

**ART, PAIN, AND IMMORTALITY: GENDERED CREATIVITY IN FELICIA DOROTHEA
HEMANS'S SENTIMENTAL POETRY**

**SANAT, ACI VE ÖLÜMSÜZLÜK: FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS'IN DUYGUSAL ŞİİRİNDE
CİNSİYETE DAYALI YARATICILIK**

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Bu makale Felicia Dorothea Hemans'ın (1793-1835) şiirini acı, kadının şiirsel yaratıcılığı ve edebi ölümsüzlük bağlamında incelemektedir. Hemans, İngiliz yazınının duygusal geleneğinde öne çıkan bir figürdür; kişisel duyguları ev içi kaygılarla bütünleştirme konusundaki benzersiz kapasitesiyle tanınır ve böylece şiirdeki geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini sıklıkla sorgular. Hemans, kişisel duyguları vurgulayarak aile içi, ulusal ve siyasi meseleleri ele alan benzersiz bir edebi gelenek kurar. Kadınlara dayatılan kısıtlamalara rağmen, Hemans şiirlerinde kadınsı kimliğini her zaman korur. Bunu yaratım sürecinde önemli bir etki olarak kabul eder. Bu ışık altında, bu makale Felicia Dorothea Hemans'ın, *Records of Women* (1828) adlı koleksiyonunda yayınlanan “Properzia Rossi” ve “The Grave of a Poetess” adlı iki şiirinde eserlerin ölümsüzleştirici gücünü ortaya koyma biçimlerini yakından incelerken, aynı zamanda kadın şairin bir sevgili ya da şair olarak bireysel acısını dile getirme biçimlerini de ele almaktadır. Hemans'ın eserleri, bu iki unsurun birleşimini vurgulayarak kişisel acıyı nasıl ustalıklı kalıcı bir yaratıcı mirasa dönüştürdüğünü keşfederek, sanatın acı karşısında bile kadınsı deneyimi ölümsüzleştirme ve koruma yeteneğine işaret ediyor.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Felicia Dorothea Hemans's (1793-1835) poetry concerning pain, female poetic creativity, and literary immortality. Hemans is a prominent figure in the sentimental tradition of English writing, as she is recognised for her unique capacity to integrate personal emotions with domestic concerns, thereby frequently questioning traditional gender roles in poetry. Hemans establishes a unique literary tradition that addresses domestic, national, and political issues by emphasising personal emotions. Despite the constraints imposed on women, Hemans always maintains her feminine identity in her poetry. She welcomes it as a significant influence on her creative process. In this light, this paper closely explores the ways Felicia Dorothea Hemans reveals the immortalising power of works in her two poems “Properzia Rossi” and “The Grave of a Poetess”, published in her collection *Records of Women* (1828), while also giving their articulation of the individual pain of the female poet either as a lover or as a poet. By exploring how Hemans skilfully transforms personal sorrow into a lasting creative legacy by highlighting the junction of these two elements, Hemans's works indicate the ability of art to immortalise and preserve the feminine experience, even in the face of pain.

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Introduction

In his “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, T. S. Eliot (1932: 13-22) emphasises the artist's need to conflate his/her original poetic creativity with the literary tradition. The poetry of Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793-1835) exemplifies this fusion of personal ingenuity with established literary conventions, resulting in a unique voice. In order to create this distinctiveness, Hemans “brings together British, French, Indian, German, American and Greek narratives from different historical periods” (Armstrong, 1996: 317) and blends them into her poetry. In addition, her works were comprised of late Romantic and early Victorian characteristics, foregrounding religious, domestic and martial themes. In the context of her literary approach, she has frequently been identified as a key figure of sentimental tradition, which can be defined as “one of the cultural trends that gave rise to Romanticism” (Baldick, 2001: 239). Sentimentalism features “effusive emotions, interpersonal relationships, domestic settings, and coincidental plots in their narrative poetry and novels” (Abrams, 1999: 284). However, Hemans’s poetry extends beyond these conventions. She engages with not only domestic themes but also political and national concerns while, above all, emphasising female creative agency and the role of women in literary production. Moreover, as Sweet (1997: 101) puts it, Hemans is also “a typical later Romantic, the author of long poems written in dialogue with Lord Byron, Shelley, and John Keats”. Substantiating this, Scott (2001: 36) observes that Hemans “wrote more ekphrastic poems than the major Romantic poets combined, thirty-eight to be exact”. Therefore, it would be an understatement to reduce Hemans’s status to that of a sentimental poet exclusively concerned with domestic life- writing about women and families. Similarly, Arıkan (2021: 9) suggests that a fundamental element of Hemans’s creative vision is her capacity to integrate the social and national with the personal and domestic, which is echoed as “complex orchestrations of sound” by Saglia (2007: 354).

In her later career, particularly in her collection *Records of Women* (1828), the poems Hemans produced dealt with the meaning of poetry, achieving immortality through poetry, and the meaning of being an aspiring female poet. Contrary to the perception that she primarily focused on domestic concerns, Hemans also subverts patriarchal literary norms through her poetic creativity. When writing was considered against a woman's domestic bliss, she could make a livelihood through writing like her contemporary Letitia Elizabeth Landon. Their poetry was produced in a period when "sentimentalism was the dominant aspect in women's poetry, and Felicia Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, who were not historically Victorian, were the best representatives of this growing sensibility" (Seber, 2007: 264). On the other hand, this sentimental tradition was not merely a sign of emotion for them; it was also an attempt to escape from the literary constraints of their era, defying gender conventions while achieving fame as writers. On the whole, regardless of her gender, Hemans was undeniably a prominent poet and aimed to show this in her poems. As Gary Kelly (2002: 15) notes, Hemans “was the most widely read woman poet in the nineteenth-century English-speaking world”. In like manner, although her poetry encompasses several other subjects, this paper is specifically interested in the distinctive aspect of her poetry, which is her emphasis on female poetic creativity. It aims to explore the ways Felicia Dorothea Hemans depicts poetic creativity by asserting female autonomy in her literary pursuits, particularly during a time marked by sentimentalism and societal expectations centred around domesticity, with a particular emphasis on her poems "Properzi Rossi" and "Grave of a Poet" in her poetry collection, *Records of Women*.

Felicia Dorothea Hemans and Her Poetry

Hemans was born Felicia Brown in 1793 into a merchant-class family in Liverpool. While she was getting an education under the supervision of her mother at home, she read widely in English and continental European literature, travelled and history, and had the opportunity to learn modern languages (Kelly, 2002: 18). Her father left home for Quebec and never returned. In 1812, she married Captain Alfred Hemans and gave birth to five sons in six years. In 1818, following his departure for Rome, Captain Hemans never returned (Feldman, 1999: xiv-xv). According to Angela Leighton (1992: 9), after these two desertions, Hemans developed a connection for her future poetic career between “male desertion and female creativity”. Hemans made her first appearance as a poet at the age of fifteen with the publication of a book that was funded by subscriptions, *Poems* (1808). It was then followed by *The Domestic Affections and Other Poems* (1812), *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy* (1816), *Modern Greece* (1817), and five other volumes (Peterson, 2016: 403). In the course of her life,

Hemans published twenty volumes of poetry, many annotated from her wide multilingual reading, and she placed nearly four hundred poems in an emerging popular market of magazines and annuals. [. . .]. Her posthumous career was as remarkable, with scores of selected and collected editions appearing between 1835 and 1920 alongside critical attention in Europe and America from Sainte-Beuve early to Saintsbury late. (Sweet and Melynk, 2001: 1-2)

Gary Kelly underpins three reasons for this success and popularity. To begin with, in her time, there was a new emerging revolutionary class, the values she acquired in her family and country. Secondly, being from the middle class herself, Hemans adapted new developments in British and European Romanticism to her works. Thirdly and finally, she "responded passionately to the unfolding national and international politics of her day" (Ryan, 2002: 15). These characteristics combined determine the status of Hemans as a poet sensitive to the social changes and literary breakthroughs of her day, enabling her work to be related with contemporary readers and ensure her enduring appeal. Within the roles of her domestic life and poetic career, as Ryan (2008: 250) puts it, "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". It is evident in her works that with her poetic skill, she navigates these complexities as she meticulously creates a careful balance between public recognition and her creative ambitions. To define her poetic trajectory, Sweet and Melynk (2001: 4-5) categorise Hemans's career into three distinct phases: an early period focused on public concerns, a middle phase emphasising intimate reflections, and a late period marked by experimental forms and themes. Considering this tripartite structure, it could be argued that the development in Hemans's poetry shows her capacity to adjust to diverse socio-political or life events of her time and her engagement with personal and innovative concerns.

Given her interaction with the female sphere and female poetic practice, in a letter that she wrote to her aunt in 1808, Hemans acknowledges that "females are forbidden to interfere in politics" (Wolfson, 2000: 475). This observation demonstrates her comprehension of the gender roles that prevailed during her lifetime. Nevertheless, she endeavoured to devise feminine patriotic poetry by blending her domestic views through her political vantage point (Lootens, 2000: 257). She wrote "The Army," "Reform", and satirical and political works. Although these works possess political and ostensibly unfeminine themes, Hemans employed them in a manner that would be considered feminine. Her poems, *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy* (1816) and *Modern Greece* (1817), bear the same motive in which she touches on the post-Napoleonic state of Britain and Europe. The poems provide commentary on significant national and global political issues, encompassing an extensive historical and cultural perspective (Kelly, 2002: 23). She consistently maintains her feminine perspective, even when discussing political matters. Similarly, according to Arda Arıkan (2021: 20), in her political and nationalistic poetry, Hemans primarily reflects the societal and political desire for strong leadership and abundant resources that people wish to see in their country. This method enabled Hemans to participate in political debate while preserving a uniquely feminine perspective. By integrating national feeling with political concerns, she redefined conventional concepts of patriotism, opening up some space for a feminine but authoritative presence in literary and cultural memory.

While Hemans approaches her themes from a distinctly female perspective in her national and political poetry, she excels in creating a female authorial persona in her narrative poems, demonstrating a particular mastery in this mode of expression. She represents central human relationships and feelings, especially those that are called domestic affections. In her narrative poems, she creates an authorial persona who sympathises with the poems' female subjects. Thus, she reconstructs history, the domain of which has conventionally belonged to men (Kelly, 2002: 29). For instance, throughout the nineteenth century, Sappho and the image of her death enabled women poets to be a source of inspiration. Similarly, Hemans's "The Last Song of Sappho" (1834) is based on a drawing by Richard Westmacott Jr. that portrays Sappho. With this picture in mind, Hemans expresses Sappho's voice just before the poet takes her own life (Brown, 2000: 183). This sentimental approach reflects on the poems of Hemans, particularly aligning with "Properzia Rossi" and "The Grave of a Poetess", where Hemans similarly pays tribute to the female creative power of women artists while simultaneously articulating the intense personal pain they experience. In these works, Hemans emphasises the transcendence of art in its power to achieve immortality.

Concentrating more on female stories in her later career, Hemans published *Records of Woman* in 1828. It is a set of poems, the focal point of which is the suffering endured by several historical women. Hemans primarily focuses on women, particularly those who have made significant contributions to history, while asserting her authority as a female writer. The collection includes several literary forms and utilises literary and historical sources. As Feldman (2002: xx) states, "[a]lthough Hemans marketed herself as a poet who celebrated the 'domestic affections,' as a defender of hearth and home, 'Records of Woman' undercuts, even while it reinforces, conventional views of women". Thus, *Records of Woman* challenges conventional gender roles, revealing the complexities and contradictions in societal expectations of women.

Two poems from *the Record of Women* collection, "Properzia Rossi" and "The Grave of a Poetess", cast women as the main personae. In both poems, Hemans emphasises "the need for domestic stability, to ensure artistic survival in a world dominated by masculine epic conventions, and contrasts that need with the inevitable failure of artistic women to achieve that stability in life" (Trefitz, 2008, p. 70). This conflict between the need for domestic stability and the challenges faced by creative women is further shown in the many depictions of the poetess. The images of the poetesses are multiple. From time to time, she is the "poem's protagonist and its narrator, a victim of the circumstances recorded in the text, and a key actor in ensuring the survival of the memory of both the poetess herself and the domestic ideals she treasures" (Trefitz, 2008: 70). In this collection, as Scott (2001: 42) puts it, Hemans move from "the national to the personal level, from a rhetoric of political and public advocacy to a voice of intense private feeling, and from the epic to the lyric mode". Unlike the early years of her career, in which more public concerns were dominant, in these poems, the women of many representations become the focal points with their autonomous presence.

"Properzi Rossi": The Fall of a Lover and the Rise of An Artist

In "Properzia Rossi" Hemans portrays a female artist, Properzia Rossi, a famous sculptor, who dies brokenheartedly due to an unrequited love. A painting by Jean-Louis Ducis epitomises her, showing her last work, a basso-relievo of Ariadne, to a Roman Knight. However, the knight is indifferent to the work. The persona in the poem is suicidal as a consequence of being disregarded as a woman. The head note of the poem states:

Properzia Rossi, a celebrated female sculptor of Bologna, also possessed talents for poetry and music and died due to an unrequited attachment. A painting by Ducis shows her last work, a basso-relievo of Ariadne, to a Roman Knight, the object of her affection, who regards it with indifference. (Wolfson, 2000: 352)

In creating a female poet, Hemans sets herself as a model here. Like Rossi, Hemans believes that she has considerable artistic skill despite the constraints of societal and cultural norms. The poem presents an artist who fancies creating an art piece yet requires deep love. When the love is unrequited, she starts to wither, hoping her art will become famous after her death. In the opening lines of the poem, Rossi's self-consciousness about her approaching death is evident: "Yet one more dream! / From my deep spirit one victorious gleam / Ere I depart! For thee alone, for thee!" (5-7). She is conscious of her impending death and the reason for it. She engages with the broader Romantic idea of the unrecognised artist, a theme that resonates with many female creators of her time, such as L.A.L. and Charlotte Smith. This reflects the Romantic belief in artistic immortality, where accurate recognition often comes only after the artist's passing. Thus, while exploring the tension between personal suffering and artistic endurance through Rossi, Hemans suggests that while love may fail, art can transcend time. The unrequited love the persona suffers from will ultimately lead to her death. It is obvious that Rossi desires immortality through her art as she states in the very beginning of the poem: "Let earth retain a trace / Of that which lit my being," (3-4), and "I shall not perish all!" (33). When she dies some day of unrequited love, the knight "may yet, / Feeling sad mastery there, perchance regret / Thine unrequited gift" (24-26). The persona expresses the artist's desire for lasting recognition in these statements. Therefore, Hemans prepares the foundation that examines the correlation between personal suffering and the immortal power bestowed by art. Furthermore, by simultaneously dealing with representing women as creators, the poem also addresses the problems concerning these female poets in the literary arena "as victims of and limited by their passions" (Kelly,

2002: 51). Similarly, Grant F. Scott analyses that “How will my work be perceived?” is the central question of the poem with the painting providing “a sentimental rendering of the female artist displaying her work and herself” (2001: 42-43) – both herself as a woman and herself as the artist.

Tormented by unrequited love, Rossi desperately seeks "one more dream" before her impending departure from life. First, she addresses Muse and then the knight. She seeks "something immortal of my [her] heart and mind" (10) in the first stanza. To avoid "perish" at all, she calls for her "fruitless dower", symbolising her poetic creativity. This creativity, thus, becomes her vehicle to achieve immortality through the work of art. The first part of the poem portrays her disappointment and anger as a lover and her desire to be immortal as an artist. This desire for artistic immortality is not confined to gender; however, Hemans's portrayal of Rossi's struggle is consistent with broader feminist literary discourses on the obstacles encountered by women in the creative arena, as suggested by feminist writers such as Gilbert and Gubar (1979).

The second part of the poem opens with Rossi's summoning her poetic gift with all its full potential and, thereby, the very concept of posthumous existence via her artistic work: “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!” (25-31). In this second section, she develops a more hopeful tone by mentioning her gift of artistic creation. She is confident that her work would provide her eternal happiness, unlike the unreciprocated love she could not experience. Images of light pervade the stanza, symbolising her art. For that aim, she expects Ariadne, the subject of the sculpture, to be the spokesperson to tell her story after her death: “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!” (45-49). While the immortality of the art she creates promises some hope to her in the second stanza group, the third stanza opens with her disillusionment. She cannot complete her work and states that if she had not been “too much alone”, she could create a “far nobler thought”. Her pain is in the foreground: “Yet all the vision 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;” (61-66). She believes that the magnitude of the pain she suffers has also withheld her from her creativity. Love could be the best solution to her problems, yet she is devoid. Akin to the Romantic male poets' approach to loss, her loneliness brings her closer to her art. By reflecting on her pains in creating the work of art, Rossi uses the statue she creates not to represent beauty but to revisit and explore love. Even though she states that her art would flourish if she were loved back, her art is the only thing that accompanies her. Despite the circumstances, she seeks refuge in her artistic creativity. Hemans portrays interconnected themes of suffering and feminine empowerment to cultivate artistic expression. Rossi is prepared to forego fame and immortality in favour of love: “Worthless fame! / That in his bosom wins not for my name / The abiding-place it asked!” (81-3). According to Rossi, the fame that artistry bestows pales compared to the exquisite joy of love. She is aware of her artistic prowess and criticises the knight for not reciprocating her love: “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!” (103-106). Despite her enduring affection for the knight, she recognises that he is incapable of comprehending the value of her love and, hence, is unworthy of it.

This disappointment with love, however, does not lessen her creative energy; instead, it supports the belief that art provides a kind of immortality not available from real connections. Leaving behind a sculpture will immortalise her. Rossi's fame is “worthless” because the fame cannot win her love back. Deborah Kennedy (1997: 280) asserts that Hemans' obsession with this theme cannot only be explained by the failure of her marriage or the pressures of society. Instead, Hemans identifies an inherent need for the love and sense of worth that can come from an intimate relationship. Employing emotional and spiritual expressions of love constitutes a valid example of this. Thus, “Rossi's triumph as an artist” is replaced “by her sense of personal isolation” (Kennedy, 1997: 281). Rossi finishes the poem by giving her voice to Ariadne in a manner that is strikingly comparable to the subtle approach that Hemans employs herself as a model: “Yet I leave my name- / As a deep thrill may linger on the lyre/ When its full chords are hushed- 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!” (121-127). By casting Ariadne

in her image, Rossi raises Ariadne's status to that of a goddess who has achieved immortality. Hemans, on the other hand, identifies with Rossi as an artist. Therefore, Hemans endeavours to alleviate her afflictions by utilising the immortality that art bestows. Hemans insinuates that, like Rossi, she also seeks solace in the immortal power of art, employing poetry to transcend the limitations of female artists. The poem serves as both an examination of the artistic challenges faced by women and a testament to the curative potential of artistic creation.

“The Grave of a Poetess” – An Elegy for the Women Poet

“The Grave of a Poetess” is an elegy written on the death of the poet Mary Tighe. The speaker of the poem mourns for the loss of a gifted poet. However, imagining that Tighe is in a better place, heaven, becomes compensation for her. Through the poem, Hemans commemorates the undying spirit of the artist (or all preceding female artists in general) by composing an elegiac poem. As Brandy Ryan (2008: 32) encapsulates, this enables Hemans to establish a system for evaluation, “whereby she and the women poets who follow her discuss, circulate, and negotiate the values of their art”. In this poem, Hemans shifts the focus toward the solace found in death, portraying the late poet as ultimately at peace. In her new place, Tighe can perform her poetic creativity: “Now peace the woman’s heart hath found/And joy the poet’s eye (51-52). The phrase, “The poet's eye” (or “I”) here symbolises the perspective of the woman poet and celebrates her poetic creativity. Her “eye” / “I” becomes her own artistic or poetic point of view, emphasising the creative act of a woman poet. Bearing Romantic traits, the poem opens with several pastoral depictions: “I stood beside thy lowly grave; - / Spring-odours breathed around, /And music, in the river-wave, /Pass’d with a lulling sound” (1-4). Thus, at the outset of the poem, Hemans uses earthly imagery. In the poem, while praising the poet, Hemans transforms this imagery into heavenly connotations with the rise of the poet's “immortal spirit” (28). Once again, using light imagery and highlighting the word woman, Hemans obviously reveals the significance of being a woman poet. In addition, following the same line of thought as “Properzia Rossi” as regards the concept of immortality, Hemans extolls the enduring influence of a female poet in this instance: “But then, even then, a nobler thought/ Over my vain sadness came; / *The immortal spirit woke*, and wrought/ Within my thrilling frame (emphasis added, 29-32). Hemans highlights the enduring nature of immortality beyond death, conveying that the poet ascends to a higher creative realm where her immortality is attained.

In addition, much as in the case of “Properzia Rossi”, where Hemans expresses her anguish and suffering while recognising the poet’s eternal fame, she does not refrain from mentioning the sacrifices that come with being a woman poet while celebrating Mary Tighe: “Thou hast left sorrow in thy song, / A voice not loud, but deep! / The glorious bowers of earth among, / How often didst thou weep” (45-48). Here, the deeply established pain in Tighe’s poetic voice is recognised, and Hemans implies that artistic creativity for women often comes at the cost of enduring pain. The words “a voice not loud, but deep!” suggest how women poets, although not usually given significance in the literary canon, have a long-lasting emotional and intellectual influence.

As a result of these observations, it is evident that through a wider angle, Hemans’s “The Grave of a Poetess” does not merely serve as an elegy for Mary Tighe but also serves as a testament to the shared struggles and unacknowledged legacies of female poets. In this instance, Hemans takes it to a more communal level for the woman artists. As she praises Tighe, she gets pretty outspoken about the female poet who aspires to earn a career by writing. The “women’s mind” is elevated, and Hemans praises a woman poet, likely identifying herself as her: “Thou in whose woman’s mind/ The ray that brightens earth and sea” (14-15). Through the end of the poem, Hemans juxtaposes the earthly and heavenly realms and hints that the poetess has reached a new level of creativity now that she is immortal. Unlike the earthly connotation at the beginning of the poem depicting the artist’s suffering, a heavenly connotation is incorporated, portraying the artist’s state of tranquillity. This juxtaposition is evident in the final stanza of the poem: “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” (49-52). The earthly world and the high thoughts of the late poet are diametrically opposed, and this contrasting picture exemplifies the poet’s transcendence to a new and elevated realm. The “poet's eye” or “I” metaphor becomes more crucial here, for her creativity now stands out as a divine one as she lives in the realm of heaven. Therefore, to praise Tighe's artistry, Hemans elevates the poet's status in the poem and does not place her inside the terrestrial sphere. There are no societal or cultural restrictions where

she lives now. Emphasising her present peace, Hemans declares that the “poet’s eye” of Tighe is now filled with joy unbounded by any earthly limitations. As a woman poet, Tighe has suffered before but now has unrestricted creative freedom in paradise.

Conclusion

In “Properzia Rossi” and “The Grave of a Poetess”, Hemans expresses the individual pain experienced by women poets in their roles as lovers or creators while conveying the everlasting significance of art. Hemans reinterprets pain as a catalyst for creative transcendence in both poems. She establishes a literary tradition in which femininity is a source of empowerment rather than a limitation. In both poems, she sees art as the ultimate emancipation for women, ensuring an enduring presence beyond death. The significance of a woman's creation as an authority extensively exists in both works. In “Properzia Rossi” and “The Grave of a Poetess”, different depictions of suffering are the natural outcome of being a woman. However, being an artist or a poet alleviates this cost by enabling immortality through creating art. According to Feldman (1999: xxi), “[d]eath, as Hemans sees it, may at times a woman’s most forceful adversary but can also be her salvation”. Following this, Hemans's approach suggests that she recognises the responsibilities imposed on female artists while concurrently redefining their legacy by declaring that the lasting nature of their works is the accurate measure of immortality.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Bu makale, İngiliz kadın şair Felicia Dorothea Hemans'ın, şiir sanatına çok yönlü olan yaklaşımını şiirsel yaratıcılık, kadın olma, acı ve ölümsüzlük konuları özelinde incelemektedir. Felicia Dorothea Hemans, Letitia Elizabeth Landon ile İngiliz Edebiyatı'nda duygusal şiir geleneğinin önde gelen isimlerindedir. Hemans'ın eser ürettiği yıllar, İngiliz edebi geleneğinde Romantik dönem sonlarına ve Viktoryen dönemin başlarına tekabül eder. Hemans, 19. Yüzyıl'da çok sayıda eser üretmiştir ve eserlerinin etkisi kendinden sonraki dönemlerde de sürmüştür. Döneminde ve sonrasında, geniş kitlelerce okunmuş bir şairdir. Şiirlerinde aile konularına duygusal bir dokunuşla yaklaşımıyla bilinen Hemans, her ne kadar bazen eleştirilse de Hemans'ın sanatı aile, din, vatanseverlik gibi kavramları kadınsı bir bakış açısıyla vermektedir. Eserlerini, doğrudan feminist eserler olarak nitelendirmek doğru olmasa da şiirlerinin kadınsal pek çok öge barındırdığı bir gerçektir. Hemans'ın şiirlerinde, kadın olmanın önemini ve bunun bir güç ve ilham kaynağı olduğu gözlemlenir. Bu araştırmanın merkezinde, her ikisi de *Records of Women* (1828) adlı şiir koleksiyonunda yayınlanan "Properzia Rossi" ve "The Grave of a Poetess" ("Bir Kadın Şairin Mezarı") adlı iki şiiri yer almaktadır. Her iki şiirde de Hemans, benzer acılardaki iki sanatçının kadın olarak ölümsüzlüğe ulaşma çabasını ve sürecini ifade eder. "Properzia Rossi" şiirinde âşık olarak hüsrana uğramış bir sanatçıyı yaratıcı sürecinde, "The Grave of a Poetess" şiirinde ise kadın bir şairin sanatı aracılığıyla ölümsüzlüğe ulaşmasını gösterir. İki şiirde de sanatın bahsettiği ölümsüzlük, geçerli ve yerinde bir teselli olarak kullanılır. Hemans, böylece, kişisel acıları kalıcı bir yaratıcı mirasa dönüştürme aşamasında kadın yaratıcılığını ortaya koyar.

Bu bağlamda, bu makalede ele alınan ilk şiir Hemans'ın "Properzia Rossi" isimli eseridir. "Properzia Rossi" şiirinde Hemans bir kadın sanatçıyı resmeder. Ünlü bir heykeltıraş olan Properzia Rossi, karşılıksız bir aşkın sonucu olarak kalbi kırık bir şekilde ölmüştür. Şiirde, Jean-Louis Ducis'in bir tablosu, Rossi'nin son eserini Romalı bir şövalyeye gösterişini tasvir ediyor. Ancak şövalye bu âşık kadının eserine kayıtsız kalır ve karşılık vermez. Bu sebeple, şiirdeki Rossi, sevilmeyen bir kadın olmanın sonucu olarak intihara meyillidir. Böylece bu şiir, bir sanat eseri yaratmayı hayal eden, ancak derin bir aşka ihtiyaç duyan bir sanatçıyı ön plana koyar. Bu kadın sanatçı, aşkına karşılık alamadığında, sanatının ölümünden sonra şöhretle sonuçlanacağından teselli bularak ölüme yaklaşır. Eser, sanatçının tanınma ve ölümsüzlük mücadelesinin dokunaklı bir incelemesidir. Bu anlatı aracılığıyla Hemans, bir açıdan da toplumsal beklentiler ve ölümsüzlük arzusuyla boğuşan bir kadın sanatçı olarak kendi deneyimlerini yansıtmaktadır. Şiir, sanatın dönüştürücü gücünün altını çizerek, gerçek ölümsüzlüğün kişisel beğenide değil, kişinin yaratıcı çabalarının kalıcı etkisinde yattığını öne sürer.

"The Grave of a Poetess" ("Bir Kadın Şairin Mezarı") şiiri ise Hemans tarafından, 1810 yılında vefat eden İrlandalı kadın şair Mary Tighe anısına yazılan bir eserdir. Bu şiirde de Hemans kadın bir yazar nezdinde yaşanan bir acı temasını, bunun yaratıcı süreçle olan içsel bağlantısını ve ölümsüzlük arayışını ortaya koymaktadır. Şiirin konuşmacısı yetenekli bir şairi kaybetmenin yasını tutmaktadır. Ancak Tighe'nin daha iyi bir yerde, yani cennette olduğunu hayal etmek onun için bir telafi olur. Bu konuşmacıya göre, Tighe, yaşarken acılar çekmiş, fakat şu anda şiirsel yaratıcılığını sergileyebileceği bir yerdedir ve orada huzur bulmaktadır. Hemans, bu şiirde de kadın yaratıcılığının anlamlarını araştırmak amacıyla kadın bir sanatçı imajını kullanmaktadır ve kişisel acı ile sanatsal ifadenin keşişimini vurgulamaktadır. Duygusal derinlik ile harmanlanan bu şiir aracılığıyla, acının sanatsal başarı için güçlü bir tetikleyici olabileceği fikrini aktararak kadın bir şairin ölümsüzlüğe ulaşma becerisini ifade eder. Bahsi geçen iki şiirin de dili, imgeleri ve tematik kaygıları yakından incelendiğinde, Hemans'ın acıyı yaratıcı sürecin ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak gördüğü gözlemlenmektedir. Farklı alanlardaki iki kadın sanatçıyı tasvir ederken aynı zamanda şiirlerde Hemans'ın da yansımaları görülmektedir. Bu sayede, Hemans, sadece bireysel deneyimlerini değil, daha geniş bir kadın deneyimine de ses vererek her iki alanda da evrensel bir ölümsüzlük arayışına girmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, Felicia Dorothea Hemans'ın *Records of Women* başlıklı şiir koleksiyonunda yer alan "Properzia Rossi" ve "The Grave of a Poetess" şiirleri, acı, kadınsal yaratıcılık ve ölümsüzlük temalarının iç içe işlendiği bir tema sunmaktadır. Acılarının içerisinde, sanatta yaratıcılığın keşfi ve bunun getirdiği ölümsüzlük hissi, iki kadın anlatıcıya da hem âşık hem de yaratıcı bir sanatçı olarak güç ve teselli vermektedir. Bunu yaparken sanatın ölümsüzlüğe ulaştırıcı gücünün altı defalarca çizilmektedir. Hemans, bu temaları kişisel duygularla bir araya getirerek acının sanatın yaratıcılığı sayesinde dönüştürücü bir güce sahip olduğunu vurgulayan kendine özgü bir anlatı yaratmaktadır. Bu şiirlerde, farklı şekillerde de olsa acı çekmenin kadınlığın doğasında var olduğu örneklendirilir. Ancak, şiirler bu acıyla baş etmek noktasında, bunun kadın yaratıcılığının sağladığı ölümsüzlük

potansiyeli ile hafifletildiğini öne sürer. Kişisel tecrübe ve duygularından da faydalanan ve bunları canlı anlatımlarla ön plana çıkaran Felicia Dorothea Hemans'ın, "Properzia Rossi" ve "The Grave of a Poetess" adlı şiirlerini inceleyen bu çalışma, sanatın acı karşısında bile kadınsı deneyimini ölümsüzleştirme ve koruma yeteneğinin bir kanıtı olduğunu ön plana getirerek kadın yaratıcılığının amacı, gücü ve derinliği hakkında içgörüler sunmaktadır.