ANGLO SAXONICA

REVISTA **ANGLO SAXONICA** SER. III **N. 15** 2018

ULICES • CEAUL
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa

ANGLO SAXONICA

REVISTA **ANGLO SAXONICA** SER. III N. 15 2018

ULICES • CEAUL
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa

ANGLO SAXONICA

SER. III N. 15 2018

DIRECÇÃO / GENERAL EDITORS

Isabel Fernandes (ULICES)
João Almeida Flor (ULICES)
Teresa Cid (ULICES)

COORDENAÇÃO / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Teresa de Ataíde Malafaia (ULICES)

EDITORES ADJUNTOS / ASSISTANT EDITORS

Ana Cristina Mendes (ULICES)
Carla Larouco Gomes (ULICES)

REVISÃO DE TEXTO / COPY EDITORS

Diana Marques (ULICES)
Mariana Pacheco Loureiro (ULICES)

EDIÇÃO Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies

DESIGN, PAGINAÇÃO E ARTE FINAL Inês Mateus

IMPRESSÃO E ACABAMENTO SerSilito

TIRAGEM 150 exemplares

ISSN 0873-0628

DEPÓSITO LEGAL 86 102/95

FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA

Este trabalho é financiado por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto UID/ELT/UI0114/2013

CONTENTS / ÍNDICE

ESSAYS/ESTUDOS

ESSAYS
ESTUDOS

Canção da partida: de Alexandria a Alexandra (ou da materialidade da palavra, de Kaváfis a Leonard Cohen)

Ana Albuquerque e Aguilar
Centro de Literatura Portuguesa, Universidade de Coimbra

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 15 2018

Canção da partida: de Alexandria a Alexandra (ou da materialidade da palavra, de Kaváfis a Leonard Cohen)

> E com o seu som por um momento regressam
> sons da primeira poesia da nossa vida —
> qual música, à noite, longínqua, que se apaga.
>
> Kaváfis, "Vozes"

1. Marco António e Alexandria

No dia 2 de setembro de 31 a.C., tem lugar, em Ácio, uma das maiores e mais importantes batalhas da história da humanidade. Otaviano, mais tarde denominado César Augusto, pugnando pela facção do Senado de Roma, e reconhecendo-se como legítimo herdeiro de Júlio César, opõe-se a Marco António e a Cleópatra, mãe da criança que ameaçava o poderio romano. Pouco experiente em confrontos navais, Marco António é derrotado (embora as notícias que chegam ao Egito sejam contrárias), acabando por fugir com a rainha, sua amante. Em agosto do ano seguinte, ambos se suicidam, pois Otaviano entra, finalmente, em Alexandria.

Da literatura ao cinema, passando pelas artes plásticas e pela música, esta história tem apaixonado inúmeros artistas, desde a Antiguidade. Na *Vida de António*, Plutarco (c. 46-c. 125) dela nos dá conta, servindo de base à historiografia e à ficção que se lhe seguiram. A grandeza épica do tempo e das personagens, tanto as vencedoras como as vencidas, bem como os contornos romanescos da ação emocionam-nos até aos dias de hoje. Konstantinos P. Kaváfis, no poema "Pois o deus abandona António", relata a *véspera* desse dia fatídico. A cidade fundada por Alexandre Magno, assento dos Ptolomeus, vai deixar Marco António. A música e os sons do tíaso invisível que irrompe pelas ruas da cidade são o prenúncio de que Dioniso, seu deus protetor, o abandona para sempre, seguindo a antiga

crença de que os deuses desamparam os vencidos e as cidades conquistadas. Com dignidade estoica, deverá António aceitar a perda.

2. "Pois o deus abandona António"

Plutarco dedica uma das suas *Vidas* a Marco António. O seu texto tem servido de base, ao longo dos séculos, a historiadores e a artistas. Para uma melhor compreensão da rede intertextual que pretendemos assinalar, interessa-nos sobretudo o final do capítulo LXXV, que se transcreve da edição da Loeb, na tradução de Bernadotte Perrin:

> During this night, it is said, about the middle of it, while the city was quiet and depressed through fear and expectation of what was coming, suddenly certain harmonious sounds from all sorts of instruments were heard, and the shouting of a throng, accompanied by cries of Bacchic revelry and satyric leapings, as if a troop of revellers, making a great tumult, were going forth from the city; and their course seemed to lie about through the middle of the city toward the outer gate which faced the enemy, at which point the tumult became loudest and then dashed out. Those who sought the meaning of the sign were of the opinion that the god to whom Antony always most likened and attached himself was now deserting him. (75, 3-4)

No texto original, lemos em grego "ἀπολείπειν ὁ θεὸς Ἀντώνιον" (75, 4), justamente as palavras que o poeta alexandrino Konstantinos Kaváfis (1863-1933) recupera para o título do seu próprio poema, traduzido como "Pois o deus abandona António" por Joaquim Manuel Magalhães e Nikos Pratsinis.[1] Esta figura histórica surge em mais dois poemas do autor: "31 a.C. em Alexandria" (de 1924) e "Em uma cidade grega da Ásia Menor" (de

[1] Das traduções em língua portuguesa da poesia de Kaváfis, destacam-se a de José Paulo Paes, a de Jorge de Sena, a de Joaquim Manuel Magalhães e de Nikos Pratsinis, e, mais recentemente, a de Manuel Resende. Opta-se pela da dupla de tradutores e, sempre que se recorrer a uma tradução diferente, indicar uma edição bilingue, com o texto grego recolhido em Τά ποιήματα ('Tá poiémata'), editado por Savvidis, as citações dos originais terão esta base.

1926). Os três poemas pertencem ao conjunto dos frequentemente denominados "poemas históricos" de Kaváfis. É de notar que, ao contrário dos dois últimos, nos quais podemos ler um certo relativismo histórico, acompanhado de uma forte crítica, em "Pois o deus abandona António" denota-se um sentimento de empatia relativamente ao general romano, dignificado por ter sido merecedor da cidade de Alexandria, símbolo do helenismo.

Em traços muito gerais, o *corpus* kavafiano divide-se em quatro grandes grupos de poemas: *i*) os poemas canónicos (conjunto de 154 poemas que Kaváfis entendeu serem merecedores da posteridade e que foi aperfeiçoando ao longo de toda a sua vida); *ii*) os poemas inacabados; *iii*) os poemas inéditos; *iv*) os poemas "proscritos" (rejeitados pelo próprio poeta). Realçamos que o poema "Pois o deus abandona António" pertence ao cânone kavafiano, tendo sido criado em 1911, ano que o próprio autor identificou como sendo o marco que assinala a passagem para a sua maturidade poética. Transcreve-se, então, a sua tradução, levada a cabo por Magalhães e Pratisinis:

Pois o deus abandona António

Quando de repente, à hora da meia-noite, se ouvir
passar uma turba invisível
com músicas requintadas, com vozes —
a tua sorte que já cede, as tuas obras
que falharam, os planos da tua vida
que deram em equívoco, não os deplores em vão.
Como preparado há muito, como corajoso,
despede-te dela, da Alexandria que se vai embora.
Sobretudo não te enganes, não digas que foi
um sonho, que foram defraudados os teus ouvidos;
tais esperanças vãs não te rebaixes a aceitar.
Como preparado há muito, como corajoso,
como convém a ti que mereceste tal cidade,
aproxima-te resoluto da janela,
e ouve com emoção, mas não
com as súplicas e as queixas dos covardes,
qual último deleite, os sons,
os instrumentos requintados da turba oculta,
e despede-te dela, da Alexandria que perdes. (57)

O estabelecimento de relações intertextuais com a *Vida de António* é inevitável, até porque é o próprio poeta que para elas aponta ao escolher a citação plutarquiana como título. Konstantinos Kaváfis, profundamente moderno e incompreendido pelos seus contemporâneos, inscreve-se como herdeiro da tradição clássica e helenística. No entanto, o seu poema também contém ecos da peça *António e Cleópatra*, de William Shakespeare, autor que muito influenciou a obra kavafiana. Carla Hilário Quevedo (43) lê em "com as súplicas e as queixas dos covardes" a tristeza dos homens de Marco António, que o choram, perante a iminência da sua morte. As "súplicas" podem ainda referir-se a Enobarbo, que, depois de trair o general romano, se arrepende e diz preferir morrer a lutar junto de Otaviano. Na verdade, o próprio dramaturgo também cita e recria o texto basilar de Plutarco, embora substitua o deus Dioniso (ou Baco) por Hércules, herói do qual António afirmava ser descendente:

> ***Music of the hautboys is under the stage***
>
> 2 SOLDIER Peace, what noise?
> 1 SOLDIER List, list!
> 2 SOLDIER Hark!
> 1 SOLDIER Music i'th'air.
> 3 SOLDIER Under the earth.
> 4 SOLDIER It signs well, does it not?
> 3 SOLDIER No.
> 1 SOLDIER Peace, I say! What should this mean?
> 2 SOLDIER 'Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony loved,
> Now leaves him. (Shakespeare 200)

Entende Gumbrecht que a linguagem tem a capacidade de presentificar o passado, não apenas no discurso historiográfico, mas também no discurso poético. Regressando ao poema de Kaváfis, verifica-se que o poeta presentifica o passado através do título, em estreita relação material com o texto plutarquiano. Por um lado, adquire uma função deítica, na medida em que aponta diretamente para o texto que o influenciou, mas, por outro, recupera também o grego clássico que, embora tratando-se da mesma língua, é imediatamente reconhecido como antigo pelos leitores (seus) contemporâneos. Poderia, assim, incluir-se no conjunto de "impressões

produzidas pelos estilos e formas linguísticas que são percebidas como 'antiquadas' sem serem tão remotas que precisem de uma tradução formal para uma linguagem mais contemporânea" (Gumbrecht 18), e que, por isso mesmo, conferem "uma presença material ao passado dentro do presente temporal" (*idem*).

Aliás, a presentificação do passado é frequente na poesia de Kaváfis, na referência a inúmeras personagens históricas (ou pseudo-históricas), mas também pela recorrente escolha do epitáfio como forma poética, *meio* que traz ao leitor o passado histórico.[2] As características linguísticas da poesia kavafiana também contribuem para uma materialização do passado no presente. Embora tenha proscrito os poemas que escreveu em *katharévussa* (variante da língua grega, considerada mais pura e aproximada dos grandes autores canónicos, muito distante da linguagem oral), os seus poemas utilizam o demótico (variante falada pelo povo), muito embora comedido e literário, por isso, diferente e mais afastado da linguagem comummente falada. E. M. Forster, que assistiu, como se de uma *performance* se tratasse, ao nascimento do poema "Pois o deus abandona António", conseguiu identificar as características linguísticas do grego escolar no texto:

> Then one evening at the Rue Lepsius "a poem is produced —"The god abandons Antony"— and I detect some coincidences between its Greek and public-school Greek. Cavafy is amazed. "Oh, but this is good, my dear Forster, this is very good indeed", and he raises his hand, takes over, and leads me through. (Forster, *apud* Haag 45)[3]

Com este comentário, ficou Kaváfis muito satisfeito, ele que achava que Forster nunca perceberia a sua poesia. Contudo, ironicamente, foi pela sua mão que a poesia do alexandrino chegou à Europa e aos Estados Unidos.

---

[2] O poema "Mense Athyr" ("ΕΝ ΤΩΙ ΜΗΝΙ ΑΘΥΡ", no original) é exemplar na forma como o *meio*, um epitáfio gravado numa "antiga pedra", praticamente ilegível, presentifica o passado, como uma espécie de "cicatriz" gumbrechtiana à qual o leitor reage corporalmente.

[3] Michael Haag reproduz o texto de E. M. Forster, em *The complete poems of Cavafy*. Acrescenta que tudo isto acontece na varanda do apartamento de Kaváfis, com vista sobre Alexandria, que o poeta reservava para ocasiões especiais.

Ao citar e recriar o texto de Plutarco, especialmente no que concerne ao título, Kaváfis confere às palavras uma nova vida, mais rica do que a anterior, característica que Gary Saul Morson entende como fundamental para haver um real processo de "quotation".[4] Efetivamente, o título "Pois o deus abandona António", assim como as duas referências à cidade de Alexandria aproximam o leitor do universo clássico, presentificando-o. No entanto, não há mais deíticos no texto que remetam exclusiva e inequivocamente para Marco António. O que se verifica é, justamente, o uso da segunda pessoa, próprio do discurso e das máximas filosóficas da Antiguidade, que opera uma mudança ao nível do interlocutor, que pode ser António, mas também qualquer um dos leitores de Kaváfis, universalizando a perda descrita no poema. Aliás, referindo-se à "atitude estoica" e digna do protagonista "diante do desastre", entende José Paulo Paes que, "por ser a Sorte caprichosa, deve o homem, mesmo nos momentos favoráveis, estar preparado para os desfavoráveis", interpretando o texto como uma espécie de *vinheta*, na qual a "anedota histórica" é a "estampa" que ilustra o texto de teor "moralístico".[5]

Na verdade, também Jorge de Sena comenta o facto de, perante a grandiosidade e as glórias alcançadas pelos homens extraordinários que traz para a sua poesia, Kaváfis destacar, "pelo contrário, os momentos de anticlímax, as derrotas, os fracassos, as fragilidades humanas, os ridículos, e, com uma recorrência manifesta, a morte",[6] tão mais próximos da condição humana. De outro modo, nas palavras de Manuel Resende, "os poemas históricos vão enraizar-se na relação mais primitiva que se pode imaginar: a trágica inserção do indivíduo num fluir de acontecimentos que o afogam".[7]

Por outro lado, se o título indica que o deus abandona António, deus que se reconhece como Dioniso pelo uso da palavra "θίασος" ('thíasos'),[8]

---

[4] Morson (2011), sobretudo o cap. III, "What is a quotation"? (71-91).

[5] Kaváfis (1982), 87.

[6] Kaváfis (2003), 14.

[7] Kaváfis (2017), 12.

[8] Note-se que, embora se tenha optado pela tradução de J. M. Magalhães e N. Pratsinis, que traduzem o grego "θίασος" pelo vocábulo "turba", J. P. Paes e M. Resende usam a palavra "tíaso".

o cortejo dionisíaco, os versos colocam a tónica do abandono na cidade personificada ("τὴν Αλεξάνδρεια ποὺ φεύγει"). É, portanto, de Alexandria, grandiosa cidade-memória, que António tem de se despedir, pois é a ela que perde ("ποὺ χάνεις"), ele, que dela foi merecedor. O tradutor e poeta brasileiro José Paulo Paes conta mais de trinta referências à pólis egípcia, num total de oitenta poemas canónicos de teor histórico.[9] Justifica esta quase omnipresença do seguinte modo:

> A verdadeira pátria de Kaváfis era mesmo a cidade fundada por Alexandre Magno no delta do Nilo como ponta-de-lança e símbolo, a um só tempo, da vocação transnacional do helenismo, a que, mais do que a qualquer patriotismo geograficamente circunscrito, o poeta se confessava ligado.[10]

Muito mais haveria a dizer sobre este poema, mas, tendo em conta a linha intertextual e de citação que se pretende explorar, salienta-se apenas uma outra ideia: a da progressiva construção musical. Se em Plutarco temos já a referência aos "sons harmoniosos" ("ἐμμελεῖς φωνὰς"), provenientes de "todo o tipo de instrumentos" ("ὀργάνων παντοδαπών"), mas acompanhados dos gritos próprios do tíaso, o poema kavafiano apresenta "músicas requintadas" ("μουσικὲς ἐξαίσιες"), tocadas por "instrumentos requintados" ("τὰ ἐξαίσια ὄργανα") e "vozes" ("φωνὲς") que têm origem num cortejo ordeiro, "invisível" ("ἀόρατος θίασος") e "oculto" ("τοῦ μυστικοῦ θιάσου"). Há, portanto, no texto kavafiano, um afastamento de alguma cacofonia própria do tíaso dionisíaco, que se verificava em Plutarco, em prol de uma criação mais harmoniosa. A própria figuratividade dos instrumentos, que eram, inicialmente, "de todo o tipo", para passarem a ser "requintados", contribui para a perceção desta harmonia musical. A aproximação da música através da linguagem torna-se evidente não apenas pela métrica e pelo ritmo do poema, ao invés da prosa plutarquiana, mas também pelo destaque dado às sensações auditivas em versos próprios (vv. 3, 17 e 18) e à frequência de vocabulário pertencente ao campo lexical de "audição" ("ἀκουσθεῖ", "ακοή", "ἄκουσει", "ἤχους"). Esta *performance*

---

[9] Kaváfis (1982), 67.

[10] *Idem*, 22.

do tíaso, destinada a um só *ouvinte*, surge numa espécie de *epifania*[11] (daí o conselho "não digas que foi / um sonho"), sendo temporal e espacialmente delimitada por fronteiras. Ocorre "à hora da meia-noite" e surge de forma repentina, como que criando um tempo próprio, numa hora de ninguém, entre o dia da existência (marcada pela *presença* do deus e da cidade) e o da já não-existência (em que há a ausência do deus e de Alexandria). Espacialmente, a *performance* é *escutada* (pela impossibilidade da visão) a partir da janela do protagonista, que deve ouvir "com emoção" as músicas e sons que fazem o percurso "along the Canopic Way towards the Gate of the Sun" (Haag 4). Como se de um portal se tratasse, esta janela dá acesso à Alexandria do presente, mas também à do passado e à do futuro, numa espécie de *mise en abîme*, sendo as vozes e os sons ouvidos mais metafísicos do que físicos. A alteração da cadência dos sons que vão passando é dada pela alteração de "φωνὲς", no terceiro verso (que Magalhães/ Pratsinis e Paes traduzem por "vozes", Jorge de Sena por "cânticos" e Manuel Resende por "algazarra"), para "τοὺς ἤχους" ("sons" na dupla de tradutores e em Resende, e "sons que passam" na versão dos poetas brasileiro e português), constituindo este o "último deleite" do ouvinte.

E é assim que a musicalidade se vai construindo por meio da linguagem, que as palavras vão caminhando para a música.

3. "Alexandra leaving"

Em Leonard Cohen (1934-2016), a experiência grega é particularmente intensa. O poeta, cantor e compositor chegou a viver na ilha de Hidra, aonde frequentemente regressou. Aí escreveu o poema "Alexandra leaving",

---

[11] Recorremos às palavras de Gumbrecht para esclarecer o conceito de *epifania*: "Em seu uso teológico, o conceito de epifania se refere ao aparecimento de uma coisa, que requer espaço, uma coisa que está tanto ausente quanto presente"; "Admitir que momentos de epifania ocorrem, mas apenas sob as condições temporais específicas que Karl Heinz Bohrer caracterizou como "subitaneidade" e "partida irreversível" (BOHRER 1981 e 1996), pode ser uma forma contemporânea de mediação entre o nosso desejo de epifania e um ceticismo moderno de que este desejo não pode ser completamente satisfeito" (16).

citação (que Morson denomina "quotation with a wink")[12] do hemistíquio "τὴν Αλεξάνδρεια ποὺ φεύγει", com a diferença de que a cidade personificada por Kaváfis se metamorfoseia completamente numa figura feminina possuidora de um antropónimo com o qual partilha grande similitude fonética. Com Sharon Robinson, Cohen compôs a melodia e, embora haja diferentes versões da letra cantada ao vivo, apresenta-se o texto tal como foi cristalizado na transcrição publicada na coletânea dos seus poemas, *Book of longing* (60-61):

Alexandra Leaving

After "The God Abandons Anthony", by C. Cavafy

Suddenly the night has grown colder.
Some deity preparing to depart.
Alexandra hoisted on his shoulder,
they slip between the sentries of your heart.

Upheld by the simplicities of pleasure,
they gain the light, they formlessly entwine;
And radiant beyond your widest measure
they fall among the voices and the wine.

It's not a trick, your senses all deceiving,
a fitful dream the morning will exhaust —
Say goodbye to Alexandra leaving.
Then say goodbye to Alexandra lost.

Even though she sleeps upon your satin.
Even though she wakes you with a kiss.
Do not say the moment was imagined.
Do not stoop to strategies like this.

[12] 42-45.

As someone long prepared for this to happen,
Go firmly to the window. Drink it in.
Exquisite music. Alexandra laughing.
Your first commitments tangible again.

You who had the honor of her evening,
And by the honor had your own restored —
Say goodbye to Alexandra leaving.
Alexandra leaving with her lord.

As someone long prepared for the occasion;
In full command of every plan you wrecked —
Do not choose a coward's explanation
that hides behind the cause and the effect.

You who were bewildered by a meaning,
Whose code was broken, crucifix uncrossed —
Say goodbye to Alexandra leaving.
Then say goodbye to Alexandra lost.

Hydra, Greece, September 1999

À semelhança de Kaváfis, o cantor canadiano gera no leitor a consciência da intertextualidade, indicando, logo à partida, que se inspirou no poema "Pois o deus abandona António". Também em contexto performativo o fazia, dando a conhecer ao público, numa espécie de prelúdio quando interpretava esta canção, a explicação desta relação intertextual. Não se sabe exatamente qual a tradução do poema que terá inspirado Leonard Cohen[13] que, eventualmente, pode também ter lido a par com o original, mas verifica-se, claramente, uma leitura muito lúcida e atenta do mesmo.

Na versão gravada em estúdio, para o álbum *Ten new songs* (2001), encontramos pequenas diferenças ao nível da letra, nomeadamente, na primeira estrofe, na qual "some deity" é substituído por "the god of love"

---

[13] A tradução de Keeley e Sherrard (da Princeton University Press) é uma importante referência, além da antologia de E. M. Forster, *Pharos and Pharillon* (publicada pelo casal Woolf – Hogarth Press), que deu a conhecer ao mundo a poesia de Kaváfis, antes inacessível pela barreira linguística.

e "the sentries of your heart" por "sentries of the heart", reforçando a ideia de perda (agora) amorosa.

São muito visíveis os eixos intertextuais que sustentam o poema: a súbita transformação do tempo/espaço, propícia à ocorrência da epifania, reforçada pela alteração da temperatura; a ideia de que o abandono não é apenas um sonho, que será real; o uso da segunda pessoa, recomendando, a partir da quinta estrofe, uma atitude estoica e digna, perante um revés inesperado do destino; de todos os sentidos, a predominância das referências auditivas, com a citação direta de "voices" e de "Exquisite music"; o convite ao interlocutor a assistir, da janela, ao momento de epifania; o conselho de aceitação dos planos falhados; o facto de o interlocutor ser, também ele, merecedor de Alexandra, recuperando, através dela, a sua própria honra. É importante destacar ainda que, na cumplicidade dos amantes, o vinho e as vozes se misturam agora, tal como num tíaso, o cortejo de celebração dionisíaca. A ausência e o abandono são reforçados pela presentificação através da linguagem, que tornam "tangible again" "[y]our first commitments". Ora, segundo Gumbrecht, a presença pressupõe justamente a possibilidade da tangibilidade.

Por fim, o refrão é particularmente interessante, na medida em que reproduz aspetualmente a ação levada a cabo por Alexandra, primeiro, focada nela própria ("Say goodbye to Alexandra leaving."), para depois se deslocar para o sujeito ("Then say goodbye to Alexandra lost."). Esta alteração de sentido provocada pela alteração da forma verbal surgia já no poema kavafiano, nos versos 8 ("ἀποχαιρέτα την, τὴν Αλεξάνδρεια ποὺ φεύγει") e 19 ("κι ἀποχαιρέτα την, τὴν Αλεξάνδρεια ποὺ χάνεις"), que termina o poema.

No texto de Cohen, a materialidade da música é tão mais evidente quanto é acompanhado por uma melodia composta para o efeito, mas que é, simultaneamente, suficientemente simples para não distrair o ouvinte do poema.[14] Parece, pelo contrário, que vem reforçar a musicalidade da palavra em si. Além disso, a rima, que surgia pontualmente no texto do poeta alexandrino, é, no poema em questão, regular, sendo o ritmo reforçado pela anáfora e pela repetição no interior do verso.

---

[14] *Vide* Gumbrecht (15), a propósito da complexa relação entre letra e música.

4. De Alexandria a Alexandra: da presentificação e da perda

Em Kaváfis, a preocupação com o texto atinge o grau de obsessão perfeccionista. Este poeta, que não publicou livros e que raramente publicava em revistas (apenas na *Grâmmata* e na *Nea Zoí*), dedicou quase toda a sua vida a 154 poemas, o seu autointitulado cânone, que foi aperfeiçoando ao longo do tempo e que reimprimia constantemente para (re)oferecer aos seus amigos. A sua poesia tem o poder encantatório de, através da linguagem, trazer o passado para o tempo presente, sobretudo a que tematicamente se denomina "poesia histórica", possuindo as características apresentadas por Gumbrecht na definição do conceito de "presentificação do passado".

Em Kaváfis, a perda de Alexandria é o símbolo que recorda o leitor, num processo quase catártico, na sua definição aristotélica, de que, se um nobilíssimo líder, contra todas as expectativas, pode perder o favor dos deuses e tudo o que tem, o mesmo pode acontecer ao comum dos mortais. Leonard Cohen, que leu e reconheceu as subtilezas do texto que o inspirou, transforma a perda, o abandono, num desgosto amoroso, tão próprio da (e recorrente na) condição humana. Ambos descrevem o momento da consciência da perda como uma epifania.

Os "sons harmoniosos" que Plutarco diz terem sido ouvidos por António na véspera da sua morte e conquista de Alexandria por Otaviano surgem, no drama shakesperiano, por baixo do palco, como que fora do espaço do real concreto, produzidos por *hautboys* (instrumentos do género do oboé), prenunciando a tragédia. Kaváfis reinterpreta o comportamento do tíaso e atribui-lhe qualidades harmónicas e musicais, quase sinfónicas, que não encontramos nos textos em que se baseia. A sua palavra está já muito próxima da música, que surge aos ouvidos do leitor como que numa *performance*. Cohen, finalmente, transforma em música a musicalidade já intuída nos textos anteriores ao seu.

No fundo, é como se esta longa viagem das palavras, através dos séculos (que, na imagem de Morson, de inspiração bakhtiniana, se encontram num *continuum*, à espera de ser citadas), fosse feita ao ritmo de uma dança órfica, sempre acompanhada pela lira, que se vai tornando mais ou menos evidente consoante a sensibilidade do seu interlocutor.

Obras Citadas

Cohen, Leonard. "Alexandra leaving." *Ten new songs*. Sony, 2001.

___. *Book of longing*. Nova Iorque: Ecco – Harper Collins, 2006.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. "A presença realizada na linguagem: com atenção especial para a presença do passado." *História da Historiografia*, 3, 2009, pp. 10-22, https://www.historiadahistoriografia.com.br/revista/article/view/80/53.30, Set. 2017.

Haag, Michael. *Alexandria: city of memory*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Kaváfis, Konstantinos P. *Poemas*. Seleção, estudo crítico, notas e tradução do grego de José Paulo Paes. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1982.

___. *90 e mais quatro poemas*. Tradução, prefácio e notas de Jorge de Sena. 3.ª ed., Porto: ASA, 2003.

___. *Os poemas*. Trad. do grego, prefácio e notas de Joaquim Manuel Magalhães e Nikos Pratsinis. Lisboa: Relógio D'Água, 2005.

___. *Τα ποιήματα – τόμοι Α' και Β'*. Edição de G. P. Savvidis. Atenas: Ikaros, 2009.

___. *145 poemas*. Tradução, apresentação e notas de Manuel Resende. Lisboa: Flop, 2017.

Morson, Gary Saul. *The words of others: from quotations to culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

Plutarco. *Lives: Demetrius and Antony, Pyrrhus and Caius Marius – vol. IX*. Tradução de Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge: The Loeb Classical Library – Harvard University Press, 1920.

Quevedo, Carla Hilário. *Influências clássicas na poesia de Konstandinos Kavafis*. Tese de Mestrado em Estudos Clássicos. Lisboa: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, 2004.

Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Edição de David Bevington, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Resumo

Na *Vida de António*, Plutarco (c. 46-c. 125) conta-nos que, na noite que antecede a morte do triúnviro, este ouve sons e música delicada, produzidos por uma turba invisível. Seguindo a crença antiga de que os deuses desamparam os vencidos e as cidades conquistadas, conclui o biógrafo que o deus Dioniso abandona António. Em 1911, Kaváfis (1863-1933), com "Pois o deus abandona António", recupera o texto plutarquiano, presentificando o passado através da linguagem. O tempo e o espaço, a meia-noite na velha Alexandria, cidade-pátria de Kafávis, ganham uma nova dimensão, a da epifania. Também a música do tíaso ganha relevo, combinada agora com o ritmo do verso. Conhecedor da experiência helénica, Leonard Cohen (1934-2016) escreve, na ilha grega de Hidra, em 1999, o poema "Alexandra leaving", que, em coautoria com Sharon Robinson, se transforma em canção. Nela, a cidade metamorfoseia-se em mulher, e os sons e melodias, outrora provenientes da turba, são a música ela-própria, acompanhada pela letra que ecoa o poema kavafiano.

O percurso realizado pela sucessiva citação e recriação das palavras de outros, numa intertextualidade deliberadamente sublinhada, assim como a presentificação do passado pela linguagem fazem-nos atentar na materialidade do texto.

Palavras-Chave

Konstantinos Kaváfis; Leonard Cohen; presentificação; citação; epifania.

Abstract

Plutarch, in *Life of Antony* (c. 46-c. 125), narrates the night before the general's death, specially the moment he hears sounds and music created by an invisible crowd. Following the ancient belief that the gods abandon defeated men and conquered cities, the biographer deduces that Dionysus abandons Antony. In 1911, Cavafy (1863-1933), in the poem "The god abandons Antony", recalls Plutarch's text, in a presentification of the past through language. Time and space, midnight in old Alexandria, Cavafy's homeland, reach a new dimension: epiphany.

The music of the thiasus, combined with the rhythm of the verse, has new significance. Knowing the Hellenic experience, Leonard Cohen (1934-2016) writes, in the Greek island of Hydra, in 1999, the poem "Alexandra leaving", which becomes a song in co-authorship with Sharon Robinson. In this song, the city is morphed into a woman, and the sounds and melodies from the thiasus become music itself, with the lyrics that echo Cavafy's poem.

The continuous quotation and recreation of the words of others as a deliberate act of intertextuality, and the presentification of the past through language makes us focus on the materiality of the text.

Keywords

Constantin Cavafy; Leonard Cohen; presentification; quotation; epiphany.

The Harp and the Poet: The Harp as a Metaphor for the Romantic Heart

Manuel Botero Camacho
Facultad de Filología, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Miguel Rodríguez Pérez
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 15 2018

The Harp and the Poet: The Harp as a Metaphor for the Romantic Heart

¡Cuánta nota dormía en sus cuerdas,…!
Gustavo Adolfo Bequer

1. Introduction

In the *Thematic Guide to British Poetry*, Ruth F. Glancy defends the closeness of the relationship between music and poetry given the etymology of "lyric" and the practice of playing melodies while reciting (153). Thomas Campion reflects this union in his poem "When to her lute Corinna sings" (1601) in which Corinna's voice is "credited with bringing to life the sound of the lute" (Glancy 153), as the strings of the instrument respond to the very mood of the song and the singer. In the second stanza, however, it is the poet who compares himself to the lute by suggesting that his mistress plays upon him and his emotions as she plays with the cords of the lute:

> And as her lute doth live or die,
> Led by her passion, so must I:
> (…)
> But if she doth of sorrow speak,
> Ev'n from my heart the strings do break. (Campion)

This identification between the body of the poet and the instrument, Glancy argues, is particularly usual in poetry since "The poet envies the lute or harp whose strings are being so gently caressed by delicate fingers" (153). Glancy also offers another example of such analogy, Shakespeare's Sonnet 128, which instead uses a harpsichord (153), but the comparison can also be found in myriads of literary and poetic works from different traditions. The same analogy is established in *Tragicomedia de Calisto y*

Melibea (1499) by Fernando de Rojas in which the lute out of tune is likened to Calisto's disturbed heart (24). In addition, though for a different purpose, Joachim Du Bellay's "Que n'ai-je encor la harpe thracienne" (1558) associates the "poet's feeling of creative power with string instruments —the harp, the lyre and the lute— and with the correspondences among the arts of poetry, painting, architecture, and music" in Joachim Du Bellay's sonnets (Davis 152).

Instead of exploring the origin of the analogy, these pages pose a panoramic reading of a recurrent poetic symbol, the string instrument, whether a harp or a lute, as a metaphor for the romantic heart. A constant phenomenon in romantic poetry, this work also intends to highlight the changes and evolutions that the symbol has experienced. As such, the work focuses on the romantic literature of the nineteenth century of three different nations and, therefore, of three diverse historical moments.[1] The three scenarios proposed are the English Romanticism in "The Eolian Harp" (1796) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), the American Romanticism in "Israfel" (1831) and "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), and the Colombian Romanticism in "El corazón de la mujer" (1887) by Soledad Acosta de Samper (1833-1913). Whether or not these authors are to be considered paradigmatic is not the concern of the work; the focus is here placed on the character and evolution of the symbol through different traditions and decades, experiencing some alterations along the way but remaining constant in its core nonetheless.

In *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Abrams indicates that a characteristic aspect of "romantic theory" is the recurrence of a series of analogies that imply "that poetry is an interaction, the joint effect of inner and outer, mind and object, passion and the perceptions of sense" (51). He clarifies that such was the idea behind the reference to the eolian lyre, which serves romantic authors like Shelley to illustrate their theories of imagination

[1] Even though the three chosen scenarios belong to the same century, their consideration as different historical moments results from the fact that these three nations are in markedly diverse developmental stages, which gives their cultural and literary expressions a different tenor.

and poetry. Since it enabled the attribution of music to nature instead of art, it became the favourite instrument of poets during the last half of the eighteenth century. But, Abrams continues, "It is noteworthy, however, that not until the nineteenth century did the wind-harp become an analogy for the poetic mind as well as a subject for poetic description" (51). The harp has signified the spontaneous urge that moves the poet to compose art as if driven by metaphysical forces, but at the same time constitutes a reminder of the impossibility to express the totality of his or her poetry due to the poet's mortal condition, existing within the boundaries of society.

The symbol's journey through the nineteenth century and across different countries transmutes its meaning and alters its phenomenological expression. In Coleridge, it assumes indistinctly the shape of a harp or a lute; Poe refers exclusively to the latter, while Acosta de Samper uses the image of the harp to describe the female heart. Although these variations of form may suggest a lack of correlation between them, in fact, the harp, the lyre and the lute can be considered versions of the same symbol. Such was the design of Du Bellay whose "concept of poetic creation and artistic power" (155) assumed the form of these three objects, considering them merely variants of each other (Davis 155, 163).

2. The harp, the lute, el arpa.

In his analysis of "The Eolian Harp", Nobuya Takahashi offers a simple depiction of the instrument:

> The aeolian harp, a name deriving from the Greek god of wind, Aeolos, is a string instrument sounded by natural wind. Mostly equipped with some device such as a slit draught for concentrating the wind, the strings (normally four to twelve) generate the notes uncontrolled by human activities. (Takahashi 19)

Music is a rather important component of Coleridge's poetry, and Takahashi offers some keys for the interpretation of said element in his work. Although music is not the objective of these lines but rather the object itself that produces it, it is impossible to separate both of them:

> [Coleridge] makes sounds heard in various forms, such as instrumental music, songs sung by human or angelic voices, storms or breezes, noises emanating from many sources, or even silence (that is, the absence of sound). But there is one image which stands out more impressively than any others; the aeolian harp. (Takahashi 18)

The simplicity of the instrument is emphasized not only by its construction, but because it can produce music at the slightest touch of the wind: "Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air/Is music slumbering on her instrument" (Coleridge 101). Furthermore, this is an artifact completely sensitive to the world and to nature; music is contained inside it, and though the external world is required to provoke the vibration, even in the absence of wind there is still sound lying dormant in it. In that sense, the instrument is played by the natural elements, but the sounds produced belong to the realm of the numinous. Thus, a metaphor begins to be conceived, one that turns the poet into an instrument moved and played by metaphysical forces so as to compose the most elevated and pure music, almost incommunicable. This idea recalls the instrument that, lifeless and engraved in a Grecian urn, even years later still suggests to the poetic voice an impossible music that does not affect the senses but the intellect (Keats 218-219). This perspective considers that poetry lies dormant within the poet just as music is stored in an instrument even when nobody is playing it. Such notion may suggest the influence of Idealism in that it refers to a reality beyond perception. Idealism is the ancient doctrine bequeathed by Parmenides and Plato that indicates that reality might be, in fact, a mere appearance, and the school of philosophy that accepts the validity of abstract ideas, or universals *ante re*, in a world only dictated by mental processes. Coleridge's stance indicates the "intellectual breeze" as the force that wakes it; other authors endow the same action to other agents.

In "The Eolian Harp", while the narrator pleasantly observes the landscapes that surround him, he reflects about the little wind harp placed along the window:

> And that simplest lute,
> Placed lengthways in the clasping casement, hark!
> How by the desultory breeze caressed,
> Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,

> It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
> Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
> Boldier swept, the long sequacious notes
> Over delicious surges sink and rise,
> Such a soft floating witchery of sound. (Coleridge 100-101)

The description of the device is not yet the definition of the metaphor that will flood romantic writings; however, a very particular simile is presented: the lute as a "coy maid", hesitant to succumb to his lover as if "half yielding" to him. It will be his beloved the one who will incite the maid to produce such sweet music. It is the wind, an external agent, the one who will determine how the harp sounds; however, even though this would be a procedure ruled by chance and unsteadiness, the instrument is never out of tune since its disposition to be played enables it to produce any sound without being discordant. The fickleness of this breeze —of natural and intellectual origin for the instrument and for the poet respectively— will be echoed in the protagonist force of Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" (114-117). In it, Shelley indicates the existence of a "Force" that, though unseen, binds all beings together, but is only accessible to the poet, while Coleridge uses the metaphor to explain to his beloved the process of his art. Simultaneously, he justifies any profanity he may incur in by emphasizing its accidental nature; it results from the influence of "the intellectual breeze" over his heart just as music is produced by harp as wind passes through it (Coleridge 102). The absence of the physical instrument in Shelley's poem —as a metaphor that does not denote the poet's heart ("Hymn" 115)— is not enough to prevent the relation that exists between the poetics of both authors since in "A Defence of Poetry" Shelley uses the metaphor of the "Aeolian lyre" to expose his own poetic doctrine (Shelley "Defence" 675).[2]

---

[2] In their notes to "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", Leader and O'Neill link the poem's "Force" to a similar design in Shelley's "Essay on Christianity" (720) in which Shelley compares this power to breath that whimsically blows through a suspended lyre (Shelley "Christianity" 147). Abrams traces the development of this symbol to Plato's *Timaeus* in which the doctrine of the *anima mundi* is proposed (184).

Coleridge's narrator, after explaining to his "pensive Sara" how beautiful the lute's melody is, overtly compares his own mind to the instrument:

> Full many a thought uncalled and undetained
> And many idle flitting phantasies,
> Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
> As wild and various as the random gales
> That swell and flutter on this subject lute! (Coleridge 101-102)

According to this perspective music is both means and end, then the poet is the instrument that, being exposed to the force, produces music in the form of sudden thoughts, fantasies that flutter; he knows intuitively that such ideas and fancies are like the wind that passes through the lute. Under this perspective, the harp would be his mind, which vibrates and sounds thanks to the irregular flow of thoughts. This suggests a lack of volition on the part of the poetic voice, that is, his mind is analogous to the instrument since external elements are required to trigger his poetic force —or at least to activate its latent melody as previously explained. It is such a predisposition to sensibility that it has no need for contemplation in order to become thought; like the harp to the wind, it is just an instrument through which the world finds a reinterpretation or recreation. This turns the narrator into a poet since, prompted by the external stimuli of nature, he produces poetry deprived of reflection and intention in a natural and spontaneous form —following Wordsworth's famous precept (367)— as without these stimuli poetry would still lay inactive and unexpressed within him:

> And what is all of animated nature
> Be but organic harps diversely framed,
> That tremble into thought, as o er them sweeps
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the Soul of each, and God of all? (Coleridge 102)

These lines present the suggestion that all animated beings are harps that, as in the poet's case, only sound when stimulated by an external element, in this case, a great "intellectual breeze" that floods the consciousness of all creatures producing thought. This force, consists and comprises the souls of everything that lives and, by extension, it can be equated with God:

> We cannot, or need not, the poet asserts, distinguish the life within us from the life without us. There is no boundary. This

> one life creates in human perception the state of synaesthesia: the fusion of sound and sight […] This unification is neatly epitomized in an image composed of breeze, harp, and music. (Takahashi 22)

Towards the end of the poem, the speaker finds disapproval in the eyes of his beloved, he retracts from his claims as if they were heretical and simply shows gratitude for what he has. He appears to reject the understanding of animate beings as harps deprived of volition, getting swept up by predestination or a supreme thought, "The earliest and most tenacious theory to explain these phenomena attributed the poem to the dictation of a supernatural visitant" (Abrams 189). As a result, one could assume that the narrator could not be identified with the instrument, since he disavows his arguments concerning the analogy. In other words, if he can recant his doctrine then it implies that he has a will of his own, blaming those blasphemous thoughts on his "unregenerate" mind, thus distancing himself from the metaphor.

However, the form in which the poem has been elaborated enables us to perceive and maintain that the poetic voice is indeed like an Aeolic harp since the poem itself is the proof that he didn't retract from those ideas: the first stanzas still propose a vision in which the world passes through him creating poetry as a result, constituting in this manner the metaphor that equates the romantic poet with the wind harp. Thus, he constitutes a being absolutely sensitive with an immense burden of poetry latent within him that, at the slightest touch of the external world, explodes in different, though always harmonious, tones of poetry. His art is not moderated by reflection or by will; it is like an accident, which finds in that very accidental nature its harmony and beauty. Even if substantial changes had been made Abrams argues "that poetic vision by no means obviated revision; but, most romantic poets insisted, at its inception a poem is an involuntary and unanticipated *donnée*" (214).

3. Israfel and Usher

The harp's metaphor as a feature of the romantic poet appears as well in the poem "Israfel". Although authors should never be associated with their narrators —a relation that alongside intentionality does not concern this

essay— in Poe's case the task of separating him from the speaker is rather complex. Since the poetic voice could be identified as a poet, Poe might be using his surrogate to voice his own poetic desires. It is clear throughout the poem that the narrator intends to be associated with Israfel. He aspires, with false modesty, to be like the angel; and false modesty is appropriate here since by the poem's conclusion the reader cannot think, in any way, that the speaker incarnates or represents that which he desires. Considering that some authors have suggested that Poe has got associated with his narrators, even with those of his most preposterous fictions (Gargano 22-23), he might have achieved to be identified with the narrator just as the narrator can be associated to the angel, with the reader's help. If readers have granted the narrator such condition —being manipulated, of course— it is rather easy for them to make another concession, this time to the author, as a result of some type of transitive quality of reading:

> Poe, however, although he grandiosely proclaimed a theory of pure art, betrays an air of pretentiousness, posturing, and even downright fraud. To be sure, he has his devoted followers who see him as he wished to be seen: the embodiment of Romantic Artist as a Victim. (Cox 41)

Cox's use of the word "victim" suits particularly well the understanding of the symbol here studied, since one of its most notable features is the passivity that characterises the poet. It signals a lack of volition on the part of the poet that, if in Coleridge served his poetic voice to justify the wrongs that his art may cause, in Poe constitutes the attempt to embrace fully the representation and ideal of the romantic poet.

The note that appears in the poem's title alludes to the *Quran*, describing a being called Israfel, whose heart is like a lute and is among God's creatures the one with the most beautiful voice. This footnote, which according to Gustav Davidson also appeared in the succeeding versions of the poem, wrongly attributed the origin of the line to the *Quran* as in it there is no reference to any angel named Israfel (87) nor a sentence similar to the line of the footnote (88). Instead, the figure of Israfel belongs to Arabic folklore in which he is considered the angel of music and one of the four angels in charge of signalling the Day of Judgement (Davidson 88). As a result, Davidson offers three possible sources: "George Sale's translation of *The Koran* (1734 or later editions); (2) Thomas Moore's

Lalla Rookh (1817 or later editions); and (3) Pierre de Béranger's poem 'La Refus' (1829-1830)" (88). Moore's oriental romance mentions in one of its sections the angel "ISRAFIL" whose sweet voice (185) is characterized "as the note of the charm'd lute" (221). In the notes to the text, Moore clarifies that Israfil is "the Angel of Music" (288) and he also credits Sale's translation of the *Quran* for the characterization of the angel's voice as sweet, "'The angel Israfil, who has the most melodious voice of all God's creatures.' — Sale" (277).[3] Whether or not in his translation of the *Quran* Sale refers to Israfel in the terms that Moore presents, or if Poe used Sale's or Moore's work as an unacknowledged source is of no consequence for the present essay. What is significant, however, is the fact that Poe and Moore, two poets of roughly the same period, use the same analogy in their respective literary creations, which reflects the recurrent and adaptive nature of the symbol. Perhaps this is not so surprising considering the following statement by Killis Campbell:

> It was to the Romantics, moreover, —and in particular to Byron and Moore and Coleridge,— that Poe looked, in so far as he looked beyond his own experiences and observation, for the materials out of which he was to fabricate his scant half a hundred lyrics; and to them also he turned for models and for inspiration. (149-150)

The significance of the third possible source, De Béranger's "Le Refus" relies rather on its relation to another of Poe's works, since in 1839 Poe used the last two lines of the poem again for the epigraph of "The Fall of the House of Usher." Nonetheless, its importance for the poem at hand is without question, since as Campbell has indicated: "The basic idea of 'Israfel' seems to have been suggested by two lines from Beranger's

---

[3] Thomas Moore's quote of Sale's translation is correct, as the same line previously cited appears in Section four of the "Preliminary Discourse" (71). It might be significant to note, however, that throughout his analysis Sale identifies Israfil as the angel in charge of blowing the trumpet to signal Judgment Day and the Resurrection (51, 59). It is curious in the least to see how both authors emphasized the virtue of the angel's voice in association with the lute instead of with the trumpet, perhaps to accommodate it to the poetic symbol in vogue.

'Le Refus' (1830)" (158). Poe's poem starts with a description of the heart and the virtues of Israfel:

> In heaven a spirit doth dwell
> "Whose heart-strings are a lute";
> None sing so wildly well
> As the angel Israfel,
> And the giddy stars (so legends tell)
> Ceasing the hymns attend the spell
> Of his voice, all mute. (Poe "Israfel" 175)

Even Nature in its entirety decides to remain silent so as to properly hear Israfel as his heart produces the most wonderful music ever heard. The footnote and the previous lines emphasise the sweetness of his voice. One might think that, as such, the instrument he plays is his voice; however, it is crucial to point out that the instrument is the heart even though the attributes addressed refer to the voice. The voice is merely the air that moves the heartstrings of this sensitive being to sound. The fact that the analogy with the lute is constituted based on his heart may support such view. This process reflects the synaesthesia that Takahashi describes in "The Eolian Harp", the fusion of voice and instrument as the angel sings accompanied by his lute, his heart:

> And they say (the starry choir
> And the other listening things)
> That Israfeli s fire
> Is owing to that lyre
> By which he sits and sings-
> The trembling living wire
> Of those unusual strings. (Poe "Israfel" 176)

The lyre's strings are Israfel's heartstrings, unusual and alive as the instrument itself, and thus, more sensitive than any other. This fragment echoes the lines in which Coleridge's speaker wonders if all animate beings are lutes. However, the last stanza introduces a more sound reference to Coleridge's harp:

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
    Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
    A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
   From my lyre within the sky. (Poe "Israfel" 176-177)

The poet also possesses a lute but his poetry is mortal; he believes that by changing places with Israfel his poetry would become more audacious. At the same time, if Israfel would occupy the poet's position his melody could never be as lovely and wild as before since it would become mortal. Considering this, it can be inferred that the speaker is suggesting that the difference between the angel and himself is just defined in terms of position, that is, what distinguishes them is the condition of mortality. If this is true, then it could be safe to affirm that the poet considers himself to be possessor of a heart whose strings are like those of a lute. The poet has the same formal qualities, so to speak, that the angel that hushes the song of the stars; the fact of his mortality is merely circumstantial. To that extent, the romantic poet is condemned to have a heart-lyre or a heart-harp that is incapable of expressing the totality of its poetry due to the poet's mortal condition. In a sense, such idea reflects Floyd Stoval's analysis of "Israfel", which argues "in this imperfect world the poet can approach truth only through the veil of beautiful forms" (175).

In "The Fall of the House of Usher" the condition of corruption and mortality of the lute finds its ultimate expression. The narrator visits the mansion of his host and friend, Roderick Usher. Through a series of parallelisms the reader receives the feeling that *Usher* refers both to the deteriorated building and to the family, therefore, the fall might allude as well to the dwellers (Poe "The Fall…" 399). The reason behind the narrator's journey is to alleviate with his presence a strange condition of disorder in the mind of his host, not necessarily an illness but rather an idiosyncratic oddity (Poe "The Fall…" 398). It consists in an extremely acute perception of the world as his senses are super-sensitive and perceive the slightest odour, taste and sound (Poe "The Fall…" 403, 406). At this point, one can discover a parallelism between Roderick Usher's condition and the epigraph that heads the narration:

> Son coer est un luth suspendu;
> Sitôt qu on le touche il résonne.
>
> *De Béranger.* (Poe "The Fall…" 398)

As previously mentioned the quote is extracted from De Béranger's poem "Le Refus", though the reference is used with a different purpose since the source deals with political satire and social demonstration. The epigraph alludes to a heart suspended like a lute that will sound at the lightest touch. This, in turn, guides the reader once again to the imagery and verses of Coleridge, who compares the poet with an instrument so delicate and sensitive that even the flow of air moves him to the point of creating melodies without predisposition or intention. The force of nature takes the poet to a state of ecstasy; however, in Usher's case he is excited disproportionally. Later in the narration, the guest and his host meet in artistic sessions, one of them consisting in singing. A double connotation can be found in these music sessions since Usher performs accompanied by a string instrument, the only type that his condition can tolerate. This may recall the situation of Israfel playing the sublime lute that is his own heart. A poetic fragment in its own right, the song's lyrics narrates the story of a haunted palace whose master lives in wealth and in radiant splendour, sitting in glory while people dance to the music of a lute. Then sorrow assails the monarch, tainting and destroying the happiness of the realm, and the music becomes discordant (Poe "The Fall…" 406-407). The poem seems to mirror the reality of what is happening in Usher's life, anticipating the fall of the house and its dwellers, reflecting how the dissonance produced by sorrow in the mind of the master disrupts the harmony of its context.

4. The poetic heart in Colombia

Before we turned to the analysis of the symbol in Acosta de Samper's work, a picture of the Colombian nineteenth century might be illustrative. Colombia is a romantic nation, where the dreams of Wordsworth and Coleridge were almost a reality, since Romanticism constituted the nation and its collective memory (Barreda y Béjar "Romanticismo y poesía" 3) for a period that stretched out from nineteenth century up to half of the twentieth century. Barreda y Béjar have named this process "america-

nismo literario" (literary Americanism), ideologically rooted in the conceptualization of literature as the form of expression of a new society ("El romanticismo hispanoamericano" 12). This romantic condition is derived not only from literature but from all areas, since it was a nation recently founded when the first romantic influences started to arrive in the continent; exploring even, as a result, romantic politics and a romantic constitution. In such context, the romantic writer assumed the role of politician and legislator, organizing not only the values but the very social structure of Colombia (Barreda y Béjar "Romanticismo y poesía" 3). In their attempt to build a romantic America, however, they found a world that by shattering their dreams did no other thing that to confirm them in their romantic character of defeat.

In "El corazón de la mujer" ("The Heart of Woman"), Acosta de Samper presents the instrument in the first line of the introduction. It is impossible not to think in a continuity when a text opens with the mention of a so valued romantic object; especially when it serves as the catalyst for the utmost sensitivity possible, as previously commented: "El corazón de la mujer es un arpa mágica que no suena armoniosamente sino cuando una mano simpática la pulsa" (237) (The heart of a woman is a magic harp that does not sound harmonious but when a caring hand touches it.).

In Acosta de Samper's work a slight change is introduced concerning the explored metaphor, the nature of the external force is substituted for a fellow being. It could be thought that such hand could be any favourable natural agent, but said reading would be too much accommodated to the poetic origins here explored. The hand could be that of a female friend, but taking into account the customs, manners and social structures that reigned in nineteenth century Colombia, the hand must be that of an affectionate man since later in the narration she expresses: "Pero la que ha sido amada y ha amado es un ser angelical" (238) (But the one who has been loved and has loved is an angelic being). Although Soledad Acosta de Samper is erected as a feminist voice in Colombia (Skinner 471), the introduction to this work still transmits certain ingenuity regarding the social roles that she is trying to vindicate. This results from the fact that Samper's proto-feminism, as well as that of some of her contemporaries, was focused on the construction of the Colombian nation (Leal Larrarte 115). Of course, the present text could be read in two different ways: from

a submissive point of view that, we might say, almost humiliates women, or from a perspective in which irony and 'the call to arms' to other women are detected and underlined. Whichever the case might be, we should be reminded how the Colombian nineteenth century regarded women.

In "Consejos a una niña" (Admonishment to a Girl) by the Colombian writer José María Vergara y Vergara, the narrator tells his young listener that the protective fairy-tale figures will disappear from her life once she is old enough to read and comprehend the letter. By that time, those dreams will have been torn by reality and she will be learning the cruel truths of life that, he warns, still store unpleasant surprises for her (Vergara y Vergara 120). It is not strange, then, that the understanding of the world inculcated to women was corrupted from the beginning. In other words, though the letter is addressed to a little girl, it is assumed that she will not read it until she has grown, but then it will be too late to protect her from harm, which is precisely the intent of the text. Deserted by the fairies of youth, the only protection that she can expect is from her appointed and trustworthy guardians, who are the figures that are responsible for her happiness and welfare, even though they might fill her with sorrow. It is noteworthy how joy is tied to a righteous path, since in the uncertainty of life he warns her that the things that may produce joy can be there to harm her, thus the need to be watched over by worthy guardians.

In the case of women, they were condemned to misery since birth. This statement does not pretend to affirm that this was the life that awaited for them, but at least it was the life dreamt and expected for them. Colombian women from that period were demanded to lead a passive life bound to the private domain of domesticity and the care of the family (Leal Larrarte 123). In a pathetic tone the speaker prophesizes that life will take a toll in their respective lives, it will shatter them; the peace of childhood will be disturbed to give way to the agitations of youth, just as his pains will be cured by the peace of the grave. He even bids her to engage in a metaphorical conversation in which she lies in her cradle while he lies in his tomb. (Vergara y Vergara 121). In this darkness, and after having explained the dependence suggested and entailed by the caring hand that has to touch the harp, appears a music, a melody that may alleviate the burden that maturity brings to women; the conviction that the heart of a

woman can, and should, overcome social impositions:

> El alma y el corazón de una mujer son mundos incógnitos en que se agita el germen de mil ideas vagas, sueños ideales y deleitosas que la rodean y viven con ella: sentimientos misteriosos é imposibles de analizar. (Acosta de Samper 237)
>
> (The soul and the heart of a woman are uncharted worlds where stirs the seed of thousands of vague ideas, ideal and delightful dreams that surround her and live with her: feelings that are mysterious and impossible to analyse.)

A woman's heart is a magical instrument, one that at first and on general terms resembles more the poet in Coleridge's verses than the angelic figure and the narrator of "Israfel" or Roderick Usher. This heart is filled with ideas and fantasies like the poetic voice of "The Eolian Harp", but radically differs from it in the following aspect:

> El corazón de la mujer tiene (…) un ligero polvillo; (…) el polvillo es la imagen de las ilusiones inocentes de la juventud que la realidad arranca rudamente, dejándolo sin brillo y sin belleza. (Acosta de Samper 237)
>
> (The heart of a woman has (…) a fine dust; (…) the fine dust is the image of the innocent fancies of youth that reality tears up rudely, leaving it without brilliance and beauty.)

The difference consist in that reality destroys the magic of the instrument, whereas in Coleridge's work the world is what induces the harp to sound thanks to the action of the external element that extracts the poetry contained within the instrument. However, the very difference with the English poet likens this vision to the lyre of Poe, as the external world is too strong for the lute's delicacy and sensitivity. In "The Heart of Woman", the figure of the instrument seems to be synthesised, combining attributes from the previous harps. It is important to point out that Acosta de Samper's work speaks of "la mujer de espíritu poético" (the woman of poetic spirit) (238) as the one who is able to be aware of the treasure hidden in her chest. In addition, the heart of such woman suffers the most from the disillusionment of reality as it is more sensitive, and thus, prone like Roderick Usher's to be hurt. This is significant since in the texts previously

explored, though easy to infer, the vision of the poet as possessor of the lute is never explicitly expressed; rather, it is understood from the narration, from the poetic's voice sensitivity; but they never speak of a poetic spirit like Acosta de Samper's text does:

> El hombre culto cuando ama verdaderamente es siempre poeta en sus sentimientos: la mujer lo es en todos los tiempos en el fondo de su alma, porque su corazón siempre ama. (238)
>
> (The educated man when truly loves is always a poet in his feelings: woman is poet at any time in the depth of her soul since her heart always loves)

A man is a poet only when he loves, but a woman is always a poet. This statement summarises the significance of the harp in the survey of romantic literature here offered. The heart of woman is a magic harp because she is a poet at all times. Only those that can love constantly are the true possessors of a lute in their hearts. The true poet is the one who loves genuinely, thus only poets and women have the sensitive instrument that reacts to the slightest touch, to the world, to human reality and, of course, to love.

Throughout the article, the evolution of the symbol of the harp as the metaphor for the romantic heart has been traced, understanding it as well as a source for poetic production. However, such development does not exclude the existence of others since that symbol can also be tracked on darker notes, for instance from Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode", in which the poetic voice would rather have silenced the harp (446-449), to Rafael Pombo's "Monotonía" (Monotony). In Pombo's poem, the speaker feels defeated by destiny, yet he urges the reader never to stop playing the lute, not to let sensitivity become dull so that it might turn against him in foolish acts (66).

5. Conclusion

Throughout the centuries, and particularly during Romanticism, string instruments have been the symbol of poetry and poetic sensitivity. These objects have served different poets in the expression of their beliefs and theories concerning art. In the early stages of Romanticism, Coleridge's speaker likens the harp to the spontaneous and uncontrolled expression and

composition of poetic material, suggesting the influence of forces beyond human comprehension. In later developments, and even in Coleridge's poem itself, this naïveté is substituted for the awareness that due to the condition of mortality, as in Poe's case, or as a result of the barriers imposed by society as in Acosta de Samper's work, the poet is unable to freely express and achieve his or her full capacities. It is in this manner that the poet's sensitivity becomes a repressed poetry, since the excess of such condition can be a curse, the wreckage of the poet's expectations by the coexistence with mundanity. In Coleridge's case, the poet has to retract from his words, in the case of "Israfel" the poet lacks the immortal condition necessary to be able to express himself completely and in "The Fall of the House of Usher" he has to die due to his excessive sensitivity. Lastly, in the work of Soledad Acosta de Samper, "La vida de la mujer es un sufrimiento diario" (The life of a woman is a daily suffering) (239). And it is so as a result of her sensitivity, her condition of being a poet on a daily basis. She buries her sorrows in her heart, the magic harp that will sound harmoniously only when played by the right hands; otherwise, it will be out of tune as the lute of the poet in "Israfel" and as the music of the cursed king of Usher's song. From Coleridge to Pombo, a broad and wide field has been covered, a field where the harp is the heart insofar as the heart is pure Romanticism.

Works Cited

Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Acosta de Samper, Soledad. "El corazón de la mujer." *Novelas y cuadros de la vida suramericana*. Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes/Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2004, pp. 237-239.

Barreda, Pedro and Béjar, Eduardo. "Romanticismo y poesía romántica en Hispanoamérica: una propuesta crítica." *Poética de la nación. Poesía romántica en hispanoamérica (crítica y antología)*. Boulder: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1999, pp. 1-3.

___. "El romanticismo hispanoamericano." *Poética de la nación. Poesía romántica en hispanoamérica (crítica y antología)*. Boulder: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1999, pp. 10-17.

Campbell, Killis. "The Origins of Poe." *The Mind of Poe and Other Studies*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933, pp. 147-186. *The Edgar Allan*

Poe Society of Baltimore. eapoe.org/papers/misc1921/kcm33c06.htm. Sept. 21, 2017.

Campion, Thomas. "When to Her Lute Corinna Sings." *English Poetry I: From Chaucer to Gray*. Ed. Charles Williams Eliot, vol. XL. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909-14. *Bartleby.com*, bartleby.com/40/. Sept. 20, 2017.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "The Eolian Harp." *The poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921, pp. 100-102. *archive.org*, archive.org/details/cu31924014151447. Sept. 14, 2017.

___. "Dejection: An Ode." *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. Ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Joe Salter and Jon Stallworthy. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997, pp. 446-449.

Cox, James M. "Edgar Poe: Style as Pose." *The Naiad Voice: Essays on Poe's Satiric Hoaxing*. Ed. Daniel W. Eddings, Port Washington: Associated Faculty Press, 1989, pp. 41-63.

Davidson, Gustav. "Poe's 'Israfel.'" *The Literary Review*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1968, pp. 86-91.

Davis, Betty J. "The Harp, the Lyre, and the Lute in Du Bellay's Les Antiquitez de Rome." *Literary Onomastics Studies*, vol. 14, no. 11, 1987, pp. 151-167.

Eddings, Daniel W., ed. *The Naiad Voice: Essays on Poe's Satiric Hoaxing*. Port Washington: Associated Faculty Press, 1989.

Gargano, James W. "The Question of Poe's Narrators." *The Naiad Voice: Essays on Poe's Satiric Hoaxing*. Ed. Daniel W. Eddings. Port Washington: Associated Faculty Press, 1989, pp. 22-40.

Glancy, Ruth F. *Thematic Guide to British Poetry*. Westport; London: Greenwood Press, 2002.

Keats, John. "Ode on a Grecian Urn." *English Romantic Poetry: An Anthology*. Ed. Stanley Appelbaum. Mineola: Dover, 1996, pp. 218-219.

Leader, Zachary and O'Neil, Michael, eds. *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Leal Larrarte, Sandra. "El cuerpo 'cárcel del alma', y la construcción de nación en 'Dolores' de Soledad Acosta de Samper." *Revista CS*, no. 17, 2015, pp. 109-131.

Moore, Thomas. *Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance*. New York: Thomas

Y. Crowel & Co, 1891. *archive.org*, archive.org/details/lallarookhorien00mooriala. Sept. 28, 2017.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "Israfel." *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott, vol. I: Poems, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969, pp. 171-179. *The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore*, eapoe.org/works/mabbott/tom1p047.htm. Sept. 12, 2017.

___. "The Fall of the House of Usher." *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott, vol. II: Tales and Sketches. Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1978, pp. 392-422. *The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore*, eapoe.org/works/mabbott/tom2t033.htm. Sept. 12, 2017.

Pombo, Rafael. "Monotonía." *Antología Poética*. Medellín: Fondo Editorial Universidad EAFIT, 2001, pp. 65-67.

Rojas, Fernando de. *Celestina. Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea.* Amberes: Oficina Plantiniana, 1599. *Google Books*, books.google.es/books?id=44R47u15SWQC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false. Sept. 28, 2017.

Sale, George. *The Koran: or, Alcoran of Mohammed.* London: William Tegg and Co., 1877. *archive.org*, archive.org/details/koranoralcoranof00sale. Sept. 28, 2017.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "A Defence of Poetry." *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*. Eds. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neil. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 674-701.

___. "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*. Eds. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neil. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 114-119.

___. "Essay on Christianity." *Selected Prose Works of Shelley*. London: Watts, 1915. 143-176. *Archive. org* https://archive.org/details/selectedprosewor00shelrich. Feb. 13, 2018.

Skinner, Lee. "Historia, Nación y Género: El Didactismo en las Novelas Históricas de Soledad Acosta de Samper." *Soledad Acosta de Samper: Escritura, Género y Nación en el Siglo XIX*. Ed. Carolina Azate and Montserrat Ordoñez. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2005, pp. 471-481.

Stovall, Floyd. "The Conscious Art of Edgar Allan Poe." *POE, A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967, pp. 172-178.

Takahashi, Nobuya. "From Harmony to Cacophony: The Image of the Aeolian Harp in Coleridge's Poetry." *The Geibun-Kenkyu: Journal of Arts and Letters*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1990, pp. 18-30.

Vergara y Vergara, José María. "Consejos a una niña." *Obras escogidas de don José María Vergara y Vergara*, *tomo II Artículos literarios.* Bogotá: Editorial Minerva, 1931, pp. 120-129.

Wordsworth, William. "Preface." *Lyrical Ballads*. London: Longman, 1815, pp. 363-394. *Archive.org*, archive.org/details/poemsbywilliamwo01word. Sept. 16, 2017.

Abstract

These pages propose a panoramic reading of a recurrent poetic symbol, the string instrument, as a metaphor for the romantic heart, attempting as well to highlight the changes and evolutions that the symbol has experienced. As such, the work focuses on the English Romanticism in "The Eolian Harp" (1796) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), the American Romanticism in "Israfel" (1831) and "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and the Colombian Romanticism in "El corazón de la mujer" (1887) by Soledad Acosta de Samper (1833-1913).

Keywords

Harp, Lute, Romantic Symbol, Coleridge, Poe, Acosta de Samper.

Resumen

Estas páginas proponen una lectura panorámica de un símbolo poético recurrente, el arpa o el laúd, como metáfora del corazón romántico, pretendiendo asimismo delinear los cambios y la evolución que dicho símbolo ha experimentado. Por este motivo el artículo se centra en el Romanticismo inglés en "The Eolian Harp" de Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), el Romanticismo estadounidense en "Israfel" (1831) y "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) de Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) y el Romanticismo colombiano en "El corazón de la mujer" (1887) de Soledad Acosta de Samper (1833-1913).

Palabras Clave

Arpa, Laúd, Símbolo romántico, Coleridge, Poe, Acosta de Samper.

A Quasi-Aesthetic Approach to the Gothic Elements in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

José Manuel Correoso Rodenas
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Department of Modern Languages,
College of Humanities of Albacete

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 15 2018

A Quasi-Aesthetic Approach to the Gothic Elements in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*[1]

The Picture of Dorian Gray was composed during the year 1890, and the same year it was sent to the print. This first version written by Wilde was not published then, because it had to be reformed and adapted in order to avoid problems with the strict social rules which were ongoing during those years. After Wilde himself had censored the novel, it was submitted to the *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*,[2] whose editor was also responsible for censoring the work (erasing or changing about 500 words) with the knowledge of the author. It finally appeared in June 1890. Even with the censorship the novel had already suffered, it was fiercely criticized by some of Oscar Wilde's detractors. Anyway, it became an enormous success and from then on, it has been one of the most famous (also controversial) pieces in British literature, being the subject of myriads of studies of all kinds, from Philosophy to Aesthetics and from its demonic plot to the treatment of women and sexual connotations.

The following year, 1891, the novel was published again. This second publication included several important changes: seven more chapters had been added, together with an aphoristic "Preface", in which Wilde deals with the labor of the artist. This preface was included in response to the criticism the novel had received, for, among some other soubriquets, it had

---

[1] This study has been partially possible thanks to the PhD Scholarship for the Formation of College Faculty Members (Funding Institution: Universidad of Castilla-La Mancha).

[2] The *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* was a 19th century literary publication settled in Philadelphia (US), which ran from 1868 to 1915, when it merged with *Scribner's Magazine*. Many important authors published their works in its pages, as for instance Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (*The Sign of Four*) or Rudyard Kipling (*The Light that Failed*).

been deemed immoral. As already stated, the very first version was not published during Wilde's lifetime. Actually, it was hidden for a long lapse of time until it was discovered, edited and published by the Virginia Commonwealth University Wilde scholar Nicholas Frankel in 2011.

Gothic elements can be traced back even before the birth of Dorian Gray, in the figure of his grandfather and his mother. In the third chapter of the 1891 version, the reader obtains, for the first time, and through a conversation between Lord Henry and his uncle, news about Dorian's family. In the course of this dialogue there are two moments to be taken into account: the first one is the description of Dorian's mother's imprisonment by her own father, Lord Kelso. "He brought his daughter back with him, I was told, and she never spoke to him again. Oh, yes; it was a bad business. The girl died too, died within a year" (32). In these lines it is explained how Lord Kelso destroyed the soul of his daughter, driving her to death. To think of the poisoning she had to suffer every day during that year constitutes a first-rate gothic element.[3] Two pages below, we have a description of Dorian's mother which brings to mind the female characters in the poems of the Romantics, a good example of the New Woman, "born" within the gothic genre:

> A beautiful woman risking everything for a mad passion. A few wild weeks of happiness cut short by a hideous, treacherous crime. Months of voiceless agony, and then a child born in pain. The mother snatched away by death, the boy left to solitude and the tyranny of an old loveless man (34).

This fragment can be considered as the background of the little Dorian, who will, with difficulty, get free of the influence and of the power that his grandfather —"an old loveless man"— had been holding over on him.

Everything starts with a conversation: Basil Hallward is trying to explain to Lord Henry how he felt when he first met Dorian. It was not a warm feeling, as their late relationship would suggest. It is described as if Basil had seen a phantom: "A curious instinct of terror came over me"

---

[3] This situation is reformulated, many years later, by the Spanish writer Carlos Ruiz Zafón's in his novel *La sombra del viento*, 2001, in the character of Penélope Aldaya.

(78).[4] With this sentence, the reader can start to imagine what is going to happen even before the real story of Dorian Gray and his portrait begins, but that is not the only issue which begins at this point: Basil Hallward is going to develop a function as a visionary and almost as a prophet.[5]

Basil is the main "prophet" in the novel, but he is not the only one; or, to be more correct, at some points in the story, some other characters take the role he had been playing as visionary.[6] The next table shows the parts of the plot where the prophetic facet of the painter, and of the other characters, appears:[7]

CHAPTER	SEQUENCE
Chapter I	The first meeting of Dorian and Basil is described.
Chapter I	A conversation between Basil and Lord Henry, where the painter shows his fear of Dorian being corrupted if he meets Harry.
Chapter II	Basil realizes that the negative influence of Lord Henry has started and tries, for the first time, to take Dorian back to the "good way of life".
Chapter III	At the end of this chapter, Harry prognosticates how the *affaire* of Dorian with Sybil is going to evolve: "…and wondered how it was all going to end" (130).
Chapter IV	Basil, after knowing of the engagement of Dorian and Sybil, suspects the tragic end of the story, with the difference that he still has a bit of hope.

[4] Frankel's edition.

[5] In this respect, see Correoso Rodenas, José Manuel. "Basil Hallward como profeta vitoriano." *Herejía y Belleza*, no. 2, 2014, pp. 221-229.

[6] These characters are Lord Henry and Dorian, and they only act like this at very specific moments of the narrative, once each one.

[7] The reference is taken from the edition by Nicholas Frankel.

Chapter X	Some years later, Dorian meets Basil by chance in the middle of the street at night. As soon as he sees the painter, he knows how the meeting is going to end. Dorian tries to avoid Basil inside his house, maybe as a last attempt to perform a good action.
Chapter XI	Basil Hallward finally confronts the portrait he painted years ago. For the last time, he makes an effort to take Dorian away from his life of sin.
Chapter XI	As typical of a prophet, Basil is assassinated by Dorian, the very man whom he had tried to save.

As a prophet, Basil blames himself for having painted the portrait when he is talking with Dorian about a hypothetical exhibition of the masterpiece and Dorian denies the painter the contemplation of his work: "Well, I am punished for that, Dorian, —or shall be some day," (246)[8] prognosticating his own ending.

After the murder of Basil, Dorian tries to defuse the fact by thinking that this was only one more of the myriad of crimes usually performed in London,[9] but he also shows his horror to be discovered. Finally, he argues that society is mad and he is only a product of its madness: "He sat down, and began to think. Every year —every month, almost— men were strangled in England for what he had done. There had been a madness of murder in the air. Some red star had come too close to the earth" (226).[10]

The plot of the novel is built by incorporating some structural gothic elements which contribute to produce, in the end, a gothic novel when considered all together. The leitmotiv underneath the story is the "sale of the soul" Dorian performs when he sees the portrait for the first time. In this moment, the painting seems to possess the model, although the latter only offers a tiny resistance before surrendering definitively: "If it

[8] 1891 version.

[9] It must be born in mind that Jack the Ripper had been acting only two years before the novel was first published.

[10] Frankel's edition.

was I who were to be always young, and the picture that were to grow old! For this —for this— I would give everything! Yes: there is nothing in the whole world I would not give!" (102).[11] Dorian regards his picture as a son, for whom he would do everything. It seems Dorian takes the responsibility of feeding the portrait… and the only food it would take is sin and corruption.

Until the *soirée* when the portrait is finished, Dorian had not known what terror was. Now, as he faces corruption and sin, he is also able to know the sensation of horror.[12] From that evening on, Dorian will go down and down into a gothic world that, even if it had always been around him, was never perceived by his senses, due to the fact that his senses were asleep and now have been awakened by the strength of Lord Henry. Some pages ahead, during his first conversation alone with Lord Henry, Dorian confesses that he had felt fear while exploring London to satisfy his curiosity: "Some of them [the lives of some Londoners] fascinated me. Others filled me with terror" (115).[13]

The description of the theatre where he saw Sybil acting embodies the gothic fashion, too: decadent buildings as symbols of a decadent society.[14] The building and the characters inhabiting it produce a feeling of anguish. But the climax of this descriptive paragraph comes with the introduction of the Jew, Sybil's master.[15] He is presented as a supernatural creature: "He was such a monster" (115).[16] With this sentence, Wilde recovers the entire gothic trend whose leading role had been performed by "monsters" and whose maximum example is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*,

---

[11] Frankel's edition.

[12] Adam and Eve only knew the shame after having sinned (Gn. 2, 7). All Biblical references belong to the *New American Bible*. Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, 2011.

[13] Frankel's edition.

[14] This can also be appreciated in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher".

[15] The Jew's description reminds the reader of the creature appearing in Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem*, 1914.

[16] Frankel's edition.

even if, in this case, the Jew could be seen as a corrupted example of Frankenstein's creature.

Dorian Gray is ready to give up everything he has or everything he is. We have already seen how he gave it away (or, at least, promised that to the portrait). In "Chapter V" he gives everything to another beautiful cause: Sybil Vane "…to whom I have given everything that is good in me" (139).[17] The fact that he only promises to give what is good can be understood in two ways: on the one hand that he still hopes to maintain something good inside himself and, on the other hand, that he does not really want to give everything to Sybil, because this "everything" already belongs to the portrait.[18] Anyway, everything good remaining in Dorian is now Sybil's. Related to this is the episode of Sybil's death. It can be appreciated, within the first version of the novel, in "Chapter VI", when Lord Henry arrives in Dorian's house to inform him of the sad news. When Harry pronounces the sentence "…my letter —don't be frightened— was to tell you that Sybil Vane is dead," (156)[19] it is understood that, with her death, she has taken everything good remaining in Dorian. From this scene on, the degradation of Dorian's soul takes place. But there have been two previous moments when Dorian had the chance of becoming a demon: the first one is when he sees the portrait for the first time, and the second one is after Sybil's horrid performance, when she and Dorian meet. Dorian literally mutters "You have killed my love" (144).[20] However, some pages afterwards it is possible to appreciate a tiny trace of regret in Dorian's attitude, with his reflection about cruelty, his plan to go to see her in order to apologize, and to fulfill his promise of marriage. His "good side" will never be shown again.

Once Sybil has killed Dorian's love he goes back to his house. On his way home, the description offered by Wilde is that of a decadent image of the city, showing the vices of people, caricaturizing human beings,

---

[17] Frankel's edition.

[18] Here, the painting can be considered as owner of its own conscience and will.

[19] Frankel's edition.

[20] Frankel's edition. Love is the last hope of men. In the Faustian myth, love [*Liebe*] is the only thing able to save doctor's soul.

transforming details into gothic elements. During this journey, there is a feature which deserves to be taken into account. It is known that Dorian's changes do not have any effect on his external appearance, but hereby a background character is presented as if he knew something about Dorian's hideous new life: the cherries seller. "A white-smocked carter offered him some cherries. He thanked him, wondered why he refused to accept any money for them, and began to eat them listlessly" (146);[21] the reason for this refusal could be due to some scarring branding Dorian has now and which can be recognized only by some people (as Cain after having killed Abel: "So the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one would kill him at sight").[22] The mark is there to show the crime and to avoid any revenge. The sinner has to suffer and do penance.

But Sybil's death is not a gothic death only for Dorian, but also for her. Her death is not a random one. She commits suicide. It has to be remembered that the night the relationship came to an end, she had been playing Juliet, and in the same way as Juliet is put into a tomb, [Sybil] dies:[23] "She had swallowed something by mistake, some dreadful thing they use at theatres" (157).[24] In Shakespeare's play it is shown how her family set Juliet's corpse in a crypt, an element very much appreciated and used by gothic authors (i.e. Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk*). On the other hand, as she kills herself by her own hand, she cannot be saved. Her soul will be brought into hell, closing the romantic aura of the romance and its end. Dorian adds one more romantic detail to the whole: "Strange, that my first passionate love-letter should have been addressed to a dead girl," (239)[25] making use of the taste expressed by writers during the Romantic period. A reason why Sybil did what she did is given. According to Dorian "she acted badly because she had known the reality of love. When she

---

[21] Frankel's edition.

[22] Gen. 4, 15.

[23] Both Juliet and Sybil are driven into tomb due to a substance they drink. Though Sybil dies, Shakespeare's character does not.

[24] Frankel's edition.

[25] 2006 edition.

discovered its unreality, she died, as Juliet might have died," (168)[26] showing that love, a feeling which is supposed to be good and to produce good effects and to bring happiness to people, is guilty of a murder. Wilde is presenting something evil beneath the mask of something good. The inner meaning of everything is what really makes it, not only its pretty looks.[27] Later on, a new similar situation is exposed: the moment when Dorian covers the portrait with a piece of cloth which is described as a luxury piece of tapestry:[28]

> His eye fell on a large purple satin coverlid heavily embroidered with gold, a splendid piece of late seventeenth-century Venetian work that his uncle had found in a convent near Bologna. Yes, that would serve to wrap the dreadful thing in. It had perhaps served often as a pall for the dead. Now it was to hide that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself, something that would breed horrors and yet would never die. What the worm of the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty, and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would be always alive. (177-178)[29]

The most terrible thing ever created is going to be hidden by one of the most beautiful pieces of art. Again, the idea of the evil hidden under a patina of attractiveness appears here.

The changes produced in the portrait are, maybe, the most significant gothic element present in the novel: they show Dorian's sins and corruption. The first change takes place after Dorian leaves Sybil, perhaps as a sign pointing to the fact that the painting already knows the actress's fate and the role Dorian has played in it:[30]

---

[26] Frankel's edition.

[27] This also happens with Dorian himself.

[28] Note that the painting is hidden in the study-room where Dorian used to be mistreated by his grandfather.

[29] Frankel's edition.

[30] Placing the sinner and the sin in opposite positions.

> As he was passing through the library towards the door of his bedroom, his eye fell upon the portrait Basil Hallward had painted of him. He started back on surprise, and then went over to it and examined it. In the dim arrested light that struggled through the cream-coloured silk blinds, the face seemed to him to be a little changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth. It was certainly curious. (148)[31]

Later Dorian doubts if he has really seen what he thought he had seen:

> Was it all true? Had the portrait really changed? Or had it been simply his own imagination that had made him see a look of evil where there had been a look of joy? Surely a painted canvas could not alter? The thing was absurd. It would serve as a tale to tell Basil some day. It would make him smile. (153)[32]

But the truth is that the painting changes and its modifications are so accurate that they are adequate to each crime Dorian commits. For instance, when he breaks up with Sybil only an evil expression appears, but when Basil is killed, a red strip, the symbol of blood, is added to the image; and when Dorian tries his first "good action" after a life of perversity (the sparing of Hetty), a new expression is added: hypocrisy. Dorian wants to convince himself and the picture (his soul) of the goodness of his act: "It was an unjust mirror, this mirror of his soul that he was looking at. Vanity? Curiosity? Hypocrisy? Had there been nothing more in his renunciation than that? There had been something else. At least he thought so. But who could tell?" (250). Some chapters before, Wilde had already compared it with a mirror, "the most magical of mirrors" (165).[33]

---

[31] Frankel's edition.

[32] Frankel's edition.

[33] Frankel's edition. This comparison affords the painting a magical character and puts it in relation with some other literary works, as for example Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson".

Another element taken from gothic tradition is the opposition between spaces: the terror appears when the character is alone and, especially, when he or she is in a particular place. In Dorian's case, this place is his own house,[34] and it goes on and on as the action is being transferred to the room where the painting is. This use of the spaces as the element which constructs the terrific atmosphere has been used since the first gothic works, favouring dark and narrow places in order to be able to maintain the heightened tension. A good and similar example can be found in the tale of Guy the Maupassant's "Le Horla."[35] The house is the scenario where the terror is developed, and the character only feels safe outside. There is a higher fear than this one: the horror of the painting to be discovered. Dorian knows that, if the work of art is seen by anyone, his life will be ruined, and this keeps him inside the house, taking care of the portrait, which becomes both his energy and his enslaver.[36] The look of the picture as a judge can be related to many popular legends and fairy tales in which a supernatural being appears in order to show its witnesses their own dreadful actions, when death comes close.[37]

In the novel, the whole concourse of the action changes at a specific point; this point is when Dorian receives a book as a gift from Lord Henry. This book is entitled *Le Secret de Raoul*, *par Catulle Sarrazin* and the description of its plot allows it to be easily associated with a prototypical gothic novel, where the main character explores all the vices which take place around the world, and across the ages. Rivers of ink have been written about this fictional book, and maybe it will never be known which one it exactly is.[38] Two candidates for this position could be William Beckford's

---

[34] "When he stepped out in the grass, he drew a deep breath. The fresh morning air seemed to drive away all his passions" (151).

[35] First published in 1886.

[36] For instance, Dorian sells his house in Algeria.

[37] One of these legends could be "the shadow", very popular and well-known in places such as the south of Spain or Argentina, where it is acknowledged as "*enlutado*" [in mourning] due to the external appearance it uses to take.

[38] It will never probably be discovered if Wilde had in mind a particular book or if it was just a creation of his imagination for his novel.

Vathek or Rachilde's *Monsieur Venus*.[39] Dorian is overwhelmed by the poisonous effect of this book: "For years, Dorian Gray could not free himself from the memory of the book" (187);[40] and, during his last conversation with Harry, the book is said to have been like a poison for the young man: "Yet you poisoned me with a book once. I should not forgive that. Harry, promise me that you will never lend that book to any one. It does harm" (299).[41] The book tells the story of a dreadful life that, at the end, becomes Dorian's own.

In "Chapter IX" (XI within the 1891 version) a vast description of the objects Dorian has been collecting for years is provided. This, besides being a work of aesthetics, also offers some gothic details which contribute to building the atmosphere. For instance, the collection of Catholic embroideries and ornaments he gathered was chosen due to the meaning they had in relation to the daily sacrifice in Mass, "more awful than all the sacrifices of the antique world" (194).[42] Dorian is not convinced of the religious principles underlying the Roman ritual, he is only interested in the notion of sacrifice (the representation of a terrible murder) performed every day in every single place in the world. It is also said that he collected some weapons and strange musical instruments, brought from the most distant areas of the world, from very different cultures, some of them with a dreadful past: "and flutes of human bones such as Alfonso de Ovalle heard in Chili" (196).[43]

Dorian had not only been cursed when the painting was finished and he pronounced those already famous words of submission. London is neither blind nor deaf to his life and people start rumoring. In meetings, some gentlemen leave when he arrives. Some ladies are taken away from

---

[39] Rachilde (1860-1953) was the pen-name of Marguerite Vallette-Eymery, a French author who was related with the decadents' group. Her novel *Monsieur Venus* was first published in 1884, in Brussels.

[40] Frankel's edition.

[41] 2006 edition.

[42] Frankel's edition.

[43] Frankel's edition.

social life (as is the case of Lord Henry's sister). It is also well known what the end of those close to Dorian will be. One of them is Alan Campbell (whose past is also questioned), but another example is found in Adrian Singleton (1891 version), now an opium addict with neither hope nor future. It would be considered as normal if all those had cursed Dorian, but the hatred for him goes further: "It was said that even sinful creatures who prowl the streets at night had cursed him as he passed by, seeing in him a corruption greater than their own, and knowing but too well the horror of his real life" (203).[44]

The experiment performed by Alan Campbell to destroy Basil's corpse can be interpreted as a sample of the new sciences which were being developed at the late XIX century.[45] These evolved disciplines contributed, too, to create new gothic trends, by introducing new elements which can provoke horror. Alan's experiment can also be seen as a homage Oscar Wilde was paying to Dr. Frankenstein. Both were doctors dealing with dead bodies: Victor Frankenstein with the purpose of creating life and Mr. Campbell in order to preserve his own (a task in which he fails, as it is known) and to allow Dorian's to continue.

The last gothic element appearing in the novel is the destruction of the portrait and the "death" of Dorian. It is with the same knife that takes away Basil's life that the painting is destroyed. Finally the actual guilt is getting its reward; finally Dorian is being a victim of the justice he had anticipated. The word "death" has been written within inverted commas because there is doubt about the end: is it the real Dorian who lies dead next to the picture with a knife in his heart? Or is it only an image of his soul, now clean and pure again, as it can be observed on the canvas? Because, at the beginning of the first published version, Lord Henry describes Dorian as unfolded: "Before which Dorian? The one who is pouring the tea for us, or the one in the picture?" (207).[46] The last scene in the novel shows Dorian's servants recognizing the corpse by examining

---

[44] Frankel's edition.

[45] Those interested in this topic should see Gray, Frances: *York Notes Advanced. The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London: Longman, 2009.

[46] 2006 edition.

the rings he is wearing, maybe a last wink to the aesthetic established by Wilde.

In conclusion, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* evolves as a first-rate gothic novel among the productions of the Victorian Age. Dorian Gray, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry are, like Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde, Dr. Moreau or Jack "the Ripper", products of Victorian (im)morality and "its inherent dualities" (Babilas 119). Besides, *The Picture* cannot be characterized only as a Gothic novel since it overspreads the boundaries of the genre including many references concerning Wilde's cultural, educational and religious background. Aestheticism and Dandyism are two terms which complicate the Gothicism along the development of *Dorian Gray*'s plot, ending in a fine example of compositional harmony. Dorian Gray, character and novel, goes from showing the darkest abyssis of the human soul to describing the most marvelous handicrafts ever produced, reflecting on the blank paper the unfolded soul of *fin-de-siècle* British society.

Works Cited

New American Bible. Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, 2011.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Babilas, Dorota. "The Undead Queen: Queen Victoria's Afterlife in Gothic Fiction." *Expanding the Gothic Canon. Studies in Literature, Film and New Media*. Ed. Anna K dra-Kardela and Andrzej Slawomir Kowalczyk. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014, pp. 110-121.

Baquero Goyanes, Mariano. *Estructuras de la novela actual*. Barcelona: Editorial Castalia, 2001.

Baquero Goyanes, Mariano. *¿Qué es la novela? ¿Qué es el cuento?* Murcia: Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad de Murcia, 1998.

Beckford, William. *Vathek*. London: W. Clarke, 1816.

Botting, Fred. *The Gothic*. Martlesham: D. S. Brewer, 2001.

Correoso Rodenas, José Manuel. "Basil Hallward como profeta victoriano." *Herejía y Belleza*, no. 2, 2014, pp. 221-229.

___. "Donde habita el horror. Análisis de la espacialización gótica en dos obras de la literatura victoriana finisecular: *The Picture of Dorian Gray y The Turn*

of the Screw." MA Thesis, Facultad de Humanidades de Albacete, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Spain, 2014.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Faust: Eine Tragödie*. Munich: Dtv Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1997.

González Moreno, Beatriz. *Lo sublime, lo gótico y lo romántico: la experiencia estética en el romanticismo inglés*. Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2007.

Gray, Frances. *York Notes Advanced. The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London: Longman, 2009.

Hogle, Jerrold E., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Lawler, Donald L. "Oscar Wilde's First Manuscript of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*." *Studies in Bibliography: Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia*, no. 25, 1972, pp. 125-135.

Lewis, Matthew Gregory. *The Monk*. London: Penguin, 2012.

Meyrink, Gustav. *Der Golem*. Cologne: Anaconda Verlag, 2006.

Nassaar, Christopher. "The Jekyll-Hyde Split in Wilde's Works." *The Wildean. A Journal of Oscar Wilde Studies*, no. 41, 2012, pp. 60-63.

Poe, Edgar A. *Tales and Sketches*. Ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Poplawski, Paul, ed. *English Literature in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Punter, David, ed. *A Companion to the Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Raby, Peter, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Ruiz Zafón, Carlos. *La sombra del viento*. Barcelona: Planeta, 2008.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Genoa: Cideb Editrice, 1994.

Smith, Andrew. *Victorian Demons. Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the* Fin-de-Siècle. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Thornley, G. C. and Gwyneth Roberts. *An Outline of English Literature*. London: Longman, 2008.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* A Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie. New York: Norton, 2006.

___. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. An Annotated, Uncensored Edition by Nicholas Frankel. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Acknowledgments: I highly appreciate the help of Margarita Rigal-Aragón, University of Castilla–La Mancha and of Kathy Radosta, University of Nebraska at Omaha for their suggestions on the first draft of this paper.

Abstract

The Picture of Dorian Gray was composed at some point between 1889 and 1890, but never published. Finally, in 1890, a censored version saw the light of day in the July issue of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. A year later, and after a huge scandal, Ward, Lock and Company released a new edition of the novel, enlarged in seven chapters and with the addition of a preface. However, none of these published versions were able to keep the gothic imagery of the "lost" one, only discovered in 2011.

Within his *first* novel, Oscar Wilde created one of the most outstanding examples of Victorian gothic literature, summoning elements both of Radcliffean tradition, religion, and *fin de siècle* aesthetics. The text is filled with gothic elements, picturing a fine and powerful image of both Wildean aestheticism, and nineteenth-century decadence.

The main goal of this essay is to analyze how the gothic elements have evolved within the different versions of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. To do that, the three existing versions of the novel will be used, making a reference to each of the sources Wilde was likely bearing in mind when composing his only full-length fiction work.

Keywords

The Picture of Dorian Gray, aesthetics, Gothic, religion, *fin de siècle*.

Resumen

Oscar Wilde compuso *The Picture of Dorian Gray* en algún momento entre 1889 y 1890, pero esta primera versión nunca sería publicada. Finalmente, en 1890, y tras una previa censura, una nueva versión vio la luz del día en el número de julio de la revista norteamericana *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. Un año después, y tras un gran escándalo, Ward, Lock and Company lanzó una nueva edición de la novela, con siete capítulos más y un prefacio. Sin embargo, ninguna

de las versiones que se publicaron a finales del siglo XIX mantiene la viveza del imaginario gótico de la versión "perdida", descubierta y publicada en 2011.

Con esta obra, Oscar Wilde consiguió crear uno de los ejemplos más sobresalientes de literatura gótica victoriana, aunando elementos de la tradición radcliffeana, la religión y la estética finisecular. El texto en su conjunto está henchido de elementos góticos, describiendo una poderosa imagen que mezcla la estética wildenana y la decadencia decimonónica.

El principal objetivo de este artículo es analizar cómo los elementos góticos han evolucionado en las diferentes versiones de *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Para ello, se utilizarán las tres versiones existentes, haciendo referencia a los recursos que Wilde debió tener en mente a la hora de componer su única obra larga de ficción.

Palabras Clave

The Picture of Dorian Gray, estética, literatura gótica, religión, *fin de siècle*.

Malleable Bodies and Unreadable Beings: Eduardo Kac and Leslie Scalapino's Poetics of Un-naming

João Paulo Guimarães
Instituto de Literatura Comparada Margarida Losa

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 15 2018

Malleable Bodies and Unreadable Beings: Eduardo Kac and Leslie Scalapino's Poetics of Un-naming

I

In *Bioethics in the Age of New Media*, Joanna Zylinska asserts that the most radical feature of Bio Art is its suspension of the categorical boundaries that separate humans from nonhuman organisms and machines. According to her, critics and bio artists alike tend to overemphasize that which is more conservative about this emerging art form: Bio Art's usage of scientific methods and instruments to construct a political critique of science. It attacks the reductionist methodologies and aesthetic directives that science is required to enforce by virtue of its collusion with Big Money, but it does so from a safe moral plateau that it occupies by rhetorical fiat. From Zylinska's perspective, Bio Art is also didactic in a negative way: it aims to spoon feed its audience a simplistic picture of the workings of biotechnology in order to drive home its political agenda. In conclusion, thanks to the immanent character of its critiques, Bio Art threatens to convert art into the handmaiden of science. In order to make its mark, art has to deploy its own vocabulary. Paradoxically, Zylinska tells us that Bio Art becomes true to its name when it sheds all kinds of meta-language and becomes thoroughly inconclusive.

Eduardo Kac, arguably the most prominent of bio artists, welcomes ambiguity into his work in at least two different ways. For him, all life forms are inherently hybrid: organisms contain other organisms or parts of other organisms. He wants his audience to question the "common perception that transgenics are not 'natural'". "It is important to understand", he says, "that the process of moving genes from one species to another is part of wild life (without human participation)" ("Life Transformation" 180). The human genome, he tells us, is rather like a trash bin, since it is composed of bits and pieces of the DNA of viruses and

bacteria. As a result, "Before deciding that all transgenics are "monstrous", humans must look inside and come to terms with their own "monstrosity", namely, with their own transgenic condition" ("Life Transformation" 180). In her latest book, *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway also provides us with a sordid picture of the actual way genomes are composed:

> The basic story is simple: ever more complex life forms are the continual result of ever more intricate and multi-directional acts of association of and with other life forms. Trying to make a living, critters eat critters but can only partly digest one another. . . . Margulis and Sagan put it more eloquently when they write that to be an organism is to be the fruit of "the co-opting of strangers, the involvement and infolding of others into ever more complex and miscegenous genomes." . . . Yoking together all the way down is what sym-bio-genesis means. (33)

According to Ursula K. Heise, attacking the concept of species as a stable biological unit is the quintessential posthuman move. In an essay titled "The Android and the Animal", she tells us that the blurring of biological differences between animals and humans is a rather common ingredient of contemporary Science Fiction literature and film. Less of a staple is the portrayal of "human consciousness as one mode of being among others", which Heise sees as the watermark of a "genuinely posthumanist perspective" (505). By positing the idea that life is synonymous with communication and by placing all communicative processes (both organic and mechanical) on the same hierarchical plane, Kac succeeds in passing Heise's posthumanist test. The conceptual ambiguity of his Bio Art is thus concurrently posthuman and posthumanist.

It is the latter level of metalinguistic inconclusiveness that brings him close to Leslie Scalapino, a Zen Buddhist poet generally associated with the LANGUAGE school, who also upheld the idea that "all objects are interconnected in a giant web and . . . defined by each other" ("Interview" 1). For her, as for Kac, "there is no stability to any entity —to any person or thing" ("Interview" 1). This idea is in tune with Buddhism's second Noble Truth, that of "dependent origination", which, as Jonathan Stalling informs us in *The Poetics of Emptiness*, states that "all phenomena are dependent upon other phenomena for existence, and are, therefore,

transient and unstable" (xxii). However, as we shall see, Scalapino's poetry complicates this notion. While they may be produced by the relations they are entangled in, the living things that we encounter in Scalapino's texts appear to have inherent qualities that make them undergo unpredictable transformations. Scalapino's humans, for instance, only become humans by activating a set of relations that make them perceivable as such. There is nothing inherently human about them, that is; "human" is, after all, only a label that we attach to a set of criteria. At the same time, though, all living beings in Scalapino's poetry appear to have been endowed with an inner potential that belongs to them as individuals.

This paper aims to unpack the implications of the latter insight and to explain how it problematizes Bio Art's fascination with the malleability of bodies, i.e. the idea that since individuals do not exist as such, the artificial production of all kinds of hybrid beings is unproblematic and in many ways desirable. In order to do so, I will first establish a comparative dialogue between Kac's work and two of Scalapino's book-length poems, *The Woman Who Could Read the Minds of Dogs* and *Instead of an Animal.* Then I will proceed to draw upon Timothy Morton's work on the overlaps between esoteric Buddhism and Object-Oriented Ontology, and on Jonathan Stalling's research on interpretations of the Buddhist scriptures by American poets to better contextualize Scalapino's simultaneous rapport with the idea of "dependent origination", and the notion that all things have an indefinable potential for self-transformation.

II

Bio Art attempts to challenge the idea that there is such a thing as purity in nature. It does so by taking us beyond what is visually graspable, to the plane of microbes and molecules, where it puts science's reductionist methodologies to the test. Bio Art shows us that no living being can be boiled down to its genes: isolated genes that can be bought and sold as purveyors of abstract qualities such as beauty or intelligence do not have any meaning if one extricates them from the bodily networks where they interact with other molecules. This is the idea that underlies *Transcription Jewels*, an artwork which Kac describes as follows:

> *Transcription Jewels* is a set of two objects encased in a custom-made round wooden box. The word "transcription" is the term employed in biology to name the process during which the genetic information is "transcribed" from DNA into RNA. One "jewel" is a two-inch genie bottle in clear glass with gold ornaments and 65 mg of purified Genesis DNA inside. "Purified DNA" means that countless copies of the DNA have been isolated from the bacteria in which they were produced and accumulated and filtered in a vial. The gene is seen here out of the context of the body, its meaning intentionally reduced to a formal entity to reveal that without acknowledgement of the vital roles played by the organism and environment, the "priceless" gene can become "worthless". The other "jewel" is an equally small gold cast of the three-dimensional structure of the "Genesis" protein. By displaying the emblematic elements of the biotech revolution (the gene and the protein) as coveted valuables, "Transcription Jewels" makes an ironic commentary on the process of commodification of the most minute aspects of life. Neither the purified gene in *Transcription Jewels* nor its protein were derived from a natural organism, but rather were created specifically for the artwork *Genesis*. Instead of a "genie" inside the bottle, one finds the new panacea, the new gene. No wishes of immortality, beauty, or intelligence are granted by the inert and isolated gene sealed inside the miniature bottle. As a result, the irony gains a critical and humorous twist by the fact that the "precious commodity" is devoid of any real, practical application in biology. ("Life Transformation" 172-173)

For Kac, then, there is no point of pristine stability. Nothing exists in isolation and nothing is in-itself because "Everything exists in relation to everything else" (*Telepresence* 273). The artist tells us that "communication and interaction between sentient and non-sentient actants lie at the core of what we call life" (*Telepresence* 275). Life is, in other words, a *social* process. In the artist's own words, "life is no longer, purely and simply, a biochemical phenomenon. Instead . . . we must consider [it] as a complex system at the crossroads between belief systems, economic

principles, legal parameters, scientific laws and cultural constructs" (*Telepresence* 260).

In his *Genesis* installation, Kac gives us a more practical idea of what this means. The artist translated a passage from the Bible into Morse Code and proceeded to translate the new message into the language of genetics. This allowed him to create an "artist's gene" that was subsequently implanted in the organism of a bacteria. At the exhibition, viewers had the opportunity to mutate the gene carried by the bacteria by activating a blue ultra-violet light, thus effecting changes to the original message. The underlying idea of the piece is, then, that whenever one interacts with another living being, one distorts its structure.

What is the nature of an organism's structure, though? Since, in Kac's model, beings are always relational and never in-themselves, the meaning of an entity can be seen as the sum total of the relations that it has established with other beings. Graham Harman, the forerunner of Object-Oriented Ontology, calls this reductionist process in which beings utterly expend themselves in their relations "overmining" (the opposite of "undermining", which reduces entities to their material properties: Kac's work constitutes a critique of this kind of methodology). The relational model upheld by Kac asserts that things do not really exist as discrete entities: they merely integrate a set of ever-changing assemblages.

At first blush, Leslie Scalapino's poetry appears to be in tune with these ideas. In "Reading the Mind of Events", an essay about the workings of perception in the poet's work, Camille Martin tells us that, for Scalapino, nothing exists inherently; things emerge via a process of dependent co-origination, i.e. they have to be perceived by other things in order to exist. This idea seems to inform several of Scalapino's poems in *The Woman Who Could Read the Minds of Dogs*. In this book, Scalapino shows us how we frequently perceive events through the lens of events that we have experienced in the past. Throughout the book, characters like Scalapino's mother, step-mother, a nameless woman her grandfather picked up in a casino, and Scalapino herself seem to be one and the same person: all are described as being reserved in a very mysterious way (mute even), and as being fascinated by features, gestures, and behaviors that make humans look like animals and vice-versa. Scalapino appears to subscribe to the idea that appearance and reality are synonymous terms. Along the

same line, in one of the poems from the book in question, she implies that it is very hard to tell the difference between myth and knowledge (note the emphasis on the word "know"):

> where rites of passage connected with magic were conducted —
> if somebody died (whether from old age or from an accident)
> they thought it just simpler to sew up the lips of the corpse
> so that if its name were called, it could not answer.
> According to this, cars (I continued) could bring them back.
> Anyone calling a dead cat in an alley at night, it was said,
> would *know* that the sound that came from the alley
> was the sound of the one who'd been killed. (60)

The easiness with which characters that would normally qualify as humans transform into animals also testifies to the idea that it is the interaction between the object and the observer that creates reality. In *Instead of an Animal*, the poet tries to drive home the idea that humans are not inherently human; they can earn the label if, at a certain moment in time, they look and act like humans (and here one is momentarily assuming that there is such a thing as a stable definition of "the human"), and/or someone perceives them as such. Conversely, characters become "animals" (yet another arbitrary category) if they look and act like "animals" and/or someone perceives them as such. In the following poem, for instance, a human mother gives birth to something that appears to have the sweetbread (the thymus or pancreas) of a lamb and the hair of a ram:

> I was surprised that infants produced by these wives
> never resembled their mothers;
> rather, as soon as they were brought to the mothers' bedsides,
> they were seen to have the sweetbread
> and the hair that curled as if it were on a ram's head (31)

The reverse is also possible, however. In *The Woman Who Could Read the Minds of Dogs*, the poet tells us about the time when she saw a dog behaving like a human being:

> Suppose I *was* thinking something, say, not knowing I was thinking it,
> one day when I saw this dog before a house on the sidewalk, he
> not really sliding toward me, but more like loping sideways?
> Well, his tongue was lolling. And he was whining the way human heads

> loll forward in sleep and whinny. Something so hesitant and low
> More so, because it was a nasal sound, a neigh, the way
> *we* neigh, not thinking, when we are nervously mimicking a horse.
> So I mimicked him, the dog, right back. Really I was being flippant
> by pretending to gallop like that; and all the while not moving,
> and letting my tongue slip forward between my lips, really laughing.
> (10)

Based on the principle of dependent co-origination, according to which reality is utterly constructed by the observer, one could say that the dog in this poem becomes a human being by being perceived as such. This reading is warranted by any Buddhist perspective, since, as Jonathan Stalling tells us, Buddhism does not acknowledge the "self-inherent existence" of things.

It is easy to see, however, that the concept of dependent co-origination is not enough to make sense of the poem quoted above. Scalapino is not so much emphasizing that reality is in the eye of the beholder as posing the question of what we are left with when we do away with names. We soon understand that Scalapino did not really discard the notion that things exist in-themselves; she only denies that they possess such a thing as a describable "essence". Camille Martin sheds some light on this matter when she unpacks the meaning of the concept of "emptiness" in the writings of the early Indian Buddhist philosopher and poet Nagarjuna, whom Scalapino cites as a significant influence. Martin points out that:

> Nagarjuna's Buddhism is not nihilistic in its denunciation of inherent existence. He does not intend to imply that reality is nothing at all, an absolute void without matter of shape. . . . When he speaks of lack of existence, he speaks of what we might call 'essence' or 'inherent existence', that is, an existence with properties apart from human attribution of a bounded entity with properties, as if there were a direct correspondence between language and the object it describes. (10)

She adds that "Our perception posits no direct correspondence to phenomena; instead, our perceptions give the illusion that what we are seeing gives us knowledge about the actual object, knowledge which corresponds directly to that object. What we perceive is, in effect, the mind

seeing its interpretation of what is out there" (Martin 13). In his essay "Is Nature Real?", Gary Snyder similarly explains that even though Buddhism deems the relations that humans establish with the world to be illusions, this does not mean the world does not exist at all:

> The idea of nature as a "social construction" —a shared cultural projection seen and shaped in the light of social values and priorities— if carried out to the full bright light of philosophy, would look like a subset of the world view best developed in Mahayana Buddhist or Advaita Vedanta, which declares the universe to be *maya*, or illusion. In doing so the Asian philosophers are not saying that the universe is ontologically without some kind of reality. They are arguing that, across the board, our seeing of the world is biological (based on the particular qualities of our species' body-mind), psychological (reflecting subjective projections) and cultural construction. (387)

For Scalapino, things exist even while they are not being perceived by other things, hence the necessity of suspending all kinds of meta-language in order to move closer to them. In the poem above, she erases the distinction between the dog and human beings because she is attempting to think without knowing she is thinking; she wants to step aside of her position as perceiver, because to perceive is to distort. In her interview with Sarah Rosenthal, she explained that "One drops any distinctions about things because one is trying to see what one thing is" (3).

According to Jonathan Stalling, all concerns about the nature of individual things are "non-Buddhist". The author points out that the coexistence of such Daoist ideas alongside ancient Buddhist concepts like that of dependent co-origination is linked to the appearance of a syncretic philosophical language in China in the third and fourth centuries of the CE, the same that would later (in the seventh century) act as a springboard for the Daoism-influenced Zen Buddhism. From Daoism, Zen also inherited some of its defining tenets like the emphasis on seeking enlightenment in one lifetime and the skepticism towards language, which, as we have seen, is central to Scalapino's poetry.

Silence is one of the most prominent leitmotifs of *The Woman Who Could Read the Minds of Dogs*: all of the women in the poem do not seem

to put much trust in language, perhaps because of the role it plays in pinning things down to a fixed identity. One can say that their resistance to definition and categorization is impersonated by one of the characters of the poem, the "woman who let her hair grow / while she was living in a jungle backwater / and clawed and bit when they wanted to force her onto the aeroplace". In the poem cited above, the poetic subject puts her labels and expectations aside and playfully mimics the dog in front of her, an entity which cannot be captured by any kind of slanted concept. Scalapino knows that "no matter how careful one is / pebbles and grains *will be* modified put in a human form", but here she appears to ignore this inevitability: "I was being flippant", she says. She lets her tongue slip forward between her lips, in imitation of the dog, but, at the same time, she is merely having a laugh. It goes without saying that this approach is anything but "scientific", if one considers science's organizing principle to be its pursuit of *scientia*, the Latin word for knowledge. Her approach is very similar to Buddhism's meditative "investigation of the mind", which Timothy Morton deemed to be Object-Oriented in the talk he gave about the matter at the 2012 Society for Literature Science and the Arts conference. The purpose of said meditation, which Morton finds similar to Husserl's cleansing of logic, is precisely to have no purpose, to "get used" to things instead of trying to know them. For Scalapino, as for Morton, things do not expend themselves in the relations that they establish with other things.

The notion that indefiniteness is a constitutive quality of all things is also central to *way*, a poem that opens with an epigraph from David Bohm, in which the physicist claims that "because all of the infinity of factors determining what any given thing is are always changing with time, no such thing can ever remain identical with itself as time passes". In her interview with Rosenthal, Scalapino points out that we're constantly discovering in people that we know "actions that [we] didn't know were in them and now seem significant" (12).

Curiously, in *way*, this inner potential for transformation appears less as a capacity that is inherent to all individuals and more as something that is projected by the authorities and the community onto people that are seen as public nuisances. In "Walking By", the first section of the book, a black man who merely walks by the police is stopped, harassed and

eventually detained; later, we come across a man who says he feels threatened by the inhabitants of the projects because "it wasn't known what people like [that] were going to do" (20). In one of the poems of this section, the poet herself is stopped by the police, who ask her if she has stolen the limousine she was driving. Taken aback by the ridiculous idea that she could ever be seen as the suspect of a crime, Scalapino exclaims: "Why would I ever do that?" The omitted question, however, seems to be: why not? On the following page the poet actually reports that she once had stolen a dress from the department store where she used to work. Maybe the poetic I in this poem is no longer Scalapino, but trying to figure out whether or not that is the case seems to be beside the point. In fact, none of the characters in *way* are ever given a name. One could argue that Scalapino un-names her characters not because she wants to suggest that they are similar or comparable but rather because their actions could have been carried forth by anyone, regardless of who they think they are. According to Scalapino, everyone transports within themselves a self-destructive potential for transformation. In fact, her poetry consists precisely in an exploration of the inherent unpredictability of all things. In her interview with Rosenthal, she tells us that, in order to write, she had to keep undoing her sense of self: "I felt I had to be in conflict with myself to dismantle myself from even whatever opinion I had of myself at any instant" (15).

Things withdraw from one another and from themselves. In *Instead of an Animal*, Scalapino explores the hidden potential of the human body. The poet implies that we cannot know something as familiar to us as our own bodies because they can constantly be given new meanings and purposes. Every poem in the book is accompanied by a drawing (by Scalapino's sister Diane Sophia) that should be experienced in tandem with the text. These drawings feature a series of isolated and overlapping body parts that seem to suggest that the possibilities of combining bodily fragments are endless. At first, this idea appears to be in rapport with Kac's view of bodies as utter surfaces that one can manipulate and mutate at will. Here, however, every combination of body parts is a mere appearance of the body as an ungraspable whole, a mere interpretation, one possible meaning among many.

Throughout the poem, we come across images of male adults giving suck to other adults and children nursing other children. As the following poem tells us, body parts do not have a pre-defined function or meaning:

> Young females will often compare
> their surprise
> to the time
> when they first became aware
> that they were able to suck the fluid out of the male's organ (27)

In *The Woman Who Could Read the Minds of Dogs*, the act of sucking also appears to be connected with the discovery of the hidden properties of things. In the following passage, Scalapino's mother persuades her to eat a number of hors d'oeuvres by injecting magical qualities into the latter and the rocks they are compared with: "she would put hors d'oeuvres / in my mouth with her fingers, saying to me, with each mouth / ful of crust with meat inside it, 'I want you to suck on it, / as if you were sucking the blood from a rock, drop by drop'". In the same book, human females are described as carrying animals in their uterus (Scalapino's mother carries a dog —the poet herself— and a nameless woman a foal), thus vindicating the idea that things have the capacity to assume unpredictable forms.

For Scalapino, everything, even the objects, people, and animals that we are most familiar with, have the capacity to surprise us. In her interview with Rosenthal, Scalapino points out that we are constantly discovering in people that we know "actions that [we] didn't know were in them and now seem significant" (12). According to the poet, everything carries within itself a childlike self-destructive potential. To be oneself is to be in conflict. In her poems, transformations of the self are frequently painful: in one of the sections of *The Woman Who Could Read the Minds of Dogs*, she burns her left hand with a cigarette in order to faithfully replicate the movement of a bird with her own body. She tells us that, in order to write, she had to "[strip] away the definitions of what [she] should be" (14). She had to keep undoing her sense of self: "I felt I had to be in conflict with myself to dismantle myself from even whatever opinion I had of sense of myself at any instant" (15).

III

In conclusion, nothing in Scalapino's poetry is ever reducible to knowable and usable properties. David Bohm affirms in the epigraph of *way* that all things "must be unique, i.e. not completely identical with any other thing in the universe, however similar the two things may be". Ironically, though, what ensures the uniqueness of the living and nonliving entities in Scalapino's poems is their capacity to become other things. In the title poem of *Instead of an Animal*, she tells us: "Instead of an animal, we got an old rag that was rancid-smelling as if it were an animal". Similarities and resonances between things activate their inherent potential for transformation. In another poem of the same book, Scalapino tells us about a man who sets a napkin on fire so that people could imagine the smell of a burning cat:

> The adult male who is eating at the dinner table with some people,
> for instance, sets his napkin on fire
> and lets it blaze as one would light a cat on fire with kerosene
> so that
> people will imagine a cat flaring up like that under their noses.

In one of Sophia's drawings, we see a pair of hands imitating a fish swallowing a smaller fish which, in turn, is swallowing an even smaller one (Picture 1). Here Scalapino seems to be suggesting that the transformations effected by perception upon the world carry real weight, i.e. that the things we imagine or hallucinate correspond to real aspects of the world.

According to Camille Martin, Scalapino was interested in exploring the ways in which memories distort our perception of the things that we encounter: "Our interpretation of phenomena depends upon our perception and memory, and Scalapino goes to the roots of cognition to investigate how we formulate, come to believe in, mnemonic illusions. Her process demonstrates the constructed, impermanent, and creative nature of memory" (18). In one of poems, the narrator asks: "Isn't it interesting how a woman like me / pursues in man after man / the same face or even the same foot or hand". Scalapino makes plain that this power of the imagination to transform things into other things is as creative as it is destructive. In a picture from *Instead of an Animal* (Picture 2), Sophia lined up three skinned ducks behind the image of a pair of hands imitating

the head of a duck. Metaphor can make things resonate with other things and thus bring out their untapped potential but it can also substitute and obliterate them completely.

Kac's art trumpets the idea that the body is obsolete. He points out that, in the future, Bio Artists will be able to create "photosynthesizing mammal[s]" ("Introduction" 18) and all sorts of other hybrid combinations. For him, as we have seen, life is a continuum that mocks all metalinguistic partitions that we try to impose on it. Bodies are utterly malleable and contingent: by entering into new relations, they constantly redefine what they are and the forms that nature allows. Hybridity and connectivity are central to Kac's work. Symbiosis and cooperation, as he reminds us in his introduction to *Signs of Life*, "are evolutionary factors as important (if not more important) than mutation and selection" ("Introduction" 3). Willingly or not, living beings collaborate in their morphological and evolutionary transformation. Kac's work draws attention and helps us come to terms with life's transgenic connectivity. By contrast, the bodies of Scalapino's poetry already carry this potential to become other things within themselves. Relations between natural beings do not exhaust nature's powers of creation, as Timothy Morton also made clear in his address. Scalapino's characters remain connected to a vibrant "emptiness" within that reminds them that their current form is merely contingent. They may, that is, still become a different person or a different natural creature: a rag can pass for an animal, a napkin can turn into a cat and an upstanding woman can suddenly become a shoplifter.

Kac veered into a similar direction in his *GFP Bunny*, an artwork that consisted in making a transgenic rabbit named Alba part of Kac's family without making it undergo the usual unidirectional process of incorporation that turn animals into pets. To be sure, *GFP Bunny* once again evidences Kac's fascination with life as a medley of coalescing forms, the gene he implanted in the bunny's organism originally belonging to a luminescent jellyfish. Life is all about connectivity and that is why "bio art emphasizes the dialogical and the relational (e.g., cross-pollination, social intercourse, cell interaction, interspecies communication)" ("Introduction" 19-20). As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen points out,

> The bunny is a biological and social symbiont, a robust nexus of forces and materialities: the gene-flow from bacteria to

> jellyfish to rabbit; the tactile relation between rabbit and human, genetically impure organisms that are already each alive with their own thriving cosmos of micro-organisms and already bodies more dispersed than bounded. (366)

However, Kac tells us that his project implied thinking "about rabbit agency without anthropomorphizing it" (*Telepresence* 273). He also states: "Understanding how the rabbit sees the world is certainly not enough to appreciate his consciousness, but it allows us to gain insights about its behavior, which leads us to adapt our own to make life more comfortable and pleasant for everyone" (*Telepresence* 274). We cannot be the other but we can certainly try to listen to it, even if that means leaving the safe grounds of human language and moving towards the threshold of the unpredictable and the misunderstood: "Contact with animals allow us to tap into dimensions of the human spirit that are often suppressed in daily life —communication without language" (*Telepresence* 274).

In one of the drawings of *Instead of an Animal*, we see a stout dog with its eyes fixed on the reader (Picture 3). We look at it through several layers of shadows of human hands imitating dogs. Throughout Scalapino's work, these formal overlaps help her make a case for the proximity between all natural forms, how one creature might have been or might still be something completely different. In many of Kac's artworks, no living constellation is disallowed. His aim is to show us that life is inherently hybrid and that biotechnology and Bio Art can read and manipulate nature to catalyze its inherent tendency towards variety. Scalapino, however, posits the idea that all things are unreadable, i.e. they resist being parsed down into translatable and combinable properties. A creature is never simply what its properties allow it to become, the relations it can enter with other living beings. There is always something that resists relationality and translation. One may be able to read the minds of dogs, but there is no guarantee that they will not bite.

Works Cited

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. Afterword. "An Unfinished Conversation about Glowing Green Bunnies." *Queering the Non/Human*. Ed. Myra J. Hird. London: Routledge, 2016.

Heise, Ursula K. "The Android and the Animal." *PMLA*. 124.2. March, 2009.

Kac, Eduardo. "Introduction: Art that Looks You in the Eye: Hybrids, Clones, Mutants, Synthetics, and Transgenics." *Signs of Life. Bio Art and Beyond*. Ed. Kac. London: MIT P, 2007, pp. 1-27.

___. *Telepresence & Bio Art*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005.

Martin, Camille. "Reading the Mind of Events: Leslie Scalapino's Plural Time." Arizona State University. Web. Dec. 17, 2012. https://www.asu.edu/pipercw center/how2journal/archive/online_archive/v2_2_2004/current/feature/martin.htm

Morton, Timothy. "Buddhist Objects." SLSA Annual Conference. Milwaukee. 29 Sept.

Scalapino, Leslie. Interview by Sarah Rosenthal. *Jacket 23*. Jacket Magazine. August 2003. Web. Dec. 17, 2012. http://jacketmagazine.com/23/rosen-scal-iv.html

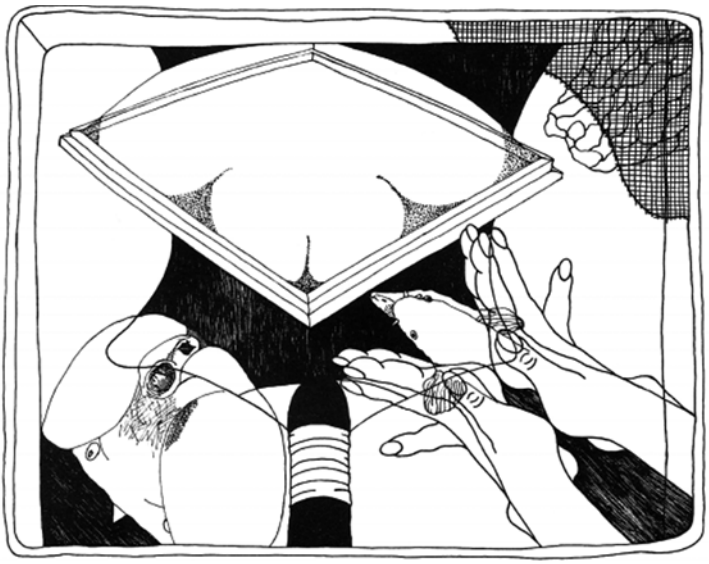
___. *Instead of an Animal*. Kensington: Cloud Marauder Press, 1978.

___. *The Woman Who Could Read the Minds of Dogs*. Berkeley: Sand Dollar, 1976.

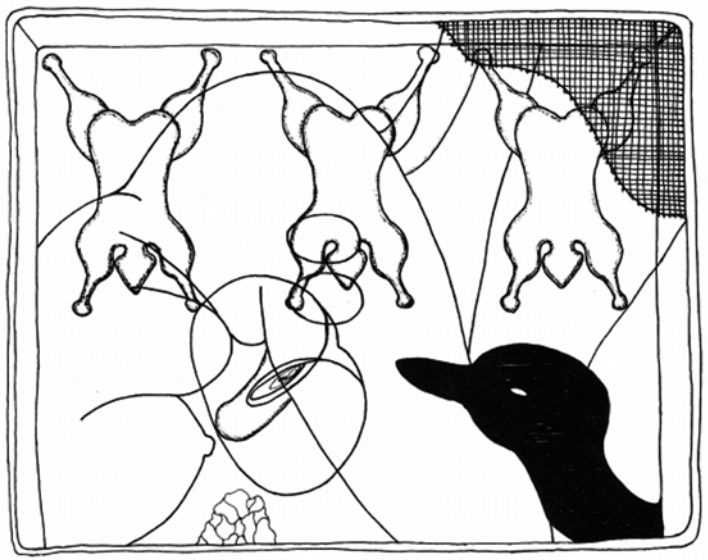
Snyder, Gary. *The Gary Snyder Reader*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1999.

Stalling, Jonathan. "The Poetics of Emptiness: Transformations of Asian Thought in American Poetry." Diss. SUNY Buffalo, 2006.

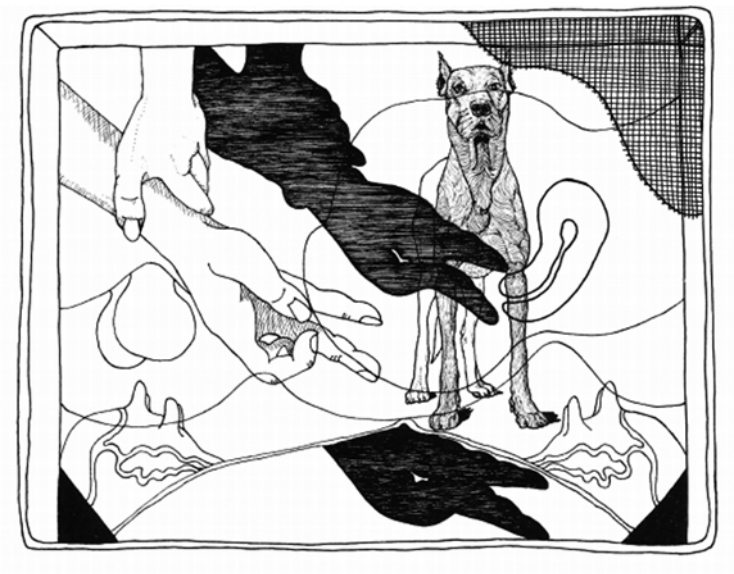
Zylinska, Joanna. *Bioethics in the Age of the New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3

Abstract

In this essay I compare Eduardo Kac's and Leslie Scalapino's conceptions of the hybrid body. Whereas, for Kac, bodies can be defined as networks of relations, for Scalapino bodies carry within them a certain potential for transformation that is never exhausted by the actual forms they assume in the world. Drawing upon Timothy Morton's "Object-Oriented" take on Buddhism, I show Scalapino's mystical poems productively complement Kac's more matter-of-fact approach to the body.

Keywords

Object-Oriented Ontology; Buddhism; Bio Art; Transgenic Poetry; Animals.

Resumo

Neste artigo comparo o modo como Eduardo Kac e Leslie Scalapino pensam a noção do corpo híbrido. Ao passo que, para Kac, os corpos podem ser vistos como redes de relações, para Scalapino estes contêm uma dimensão virtual que nunca se esgota nas formas que assumem no mundo. Baseando-me no trabalho que Timothy Morton (um dos teóricos da chamada "Object-Oriented Ontology") fez sobre o Budismo, pretendo mostrar que os poemas místicos de Scalapino complementam de forma produtiva a visão mais mundana que Kac nos oferece do corpo.

Palavras-Chave

Object-Oriented Ontology; Budismo; Bio Arte; Poesia Transgénica; Animais.

Suburban Gothic Revisited in Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*

Elisabete Lopes
Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal
Centro de Estudos Anglísticos, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 15 2018

Suburban Gothic Revisited in Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*

Following in the footsteps of novels such as Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* (1972), Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974), and Jack Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* (1989), Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides* (1993) rekindles the flame of the Suburban Gothic by weaving a narrative that encompasses the reflections of a group of boys whose adult lives are unremittingly linked to an episode that dates back to their youth, in the 1970s, when they lived with their families in the suburbs of Grosse Pointe, in Detroit, Michigan.

In *The Virgin Suicides*, the story is told with nostalgic undertones as the haunted narrators try to find a logical explanation for the suicide of the Lisbon sisters. They set out to revisit the past and start unburying the facts so as to find an explanation for those tragic events, in an attempt to come with terms with the fact that they were unable to predict or avoid such a bleak outcome.

The first girl who decides to put an end to her life, in the apparently peaceful Lisbon's home, is Cecilia. In her first unexpected suicide attempt, she slits her wrists, but the family discovers her body on the tub and she is immediately taken to the hospital. However, Cecilia tries to kill herself again and, this time, she succeeds. She throws herself out of the window of the Lisbon's house, thus falling upon the fence. The incident leaves the neighbours in a state of shock. In an attempt to disguise the truth of the facts, Mrs. Lisbon tries to dismiss it, explaining them that it was just an unfortunate accident. From that moment on, the girls start building their grief secretly and they become more united than ever, almost as if they comprised one entity, sharing one body and one soul.[1]

---

[1] The boys refer to the Lisbon sisters as if they constituted "a single species". Please see Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides* (112).

In an effort to bring some comfort to the girls, the boys invite Lux, Bonnie, Therese, and Mary to the prom. They ally themselves with Trip Fontaine who has manifested interest in one of the sisters, Lux, and manages to approach the Lisbons, convincing the strict parents that it would be good for the girls to attend the school's celebration. Mr. and Mrs. Lisbon acquiesce to the boys' request; however, they set up a rigid schedule for the girls to be home.

On the night of the prom the boys describe the girls as a happy party, despite their outdated and conservative dresses. At the end of the ball, after being elected queen and king of the prom, Trip and Lux leave the facilities where the ball took place and head towards the football field, so as to be alone. As a result, Lux arrives home later than what it had been initially agreed and the girls fall prey to Mrs. Lisbon's abusive behaviour. The rigid religious mother who feared the "dark urges of dating" (Eugenides 116) decides to take the girls out of school, thus locking them permanently inside the house. After this awkward decision, the boys try to communicate with the girls, but they are not successful. Consequently, they spy on them, thoroughly scrutinizing their domestic imprisonment that will have its epilogue in the death of the five girls. Despite all the efforts, the boys are unable to rescue them. As a result, they become forever haunted by the ghosts of the blond sisters and their bleak house across the street.

Considering this dreadful sequence of events, this essay aims at examining the tropes and imagery employed by Jeffrey Eugenides that contribute to entrench the novel amidst the Gothic genre. Indeed, by grounding his novel upon Gothic motifs, the author will turn the mild geography of suburbs into a dark place, threatened by untamed nature and tainted with death. The Lisbon house will then become the doomed house, bearing the scarlet letter that breaks up with the neatness and uniformity of the classic suburban landscape. In this dim scenario, only innocence is left alive in the boys' active imaginations.

1. Suburban Gothic Landscapes

In *The Virgin Suicides* Eugenides revisits some of the timeless Gothic tropes such as the haunted house, family tensions, untamed nature, monstrosity (the ghost and the vampire), the uncanny, and contagion. The

Gothic is a literary genre that allows a profound examination of all the problems and anxieties that afflict our society in a subversive manner, adopting a darker perspective and a harsh social critique, while embracing landscapes rife with uncertainty, fear, terror, and horror. In the specific case of *The Virgin Suicides*, the epicenter of the Gothic is lodged in the suburbs. Resorting to gothic tropes, Eugenides sets out to explore the hidden aspects that contribute to undermine the traditional idyllic nature of suburbia. In *Love and Death in the American Novel* (2003) Leslie Fiedler contends that the American Gothic assumes a special relevance because it informs "a literature of darkness in the land of light and affirmation" (29).

The suburbs are culturally and socially connoted with well-being and prosperity, a real beacon in this land of light that Fiedler refers to; however, Eugenides's reflection brings to the surface all the tensions, anxieties, and fears that are coiled underneath this utopian construct. According to Roger Webster, the suburbs are "a region existing on the margins of city and country, (…) a surface where the mundane and monotony prevail, consumerism and commodification determine lifestyles and time and space are reduced to the garden or television screen. Suburbia has no 'history'" (2).

Holding a different perspective, Martin Dines contends that Eugenides subverts this belief, since the author envisions the suburbs as a space where repressed ethic memories interfere with the blissful image of the suburbs:

> Eugenides's novel reconstitutes the postwar suburbs as a historical space, a site of conflict undergoing change. Eugenides's gothic motifs— doublings, infestations, ruination, coalesce around the eruption of repressed ethnic memories into the cultural blankness of the suburbs. (961)

The neighbourhood boys are aware of this intentional attempt so as to eradicate the family ethnic roots, as the collective narrator observes that their grandparents "spoke foreign languages and lived in converted attics like buzzards" (Eugenides 55).[2] Furthermore, all the tensions and

---

[2] The names of some suburban families clearly disclose their ethnic origins: the Hessens are a family from Germany, the Karafilis are from Greece, and the Stamarowskis from Poland.

contradictions that threaten to put into question the serenity of the suburbs are therefore made occult or masqueraded. Cecilia's suicide is dismissed by Father Moody as an accident (Eugenides 37) and the local newspaper refuses to make any reference to it, because it didn't tie in with the overall positive contents of its pages. In an ironic tone, the narrator remarks, "In the local newspaper, 'The "Welcome, Neighbor"' section continued to feature newcomers attracted by our town's greenness and quiet, its breathtaking verandas" (Eugenides 93).

Both the repressed memories of the dwellers and their effort at masquerading sad incidents lend the suburban space an uncanny quality. The boys acknowledge these contradictions, as their collective voice remarks, "We realized that the version of the world they rendered for us was not the world they really believed in" (Eugenides 55).

Aware of the utopian nature of suburbia, Eugenides selects it as the set of the story, gradually turning its pleasant and quiet landscape into something gloomy and dystopian that can easily fit the framework of the Suburban Gothic. As Bernice Murphy notes in *The Suburban Gothic in the American Popular Culture*:

> (…) the Suburban Gothic is a sub-genre concerned, first and foremost, with playing upon the lingering suspicion that even the most ordinary-looking neighbourhood, or house, or family, has something to hide, and that no matter how calm and settled a place looks, it is only ever a moment away from dramatic (and generally sinister) incident. (2)

This dramatic familiar incident contemplated in Murphy's reflection corresponds to the sudden deaths of the Lisbon sisters. The suicides that occur in the Lisbon household signal a separateness of the family Lisbon from the idyllic concept of suburbia; they suddenly become the strange family, thus incarnating the "Other". As Joanna Wilson refers in "The End of the Good Life: Representations of Suburbia and the American Nightmare", "Within these communities, neighbours are continually monitored to ensure adherence to strict social codes of behaviour: if one does not conform, one risks arousing the suspicions of one's fellow suburbanites, or even being ostracized from the community" (4).

Sara Wasson, in her article "Gothic Cities and Suburbs, 1880-Present," also envisions the suburban landscape as a geographical area prone to the emergence of horror. The author claims that:

> In suburban Gothic, city peripheries become sites of threat while the suburbs lack the setting, claustrophobic conditions that make industrialized cities such ripe settings for Gothic drama, they nonetheless hold ample opportunities for horror. Here, the confinement can be metaphoric: the space can be experienced as a site of oppressive normalization. (Wasson 36)

In this Gothic novel, the Lisbon family is depicted as a discrete Catholic conservative family. The father is a respected teacher while the mother is basically a stay-at-home mother. Mrs. Lisbon plays an important role in the development of the story, because of her severe restrictions upon the girls.[3] These are not allowed to wear modern clothes, to use perfume, to read feminine magazines or to listen to certain kinds of records. Isabella Van Elferen, in *Nostalgia or Perversion? Gothic Rewriting from the Eighteenth Century Until the Present Day*, highlights the role of the maternal within the Gothic tradition, stating that:

> Although the Gothic hero-villain and the mother may be said to do the same work as both police their daughter's behavior according to patriarchal prescriptions, it is the latter terrorist, —the mother— who became extremely popular in the twentieth century. (32)

According to the boys, Mrs. Lisbon exhibited a "queenly iciness" (Eugenides 8). The narrator stresses that she was quite different from her offspring both in terms of her physical appearance and personality:

> Whenever we saw Mrs. Lisbon we looked in vain for some sign of the beauty that must have once been hers. But the

---

[3] Mrs. Lisbon is also an ardent religious Catholic woman, similarly to Carrie's mother, in Stephen King's Gothic novel. In both literary works, the prom marks a period in the girls' lives. Carrie's humiliation during the ball triggers her supernatural powers and the girl starts causing chaos all across town, until she dies. In the same fashion, it is the events of the prom night that determine the girls' domestic seclusion and their subsequent deaths.

> plump arms, the brutally cut-steel-wool hair, and the librarian glasses foiled us every time. We saw her only rarely, in the morning, fully dressed (…). (Eugenides 8)

Contrasting with Mrs. Lisbon's authoritarian personality, Mr. Lisbon is portrayed as compliant, alienated and unresponsive. Joana Wilson argues that the father figure has undergone emasculation (8).[4]

When their first daughter, Cecilia, dies, Mr. and Mrs. Lisbon are incapable of reading the signs that something is wrong with the way they are bringing up their daughters. However, this detachment seems to endure as both of them stay somehow emotionally distant and remain unable to understand the real reasons that led their other daughters to a similar faith. In fact, afterwards, when the boys interview Mrs. Lisbon, they get quite astounded by her discourse which ultimately contributes to transform her into a kind of monstrous mother figure: "We felt that she, being the girls' mother, understood more why they had killed themselves. But she said; 'That's what's so frightening. I don't. Once they're out of you, they're different'" (Eugenides 143). The lack of identification with her daughters stands out in the cold observation she puts forward.[5] Mrs. Lisbon seems disappointed in the fact that she was unable to produce a replica of herself. As the five sisters are all very different from her, or from the feminine version she idealized in her mind, she creates a sort of abyss between herself and them. On the one hand, she is incapable of identifying with her children, or to communicate with them, but on the other hand, the girls also refuse to recognize themselves in the role model she provides.

Bearing this context in mind, it is liable to see that Mrs. Lisbon's way of thinking seems to be in unison with Simone de Beauvoir's discourse concerning the figure of the mother:

---

[4] In fact, the boys' collective narrative voice notices his "girlish weeping" by the time Cecilia dies (Eugenides 8).

[5] Mrs. Lisbon successive pregnancies suggest a possible diagnosis of post-partum depression, a detail which is never discussed in the novel. The Lisbons were, in fact, a dysfunctional family. At some point in the novel, the alienation and distance of Mr. Lisbon towards the daughters appears to be evident, when it said that for him, "children were only strangers you agreed to live with" (Eugenides 59).

> The mother's attitude towards her grown-up daughter is most ambivalent: in her son she looks for a god; in her daughter she finds a double. The double is a dubious personage, who assassinates his original, as we see, for example, in Poe's tales and in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. Thus, in becoming a woman, the daughter condemns her mother to death; and yet she lets her live on. (…) Many a mother hardens into hostility: she does not accept being supplanted by the ingrate who owes her life. (600)

In this way, as it is very typical of the Gothic narrative, the mirror that is supposed to establish identification between mother and daughter is shattered, and, in the particular case of *The Virgin Suicides*, it brings about the most disastrous consequences.

2. The Mysterious Dialogue between the Sisters and Nature

The girls appear in the novel closely related to nature. Indeed, both of them seem to share a common language, a sort of secret code that the boys are unable to decipher. Heather Eaton, in her article "Women, Nature, Earth," that dwells upon the reasons that lie beneath the relationship of women to the natural world, asserts:

> (…) women and nature are connected historically through a conceptual symbolic association. (…) Euro-western cultures developed ideas about the world that contain a hierarchal and dualistic vision. Dualistic conceptual structures identify women with femininity, emotions, the body, sexuality, earth or nature and materiality; and man with masculinity, reason, the mind (…). (7)

Elizabeth Bronfen in her work *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* observes that, in fact, within an essentialist perspective, women have always been connected to nature.[6] The author subscribes to

---

[6] According to the narrator's account, Therese had a vivid fondness for the study of trees, "Therese was the one who was into trees. She knew everything about them. All the varieties. How deep the roots went" (Eugenides 184).

Eaton's point of view, when she notes, "One aspect of popular mythology (…) is that of casting objectivity, reason, distinctions, mind, scientific thought as masculine and feeling, fluidity, nature, the domain of scientific inquiry as feminine" (66).

In *The Virgin Suicides*, the boys can be seen as a symbol for rationality whereas the girls are associated with the wilderness and unpredictability of nature. This detectivesque desire to underscore the motifs that led to the girls' suicides makes them gather everything that they can find which might be connected to the girls, mainly personal objects and garbage disposals, granting them possession of a "strange curatorship" (Eugenides 186). Therefore, in the same way that scientists try to scrutinize the secrets of nature, so the boys strive to achieve a coherent body of evidence capable of lending them some sense of closure, some sort of comfort as to the truth that lies beneath the girls' demise.

This aspect stands out when the boys get access to Cecilia's journal. Although they identify in it references to nature, they do not seem to be aware of their meaning, as the following passage reveals: "Many people felt the illuminated pages constituted a hieroglyphics of unreadable despair, though the pictures looked cheerful for the most part" (Eugenides 41). In truth, the journal displays a mixture of ecological references intertwined with magic, as this passage illustrates:

> Maidens with golden hair dripped sea-blue tears into the book's spine. Grape-colored whales spouted blood around a newspaper item (pasted in) listing arrivals to the endangered species list. Six hatchlings cried from shattered shells near an entry made on Easter. (Eugenides 32)

The journal also contains pictures, such as the one that shows a "weeping Indian paddling his canoe along a polluted stream, or the body counts from the evening war" (Eugenides 44). The memories that the boys hold of Cecilia show her likewise engaged in activities that are linked to the natural world: "She always wore the wedding dress and her bare feet were dirty. In the afternoons, when sun lit the front yard, she would watch ants swarming in sidewalk cracks or lie on her back in fertilized grass staring up at the clouds" (Eugenides 17). However, the most poignant event that contributes to reassert the girls' intimate connection to nature takes place when the elms that ornate the neighbourhood become infected with a fungus.

The sisters refuse the Parks Department workers to cut down the tree that is inside their yard. The way the boys depict the scene where the sisters defend their tree recalls an ancient druid ritual, as the narrator reports:

> The next day, a short article appeared, accompanied by a grainy picture of the girls embracing the tree (…). They seem to be worshipping it like Druids. In the picture, you can't tell that the tree ends starkly twenty feet above their inclined heads. (Eugenides 184)

The tree has a strong emotional relevance for the Lisbons, and somehow it stands, in metaphorical terms, as a symbol for their lost sister Cecilia, who was the first of the girls to commit suicide. Furthermore, the girls knew that their younger sister made references to what was happening to the elms in the neibhourhood, and showed revulsion regarding the decision of the Parks Department. The boys are also acquainted with Cecilia's opinion, as the narrator observes: "In cynical entries she suggests the trees aren't sick at all, and that the deforesting is a plot to make everything flat" (Eugenides 44). From a feminist point of view, Cecilia's claim that men are trying to make everything flat is relevant because within a symbolic frame it points to the fact that men are trying to build a world according to their personal image that is physically different from the feminine, which is characterized by having curves. Curiously, the same metaphor is used by the American poet Sylvia Plath who, in her poetry, identified masculinity and lack of creativity with flatness. Moreover, in some of her poems, this flatness is clearly linked to maleness and power.[7] Coincidentally, Plath died prematurely and also committed suicide.

Amber B. Vayo, in "What the Green Grass Hides: Denial and Deception in Suburban Detroit," argues that the elm tree figures in Eugenides's novel as the most prominent Gothic prop, as the elm serves "as a barrier between city and suburb, allowing a denial of race and economic unrest, but they also serve as a window dressing throughout the

---

[7] The way Cecilia dies, impaled upon the fence, can be symbolically read as the triumph of patriarchal and phallic principles over femininity, reason imposing itself on nature.

suburbs to keep the neighbours from examining their own superficiality and unoriginal attitudes" (117).

In Eugenides' novel, it is noteworthy that the transience of the natural world appears strongly linked to the Lisbons, as they are metaphorically compared to fly-fish, insects whose lives are very short. The narrator comments, "That was in June, fish-fly season, when each year our town is covered by the flotsam of those ephemeral insects" (Eugenides 4).

According to Vayo, the fish-flies also work metaphorically in the novel "as the artifice of denial creating a barrier between what is on the surface and seeing what is underneath it" (112). On the other hand, the insidious presence of these insects is reminiscent of the decomposing process of a corpse. In other words, the pristine body of Grosse Pointe is dissolving, and as it does, the vulnerable skeleton arises to the surface conveying its fragilities and inner contradictions.

3. The "Rotting House across the Street"

As the story of the novel progresses, the Lisbon house becomes misplaced among the singularity of the suburbs. After Cecilia's death and after the girls' confinement, the house assumes the form of a haunted castle or even a prison. This aspect unremittingly turns the Lisbon house into an iconic image ever-present in the Gothic tradition. Maggie Kilgour, in *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, reminds us that whenever horror invades the domestic sphere, the house is literally or metaphorically transformed into a castle or a prison: "In the female gothic, the private world is turned temporarily into a house of horrors; the domestic realm appears in distorted nightmare forms in the images of the prison, the castle" (38).

In *The Virgin Suicides*, the house where the family lived prior to the girls' domestic seclusion has nothing in common with its original shape. It is severely deteriorated through time, becoming reminiscent of a ruin that stands as a privileged space within the literary Gothic tradition.[8]

---

[8] The image of the Lisbon house and its progressive decay sustains some resemblance to the iconic house of Edgar Allan Poe's tale "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), a landmark within the American Gothic genre.

In this fashion, Eugenides transports the suburban house of the Lisbons to a kind of wilderness, making it assume the features of a classical haunted home. Similarly to the trees and the girls, the house appears to be afflicted by a kind of ailment.[9] As a result of this ailment, it gradually starts displaying similarities with a ruin. In this respect, Lara Baker Whelan adds:

> Taking the ruin as the main feature of the suburban Gothic that lingers from its eighteenth century origins, we find many texts that investigate a ruined suburban landscape as a space completely divorced from the cultural ideal it was supposed to represent. (101-102)

Indeed, due to its decay, the house becomes completely detached from the suburban landscape. Even though it remains there in a spatial dimension, it does not belong there aesthetically as it has just stopped reflecting back the suburban ideals and aspirations. It is rendered a beacon for something corrupted, oddly standing out in a clean and neat geography of suburbia as the narrator underlines:

> (…) the Lisbon house began to look less cheerful. The blue slate roof, which in certain lights had resembled a pond suspended in the air, visibly darkened. The yellow bricks turned brown. Bats flew over the chimney in the evening (…). (Eugenides 88)

Allison Millbank's observation regarding the depiction of the ruin in Gothic novels, easily applies to the misplacement of the Lisbon house. The author notes, "in Gothic novels of the eighteenth century, the landscape is littered like a surrealist canvas with broken pillars and buildings which, isolated in time and space, have lost any relation to the world around them" (9).

The narrator also highlights that: "The window shades had closed like eyelids and the shaggy flower beds made the house looked abandoned" (Eugenides 139-140). In a skillful way, Jeffrey Eugenides sets out to

---

[9] The boys actually envision the girls as getting sick inside a house which has turned into a ward: "When we thought of the girls along these lines, it was as feverish creatures, exhaling soupy breath, succumbing day by day in their isolated ward" (Eugenides 157-158).

transform the sophisticated house in the suburbs into something wild and outcast, "the rotting house across the street" (Eugenides 186). This is a house, as Millbank stresses, isolated in time and space, which has lost all the ties it had with the surrounding geography.

The presumable horror the girls suffer at home, with all its repression and claustrophobia, thus becomes visible on the outside. The secret life of the Lisbon girls, their repression and their unhappiness become transparent to the public through their progressively derelict house, as it is showcased in this passage: "The house receded behind its mists of youth being choked off, and even our parents began to mention how dim and unhealthy the place looked" (Eugenides 145). Moreover, the neighbours' reaction to the Lisbon house is gradually enveloped by superstition, as it was believed that stepping on the Lisbon's porch was bad luck (Eugenides 95). To make this scenario worse the narrator adds that, at some point, Mrs. Lisbon stopped cooking for the girls, so the girls survived by foraging (Eugenides 147); the family burned their own furniture in order to warm themselves (Eugenides 208); and the living-room transformed itself into a rain forest, since the family did not bother repairing the household leaks. Hence, the house slowly metamorphoses into a sort of coffin. The narrator likewise remarks that the smell emanating from the Lisbon house "was the smell of wet plaster, drains clogged (…) mildew cabinets, leaking pipes" (Eugenides 208).[10]

As claimed by Matthew Sivils, in the article "American Gothic and the Environment, 1800-Present," the manifestation of the Ecological Gothic occurs when there is a contrast between an idyllic and peaceful set with the secrets and horrors it withholds. Sivils argues that,

> Ultimately, the power of the American environmental Gothic resides in its genius for playing upon the terror that resides behind a curtain of pastoral beauty, forcing us to recognize the ecological horror buried, corpselike, in the landscape. (130)

---

[10] The narrator also compares the smell given off by the house to bad breath. This comparison metaphorically suggests the possibility of the door of the house being read as a foul mouth, as the following passage enlightens: "The smell was partly bad breath, cheese, milk, tongue film, but also the singed smell of drilled teeth" (Eugenides 165).

It is precisely the secret of what lies inside the suburban house that gives rise to the awakening of the ecological Gothic. Allegorically, the interior of the Lisbon house is rendered intertwined with the exterior, the first being a reflective mirror for the second. Eventually, it is this promiscuous relationship that ends up by unburying the corpse, the secret that the house hides within its walls. The metaphorical corpse is the idea of a family togetherness being decomposed, fractured, as a dysfunctional mother locks up their daughters in an attempt of stopping time so as to avoid her daughters to flourish into womanhood.[11] Unconsciously, she seems unable to cope with the fact that her children are turning into adolescent sexual women. By keeping them inside the house, she intends to preserve their innocence, as if they were butterflies pinned to a board.

As if emulating the girls' sadness, nature acquires a hostile character. It also deteriorates in the surrounding landscape, as the following passage exemplifies:

> A spill at the River Rouge Plant increased phosphates in the lake producing a scum of algae so thick it clogged outboard engines. Our beautiful lake began to look like a lily pond, carpeted with undulating foam. (Eugenides 234)

The natural world seems to echo the Lisbon's sadness and discontentment. Nature responds negatively to the girls' imprisonment in their own home. The house and its yard begin to look like a piece of wilderness misplaced amidst the suburbs, a place now enveloped by monstrous bushes, as the following passage discloses:

> (…) the Lisbon leaves went unraked (…) from time to time (…) we looked over at the Lisbon house, its walls accumulating autumn's dampness, its littered and varicolored lawn hemmed in by lawns becoming increasingly exposed and green. When they blew onto other people's lawns there was grumbling. These aren't *my* leaves. (Eugenides 92)

---

[11] Actually, the neighborhood boys notice that, at the Lisbon home, the photos of the Lisbon sisters "cease about the time Therese turned twelve," (Eugenides 229) a fact that indicates that Mrs. Lisbon was in a state of denial, wishing that her daughters would never grew up to become women.

According to Andrew Smith and William Hughes, in their pioneer research about this new trend of the Gothic fiction, entitled *Ecogothic*,[12] this branch of the Gothic genre can be said to be present when nature appears as "a space of crisis which conceptually creates a point of contact with the ecological" (3), thus appearing to operate as the repository for such anxieties.

Undeniably, the gradual deterioration of the house and the surrounding landscape reveal the effects of nature undergoing a crisis, since it metaphorically mirrors the Lisbon sisters' psyche. It is in this vein that Jeffrey Eugenides' approach to nature acquires its marked Gothic undertones and, as a result, seems to diverge from Emerson's transcendentalism. In this context, Mathew Sivils acknowledges that what fundamentally differentiates the Gothic and the Dark Romanticism from the Transcendentalism resides:

> (…) in how they answer the question whether this human melding with the environment is to be enjoyed or feared. Most works of nature writing invite us to see the natural world as a beneficent entity where mankind may seek answers to the mysteries of existence and find solace from an increasingly urbanized world. American Gothic, however, wants us to fear the non-human, to dread the vengeance of animals and the environment, and to dread the horrific fact that our bodies and minds are entwined with the land itself and will eventually decompose back into it. (124-125)

The unraked leaves that spread from the Lisbon's yard evoke once more the trope of contagion. The dwellers of the neighbourhood feel the need to stress that those are not their leaves, in an effort to reassert themselves that the "illness" resides in the Lisbons' home, not in theirs. They try to comfort themselves by trying to shield themselves behind a fragile security wall.

There is also an underlying comparison between the bodies of the girls and the body of the house. Both of them are rendered prisons. The

---

[12] *The Road* (2006) by Corman McCarthy constitutes a sharp example of the Ecogothic as the novel portrays a post-apocalyptical world where motherhood issues are also raised.

boys themselves perceive the limitations inherent in the female body when the narrator declares, "We felt the imprisonment of being a girl, the way it made your mind active and dreamy, and how you ended up knowing which colors went together" (Eugenides 43).

Cecilia's portrayal embodies this flawed and contradictory vision that society displays regarding the expectations inherent in the female role. On the one hand, when the boys notice her wandering about dressed in a white wedding dress she evokes purity, but on the other hand, the reference to her black underwear along with the red lips equate her with the figure of a "harlot." This paradoxical image of femininity indicates that Cecilia is herself a repository of contradiction. In a clever way, Jeffrey Eugenides transforms Cecilia in a sort of personification of the hidden inconsistencies that haunt the suburbs. Figuratively, she thus operates as double for the suburbs because she sustains its duplicity and, similarly to what happens to the young girl, the suburb will eventually succumb to this unsustainable state of denial.

Interestingly, and although the tone of the novel is more in tandem with Gothic traditional representations of the natural world, Eugenides, in paralleling the girls with nature as something inaccessible to the boys, somehow becomes closer to the Emersonian perspective, as the following passage shows: "The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence" (Emerson 6). The Lisbons, like the stars in the example given, trigger a reverence and adoration by the boys thereby remaining somehow far from their grasp throughout the whole novel.

4. The Vampiric Lux and the Ghostly Sisters

As previously observed, the Lisbon house gradually becomes very reminiscent of a castle in ruins. In this scenario, Lux is appropriately transformed into a vampire. Indeed, it is possible to state that there are two moments in the novel where the image of the vampire is evoked and both of them concern Lux. One passage bears evident reference to her teeth: "When she smiled, her mouth showed too many teeth, but at night,

Trip Fontaine dreamed of being beaten by each one" (Eugenides 79).[13] Another reference appears in an occasion when she leaves home, at night, so as to say goodbye to Trip Fontaine. She is only wearing a white night-gown and this apparent resemblance to Lucy Westenra, one of the main female characters from Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897), quickly becomes evident, when she climbs into his car and practically rapes him, as it is illustrated in this passage:

> (…) suddenly the air inside the car churned. He found himself grasped by his long lapels, pulled forward and pushed back, as creature with hundred mouths started sucking the marrow from his bones. She said nothing as she came on like a starved animal. (Eugenides 85-86)

Trip Fontaine's fantasies concerning Lux always entangle violent images; he dreams of being flayed alive, or envisions her like a mythic being or ancient creature endowed with preternatural powers: "Years later, he was still amazed by Lux's singleness of purpose, her total lack of inhibitions, her mythic mutability that allowed her to possess three or four arms at once" (Eugenides 87). Not only Trip, but also the boys are afflicted by images in which Lux is identified with a supernatural being. After the girls' confinement, the blonde girl becomes a constant inhabitant of their nightly reveries: "And, we'd to admit, too, that in our most intimate moments, alone at night with our beating hearts (…) what comes most often is Lux, succubus of those (…) nights" (Eugenides 147). Later in the novel, after the girls are taken out of school and consequently confined to the interior of their home, the narrator comments: "A few weeks after Mrs. Lisbon shut the house in maximum-security isolation, the sightings of Lux making love on top of the roof began" (Eugenides 141). She is described as an unnatural being, impelled by a strong death drive, given the fact that she remains there despite the adverse weather. In an image that strikingly evokes the vampire, Lux stoically endures the cold, luring boys to her

---

[13] Actually, in the novel, the narrator curiously remarks that, "Mary, like her sisters, appeared to have two extra canine teeth" (Eugenides 63).

rooftop, hence metaphorically feeding on them.[14] Her detachment and her absence of feelings are noted by the boys who become fast food for a hunger that cannot be satisfied and apparently does not grant Lux any satisfaction either. The boys who made love to Lux noticed that, "her collarbones collected water" (Eugenides 148) and the taste of "digestive fluids" (Eugenides 148) could be felt in her mouth, evincing clear signs of "malnourishment or illness" (Eugenides 148). Curiously, the boys seem to envisage themselves as mere objects under Lux's control, as they report "that they had served as only the most insignificant footholds in Lux's ascent, and, in the end, even though they had been carried to the peak, they couldn't tell us what lay beyond" (Eugenides 148). Those boys observed that, "despite her eagerness, she didn't seem to like it much and many boys described similar inattention" (Eugenides 148). Another resemblance that brings back the emblematic novel *Dracula*, and places the vampire among the suburbs, is the fact that the Lisbon house is depicted as a haven for bats. The boys notice that, when the evening falls, they whirl around the Lisbon's house chimney.

Alongside the vampiric features that characterise Lux, the resemblance of the Lisbons sisters to ghosts is also noticeable. This image emerges very clearly in the passage where the boys encounter the girls at school:

> They passed beneath the great school clock, the black finger of the minute hand pointing down at their soft heads. We always expected the clock to fall, but it never did, and soon the girls had skipped past the danger, their skirts growing transparent in the light coming from the halls far end, revealing the wishbones of their legs. If we followed, however, the girls would vanish, and, looking into classrooms they might have entered, we would see every other face but theirs (…). (Eugenides 100)

In the neighbourhood boys' imaginations, the Lisbons become ethereal female figures that do not belong to the side of the living nor the side of

---

[14] In *Dracula*, after being bitten by the vampire, Lucy also becomes promiscuous and afflicted by a strong appetite for blood. Lux undergoes a similar transformation after the prom night. In this context, the name Lux stands as an abbreviation for luxury.

the dead. Symbolically, by portraying the girls in an ambiguous fashion, Eugenides intentionally tries to stress both the sisters' atemporality and inaccessibility.[15]

5. Contamination: The Fear of Breathing Toxic Suicidal Vapours

In *The Virgin Suicides*, there is the underlying idea that the girls, like the elms in that suburban area, were the victims of some sort of malady. The fear that this malady would spread to the other elms actually mimics the fear of the neighbours concerning the contamination of their daughters by the Lisbons' "suicidal infection." Cleverly, Eugenides appropriates another Gothic trope to reinforce the dark nature of this account: the threat of an impending contamination.[16] As Fred Botting contends in *Gothic*, this fear of contamination, in its literal and metaphorical dimension still endures, as it remains a current manifestation of the literary Gothic and horror fiction. As Botting underlines, this dread of contagion can be related to physical aspects or conversely are associated to metaphorical and psychological aspects. In the first case, anxieties that are connected to the terror of a spreading disease are explored while, in the second situation, it is the propagation of an ideology or emotional state that is feared (Botting 177).

Indeed, this terror of being contaminated afflicts all the Lisbons' neighbours, as the suicides of the sisters were seen by the local community as kind of infection, a potential disease emanating from some kind of mysterious source that was lodged inside the Lisbon girls. The narrator states that Cecilia's suicide:

---

[15] Eugenides envelops the Lisbons in an almost mythic atmosphere. Later in the novel, the local community starts to believe they were actually seers (Eugenides 244). The newspapers treat their deaths as if they were victims of a suicidal pact involving Satanic rites and black magic (Eugenides 176). They inhabit the boys' imaginations as a kind of teenage witches "who were all synchronized in their lunar rhythms" (Eugenides 23).

[16] Bram Stoker's *Dracula* also tackles issues that intimately concern the topic contamination both in literal and figuratively terms. In this novel, the vampire is the vehicle of transmission of the disease.

> (…) was seen as a kind of disease infecting those close at hand. (…) Transmission became explanation. The other girls, safe in their own rooms, had smelled something strange, sniffed the air, but ignored it. (Eugenides 157)

The novel shows that the boys were well aware that this fear had no rational basis to be supported. They promptly dismiss the possibility of the existence of any illness that could have been infecting the Lisbons. This is openly referred by the narrator the night the boys are allowed to take the girls to the prom: "Even up close, the girls didn't seem depressed. They settled into the seats, not minding the tight fit. (…) they began chattering immediately" (Eugenides 123).

Unintentionally, the narrator attributes their fictional disease to "the problem that has no name", a term coined by Betty Friedan, in her referential feminist manifesto called *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan attributed the causes of feminine depression to the way they were brought up and to society that only had to offer these girls a husband and a home.[17] Most girls at the time had the ambition of taking up a career and this kind of thought was frowned upon by society. The boys could perceive that feeling of doom that emanated from the sisters, their crescent disappointment concerning a world that was progressively moving away from nature and, to a certain extent, from femalehood. As the narrator remarks: "In the end, the tortures tearing the Lisbon girls pointed to a simple reasoned refusal to accept the world as it was handed down to them, so full of flaws" (Eugenides 245). Like the elm trees and the seasonal fly-fish, the girls seemed incapable of dealing with a world that was rife with scientific theories, technological advancements, that was gradually retrieving from its natural essence.

---

[17] This observation made by the narrator reinforces the fact that the future was something imposed by society, and the feminine fate was somehow already sealed: "There is no discussion of how they feel or what they want out of life; there is only the descending order— grandmother, mother, daughters— with back yard outside under rain, and the dead vegetable garden" (Eugenides 145).

6. Conclusion

The teenage boys realize that this sort of disease that caused the deaths of the Lisbons was something that overcame the geography of the suburbs and spatial reality itself. It was a disease whose virus was encroached in the heart of the American Dream. According to the narrator's view, the tragedy of the Lisbon household was believed to have spread to America:

> Something sick at the heart of the country had infected the girls. Our parents thought it had to do with our music, our godlessness, or the loosening of morals regarding sex we hadn't even had. (…) The Lisbon girls became a symbol of what was wrong with the country, the pain it inflicted on even its most innocent citizens. (Eugenides 231)

The suburbs, operating in the novel as an effigy for conformity, prove to be no place for girls like the Lisbons to flourish, because they are too synchronized with nature. They refuse the artificial gender constructs and fictional lives inherent in the suburban ideal. They have fertile imaginations and a potential to be creative, different. The too-ordered and symmetrical landscape of the suburbs is rendered no match for their creative and dreamy thoughts. In this way, the girls' asymmetry then becomes a disease within the symmetry of the suburbs. Their wild mindset is too asymmetric to fit in the neat geometry of the suburban landscape.

In the end of the novel, Eugenides transforms the girls into martyrs, as the sisters are elevated to the status of saints, "like something behind a glass like an exhibit" (Eugenides 221). As a matter of fact, the coroner responsible for the autopsy describes the Lisbons' bodies as pure, stressing "the incredible cleanliness of the girls' bodies (…) showing no signs of wastage or alcoholism" (Eugenides 221). Intelligently, the symbol of the Virgin present in the cards the sisters use to communicate with the outside world before their demise, conflates with their earthly natural bodies.[18] By

[18] A short time prior to the suicides, the sisters communicate with the boys through the spreading of these small cards with the image of the Virgin Mary. Remarkably, when Cecilia tries to kill herself for the first time, she is described serenely floating in the bathtub, holding a laminated picture of the Virgin (Eugenides 4).

turning them into a "congregation of angels" (Eugenides 25) upon Earth, Eugenides pays homage both to the sacred feminine and nature.

In the novel it is implied that the boys always kept their youth alive owing to the fact that they could not ever let go the memory of the Lisbon sisters. This strong event has inexorably anchored them to the past and although they live in the present and are adults, there is always this place where they go back to, where they can be in communion with their inner child. It is through the memory of the Lisbon sisters that they can reach their own secret places, their own private heaven. It can be said that the narrator of *The Virgin Suicides*, and the male voices who integrate his narrative, have left their boyhood ghostly lingering in those Michigan cursed suburbs, forever linked to the Lisbon house and to the tragic fate of the sisters that dwelled in it.

Works Cited

Beauvoir, Simone de. 1949. *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage, 1997.

Byron, Glennis, and Dale Townsed, editors. *The Gothic World*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Bronfen, Elizabeth. *Over Her Dead Body: Death Femininity and the Aesthetic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.

Dines, Martin. "Suburban Gothic and the Ethic Uncanny in Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2012, pp. 959-975.

Eaton, Heather. "Women, Nature, Earth." *Religion, Ecology and Gender: East-West Perspective*, edited by Sigurd Bergmann and Kim Yong – Bock. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009, pp. 7-22.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Nature*. Cambridge and Boston: J. Munroe, 1849.

Eugenides, Jeffrey. *The Virgin Suicides*. London, New York and Berlin: Bloomsbury, 1993.

Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Champaign, IL: Dalkey Arquive Press, 2003.

Kilgour, Maggie. *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Millbank, Allison. *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction*. London: Palgrave McMillan, 1992.

Murphy, Bernice M., editor. *The Suburban Gothic in the American Popular Culture*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

Sivils, Matthew Wynn. "American Gothic and the Environment, 1800-Present." *The Gothic World*, edited by Glennis Byron and Dale Townsend. London and New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 121-131.

Smith, Andrew, and William Hughes, editors. *Ecogothic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.

Turner, Bryan S. *The Body and Society: Exploration in Social Theory*. London: Sage, 1996.

Van Elferen, Isabella, editor. *Nostalgia or Perversion? Gothic Rewriting from the Eighteenth Century until the Present Day*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.

Vayo, Amber V. "What the Green Grass Hides: Denial and Deception in Suburban Detroit." *Gothic Landscapes: Changing Eras, Changing Cultures, Changing Anxieties*, edited by Sharon Rose Yang and Kathleen Healey. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 107-124.

Wasson, Sarah. "Gothic Cities and Suburbs, 1880-Present." *The Gothic World*, edited by Glennis Byron and Dale Townsend. London and New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 132-142.

Webster, Roger, editor. *Expanding Suburbia: Reviewing Suburban Narratives*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000.

Wilson, Joanna. "The End of the Good Life: Representations of Suburbia and the American Nightmare." *Forum*, no. 20, 2015, pp. 1-14.

Whelan, Lara Baker. *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era*. New York and London: Routledge, 2010.

Abstract

The Virgin Suicides (1993), by Jeffrey Eugenides, offers us a look at an ordinary American suburban neighborhood whose quietness is disrupted by the Lisbon girls' suicide. The first sister who commits suicide is Cecilia. A year later, her sisters Lux, Bonnie, Therese and Mary follow her example. The neighbourhood teenage boys, who are mesmerized by the sisters, are heavily stricken by these events. The plot revolves around the boys' mission which is to disclose the motifs underlying the sisters' premature deaths. Their investigation is thwarted because the girls remain forever out of their reach. In the same manner that it is impossible to underscore the dark reasons at the origin of the suicides, the boys are incapable of rescuing the girls from their tragic end. Following Cecilia's death, the quiet house in the suburbs starts to metamorphose into a haunted and doomed space, thus disfiguring the harmonious geography of the little Michigan suburb. The challenge of this essay is to analyse the impact of this shift, and how it contributes to posit *The Virgin Suicides* in the Gothic tradition. In order to fulfill this task, Gothic tropes such as the monster, the haunted house, familiar tensions, femininity and nature will be under the scope so as to shed light upon one of the darkest novels featuring life in the apparently quiet American suburbs of the 1970s.

Keywords

Lisbon sisters; Gothic; femininity; haunted house; suburbs.

Resumo

The Virgin Suicides (1993), de Jeffrey Eugenides, debruça-se sobre um bairro situado no seio dos subúrbios de uma localidade Norte-Americana, cuja calma é interrompida devido aos suicídios das filhas da família Lisbon. Após o suicídio de Cecilia Lisbon, as restantes irmãs, Lux, Bonnie, Therese e Mary seguem-lhe o exemplo. Estes trágicos acontecimentos irão deixar marcas profundas num grupo de jovens que habita na vizinhança e que sempre nutriu admiração secreta pelas

irmãs. O enredo da obra centra-se justamente na tentativa, por parte desse grupo de rapazes, de desvendar os motivos que levaram à morte das raparigas. Logo após a morte de Cecilia, a casa dos Lisbon sofre uma metamorfose, tornando-se num espaço assombrado e amaldiçoado, contrastando com a normalidade inerente à paisagem suburbana. O desafio deste artigo é, por conseguinte, analisar o impacto desta transformação e a relevância que este processo assume ao ser responsável pela incursão da obra no território do Gótico. De modo a cumprir o seu objectivo, serão examinadas algumas temáticas recorrentes típicas deste género literário, tais como a figura do monstro, da casa assombrada, as tensões familiares, a feminilidade e a natureza, e que contribuem para uma interpretação original daquela que constitui uma das obras mais escuras que versa a vida aparentemente calma dos subúrbios Americanos dos anos 70.

Palavras-Chave

Irmãs Lisbon; Gótico Suburbano; feminilidade; casa assombrada; subúrbios.

Bards and Gleemen: from the Middle Ages to Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*

Rui Mateus
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 15 2018

Bards and Gleemen: from the Middle Ages to Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*

1. The World of *The Wheel of Time*

Before discussing the types of poet that existed throughout the ages, it seems important to give a general idea of how the world of Robert Jordan works. The world of *The Wheel of Time* is a fantasy world where a primeval battle between the Creator and his antithesis, the Dark One, resulted in the latter's defeat and entrapment in a prison outside of time. The Creator, victorious, made the Wheel of Time and used the True Source, the driving force of the universe, to turn the Wheel. The Wheel weaves the Pattern, like a great tapestry that intertwines the lives of people, each thread representing a human life. The True Source can also affect human lives and grant them access to the One Power, which is the ability to channel the five flows of the Power: Air, Earth, Fire, Spirit and Water.

True Source was of restricted use; women could only draw the One Power from *saidar* and men from *saidin*, the female and male halves of the True Source, respectively. Both halves worked together as much as they did against each other. These restrictions led to the search for a new source of power. The True Power, as the newly-found was called, required the drilling of a hole in the ground so that it could be tapped into. The drilling of this hole caused a tear in the Pattern and the Dark One, trapped outside of time, could now influence the lives of people. The True Power was the Dark One's own essence and it was addictive and dangerous to those who had permission to use it. With the Bore[1] open evil came to the world, bringing wars and long years of strife. However, a group of men were able

[1] Another name for the Dark One's prison.

to seal the prison, but not permanently, and to a great cost; the Dark One was able to taint *saidin* and drive all men who could wield it mad. And so, since the world of *The Wheel of Time* is one where events repeat themselves, the Dark One is destined to break free again. When he does, the Pattern will weave the hero who will face the Dark One. This man, the Dragon Reborn, will be the reincarnation of the leader of the men who had imprisoned the Creator's antagonist before. Because of these events, the use of prophecy is recurrent in the series, and prophecy is part of the repertoire of songs sung by poets throughout the land, but these songs will be explained as we proceed.

2. The Poet: Origin and Types

The first part of this essay aims at dating the origin of the poet, as well as trying to find the different types of composers through medieval Europe. The earliest accounts of the poet can be traced back to Ancient Greece, according to Wallace E. McLeod, who points that the bard has its origin in Delphi, in Apollo's temple. However, the bard's function was slightly different; he worked as a composer of the messages given by the oracle; therefore, the bard is a "versifier", as McLeod calls him, a composer of verse.

It is possible to date some bardic compositions back to the eighth century BC when the influence of the oracles was still strong in Greece. Throughout the centuries, especially in the sixth century BC, the bards, who were "custodians of the oral art", were associated with the *aoidi* (McLeod 323). The *aoidi* were composers of verse and were stationed in court, where they always performed. Homer and Hesiod, composers of epic verse, like the *Illiad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Theogony*, were *aoidi*. The *rhapsode*, or rhapsodist, was an itinerant poet, going from city to city singing poems, but not composing. Actually, the Homeric poems were already well known by the time they appeared in writing. Crosby states that "the Homeric poems themselves, it is believed, were chanted at the courts of kings and chieftains long before they were written down" (Crosby 88).

This is similar to what we will find later: the bard and the gleeman. The bard was employed by a person of rank, a monarch or lord, to compose and sing in court or palace, and, like the *aoidi*, bards were composers.

These poets had different names according to their places of origin. In Iceland and Scandinavia, we would find the *skald*, and its Anglo-Saxon version was the *scop*. The *fili* was from pre-Christian Ireland, and could still be found just before the Renaissance. The minstrel, also known as gleeman, came from Medieval Europe and replaced the English *scop* after the Norman Conquest.

The word "bard" can be found in the Gaelic branch of the Celtic tongue. According to Herbert Hope, the term was used to classify "a person who composes and sings inspiring poems" (Hope 93). In pre-Christian Ireland, the bards were a very important part of the court and being one was a profession of great renown. It was their job to educate the Irish people concerning their leaders; the bards taught the people to think the leaders "great and powerful" (Hope 110).

However, the bards were the lowest class among the seven groups of the *filid* in Ireland. It is possible that the *filid* belonged, along with the druids, to the same class of Irish society, one that dealt with knowledge. For instance, in war, "the *philosophoi*[2] are readily obeyed, they and the singing bards, and this by enemies as well as their own people" (qtd. in Gantz 10), making it seem that the importance of the arts outranks that of the war. The importance of the *fili* can be seen by the number of stories he could recite: "early Irish professional poets (fili) or storytellers were ranked partly by the extent of their repertory of tales, the highest class being able to recite no less than 350 separate stories" (Holman 236). This repertory does not mean the memorization of stories in detail. In fact, the *fili* would memorize only the main aspects of a tale and add details of his imagination (Gantz 19). Nonetheless, this position would require long years of training and, of the seven classes among the *filid*, the *ollmah*, the highest, would take up to twelve years in training (*Encyclopedia Britannica* "Fili").

There is an association of the *fili* with the druid, whose training was also long. In addition, they were dedicated to the collection of knowledge. Their relation can be perceived from the fact that the *filid* "assumed the poetic function of the outlawed Druids" following the Christianization of Ireland (*Encyclopedia Britannica* "Fili"). The distinction between bard and

---

[2] These would be the druids.

fili eventually became less clear, with the bard assuming a more important role after the thirteenth century (*Encyclopedia Britannica* "Fili").

Still, the bard was not exclusive of Celtic Ireland. When Welsh literature experienced a renaissance around the eleventh century, court poetry thrived (Hollman 465). Various orders of court poets existed. The highest-ranking was the *pencerdd*, which means "chief of song or craft", but there were also the *gogynfeirdd* or the *bardd teulu* (Thomson and Jones, *Encyclopedia Britannica* "Scottish Gaelic"). The bards, ranked according to their ability, were present until the seventeenth century, which validates their importance as preservers of the Welsh poetry (Hollman 465).

The word bard may have been in use among the Germanic peoples, namely the Teutons. In Tacitus's *Germania*, the following is said about their composer: "possuem ainda uns carmes com cuja declamação, a que chamam barito, inflamam os ânimos e com a própria sorte auguram a sorte do futuro combate" (Tácito 19). This type of bard bore some resemblance to the Celtic one. The Germanic was closely linked to war, and while the Celtic dealt mostly with poems concerning the deeds of great heroes, the Irish *fili*, as seers, could partake in battle by deciphering its outcome. They could also use poetry to curse people (*Encyclopedia Britannica* "Fili"). Therefore, we find a resemblance between the Celtic bard and the Greek *aoidi*, whose recitation and chanting consisted, in part, of praising heroes, most of them war heroes. The *aoidi* sang of love as well, like the tale of Ares and Aphrodite sung in the *Odyssey*.

As to the *scop*, his job was much steadier than the bards'. The *scop* seemed to have a much more secure position, for he was permanently stationed at court, traveling only occasionally, and was part of the king's retinue. French writes that one of the *scop*'s goals was to compose and recite his poems to please a patron who could and would support him (623), much like the court bard we find in *The Wheel of Time*. They differed from the Scandinavian *skald* in terms of their poems' content. While the *scop* sang of noble deeds performed by heroes, kings, or lords, the *skald*'s poems had a strong mythological edge to them. After some time, the *scop*'s compositions included biblical themes and he was tasked with compositions about the family he served.

On the other hand, the *scop* may have another function, as the meaning of the word suggests, alongside poet or minstrel, mockery and

jest, among others. The same reference can be made to the *skald*, from which derives the word "scold". This may mean that both types of poet had some control over society, praising some and satirizing others, and adding or destroying reputations. They shared this trait with the *fili*. However, some definitions of *scop*, namely the one provided by Holman, place him among the wandering poets, though not so much as the Welsh bard. Holman states that "he [the *scop*] occupied a position of importance and permanence in the king's retinue" (Holman 405). In addition, he calls him a court poet and an ancestor of the Poet Laureate. The gleeman held a rather different position from that of the *scop*, although at time it could show some similarities. The gleeman was a not a composer, but a reciter of poetry composed by other people. They were wanderers, not staying in a place for too long. They could be temporarily employed by a king or lord, but their position was not as honorable as the *scop*'s. The term may be wrongly used to apply both to composers and reciters. The gleeman was also a professional storyteller and he coexisted with the *scop* during the Anglo-Saxon period.

After the Norman Conquest, Europe witnessed the arrival of the minstrel. This professional character consisted of a mixture of the *scop* and gleeman, although he was more closely linked to the latter. Jay Ruud says that minstrels were "most typically (…) itinerant musicians, singers, storytellers, magicians, or jugglers who wandered from court to court and from town to town" (Ruud 448). They were active from the late thirteenth century until the end of the fifteenth century, when the printing press was invented and minstrelsy waned. The minstrel and the gleeman were on par with the *jongleur*, the French term for a professional poet who "sometimes composed and sometimes supplied nonmusical forms of entertainment, such as juggling and tumbling" (Holman 239). The *jongleur* could also be an assistant to the troubadour, who was an aristocratic poet from France, namely from the region of Provence. However, the gleeman had a less dignified position in court and it is possible that the *jongleur* and troubadour were held in more esteem.

It was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the troubadours proliferated, and they sang mostly of love. In the same period in the north of France, groups of poets influenced by the troubadours appeared. They were called *trouvères* and sang, among others, songs of love (Holman 453).

Ruud even mentions the existence of a guild for minstrels and they experienced a change in their characteristics that operated as time went on, such as the fact that minstrels turned their focus toward music, instead of poetry. These guilds also ensured that there was little competition from other groups of wandering musicians. So, what we witness is the existence of many poets from very early ages, even before the appearance of the Homeric poems, and in a wide variety. As to the work of these poets, it varied in two ways, as we have seen: either they were employed by a patron and created their own verse, or they were itinerant poets and told or sang, and sometimes embellished, the stories they knew.

Throughout *The Wheel of Time* series, we are not faced with such a wide variety of poets, but they are nonetheless worthy of mention. The most common deliverers of the oral tradition in the Westlands[3] are the gleeman and the court bard. The word bard is almost never used, unless it is referring to one stationed at court. The difference that we find among these is that the gleeman's displays are more varied. They eat fire, tell stories, juggle, play instruments, throw knives, or perform acrobatic moves. The gleeman does this as a wandering man. The court bard is hired by a patron as an entertainer. We do not know the full extent of his job, but it may not entirely differ from that of the gleeman. It is safe to assume that his displays are in accordance to the proper decorum of court life. The court bard in *The Wheel of Time* could be ranked alongside that of the Welsh bard in the eleventh century, after the renaissance, and sharing some traits with the *scop* and *skald*, for he was a composer, was stationed at court and was not a wanderer.

There is still another type of deliverer: the singers in inns and taverns. These are exclusively employed by the owners of these establishments to entertain and attract customers. There is reason to believe this job was somewhat permanent, although the professionals might change from time to time. Not all inns could afford this kind of entertainment; however, gleemen sometimes performed in exchange for a room and meals.

Some inns located in the rougher parts of the cities could hire singers, normally female, who would attract not only with her voice, but

---

[3] The main continent in the series.

with not so modest displays of body parts.[4] In *The Fires of Heaven*, one of the characters, Siuan Sanche, asks for a job as a singer at an inn and she is told to show her legs, proving that singing was not at all the primary requisite. Since Siuan was only seeking information, she confesses that she couldn't really sing, to which the innkeeper replies: "'as if it mattered to that lot out there'" (Jordan 241). Therefore, this job does not resemble a gleeman or a bard's job, although they may sing the same songs sometimes. There were poets and musicians already since before the drilling of the Bore,[5] which took place more than three thousand years before the events in the series. The means of composition and travelling were probably much better then than in the Third Age.[6]

Now that we have managed to properly define the types of poet that existed throughout the times, it is important to see how these bards and wandering poets worked, what they used to aid them in their performance, and what kind of life they led.

3. The Mechanics of the Poet: the Middle Ages and Thom Merrilin

We have already seen that poets could be stationed at court or wander the lands to entertain people. The form of entertainment could be delivered in two ways: either by recitation and chanting or by reading the stories (Crosby 91). These methods were the most frequent in the Middle Ages, but the form of reading aloud will not be of interest in this work. Recitation and chanting were often accompanied by a musical instrument, usually

---

[4] Travelling circuses can also be found throughout the Westlands. These assemble a variety of exhibitions that range from acrobatics to displays with animals. However, it is unknown whether they employ any sort of poets or singers.

[5] The official name of the Dark One's prison.

[6] Many stories in *The Wheel of Time* come from the First Age, which possibly corresponds to the twentieth century of our world. The Second Age, the Age of Legends, refers to an epoch where technology was greatly developed, even better that in our twenty-first century. The Third Age, when the events in the main series occur, corresponds to our medieval times.

the harp, which allowed the poet to play while talking or singing. If the poet had an assistant, stories could be told accompanied by the flute, for example. This kind of entertainment was very prominent during some periods of the Middle Ages where access to books was very difficult, especially among the lower classes. Even though this art was long-lasting, it could be argued that the appearance of the printing press had some impact in the art of oral delivery. Chanting and recitation usually took place during feasts and celebrations. According to Crosby, "it was necessary for the story-teller to ask that all noise come to an end and that attention be given to him" (Crosby 102). That way, the story-teller knew the crowd would surely pay him attention.

Since these stories were not written and could not be universally read, the use of repetition would be strongly recurrent. Words or phrases, or even entire situations, would be repeated, so that the listeners would not easily forget. One of the songs in *The Eye of the World* uses repetition,[7] so we can see that the main purpose is to tell the story and memorize the important parts. There are more strategies the story-teller uses that describe the type of songs we could listen to during the Middle Ages. A song or story would normally start with the phrase "on a day" or "on the morrow when it was day", among others (Crosby 103). The use of adjectives was also common as well as the use of alliteration, to grant some musicality.

In *The Wheel of Time*, gleemen were recognized at first sight. The description given to us of Thom Merrilin could suit any other gleeman: "his cloak seemed a mass of patches, in odd shapes and sizes, fluttering with every breath of air, patches in a hundred colors" (Jordan 46). The cloak is a distinguishing symbol of gleemen.

Even though the gleeman's is not as notable a position as the court bard's, they are very well respected and welcome. The presence of a gleeman is always enticing, and innkeepers are often glad to have a gleeman perform at an inn, as is the case of Thom's reception in Baerlon, in Tanchico, or in Tar Valon. However, a gleeman's life is hard. As Thom puts it: "'that's how gleemen travel, like dust on the wind'" (Jordan 309). It indicates that it is a very unsteady life. Later, Thom dwells on the subject again: "'wandering

---

[7] See Appendix A.

from town to town, village to village, wondering how they'll try to cheat you this time, half the time wondering where your next meal is coming from'" (Jordan 383). In a place like Cairhien, where "musicians were hired and forgotten", this is certainly the case (Jordan 390).

E. K. Chambers defines this kind of life in a similar way:

> To tramp long miles in wind and rain, to stand wet to the skin and hungry and footsore, making the slow bourgeois laugh while the heart was bitter within; such must have been the daily fate of many amongst the humbler minstrels at least. And at the end to die like a fog in a ditch, under the ban of the Church and with the prospect of eternal damnation before the soul. (Chambers 48)

Thom was a house bard to House Trakand, in Andor, and became the court bard when Morgase Trakand won the throne. It is even stated that he tried teaching the queen to throw knives (Jordan 572). Being a court bard meant being constantly in contact with court life, and it is possible that during the Middle Ages bards knew well enough what happened in a palace or court.

Thom also advised Morgase and helped her maintain the Andoran throne.[8] Actually, the character is possibly inspired by King Arthur's advisor, Merlin, given the resemblance of the name, the Andoran capital city is called Caemlyn, a clear reference to Camelot, and Morgase to Morgause. Furthermore, the name derives from Myrddin, a legendary Welsh figure who was also a bard and prophet.[9] Thom is very skilled in politics, and is regarded as one of the best players of *Daes Dae'mar*, also known as the Game of Houses.[10] Thom's skills in storytelling are remarkable, for he is able to recite with the same efficacy in the three existing forms: Common, Plain Chant and High Chant. Common is very

---

[8] Thom was involved in the murder of Taringail Damodred, Morgase's husband, when he discovered that he planned to murder his wife and take the throne for himself.

[9] Myrddin was "the original form of Merlin" (Ellis 165).

[10] The Game of Houses consists of actions done in a specific way as to misguide others in order to attain power and influence among the powerful.

simple, as it consists of telling a story in a conversational tone. Plain Chant implied reciting in a poetic form. High Chant was sung and it meant to convey the more emotional aspects of the song. This form was very difficult for people who didn't understand High Chant. Usually, it was only used in court.

Some stories are meant to be told in one of these three forms; however, all of them can be used to tell the same, although not with the same results. Thom complains over the fact that people prefer to hear something in Common, rather than Plain or High Chant: "'the tale[11] is a hundred times better in Plain Chant, and a thousand in High, but they want Common.' Without another word, he buried his face in his wine" (Jordan 383). Thom's displeasure might indicate that he is too skilled in both Plain Chant and High Chant.

Women as gleemen were unheard of during the Middle Ages, yet it is possible that some who accompanied minstrels also performed. In *The Wheel of Time*, female gleemen were never found. There is one case in which a woman, Dena, was apprenticed to Thom and claimed she would become the first gleeman (Jordan 382), though Thom expected her to become a court bard, since, in his opinion, a gleeman's is no life for a woman. Dena's untimely death could indicate that women would never vindicate in this kind of profession, and no others were seen in the rest of the series.

We have seen that geography plays an important role concerning the itinerant poets. They have different names in different places, even though they have the same characteristics. The same happens in the Westlands, but with the songs themselves; a song that is known in a city or village may be known with a different name in another town. That is remarked a few times in *The Eye of the World* and the *Great Hunt*: "it was not the first time that Rand had discovered a tune had different words and different names in different lands, sometimes even in villages in the same land" (Jordan 312). For instance, a song that was known as "The Marriage of Cinny Wade" in Caemlyn, was known as "Always Choose the Right Horse" in a different place.

---

[11] Thom is referring to a song called "Mara and the Three Foolish Kings."

Two of the most important epics in the series are *The Great Hunt of the Horn* and the *Karaethon Cycle*. They are sung by gleemen and bards throughout the Westlands. *The Great Hunt of the Horn* is a long poem that praises the men and women who went in search of this almost mythical object that would summon the heroes of old from their graves to fight alongside the one who blew the horn. The Horn of Valere, as it is called, would be found just in time to fight the Last Battle when the Dark One breaks free, so, this epic has a prophetic meaning. The same holds for the *Karaethon Cycle*,[12] which is but a mere part of the *Prophecies of the Dragon*. These verses result from Foretellings [13]that refer to the rebirth of the Dragon, the Last Battle, and the coming of the Dark One.

Songs and poetry were such an important part of life in the Westlands that when the Great Hunt for the Horn was proclaimed in the city of Illian, a contest took place to determine who would best recite *The Great Hunt of the Horn*. Great glory would await the winner of the contest. In addition, it would be an opportunity to sing of the new proclamation.

At the time of the Last Battle, Thom is sitting in a vantage point from where he can see the battle raging in one of the main fronts. The reader witnesses the moment in which the gleeman is composing what would be the epic of that age. He fumbles trying to find the appropriate words:

> *Perilous*"? he thought. No, that wasn't the right word. He'd make a ballad of this for certain. Rand deserved it. Moiraine, too. This would be her victory as much as it was his. He needed words. The right words. (…) "*Exquisite*," Thom thought. *That is the word. Unexpected, but true. Majestically exquisite. No. Not "majestically." Let the word stand on its own. If it is the right word, it will work without help. If it's the wrong word, adding other words to it will just make it seem desperate.* This was what the end should be like. (Jordan 1086-87)

---

[12] See Appendix B.

[13] A talent some people have that is related to the One Power. People with the Foretelling unknowingly speak words in riddles that are difficult to understand.

All this information on Thom tells us how versatile a character he is and how he manages to comprise the characteristics of many performers from the Middle Ages.

As a matter of curiosity, a number of stories in *The Wheel of Time* that come from the First Age are actually based on historical people. For example, Elsbet, the Queen of All, is inspired by Elizabeth I; Lenn, who is said to have been to the moon, is a possible reference to John Glenn; Materese the Healer, also known as Mother of the Wondrous Ind, may refer to Mother Theresa. Stories of Artur Paendrag were also very common. Artur, the High King who united all the Westlands, building a huge empire, was inspired by King Arthur.

Since the first known appearance of the bards and gleemen, represented by the Greek *aoidos* and *rhapsode*, until the end of the Middle Ages, we can establish a common ground between them and *The Wheel of Time*. Thom Merrilin fits quite well into the paradigm of the bard and gleeman that we know, proving the preservation of this character in contemporary literature.

The Wheel of Time shows us a rich culture and easy access to it through the itinerant poets. The great variety of poets through Europe, though, is much wider than the variety we find in Jordan's work. We can conclude that Thom is a crucial character because he gives the readers the opportunity to know of the world, the culture, the mythology. The gleemen and bards had the same function. Since in both places there was no printing press, this was the best way of transmission. Even though this kind of life was hard, we can determine how important it must have been, since it was an occupation that held for so long, and it would probably have gone on much longer, had it not been for the invention of the press.

A very interesting aspect in Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* is how he managed to connect his own story to world culture. Profoundly based on Arthurian legend and historical people, he fit these characters in the tales of an ancient world, thus placing the Third Age of *The Wheel of Time* in a very far future. Although it is difficult to cross some of the information, we can see the similarities between bards and gleemen from our world and the bards and gleemen in *The Wheel of Time*. One of these similarities consists on the use of instruments. For Thom, the harp was his most prized object.

Finally, we can determine that the similarity between the Middle Ages and *The Wheel of Time* regarding the poets is easier to see among the bard than the gleeman, for whom there is little information available. In addition, this parallel between Jordan's work and the itinerant poets of the Middle Ages constitutes a characteristic that is very common in the fantasy genre, which is that of using medieval settings and many of its aspects in order to create secondary worlds, those that are imagined by the authors.

By bringing into his world the aspects of the poet of the Middle Ages Robert Jordan is using a segment of the primary world (our world) to deliver a more realistic story, one in which the reader can identify traces of history, in this case the history of the itinerant poets, so that he feels closer to the story itself. Moreover, the use of the gleeman in *The Wheel of Time* serves the purpose of telling stories by means of the club narrative. This form of storytelling is a way of conveying to an audience some form of unquestionable tale and "[i]n the club narrative, the ability to convince and to hold the floor is the sign of success" (Mendlesohn 7). This is a narrative technique often employed by fantasy writers. Therefore, Robert Jordan's fantasy has a very medievalist way of narrating the past, by making use of the gleeman to help create the roots of his fantasy story. The delineation of the itinerant poets helped demonstrate how Robert Jordan appropriated some of the methods of storytelling recurrent in the Middle Ages.

Works Cited

Chambers, E. K.. *The Medieval Stage.* Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903.

Crosby, Ruth. "Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages." *Speculum*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1936, pp. 88-110.

Ellis, Peter Berresford. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Santa Barabara: ABC-CLIO, 1992.

French, W. H. "Widsith and the Scop." *PMLA*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1945, pp. 623-630.

Gantz, Jeffrey, trans. *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*. Suffolk: Penguin Books, 1981.

Holman, C. Hugh. *A Handbook to Literature*. Indianapolis: ITT Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing Company, 1985.

Hope, Herbert F. "The Munster Bards." *Ulster Journal of Archeology*, First Series, vol. 7, 1859, pp. 93-115.

Jordan, Robert, Harriet McDougal, Alan Romanczuk and Maria Simons. *The Wheel of Time Companion*. London: Orbit, 2015.

Jordan, Robert. *A Memory of Light*. New York: Tor Books, 2013.

___. *New Spring*. London: Orbit, 2004.

___. *The Dragon Reborn*. New York: Tor Books, 1991. E-book.

___. *The Eye of the World*. London: Orbit, 1990.

___. *The Fires of Heaven*. New York: Tor Books, 1993.

___. *The Great Hunt*. London: Orbit, 1990.

Mcleod, Wallace E. "Oral Bards at Delphi." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 92, 1961, pp. 317-325.

Mendlesohn, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

Mulholland, James. "Gray's Ambition: Printed Voices and Performing Bards in the Later Poetry." *ELH*, vol. 75, no. 1 (2008), pp. 109-134.

Ruud, Jay. *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*. New York: Facts on File, 2006.

Tácito. *A Germânia*. Trans. Maria Isabel Rebelo Gonçalves. Lisboa: Nova Vega, 2011.

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Fili." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1 Sept. 1999, www.britannica.com/art/fili-ancient-Gaelic-poets. Accessed 2 Nov. 2017.

Thomeson, Derick S., and Thomas Jones. "Scottish Gaelic." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 21 Aug. 2013. Accessed 2 Nov. 2017.

Appendices

Appendix A

"The Wind That Shakes the Willow"

My love is gone, carried away
by the wind that shakes the willow,
and all the land is beaten hard
by the wind that shakes the willow.
But I will hold her close to me
in heart and dearest memory,
and with her strength to steel my soul,
her love to warm my heart-strings,
I will stand when we once sang,
though cold wind shakes the willow. (Jordan 243)

Appendix B

The Karaethon Cycle

"Twice and twice shall he be marked,
twice to live, and twice to die.
Once the heron, to set his path.
Twice the heron, to name him true.
Once the Dragon, for remembrance lost.
Twice the Dragon, for the price he must pay.

Twice dawns the day when his blood is shed.
Once for mourning, once for birth.
Red on black, the Dragon's blood stains the rock of Shayol Ghul.
In the Pit of Doom shall his blood free men from the Shadow."
(Jordan 387)

Abstract

In Robert Jordan's work, *The Wheel of Time* (1990-2013), particularly in the character of Thom Merrilin, we can see a reflection of the paradigm of the itinerant poet from medieval times. From the classical period until the appearance of the printing press, Europe witnessed the existence of multiple types of poet. What this article aims at is to understand how Jordan's Thom Merrilin corresponds to the figure of the gleeman and bard known during the Middle Ages. However, it is essential to determine the different types of poet so we can narrow them to those that best resemble Thom and his condition as a gleeman and former court bard. After identifying the multiple composers and poets, it is important to know how they work; whether they are employed by a patron or wander the lands as storytellers; what materials they use, and what stories they tell. *The Wheel of Time* also presents some examples of the various types of entertainers, which will be used in this article in order to differentiate the most renowned types, the ones employed by nobles, and the simplest ones, usually employed in inns and taverns.

Keywords

Robert Jordan; *Wheel of Time*; gleemen; itinerant poets; Thom Merrilin.

Resumo

Na obra de Robert Jordan, *The Wheel of Time* (1990-2013), principalmente na personagem Thom Merrilin, podemos ver reflectido o paradigma do poeta itinerante da época medieval. Desde o período clássico até ao aparecimento da imprensa, a Europa assistiu à existência de múltiplos tipos de poeta. O que este artigo pretende é perceber como o Thom Merrilin de Robert Jordan corresponde à figura do jogral e do bardo encontrados durante a Idade Média. Contudo, é importante identificar os diferentes tipos de poetas de forma a limitar as hipóteses àquelas que mais se assemelham a Thom e à sua condição de jogral e antigo bardo de corte. Depois de identificar os vários poetas e compositores, é importante perceber como trabalham; se são empregados por um patrono ou vagueiam pela

terra como contadores de histórias; que materiais utilizam na sua profissão e que histórias contam. *The Wheel of Time* ainda nos apresenta outros exemplos de artistas que serão úteis neste artigo para diferenciar os tipos mais afamados, aqueles que são contratados pelos nobres, dos tipos mais simples, normalmente empregados em estalagens e tabernas.

Palavras-Chave

Robert Jordan; *Wheel of Time*; jograis; poetas itinerantes; Thom Merrilin.

“On such a full sea are we now afloat”: Travelling through Oceans, Writings and Images in Early Modern Times

Maria de Jesus Crespo Candeias Velez Relvas
Universidade Aberta
Centro de Estudos Anglísticos, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 15 2018

"On such a full sea are we now afloat": Travelling through Oceans, Writings and Images in Early Modern Times

> There is a tide in the affairs of men
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
> On such a full sea are we now afloat,
> And we must take the current when it serves,
> Or lose our ventures.
>
> (*Julius Caesar*, IV, 3, 272-278)

Brutus's speech is heavily impregnated with the imagery of the sea and the voyage, both literal and metaphorical. Here, as in many other passages of many other early modern works of diverse nature, Shakespeare emphasises the liquid element that, from the fifteenth century onwards, would constitute a huge turning point, when the Ocean became an immense stage of events, with a more or less direct impact everywhere. As the Portuguese Renaissance poet Luís de Camões expressed in his epic *Os Lusíadas*, "new worlds were being shown to the world."[1]

All the records approached in this essay, of heterogeneous origin, authorship, nature, and purposes, belong to a proficuous, large universe of written and iconographic productions, whose relevance stems from their practical, useful, informative data, as well as from their interrelationships with other works of the same period; all of them bear witness to the dynamic process that forever changed the world and the perception of the world.

---

[1] My adaptation of Camões's line 8, stanza 45, Canto II, referring to the deeds of the Portuguese: "Novos mundos ao mundo irão mostrando."

The project of the Discoveries appears to be encapsulated in the title of one of Bacon's texts, *De Fluxu et Refluxu Maris*, written around 1616 and entirely centred on the liquid element. In fact, in a never-ending movement, the Atlantic route established a perennial interconnection and originated a deep, global change, having started flooding the New World with old habits and the Old World with wondrous things, never seen before. Hence, it will not be redundant to state and restate —by evoking the flux and reflux of the ocean waters— that those were complex times, simultaneously interesting, disturbing and challenging; moreover, like the rest of Bacon's vast literary production, the text on the sea tides highlights relevant characteristics of a peculiar era, never again achieved, when Occultism coexisted with Empiricism, and Astrology was not separated from Astronomy, or Alchemy from Chemistry.

Up to then, for centuries, the Western notions of exoticism and otherness had been confined to a relatively limited space, with the Mediterranean Sea as its epicentre, and somehow kept within patterns of acceptability and verisimilitude, even when considering the distant lands and peoples reported by Marco Polo. Caravels, carracks, galleons were now navigating far beyond the boundaries of a preconceived universe. The world was becoming stunningly wider, not only in its physical and conceptual spatiality, as the theories by Copernicus and Galileo, among others, were being grounded, but also in its cultural horizons, through the Humanist recovery of precious written legacies, some unknown, others thought to be lost. The concepts of the planet we inhabit, of Nature, God, and the relation of Humankind to them both had therefore to be reassessed, according to plural perspectives, having implied new notions of exoticism, otherness, selfhood, and identity. At a unique age when innovation was amalgamated with tradition, and amidst varied tensions, intersections and dichotomies, the way the discovered realities were registered, through words or images, could not but display the multifaceted characteristics and worldview of those complex times. In a relatively short period, the Europeans and the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa, the American continent, and the lands "Down Under" came to face a series of dilemmas, raised by the myriad of novelties, not rarely very difficult to deal with, to accept, to assimilate, or to explain. Amidst a series of striking habits, nudity, the black colour of human skin and anthropophagy were the hardest ones

to behold by the Western travellers. The materialisation of such realities that rather seemed to belong to idealised, fictional worlds implied the revaluation of almost everything, along with the acknowledgement, for the first time in history, of the existence of other microcosms based upon very different paradigms, even when compared with the ones previously disclosed by the ancient terrestrial routes. Furthermore, the shattering of an erroneous conceptual system that had prevailed for hundreds of years, organised according to a rigid but somehow reassuring hierarchy, brought about insecurity and scepticism, not only to the Europeans but certainly also to the native peoples dwelling in those faraway places.

As Professor Maria Helena de Paiva Correia refers in one of her works on Renaissance English Literature,[2] at the dawn of the age of the Discoveries, the problematic situation around the Mediterranean Sea, fully controlled by the Ottoman Empire since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, accompanied with the new epistemology and the significative progress in navigation, pushed vessels and seafarers to the oceanic open waters (29). The consequent reshaping of Southern Europe would lead to a broad, deep, and unprecedented reshaping of the entire world in every sphere when, primarily due to commercial reasons, the sea west to the Iberian Peninsula started being navigated. As Paiva Correia emphasises in the same work, the Ottoman rulership of that vast region led to, or accelerated, the substitution of the Mediterranean routes by the Atlantic ones, at an age when Europe lacked alternative terrestrial trade itineraries and depended on a precarious, stagnant agriculture. Moreover, the Iberian nations (Portugal and Spain), besides occupying a privileged geographical situation, were carrying on— unlike the Italian city-states— an expansionist policy coincident to an amazing era of progress that would connect them to the other oceans and continents of the globe (30).

Although the fundamental reasons for the Discoveries were undoubtedly commercial since the beginning, the maritime expansion comprises two different phases that eventually would coincide. The first— exploration— was led by Portugal and Spain, when there was a need to overcome the fear

---

[2] *Literatura Inglesa I (Época Renascentista)*.

of the unknown open waters, to cross them, to reach coast after coast and to draw, or correct, charts. An immensity of iconographic records after written reports started being produced, many of them by Germans and Flemish who, up to then, were playing no outstanding role in the maritime enterprise. The second phase —exploitation— would later be shared by other European nations, and dominated, above all, by mercantile interests and colonial policies.

In early modern times, when distance and the notion of distance were being shortened in multiple senses, the mapping and the depiction of the world constituted a many-sided process, accomplished through cartography itself, based on new data, new techniques, and the systematic use of nautical instruments, some invented, some readapted, others improved, and through a set of another kind of "charts": books on animals and plants; travel reports of various kinds; poems, treatises, and essays; iconographic works, many of which specifically produced to illustrate the written accounts, as mentioned above. Literature and iconography complemented one another and recorded a series of precious data, namely forms of life now extinct, chiefly due to the Europeans' predatory actions; simultaneously, they captured forever the way the New World was then being apprehended.

Three aspects must be considered, regarding both the process of reporting and the strong interaction of word and image. Firstly, the records were certainly motivated by practical purposes of different nature: i) factual, in terms of promoting widespread information; ii) scientific, in terms of data interchange among men of knowledge; iii) economic, in terms of the maritime trade. For instance, let us not forget that, at least at the beginning, the Portuguese commercial empire was mainly founded upon the exotic spices, which had become as valuable as gold. Animal and, above all, vegetal species were disseminated and introduced in other continents, miles away from their places of origin, in order to be sold, eaten, or transformed into curative substances. Eventually and regretfully, human beings would also be exploited, transacted and considered mere items of merchandise. Secondly, the reports seem balanced between the endeavour to capture, in a reliable way, all that was being seen and the difficulty subjacent to the task, whenever places, plants, animals, and people with odd, peculiar features (according to Western standards) were not depicted right away *in*

loco or soon afterwards. Thirdly, beyond their artistic dimension, many of the reports were made after the tales of sailors and adventurers, most surely influenced by feelings of awe and fascination.

The descriptive and narrative processes began to change, as a tendency towards precision was growing steadier and the vernacular languages were replacing Latin which, notwithstanding, would remain, until very late, the *lingua franca* used by scholars. Simultaneously and frequently, antithetical tendencies were projected on the records because imagination proved to play a relevant role, when new realities, lacking verisimilar consistency, were reported by travellers and afterwards depicted by authors; moreover, as old superstitions regarding the Ocean began to fade away, new fears began to arise out of unexplained phenomena, such as violent storms, gigantic waves, amazing geological formations, phosphorescent waters, and other natural luminescences. Taking all these contextual aspects into account and starting with cartography, I will now approach some of the "charts" that, in varied fields and through varied ways, depict what was then being apprehended.

Early modern cartography assumed an essential key role. It was particularly concerned with and based upon new notions of exactitude, especially since the Portuguese systematic sea voyages initiated in 1415. But even in this domain, the use of symbolism and allegory persisted (it was probably considered normal) through the insertion of artistic motifs.[3] On the other hand, the reproduction of ancient concepts did not end overnight. In the late fifteenth century, more precisely in 1482, a printed map by Lienhart Holl, or Holle, depicting Ptolemy's inhabited world would come to light,[4] although the most astounding items are undoubtedly Heinrich Bünting's maps, produced in the late sixteenth century and contained in his work, written in Latin, *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae*

---

[3] Among many others, maps with these characteristics were conceived by the Portuguese cartographers Lopo Homem, Pedro Reinel, Jorge Reinel, and Lázaro Luís, and are contained in the following works, respectively: *Atlas Miller* or *Lopo Homem-Reinéis Atlas* (1519; French National Library, Paris); *Atlas de Lázaro Luís* (1563; Academia das Ciências de Lisboa).

[4] Printed in Ulm, reproducing the map contained in Ptolemy's *Cosmographia*.

(1581): *the Clover Leaf Map*; *Europe in the Shape of a Queen*; *Asia in the Form of Pegasus*.

Literature, iconography, and the interaction between both constitute much more complex spheres, due to the specificities intrinsic to the process of representation, to the new nomenclature and to the very usual mixture of factual with legendary matters. Accounts and pictures gave origin to other accounts and other pictures, within a dynamic process potentiated by Guttenberg's printing press. For instance, Albrecht Dürer produced his famous rhinoceros in 1515, after two letters[5] sent from Lisboa to Nuremberg by correspondents who had seen the large animal, brought from India in that same year; afterwards, Hans Burgkmair, Conrad Gesner and David Kandel (who worked for Sebastian Münster, the author of *Cosmographia*, 1545), among others, made reproductions of the astounding creature, after Dürer. Carolus Clusius drew the dodo in 1605, based on Jacob van Neck's report of his expedition to Indonesia (1598-1600). Once the dodo would be extinct within approximately 100 years after the Dutch arrived in Mauritius, Clusius's iconographic pieces, together with other ones of the same kind, become particularly important. The same happens with the works of other artists, namely Theodor de Bry's impressive scenes of cannibalism and appalling acts of torture inflicted to the native inhabitants of the Americas, made after Friar Bartolomé de las Casas's pungent written testimony entitled *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552).[6]

Within an immense set of records depicting animals (as the afore mentioned rhinoceros and dodo) and exotic plants (for instance, the corn, the pineapple, the black pepper, and the cinnamon tree),[7] a small South American creature constitutes an enlightening, complex example in the

---

[5] One by Valentim Fernandes, a Moravian merchant and printer, the other of unknown authorship.

[6] *A Most Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies.*

[7] Many early modern engravings of fauna and flora are assembled in the work by Marília dos Santos Lopes, published in 1998: *Coisas maravilhosas e até agora nunca vistas. Para uma iconografia dos Descobrimentos*.

fields of Philology, Geography, and Politics. Its triple designation of different origins —tatu; cassacam; armadillo— bears witness to the process of colonisation of the New World, anchored in the Treaty of Tordesillas. The animal may be visualised through two 16th-century iconographic displays (by Hans Staden and Conrad Gesner) and two written records (by Hans Staden and Sir Walter Raleigh). In a world then already divided between the two Iberian kingdoms, the Portuguese adopted the Indian word "tatu," used in *Wahrhaftige Historia* (1557) by the German author; the Spaniards named it "armadillo," used in *The Discovery of Guiana* (1595) by the English author, who fortunately also registered another native word: "cassacam." Staden was reporting on the Brazilian territory visited by him, already occupied by Portugal; Raleigh was reporting on the territory visited by him, already occupied by Spain. Here is the description by the Elizabethan writer:

> (…) a beast called by the Spaniards armadillo, which they [the native tribes] call cassacam, which seemeth to be all barred over with small plates somehow like a rhinoceros, with a white horn growing in his hinder parts as big as a great hunting-horn (…). (27)

As it happens with the maps, reliable accounts co-exist with material of another nature, sometimes even in the same work. For instance, Hulsius would produce an implausible woodcut[8] after Sir Walter Raleigh's also implausible description of a people (whom he actually never saw), in a text generally accurate. Raleigh himself was indebted to Pliny's legendary reference to the Blemmyae, a Nubian tribe believed to be acephalous, when he wrote:

> (…) a nation of people whose heads appear not above their shoulders … They are called Ewaipanoma; they are reported to have their eyes in their shoulders, and their mouths in the middle of their breasts, and that a long train of hair groweth backward (…). (37)

---

[8] Inserted in the German translation of *The Discovery of Guiana*: *Kurze wunderbare Beschreibung des goldreichen Könisgreichs Guianae in America* (1599).

The miscellany I am here considering is peculiarly displayed in two other written works created a century apart. In Gesner's exquisite book *Historiae Animalium* (1551-58; 1587) we find accurate depictions and descriptions, such as the rhinoceros, the tatu, the castor and the ostrich, side by side with creatures, such as the unicorn, a polycephaly, and a sea satyr. The same happens in Edward Topsell's *The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents* (1658), which mixes apes, vipers, and other common animals with monstrous creatures from the realm of fantasy (many by Gesner, actually). Items of a still different nature that still fall into another category kept being produced, for example Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires Prodigieuses* (1561), presented to Queen Elizabeth I when the author visited England, and Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Monstrorum Historia* (1642). Classical and medieval works on animals, wonders, and malformations had therefore not been dismissed during the new era; they were being reread, certainly according to other perspectives, and taken into account, in an effort to understand the amazing discovered realities. Iconographic works like the ones contained in these texts seem to reproduce the fright of unexplained phenomena. Furthermore, the persistence of certain ancient matters seems to constitute strong evidence of the composite spirit of the age that skilfully articulated Natural Philosophy and Neoplatonism with Experimentalism and Observation.

The intersection of both approaches —the ancient and the new— is masterfully delineated by Garcia de Orta in *Colóquios*, written in India in 1563, when the Portuguese were in full possession of their empire in the East. The author, a physician, herbalist, and naturalist, one of the major figures of the Renaissance in Portugal, devised a peculiar work with a peculiar structure, in the form of colloquies, i.e. conversations between two Iberian interlocutors —Orta, himself, and Ruano, his *alter ego*. The first, who was already settled down in Asia at the time, represents the innovative approach, based on observation and experimentation; the second, a fictional Spanish physician who was there visiting his Portuguese fellow, represents the traditional approach based on inherited, theoretical knowledge. Throughout the dialogues, the Oriental fruits, spices, trees, substances, and "simples" (meaning "herbs used singly") are listed in alphabetical order, followed by the description of their features, the indication of their therapeutic uses, and the locations of transaction and

distribution within the early modern commercial network. Orta's was indeed a pioneer text, with a strong, deep impact on other authors and on diverse fields, both of knowledge and action; but because it had been written in Portuguese, its wide circulation and subsequent influence would be only reached in 1567, through Carolus Clusius's translation of it into Latin. This version is illustrated by Clusius himself, who thus added a valuable dimension to the contents. Regrettably, however, the translator did not keep the original structure, in the sense that the colloquies —the conversations— between the two physicians do not exist, having thus erased significant, paradigmatic rhetorical devices.

As the Europeans reached the new territories, there was a usual— certainly natural— major tendency to highlight the interaction with the indigenous peoples and the places where they dwelled. Nevertheless, and independently of the everlasting conflicts in the Old Continent, the Europeans' interaction among themselves also changed at that time, having taken different tonalities. The perspectives and interactions afore mentioned may be observed in two other interesting works: *Carta a El-Rei D. Manuel* (1500),[9] by the Portuguese Pêro Vaz de Caminha; *A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of Açores* (1591), also known as *The Last Fight of the Revenge*, by the English Sir Walter Raleigh.[10]

The *Letter*, actually not a single sheet of paper but a long text[11] addressed to King Manuel I of Portugal, belongs to the early phase of the Discoveries —exploration— and is primarily centred on the encounter with the "Other," epitomised by Theodoor Galle's allegorical engraving *America* (*ca*. 1600), after Stradanus. Due to the Portuguese policy of secrecy regarding the maritime expansion, this valuable piece of literature would only be published in the nineteenth century. Pêro Vaz de Caminha was a knight who travelled with Pedro Álvares Cabral to India in 1500, as

---

[9] *Letter to King Manuel* (my translation), hereafter referred to as *Letter*.

[10] Hereafter referred to as *The Last Fight*. All the quotations belong to the modernised version of the text entitled *A Report of the truth concerning the last sea-fight of the Revenge*.

[11] In the edition I am using it occupies 50 pages.

a secretary to the royal factory. The fleet sailed further westward than planned —while using the turn of the sea ("volta do mar"), a navigational technique developed by the Portuguese to catch favourable winds— and, instead of proceeding on the India route, discovered by Vasco da Gama two years earlier, reached the coasts of another continent. The *Letter* constitutes both first-hand news to the king on the unexpected arrival in an unknown land and a detailed report on the place and its inhabitants, who were then plainly denominated "Indians." It also constitutes a fine example of the mutual amazement, at a somehow Edenic stage that characterised these first encounters, and has forever captured those unique, primeval moments when the territory had not yet been given a name. Caminha only mentions "the land," at first believed to be an island, found, by chance, on the way to Calicut, and ends his report by using the term "Vera Cruz" ("True Cross"). As a matter of fact, the designation "Terras de Vera Cruz" ("Lands of the True Cross") lasted until our days as an alternative, more poetic synonym for Brazil.

Caminha centres his attention on the native inhabitants, who lived in a pre-iron age and to whom gold did not constitute a panacea, as it also happens in More's *Utopia*. Caminha bears witness to two of the three most conspicuous novelties beheld by the Europeans on the African and American continents: nudity, tattoos and, above all, anthropophagy. Hans Staden's testimony in his *Wahrhaftige Historia* is impressive: he tells and depicts what he witnessed and almost experienced when he was about to be killed, roasted, and eaten by a Brazilian tribe, had he not been rescued by another tribe, allied to the Portuguese. The famous, also impressive engravings by Theodor de Bry depicting anthropophagic scenes were precisely made after Staden's *Wahrhaftige Historia*. Caminha did not face Staden's experience, fortunately for him, but he is constantly struck by the natives' lack of clothes and body marks, on the one hand, and by their cleanliness, health, good shape (32-33) and generosity (32; 33-34; 36-37; 38), on the other, while describing, in detail, the physical characteristics of both men and women, their feather adornments, their dwellings and their weapons (which they gradually stopped carrying, in an attitude of total trust —10-11; 13-15; 20; 29-30; 35). At the same time, Caminha gives account of the natives' perspective, by referring to their own curiosity and reactions before the European clothes, animals and food (16-17), certainly

also puzzled by their/our physiognomies, and he openly recognises that the Indians are "muito mais nossos amigos que nós seus" (44).[12] Amidst an atmosphere of goodwill, the dichotomy Civilisation/Nature could not but surface, due to crucial actions and occurrences, namely: the Portuguese permanent effort to clothe the naked Indians; the building of a large cross, the offering of a small cross to each one of the natives, and the celebration of Mass (24; 48), thus metonymically marking the beginning of evangelisation; the flight to land, in a stolen skiff, of four members of the crew (two deported convicts and two cabin-boys), thus literally marking the beginning of miscegenation, which was a characteristic of the Portuguese colonisation everywhere: "E cremos que ficarão por aqui" (50),[13] writes Pêro Vaz de Caminha.

Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Discovery of Guiana* shares many aspects with Caminha's *Letter*, in the sense that the former visited South American territories with similar characteristics, lived similar experiences, and acknowledged the Indians' constant generosity. But unlike the *Letter*, both *The Discovery of Guiana* and *The Last Fight* belong to a later phase, when colonisation was at full speed. *The Last Fight of the Revenge* was written in 1591, when King Felipe II of Spain was I of Portugal, i.e. when the Iberian Peninsula was politically unified, as a consequence of King Sebastião's loss at Alcácer-Quibir, in 1578; therefore, the Portuguese Archipelago of Açores, strategically located in the Atlantic, was then under the Spanish flag. The arch, everlasting opposition England/Spain (and vice versa) bursts out both in the report of the events and in the events themselves, at a time when a fortified England under Elizabeth I's rule was seeking an active participation in the maritime enterprise, encouraged by the defeat of the Spanish Armada in the Battle of Gravelines three years earlier. Although the English were defeated by the Spaniards on the Açores waters, Raleigh's account of the peculiar, odd battle —the Battle of Flores[14]— is imbued with emblematic meanings, whose scopes are

---

[12] "much more our friends than we [are] theirs" (my translation).

[13] "And we do believe they will remain here" (my translation).

[14] Flores is one of the Açores islands.

amplified by the author's literary skills. The 14-year old galleon *Revenge* —the Queen's finest warship with a highly symbolic name— fiercely fought alone for 12 hours against a recently renewed Spanish fleet. It eventually surrendered and, badly damaged, sank near the Island of Terceira during a storm.

> So it pleased them to honor the burial of that renowned ship the Revenge, [not] suffering her to perish alone, for the great honor she achieved in her life time. (13)

Revenge's resistance may symbolise both England's and its Queen's resilience against a long Spanish menace to independence, both political and religious; moreover, and due to the characteristics of this naval battle, it may be understood as a sign of the growing strength of a nation that had recently gone through deep, radical changes.

> Thus it has pleased God to fight for us, and to defend the justice of our cause, against the ambiiious and bloody pretenses of the Spaniard, who seeking to devour all nations, are themselues devoured. (14)

Raleigh's writings are imbued with the same anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic feelings that can be detected in *The Discovery of Guiana*. As he reports the last battle of the *Revenge*, he develops a series of considerations, and the text goes far beyond the report of the factual event. The author vehemently denounces the Spaniards' rapacity, plunder, cruelty, and prepotency in the New World; but so does Bartolomé de las Casas, and he was a Spaniard. Curiously, Raleigh mentions de las Casas in *The Last Fight* and must have read his writings, once he uses them to ground his own argumentation against the Spanish methods in the New World (15-16). Then, proceeding with his vigorous criticism and anti-Spanish feelings in the superlative, he focuses on the Europeans' interaction among themselves, while disputing the immense resources of the colonies, which led to another kind, or level, of prepotency and rapacity in the Old Continent. For Raleigh, the Spaniard was indeed a great deal worse than the Turk (16). From another perspective and within the complexity of the relations among Europeans, one must not forget that the English were carrying on ferocious acts of plunder and rapacity when they assaulted the Iberian ships, loaded with treasures from the other side of the ocean, or that they were anchored

on the same beliefs of superiority and the right to appropriation, rulership and Westernisation. Be that as it may, a crucial, complex fact that often tends to be disregarded must be here mentioned: countercurrently, some early modern authors of various backgrounds, including missionaries (mainly Jesuits), were bold enough to support the native peoples, their environment and cultures, and to denounce the process of colonisation that would follow those first moments of the encounter with the "Other," as told by Pêro Vaz de Caminha. Besides Friar Bartolomé de las Casas (*Brevísima Relación*) and Sir Walter Raleigh (*Discovery of Guiana*), the Portuguese Fernão Mendes Pinto (*Peregrinação*, *ca*. 1569, published 1614) and Father António Vieira (*Sermões*, 1633-1681) would expose the Europeans' rapacity, plunder, cruelty, and prepotency in the New World.

This second stage of the Discoveries —exploitation and settlement— is depicted in two other English texts that constitute interesting data at several levels: Sir George Peckham's report concerning Newfoundland (*True Report of the Late Discoveries*, 1584) and Thomas Hariot's written testimony on Virginia (*A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, 1588), both assembled in Hakluyt's well-known compilation on the English maritime enterprise, *The Principal Navigations*, *Voyages*, *and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589). The texts by Peckham and Hariot are centred on actions within Sir Walter Raleigh's projects for the New World and on expeditions commanded by two of his relatives, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Raleigh's half-brother, and Sir Richard Grenville, a cousin of both. The texts share a series of premises on colonialism and mercantilism, noticeable from the very beginning through the use of identical terms in the titles: "report" refers to the intended factual nature of the writings; "true" validates and/or reinforces such nature (which, in the case of Hariot's, is endorsed by Governor Ralph Lane's foreword); "land" specifies each object under consideration; "discover," "new," and "found" share a broader meaning implying not only the literal sense of *terra nova* but also the right to "claim," "possess," and "explore" new territories. In fact, two apologies for settlement in different parts of the world are developed in these texts, making use of description, evidence and enumeration of resources, in order to justify, above all, the right of occupation and exploitation.

Peckham's text appeared in the aftermath of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's disastrous expedition to Newfoundland in 1583. The author reveals a good knowledge of the age, in terms of historical figures, events, and contexts, of geography, natural resources, policies, and strategies. He departs from Gilbert's discoveries, euphemistically discarding the nobleman's failure and eventual death, and develops both an analeptic and a proleptic argumentation of subtle contours. Most probably within the ethos of the Tudor propaganda, he grounds Elizabeth I's right to territories in the New World on the alleged twelfth century deeds of a Welsh Prince, Madog Ab Owain Gwynedd, who, according to legend, had sailed to America in 1170 (let us not forget that Elizabeth's grandfather, Henry VII, had based the claim to the throne of England on his own Welsh ancestry). According to Peckham, the Queen's right was so solidly anchored that even one of the native leaders, the Aztec emperor Montezuma II, openly acknowledged it, while delivering a speech to his subjects in the presence of the Spaniards, whose hegemony in South America was already in motion. Then, fully aware of the Iberian nations' supremacy, mentioned several times in the report, Peckham states the reasons why the English colonisation should proceed (*malgré* Gilbert's mischance), justifies it and gives counsel to future colonists on how to deal, trade and traffic with the indigenous peoples. The 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas gains yet another dimension, here and in the majority of early modern texts, namely in Caminha's *Letter*, when a dichotomy based on religious beliefs also divides the world in two broad halves and disregards ethnic specificities: the Europeans are always referred to as Christians, the native peoples as Savages.

In its turn, Thomas Hariot's apologetic report appeared in the aftermath of the 1580's failures to settle an English colony in North America. Sir Richard Grenville's expedition in 1585 aimed at the colonisation of Virginia, devised by his cousin Raleigh. However, due to other priorities, namely the conflict with Spain, the crown ceased to invest in the project, which eventually failed after two attempts of settlement. The work constitutes another rich repository of nomenclature, descriptions, definitions, explanations, and pieces of advice to prospective colonists; besides, it also goes beyond the literal listings, because of two specific, pertinent circumstances associated with the interrelationships afore mentioned. Intrinsic to the report are the author's background and point

of view. Hariot, a mathematician, astronomer, ethnographer, and translator educated in Oxford, was actively involved in Raleigh's plan to Virginia, as well. He became his accountant and navigational counsellor, having also participated in the design of the ships; furthermore, he conceived a phonetic alphabet in order to transcribe the Algonquian, a native North American language now extinct, which undoubtedly helped him a lot in the detailed reference to plants, trees, animals, minerals and manufactured products.

Extrinsic to the report but intimately related to it, is an artist's point of view, materialised in a large collection of watercolours by the painter John White, entrusted by Raleigh to draw the place and its inhabitants, the Algonkin Indians. The strong interaction of word and image, as well as the ethnographic dimension, would gain new, richer angles with the 1590 edition of the report by Theodor de Bry, who wrote an introduction and created a series of engravings based on White's watercolours. On the other hand, the editor's introduction discloses an uncommon position for the time, when he praises the native peoples' superiority, wisdom, and skills in certain fields. Such countercurrent attitude, somehow also subjacent in Hariot's report, appears to be the same shared by those authors who were previously mentioned here: de las Casas, Raleigh, Mendes Pinto, and Vieira. Concomitantly, in the twentieth century, two works in the field of cinematography would expand such approach: *The Mission*, directed by Roland Joffé, depicts the subjugation of the native dwellers and the Europeans' interaction among themselves in the exploitation of the New World; *Apocalypto*, directed by Mel Gibson, highlights yet another side of the human nature, while depicting the interaction of some South American tribes and exposing that slavery, plunder, and rapacity were not exclusive to the Europeans. Be that as it may and independently of the tribal conflicts that also existed in Africa, the arrival of caravels, carracks, and galleons in other lands literally meant the end of an archetypal era, more or less abruptly put to an end by a set of diverse, deep impacts of the Western civilisation.

The navigations westward to the Iberian Peninsula did unveil the rest of the planet and its dwellers. From then on, nothing would or could be the same as before. The varied reports were essential then and are essential now: on the one hand, they decisively contributed to the early modern

perspectivation of the planet; on the other hand, they are nowadays key elements to our own perception of the whole context, some of them being even the only traces of long-extinct environments and creatures— not only of the dodo, but also of native tribes, consequently of their cultures, habits, languages, myths, religions. The several texts and iconographic works here under consideration constitute therefore relevant pieces that highlight the proficuity and variety of records, when the peoples of the world were facing so many challenges. As we have seen, the relationship of human beings with the environment and with other human beings, so different in their features, traditions and ways of life, implied whole new perspectives from both sides: from the Old World travellers and from the New World dwellers. In Europe, the natural urge to record and reveal what was being experienced during the Age of the Discoveries generated a wide variety of items and an interesting symbiosis between word and image: oral and written narratives were the sources for iconographic works, while iconographic works became the visual materialisation of what had been observed in distant places and afterwards told.

The issue of communication must, once again, be emphasised, and some aspects recollected. At a time when the printing press was playing a decisive role in the production and circulation of works, when the vernacular languages were being promoted and studied, Latin remained the *lingua franca* in the dissemination of knowledge among scholars. Besides, inherent to the substantial changes in the reception of works, there was a certain degree of relativity, as the circumstances surrounding Garcia de Orta's text put into evidence: not everyone shared the same information at the same time, and several important writings became known only within the nations where they had been produced, or much later, as is the case of Caminha's *Letter* to his king. The more or less accurate, circumstantial, pragmatic, elaborate, or literary "charts," created by individuals of different backgrounds (merchants, seafarers, adventurers, courtiers, scholars, diplomatic envoys), took the form of letters, poems, logbooks, treatises, travel narratives, permeated with an immensity of new nomenclature and, frequently, with illustrations. Apart from their characteristics or authorship, they ended up by having a deep impact on erudition.

The disclosure of the rest of the planet changed forever the way each human being *is* in the world, *sees* the world and *deals* with the "Other."

Despite the negative impacts both on the environment and on other civilisations, the positivity intrinsic to the process of Expansion seems to be encapsulated in the title *De Fluxu et Refluxu Maris* and must be here evoked: as the constant sea tides, so the fragile ships that departed from the coasts of Europe and managed to return became continuous carriers of news, samples and reports. Due to such adventurous voyages, "the clouds, and the mists, and the fogs did open and show riches."[15] The mapping of the world would indeed disclose those riches by means of the wide circulation of printed works of multi-sided nature that so effectively captured the complexity of the age. Therefore, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the literal voyages on and through the Ocean gave origin to another sort of unending, peculiar voyages —"on such a full sea are we now [and still] afloat," whenever we metonymically keep travelling through the written and iconographic records, catching glimpses of a unique world and worldview that, meanwhile, have radically changed.

Works Cited

Aldrovandi, Ulisse. 1642. *Monstrorum Historia*. https://books.google.pt/books/about/Ulyssis_Aldrovandi_Monstrorum_historia_c. html?id=hOFCAAAAcAAJ&redir_esc=y. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Apocalypto. Directed by Mel Gibson, performances by Rudy Youngblood, Dália Hernandez, and Jonathan Brewer, Icon Productions, 2006.

Bacon, Francis. 1612. *De Fluxu et Refluxu Maris*. *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*. Edited by James Spedding *et al*., vol. III. London: Longman & Co., 1861, pp. 47-61.

Boaistuau, Pierre. *Histoires Prodigieuses*. 1561. https://crm.revues.org/12303. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Bry, Theodor de. 1562. *The Sons of Pindorama*. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cannibals.23232.jpg. Accessed 16 Sep. 2017

___. "16th century." http://www.lehigh.edu/~ejg1/doc/lascasas/casas.htm. Accessed 16 Sep. 2017

---

[15] My adaptation of Shakespeare's line 144 in *The Tempest* (Act III, Scene 3): "The clouds me thought would open and show riches."

Bünting, Heinrich. 1581. *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae*. London: Adam Islip, 1623.

Caminha, Pêro Vaz de. 1500. *Carta a El-Rei D. Manuel sobre o achamento do Brasil*. Lisboa: Parque Expo 98, 1997.

Camões, Luís Vaz de. 1572. *Os Lusíadas*. Edited by Álvaro da Costa Pimpão. Lisboa: Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1989.

Casas, Bartolomé de las. 1552. *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. Edition and notes by Miguel Martínez Torrejón. Prologue and chronology by Adolfo Zuluaga Hoyos. Alicante: Editorial U de Alicante, 2006.

Clusius, Carolus, translator. 1567. *Aromatum et simplicium aliquot medicamentorum apud Indios nascentium historia*. By Garcia de Orta. http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/113432#page/5/mode/1up. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Corrêa, Gaspar. 1512-1514. *Lendas da Índia*, edited by Rodrigo José de Lima Felner. Lisboa: Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa, 1858-1863.

Galle, Theodoor. *America*. 1575-1580. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2c/Theodor_Galle_after_Johannes_Stradanus.PNG. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Gesner, Konrad. 1551-58; 1587. *Historia Animalium*.https://ceb.nlm.nih.gov/proj/ttp/flash/gesner/gesner.html. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Hakluyt, Richard, editor. 1589. *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/metabook?id=hakluyt. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Hariot, Sir Thomas. 1588. *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=etas. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

___. 1588. *Thomas Hariot's a brief and true report*. Introduction and edition by Theodor de Bry. http://www.nps.gov/fora/learn/education/thomas-hariots-a-brief-and-true-report.htm. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Holle, Lienhart. 1482. *Reproduction of Ptolemy's map of the inhabited world*. 1https://www.lib.umn.edu/apps/bell/map/PTO/TOUR/1482ulg.html. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017

Hulsius, Levinus. 1599. *Kurze wunderbare Beschreibung des goldreichen Könisgreichs Guianae in America*. http://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de

/?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00024020&pimage=00001&v=10&einzelsegmentsuche=&mehrsegmentsuche=&l=en. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Index of White Watercolors and de Bry Engravings. 16th century.http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry_html/jamestown.html. Accessed 21 Sep. 2017

Lopes, Marília dos Santos. *Coisas maravilhosas e até agora nunca vistas. Para uma iconografia dos Descobrimentos*. Lisboa: Quetzal Editores, 1998.

Lopo Homem, *et al*. 1519. *Atlas Miller*. http://expositions.bnf.fr/marine/albums/miller/index.htm. Accessed 16 Sep. 2017.

Luís, Lázaro. *Atlas de Lázaro Luís*. 1563. http://purl.pt/27808/1/index.html#/1/html. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Mendes Pinto, Fernão. 1614. *Peregrinação*. Transcribed by Adolfo Casais Monteiro. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1983.

More, Thomas. *Utopia*. 1516, edited by George M. Longan and Robert M. Adams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Münster, Sebastian. 1545. *Cosmographia*. http://purl.pt/21907/1/index.html#. Accessed 15 Sep. 2015.

Orta, Garcia de. 1563. *Coloquios dos simples, e drogas he cousas mediçinais da India*.http://purl.pt/22937. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Paiva Correia, Maria Helena de, *et al*. *Literatura Inglesa (Época Renascentista)*. Lisboa:Universidade Aberta, 1996.

Peckham. 1583. *A True Report of the Late Discoveries*.http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/16century/topic_2/peckham.htm. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Pliny. *Natural History*. 1938. Translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1967.

Portinaro, Pierluigi, and Franco Knirsch. *The Cartography of North America. 1500-1800*. London: Bison Books, 1987.

Raleigh, Sir Walter. 1591. *A Report of the Trvth of the Fight about the Iles of Açores*.http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/raleigh1.html. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

___. 1591. *A Report of the truth concerning the last sea-fight of the Revenge*. http://www.elfinspell.com/RaleighRevenge.html. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

___. 1595. *The Discovery of Guiana*. https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1595raleigh-guiana.asp. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Shakespeare, William. 1610-11. *The Tempest*. *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells *et al*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, pp. 1315-1340.

___. 1599. *The Tragedy* of *Julius Caesar*. *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells *et al*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, pp. 673-703.

Staden, Hans. 1557. *Wahrhaftige Historia*. http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/warhaftige-historia-5531/1. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

The Mission. Directed by Roland Joffé, performances by Robert De Niro, Jeremy Irons, and Ray McAnally, Warner Bros., 1986.

Topsell, Edward. 1658. *The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents*.https://archive.org/details/historyoffourfoo00tops. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Trismegistus, Hermes. I-III AD?. *Hermetica*. *The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius*. Edited and translated by Brian P. Copenhaver. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Vieira, António. 1633-1681. *Sermões*. http://purl.pt/292. Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.

Abstract

For centuries, the Western notion of exoticism and otherness comprehended a relatively limited space, whose epicentre was the Mediterranean Sea. With the maritime expansion on the Atlantic, initiated by the Iberian nations in the fifteenth century and afterwards undertaken by other European countries, deep changes would occur in every domain. Horizons were broadened, geographically, and conceptually, to an unprecedented scale, and an immensity of amazing realities was disclosed. Vessels went far beyond the boundaries of a preconceived universe, at a unique time when innovation was wisely amalgamated with tradition.

In the aftermath of such an important human conquest, a natural urge was felt to register what was being witnessed. The complex notions of otherness —as well as of selfhood and identity— became consequently rather striking, once they involved not only the Europeans' interaction with the New World (and vice versa), but also the interaction among themselves, while disputing the oceans, the recently found territories and the natural resources. Early modern texts, many displaying invaluable illustrations, proliferated and would constitute important data, both on the maritime expansion and the worldview. Bearing in mind the early modern context and the different stages of the Discoveries, this essay is focused on diverse written and iconographic works by European authors of heterogeneous backgrounds— cartographers, engravers, travellers, courtiers, scholars— and on their contribution to the new understanding of the world.

Keywords

The New World; maritime expansion; literature; iconography; worldview.

Resumo

Durante séculos, a noção ocidental de exotismo e alteridade inseriu-se num espaço relativamente confinado, cujo epicentro foi o Mar Mediterrâneo. A expansão marítima, iniciada pelas nações ibéricas no século XV e prosseguida por outros países europeus, originou profundas mudanças em todos os domínios. Os horizontes

geográficos e conceptuais alargaram-se numa escala sem precedentes, e uma imensidão de novas realidades foi desvendada. As embarcações passaram as fronteiras de um universo pré-concebido, durante uma era única em que, sabiamente, a tradição foi amalgamada com a inovação.

No seguimento de tão importante conquista humana, sentiu-se um impulso, normal, de registar o que estava a ser testemunhado. As noções complexas de alteridade —assim como as de individualidade e identidade— tornaram-se particularmente proeminentes, uma vez que envolviam, não apenas a interacção dos Europeus com o Novo Mundo (e vice-versa), mas também a interacção uns com os outros, enquanto disputavam os oceanos, os territórios recentemente descobertos e os recursos naturais. No período pré-moderno, registou-se uma proliferação de textos, muitos deles com valiosas ilustrações, constituindo importantes dados sobre a expansão marítima e a mundividência. Tendo em consideração o contexto pré-moderno e as diferentes fases dos Descobrimentos, este ensaio centra-se em diversos trabalhos escritos e iconográficos de autores europeus de origens heterogéneas —cartógrafos, gravadores, viajantes, cortesãos, académicos— e na sua contribuição para o novo entendimento do mundo.

Palavras-Chave

Expansão marítima; o Novo Mundo; literatura; iconografia; mundividência.

Approaching Democracy: The Virtues of Representative Government in Mid-Victorian England

Elisabete Mendes Silva
Instituto Politécnico de Bragança
Centro de Estudos Anglísticos, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 15 2018

Approaching Democracy: The Virtues of Representative Government in Mid-Victorian England

1. Introduction

Seizing Michael Ignatieff's visit to Portugal in 2014, the Portuguese newspaper *Público* published an interview (Moura 26-27) addressed to the historian, academic, and former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. In that interview Ignatieff stated that, despite the upsurge of the capitalist totalitarian regimes in the world which smother public liberties, there are nowadays more people living in democracy, and enjoying civil and political liberties than ever before. By public liberties is meant the right to express one's opinions, to mobilise and act more in public life, and interfere actively in political matters. Private liberty gives people the right to buy and sell and to do whatever they want with their own lives, even if it costs the loss of democratic values. Russia, Turkey, or China represent just some examples of countries where a flourishing middle class chooses order and repression to public liberties, as long as its private liberties are safeguarded.

Brazilian elections symbolise a paradigmatic example of the exercise of democracy. In Brazil the vote is compulsory for all Brazilian citizens over 18, as it ensures that a large percentage of the more than 300 million people would vote. If it were not mandatory, perhaps only 20% of the population would vote. This conveys some downsides such as the lack of political awareness with regard to many voters and the conversion of the elections into democratic triviality.

In the Western civilisation, the word democracy is somehow taken for granted, regardless of the loss of credibility of our current politicians and the still enduring system flaws, but it has not always been so. Suffrage and the ballot, expressions of democracy and citizenship, have been on a long journey before they reached their universality. Britain is known for its long tradition of democracy, sustained on representative government,

heralded by political developments interpreted as marking the evolution of constitutional democracy, so much promoted by the Whig historians, namely Trevelyan (Williams 2; Himmelfarb 97-98). However, despite this biased interpretation, Britain has, in fact, endeavoured to approach democracy through the many reforms that have been adopted mainly since the nineteenth century onwards and more specifically during the second half of the nineteenth century. Until then, democracy and the extension of the franchise were deeply resisted because they were seen as something rather dangerous, a leap in the dark,[1] a footstep into the unknown. Even if the 1832 Reform Act represented a decisive move in the political *status quo* of the nineteenth century *a propos* the reform pressure felt throughout the whole century, it did not meet the requirements of the people who were vindicating representation in Parliament.

Notwithstanding its symbolic importance, we will turn our attention to the Second Reform Act, approved in Parliament in 1867, which has been of major relevance in the course of reform concerning franchise. In order to better understand its causes and impact, we will therefore delve into the social and political debate underlying this Act, stressing the actions and reactions put forward by some of the most prominent political actors of the time, specifically W. E. Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, Thomas Carlyle, and John Stuart Mill. The first two represent the political parties which claim to have put Britain in the path of reform, the Liberal and Conservative parties, respectively. Moreover, both Gladstone and Disraeli, acknowledged as the political leaders of the time in focus, fought over governmental power during more than two decades (1868-1892), giving way to a political rivalry centred on the topic of reform.

In the attempt of analysing the different responses to the reform movement and the meanings of political citizenship, we focus on Thomas Carlyle's text "Shooting Niagara— and After?" as it somehow voices the opposing views and uncertainties on the extension of the franchise. John Stuart Mill embodies the intellectual and also the political players who defended reform as he wrote much on the subject (Mill, *Essays on Politics*

[1] The phrase "a leap in the dark" was taken by Lord Cranborne from Thomas Hobbes.

and Society, *On Liberty*, *The Subjection of Women*, *Essays on Equality*, *Law and Education*), and had a direct intervention in the decisions of Parliament, namely in his struggle for the inclusion of women in the franchise. We dedicate more attention to this last issue.

Notwithstanding the importance of these names we will also bring more valuable contributions to the debate on representative government. As such, other crucial names will also be mentioned, such as Matthew Arnold and Walter Bagehot, because of their utmost importance as critics of the new political and cultural scene of mid-Victorian society. As such, references to some of their positions or impressions regarding mass government, representation, liberty, and culture will be pointed out. Newspapers and periodicals of the time in analysis also devoted space to parliamentary debates. Therefore, we will bring forward these direct statements, together with accounts and speeches presented in both the House of Lords and House of Commons, in order to have a clearer insight on the immediate reactions to reform.

2. Reform and Democracy: a leap in the dark

In nineteenth-century England, reform has opened up new horizons and set new goals for civil liberties and the improvement of individuality. The questions of representation, parliamentary reform, and democracy were addressed by a growing and dominant middle class and by a radical working class that claimed representation in Parliament. During the Industrial Revolution process many social and economic problems were unveiled, exposing thus some of the social malfunctions of the era. Within this process, a new middle class became more prominently wealthy and influential. The working class claimed better working and living conditions. Therefore, social and economic developments in industrial Britain prompted political change. In Parliament, a more radical Liberal wing gave voice to the ones who claimed more social equality and fairer political representation. Liberals such as John Bright and Richard Cobden, leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League, became active participants in the reform process. The popular movement for Parliamentary reform in the 1860s also transcended the scope of urban and industrial communities such as Lancashire, Yorkshire, lowland Scotland, Birmingham, and the East End

London, places where Chartism (1842-1848) "had found its roots" a few decades earlier (Morgan 89-90; Chase).

The extension of the suffrage was rather slow but somehow progressive. The Great Reform Act of 1832 symbolises one of the first political decisions regarding the social pressures felt more overtly in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This Act carried some seeds of hope for the ones claiming to be represented in Parliament, but in fact undermined the majority of the people's expectations since the vote was based on property and on the payment of a rent. It left the working class and the lower middle classes out of the electoral process. The constant pressure of Liberals and Radicals made parliamentary franchise a need and a reality. For this reason, the 1867 Representation of the People Act, also known as the Second Reform Act, tried to correct some still inappropriate guiding principles in the political system which the 1832 Reform Act had then approved. It extended the vote to some working-class men, increasing the electorate from just one million to the double in England and Wales compared to the achievements after the 1832 Reform Act (Leonard 133; Saunders, *The Politics of Reform* 572). As F. B. Smith noted, it enfranchised "almost half of adult male occupiers of the nation", being defined as exclusive, propertied and incomplete (F.B. Smith 2). In fact, the franchise was still based on property qualifications. "One man, one vote" was still beyond its real completion. The so-called universal suffrage would have to wait until 1918, when women, over 30 and subject to property qualifications, were for the first time enfranchised.

This much shortened account might give the impression that the reform was voiced mainly by Whigs and Liberalism and hustled by social and economic changes in the context of the Industrial Revolution. What is called a Marxist interpretation of the history of British politics, also emphasised by social historians of the 1960s and 1970s (Hall, McClelland and Rendall 11), is opposed by a new current analytical approach on social history which rejects Marxist interpretations. According to Hall, McClelland and Rendall (10) this approach placed a considerable stress on the persistent importance until about 1880 of a traditional politics in which local, aristocratic and religious influences remained paramount as against the importance of class in the subsequent era.

Supported by the reform debate, unavoidable in the 1850s and

1860s, the 1867 Reform Act was in fact set in motion not by Liberals but by Conservatives. However, both parties had their share in the 1867 Act, as we will explain far ahead in the text.

Nearly a century later, Gertrude Himmelfarb considered the 1867 Reform Act as:

> (…) one of the most decisive events, perhaps the decisive event, in modern English history. It was this act that transformed England into a democracy and made democracy not only a respectable form of government (…), but also, it was soon taken for granted, the only natural and proper form of government. It should be called the "Great Reform Bill." (Himmelfarb 97)

Notwithstanding what we consider an overstated assessment, what Himmelfarb means is that if it were not for the approval of this Bill the consolidation of democracy and universal suffrage would not have been possible in the subsequent years. However, as the impact of the 1832 Great Reform Act was not so striking, as it intended to harmonise upper and middle class interests, while, at the same time, maintain aristocratic influence, the 1867 Act was also guided by the same motivations. But one cannot deny that the 1867 Act extended the vote to many skilled and unskilled working-class men, and represented the first steps towards democracy as it "propelled the British electoral system into the age of mass politics" as Robert Saunders (*The Politics of Reform* 571) emphasised. Nonetheless the payment of a £10 rent a year or more of all householders and lodgers was still a *sine qua non* condition to get the vote.

The 1867 Reform Act was hence a result of "political calculations" (Hall, McClelland and Rendall 8) and, as Jonathan Parry put it, "the most unintentional revolution in the history of British politics" (Parry 216 quoted in Hall 9). F. B. Smith (1) highlights the treachery on which the reform bills of the 1960s were grounded and all leading participants, "Russell, Bright, Gladstone, Derby and Disraeli, found themselves lost in it." Maurice Cowling (3) defined it as "an incident in the history of the party" because "party was the mould in which parliamentary ambition had to be set" (Cowling 4). Despite the most certain inevitability of the expansion of the franchise, due to the pressure of the working-class movement and their respective associations, such as the London Working

Men Association (LWMA), the Reform League and the more radical Chartists, we need to give Cowling's position some credibility. Based on one of the two main schools that interpret the 1867 accounts (Saunders, *The Politics of Reform* 572) [the other being the actions of the Reform League], this line of thought "puts emphasis on a crisis of party and the rivalry between W. E. Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli" (Saunders, *The Politics of Reform* 572).

The political leaders of the time, Gladstone and Disraeli, "forced up the price of reform, not the reformers inside and outside the House of Commons" (Himmelfarb 106-107) for their own revival and promotion. In 1866, after defeating the Liberal John Russell in elections, Benjamin Disraeli was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer by the elected Tory Prime Minister, Lord Derby, who retired from political life in 1868. As a consequence, Disraeli replaced him in the leadership of the government. Gladstone was Russell's Chancellor of Exchequer and was to become Prime Minister four times, 1868, 1880, 1886, and 1892. The idea of setting forth political reform became one of the core issues of the governments led by both Russell and Derby. However, opinions differed widely regarding who could have the right to get the vote and thus become an active citizen in a more representative and thus fairer government.

Contrary to Robert Lowe, utilitarian, free-trader, and the leader of the Addullamites, an anti-reform faction within the Liberal party, and even Disraeli, Gladstone was not worried about the balance of classes but with the dissolution of classes of which the extension of franchise was part (Saunders, *The Politics of Reform* 582). Within this agenda, the distribution of seats was not so important for Gladstone. In addition, the Russell-Gladstone proposal of 1866 met this assumption as imposing a £7 rating franchise represented a safeguard against indiscriminate enfranchisement (Saunders, *The Politics of Reform* 586).

If it was generally accepted that every class should be represented in Parliament, the extension of the representation, i.e. "the distribution of seats between town and county," was one of the "fault-lines" which fractured the parties:

> It was generally accepted that every class and every interest should have a voice in Parliament, and in this respect, enfranchising the working classes in the 1850s was like

> enfranchising Manchester and Birmingham in 1832: it added one more piece to the matrix of representation. The difficulty was the sheer size and ubiquity of that class, which meant that any franchise to which they could realistically aspire risked swamping every other interest. This would not be the extension of the representative government but its negation, replacing Britain's mixed government with the exclusive rule of a single class. (Saunders, *The Politics of Reform* 578)

The 1866 proposal was brought down by the Tories with the support of the Adullamites who were in disagreement with Gladstone's principles. This bill established that qualification to get the vote would be dependent on the payment of a house every year. Lodgers should also reside the house for at least 12 months. £14 in the counties and £7 in the boroughs were the new figures proposed. Unlike the amount set in 1832, £50 in the counties and £10 in the boroughs, the new model set in 1866 was rather extreme, as Saunders explains:

> The change in itself was radically extreme: a £7 house, when set alongside further requirements on rating and residence, remained beyond the reach of most working families, and £7 marked a retreat from the £6 figure Russell had proposed in 1860. What troubled MPs was the lack of any 'principle' for the new figure. The occupation of a £7 house could hardly be said to be a test of character, for rents fluctuated wildly in different parts of the country. The qualification was simply a figure plucked from the air, on the basis that it enfranchised roughly the desired number of votes. (Saunders, "Introduction": *Shooting Niagara— and after?* 9)

It also added one more piece to the many reform bills that had already been put forth since 1832, namely 1852, 1854, and 1860. Saunders (*Shooting Niagara— and after?* 2) defines the thirty-year reform movement as having accounted for the establishment reform as the "Bermuda Triangle of British politics." Saunders notes that the 1867 "Reform Act brought to a climax a controversy that had bedevilled governments for a generation." (Saunders, "Introduction": *Shooting Niagara— and after?* 2)

Aiming at securing household suffrage, Lord Derby and Disraeli's proposal introduced a series of far-reaching amendments to the 1866

proposal, such as the inclusion of compound householders, "enfranchising," therefore, "almost the entire working classes in the boroughs" (Himmelfarb 107). However, this revealed to be "administratively impractical" as Saunders explains (Saunders "Introduction": *Shooting Niagara— and After?* 9). The Conservative proposal's main objective was to distinguish between personal ratepayers from compound householders. The latter had local taxes paid by their landlords whereas the former were able to pay taxes for themselves. Nevertheless, compounding depended on local acts and, as such, did not define the value of the lodgers. Compounding was therefore abolished and the system of personal rating ensured that the principle of taxation and representation would be respected. If individual ratepayers were not able to pay for their rates they would be excluded from the borough electorate (Saunders, "Introduction": *Shooting Niagara— and After?* 9).

On July 12 1867, in the House of Commons debates, when asked about a proposed Amendment by the Member of Parliament (MP) P.A. Taylor, on page 2, line 20, after the words "same lodgings," to insert the words "or different lodgings in succession," Disraeli replied that the agreement on such amendment "would throw open the door to many manifold abuses." However, the amendment stating that "the occupier to be rated in Boroughs and not owner (clause 5)" was agreed to (Hansard online, *Commons Debates*).[2] This debate shows how difficult and controversial was to reach a uniform household franchise.

Nonetheless, household suffrage was believed to include the "residuum" of the working classes that would strengthen the Conservative Party, so Disraeli believed, as the *Times* reported:

> (…) while the enfranchisement of the elite of the working classes alone would destroy his party, the enfranchisement of the residuum with the elite would renew its source of strength. (Himmelfarb 127)[3]

---

[2] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1867/jul/12/consideration#S3V0188P0_18670712_HOC_98

[3] Joseph H. Park, *The English Reform Bill of 1867*, 243 quoting *The Times*, June 12, 1967, quoted in Himmelfarb 127.

According to Himmelfarb, the Conservatives believed the masses were more deferential upon established tradition and authorities rather than on property, privilege, or power which would not jeopardise the aristocratic outlook of the "future governors of England," the same as the "old governors of England" (Himmelfarb 131-132). Disraeli was therefore driven by the creed known as "Tory Democracy" and "took advantage of all the political latitude implicit in his social creed, (…) accelerating the movement towards democracy" (Himmelfarb 112-113), based on the assumption that the lower classes were naturally Conservative:

> (…) there was an additional impetus towards democracy in the Tory creed. This came from the belief that the lower classes were not only naturally Conservative in temperament but also naturally Conservative in politics. Thus the party had a practical interest as well as a philosophical disposition towards democracy. The Tories were democratic, one might say, because they assumed that the demos was Tory. (Himmelfarb 113)

Deference was indeed a valued and taken for granted characteristic of the working class people which was believed to be needed to enforce the value of constitution. Walter Bagehot, in 1872 in the introduction to the second edition of *The English Constitution*, first published in 1867, noted that when writing the first edition there was a prevalent (liberal) idea that skilled artisans should be enfranchised as they "could form superior opinions on national matters" (9). However, the unexpected enfranchisement of unskilled labour, with no special skill and lacking intellectual abilities created more fears and doubts as to whether the ordinary working man could still be deferential upon his "betters" and therefore accepted to be guided by them:

> We have not enfranchised a class less needing to be guided by their betters than the old class; on the contrary, the new class need it more than the old. The real question is, will they submit to it, will they defer in the same way to wealth and rank, and to the higher qualities of which these are the rough symbols and the common accompaniments? (9-10)

Bagehot, a liberal-minded intellectual "with a conservative undertow of deference to customary and established order", but no "natural democrat" (Fawcett 183) also feared the extension of the franchise to the illiterate

working class as it would endanger parliamentary government. Bagehot supported reform, but he was distrustful of the effects that the extension of franchise would have in cabinet government. In addition, as Bagehot described, in 1867 there were many uncertainties regarding the real extension of the Reform Act:

> They are taken up with technicalities as to the ratepayers and the compound householder. Nobody in the country knew what was being done. I happened at the time to visit a purely agricultural and conservative county, and I asked the local Tories, "Do you understand this Reform Bill? Do you know that your Conservative Government has brought in a Bill far more Radical than any former Bill, and that it is very likely to be passed?" The answer I got was, "What stuff you talk! How can it be a Radical Reform Bill? Why, Bright opposes it!" There was no answering that in a way which a "common jury" could understand. (10)

Bagehot believed that English politics was entering a new world, and change was thus unavoidable, as the author stated in 1872:

> A new world has arisen which is not the old world; and we naturally ascribe the change to the reform Act. But this is a complete mistake. If there had been no Reform Act at all, there would have been a great change in English politics. There has been a change of the sort which, above all, generates a change of generation. (4)

In reality, Gladstone and Disraeli epitomised this new generation of political leaders who, though fearing reform and its implications, knew that change was inevitable.

With the aged Prime-Minister, Lord Derby, Disraeli grabbed the opportunity of reform to boost his political ambitions and to re-establish the Conservative Party as government. Several cartoons from *Fun* portrayed Disraeli as a very cunning Jewish street merchant, selling household suffrage on the cheap, and distrusted by Gladstone, as exemplified in figure 1.

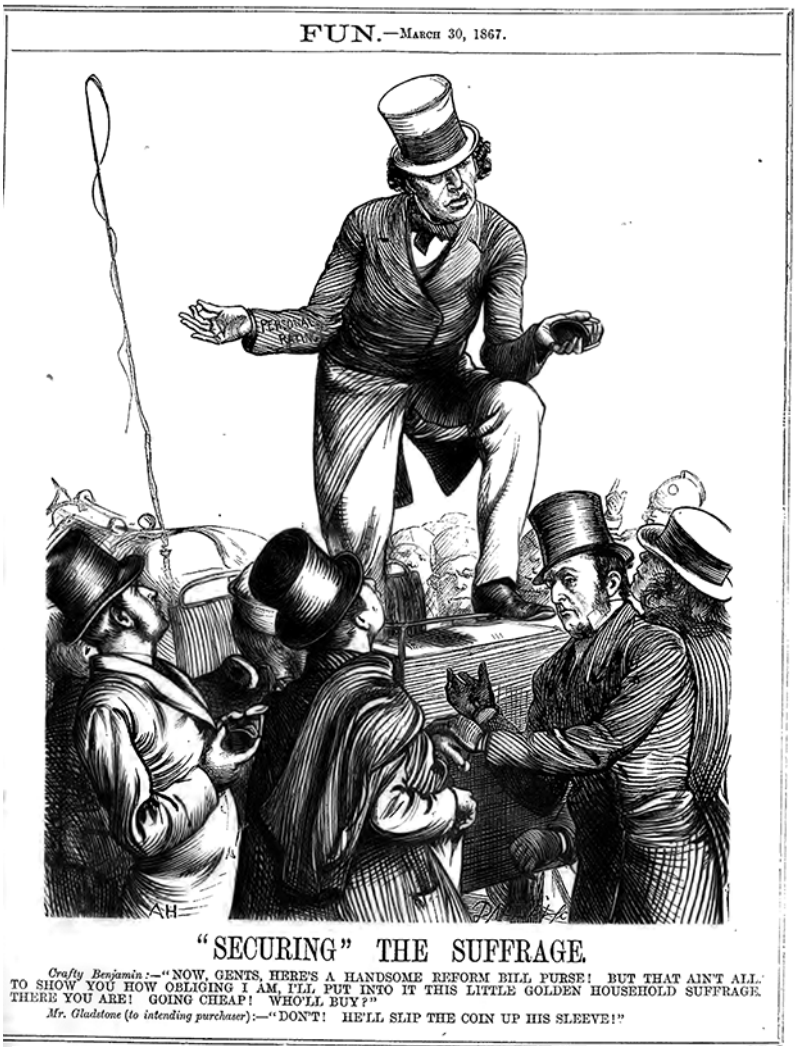


Figure 1: "Securing the Suffrage" (*Fun*, 30 March 1867, NS, 5, 29. N. 2706 d. 13)[4]

[4] "Securing" the Suffrage (*Fun*, Series II, 30 March 1867, p. 344) available at https://archive.org/stream/selectedillustra00lond#page/n343/mode/2up.

Lord Palmerston, the Liberal Prime-Minister from 1859 to 1865, in a memorandum to his secretary on 15 May 1864, resisted the expansion of the franchise claiming that "a vote is not a Right but a Trust. All the Nation cannot by possibility be brought together to vote and therefore a selected few are appointed by law to perform this Function for the Rest" (Hall, McClelland and Rendall 1). The *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*) reported in 1860 that the "Liberal party is once more in a state of complete disorganisation, and that Lord Palmerston is governing and guiding the State principally by the aid of the opposition" (*ILN*, "Sketches in Parliament" 71). Besides, Palmerston's government was more focused on foreign affairs than on reform (Leonard 125).

Both Conservatives and Liberals saw it with much suspicion, a leap in the dark, a leap of Britannia into the unknown, "but not a leap into darkness" (Read 145), as it was caricatured in *Punch* Magazine, illustrated in figure 2.

Depicting Disraeli's face on the horse carrying Britannia, backed up by other riders, John Bright, W. E. Gladstone, and Lord Derby, *Punch*'s quite evocative and satirical words did somehow justice to the spirit of the Reform and Parliamentary momentum on such a topic:

> A fine horse, a fine rider— and first of the steed —
> Caucasian Arab, they say, by his breed (…)
> And he who backs his horse, for field, course, or park,
> ten to one, finds he's taken— a LEAP IN THE DARK. (…)
> There are fears and forebodings, BRITANNIA, for you! (…)
> He goes by BRIGHT and GLADSTONE, HUGHES, FAWCETT,
> And MILL (…)
> And— who knows what will come of this LEAP IN THE DARK?
>
> (*Punch*, August 3, 1867, 46)

Disraeli had hoped "that it would never be the fate of this country to live under a democracy" (Read 145). Even the leaders of the reform movements, namely George Potter, leader of the LWMA, were not expecting such radical amendments, and they did not claim universal or manhood suffrage, unlike the Chartists demands of the 1830s. They would only be pleased with household suffrage and lodger franchise, even without the ballot (Coltham 171; Himmelfarb 130).

Figure 2: A leap in the dark (*Punch*, August 3, 1867, 47)[5]

3. Definitions of political citizenship during the parliamentary debates of 1866-7

Political citizenship was based on two sets of qualifications for citizenship, on the one hand, class and skill, and on the other, age and householding status (Gleadle 31). Gender was also at the centre of contention regarding the extension of franchise. In fact, the imagined Victorian society was patriarchal, imperial, virtuous, and individual where the moral self-improving man was a family caring man, devoted to evangelical domesticity, as Gleadle notes:

[5] Cartoon available at https://archive.org/stream/punch52a53lemouoft#page/46/mode/2up (accessed September 14, 2016).

> Many parliamentarians were invested in an evangelical domesticity, with its associated values of piety and family cares, and this intersected with a long-standing connection between fatherhood and citizenship. (Gleadle 34)

Man was regarded as the breadwinner (Rendall 120) and the moral guide of his family. If women were meant to naturally belong to the private sphere, men were entitled with the onus of public sphere. Besides class and gender, the framework which supported the construction of the potential voter also lay upon age. The idea that man should be of "full age" was part of the reform discourse. Full age meant therefore an accepted link between fatherhood and citizenship which accounted for the consolidation of the Victorian social discourse based on tradition and stability. Young males were out of the franchise because, as Kathryn Gleadle explains, they had too much independence, were too immature and, therefore, would not have the right conditions to settle down. In her words, they were: "the sexually-free bachelor; the mobile lodger; the rowing, juvenile crowd member; the unburdened, impulsive youth" (33). Rising the age of franchising would also exclude many men from citizenship (Gleadle 39). Adult single males still living in their parents' home were not also meant to be enfranchised. The common claims in Parliament discussion regarding the age of enfranchisement endorsed married men over 25 or even 30 years of age with intellectual abilities or sufficient literacy who would be able to vote responsibly (Gleadle 36-41). Even though these measures were not implemented, the arguments revealed rather effective in the reform debate.

According to the Victorian social ethos, the idea of manliness was associated with much praised qualities like "integrity, self-discipline, rationality and public spirit" (Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism* 69). These qualities reconciled classes as the respectable working man could also merit this description. Parry states that the emphasis on manliness became part of the liberal discourse to justify the entitlement to membership of the political community. In this sense, men like John Bright or John Stuart Mill were used as examples of prominent political men to justify the idea that "an inspirational political figure did not need to be a man of property" (Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism* 70). However, the crux of disagreement lay on which working men were qualified as respectable. Skilled workers, like artisans, could also be liable to corruption and bribery.

Possession or payment of property represented though the expected condition to get the vote, and the franchise included skilled and unskilled men, scot and lot voters, and freemen. Defining these voters was also no easy task, as Lord Derby, on March 11 1867, in the House of Lords Debates, stressed: "How are we to distinguish the mechanics and artizans, and other working men who were entitled as scot and lot voters, from those who were entitled as freemen?"[6]

Nonetheless, the Second Reform Act decided that:

> At present every freeholder of the value of 40s. was qualified to vote for a county, and so, in like manner, was the holder of a copyhold or a leasehold, either for the life of one person or for a period of not less than 60 years, of the annual value of £5. (Hansard Online, *Commons Debates*, March 21, 1882)[7]

Women were not included in the reform plans. The support of women's suffrage was very scarce as manhood suffrage still dominated the reform discourse. According to Jane Rendall, "citizenship for women was variously defined by campaigners for and sympathisers with women's suffrage, both women and men, like Helen Taylor and Barbara Bodichon, Jacob Bright and Charles Kingsley" (120). However, women's citizenship was still dependent on "marital status, class, ethnicity or race" which divided "the political nation" (121).

John Stuart Mill, one of the leading names in nineteenth century liberal political tradition, who had widely examined the issues of equality, liberty, and the virtues of representative government, became also known for his support of the extension of the suffrage to women, based on the principle of perfect equality: "the equals were limited to the free male citizens. (…) and no one being now left out, but an equal measure being extended to all" (*The Subjection of Women* 167). When running for a Parliamentary seat in the House of Commons in 1865, and before

---

[6] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1867/mar/11/motion-tor papers#S3V0185P0_18670311_HOL_21

[7] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1882/mar/21/resolutions#S3V0267P0_18820321_HOC_93

the supporters of the constituency he represented, Mill made clear his conviction on the suffrage and on personal representation, more specifically on women's suffrage, as stated in the author's *Autobiography*:

> I made know to them, among other things my conviction (as I was bound to do, since I intended, if elected, to act on it) that women were entitled to representation in Parliament on the same terms with men. It was the first time, doubtless, that such a doctrine had ever been mentioned to electors; and the fact that I was elected after proposing it, gave the start to the movement which has since become so vigorous in favour of women's suffrage. (*Autobiography* 274)

In fact, Mill's defence of proportional and personal representation, which he claimed remained to be made in representative government before the House and the nation (*Autobiography* 284), represent one of the most important contributions to the Reform debate. The other was the extension of the vote to all women householders (*Autobiography* 285). Mill presented a petition for the suffrage signed by a considerable number of distinguished men. The many votes his petition got in the House of Commons, including John Bright, to Mill's surprise (*Autobiography* 285), encouraged him to continue his struggle. Together with his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, and then with their daughter, Helen Taylor, John Stuart Mill wrote widely in the defence of women's rights (Harriet Mill, "Enfranchisement of Women" 393-415; Mill, *The Subjection of Women*). Hence, John Stuart Mill became an active supporter of the movement for the extension of the suffrage to women, which disclosed more radicalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Helen Taylor was one of the founding members of the National Society for Women's suffrage (1867) which campaigned for women's right to vote. It had several branches across Britain and each acted independently with their own governing bodies (*Autobiography* 285). Mill became the president of the branch in London. Many other distinguished MPs, professors and others became members of this Society. The most distinguished female members included Millicent Fawcett, later to become the President of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (1897-1919), Lydia Becker, Barbara Bodichon, among others.

Mill's frankness on women's rights earned him the epithet "The Ladies' Advocate" (*Punch*, June 1, 1867, 225)[8] and some ill-judged criticism, explored in a mocking tone in Victorian periodicals such as *Punch, or the London Charivari* and *Judy, the London serio-comic Journal*.

On June 1, 1867, *Punch* published several scornful cartoons and texts on the performance of Mill as the defender of the franchise for females. In the House of Commons, on May 20 1867, Mill introduced an amendment to the Reform Bill on women's suffrage. In clause 4, related to "the occupation qualification for voters in the counties" (Rendall 136), Mill suggested the replacement of 'man' by 'person' in an attempt to include property owners and qualified women. Rather sarcastically, *Punch* magazine took advantage of this slip, publishing a cartoon with Mill clearing the way for several women giving it the following title: "Mill's logic; or, Franchise for females. Pray clear the way, there, for these-a-persons" (*Punch*, March 30, 1867 129).[9]

This small mistake gave way to more comic and ironic remarks, such as this one again in *Punch*:

> A certain "person" to Mr. Mill
>
> Dear Mr. Mill
>
> In the name of my sex, I feel bound to thank you for your argument in support of your motion for the admission of women to the franchise, though the proposal itself was not quite for my taste, either in the manner or the manner of it. If we are to be let within the pale of the constituencies, I would rather we come in under our own style and title as "women" than to be hustled thro' your wicket under the epicene disguise of "persons." (*Punch*, "A certain 'person' to Mr. Mill", 224)

---

[8] Cartoon available at https://archive.org/stream/punch52a53lemouoft#page/n247/mode/2up (accessed 14 September 2016).

[9] Cartoon available at https://archive.org/stream/punch52a53lemouoft#page/n151/mode/2up (accessed 14 September 2016).

Nonetheless, Mill is still much praised by all the time and writings he devoted to the defence of women's rights. The author, somehow, preached what he believed in. Mill believed in individual liberty and in gender equality, even though the equal and total achievement of these ends rested on fallacious premises such as the belief in human perfection. However, one must acknowledge Mill's important role in the fight for women franchise.

Despite the discussion around the concepts of class, gender, age and skill, and the restriction of property qualifications to get the vote, the consequences of the 1867 would have some political impact on the expansion of the franchise making the working class a majority of the electorate which, for some, risked the integrity and nobility of the Parliament as Thomas Carlyle feared it would happen.

4. "Shooting Niagara": capitulation to democracy

One of the most avid opponents to the political Reform was Thomas Carlyle who, a month after the approval of the Bill, wrote the much sardonic article "Shooting Niagara. And After?" published in Macmillan Magazine. For Carlyle, England had entered an epoch of "self-congratulation and flinging up of caps" (Carlyle 4) and was about to take the Niagara leap of completed democracy sooner than expected. But that would bring serious problems to the once noble England. Critical about the slavery question, since he disapproved the abolitionist movement in America, Carlyle opposed universal suffrage as it would be exercised by the illiterate and ungifted men, contrary to the white noble men, men of genius, as he much ironically expressed:

> Divine commandment to vote ("Manhood suffrage," — Horsehood, Doghood ditto not yet treated of); Universal "glorious liberty" (…) count of Heads the God-appointed way in this universe (…); in one brief word (…) can be uttered or imagined on these points, "the equality of men," any man equal to any other," Quashee Nigger to Socrates or Shakespeare; Judas Iscariot to Jesus Christ; (…). (Carlyle 4)

For Carlyle, the working-class people were at the same social and cultural level as the slaves and coloured people. Irish people were also discriminated. During the parliamentary reform debates, other major events were

undergoing or were still very recent, such as the American civil war (1863-65), the fight for Home Rule in Ireland led by the Fenian movement, a revolutionary organisation in Ireland and among the Irish in the US, and the Jamaica question resulting from the insurrection of native people against the British. Carlyle was very critical of the American civil war outcome and of the "Nigger-Philantropists," such as John Stuart Mill, who made part of the Jamaica Committee assigned to investigate the British Governor Edward John Eyre's actions in Jamaica (Carlyle 19). Catherine Hall argues that this differentiated treatment was instilled in the "nationally and racially inflected" imagined world of Victorian people, of which the nation and the empire were seen separately (Hall 183). This discourse was based on the arguments of racial difference and superiority and eugenics so much promoted in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In England, Carlyle was critical of the "extension of the franchise" and presaged the threats of the enfranchisement of working class people to the British accepted axioms on liberty, constitutional government and reform: "Oh, my friends, whither are you buzzing and swarming, in this extremely absurd Manner? Expecting a millennium from 'Extension of the suffrage,' laterally, vertically, or in whatever way?" (Carlyle 8)

For Carlyle, "the Divine quality of liberty" should only be made indispensable to the good man, i.e. the noble man, as he is "permitted to unfold himself in works of goodness and nobleness" (Carlyle 8). To give freedom to the "bad man" is to grant him with the means to continue in ill-doing, that is, the devil, represented by the slaves and the working class, likewise to become an emancipated gentleman, is unable to act accordingly:

> But that a bad man be "free"—permitted to unfold himself in his particular way, is contrariwise the fattalest curse you could inflict on him: curse and nothing else, to him and all his neighbours. (Carlyle 8)

More voting would not bring the clearance of rottenness and the solution to mendacity but the opposite, because ordinary people are not gentlemanly like:

> Bring in more voting; that will clear away the universal rottenness, and quagmire of mendacities, in which poor England is drowning; let England only vote sufficiently; and

> all is clean and sweet again. A very singular swarmery this of the Reform movement, I must say. (Carlyle 10)

The working-class people, illiterate and coarse did not have the necessary intellectual qualities that would lead them to progress or to the possibility of improvement, as the author highlighted:

> It is not Thought, this which my reforming brothers utters to me with such emphasis and eloquence; it is mere "reflex and reverberation," repetition of what he has always heard others imagining to think, and repeating as orthodox, indisputable, and the gospel of our salvation in this world. (Carlyle 11)

According to Carlyle, the reformers —"Beales and his Roughs"— were going too fast, reaching the Niagara rapids as quickly as possible, following the path of treason, bribery and gullibility to grasp more votes even from the common people with no power or social status (i.e. the multitude) (Carlyle 11). Edmond Beales was the national President of the Reform League created in 1864 and campaigned for male suffrage. He was also the leader of the London Park railings on 26 July 1866 which might be interpreted as a sign of extreme social unrest longing for political and social transformations. Even though this League was not as radical as the Chartist movement, it attracted former chartist sympathisers and leaders, such as John Jaffray, who signed the 1838 People's Charter, and John Bedford Leno, "a leading London Chartist in the 1850s" (Chase 16-17) and trade unionists.

Carlyle foresaw the end of "Poor England" that would be transformed into a "tearful tragedy and an ignominious farce" (12). Because the society had fallen vulgar and chaotic (18), due to the new religion of free trade that brought out the "nasty cunningly varnished over" (36-37), the aristocracy, or, in other words, the industrial hero and the aristocrat by class, i.e. the men of genius, the noble few, "the inspired Gift of God" (23) revealed indispensable as they would shed some light to the roaring populaces (29).

Matthew Arnold is worth mentioning here for his valuable political and social critiques of the period in focus. Arnold stated in *Culture and Anarchy*, published in 1867, that culture was needed to maintain social order and thus avoid a state of anarchy in a time of mass democracy. Acknowledging the desire of working-class people for political trans-

formation regarding the extension of the franchise, Arnold believed that the working class was not the only class lacking the light so much needed for the attainment of perfection. This did not mean that the working-class people were not to be trusted the control of the state. For Arnold the three classes should be entrusted the governance of the country. However, for Arnold, the social machinery was out of order, as social inequality, submission to a fierce individualism in an era where wealth represented power and greatness, blind faith in machinery and trade, were the ingredients of a malfunctioning society:

> (…) there are a good many people in our paradisiacal centres of industrialism and individualism taking the bread out of one another's mouths. The rough has not yet quite found his groove… (Arnold 80-81)

Fostering the spirit of bringing together all the three classes, Arnold defended that every class should try to uphold their best self instead of asserting their everyday selves and, upon reaching that condition, they could govern the country in "united, impersonal and harmonious way" (95). Arnold's idea of culture to be a collective movement was at odds with the strong sense of individualism so much sought and promoted in Victorian society. The three classes lacked sweetness and light. Unlike Carlyle's blind belief in the aristocracy as the best class to rule the country (82), Arnold held that the aristocracy, i.e. the Barbarians, was futile and sterile and, as such, lacked the light (83-85) in a period of expansion, "a time for ideas" (84). The middle class, or the philistines, endorsed by Robert Lowe as the rightful members of Parliament (82), only thought about moneymaking, machinery and trade and were ignorant of culture and arts. Therefore, this class was not "in possession of light and that here is the true seat of authority for which we are in search" (89). The working class, or the populace, raw and uncultivated, embodied the liberal national idea of individual freedom and individual self-assertion. However, to do as one pleases risked "drifting towards anarchy" (75). The working class, submissive and undeveloped, needed the vigour and experience of both the aristocracy and middle class (81, 93). Therefore, riots such as the one in London Hyde Park in 1866 stand as a demonstration of popular agitation to which the "raw and rough" working-class people "joined in in immense numbers" (81). John Bright, leader of these extra-parliamentary

reform manifestations, personified the liberal individualism that Arnold criticised (Hall 186). "The nineteenth-century version of Puritanism and provincial nonconformity" that Bright represented "endangered the nation," according to Catherine Hall (187).

The importance of education and culture was still highly considered in Parliament during the 1867 debates on Reform. When asked about an improvement of Scotland's representation, even though Disraeli praised "the great seats of learning in Scotland,"[10] he defended the idea that the Scottish claim could not be satisfied by the sacrifice of English interests as districts in England which had grown substantially were insufficiently represented and thus needed more representation. Actually, London University would be given an MP constituency in 1867. However, he maintained that the case of Scotland was not forgotten: "I must beg the Representatives for Scotland to understand that Her Majesty's Government, when dealing with the case of Scotland, will consider it without any foregone conclusion." Nonetheless, Scottish universities were praised for their outstanding intellectual members and output and, evidently, Disraeli emphasized that quality in Parliament:

> I have always been favourable to constituencies which, mixed with those based on the great material interests that must always form the bulk of a representative assembly, should be founded on intellect and education. (Hansard online, *Commons Debates* 1 March 1867)

Coming to accept reform and the working class vote as well as women's vote (Fawcett 184), Bagehot also believed education represented the answer to the possible negative effects of democratisation. Education would morally guide the working class and would make it more politically competent (Fawcett 184).

John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* (92-93) warned about the dangers of the tyranny of opinion which renders the masses mediocre. For Mill, "if the agents of government, or those who choose the agents, or those to whom the agents are responsible (…) are mere masses of ignorance,

---

[10] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1867/mar/01/question-10#S3V0185P0_18670301_HOC_72

stupidity, and baleful prejudice, every operation of government will go wrong" (*Essays on Politics and Society* 390). The only solution to this problem was education so that individual progress could be achieved. Robert Lowe shared the same position and defended that "from the moment that you intrust the masses with power their education becomes an absolute necessity" (Heffer 412).[11]

Despite defending the increase and protection of individual liberty, Mill's utilitarian belief made him endorse the actions of the state for the sake of individual progress. "The worth of the state should, in the long run, be the worth of the individuals composing it" as the author stated in *On Liberty* (131). Therefore, Mill supported state interference in education sustained on the utility principle and the idea of progress. Even though he feared a tyrannical control of state over general education as it would be tantamount to uniformity of opinion and to the annulment of the mind, he maintained that the masses should be instructed to get the necessary skills and tools to develop both at spiritual and professional levels. Therefore, according to Mill: "Education makes a man a more intelligent shoemaker, if that be his occupation, but not only by teaching him how to make shoes; it does so by the mental exercise it gives, and the habits it impresses" (*Inaugural Address delivered to the University of St. Andrew* 218).

The idea of educating the masses at a spiritual level to make them more virtuous and respectable and thus less prone to violence was in line with the "Whig tradition of inclusive constitutional reform and state activist" (Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism* 73). According to Parry, the Liberal John Russell:

> (…) tried to take up reform in 1849, 1851, 1854 and 1860 in order to restore his reputation after the Radical criticism that he had received since 1846, to vindicate the evolutionary Whiggish model of the British constitution against the Chartist alternative (…). When he became Prime Minister again in 1865, he committed himself to Reform, not only for those reasons, but also to make the Liberal party a proper

[11] Robert Lowe, Speech on the third Reading of the Reform Bill, House of Commons, 15 July 1867. apud Heffer (*High Minds: The Victorians and the Birth of Modern Britain*).

> party again, and to galvanise Parliament, inactive in the early 1860s, to a general policy of legislative activity on educational, Irish and social issues, as in the 1830s. (Parry 73)

However, the democratisation of education could nonetheless represent a major setback in the expected social balance of the period which was led by both the opulent aristocracy and materialistic middle class.

For Carlyle, if democracy shot Niagara, that is, if democracy succeeded, the aristocracy would be in danger of losing its privileges and all the potentialities of governing, of leading and coercing in the name of a nobler good, as the most vulgar people could actually do, namely emancipated black people:

> See, I have scores or scores of "colonies," boa-constrictors, rattlesnakes, Parliamentary Eloquences, and Emancipated Niggers ripening towards nothing but destruction; one of these you shall have, you as vice-king (…). (Carlyle 19)

Carlyle was not alone in this position against more representation in Parliament. As *Punch* reported, the topic "Reform" was tantamount to disagreement: "On reform, the Parliamentary Lion was once more roused, and roared tremendously." The issue was widely discussed in the House of Commons and Mr. Roebuck, an MP, *a propos* the debate on borough suffrage and whether the payment should be made compulsory, shared the same fears as Carlyle: "In the course of the debate Mr. Roebuck observed that he did not see the country handed over to ignorance and vice, which would rule if the Rabble came in, and we were going to let in the Rabble" (*Punch*, "Punch's essence of Parliament" 3).

The franchising of the masses brought the issue to the front and also some Liberals who supported representative government feared the ignorance of the common people who would be liable to corruption and vice. The problem of corruption was in fact a very serious issue that concerned parliamentarians. The new middle class of entrepreneurs and merchants, wanting to make their way in society and politics, were accused of taking advantage of their wealth and therefore of buying off their seat in Parliament. Parry emphasises the idea that the reform debate did not centre on the binomial aristocracy and democracy, but a third highly influential force had to be considered, that is, the power of commercial wealth or plutocracy (Parry, *1867 and the Rule of Wealth* 46). Both

aristocrats and merchants were at the same level as they were the great monopolists of power and property. It became then urgent to legislate against corruption.

Kathryn Rix contends that the question of corruption and the great expense of the electoral process were approached during the Reform Bill debates. However, the Election Petitions Act would only be approved in 1868. This represented a legal attempt to tackle corruption and bribery and the great cost of elections. Nonetheless, the Reform debates urged the approval of this Act as this "was part of a wider reform settlement" (Rix 65-66). Despite the governments' attempts to strive for "electoral purity," this still remains a major concern not only in Britain but in every democratic nation as a way to maintain the necessary system of checks and balances that the British constitution demands to impose, as Bagehot pointed out (Bagehot 280).

5. Conclusion

Despite the Whig historians' attempt to make the Liberals as "the legitimate parents of the act" by "redesigning history to conform the Liberal myth" to an image of progress and reform (Himmelfarb 118-119), the 1867 Reform Act had more limited consequences than the ones normally stated, and the politics remained deeply aristocratic. Conservatives and Liberals as well as many radicals were fearful of the consequences of Disraeli's proposal. Bagehot argued that the Conservatives could not oppose it as they were obliged to accept it due to the discipline of the party. The "intelligent Liberals," as they had a tradition of proposing reforms, could not disappoint the electorate in their constituencies based on the argument "that it was too democratic." As for the Radicals "asking for years for household suffrage were much more surprised than pleased at the near chance of obtaining it, (…) but they never expected to get it" (Bagehot 10-11). In truth, the 1867 Reform Act granted the vote to all householders in the boroughs and to lodgers who were able to pay a £10 rent a year or more. In the counties, it gave the vote to landowners and tenants with small portions of land and to adult men freeholders or copyholders of property worth £5 per year, or to ratepayers occupying property for at least one year at the cost of £12 per year. Seats were distributed from small towns to the growing industrial towns or

counties, like Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester. However, the distribution of seats was very limited and it still revealed insufficient to "redress" the gap between population and representation (Smith 194).

Universal suffrage was still far from its completion due to political, social, and moral obstacles associated with class, gender, age, skill, and race. Nevertheless, Britain had finally capitulated to democracy even though a lot was still left to be done. Immediately after the approval of the Second Reform Act, the parliamentary debate on reform continued as there were still doubts pending regarding enfranchisement. Issues related to the distribution of the seats, corruption, and bribery, for example, were still some common fears. On June 24, 1867, Sir Roundell Palmer, a Tory MP, proposed some amendments to the Act related to the type of property that should be made clearer. Palmer assumed that:

> (…) it was intended that property should give a vote for counties, not for boroughs. No one would believe that it was ever intended by the Reform Act to give a vote for land in boroughs, whatever was the character of the building upon it, or that a cow-shed should give a vote. It was an abuse which had grown up under the Reform Act, and experience proved that it had become a systematized abuse. (Hansard online, *Common Debates*, 24 June 1867)[12]

During the debate, Disraeli reminded the Committee that:

> (…) this land was as much occupied in the borough as a house was occupied, and they ought not to be quarrelling about whether the buildings on it were worth £3 or £5. The law had made the land a portion of the borough, and therefore the question was not whether the building or the land was a cow-shed or not, but whether the person who occupied it within the borough ought to have a vote. (Hansard online, *Common Debates*, 24 June 1867)[13]

---

[12] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1867/jun/24/committee-progress-june-21#S3V0188P0_18670624_HOC_82

[13] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1867/jun/24/committee-progress-june-21#S3V0188P0_18670624_HOC_82

Other amendments which disqualified people accused of bribery were stated. Using the example of Barnstaple borough where corruption prevailed, a Bill for disenfranchising the corrupt voters was also introduced. In the same context, on 30 July 1867 the Marquess of Clanricade, a Tory MP, proposed the addition of a clause that provided "that no person who, after the passing of the Act, shall become a freeman of any city, town, or borough, shall be entitled as such to be placed on the register, saving the rights of existing freemen" (Hansard online, *Lords Debates*, 30 July 1867).[14]

This clause would prevent vote malpractices as it was based on the assumption that a freeman brought up in habits of corruption would be more easily contaminated and prompted to follow the same behaviour. Therefore, the "new" freemen should not be admitted into the constituency. However, despite the creation of "a Commission into Corrupt Practices at Barnstaple, where the freeman qualification existed," this had little result and great expense to the country, as Hugh Fortescue, Third Earl Fortescue and Liberal MP, highlighted (Hansard online, *Lords Debates*, 30 July 1867). Nonetheless, enfranchised electors should be worthy of the possession of the vote, not only because they had some property, but also because they were not liable to corruption. The price to pay for electoral misconduct would be disfranchisement (Hansard Online, *Lords Debates*, 30 July 1867).[15]

The Reform Acts that followed, in 1884-5 and 1918, would bear in mind these concerns with corruption and bribery. Consequently, the Secret Ballot Act would then be approved in 1872. Parliament continued increasing the scope of enfranchisement, becoming thus more democratic and representative, even though most women were still excluded until 1928.

The different positions that we have highlighted make us understand what was at stake at the time regarding suffrage and the ballot. The principles of individuality and equality, so highly praised by John Stuart Mill

---

[14] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1867/jul/30/committee#S3V0189P0_18670730_HOL_51

[15] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1867/jul/30/committee#S3V0189P0_18670730_HOL_51

under the scope of the Liberal predicament, were at the agenda of Victorian politics, but they faced many hurdles as there were still many doubts about the expansion of the franchise. Both Whigs and Tories, before and even after 1867, did not intend to further extend the vote as Parliament would lose its aristocratic stance. Moreover, Carlyle feared the danger of the ignorance of the working-class that would stain the virtuous and aristocratic House of Commons. His position was endorsed not only by many Conservatives but also by some Liberals, such as Arnold and Bagehot. When supporting the 1867 Reform Bill, Disraeli saw an egotistical opportunity to promote himself and his party. However, the two main political participants in the reform struggles, Gladstone and Disraeli, apart from the many political differences and rival positions, became somehow united in the reform issue as none denied Britain's need for parliamentary change when faced with the unavoidable shifting social and political status quo.

In an attempt to answer Carlyle's questions: once democracy is achieved, what comes next? What does one need to do to maintain it? our answer is as follows: democracy cannot be taken for granted as it is always subject to obstacles such as greed and self-gratification. Therefore, it needs constantly to be put to the test. On the one side, people who vote should be aware of the importance of the act and, on the other, the people who represent us in Parliament should be the ablest, the most intelligent and selfless men and women who would resist corruption and vice, concerns that also disquieted the Victorians.

The struggle for overcoming the obstacles to democracy continues and both the Parliament and the Members of Parliament (MPs) should have that responsibility, as the late Labour MP, Michael Meacher,[16] also stated in 2014: "the gravy train rolls on, reaching ever-more sickening heights of greed, selfish gratification and disregard for the ever-deeper miasma of poverty that disfigures our country" and therefore:

> MPs should be judged by how far they strip away these obstacles to democracy to open up the channels for the popular will to be reflected throughout the Parliamentary process. (Meacher n.p.)

---

[16] Michael Meacher (1939-2015)–Labour MP for Oldham West and Royton.

Notwithstanding the impossibility of levelling equality and liberty to the same measure, one can and should pursue the maximum of these values so important for individual self-preservation and individuality.

To conclude, the Reform Act of 1867 represented the beginning of the end of "Old England," with a predominantly aristocratic Parliament, which Carlyle so much celebrated. Despite property restrictions, it paved the way for a more inclusive and democratic Parliament in Britain.

Works Cited

Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932.

Bagehot, Walter. *The English Constitution*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1873.

Carlyle, Thomas. "Shooting Niagara and After?" London: Chapman and Hall, 1867. https://books.google.pt/books?hl=pt-BR&lr=&id=W8g AAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=shooting+niagara&ots=nzJP4yhesO&sig=kj6LMtQX7agx0FaEL8v9rclGiGo&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=shooting%20niagara&f=false. Accessed 10 Sep. 2016.

Chase, Malcolm. "The Popular Movement for Parliamentary Reform in Provincial Britain during the 1860s." *'Shooting Niagara – and After?' The Second Reform Act and its World*, edited by Robert Saunders. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell for The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2017, pp. 14-30.

Coltham, Stephen. "English Working-Class Newspapers in 1867." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1969, pp. 159-180. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3826057. Accessed 10 Nov. 2014.

Cowling, Maurice. *1867. Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution: The Passing of the Second Reform Bill*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Fawcett, Edmund. *Liberalism. The Life of an Idea*. Princeton and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Gleadle, Kathryn. "Masculinity, Age and Life Cycle in the Age of Reform." *'Shooting Niagara— and After?' The Second Reform Act and its World*, edited by Robert Saunders. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell for The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2017, pp. 31-45.

Hall, Catherine, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall, editors. *Defining the Victorian Nation. Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Hall, Catherine. "The nation within and without." *Defining the Victorian Nation. Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867*, edited by Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 179-233.

Hansard Online. *Commons Debates*. March 1, 1867. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1867/mar/01/question-10#S3V0185P0_18670301_HOC_72. Accessed 22 Jan. 2018.

Hansard Online. *Lords Debates*. March 11, 1867. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1867/mar/11/motion-tor-papers#S3V0185P0_18670311_HOL_21. Accessed 20 Jan. 2018.

Hansard Online, *Commons Debates*, March 21, 1882. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1882/mar/21/resolutions#S3V0267P0_18820321_HOC_93. Accessed 25 Jan. 2018.

Hansard Online. *Commons Debates*. June 24, 1867. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1867/jun/24/committee-progress-june-2#S3V0188P0_18670624_HOC_82. Accessed 18 Jan. 2018.

Hansard Online. *Commons Debates*. July 18, 1867. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1867/jul/12/consideration#S3V0188P0_18670712_HOC_98. Accessed 21 Jan. 2018.

Hansard Online. *Lords Debates.* July 30, 1867. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1867/jul/30/committee#S3V0189P0_18670730_HOL_5. Accessed 20 Jan. 2018.

Heffer, Simon. *High Minds: The Victorians and the Birth of Modern Britain*. London: Windmill Books, 2013.

Himmelfarb, Gertrude. "The Politics of Democracy: the English Reform Act of 1867." *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 6, 1966, pp. 97-138. http://www.jstor.org/stable/175195. Accessed 10 Sep. 2016.

Leonard, Dick. *The Great Rivalry: Disraeli and Gladstone*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013.

Meacher, Michael. "Labour Should Appoint a Shadow Minister for Inequality." *Morning Star*. October 28 2014, n.p. http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-9439-Labour-should-appoint-a-shadow-minister-for-inequality#.V9

laVdQrKt8. Accessed 10 Sep. 2016.

Mill, John Stuart. "Considerations on Representative Government." *Collected Works*, *Essays on Politics and Society*, edited by J. M. Robson, introduction by Alexander Brady. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Vol. XIX, 1977 [1861], pp. 371-616. http://files.libertyfund.org/files/234/0223.19_Bk_Sm.pdf. Accessed 30 Nov. 2014.

___. *Collected Works*, *Essays on Equality*, *Law and Education*, edited by J. M. Robson, introduction by Stephan Collini. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Vol. XXI, 2014.

___. "Inaugural Address delivered to the University of St. Andrew." *Collected Works*, *Essays on Equality*, *Law and Education*, edited by J. M. Robson, introduction by Stephan Collini. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Vol. XXI, 2014, pp. 215-257.

___. *On Liberty*, edited by Alan Ryan. *Mill: The Spirit of the Age*, *On Liberty*, *the Subjection of Women*. London and New York: Norton, 1997, pp. 41-131.

___. *The Subjection of Women*, edited by Alan Ryan. *Mill: The Spirit of the Age*, *On Liberty*, *The Subjection of Women*. London and New York: Norton, 1997, pp. 133-215.

___. *Collected Works, Autobiography and Literary Essays*. Vol. I, edited by J. M. Robson and Jack Stillinger. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

Mill, Harriet. *Collected Works*, *"Enfranchisement of Women" Essays on Equality*, *Law and Education*, edited by J. M. Robson, introduction by Stephan Collini. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Vol. XXI, 2014, pp. 393-415.

Morgan, Kenneth. *The Birth of Industrial Britain: 1750-1850*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2011.

Moura, Paulo. Sem título. *Público*. 6 Outubro, 2014, pp. 26-27.

"Punch's Essence of Parliament." *Punch or the London Charivari* 53, July 6 1867, p. 3. https://archive.org/stream/punch52a53lemouoft#page/n299/mode/2up. Accessed 14 Sep. 2016.

"A Certain Person to Mr. Mill." *Punch or the London Charivari* 52, June 1 1867, p. 224. https://archive.org/stream/punch52a53lemouoft#page/n247/mode/2up. Accessed 14 Sep. 2016.

"A Leap in the Dark." *Punch or the London Charivari* 53, August 3 1867, p. 46.

https://archive.org/stream/punch52a53lemouoft#page/46/mode/2up. Accessed 14 Sep. 2016.

Parry, Jonathan. *The Politics of Patriotism. English Liberalism, national identity and Europe, 1830-1886*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

___. "1867 and the Rule of Wealth." *'Shooting Niagara— and After?' The Second Reform Act and its World*, edited by Robert Saunders. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell for The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2017, pp. 46-63.

Read, Donald. *The Age of Urban Democracy: England 1868-1914*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Rendall, Jane. "The citizenship of women and the reform act of 1867." *Defining the Victorian Nation. Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867*, edited by Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Ryx, Kathryn. "Second Reform Act and the Problem of Electoral Corruption." *'Shooting Niagara— and After?' The Second Reform Act and its World*, edited by Robert Saunders. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell for The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2017, pp. 64-81.

Saunders, Robert. "The Politics of Reform and the Making of the Second Reform Act 1848-1867." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2007, pp. 571-591.

Saunders, Robert. "Introduction: 'Shooting Niagara— and After?'". *'Shooting Niagara— and After?' The Second Reform Act and its World*, edited by Robert Saunders. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell for The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2017, pp. 1-13.

"'Securing' the Suffrage" (*Fun*, Series II, March 30 (1867): 344. Available at URL: https://archive.org/stream/selectedillustra00lond#page/n343/mode/2up (retrieved 6 June 2018).

"Sketches in Parliament," *The Illustrated London News* 37, July 21 1860, p. 71. https://archive.org/details/illustratedlondov37lond. Accessed 12 Sep. 2016.

Smith, F.B. *The Making of the Second Reform Bill.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Smith, Paul. "Introduction to *The English Constitution.*" *The English Constitution*, edited by Walter Bagehot. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Williams, Chris, editor. *A Companion to 19th century Britain*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.

Abstract

In nineteenth-century Britain the questions of representation, parliamentary reform and democracy were more categorically discussed. The Great Reform Act of 1832 epitomised hope for many people who felt left out of the suffrage, as it would reform the British electoral system but in fact it did not match expected outcomes. In this essay we explore the parliamentary reform debate, assessing the direct and unintended political and social causes and effects of the 1867 Reform Act, also known as the Second Reform Act. Therefore, we analyse the relation between representation and democracy as the possession of the vote and of political power were not necessarily the same thing.

We also scrutinise the construction of a political discourse sustained by several players, such as historians and political writers, to meet political, economic and social needs, highlighting opposing views regarding suffrage and the disbelief in democracy focusing particularly on Thomas Carlyle and his 1867 pamphlet: *Shooting Niagara— and And after?* and some of the supporters of the extension of the franchise, specifically J. S. Mill, Gladstone, and Disraeli. In order to support these aims, we also bring to light how some nineteenth century periodicals cast the debate on suffrage, namely The *Illustrated London News (ILN)*, *The Times*, *Fun* and *Punch*.

Keywords

Liberalism; parliamentary franchise; democracy; reform.

Resumo

Na Grã-Bretanha do século dezanove as questões de representatividade, reforma parlamentar e democracia gozaram de um destaque mais categórico na discussão pública. A Lei da Reforma de 1832 simbolizou esperança para grande parte da população mas de facto não correspondeu às expectativas do povo britânico. Neste ensaio exploramos o debate parlamentar suscitado pela reforma, avaliando as causas e os efeitos diretos e involuntários políticos e sociais da Lei da Reforma de

1867, também conhecida como Segunda Lei da Reforma. Por conseguinte, comentamos a relação entre representatividade e democracia uma vez que a possibilidade de votar não garantia poder político.

Analisamos também a construção de um discurso político promovido por vários atores, tais como historiadores e politólogos, no sentido de ir ao encontro de necessidades sociais, políticas e económicas, realçando opiniões opostas sobre o sufrágio e a descrença na democracia, mais particularmente centrando-nos no panfleto: *Shooting Niagara— And after?* escrito por Thomas Carlyle em 1867. Além disso, trazemos a lume as opiniões daqueles que defenderam a extensão do sufrágio, nomeadamente J. S. Mill, Gladstone e Disraeli. Para ilustrar e comprovar estas posições verificaremos como alguns periódicos do século dezanove lançaram o debate sobre o sufrágio, tais como *The Illustrated London News (ILN)*, *The Times*, *Fun* and *Punch*.

Palavras-Chave

Liberalismo; sufrágio parlamentar; democracia; reforma.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

NOTAS SOBRE OS COLABORADORES

Ana Albuquerque e Aguilar has a degree in Classics. She holds a Master's degree in Classical Studies–Comparative Literature, with a thesis on the poetic works of Miguel Torga. She studied at the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Lisbon and at the Paris-Sorbonne University. She is currently a FCT doctoral fellow in the Materialities of Literature PhD Programme, at the University of Coimbra. She is also a teachers' trainer; she has been involved in Portuguese language and literature projects, and has several publications, including textbooks of Portuguese.

Manuel Botero Camacho is Assistant Professor at Universidad Complutense de Madrid. PhD in Comparative Literature and Theory of Literary Discourse and PhD in English. Worked as Academic coordinator at Instituto Caro y Cuervo; taught in Universidad del Rosario and Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano in Bogotá. Coordinated the conference cycles at "Biblioteca-Museo Carlos Lleras." Author of the book *El abismo lógico*, (UR 2009) and published in several academic journals. Member of the editorial board of *Razón Crítica.* Coordinator of the project *Complementary Views on British Fiction.* Member of the research group Studies on Intermediality and Intercultural Studies Mediation-SIIM. Collaborator in the research group Acis & Galatea.

Miguel Rodríguez Pérez is an M.A student of Literary and Cultural Studies in Great Britain and Anglophone Countries: Literature, Culture, Communication and Translation at the Autonoma University of Madrid, and graduated by the Complutense University in English Studies. He takes part in the Educational Innovation project Complementary Views on

British Fiction and Comparative Literature working as researcher and editor. His last publication, co-written with Manuel Botero Camacho, titled "Searching for the Gift in T.S. Eliot s Ash-Wednesday," was published on the *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* in its last volume of 2016. Speaker in the first international conference "Representations of Hostile Spaces in Literature and the Arts: Images and Metaphors" organized by the Complutense University of Madrid in May 2017.

José Manuel Correoso Rodenas holds a PhD in English and American Studies (University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain) and he is currently a post-doctoral researcher within that same institution. His areas of interest and research are mainly Gothic Literature and American Studies, in which he has presented several papers at national and international conferences. Currently, he is also a Member of the Research Project "Edgar A. Poe on-line. Texto e imagen" and of the Research Group "Estudios interdisciplinares de Literatura y Arte," located at the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.

João Paulo Guimarães received a PhD in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 2017. He specializes in contemporary American poetry, science studies, and ecocriticism. His dissertation examined how contemporary poetry inflected the Romantic concept of "living form"; in response to new philosophical and scientific definitions of "life." While at Buffalo, he was an academic writing instructor and he designed a course called "Thinking with Videogames." His work has appeared in Western American Literature and one of his essays is forthcoming from *CounterText*. He is currently a research assistant at the Comparative Literature Institute of the University of Porto.

Elisabete Lopes is an English Lecturer at the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal. She holds a Master's Degree in English Studies and a PhD in the field of North-American Literature. The thesis dwelled upon the Female Gothic in the works of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Francesca Woodman and Cindy Sherman. She is also a member of ULICES/CEAUL (University of Lisbon Centre of English Studies), the research centre from the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. The Gothic genre,

Horror cinema/literature, and Women Studies have been privileged areas of research and publication in the course of her academic career.

Rui Mateus has a degree in Languages, Literatures and Cultures in the field of English and Portuguese Studies from Nova University of Lisbon. He is currently enrolled in the master program in English and North-American studies at the same university, writing a dissertation in the field of fantasy literature.

Maria de Jesus Crespo Candeias Velez Relvas is Professor of English Studies (with Tenure) at the Department of Humanities of Universidade Aberta (Distance Education University of Portugal), where she teaches English Literature of the Renaissance, English Society and Culture, Masterworks of Western Literature, and Themes of Classic Culture. She is a Researcher at ULICES/CEAUL (University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies) and at LE@D (Distance Education Laboratory, U Aberta), an Associate Member of SEDERI (Spanish and Portuguese Society for English Renaissance Studies), and she is currently participating in a CETAPS project. Her areas of academic research and interest are Medieval and Renaissance studies, Renaissance imagery and iconography, Victorianism, and Distance Education. She has participated in several research projects in Portugal and abroad, within the fields of Literature and Distance Education. The following works can be counted among her publications: "Beholding a 'Brave New World': Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Discovery of Guiana* and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*"; "Myths (Re)Told in the Iconography of Elizabeth I"; "A Villain and a Monster – The Literary Portrait of Richard III by Thomas More and William Shakespeare"; "Beyond Time and Oblivion: Sir Robert Sidney's autograph manuscript"; "Evaluating Continuous Assessment Quality in Competence-Based Education Online: The case of the e-Folio" (co-author; EDEN 2009 Best Research Paper Award).

Elisabete Mendes Silva is Adjunct Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança where she teaches English Language and Culture. In her M.A. studies she specialised in Culture Studies and wrote her thesis on George Orwell's political Essay. She holds a PhD in Literature and Culture

studies, specialising in Isaiah Berlin`s political thought. She is a researcher at ULICES/CEAUL (University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies) since 2005. At ULICES, she has been involved in the projects on the British Empire and on Victorianism. Her main areas of interest include Culture Studies, English Culture, History of Ideas, History of Political Thought and Liberalism and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). She has been publishing in the areas of English culture and TEFL.

FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA