet wearing in the place
Where so it ever smiled!—Perchance the prayer
Learn'd at her knee came back on his despair;
The blessing from her voice, the very tone
Of her "Good-night" might breathe from boyhood gone!—
He started and look'd up:—thick cypress boughs
   Full of strange sound, wav'd o'er him, darkly red
In the broad stormy firelight;—savage brows,
   With tall plumes crested and wild hues o'erspread,
Girt him like feverish phantoms; and pale stars
Look'd thro' the branches as thro' dungeon bars,
Shedding no hope.—He knew, he felt his doom—
Oh! what a tale to shadow with its gloom
That happy hall in England!—Idle fear!
Would the winds tell it?—Who might dream or hear
The secret of the forests?—to the stake
   They bound him; and that proud young soldier strove
His father's spirit in his breast to wake,
   Trusting to die in silence! He, the love
Of many hearts!—the fondly rear'd,—the fair,
Gladdening all eyes to see!—And fetter'd there
He stood beside his death-pyre, and the brand
Flamed up to light it, in the chieftain's hand.
He thought upon his God.—Hush! hark!—a cry
Breaks on the stern and dread solemnity,—
A step hath pierc'd the ring!—Who dares intrude
On the dark hunters in their vengeful mood?—
A girl—a young slight girl—a fawn-like child
Of green Savannas and the leafy wild,
Springing unmark'd till then, as some lone flower,
Happy because the sunshine is its dower;
Yet one that knew how early tears are shed,—
For hers had mourn'd a playmate brother dead.

She had sat gazing on the victim long,
Until the pity of her soul grew strong;
And, by its passion's deep'ning fervour sway'd,
Ev'n to the stake she rush'd, and gently laid
His bright head on her bosom, and around
His form her slender arms to shield it wound
Like close liannes; then rais'd her glittering eye
And clear-toned voice that said, "He shall not die!"

"He shall not die!"—the gloomy forest thrill'd
To that sweet sound. A sudden wonder fell
On the fierce thron; and heart and hand were still'd,
Struck down, as by the whisper of a spell.
They gaz'd—their dark souls bow'd before the maid,
She of the dancing step in wood and glade!
And, as her cheek flush'd thro' its olive hue,
As her black tresses to the night-wind flew,
Something o'ermaster'd them from that young mien—
Something of heaven, in silence felt and seen;
And seeming, to their child-like faith, a token
That the Great Spirit by her voice had spoken.
They loos'd the bonds that held their captive's breath;
From his pale lips they took the cup of death;
They quench'd the brand beneath the cypress tree;
"Away," they cried, "young stranger, thou art free!"

COSTANZA.

—Art thou then desolate?
Of friends, of hopes forsaken?—Come to me!
I am thine own.—Have trusted hearts prov'd false?
Flatterers deceived thee? Wanderer, come to me!
Why didst thou ever leave me? Know'st thou all
I would have borne, and call'd it joy to bear,
For thy sake? Know'st thou that thy voice had power
To shake me with a thrill of happiness
By one kind tone?—to fill mine eyes with tears
Of yearning love? And thou—oh! thou didst throw
She knelt in prayer. A stream of sunset fell
Thro' the stain'd window of her lonely cell,
And with its rich, deep, melancholy glow
Flushing her cheek and pale Madonna brow,
While o'er her long hair's flowing jet it threw
Bright waves of gold—the autumn forest's hue—
Seem'd all a vision's mist of glory, spread
By painting's touch around some holy head,
Virgin's or fairest martyr's. In her eye,
Which glanced as dark, clear water to the sky,
What solemn fervour lived! And yet what wo,
Lay like some buried thing, still seen below
The glassy tide! Oh! he that could reveal
What life had taught that chasten'd heart to feel,
Might speak indeed of woman's blighted years,
And wasted love, and vainly bitter tears!
But she had told her griefs to heaven alone,
And of the gentle saint no more was known,
Than that she fled the world's cold breath, and made
A temple of the pine and chestnut shade,
Filling its depths with soul, whene'er her hymn
Rose thro' each murmur of the green, and dim,
And ancient solitude; where hidden streams
Went moaning thro' the grass, like sounds in dreams,
Music for weary hearts! Midst leaves and flowers
She dwelt, and knew all secrets of their powers,
All nature's balms, wherewith her gliding tread
To the sick peasant on his lowly bed,
Came and brought hope; while scarce of mortal birth
He deem'd the pale fair form, that held on earth
Communion but with grief.

Ere long a cell,
A rock-hewn chapel rose, a cross of stone
Gleam'd thro' the dark trees o'er a sparkling well,
And a sweet voice, of rich, yet mournful tone,
Told the Calabrian wilds, that duly there

That crush'd affection back upon my heart;—
Yet come to me!—it died not.
Costanza lifted her sad heart in prayer.—
And now 'twas prayer's own hour. That voice again
Thro' the dim foliage sent its heavenly strain,
That made the cypress quiver where it stood,
In day's last crimson soaring from the wood
Like spiry flame. But as the bright sun set,
Other and wilder sounds in tumult met
The floating song. Strange sounds!—the trumpet's peal,
Made hollow by the rocks; the clash of steel,
The rallying war cry.—In the mountain-pass,
There had been combat; blood was on the grass,
Banners had strewn the waters; chiefs lay dying,
And the pine-branches crash'd before the flying.

And all was chang'd within the still retreat,
Costanza's home:—there enter'd hurrying feet,
Dark looks of shame and sorrow; mail-clad men,
Stern fugitives from that wild battle-glen,
Scaring the ringdoves from the porch-roof, bore
A wounded warrior in: the rocky floor
Gave back deep echoes to his clanging sword,
As there they laid their leader, and implor'd
The sweet saint's prayers to heal him; then for flight,
Thro' the wide forest and the mantling night,
Sped breathlessly again.—They pass'd— but he,
The stateliest of a host— alas! to see
What mother's eyes have watch'd in rosy sleep
Till joy, for very fullness, turn'd to weep,
Thus chang'd!—a fearful thing! His golden crest
Was shiver'd, and the bright scarf on his breast—
Some costly love-gift—rent:—but what of these?
There were the clustering raven-locks— the breeze
As it came in thro' lime and myrtle flowers,
Might scarcely lift them— steep'd in bloody showers,
So heavily upon the pallid clay
Of the damp cheek they hung! the eyes' dark ray—
Where was it?—and the lips!—they gasp'd apart,
With their light curve, as from the chisel's art,
Still proudly beautiful! but that white hue—
Was it not death's?—that stillness— that cold dew
On the scarr'd forehead? No! his spirit broke
From its deep trance ere long, yet but awoke
To wander in wild dreams; and there he lay,
By the fierce fever as a green reed shaken,
The haughty chief of thousands—the forsaken
Of all save one!—She fled not. Day by day—
Such hours are woman’s birthright—she, unknown,
Kept watch beside him, fearless and alone;
Binding his wounds, and oft in silence laving
His brow with tears that mourn’d the strong man’s raving.
He felt them not, nor mark’d the light, veil’d form
Still hovering nigh; yet sometimes, when that storm
Of frenzy sank, her voice, in tones as low
As a young mother’s by the cradle singing,
Would sooth him with sweet aves, gently bringing
Moments of slumber, when the fiery glow
Ebb’d from his hollow cheek.

At last faint gleams
Of memory dawn’d upon the cloud of dreams,
And feebly lifting, as a child, his head,
And gazing round him from his leafy bed,
He murmur’d forth, "Where am I? What soft strain
Pass’d, like a breeze, across my burning brain?
Back from my youth it floated, with a tone
Of life’s first music, and a thought of one—
Where is she now? and where the gauds of pride
Whose hollow splendour lured me from her side?
All lost!—and this is death!—I cannot die
Without forgiveness from that mournful eye!
Away! the earth hath lost her. Was she born
To brook abandonment, to strive with scorn?
My first, my holiest love!—her broken heart
Lies low, and I—unpardon’d I depart."

But then Costanza rais’d the shadowy veil
From her dark locks and features brightly pale,
And stood before him with a smile—oh! ne’er
Did aught that smiled so much of sadness wear—
And said "Cesario! look on me; I live
To say my heart hath bled, and can forgive.
I loved thee with such worship, such deep trust
As should be Heaven's alone—and Heaven is just!
I bless thee—be at peace."

But o'er his frame
Too fast the strong tide rush'd—the sudden shame,
The joy, th' amaze!—he bow'd his head—it fell
On the wrong'd bosom which had lov'd so well;
And love still perfect, gave him refuge there,—
His last faint breath just wav'd her floating hair.

MADELINE, A DOMESTIC TALE.

Who should it be?—Where shouldst thou look for kindness?
When we are sick where can we turn for succour;
When we are wretched where can we complain;
And when the world looks cold and surly on us,
Where can we go to meet a warmer eye
With such sure confidence as to a mother?

JOANNA BAILLIE.

"MY child, my child, thou leav'st me!—I shall hear
The gentle voice no more that blest mine ear
With its first utterance; I shall miss the sound
Of thy light step amidst the flowers around,
And thy soft-breathing hymn at twilight's close,
And thy "Good-night" at parting for repose.
Under the vine-leaves I shall sit alone,
And the low breeze will have a mournful tone
Amidst their tendrils, while I think of thee,
My child! and thou, along the moonlight sea,
With a soft sadness haply in thy glance,
Shalt watch thine own, thy pleasant land of France,
Fading to air.—Yet blessings with thee go!
Love guard thee, gentlest! and the exile's wo
From thy young heart be far! And sorrow not
For me, sweet daughter! in my lonely lot,
God shall be with me.—Now, farewell! farewell!
Thou that hast been what words may never tell
Unto thy mother's bosom, since the days
When thou wert pillow'd there, and wont to raise
In sudden laughter thence thy loving eye
That still sought mine:—these moments are gone by,
Thou too must go, my flower!—Yet with thee dwell
The peace of God!—One, one more gaze—farewell!"

This was a mother’s parting with her child,
A young meek bride, on whom fair fortune smil’d,
And wooed her with a voice of love away
From childhood’s home; yet there, with fond delay,
She linger’d on the threshold, heard the note
Of her cag’d bird thro’ trellis’d rose-leaves float,
And fell upon her mother’s neck, and wept,
Whilst old remembrances, that long had slept,
Gush’d o’er her soul, and many a vanish’d day,
As in one picture traced, before her lay.

But the farewell was said; and on the deep,
When its breast heav’d in sunset's golden sleep,
With a calm’d heart, young Madeline ere long,
Pour’d forth her own sweet solemn vesper-song,
Breathing of home: thro’ stillness heard afar,
And duly rising with the first pale star,
That voice was on the waters; till at last
The sounding ocean-solitudes were pass’d,
And the bright land was reach’d, the youthful world
That glows along the West: the sails were furl’d
In its clear sunshine, and the gentle bride
Look’d on the home that promis’d hearts untried
A bower of bliss to come.—Alas! we trace
The map of our own paths, and long ere years
With their dull steps the brilliant lines efface,
On sweeps the storm, and blots them out with tears.
That home was darken’d soon: the summer breeze
Welcom’d with death the wanderers from the seas,
Death unto one, and anguish—how forlorn!
To her, that widow’d in her marriage-morn,
Sat in her voiceless dwelling, whence with him
Her bosom’s first belov’d, her friend and guide,
Joy had gone forth, and left the green earth dim,
As from the sun shut out on every side,
By the close veil of misery!—Oh! but ill,
When with rich hopes o'erfraught, the young high heart
Bears its first blow!—it knows not yet the part
Which life will teach—to suffer and be still,

And with submissive love to count the flowers
Which yet are spared, and thro' the future hour;
To send no busy dream!—She had not learn'd
Of sorrow till that hour, and therefore turn'd
In weariness from life: then came th' unrest,
The heart-sick yearning of the exile's breast,
The haunting sounds of voices far away,
And household steps: until at last she lay
On her lone couch of sickness, lost in dreams
Of the gay vineyards and blue-rushing streams
In her own sunny land, and murmuring oft
Familiar names, in accents wild, yet soft,
To strangers round that bed, who knew not aught
Of the deep spells wherewith each word was fraught.
To strangers?—Oh! could strangers raise the head
Gently as hers was raised?—did strangers shed
The kindly tears which bath'd that feverish brow
And wasted cheek with half-unconscious flow?
Something was there, that thro' the lingering night
Outwatches patiently the taper's light,
Something that faints not thro' the day's distress,
That fears not toil, that knows not weariness;
Love, true, and perfect love!—Whence came that power,
Uprearing thro' the storm the drooping flower?
Whence?—who can ask?—the wild delirium pass'd,
And from her eyes the spirit look'd at last
Into her mother's face, and wakening knew
The brow's calm grace, the hair's dear silvery hue,
The kind sweet smile of old!—and had she come,
Thus in life's evening, from her distant home,
To save her child?—Ev'n so—nor yet in vain:
In that young heart a light sprung up again,
And lovely still, with so much love to give,
Seem'd this fair world, tho' faded; still to live
Was not to pine forsaken. On the breast
That rock'd her childhood, sinking in soft rest,
"Sweet mother! gentlest mother! can it be?"
Di Rosa

The lorn one cried, "and do I look on thee?
Take back thy wanderer from this fatal shore,
Peace shall be ours beneath our vines once more."

THE QUEEN OF PRUSSIA'S TOMB.

"This tomb is in the garden of Charlottenburgh, near Berlin. It was not without surprise that I came suddenly, among trees, upon a fair white Doric temple. I might, and should have deemed it a mere ornament of the grounds, but the cypress and the willow declare it a habitation of the dead. Upon a sarcophagus of white marble lay a sheet, and the outline of the human form was plainly visible beneath its folds. The person with me reverently turned it back, and displayed the statue of his Queen. It is a portrait-statue recumbent, said to be a perfect resemblance—not as in death, but when she lived to bless and be blessed. Nothing can be more calm and kind than the expression of her features. The hands are folded on the bosom; the limbs are sufficiently crossed to show the repose of life. Here the King brings her children annually, to offer garlands at her grave. These hang in withered mournfulness above this living image of their departed mother."—SHERER's Notes and Reflections during a Ramble in Germany.

In sweet pride upon that insult keen
She smiled; then drooping mute and broken-hearted,
To the cold comfort of the grave departed.

MILMAN.

IT stands where northern willows weep,
   A temple fair and lone;
Soft shadows o'er its marble sweep,
   From cypress-branches thrown;
While silently around it spread,
Thou feel'st the presence of the dead.

And what within is richly shrined?
   A sculptur'd woman's form,
Lovely in perfect rest reclined,
   As one beyond the storm:
Yet not of death, but slumber, lies
The solemn sweetness on those eyes.

The folded hands, the calm pure face,
   The mantle's quiet flow,
The gentle, yet majestic grace,
Throned on the matron brow;
These, in that scene of tender gloom,
With a still glory robe the tomb.

There stands an eagle, at the feet
Of the fair image wrought;
A kingly emblem—nor unmeet
To wake yet deeper thought:
She whose high heart finds rest below,
Was royal in her birth and wo.

There are pale garlands hung above,
Of dying scent and hue;—
She was a mother—in her love
How sorrowfully true!
Oh! hallow'd long be every leaf,
The record of her children's grief!

She saw their birthright's warrior-crown
Of olden glory spoil'd,
The standard of their sires borne down,
The shield's bright blazon soil'd:
She met the tempest meekly brave,
Then turn'd o'erwearied to the grave.

She slumber'd; but it came—it came,
Her land's redeeming hour,
With the glad shout, and signal flame
Sent on from tower to tower!
Fast thro' the realm a spirit moved—
'Twas hers, the lofty and the loved.

Then was her name a note that wrung
To rouse bold hearts from sleep;
Her memory, as a banner flung
Forth by the Baltic deep;
Her grief, a bitter vial pour'd
To sanctify th' avenger's sword.
And the crown'd eagle spread again
His pinion to the sun;
And the strong land shook off its chain—
So was the triumph won!
But wo for earth, where sorrow’s tone
Still blends with victory’s!—She was gone! *

THE MEMORIAL PILLAR.

On the road-side between Penrith and Appleby, stands a small pillar, with this inscription:—"This pillar was erected in the year 1656, by Ann, Countess Dowager of Pembroke, for a memorial of her last parting, in this place, with her good and pious mother, Margaret, Countess Dowager of Cumberland, on the 2d April, 1616."—See Notes to the "Pleasures of Memory."

Hast thou thro’ Eden’s wild-wood vales, pursued
Each mountain-scene, magnificently rude,
Nor with attention’s lifted eye, revered
That modest stone, by pious Pembroke rear’d,
Which still records, beyond the pencil’s power,
The silent sorrows of a parting hour?
ROGERS.

MOTHER and child! whose blending tears
Have sanctified the place,
Where, to the love of many years,
Was given one last embrace;
Oh! ye have shrin’d a spell of power,
Deep in your record of that hour!

A spell to waken solemn thought,
A still, small under-tone,
That calls back days of childhood, fraught
With many a treasure gone;
And smites, perchance, the hidden source,
Tho’ long untroubled—of remorse.

For who, that gazes on the stone
Which marks your parting spot,
Who but a mother’s love hath known,
The one love changing not?
Alas! and haply learn’d its worth
First with the sound of "Earth to earth?"
But thou, high-hearted daughter! thou,
O'er whose bright honour'd head,
Blessings and tears of holiest flow,
Ev'n here were fondly shed,—
Thou from the passion of thy grief,
In its full burst, couldst draw relief.

For, oh! tho' painful be th' excess,
The might wherewith it swells,
In nature's fount no bitterness
Of nature's mingling, dwells;
And thou hadst not, by wrong or pride,
Poison'd the free and healthful tide.

But didst thou meet the face no more
Which thy young heart first knew?
And all—was all in this world o'er,
With ties thus close and true?
It was!—On earth no other eye
Could give thee back thine infancy.

No other voice could pierce the maze
Where, deep within thy breast,
The sounds and dreams of other days
With memory lay at rest;
No other smile to thee could bring
A gladd'ning, like the breath of spring.

Yet, while thy place of weeping still
Its lone memorial keeps,
While on thy name, midst wood and hill,
The quiet sunshine sleeps,
And touches, in each graven line,
Of reverential thought a sign;

Can I, while yet these tokens wear
The impress of the dead,
Think of the love embodied there,
As of a vision fled?
A perish'd thing, the joy and flower
And glory of one earthly hour?

Not so! – I will not bow me so,
To thoughts that breathe despair!
A loftier faith we need below,
Life's farewell words to bear.
Mother and child!–Your tears are past–
Surely your hearts have met at last.

THE GRAVE OF A POETESS.

"Ne me plaignez pas–si vous saviez
Combien de peines ce tombeau m'a épargnées!"

I STOOD beside thy lowly grave;
Spring-odours breath'd around,
And music, in the river-wave,
Pass'd with a lulling sound.

All happy things that love the sun,
In the bright air glanc'd by,
And a glad murmur seem'd to run
Thro' the soft azure sky.

Fresh leaves were on the ivy-bough
That fring'd the ruins near;
Young voices were abroad–but thou
Their sweetness couldst not hear.
And mournful grew my heart for thee,
Thou in whose woman's mind
The ray that brightens earth and sea,
The light of song was shrined.

Mournful, that thou wert slumbering low,
With a dread curtain drawn
Between thee and the golden glow
Of this world's vernal dawn.
Parted from all the song and bloom
Thou wouldst have lov'd so well,
To thee the sunshine round thy tomb
Was but a broken spell.

The bird, the insect on the wing,
In their bright reckless play,
Might feel the flush and life of spring,—
And thou wert pass'd away!

But then, ev'n then, a nobler thought
O'er my vain sadness came;
Th' immortal spirit woke, and wrought
Within my thrilling frame.

Surely on lovelier things, I said,
Thou must have look'd ere now,
Than all that round our pathway shed
Odours and hues below.

The shadows of the tomb are here,
Yet beautiful is earth!
What see'st thou then where no dim fear,
No haunting dream hath birth?
Here a vain love to passing flowers
Thou gav'st—but where thou art,
The sway is not with changeful hours,
There love and death must part.

Thou hast left sorrow in thy song,
A voice not loud, but deep!
The glorious bowers of earth among,
How often didst thou weep!

Where couldst thou fix on mortal ground
Thy tender thoughts and high?—
Now peace the woman's heart hath found,
And joy the poet's eye.