

Unveiling Hannah Cowley (1743-1809): Analysis and translation of the poetic and sentimental games under the name of Anna Matilda

Desvelando a Hannah Cowley (1743-1809): análisis y traducción de los juegos poéticos y sentimentales bajo el nombre de Anna Matilda

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Abstract: This paper focuses on a highly popular late eighteenth-century linguistic-poetic competition between the well-known writer Hannah Cowley and the leader of the Della Cruscan poetic movement, Robert Merry. Their “playful literature of sensibility” challenged the conventional forms of poetry and was fervently followed by the public. Nevertheless, the short-lived activity of this literary group was soon fulminated by the attacks of critics and satirists such as William Gifford, whose exacerbated acrimony and deeply biased attitude precipitated the eradication of the movement. As a result, this work has been judged by its “non-readers” (Labbe, 2009) mostly through criticism rather than by the original text. For this reason, with the intention of contributing to a greater and fairer knowledge of these authors that may open the possibility of new readings of their work, we present the analysis and translation into Spanish of three poems signed by Anna Matilda (Hannah Cowley) in response to Della Crusca, belonging to the amorous exchange scripted for the readers of *The World*.

Keywords: Hannah Cowley; Anna Matilda; Robert Merry; William Gifford; the Della Crusca movement; poetic and sentimental games; poetic translation.

Resumen: Este artículo se centra en una competición lingüístico-poética muy popular a finales del siglo XVIII entre la conocida escritora Hannah Cowley y el líder del movimiento poético Della Crusca, Robert Merry. Su estilo literario lúdico y sensible desafió las formas poéticas convencionales y fue seguida con fervor por el público. Sin embargo, la efímera actividad de este

grupo literario pronto se vio fulminada por los ataques de críticos y satíricos como William Gifford, cuya exacerbada acritud y actitud profundamente tendenciosa precipitaron la erradicación del movimiento. Como resultado, esta obra ha sido juzgada por sus “no lectores” (Labbe, 2009) principalmente a través de la crítica y no por la lectura del texto original. Por todo ello, y con la intención de contribuir a un mayor y más justo conocimiento de estos autores que abra la posibilidad de nuevas lecturas de su obra, presentamos el análisis y traducción al español de tres poemas firmados por Anna Matilda (Hannah Cowley) en respuesta a Della Crusca, pertenecientes al intercambio amoroso que protagonizaron para los lectores del periódico *The World*.

Palabras clave: Hannah Cowley; Anna Matilda; Robert Merry; William Gifford; el movimiento Della Crusca; juegos poéticos y sentimentales; traducción poética.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hannah Cowley (1743-1809), née Parkhouse, was one of the foremost English writers up to the nineteenth century.¹ She was a popular playwright and poet, especially recognized for her comedies, *The Runaway* (1776), *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783), and her most successful *The Belle’s Stratagem* (1780), which portray self-determined women facing difficult situations imposed on them by family life and social custom. Her long narrative poems include “The Scottish Village, or Pitcairne Green” (1786) and “The Siege of Acre: An Epic Poem” (1801). Within this poetic facet, she achieved fame in the last decade of the century for her epistolary

¹ She was the daughter of Philip Parkhouse, a Tiverton bookseller, and married the writer and Stamp Office clerk Thomas Cowley. She was the mother of three children and lived in London. (For more on her life and works, see Todd, 1987; Baines *et al.*, 2011; Radcliffe, 2011).

exchange in verse under the pseudonym Anna Matilda with the poet Robert Merry (Della Crusca) in *The World* newspaper. Although the two writers did not know each other at the beginning of their poetic exchange, they were both members of the Della Cruscan poetic movement.

The love exchanges between Della Crusca and Anna Matilda intrigued readers and caused a sensation. In a similar way to current social-media phenomena, criticism and praise soon emerged, but also imitations and parodies. Such was its success that the printer and the editor of the journal, John Bell and Captain Edward Topham, decided to publish two volumes including these exchanges and other poems under the name of *The Poetry of the World* in 1788. Two years later, in view of the books' tremendous success, John Bell would edit a new anthology of poems published in his newspaper under the title of *The British Album*.

The main critic of these works and of the Della Crusca circle was William Gifford, who wrote the satires *The Baviad* in 1791 and *The Mæviad* in 1795. Michael Gamer (2017) points to an animosity towards John Bell and his influence on popular culture ("Bell's poetics") rather than a rejection of the poets themselves and their poetry. As Robinson (2011, p. 170) indicates, John Bell was essential to the Della Crusca circle since he not only offered them a voice through his newspaper, but also provided them with the possibility of publishing subsequent anthologies in volumes edited outside the press, as he did with Hannah Cowley, Robert Merry and Mary Robinson, among others.

The Della Cruscans encountered great detractors such as Gifford and also the famous Lord Byron or Wordsworth himself, who in the "Advertisement" of his *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) spoke disparagingly of the poets as representing "gaudiness and inane phraseology" (Pollin, 1968; Labbe, 2000; Robinson, 2011). They blamed the success of this poetic movement on the loss of taste and sensitivity on the part of readers; the readers themselves followed it with pleasure for its playful and mischievous tone, its double meanings, jokes and ironies. However, for authors like Robinson (2011, p. 170), this is no more than a simplification, because "To attack Della Cruscan poetry for not being great literature, as Gifford did, is to miss the point entirely. In the original context, in *The World*, Della Cruscan poetry was a burlesque of sensibility". For this reason, he proposes to read it as a "ludic literature of sensibility".

In this article we aim to show how this poetry, which became so popular due to its witty and carefree nature, is nevertheless a seemingly lighter way of conveying the more complex and deeper meanings and

feelings which characterize the different phases of a love relationship, and the intensity of sensations associated with it, such as pleasure, fear, anguish or melancholy. Clearly, a work that is better known through the opinion of others than through reading the original has no chance of being appreciated by future readers or of being transposed into other languages. In the case of the literary work of the Della Crusca movement, a symbol of the Italian language Accademia which served as a lexicographical model for the study of Spanish, among other languages, and for the Real Academia Española, it is very surprising that there is practically no impact or knowledge of the movement in Spain. For this reason, we consider it pertinent to offer a translation into Spanish of some of the main poems of the exchange between Cowley and Merry analysed in this study, so that they may potentially reach a new public in another time and another space.

To achieve this purpose, this work will focus on three of the poems signed by Anna Matilda, all addressed “To Della Crusca”, namely the first and the last of the poems that the writer directs to her correspondent in the volume *The Poetry of the World* (1788), plus a poem in which she provides the key to her fears in the relationship. We will carry out the analysis and translation into Spanish of these poems, in which she passionately discusses feelings such as love, fear, horror, sensitivity, and, especially, despair and melancholy.

1. 1. The ‘Della Crusca’ Movement

The Della Cruscan school of poetry was a brief but intense movement of the 1780s and 1790s which achieved a resplendent reputation and popular success for its sensual, mannerist style and daringly sentimental subject matter.

As Roderick Marshall (1934) pointed out, we must distinguish between the first group of Della Cruscans, with Italian roots, the contributors to the *Florence Miscellany* (1785), and the second group of contributors to the correspondence in *The World* from 1787 onwards. Robert Merry was the leader of both groups.

The name of this poetic movement comes from the Italian Accademia della Crusca,² the world’s first linguistic academy, which was founded in

² It is the most prestigious language institution in Italy. Currently, it continues to collect scientific studies from experts in Italian linguistics and philology. The *Accademia della*

Florence in 1583 with the ultimate aim of keeping the original Italian language “pure” and preserving the fourteenth-century Tuscan Florentine forms employed by Petrarca, Dante and Boccaccio.³ In 1612 it published the first edition of the *Vocabulary of the Italian language, Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*,⁴ which, in turn, served as a lexicographic model for the French, Spanish and English languages. When by 1783 Grand Duke Leopold of Austria realized that it had begun to be seen as a centre of revolutionary activity and a symbol of Florence’s independence, he transformed it into the Accademia Fiorentina.

Robert Merry, a graduate of Harrow and Cambridge, spent three years in Italy. He visited Florence from 1782 to 1786 and was invited to be part of this Florentine academy. Merry was in fact a member of this Accademia Fiorentina and not of the Della Crusca, although symbolically and because of his genuine liberal sympathies, he was given the nickname ‘Della Crusca’. The name Della Cruscan is therefore highly significant: it indicated his sympathies, which were against the Austrian duke and in favour of the liberals.

Under the patronage of Mrs. Hester Thrale Piozzi, the three initial writers of the group, Bertie Greatheed, William Parsons and Robert Merry, wrote with her a very amusing and jocular book, *Florence Miscellany* (1785), which Mrs. Piozzi herself qualifies as irrelevant in the Preface (“*Insouciant trivium*”). In this book they showed their “allegiance to style over substance” (Pascoe, 1997, p. 68) and it became a successful literary craze, especially among women, who were dazzled by it. For Bostetter (1956, p. 297), it is possible that the authors intentionally insisted on the humorous character of the book in order not to draw the Grand Duke’s attention to their praises of Italy, in which they contrasted the “glorious

Crusca is the Italian equivalent of the *Académie Française* in France or the *Real Academia* in Spain, as all three study and supervise the national language.

³ For them, Tuscan Florentine was, more than a dialect, a complete and autonomous language. For them, it was based on the writing of prestigious authors who had used the highly cultured Florentine language: Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca and Giovanni Boccaccio, among many others. For this reason, they decided to call their academy “*della crusca*” or “bran”, because their mission was to get rid of the waste from the milling of wheat and preserve only the pure white flour of the language.

⁴ This in-depth study of the Italian language became the model for European vocabulary, including languages such as Spanish, French, English and German. It is the main lexicographical reference of the Italian language, and, with its continuous revisions and editions, it has been a historical dictionary from its origins to the present, based mainly on the literary variety.

past” with the “present ignominy”. In relation to this, we find it deeply relevant that the book contains poems with blank lines, which only appeared complete with pasted pages in the versions for trusted friends. It was a little-circulated book, but one that achieved great fame.

Therefore, when, on his return to England, Robert Merry began to publish in *The World* under the sobriquet of Della Crusca and wrote “The Adieu and Recall to Love”, he also obtained a warm and quick response among the public and contemporary writers. One of them, Hannah Cowley, immediately began a poetic exchange by answering Della Crusca under the name of Anna Matilda.

Throughout the final decade of the eighteenth century, Robert Merry managed to make present in England a poetic style that “infected”, as *The English Review* then pointed out, authors such as Coleridge in his *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796). In fact, critics call this style, which influenced some of the most prominent figures of the moment, “cloying”, characteristic of an “affected and silly group of sentimental versifiers”. Nevertheless, we agree with Robinson (2011) that this “affectation” and “sentimentality” were totally intended, for it was a completely different way of transmitting common emotions that moved away from the resources of conventional poets.

According to Stones and Strachan (1998), the image of many of its components, such as Robert Merry (Della Crusca), Hannah Cowley (Anna Matilda), Edward Jerningham (Benedict), Mary Robinson (Laura) or John Williams (Anthony Pasquin), has passed to posterity more for the representation they had in the satires of the time than for their own works. This is the case with the attacks of T. J. Mathias in his *Pursuits of Literature* (1794-97) or those of William Gifford in *The Baviad* (1791) and *The Mæviad* (1795).

Later critics took the assessments of their nineteenth-century colleagues at face value, and these, in turn, were based exclusively on Gifford.⁵ Bostetter (1956) wonders why the Della Cruscans were used as scapegoats, given that they warranted, as Keats did, a more favourable opinion than Gifford’s. The effectiveness of Gifford’s attacks, however, is

⁵ Curiously, however, Gifford’s opinion of other writers of the period is not considered, perhaps because he was the editor of the *Quarterly Review* and attacked Keats and Shelley. Nevertheless, his manner and arguments for attacking Shelley and the Della Cruscans were similar.

now questioned in the light of his strong political stance, his misogyny or his elitism, as will be discussed below.

This short-lived but highly popular Della Cruscan movement has received increased attention from scholars in the past two decades. In fact, it was Jerome McGann's article "The Literal World of the English Della Cruscans" (1995) which meant a turning point in the study of this literary group, when there were just a couple of works on it before. Moreover, the few references in encyclopedias were invariably dismissive due to "the role of the satirist William Gifford in their historical devaluation" (Broadhead, 2010, p. 577). This group might well have been forgotten, since the few authors who had paid attention to their work were not as successful as McGann when he called for a less judgmental study of this literary group. In fact, McGann (1995) provides a comprehensive and receptive vision, very different from that of those who preceded him and who were influenced by the scathing criticisms of authors such as Gifford. Most importantly, McGann reflects on the great relevance that the Della Cruscan movement had for the advent of romantic poetry. Pascoe (1997, p. 70) is of the same opinion: "The obligation of Romanticism to Della Cruscanism has been minimized, when not altogether ignored, by literary histories". Bostetter (1956) had already warned of the disastrous influence of Gifford's criticism. He had lost authority in his criticism of Keats, for example; however, he laid the groundwork for the future negative reception of the Della Crusca movement. Perhaps the person who best summarized the reason for this group's oblivion is Jerome McGann (1995, p. 96) when he observed: "We have all but completely lost the ability to read sentimental poetry, because its stylistic codes have been largely erased from our (short-term) memories". Indeed, this group is "consciously theatrical" and, as opposed to the sublime and meditative style of authors like Wordsworth, they prefer to show feelings covered in tinsel.

Following McGann, there have been various studies, mostly focused on the group's transgressiveness. Some of these studies also reflect the vital importance that Della Cruscan women had for the style and popularity of the movement; as Pascoe (1997, p. 70) points out: "It is women such as Cowley and Robinson who embroidered on this already ornate mode and turned it into a recognizable school of poetry". Van Remoortel (2007, p. 311) also argued that this female presence served as an excuse for critics to attack the group again: "...newly charged with feminine overtones, it

provided Gifford with a powerful metaphor of marginalization that would prove indispensable in his crusade against the Della Cruscan”.

2. CONTEXTUALISATION: THE REASONS FOR THE OPPOSITION AGAINST THE DELLA CRUSCAN MOVEMENT

The Baviad and *The Maeviad*, William Gifford’s hurtful and aggressive satires on the Della Cruscan, were withering and helped to stamp out the Della Cruscan movement. Their influence was such that *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (1949) called the group ‘the nadir of the art’, and called *The British Album* “an anthology of folly and bad taste” (Van Remoortel, 2007, p. 324).

As this author points out, “that the Della Cruscan still need introduction a decade after Jerome McGann’s “Poetics of Sensibility” put their poetry back on the agenda of literary criticism is largely Gifford’s doing” (2007, p. 312). Indeed, we still wonder whether history has been entirely fair to the Della Cruscan, since their “reparation”, or at least their reconsideration since McGann (1995), may not be as effective as the scathing criticism they suffered at the time. For Labbe (2009), Gifford’s “appraisal” has prevented or, rather, supplanted the reading of the original: “Gifford’s intemperate responses to English Della Cruscanism (...) have influenced readers of this poetry ever since or, rather, non-readers, since Gifford’s jeremiad has taken the place of the original for most”.

To better understand the real reasons for the rejection of the Della Cruscan, we will review the three main pillars of opposition to this movement: the prevailing elitist genre model of authorship and style, the struggle for audiences and representation, and the political ideology prevailing at the time.

2.1. The elitist genre model of authorship and style

One of the bases for William Gifford’s attacks on the Della Cruscan is the literary form they employ, in particular the accusation that they are mere “soneteers”. For instance, when on 29 June 1787 Merry published “The Adieu and Recall to Love”, a poem of forty-four lines in rhyming couplets which cannot be considered a proper sonnet, nevertheless, Gifford considered it as “a sonnet to Love” (Gifford, *Baviad*, 1797, p. 4). Many critics have continued to take these assertions at face value without checking the original work of the Della Cruscan; however, if convention

is anything to go by, sonnets are typically masculine fourteen-line verses, although, for Gifford, they find a new derogatory meaning with the connotation of marginalization, especially because of their feminine overtones: “As shorthand for an entire poetics that distressed Gifford, the sonnet persistently constructs the Della Cruscans as feminine, as the negative ‘other’, and thus very effectively disarms the movement” (Van Remoortel, 2007, p. 325).

The style of the Della Cruscans is also derided by Gifford for its excess of ornamentation and its detachment from “reality”: “Truth is sacrificed to letters, meaning to sound” (*Baviad*, 1797, p. 13). He criticises its “stilted” diction and alliterations, “meaningless” hyphens, and “Ahs! and Ohs!” (Gifford, *Maeviad*, 1797, p. 38; *Baviad*, p. 13). Gifford even ends by recommending: “Keep your style brief, your meaning clear”, “Oh, I love you, meek SIMPLICITY” (*Baviad*, p. 28; *Maeviad*, pp. 39-40).

Gifford’s deep interest in fulminating against or eradicating the Della Cruscans leads us to consider other motives than the literary. If, as Mrs. Piozzi noted in the foreword to the *Florence Miscellany*, their poetry “can scarcely be less important to Readers of a distant Age and Nation than we ourselves are ready to acknowledge” (“Preface”, p. 142), what is the reason for such acrimony? If they are poems that breathe “earthliness and temporal beauty” (Van Remoortel, 2007, p. 313), why so much attention? Gifford himself knew that these questions would be raised and noted: “I hear that I am now breaking butterflies upon wheels” (*Maeviad*, xivxv).

For Labbe (2009, p. 39), one of the reasons was the subject matter of the Della Cruscan’s poetry. He was horrified by it because it “charts a romance in terminology that offends the sensibilities of sensibility: it is too physical, too open, too desiring, too expressive”, that is, it offends sensibility because it is too “sexual”.

Is this all it is about? Michael Gamer (2017, p. 33) places the work in its socio-cultural context and adds further historical elements to this angry opposition to the movement. For this author, the fact that they were managing to transcend temporality, “from improvisation to permanence, from newsprint to codex”, unnerved Gifford. Moreover, it was about defending an elitist model of “authorship” in which only “male” and “learned/educated” authors’ circles had a place (Sangster, 2012, p. 24). Gifford writes from the intellectual height of one who draws on Persius, Juvenal, and Pope, scorning the Della Cruscan’s “conglomerate of abortive thoughts”, “incongruous images”, and “noise and nonsense” (*Baviad*, p. 3).

For their part, Pascoe (1997) and Gamer (2017) are of the opinion that Gifford disdains the feminization of poetry. Van Remoortel (2007, p. 314) goes further and considers that Gifford not only intends to fight against the feminization of poetry in general, but uses this argument to attack the Della Cruscans, given the number of women involved in the movement. As Curran (1993) and Ross (1989) point out, the revival of the sonnet in the late eighteenth century is closely related to the use of the sonnet by women poets, like Charlotte Smith or Mary Robinson, to express their deepest feelings. For all these reasons, the “feminization” of the sonnet meant that eighteenth-century critics and satirists began to consider the sonnet as a sign of marginality.

Consequently, to call the Della Cruscan “sonneteers” was to degrade them; as opposed to the male and educated, the Della Cruscans were branded as possessing all the feminine defects and lacking in education:

By continually referring to Merry and his colleagues in terms of madness, disease, and invalidity, and to their work in terms of chaos, hypersentimentality, decorativeness, and other qualities that are traditionally gendered feminine, Gifford effectively puts Della Cruscanism on the fringes of literature (Van Remoortel, 2007, p. 314).

On the other hand, while the Della Cruscans did not have the Oxford education that Gifford boasted of and that few could access, they were not illiterate at all and they had knowledge of the classics (Gamer, 2017, p. 38). Moreover, Gifford, curiously, was a poor orphan who had to leave school and was apprenticed to a shoemaker; it was a surgeon, William Cookesley, who sent him to Oxford, where he acquired the scholarly classical literary education of which he boasted.

2.2. The struggle for audiences and representation

The power of the reviewers was extensive, but one way to counter the critics’ attack was to gain public favour and popularity (Sangster, 2012, p. 24). Both authors and critics were aware of their social influence in the tightly networked literary society of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As Jeffrey Cox aptly pointed out, “a literary work is both a product and producer of a web of human relations” (1998, p. 14). Moreover, writing was a powerful form of social assertion (Siskin, 1998).

Gamer (2017) discusses in depth how romance authors transformed their writing to reach new audiences. This phenomenon had no doubt already been exploited by the Della Cruscan. Romantic and ‘pre-romantic’ poets were ‘social’ authors who had close relationships with publishers and booksellers; they were involved in literary production and in readership and sales figures, even though they appeared to focus only on their artistic creation. Far from innocent and detached from material things, they needed to sell to make a living and were interested in sales and dissemination strategies, fame and reputation, intellectual property, the media, writers’ networks or circles, etc.

[It] was a transitional period for conceptions of authorship, which was not yet established as a solid profession or seen as the special province of the inspired genius. Authors therefore focused their ambitions on various different objectives, some seeking primarily to achieve the difficult goal of earning a living by publishing, some pursuing critical acclaim, others looking to access influential networks and a few attempting to redefine and reify conceptions of authorship (Sansgter, 2012, p. 3).

Only well-to-do writers could make a comfortable living from literature; the rest could only survive and soon became disenchanted. In the period between 1820-1830, new printing technologies and changes in periodical methodologies allowed for other ways of making a literary living. It was not until the mid-19th century that so-called professionalisation emerged; however, authors such as Keen (1999) speak of signs of professionalisation in the 18th century. He identified in the 1790s “two critical transitions: a shift in focus from literature to authors, and a redefinition of politics as a struggle for professional distinction (the status of author) rather than for national agency (revolution, government reform, the rights of man)” (1999, p. 8).

In the struggle for social distinction, some authors denigrated others to achieve fame. Besides, it was very difficult to publish outside the literary “networks” or circles, because there was too much competition and not enough room for everyone.

2.3. The political ideology prevailing at the time

While the society of 1789 was relatively open, in the late 1790s to the early 1820s a clear conservatism prevailed in which the most revolutionary

and “dangerous” authors were censored (Sangster, 2012, p. 40). The propaganda engine was so powerful that to go against it politically could mean literary suicide, and although radical publications fought back, being a radical and a writer at that time could be a serious risk.

There was a real battle for “representation” and the power to induce readers to accept political positions (Schoenfield, 2009, p. 85); for this reason, reviewers were very selective in their praise of new authors and works and were often ideologically motivated. This seems to have been the case with Gifford, who was editor of the influential *Anti-Jacobin* magazine between 1797 and 1798 and of the *Quarterly Review* from 1809 onwards, in both of which he launched furious *ad hominem* attacks on radicals and Whigs, such as those he launched against the Della Cruscans.

In *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) Hazlitt calls Gifford “a critic of the last age”, and describes him as:

(...) possessed of that sort of learning which is likely to result from an over anxious desire to supply the want of the first rudiments of education: that sort of wit which is the offspring of ill-humour or bodily pain: that sort of sense which arises from a spirit of contradiction and a disposition to cavil at and dispute the opinions of others: and that sort of reputation which is the consequence of bowing to established authority and ministerial influence.

The French Revolution increased conservative aggression, and in the *Quarterlies* critics like Gifford mercilessly attacked authors, above all female authors, with different political leanings. Thus, the furious attack on the Della Cruscans is now known to have been largely “politically motivated” (Bostetter, 1956, p. 299):

Merry and his friends upon their return to England became intimate with Sheridan, the Kembles, and Mrs. Siddons, who belonged to that section of the Whig party with which the Prince of Wales identified himself (...). The savage scurrility of Gifford’s attack, out of all proportion to the significance of the poetry, and the timing of the attack would indicate that it was an attempt to discredit and make ridiculous the writers supporting the Prince. (...) The political attitudes of the Della Cruscans must, on the other hand, have won them the sympathy of liberal and radical groups, and drawn to their poetry the young Romantics of the nineties.

For Clark (1930, p. 75), Gifford’s *Baviad* was also intended to ridicule Merry for his sympathies with pro-French ideas. In fact, Merry had openly

criticized British people for being largely nervous about the French Revolution because they did not like democratic change (Sigler, 2021).

3. DEVELOPMENT: ANALYSIS AND TRANSLATION OF THE POETIC EXCHANGE BETWEEN DELLA CRUSCA AND ANNA MATILDA

As has become evident in the previous sections, opposition to the Della Crusca movement came from various quarters and was not only based on purely literary or stylistic issues. The fact that a work is known more for its critics and detractors than for its own texts has meant that a perhaps biased account has survived, which may have meant more limited readers. As a result, any potential interest in disseminating and translating the works of this movement was aborted, preventing it from being appreciated, judged or even criticised by future readers both in the original language and in other languages.

For this reason, as we pointed out at the beginning, we believe it is necessary to carry out a new analysis of part of the Della Cruscan's representative collection of poems, as well as to provide a translation into Spanish, which will allow new readers the opportunity to recognise or reject them based on their own judgment.

3.1. The poetic exchange in context

On 29 June 1787 Robert Merry published "The Adieu and Recall to Love" and renowned playwright Hannah Cowley's immediate and effusive response "To Della Crusca" initiated a poetic exchange in *The World*, followed by a host of readers who wondered about the poets' intriguing identity. Della Crusca and Anna Matilda recreated and shared a love affair in verse before the public gaze and with the absolute approval, and propaganda, of the newspaper where it was published. John Bell published the poems in *The Poetry of the World* (1788) and *The British Album* (1790). In the "Preface" to Robert Merry's *The British Album*, Bell made clear that it was an exclusively literary relationship originally (Merry, 1790, p. iii):

It ought, however, to be recorded, of the celebrated Correspondence between DELLA CRUSCA and ANNA MATILDA, that its genuine enthusiasm arose entirely from poetical sympathy; for till immediately before the publication of 'The Interview', they were totally unacquainted with each other, and reciprocally unknown.

The exchange of letters was published serially for two years. Such was the success that it was published as a book in *The British Album*, being reissued until 1794 with new exchanges and with the insertion of other poems and even characters like Laura, who hid the writer Mary Robinson.

The epistolary exchange between Anna Matilda and Della Crusca has a double nuance, or two faces; on the one hand, it is a linguistic-poetic competition and, on the other, a love-sexual game, as the authors themselves clearly suggest. For this same reason, the presentation of feeling, pleasure, frustration and melancholy cannot be, and is not, conventional. Also, the protagonists praise and admire each other as much as they criticize and reproach each other.

Curiously, the “Interview” between the lovers that is anticipated in the preface of the first volume is published in the second edition and not in the first one, which could lead us to think that the romance was prior and with “the paradox of being simultaneously spontaneous and scripted” (Labbe, 2009, n. p. /section 6). As Pascoe points out, when the actual meeting took place in person, the romance’s “fires were cooled by a disappointing meeting between the matronly Cowley and the younger Merry” (1997, p. 69), which, on the other hand, might suggest that there were prior expectations and a deep desire to get to know each other.

This is just a new instance of the dualities and paradoxes of the exchange. On the one hand, it seems spontaneous, responding poem by poem to the feelings of love, jealousy, indifference or melancholy aroused by the preceding poem by Della Crusca or Anna Matilda, and, on the other, it seems pre-designed to satisfy the public’s expectations, responding to the requirements of its own literary nature.

Be that as it may, it undeniably caught the readers’ attention and became the literary craze of the moment. However, the boom of this poetry fell sharply after shining like fireworks. The dazzled reception by the public collided with the scathing, almost ruthless criticism of authors such as William Gifford, as discussed above.

Gifford’s “intemperate responses” and “indignant reactionism” caused immense damage to the reception of this poetry, especially because they prevented the poems from “reaching” the audience. Nevertheless, as Labbe (2009) points out, amid Gifford’s criticisms, there seems to be some truth; for example, the fact that the two “great luminaries of the age”, Della Crusca and Anna Matilda, fell desperately in love with each other (Gifford, 1797, p. xii).

Labbe (2009, no page /section 1) described the transgressive characteristics of this poetic exchange that delighted the readers of *The World* in the years 1787-1788 and almost made them hold their breath as they followed the phases of the love affair:

Della Cruscan poetry, in its English incarnation, charts a romance in terminology that offends the sensibilities of sensibility: it is too physical, too open, too desiring, too expressive. Most dangerously, it allows for, even encourages, the poeticising of erotic attraction.

What most attracted the readers and made them identify with the lovers was precisely what horrified critics like Gifford: they were witnessing a relationship between a man and a woman who clearly and openly declared their love both romantic and physical, revealing all their emotions, and expressing them freely rather than respecting the “classical purity” expected of poetry. Even if we think that Della Crusca and Anna Matilda are “romantic constructs, mere masks” (Labbe, 2000, p. 42), what readers wanted to contemplate and did contemplate was a ‘real’ and not a sublime romance, with raw feelings such as love, jealousy, despair, feigned indifference, and melancholy. Despite this, the broad consensus of criticism prevailed and declared that this could not be a true romance, for it exceeded the ‘real’ limits of ‘sensitivity’:

For Gifford, a signal crime of Della Cruscanism was its *contradictory devotion to sensibility*; even as its sensual language fell foul of sensibility’s celebration of virtue, its plotline depended heavily on a scenario of love deferred, a plotline eventually exploded... Gifford’s view is endorsed by McGann, who situates Della Cruscanism as exemplifying *‘the poetics of sensibility’*... (Labbe, 2009, n. p. / section 2).⁶

Except for the fact that we are dealing with an epistolary exchange, the plot line of the Della Crusca-Anna Matilda exchange follows the guidelines of the novels of the time. In addition, in this case, without losing the limits of decorum and formality, the romance shows the fusion of the sensible and the physical, the sensual and the sexual, as if the physical distance that separates the lovers could be replaced with the poetic presence: “their exchanges convert the absence of bodies into a paradoxical presence: the corpus of their love is composed of print. The

⁶ My emphasis.

body of work takes over for the body of the beloved, and is correspondingly increasingly eroticised” (Labbe, 2009, n. p. / section 5).

Once again, we are facing a duality that is balanced in this type of poetry: the fusion of heartbreaking passion and pure sensitivity. In turn, the fiery dimensions of romance are controlled by the aesthetics of the form, contained by the meter and the rhythm of the rhyming couplets.

3.2. The plot line

The exchange begins with a poem by Della Crusca entitled “The Adieu and Recall to Love”, in which he expresses his grief over the loss of Louisa’s love, but declares how the deep suffering is compensated for by the experience of feeling and being able to express that emotion. Anna Matilda responds excitedly to this poem with passionate verses, taking the initiative in the love relationship with fiery insinuations.

3.2.1. Anna Matilda’s opening poem: “To Della Crusca. The Pen”

In this poem, Anna Matilda asks Della Crusca to take back his pen, which acquires both romantic and sensual connotations, since it is a gift from the gods Apollo and Cupid. One god is supposed to be bringing him the fire of poetic language and the other god, the power of passion. In this new duality, language and life are presented as intertwined and as a metaphor for a ‘poetic’ romance, which could also be ‘real’.

The pen will not only be used to write their romance, but, like a magic wand, it could serve to “thrill” ‘her bosom’ and “explore” ‘her heart’. The feather that Apollo gives Della Crusca has been bathed by the waters of Aonia. This is the name used by the Greek poet Callimachus to refer to Boeotia, a historical region of Ancient Greece, where Mount Helicon is located. This place was consecrated to the Muses, whom Ovid in his *Metamorphosis* (1.5333) called Aonides. Since then, in Roman and later literature, Aonia was the name used for Boeotia and, more specifically, for the Helicon, seat of the muses (Buxton, 1994). The feather, which flew “fluttering thro’ the sky, borne on the vapor of a sigh”, fell on Cupid’s wing and from there, like a metaphorical dart of passion, on a sleeping heart.

Anna Matilda’s insinuations are contained, literally and metaphorically, by the poetic structure. Through iambic tetrameters paired in couplets, the writer begs her lover not to reject what the gods have given

him. Curiously enough, the initial polysemic action verb SEIZE, the names of the two gods, APOLLO and CUPID, and the word LOVE are highlighted in capital letters.

TO DELLA CRUSCA. THE PEN	A DELLA CRUSCA. LA PLUMA ⁷
<p>O! SEIZE again thy golden quill, And with its point my bosom thrill; With magic touch explore my heart, And bid the tear of passion start. Thy golden quill APOLLO gave— Drench'd first in bright Aonia's wave: He snatch'd it flutt'ring thro' the sky, Borne on the vapour of a sigh: It fell from Cupid's burnish'd wing As forcefully he drew the string Which sent his keenest, surest dart Thro' a rebellious frozen heart; That had till then defy'd his pow'r, And vacant beat thro' each dull hour. Be worthy then the sacred loan! Seated on Fancy's air-built throne, Immerse it in her rainbow hues, Nor, what the Godheads bid, refuse! APOLLO, CUPID, shall inspire, And aid thee with their blended fire, The one poetic language give,</p>	<p>¡Ay! TOMA otra vez tu pluma dorada y con su punta estremece mi pecho. Explora mi corazón con su magia y haz que empiece el dolor de la pasión. APOLO te dio tu pluma dorada impregnada de las aguas de Aonia: La prendió cuando volaba en el cielo, portada en el hálito de un suspiro. De la bruñida ala de Cupido, al tirar con fuerza de la cuerda, cayó clavando el dardo más certero en un rebelde corazón helado,⁸ que hasta entonces su poder desafiaba y vacío latía en tristes horas. ¡Sé digno, pues, del préstamo sagrado! Sentado en tu trono de Fantasía, sumérgelo en sus tonos de arcoíris, ¡No rechaces lo que los Dioses te dan! APOLO, CUPIDO, te inspirarán, y aunarán sus fuegos para ayudarte, uno te dará el lenguaje poético,</p>

⁷ Our translation into Spanish aims to be carefully faithful to the original, trying to reproduce the 'stimuli' intended by the poet in the original text in order to awake the same cognitive effects in the potential target reader. Rhyme has not been pursued, so as not to sacrifice meaning, but attention to rhythm and metre is maintained with hendecasyllabic verse. The relative simplicity of the syntactic structure has been maintained, as well as rhetorical figures of speech such as syntactic parallelism.

⁸ The high register has been preserved, especially at the lexical-semantic level, and special attention has been paid to adjectives and participles with an adjectival function, as in: "Thy golden quill APOLLO gave—/ Drench'd first in bright Aonia's wave:/ He snatch'd it flutt'ring thro' the sky,/ Borne on the vapour of a sigh:/ It fell from Cupid's burnish'd wing/ As forcefully he drew the string/ Which sent his keenest, surest dart/ Thro' a rebellious frozen heart", which is presented as "APOLO te dio tu pluma *dorada*/ *impregnada* de las aguas de Aonia:/ La prendió cuando volaba en el cielo,/ *portada* en el hálito de un suspiro./ De la *bruñida* ala de Cupido,/ al tirar con fuerza de la cuerda,/ cayó clavando el dardo más *certero*/ en un *rebelde* corazón *helado*". All mythological allusions have also been preserved.

<p>The other bid thy passion live; With soft ideas fill thy lays, And crown with LOVE thy wint'ry days! ANNA MATILDA.</p>	<p>el otro hará que vivas tu pasión;⁹ llena tus versos de suaves ideas, ¡corona de AMOR tus días de invierno! ANNA MATILDA</p>
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3.2.2. Drawing 'the strong passions of the mind': "To Della Crusca"

Della Crusca responds to this opening poem by Anna Matilda by accepting the proposal with enthusiasm and without delay, and by making her his Muse, with all the pain and passion that this entails.

Nevertheless, throughout the whole exchange of poems, Anna Matilda brings out perhaps the greatest impediment to their relationship; a hindrance that, in the end, when they meet in "The Interview", will trigger the end of their relationship: the great age difference. Anna Matilda repeatedly expresses in her poems how her wit and mind are young, but her body is older. This is how she first introduces age as a barrier to love.

Continuing with the paired iambic tetrameters, Anna Matilda tries to redirect the passion awakened in Della Crusca from the body to the mind, since her body suffers the passage of time, but her mind remains young and happy: "tho' the rose -bud on my cheek / Hath shed its leaves, which late so sleek, / Spoke youth, and joy — and careless thought, / By guilt, or fear, or shame un-smote, / My blooming soul is yet in youth, / Its lively sense attests the truth". Her heart and her mind can be moved by the beauty of nature ("The beauties of the flow'ry waste; the nightingale's deep swell; the gem-deck'd night; the clear moon's silent flight; the slow river's crumpled wave...") and she places passion in the mind by stating that his "pencil" draws on the canvas "all the strong passions of the mind". The pen becomes the painter's brush on the canvas, the sculptor's "chisel", and all her inspiration comes from the light of Della Crusca. For this reason, she implores 'Time' to take away everything corporeal but preserve her mind to feel: "O Time! ... / Of lesser thefts e'en take thy fill... / But leave me, when all these you steal, / The mind to taste, the nerve to feel!"

⁹ The relative simplicity of the syntactic structure has been maintained, as well as rhetorical figures of speech such as syntactic parallelism: "APOLLO, CUPID, shall inspire, / And aid thee with their blended fire, / The one poetic language give, / The other bid thy passion live", which is translated as "APOLO, CUPIDO, te inspirarán, / y aunarán sus fuegos para ayudarte, / uno te dará el lenguaje poético, / el otro hará que vivas tu pasión".

TO DELLA CRUSCA	A DELLA CRUSCA ¹⁰
<p>THOU bidst!—"my purple slumbers fly" Day's radiance pours upon my eye. I wake—I live! the sense o'er pays The trivial griefs of early days. What! tho' the rose-bud on my cheek Hath shed its leaves, which late so sleek, Spoke youth, and joy—and careless thought, By guilt, or fear, or shame un-smote, My blooming soul is yet in youth, Its lively sense attests the truth. O! I can wander yet, and taste The beauties of the flow'ry waste; The nightingale's deep swell can feel, Whilst from my lids the soft drops steal; Rapt! gaze upon the gem-deck'd night, And mark the clear moon's silent flight; Whilst the slow river's crumpled wave Repeats the quiv'ring beams she gave. Nor yet, the pencil strives in vain, To wake upon the canvas plain, All the strong passions of the mind, Or hint the sentiment refin'd; To its sweet magic yet I bow, As when Youth deck'd my polish'd brow. The chisel's feath'ry touch to trace, Thro' the nerv'd form, or soften'd grace, Is lent me still. Still I admire, And kindle at the Poet's fire— My torch, at Della Crusca's light, And distant, follow his superior flight. O Time! since these are left me still,</p>	<p>¡TÚ mandas! — “mis sueños púrpura vuelan” La luz del día ya inunda mis ojos. Me despierto, ¡vivo! La sensación compensa los dolores de antaño. ¡Qué! aunque la rosa de mis mejillas ha arrojado las hojas ya marchitas, habló de juventud y de alegría, por culpa, miedo, vergüenza intacta, mi alma en flor se siente aún joven, su alegría da fe de la verdad. Aún puedo vagar y saborear las bellezas del derroche de flores, sentir la melodía del ruiseñor, que roban a mis ojos gotas suaves; ¡con deleite ver la noche estrellada!, mirar el vuelo de la luna clara, mientras las olas del pausado río reproducen sus temblorosos rayos. El lápiz aún no se esfuerza en vano en despertar sobre el desnudo lienzo las pasiones que viven en la mente, o en sugerir el sentir refinado; a su dulce magia aún me inclino, como cuando mi frente era más joven. El suave toque al usar el cincel, en fuertes formas o en suaves gracias, aún lo conservo. También admiro, y me enciende, el fuego del poeta - mi antorcha, a la luz de Della Crusca, y distante sigo su alto vuelo. ¡Tiempo!¹¹ ya que conservo todo esto,</p>

¹⁰ The translation, again in unrhymed hendecasyllabic verse, aims to preserve and convey the passion with which Anna Matilda expresses that she feels at last alive: “I wake—I live! the sense o'er pays/ The trivial griefs of early days.” (“Me despierto, ¡vivo! La sensación/ compensa los dolores de antaño”). The beautiful images of light and nature breathe optimism and youth, when daylight floods the eyes and the poet's soul feels rejuvenated (“Day's radiance pours upon my eye / La luz del día ya inunda mis ojos”; “My blooming soul is yet in youth / mi alma en flor se siente aún joven”).

¹¹ The metaphors of the passage of time reflected in the loss of the brightness of the eyes or the colour of the cheeks, the colour of the hair or the thinness of the body allow Anna

<p>Of lesser thefts e'en take thy fill: Yes, steal the lustre from my eye, And bid the soft Carnation fly; My tresses sprinkle with thy snow, Which boasted once the auburn glow; Warp the slim form that was ador'd By him, so lov'd, my bosom's LORD— But leave me, when all these you steal, The mind to taste, the nerve to feel! ANNA MATILDA.</p>	<p>de robos menores puedes saciarte: sí, llévate el brillo de mis ojos y deja que vuele el suave clavel; mis cabellos salpica con tu nieve, que una vez fueron de color rojizo; deforma la delgadez que adoraba, tan amado, el SEÑOR de mis entrañas- pero déjame, cuando robes esto, ¡la mente y el valor para sentir! ANNA MATILDA.</p>
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3.2.3. *The end of the first poetic exchange: “To Della Crusca”*

In his responses to Anna Matilda, Della Crusca seems to accept this fusion between body and mind, although he expresses this in a tremendously passionate way, as a clear demonstration of “romantic sensibility”. He gradually turns Anna Matilda into a real ‘lover’ rather than a mental poetic image. For Runge (1997, p. 173), a discursive structure is built in which the man exercises authority in the relationship. However, in this exchange, we again find ourselves faced with dualities and changing roles, and with the typical evolution of feelings in romances: statements, indifference after fights, accusations, neglect, etc. Jealousy and melancholy appear with the presence of characters such as Reuben, who declares his love and admiration for Anna Matilda, or with Della Crusca’s praise of other women.

As a result of this, Anna Matilda begs Della Crusca to return to sensitivity, since sensitivity and love are innate to poetry. Although she has also received the attention of Reuben, she is jealous of the poems that Della Crusca directs to other women and manages to ignore him in “Ode to Indifference”. Like an abandoned lover, she believes that indifference will protect her from a missing beloved who has stopped writing to her. At last, Della Crusca answers Anna Matilda and explains that indifference could drive them away from suffering, but also from love and poetry.

Matilda to cry out to “Time” to take all this away, while pleading for her mind and soul to remain young (“Yes, steal the lustre from my eye, / And bid the soft Carnation fly; / My tresses sprinkle with thy snow, / Which boasted once the auburn glow; / Warp the slim form that was ador’d...”) (“sí, llévate el brillo de mis ojos / y deja que vuele el suave clavel; / mis cabellos salpica con tu nieve, / que una vez fueron de color rojizo; / deforma la delgadez que adoraba...”).

In a game of indifference and rejection, they hurt each other, and in the penultimate poem of the first original exchange published in *The World*, Della Crusca finally decides to turn away from Anna Matilda and travel north. His poem portrays the pain his beloved's indifference causes, and he states vehemently that he intended to be much more than a mere platonic friend: "Age, jam meorum, / Finis amorum. / AND have I strove in vain to move / Thy Heart, fair Phantom of my Love? / And cou'dst thou think 'twas my design, / Calmly to list thy Notes Divine, / That I responsive Lays might send, / To gain a cold Platonic Friend? / Far other hopes thy Verse inspir'd, / And all my Breast with Passion fir'd." However, he just finds cold indifference in her: "Ah! when I deem'd such joys at hand, / Remorseless comes the stern command, / Nor calls my wand'ring footsteps home, / But far, and farther bids me roam; / And then thy Vestal Notes dispense / The meed of COLD INDIFFERENCE! / Curs'd Pow'r! that to myself unknown, / Still turns the heart I love, to stone!". Dejected, he decides to travel north and, heartbreakingly, says farewell to (a capitalized) Anna Matilda, whom he names repeatedly for the first time: "Yes, ANNA! I will hasten forth / To the bleak regions of the North "... ANNA MATILDA! fare thee, fare thee well! / Farewell, whoe'er thou art, ... / And O! farewell to distant Britain's shore, / Which I perhaps am doom'd to see no more...". Once again love and poetry go hand in hand, for he says goodbye to his homeland, his beloved and poetry at the same time: "Sweet POETRY! my earliest, falsest Friend, / Here shall my frantic adoration end."

But should, with ANNA's Verse, his hapless Rhime,
 In future meet th' impartial eye of Time,
 Say, that thy wretched victim long endur'd,
 Pains which are seldom felt, and never cur'd!
 Say, 'midst the lassitude of hopes o'erthrown,
 MATILDA's strain could comfort him alone.
 Yet was the veil mysterious ne'er remov'd,
 From him th' admiring, and from her the lov'd,
 And no kind intercourse the Song repaid,
 But *each to each remain'd—a Shadow and a Shade*.¹²
 DELLA CRUSCA.

Unfortunately, when Anna Matilda reacts and asks him to stay ("OH stay, oh stay! / thy rash speed check"), it is too late. Without her lover, the

¹² My emphasis.

poetic inspiration leaves her as well, and she loses the desire to continue singing her love (“And now, MATILDA, bind thy lyre / With cypress wreathes!”), thus ending the loving exchange of the first series of poems.

The intellectual and sentimental inspiration that love provokes is expressed through musical metaphors. Not only will she hang up her lyre and wrap it in cypress leaves, but she will stop hearing Maia’s melody (“In vain each morning now will glow— / In vain soft MAIA’s music flow, / And to my pillow force its way, / And on my wak’ning senses play.”). In ancient Greece, Maia was the goddess of spring, the eldest and most beautiful of the Pleiades or Atlantides, nymph goddesses of the mountain daughters of Atlas.

In a new comparison with classical mythology, the poet compares herself to Sappho, the Greek lyric poet whose poems were written to be sung accompanied by a lyre, and who, according to an ahistorical tradition, killed herself by jumping off the Leucadian cliffs for the love of Phaon.

TO DELLA CRUSCA	A DELLA CRUSCA¹³
<p>OH stay, oh stay! thy rash speed check,</p> <p>Not yet ascend the flying deck; Nor Europe's Hemisphere forsake, Nor from THY NATION's pleasures take A bliss so exquisite and chaste— A feast so dear to polish'd taste, As that thy Lyre correctly flings, As that they feel when DELLA CRUSCA sings. Alas! thou'rt gone, and to my straining eye] Thy Bark seems buoyant on the distant sky;— See! in the clouds its mast it proudly laves, Scorning the aid of Ocean's humble waves:</p>	<p>¡Oh, quédate, oh, quédate! ya tus prisas refrena,] no inicies el ascenso de tu vuelo; ni dejes el hemisferio europeo, ni de las dichas de TU NACIÓN tomes un gozo tan exquisito y tan casto... Un placer tan querido y refinado, como el que bello surge de tu lira, como el que sienten todos al cantar DELLA CRUSCA. ¡Ay de mí! te has ido, y ante mis ojos parece estar tu nave en el cielo distante; ¡mira! muestra su mástil con orgullo en las nubes,] despreciando la ayuda del Océano humilde:]</p>

¹³ Since the poet has employed iambic tetrameters and pentameters on this occasion, hendecasyllables and fourteen-syllable verses with hemistich have been combined in the target text. As regards the pragmatic intention of the poem, all the strategies and cognitive clues used by Cowley have been preserved, within the limitations imposed by the rhythmic scheme.

<p>Well may it soar and bear aloft the prize Whose verse immortal links him to the skies; Well may it scorn rough Neptune's rocky way,] Which bears the Genius of the GOD OF DAY!] And now, MATILDA, bind thy lyre With cypress wreathes! the lambent fire Thou kindled'st at his fervid rays</p> <p>Can gleam no more;—thy future days</p> <p>Lost to the Muses and to Taste, Each torpid hour will joyless waste.</p> <p>In vain each morning now will glow— In vain soft MAIA's music flow, And to my pillow force its way, And on my wak'ning senses play. Her notes my wak'ning senses fill,</p> <p>And conscious slumbers own the trill;</p> <p>But when at length Remembrance bids The filmy slumber quit my lids,</p> <p>Saying “THE WORLD its Wit hath brought, “Its various point, its well-turn'd thought,</p> <p>“But DELLA CRUSCA lends no ray”— Oh what is Morning—what is May?</p> <p>Yet hold! some solace yet remains, And pensive joys await my pains. I too must leave this laurel'd coast Which all, that ROME adorn'd, can boast;</p> <p>But not like thee, for GRECIAN shores;—</p> <p>Ah no! my humbler prow explores The Sea unsung, which lies between Dover's proud cliffs, and France serene. Thou'lt skim th' Egean's brilliant tide,</p>	<p>puede bien elevarse con el premio cuyo verso inmortal une a los cielos;</p> <p>¡bien puede despreciar el rocoso Neptuno, que lleva el Genio del DIOS DEL DÍA!</p> <p>Y ahora, MATILDA, ¡ata tu lira con coronas de ciprés! que ese fuego que radiante encendiste ante sus vivos rayos] no puede brillar más; —y tus días futuros,] perdidos para las musas y el gusto, cada hora de letargo desperdiciará triste.] En vano brillará cada mañana, en vano sonará la música de MAIA, ni paso se abrirá hasta mi almohada, ni jugará en mis sentidos despiertos. Pero sus notas llenan mis sentidos despiertos,] y los sueños conscientes sí poseen el trino;] mas cuando por fin el Recuerdo haga que el vaporoso sueño abandone mis párpados,] diciendo que “EL MUNDO ha traído su ingenio, su bien variada punta, su ágil pensamiento,] pero DELLA CRUSCA no brilla más”— Oh, ¿qué es la mañana?, oh, ¿qué es mayo?] ¡Mas espera! aún queda consuelo, y tristes alegrías aguardan mis dolores. También debo dejar la costa laureada que ya adornara ROMA, y de la que presumen;] pero no como tú, a las costas de GRECIA;-] ¡ah, no! mi proa más humilde explora ese mar olvidado, entre los orgullosos acantilados de Dover y Francia. Rozarás la brillante marea del Egeo,</p>
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<p>I, o'er the British channel glide*; Thou, all enthusiast! fondly trace The Isle where PHAON's beauteous face Gave birth to SAPPHO's glorious art— Illum'd her name, but tore her heart: Thy SAPPHO seek the shores vicine, Where England's lovely great-soul'd QUEEN Sublimely knelt, and snatch'd from blushing Fate The Godlike victims of her Edward's hate. Thou, at AONIA's sacred feet Wilt duly pour libations meet; I, roam o'er GALLIA's sportive plains Where thoughtless Pleasure ever reigns. But 'tis not sportive GALLIA's plains, Tho' Pleasure there for ever reigns, Which promises the boasted bliss— No, BARD BELOV'D! the hope is this, That there thy footsteps I may tread, Press the same turf where sunk thy head; Sip the quick stream thy thirst hath slaked, And greet the Dawn where thou hast waked—] Fancying her waves of mazy gold Ne'er with such rich refulgence roll'd; And when her tints of various dye Burst from the pallid sickly sky, There rush in violet, there in green, Here in soft red imbue the scene; Then lose themselves by growing bright,</p>	<p>por el canal británico, yo me voy deslizando*:] ¡y tú, todo entusiasta! dibuja con cariño la isla donde el bello semblante de Faón] dio a luz al glorioso arte de Safo: iluminó su nombre, rompió su corazón: tu Safo busca las costas vecinas, donde la magnánima REINA de Inglaterra se arrodilló sublime, y arrebató al Destino las víctimas divinas del odio de su Edward.] Tú, a los sagrados pies de Aonia debidamente hallarás libaciones; yo erraré por las llanuras de GALIA donde reina el placer irreflexivo. Pero no son las llanuras de GALIA, aunque el placer reina allí para siempre, las que prometen absoluta dicha... ¡No, BARDO AMADO! la esperanza es esta,] que allí podré andar sobre tus pisadas, pisar la hierba en que hundiste tu pelo, beber del agua que sació tu sed, y saludar al Alba que a ti te despertó...^{14]} imaginando sus olas de oro que nunca lucieron con tal fulgor; y cuando sus tonos multicolor estallen desde ese pálido cielo, allí en color violeta, allí en verde, aquí en bermellón pintaré la escena; se perderán al volverse brillantes,</p>
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¹⁴ As an instance of this linguistic transfer, let us compare the beautiful images that describe Anna Matilda's only hope. Since Della Crusca has left for Greece, Anna will go to the "serene France" and try to find comfort in finding herself in the place where he was before, in the land he stepped upon before: "No, BARD BELOV'D! the hope is this, / That there thy footsteps I may tread, / Press the same turf where sunk thy head; / Sip the quick stream thy thirst hath slaked, / And greet the Dawn where thou hast waked." The Spanish version has maintained all these images in the proposed metric scheme of hendecasyllables: "¡No, BARDO AMADO! la esperanza es esta, /Que allí podré andar sobre tus pisadas, / pisar la hierba en que hundiste tu pelo, / beber del agua que sació tu sed, / y saludar al alba que a ti te despertó...".

<p>'Till swallow'd up in one vast flood of light—] Thus shall I say, HE saw her rays,</p> <p>Thus was HE rous'd t'adore and praise! Oh SYMPATHY, of birth divine, Descend, and round my heart-strings twine! Touch the fine nerve whene'er I breathe Where DELLA CRUSCA dropt his wreath! Lead me the sacred way of ROME,</p> <p>Lead me to kneel at Virgil's tomb, Where he th'enduring marble round With fresh-wove laurels graceful bound. Then guide where still with sweeter note,</p> <p>Than flow'd from Petrarch's tuneful throat,</p> <p>On Laura's grave he pour'd the lay</p> <p>Amidst the sighs of sinking day: Then point where on the sod his tear</p> <p>Fell from its chrystal source so clear, That there my mingling tear may sink,</p> <p>And the same dust its moisture drink! Thus dying Swans are said to sing,</p> <p>And their last breath in numbers fling. O'er the dear liquid shining plains, Which nurs'd their joys, and nurs'd their pains.] Like them my Muse pines fast away, And this her last, her closing day. When one blest word her lips hath seal'd,</p> <p>In lasting silence she'll be veil'd. Expiring, still her note's the same,</p> <p>She murmurs DELLA CRUSCA's name!— The SACRED WORD! ye heard it spoke;—]</p>	<p>hasta ser tragados por la gran luz... Entonces diré yo: “¡ÉL ha visto sus rayos,] ha sido animado a decir alabanzas!” ¡Ay, COMPASIÓN, de tan divina cuna, desciende y entreteje del corazón los hilos! ¡Hazme saber cada vez que respire dónde a DELLA CRUSCA se cayó la corona! Llévame por la vía consagrada de ROMA,] llévame ante la tumba de Virgilio, donde el imperecedero mármol se adorna con laurel recién tejido. Después guíame donde con notas aún más dulces] que las que habrían salido de la voz de Petrarca] en la tumba de Laura él vertió su cantar] entre los suspiros del triste día: ¡Luego señala el suelo donde cayó su lágrima] desde fuente tan clara y cristalina, para que allí se hunda mi lágrima y la suya,] y el mismo polvo beba su humedad! Se dice que así cantan los cisnes moribundos] cuando lanzan sus últimos alientos. Sobre sus brillantes caras llanuras, que arrullaran sus penas y alegrías. Como ellos, mi musa languidece, y este es el final, su último día. Cuando selle sus labios la palabra bendita,] será cubierta de eterno silencio. Y al expirar, su nota sigue siendo la misma,] ¡Murmura el nombre de DELLA CRUSCA! ¡Oíd todos la PALABRA SAGRADA!</p>
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Her Book is clos'd—her Lyre is broke! ANNA MATILDA.	¡Su libro se ha cerrado, y se ha roto su lira! ¹⁵ ANNA MATILDA
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4. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have briefly reviewed one of the literary facets of the English writer Hannah Cowley, recognized for her theatrical work at the end of the eighteenth century. The poetic exchange that she maintained in the last decade of this century with the writer Robert Merry seems to us one of the most interesting and representative examples of the Della Cruscan poetic style, which was vilified and despised until just twenty years ago.

In our opinion, this ostensibly lighthearted, witty and carefree poetry, despite its apparent superficiality according to critics of the time, especially William Gifford, has significant depth and complexity. In the case of the poetic love exchange between Anna Matilda and Della Crusca, the verses are capable of transmitting in all their intensity the feelings of love, pleasure, fear, horror, jealousy, anguish or melancholy, even if we consider that the “poetic game” is what prevails in the end.

The fact that the romance seems to have been felt as something real by the authors, as suggested by Gifford (1797, p. xii), but was also scripted for the readers of *The World*, as can perhaps be deduced from the nod to this newspaper in the last verses of the exchange (“But when at length Remembrance bids / The filmy slumber quit my lids, / Saying “THE WORLD its Wit hath brought, / Its various point, its well-turn’d thought, / But DELLA CRUSCA lends no ray””), is one more of the aspects that caught the attention of and captivated the public of the time. As we have noted, the epistolary exchange between Anna Matilda and Della Crusca is full of dualities. It is a linguistic-poetic competition and a love-sexual

¹⁵ In the end, it is reconfirmed that poetry and love are always united in this exchange; when the lovers part, poetry ends: “When one blest word her lips hath seal’d, / In lasting silence she’ll be veil’d / Expiring, still her note’s the same, / She murmurs DELLA CRUSCA’s name!— / The SACRED WORD! ye heard it spoke;— / Her Book is clos’d—her Lyre is broke!” / “Cuando selle sus labios la palabra bendita, / será cubierta de eterno silencio. / Y al expirar, su nota sigue siendo la misma, / ¡Murmura el nombre de DELLA CRUSCA! / ¡Oíd todos la PALABRA SAGRADA! / ¡Su libro se ha cerrado, y se ha roto su lira!”.

game; the protagonists love and admire each other, but they also criticize and reproach each other. In Labbe's words, "the poetry is both genuine and artificial, structured and spontaneous, even as the romance is both effective and laboured, sincere and theatrical" (2000, p. 42). For this precise reason, Della Cruscan poetry, which has so often been labelled too 'sensitive' to reflect reality, could not employ conventional poetic strategies.

As Bostetter (1956) argued, there is a line of continuity between the Della Cruscans and the major Romantics, whether they read them or not, because the attitudes, subject matter and stylistic traits that would characterize those Romantics we know well were already anticipated in this group of poets full of "freshness in subject and style and youthful enthusiasm" which would serve to challenge our traditional perception of the limits of Romanticism.

Moreover, after his exile in America (1796-1798), Merry was hailed as the most influential poet of the time: "Merry exercised during twenty years a greater influence than any other individual upon American poetry and other kinds of writing" (R.W. Griswold (1885), in Adams, 1964, p. 259). The *Columbian Centinel* of Boston for 12 March 1791 also hailed the fact that "Della Crusca and Anna Matilda have ameliorated the Eastern world", and many of their poems were published in the *New York Magazine*, the *American Museum*, the *Columbian Centinel* and Matthew Carey's anthology *The Beauties of Poetry, British and American* (Philadelphia, 1791).

On the other hand, although Cowley and Merry's works before and after the amorous exchanges in *The World* have been considered of a much higher standard, the fact is that the authors never disdained them, nor were they ashamed of them. Quite to the contrary, as William B. Wood pointed out, they were "far from thinking meanly of them" (Philadelphia 1885, in Adams, 1968, p. 265).

Had they not suffered William Gifford's fierce attacks, or had they had the opportunity to review them, as happened with his criticism of Keats, perhaps the course of their literary history would have been different, for, while some argue that Gifford's satires brought them notoriety, in reality these caused many of their "non-readers" (Labbe, 2009) to despise their work through reading Gifford rather than the original poems. Following McGann's (1995) review, some thought has begun to be given to the non-literary motives that led Gifford to his voracious persecution of the Della Cruscans beyond their style or subject matter. Among others, the fact that their work went from being very popular but

fleeting to acquiring “permanence” through more “serious” publications, the fact that their authors did not belong to the closed network of an “intellectual” circle of male writers, but consisted of numerous women, or the fact that in the battle for representativeness they began to gain social relevance which amounted to being able to influence their audience both politically and ideologically seem to explain the furious criticisms they suffered.

This is the main reason why we have provided a Spanish translation of the three selected poems by Hannah Cowley. Gifford’s attacks have prevented her work from making its way into the studies of foreign scholars specializing in English literature, literary translation and, even more so, from reaching those who appreciate literature but are not fluent in English. Among the many English poets of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries known to Spanish speakers and translated into Spanish, there is no title in the database of books published in Spain that includes the work of Hannah Cowley or Robert Merry. We believe that they are owed a chance to be appreciated or even criticized, but through the reading of their originals (in this case the translations) and not through the words of their critics.

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