

FANNY KEMBLE AND *LA ESTRELLA DE SEVILLA**

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This paper analyses and sets out possible reasons as to why the British actress and playwright Fanny Kemble wrote the play *Star of Seville*, based on the plot of *La Estrella de Sevilla* attributed to Lope de Vega. One of the main strands of this paper establishes the existence of a widespread attraction felt by the English towards Spain, rooted in the political and military assistance provided by the British army to the Spanish liberals in their struggle against the absolutism reigning in Spain. In fact, Fanny Kemble's brother travelled to Spain to help General Torrijos; hence it should come as no surprise that the playwright felt close to Spain's political reality, which would explain her interest in writing a play set in Seville. In addition to this line of research, this paper also analyses the differences and similarities between the two plays and the possible reasons that led the playwright to change the ending of the Spanish play.

Keywords: *Anglo-Spanish relations, theatre, Fanny Kemble, La Estrella de Sevilla, Star of Seville, Lope de Vega.*

Este trabajo analiza y expone las posibles razones por las que la actriz británica y dramaturga Fanny Kemble escribió la obra de teatro *The Star of Seville* basada en el argumento de la obra *La Estrella de Sevilla* atribuida a Lope de Vega. Uno de los principales ejes de este trabajo es establecer la existencia de una atracción generalizada por parte de la población inglesa hacia España, sustentada por la ayuda política y militar que el ejército británico brindó a los liberales españoles en su lucha contra el absolutismo imperante en España. De

hecho, el hermano de Fanny Kemble viajó a España a ayudar al General Torrijos, por lo que no es de extrañar la cercanía de la dramaturga a la realidad política española y por ello su interés en escribir una obra situada en Sevilla. Junto con esta línea de investigación, el trabajo también analiza las diferencias y semejanzas entre las dos obras y los posibles motivos que llevaron a la dramaturga a cambiar el final de la obra española.

Palabras clave: *relaciones anglo-españolas, teatro, Fanny Kemble, La Estrella de Sevilla, Star of Seville, Lope de Vega.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The interest in Spain felt by the British at a commercial level first emerged in around the 16th Century with the development of economic activity surrounding wine, particularly the sherry produced in Jerez. But before this, Chaucer had already mentioned it in *The Canterbury Tales*, describing it as “the fumosittee of this wine from Spain”. From the 19th Century onwards, the towns of Jerez, Sanlúcar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa María in South West Spain made up the golden triangle of the sherry bodegas with names that still endure into the present day (Harvey, Terry and Osborne). From that time onwards, commercial relations between the two countries intensified not only in this area but also in Huelva with the Riotinto mines and in the port of Bilbao (Grayson, 2001)

David Mitchell in his foreword to *The Spanish Attraction*, written by Grayson (2001), mentions that Alexander Jardine, the British consul in La Coruña in the year 1780, said that in comparison to France, Spain “had more of pure nature, sincerity and sound sense” (2001: 9). Mitchell adds that “its ruins appealed to the imagination, as did the rugged sierras, equally rugged peasants, and the fact that ways of life, elsewhere dead or dying, were still flourishing”. In addition, the contributions made by Henry Swinburne and Richard Twist were undeniable, putting Spain on the map in terms of tourist destinations for the British from the 18th century onwards. In the 19th century, the

first guides for travellers to Spain were the *Handbook for Travellers in Spain* (1845) and *Gatherings from Spain* (1846) by Richard Ford, who travelled round Spain accompanied by his wife, setting up base camp in Seville for his trips across the country between 1830 and 1833. In 1860, one of the first British women travellers in Spain, W.P. Byrne, commented: “I prayed that the inevitable impacts of industrial revolution would not be too devastating, that somehow Spain would escape the blasting breath of the Iron Age unscathed” (Grayson, 2001: 14). Many men and women travelled to Spain from the United Kingdom, a tradition that continued into the 20th Century with figures such as Gerald Brenan, Virginia Woolf, Robert Graves and Laurie Lee, among others.

One of the great advocates for Spain at the start of the 19th Century was Lord Holland (1773-1840). Lord Holland’s first visit to Spain was at the end of the 18th Century, and in 1802 he returned and visited Barcelona, Valencia, Murcia, Andalucía and La Mancha, finishing his travels in Madrid, where he lived until 1805. In 1808 he returned to Spain once more and lived in Seville with his wife Lady Holland, as shown in her diaries (Holland, 1910). The diaries of Lady Holland are, according to Manuel Moreno, “el mayor testimonio del amor que los esposos sintieron por España” (1983: 193). Lord and Lady Holland endeavoured to have as many different kinds of cultural and festive experiences in Spain as possible, from visiting the prison cells of the Inquisition in Murcia to watching a bullfight in La Maestranza bullring in Seville, which they then went on to record in great and personal detail in their diaries, as Moreno says again: “todas las cosas de España están amorosamente interpretadas en las bellas y muy agudas páginas del Diario” (1983: 194). Manuel Moreno explains that the interest and love felt by Lord Holland towards Spain led his compatriots to brand him *Españolista* (1983:183).

The Spain known to Lord Holland was the Spain of the Count of Aranda, of Godoy, of the war against the Napoleonic Empire, the War of Independence, the liberal revolution, and Ferdinand VII. Together with these social revolutions, and owing to a rejection of the economic conditions brought by the industrial revolution, the arts were experiencing a period of so-called romanticism that originated in Europe in the late 18th Century and which peaked between 1800 and

1850. According to Ubieto, romanticism cannot be considered an exclusively literary phenomenon but rather an understanding of the world and a certain form of human behaviour (1963: 470). It is possible, therefore, to talk about a political and social romanticism represented in literature and it seems clear that the revolutions occurring in Europe at the start of the 19th Century pointed to a burgeoning nationalist romanticism in Europe. For Miroslav Hroch, romanticism and nationalism share the same social roots insofar as the first strives for the freedom of the individual in the face of exploitation and oppression, and the second seeks a new collective national spirit, which ensures the freedom of its members (2007:16). As Martin Travers notes when mentioning Alessandro Manzoni, this romantic-nationalist movement was also democratic, and its greatest advocates were Victor Hugo in France, Percy Bysshe Shelley in the United Kingdom, and Mariano José de Larra in Spain. Victor Hugo, in his famous preface to *Hernani* (1830), affirms that romanticism is liberalism in literature. Shelley in his work *A defence of Poetry* (1821) highlights the great social inequalities that existed. And in the case of Larra, his essay “Literatura” (1836) sets out the union between the Romantic Movement and the promotion of national identity through so-called “costumbrismo” (Travers, 2001: 29-30).

This paper does not intend to focus on the nationalist-romantic spirit that existed in Spain, nor on the spirit developed by the British about their own nation, but rather on the development of a British nationalist-romantic spirit in relation to Spain. One of the greatest exponents of this geographical displacement is the prose treatise “Convention of Cintra” written by Wordsworth following the signing of said Convention by the French and British armies in 1808 at the end of the first Peninsular War. For Peter Bromwich, this text and the subsequent reflections made by the romantic writer clearly show the British sympathies towards the Spanish resistance, which came to mirror the British desire for freedom. Bromwich added: “We infer that sympathy with the Spanish cause cannot but lead the people of England to re-examine their social arrangements and conspire to make a revolution at home” (2010: 606).

For Diego Saglia (1998: 363), it seems evident that one of the recurrent themes in British romanticism in particular is the Spanish

nationalist spirit. In this respect, there are numerous literary examples reflecting the attention and curiosity felt by the British towards political affairs in Spain, specifically the War of Independence against France and Napoleon Bonaparte (1808-1814). There was even a certain thirst among the British for news about Spain in bulletins and chronicles, not to mention accounts of travels, and narratives evoking the landscape, culture, and history of Spain. Furthermore, there are numerous Spanish writers and politicians who fled to England when absolutism was re-established, for example Espronceda, and their presence in British society was well received and supported by the English, who even raised money to help them (Marrast, 129). Lord Holland welcomed many of the over a thousand families concentrated particularly in the neighbourhood of Euston Square into his home (Ubieto: 460). Meanwhile, Holland criticised the politics implemented in their homeland, which did not consider the right of the Spanish nation to govern itself, and had not saved Spain from the French invasion (Moreno, 1983: 216). According to Martin Hume, the presence of Spanish liberals in England undoubtedly brought consequences in terms of English literature, since the interest and sympathies awoken in the British by the playwrights at the start of the 19th Century revived the romantic idea of a legendary Spain (1905: 308). What was initially a taste for exoticism was replaced by rebellion against the French and an Alliance between the liberals and the British.

Inevitably, Spain became a major theme in the British literature of the day, which depicts from recreations of Spain's mediaeval past to adventures in Wellington's campaign (The Battle of Vitoria), through the geography of Spain, as in Honoria Scott's novel *The Fair Andalusian* (1810), Alexander R. C. Dallas' *Felix Alcaarez*; and *Manners in Spain* (1818). In these works, the exotic was blended with discourses tinged with nationalism and the figure of Spain became an object to be rescued from the French usurpers. Literary texts, be they poetry, narrative, or theatre, dealt with Spanish current preoccupations such as political representation, the state, freedom, and the individual.

In relation with the theatre, the genre that is the focal point of this paper, plays that dealt with Spain and the Spanish existed well before the 19th Century, with Thomas Kyd penning *The Spanish Tragedy* in around 1590 and *The Conquest of Granada*, written by Dryden and

published in 1672. *The Spanish Tragedy* was particularly popular and established a new theatrical genre known as revenge tragedy, which we can also see later on in works by Shakespeare, Marlowe and Ben Jonson. As for British female playwrights, several plays were written in the 18th and 19th centuries that spoke of the history and culture of Spain and the Iberian Peninsula, including *Almeyda, Queen of Granada* (1796) by Sophia Lee, Lady Barbarina Dacre and her works *Gonzalo of Cordova* and *Xarifa* (1821), Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley, who wrote *Alphonzo Algarves* (1841), Joanna Baillie and her work *Henriquez* (1851), Mary Russell Mitford with *Inez de Castro* (1854) and the central theme of this paper *The Star of Seville* (1837) by Fanny Kemble.

2. FANNY KEMBLE AND THE THEATRE

Katherine Newey highlights an unprecedented phenomenon produced between 1800 and 1900 when hundreds of plays by women playwrights were written, produced and performed in the city of London (2005: 11). As Powell adds (1997:80), it was not uncommon during the Victorian period, in spite of the obstacles imposed in the male-dominated world of the theatre, for an increasing number of women playwrights to earn a living this way, receiving on average ten percent of the total box office takings. Among all the women playwrights who emerged during this time, Newey dedicates a chapter specifically to Fanny Kemble and Isabel Hill owing to the former's direct involvement in the recovery of the British National Theatre in London's Convent Garden (Newey 2005: 20).

Fanny Kemble was born into a theatrical family from London in 1809. Her theatrical roots were well established right from birth: her aunt was a famous actress of the time called Sarah Siddons and her father, Charles Kemble, was a famous Shakespearean actor and owner of the Convent Garden theatre in London. As Gibbs records (1945: 98), owing to financial problems affecting the theatre and the family, Fanny began contributing to the family's theatrical activity, and aged 19 she gave her debut performance as Juliet in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. From that moment onwards her fame grew and grew, and in 1832, owing to a fire in the theatre that caused her family serious economic hardship, she began touring the United States where

she garnered great professional success.

In 1834, in Philadelphia, she married Pierce Butler, a Georgian landowner who, during his vacation, joined the orchestra of the theatre company as a flautist. According to Marshall (1977: 137) the plantation owned by Butler scandalised Fanny when she realised how the Americans treated their black slaves. In her American home, Fanny felt lonely, depressed, and even though she tried to integrate into the society that surrounded her, her marriage began to fall apart. The main reasons were the abolitionism supported by Fanny, Butler's infidelities, and the fact that Butler could not stand his wife having the same rights as he did, being more intelligent than he was, and not behaving in the manner of a traditional wife (De Bear Bobbé 1932: 117). During the divorce proceedings, Butler forced her to leave her two daughters behind in America, to be cared for by him and his lover (Miss Hall), and she decided to return to England to take up acting once again. The divorce was finally settled in 1849 and she received 1500 pounds a year, and permission to see her daughters for the two summer months. Butler gambled away a great deal of money and was arrested several times for not complying with the agreements reached after the American Civil War; he even refused to hang black ribbons at the windows when Lincoln died. Butler himself died in 1867 from malaria.

Fanny Kemble wrote many pieces about her experience on the plantation, which she eventually published in spite of opposition from her in-laws, among them *A Residence on A Georgian Plantation*, books about her travels around the United States, and plays that were performed in the United States, such as *The Star of Seville* in 1838 (Marshall 1977: 201). Fanny Kemble died aged 84 in London, with her housekeeper by her side.

In 1878, Fanny Kemble wrote *Records of a Girlhood*, a book that looks back at her diaries and letters to friends and family, with comments and explanations furnished by the wisdom of age and the benefit of hindsight. This book relays the origin of her idea to write *The Star of Seville*. In a letter dated 21st December 1830 she says the following:

My dearest H,
My aunt Dall brought me home word that you

wished me to send a letter which should meet you on arrival at Ardgillan; and I would have done so, but that I had previously promised myself that I would do nothing this day till I had copied out the fourth act of *The Star of Seville*, and you know unless I am steady at my work this week, I shall break my word a second time, which is impossible, as it ought to have been at first (1878: 319).

Immediately after this letter, in brackets, Kemble, with the benefit of hindsight, comments on and analyses the origin of this play:

A tragedy in five acts, called “*The Star of Seville*”, at which I was working, is here referred to. My father had directed my attention to the subject by putting in my hands a sketch of the life and works of Lope de Vega, by Lord Holland. The story of *La Estrella de Seviglia* appeared to my father eminently dramatic, and he excited me to choose it for the subject of a drama. (Kemble, 1878: 319)

As mentioned above, Fanny’s father had read a book by Lord Holland entitled *Some Account of the Lives and Writings of Lope de Vega Carpio and Guillen de Castro* published in London in 1806 in its first edition; there was a second edition of the book in 1817, in which, according to Crawford (1930: 496), no fewer than sixty five additional pages were included providing a detailed analysis of *La Estrella de Sevilla*, alongside the complete text in Spanish and the translation of several excerpts such as the scene in which the King forces Don Sancho to pledge that he will kill the man who has slighted him, the meeting between Sancho and Busto Tabera, and the scene in which Estrella is waiting for her lover and instead comes across the dead body of her brother. Holland’s partial translation is not the only version of *La Estrella de Sevilla* in English; two more are known of, this time complete. The first was published in 1950 by Henry Thomas through Oxford University Press and the second is by Elizabeth C. Hullihen published in 1955 by the Jarman Printing Company. It is not our intention here to analyse these translations or to enter into a discussion about the authorship of the play or the various modifications made by Trigueros, since these matters are analysed in depth in the

work of René Andioc (1988) and Joan Oleza (1999).

According to Fanny Kemble's diaries, she started working on the basis of the summary and the scenes published by Lord Holland, given to her by her father. Her letters and diaries give an idea of the pace at which she worked and the possible reasons that led her father to the idea of writing a play based on *La Estrella de Sevilla* and motivated Fanny to undertake such a task. On the 10th April 1831, several months after beginning work on *The Star of Seville*, Fanny Kemble confessed that "I am working hard at it. I begin to see my way through it" (Kemble, 1878: 320); on the 20th July and 4th August, she commented in her diaries that she was maintaining a steady pace of work; one year after she started, on the 17th December, she confessed in her diary: "... and I wrote a few lines of *The Star of Seville*; but I hate it, and the whole thing is as dead as a ditch-water," (Kemble, 1878). Days later, on the 29th December, Kemble was still somewhat tired of the play, but continued to work on it: "After dinner worked at *The Star of Seville*. I really wonder I have the patience to go on with it, it is such heavy trash," (Kemble, 1878). On the 14th January 1832, Kemble completed the play, writing the following in her diary with great satisfaction:

After dinner I came up to my room, and set to work like a little galley slave, and by tea-time I had finished my play "Oh, joy forever! My task is done!" I came down rather tipsy and proclaimed my achievement. After tea I began copying the last act, but my father desired me to read it to them; so, at about half-past nine, I began. My mother cried much; what a nice woman she is! My father, Dall, and John agreed that it was beautiful. (...)

I wonder why nowadays we make all our tragedies foreign? Romantic, historical, Knightly England had people and manners once picturesque and poetical enough to serve her play-writer's turn, though Shakespeare always took his stories, though not his histories, from abroad; but people live tragedies and comedies everywhere and all time. (1878)

This reflection made by Kemble is precisely the same question tackled in this paper as we endeavour to find answers. We have already discussed the interest felt by the British in the cultural, economic, and political affairs of Spain in the early 19th Century. Furthermore, in Kemble's case, as her letters describe, her own brother John and some family friends collaborated with and helped Spanish revolutionary groups one year before she completed *The Star of Seville*. In the August of 1830, Kemble wrote a letter to a friend saying that while she was in Liverpool she had received a missive from her brother John sent from Algeciras, Spain: "telling me that he and several of his college companions had determined to lend the aid of their enthusiastic sympathy to the cause of liberty in Spain" (1878). In this same letter, Kemble expressed her concern for her brother, whose decision she defines as a "romantic expedition". On 9th January 1831, Kemble once again wrote to her friend, telling her that her brother and his friends had run into problems, forcing them to flee to Gibraltar. On 9th March, she wrote another letter expressing her joy because a friend of her brother had just arrived from Spain and had paid her a visit, informing her that her brother John was fine and awaiting an opportunity to return home, and although the friend had endeavoured to convince him to board the boat, he was unsuccessful as John did not wish to leave Torrijos to his fate. According to Fanny's letters and diaries, John eventually returned home, since he was noted as being present for the reading of her recently completed play *The Star of Seville*, in January 1832. We can assert, without fear of straying too far from the truth, that when Kemble wrote this play, she felt an emotional proximity to the entire political situation of Spain at the time because her own brother had told her about it and had described in great detail the feelings, events, and tragedies experienced there, and it was precisely this kind of personal familiarity gained through her brother that helped her in her endeavour, to such an extent that her own mother broke into tears following her first dramatic reading of the play.

The original play appears to have undergone minor modifications, since on 24th January 1832, Kemble wrote that Mr. Bartley, the director, made several amendments, including a faster ending, with the idea of performing the play, although we do not know exactly what these changes were, since the original manuscript prior to these changes has not survived to the present day. There is no

information confirming that this play was eventually performed in London, and Crawford comments that the play was performed five years later, on 7th August 1837 in Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theatre, without any success whatsoever (1930: 499). One might assume that the poor reception it received in the United States could be due to the fact that the issues tackled had no resonance in American society at the time, and that perhaps had it been performed in London it would have achieved greater success, although any conjecture is risky. Saunders and Otley published the play that same year in New York separately and without including other plays in the same publication. As far as we know, this is the only publication of the play that exists, the digitalised and printed version held by the United States Congress Library being the one used for this study.

3. THE STAR OF SEVILLE AND LA ESTRELLA DE SEVILLA

The authorship of *La Estrella de Sevilla* was attributed initially to Lope de Vega; however, there are opinions to the contrary, such as that voiced by Melveena McKendrick, who claims that the play was written by an unidentified playwright (2003: 186). A study by Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez tells us that there are only two editions of this Spanish play that have survived, one with 2503 verses and another that has 3029 verses, printed by Foulché-Delbosc, and refutes its attribution to Lope de Vega, believing that behind the name Cardenio hides the Cordoba poet Pedro de Cárdenas y Angulo. Whatever the case may be, *La Estrella de Sevilla* is currently an anonymous play, the style of which “difiere de lo que sería una obra de Lope de Vega” (Pedraza, 1980: 254).

In any case, this play is one of the major tragedies of Spanish Golden Age theatre. It tells of certain supposedly historical events that took place in Seville in the 13th Century and develops the theme of a predatory and unassailable monarch. The three-act play opens with the sumptuous welcome Seville is preparing for the King, Sancho el Bravo, who is arriving in this city for the first time, and who is captivated by the beauty of Estrella Tavera, determining to make her his as soon as possible, sweeping aside anyone who gets in his way. Estrella is the sister of the local nobleman Bustos Tavera and she is in

love with the gentleman Sancho Ortiz de las Roelas. The monarch uses cunning and guile to access the lady's chambers, which leads to a confrontation with Bustos. The enraged King orders the assassination of Bustos, charging with this task Sancho Ortiz himself, who unwittingly accepts through loyalty, ignorant of the identity of his intended victim. When he discovers that he must kill the person who should become his brother-in-law, he is torn between fraternal love and his loyalty to the King. He chooses the latter, kills Bustos and is imprisoned for the murder. By killing the person he loves so dearly, his betrothed's brother, he is the agent of a brutal aggression and a victim of the terror established and revered in the figure of the monarch. Sancho is eventually freed when the King confesses and confirms that the gentleman was only following his orders. However, Sancho's courtship with the lady has come to an end for good and Estrella decides to enter a convent.

The play does not conceal its critical stance towards the sovereign through subterfuge or baroque excess. It is direct, clear and unambiguous. In contrast to the mediaeval concept of absolute power it sets up the modern notion of citizenship in which subjects begin to demand their rights in the face of the despotic arbitrary behaviour of their monarchs. As Hugo Laitenberg notes (1999), although there is a certain degree of submissiveness shown by the people towards the monarch, Sancho Ortiz does not flinch from calling the King "unjust" to the audience, and this behaviour shows the audience that the vassal can and must resist the King, since the result is very positive for the future of Sancho, who is able to live instead of dying (1999: 765). This play is, therefore, a representation of the victory of the subject over the King in spite of the limitations imposed on the former by an absolute monarchy. Furthermore, the play chooses not to close with praise for the King but rather for the subjects. It is important to bear in mind that this play was written and performed in the early 17th Century when Spain was ruled by Phillip IV, who coincidentally visited Seville in 1624; one might deduce that this play offers a lesson for Kings in the line spoken by Busto Tavera in his confrontation with the King: "Así aprenderá a ser Rey/ del honor de sus vasallos" (II, 5; 939-940). For Campbell, this same phrase is the antithesis of the sanctified image of the sovereign, since his actions do not correspond to the behaviour expected of God's *representative* on earth (2007: 41). Estrella, hence

her name, is the light who remains blind and in the dark without sensing the truth for much of the play. But in the last section she shines incandescently and she lights the way for us so that, through her luminosity, we achieve recognition and arrive at the final unexpected turn of events, with these steps being necessary for this tragedy to purge us as individuals.

Fanny Kemble's *The Star of Seville*, a play in five acts instead of three as is the case with the Spanish play, begins in the same way as *La Estrella de Sevilla*, in other words, with Seville getting ready to receive, in this case, King Alfonso, although it introduces a longer first scene than the Spanish version. The second scene incorporates a dialogue between servants that has little to do with the main plotline. In the third scene, Carlos tells Estrella why he is devoted to and admires the King, whom he has known since they were children, and to whom he is bound by childhood memories. And it is precisely these bonds that the King will use in the request he makes of him later on.

In the second act, the King takes a fancy to a lady by the name of Estrella, who has a brother called Don Pedro and who is in love with a gentleman called Don Carlos. The King enters Estrella's chamber, her brother Pedro discovers him there, they fight, and although Pedro does not see the King's face, the latter eventually flees. In the third act, the King summons Don Carlos and asks him to kill a traitor, Pedro, as proof of his loyalty and friendship, in this latter aspect diverging from the Spanish play. Following a comic scene featuring some servants with whom Don Carlos drinks in a tavern, Don Carlos encounters Don Pedro in the street. Taking advantage of Pedro's surprise, Carlos stabs him. Now lying on the floor, in the romantic style of the period, Pedro speaks his last words for his sister. Once he has murdered his friend and the brother of his beloved, Carlos is imprisoned. Up to this point, Fanny Kemble follows the main storyline of the Spanish play, although she changes, modifies and adds a few short scenes for the servants. In this moment of the play, Kemble adds a romantic element, since while her beloved is murdering her brother, Estrella, ignorant of what is happening and what the audience is party to, is preparing her dress, and the flowers for her wedding. When Estrella discovers that her brother has been killed at the hands of her fiancé she does not believe it and begins to lose her mind in the manner of Shakespeare's Ophelia

in *Hamlet*. The fourth scene of the fifth act shows us Estrella wearing her wedding dress and talking to her brother's lifeless body, spiralling further into insanity. Estrella continues with the preparations for her wedding without understanding the reality that now surrounds her and which is very different from what she had planned for that day. In the following speech, the play reaches high levels of dramatic tension, and this is almost certainly the part that led Fanny's mother to break into tears as mentioned in her diaries and discussed above. In the final act, whilst the beloved murderer is on his way to the gallows, Estrella's maid tells us what she sees: the death of the two lovers together in a completely unexpected ending for a romantic drama; instead of mounting the steps to the church, the two lovers mount the steps to the gallows where an axe extinguishes the light of the star of Seville. It is in this ending that we find the major difference between the two plays: whereas in the Spanish play, written in 1640, the King acknowledges his error and orders a stay of the execution, in this other play written by Fanny Kemble in 1837, after the liberal revolutions, we clearly see the absolute power of the monarch and the absolute defencelessness of his subjects, all of whom become victims of his despotic behaviour, without any glimmer of hope. In the work by Fanny Kemble, the star does not shine but rather is extinguished, together with any hope of freedom from the absolutist yoke.

4. CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude, for now, with the certitude that, on the one hand, Fanny Kemble's father drew her attention to the plot of Lope de Vega's play *La Estrella de Sevilla* for purely commercial purposes, since he undeniably saw in the subject matter, the plot and the characters, a way to draw audiences into the theatre; however, we might also think that the emotional proximity with which Fanny Kemble and her father perceived the situation and reality in Spain through their brother and son, is comparable to the proximity with which British audiences could understand the events of the play and feel close to the tragedy that befalls Estrella as a symbol of Spain. Contrary to the affirmations of Crawford (1930: 505) that Fanny Kemble's play is a failed attempt to impose the tradition of English tragedy on a Spanish masterpiece, we believe that Fanny Kemble uses, perhaps involuntarily and

unconsciously, the plot of the Spanish text as an excuse to represent Spain in the character of Estrella. In fact, Saglia analyses various 19th-Century English literary texts set in Spain and in which the female figures are raped, as illustrated by Southey's narrative poem, *Roderick, The Last of the Goths* from 1814, in which Florinda is raped by the Spanish King Roderick. For Saglia, the image of this female character is none other than a representation of the violation of the Spanish nation by usurpers (1998:370). In this respect, we should not forget that in the case of Estrella, the King attempts to rape her and take her by force, although in the end this does not occur, but the fate that awaits Estrella is undoubtedly worse: her death and, through analogy, the disappearance of the light of liberalism in the face of absolutism.

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