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**LANGUAGES OF THE MOON**  
A CULTURAL AND LITERARY STUDY

Dissertação de Mestrado em Estudos de Cultura, Literatura e Línguas Modernas, Ramo  
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## LANGUAGES OF THE MOON A CULTURAL AND LITERARY STUDY

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While you come out of the skies  
Oh Moon that halves them whole  
    Afraid am I to let out lies  
While returning from my stroll

We are brief and tiny - humane  
Promise me more than one chant  
    Us - twice folded and insane  
I am not nightly - yet here I stand

Midnight hours almost full  
Afraid yet rising to meet us two  
    Forever mine - high and null  
    Failing to truly chant you

In the night skies that make me dream  
    Nights highly full of contrast  
Skies like these that always seem  
    To bring me the Moon at last

Of the past I always part  
With peaceful conceptions and soars  
    Moon of mine always torn apart  
For the other part - is forever yours

Tiago Matos

## **Linguagens da Lua: Um Estudo Cultural e Literário**

### **Resumo:**

Vastamente conhecido como “Um gigantesco salto para a humanidade”, o sucesso da missão de alunagem Apollo 11 ficou marcada na nossa memória. Foi um dia memorável de princípios de verão, um marco para recordar. A Lua esteve sempre lá para ser conquistada, ou pensada. A alunagem de 1969 foi nada mais que um merecido triunfo sobre o satélite que havia sido bendito e louvado por nós, desde o princípio da espécie humana, como uma regente celestial da noite, marés e corpos aquosos e não só. A Lua era nossa mesmo antes da alunagem: religiosa, espiritual, e cientificamente falando. No entanto, tínhamos de a calcar e sentir a sua quase nula gravidade, para saber que ela o era.

A existência da Lua na órbita da terra precede a nossa por milênios. Enquanto a espécie humana estava ainda no seu estágio de evolução *Erectus / Habilis*, a Lua já lá estava, patrulhando os céus noturnos, como a deusa que a maioria das nossas culturas a sonharam ser. Desde os primórdios, o nosso satélite natural foi feito parte tanto de religiões baseadas em astrologia, como de ciências astronômicas: esteve omnipresente nos nossos tempos de vida. Almanques ou até a religião Wicca não funcionariam sem a presença da Lua e as fases da sua única face. A luz da Lua cheia também originou vários tipos de mitos, como Vampiros, Lobisomens e até Sereias que datam ao tempo da *Odisseia* de Homero. Depois de toda a evolução até ao estágio de *Homo Sapiens* – após pinturas, após capelas, após sinfonias, após alquimias, e após a descoberta de todo o mundo – a nossa curiosidade não estancou e tínhamos de ir ainda mais além.

Após o nosso sucesso numa viagem à Lua e volta, as questões pareciam ser: “O que dizer?” e “Como dizê-lo?”. A poesia que precedeu a alunagem era de uma espécie, a poesia que foi influenciada pelo marco, de outra. É do intento desta tese compreender como um fator tecnológico possa ter influenciado tanto a nossa linguagem e da nossa literatura.

**Palavras-Chave:** Década de Sessenta, Corrida ao Espaço, Lua, Alunagem, Poesia.

## **Languages of the Moon: A Cultural and Literary Study**

### **Abstract:**

Widely known as “a giant leap for mankind”, the Apollo 11 Moon Landing mission success was branded in our memory. It was a memorable day of early Summer, a milestone to remember. Yet, or more even so, the Moon had always been there for the taking, and for the thinking. The Moon Landing of 1969 was no more than our deserved triumph over a satellite that had been praised and worshiped by us since the beginning of our species, as a celestial ruler of nighttime, tides, and water bodies. The Moon was ours even before the Moon Landing: religiously, spiritually, and scientifically speaking. Nonetheless, we had to step on it and to feel her nearly null gravity to know she was ours.

The Moon’s existence around the earth precedes our own by millennia. While the human species was still in its *Erectus* / *Habilis* stages of evolution, the Moon was already there, patrolling the night skies, as the goddess most of our cultures made her out to be. Since early on, our natural satellite was made a part of both astrological based religions and astronomical sciences: it was omnipresent in our lifetimes. The Almanacs, or the Wicca religion, would not function without the presence of the Moon and the phases of its only face. The full Moon light also originated many types of folklore, such as Vampires, Werewolves, and even Sirens that date back to Homer’s *Odyssey*. After all that evolution into our current *Homo Sapiens* stage – after the paintings, and the chapels, and the symphonies, and alchemies, and the discovery of the whole world – our curiosity wasn’t sated, and we needed to go beyond.

After our successful voyage to the Moon and back, the question seemed to be: “What to say?”, and “How to say it?”. The poetry that preceded the Moon Landing was of one kind, the poetry that was influenced by it, of another. It is of this thesis intent, to figure how a technological feat can influence our language and literature.

**Keywords:** 1960’s, Space Race, Moon, Moon Landing, Poetry.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1 – I like the sunset / It brings me back the moon .....	10
1.1 – Blue Moon, Blood Moon, and Supermoons.....	12
1.2 – Witchcraft and the Occult .....	15
1.3 – Mythical Creatures of the Night.....	19
1.4 – The Moon Goddesses of the World.....	22
1.5 – Closing Thoughts .....	25
Chapter 2 – The 1960’s and the Birth of the Final Frontier .....	26
2.1 – Cultural Phenomena .....	27
2.2 – Political Issues.....	32
2.3 – The Space Race .....	38
Chapter 3: Moon Landing Poetics.....	45
3.1 – Archibald MacLeish’s “Voyage to the Moon” .....	47
3.2 – May Swenson and W. H. Auden .....	52
3.3 – The before, the then, and the now .....	61
3.4 – The ones that would rather stay.....	66
3.5 – The Journey of a Millennium .....	70
Conclusion.....	72
Sources .....	78
Annexes.....	90

## Introduction

There is something haunting in the light of the Moon. It has all the dispassionateness of a disembodied soul and something of its inconceivable mystery.  
(Joseph Conrad, 1900)

For millennia, the Moon, Earth's only natural satellite, has been thought of as a mystical presence that affects and watches over water bodies and living creatures. Since the dawn of time, the Moon's mystical and enigmatic presence, alongside her unreachability to humans, created an ambiance in which many began praising her. Such praise has been seen in the study of the Moon's phases and their effects on crops, in the creation of supernatural ideologies and creatures that shape-shift in the Full Moon light, in Wicca rituals, and more recently, in the race for space conquest.

Though the human nature is to fear the unknown, it seems the Moon is an exception: instead of being feared, she has long been worshiped, and although humanity has always been divided in the way they express such praise and curiosity, the Moon has never ceased to be at the center of humankind's fascination. Whilst those who worshipped the Moon's phases paid constant attention to her, guiding themselves and living their lives based on the Moon's powers, for some the Moon was simply out there, every night, an untouchable and unattainable symbol of continuity.

As will later be explained, although this thesis' main focus will be the Moon Landing Poetics, its context is a necessary factor. As we all know, there is no text without context. I must also mention that, despite being able to make use of books for my research, I made a conscious choice of resorting mostly to American articles, papers, and publications found online. Some may ask "why?". Simply put, these papers and articles gave me a first-hand perspective on the issues: I got to understand the news through the perspectives of those who lived through them and learned through masters of their craft. Of course I shall also refer to literary criticisms regarding the analyzed poems, alongside cultural criticisms to back my contextual remarks. Furthermore, I want to add that throughout this thesis I will take a poetic perspective regarding the Moon, thus referring to the satellite as "she" or "her".



Before humanity began its race for spatial conquest, the Moon was thought of as being just out of our reach, both literally and figuratively. It wasn't until the 1960's that such paradigm would begin shifting when President John F. Kennedy announced his goal of putting man on the Moon by the end of the decade. Such goal would see humankind fulfill their curiosity and satisfy their undying need for conquest. And though the first Moon Landing ended the 1960's decade on a stellar note, fomenting a new frontier, it can be argued that such frontier has yet to be truly dominated by humankind.

While it is true that we have been able to set foot on the Moon and, in a way, conquer her, some argue that the natural satellite has not yet been truly dominated and that much is yet to be done and explored. Clara Moskowitz, author of a *Space* article entitled "The Case for the Moon: Why We Should Go Back Now", for once, states that "Just because a dozen humans set foot on a small fraction of lunar surface does not mean humanity has conquered the moon, proponents of revisiting it say." (Moskowitz, 2011). In this same article, Moskowitz argues that while some people refuse to give up on the idea of fully conquering on the Moon, such task "has begun to feel old-hat to some. Even NASA has shifted its sights to fresher targets for exploration: an asteroid and Mars." (Moskowitz, 2011). Although NASA'S attention has shifted away from the Moon in the 54 years that followed the Moon Landing, a new Mission is now on the works. According to NASA's official website, Artemis II will be:

the first crewed mission on NASA's path to establishing a long-term presence at the Moon for science and exploration through Artemis. The agencies revealed the crew members Monday during an event at Ellington Field near NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

(NASA, 2023)

President John F. Kennedy's dream was cherished by his successors, and Lyndon B. Johnson's and Richard Nixon's efforts made sure this deep dive on the cosmic sea, which had never before been attempted, would happen.

Keeping this in mind, and knowing that the Space Race was, in its core, a technological struggle that culminated in a cultural milestone, why study its Poetry? Well, the answer lies primarily in my academic path: a new idea in every work, in my personal interests, which among others include poetry and creative writing; and, of course, to cement this paper in all

ramifications of my Modern Culture, Literature, and Languages master's degree. Poetry is, in my perspective, the ultimate form of expression. Yet, at the same time, it is scarcely resorted to. That is why I decided to analyze one of the greatest human milestones in history through poetry, because, more often than not, poets have something to tell about this walk of life.

The following thesis will be divided into three Chapters which will, within themselves, be again divided according to the needs of each part. Throughout the thesis, I shall investigate such issues as some of the cultures that worship the Moon and its presence in the USA. The latter study will include an analysis of the culture and politics of the 1960's in its relation to the space race which ultimately led Americans to step foot on Lunar Soil in 1969. This investigation will be done in order to achieve the ultimate goal of analyzing how the Moon Landing milestone influenced poetry in the United States of America and how humankind's curiosity thrived after it. To achieve such goal I shall explore some important and well-known poems from that time (that discuss the voyage to the Moon and, ultimately, the Moon landing).

In the first Chapter, cultures influenced by the Moon and the mysticisms of such cultures will be put under a scope. Divided into five parts, this Chapter will analyze the way humanity thought about the Moon before stepping foot on the natural satellite. This analysis will include some of the mythical, supernatural, and scientific aspects of the Moon.

In the first sub-chapter, I shall study lunar phenomena and special events related to the Moon, namely the Blue, Red, and Super Moons. In this discussion, the regularity of the events and its meaning will be explained separately as to give each phenomenon its deserved clarification. Though the Moon can take the form of a Blue Moon in the event of a second full Moon in a month, or in the shape of the thirteenth full Moon in a year; of a Red Moon in the event of a Total Lunar Eclipse; or of a Super Moon based on the proximity values of the lunar translation ellipsis; in the end, the Moon can even acquire the three terminologies at once: Blue based on its occurrence period, Blood based on its localization in relation to the Sun and the Earth, and Super due to its proximity to us: a Super Blue Blood Moon.

The second part will include a brief reference to the Wicca Religion and other cultures that cherish the Moon as a higher power. Although witchcraft can seem to be out of context in this thesis, I argue that that couldn't be farther from the truth: the Wicca religion seems to hold the Moon as a deity to be praised, a goddess to be worshipped. The importance of the sacredness of the Moon in rituals can be found in Encyclopaedia Britannica, as it is stated that: "The sacredness of the moon has been connected with the basic rhythms of life and the universe. A

widespread phenomenon, appearing in various eras and cultures, moon worship has engendered a rich symbolism and mythology.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998).

In the third part, the actual myths and supernatural creatures of the night, such as werewolves, vampires, and mermaids, will be discussed. All of these fictional beings, which supposedly ascend, transform, or draw power from the Moon are either related to a human trapped with a curse or another species altogether with humanoid aspects. This subchapter will explore the many curses and their connection to humankind, be it via clinical cases of mental (or physical) illness, an idea touched upon by Daniel S. Levy in the *National Geographic* article “Tracing the blood-curdling origins of vampires, zombies, and werewolves”:

Full moons are said to cause those who are werewolves to involuntarily morph into the dreaded beasts [however] the concept of werewolves most likely derived from people suffering from misunderstood and feared medical conditions. Rabies for example, brings on headaches and foaming mouth, while hypertrichosis is a genetic condition that causes excessive hair growth.

(Levy, 2022)

Moving onto the fourth subchapter, I will be revising the lunar gods and goddesses of the world, focusing the section mostly on Selene (or Luna), Hecate (or Trivia) and Artemis (or Diana), the Greco-Roman Triad of Moon deities. Patti Wigington, author of “Lunar Deities” argues that “It should come as no surprise that many cultures throughout time have had lunar deities—that is, gods or goddesses associated with the power and energy of the moon.” (Wigington, 2018). Although many of said gods and goddesses remain to be worshipped in real life, Diana, the lunar goddess of the hunt has been portrayed in the *DC Comics* universe as Wonder Woman. Diana is but one of the many deities that personify the Moon, making her not the first nor the last idealized version of the night skies keeper. There will still be a fifth part where I will attempt to draw conclusions about this lunar spirituality and how a natural satellite, the Moon, can create such rhetoric and language.

Although for a long time the Moon was solely imagined as something to worship, either for mystical reasons or for the good preservation of fauna and flora, or as something that was just out of human reach (and thus should be praised as Earth’s only natural satellite), such narrative shifted as soon as humankind decided that the Moon was not only reachable, but

something that could (and should) be conquered. I believe that in order to understand why this shift is so important, one should be able to comprehend the way people thought about the Moon before the idea of conquering the satellite even came about.

Moving onto the second Chapter, the culture and politics of the 1960's in the United States of America will be revised within a scope that focuses on the endeavor that was the voyage to the Moon. Amidst two wars, famine, and illiteracy in the United States, the way was paved by a rocket to the Moon and back, with history being made. With that thought in mind, this Chapter will be divided into three subchapters: Culture, Politics, and the Space Race, respectively.

In the first part, regarding culture, I shall analyze the cultural innovation of televised debates and new conferences, both of which included John F. Kennedy before and during his time as President. The many advances in science and television will additionally be mentioned as I shall attempt to show that a whole new lunar and Spatial imaginary was created with shows such as *Star Trek* and *The Jetsons*. A curious idea brought about by the Hilton Hotel chain in 1967 that involved building a Hotel on the Moon was seemingly predicted on *The Jetsons*. According to Dov Greenbaum in "Re-meet George Jetson: Innovation inspiration goes back to the future", "concerns arise out of the increasing number of private players in the space race, another innovation predicted by the Jetsons that saw George vacationing on the Moon, which included the private Moonhattan Tilton Hotel" (Greenbaum, 2022).

I will further attempt to portray how a collective memory was formed, the first step towards the new frontier: the final frontier, as *Star Trek's* narrator states. Films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* further participated in the creation of the new imaginary as, according to Dan Chiasson in a *The New Yorker* article, *2001: A Space Odyssey* director, Stanley Kubrick, made sure the film "was a science-fiction film trying not to be outrun by science itself. Kubrick was tracking NASA's race to the moon, which threatened to siphon some of the wonder from his production." (Chiasson, 2018).

Other cultural events, such as the July 1969 release of David Bowie's *Space Oddity*, the Woodstock music festival, and the "confessional" poetry will also be briefly mentioned. The cultural impact of NASA and the Apollo 11 missions in literature will also be analyzed, though, due to the limits of this thesis, I shall only quickly mention some of the many books, such as Erik Bergaust's *Murder on Pad 34* and William B. Breuer's *Race to the Moon: America's Duel with the Soviets*. Additionally, this subchapter will briefly discuss the Civil Rights Movement,

mainly focusing the argument on President John F. Kennedy's intervention in a June 1963 University of Alabama standoff and on Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

In the second part, regarding politics, I shall analyze the mandates of the four presidents of the United States that carried the dream, passed it hand in hand, and ultimately got us, mankind, to the Moon. Presidents Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard Nixon were the men who saw this groundbreaking moment through. They were the dreamers that saw the challenge and faced it. Some could say they were the leaders that the 1960's needed to brave that first step across the new frontier. Although each of them seems to have had a critical role in the development of this breakthrough, such event is mainly associated with President Kennedy as he was the one who brought forth the idea to Congress in 1961, stating: "Now it is time to take longer strides--time for a great new American enterprise--time for this nation to take a clearly leading role in space achievement, which in many ways may hold the key to our future on earth." (Kennedy, 1961).

The wars and political struggles experienced during the 1960's will furthermore be discussed through the discussion of such issues as the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Vietnam War. Kennedy's assassination, and the multiple mandate changes will be examined in this subchapter as they are not only an important part of American history and politics, but a crucial passage of power which made the Moon Landing a reality.

The Civil Rights Movement will again be mentioned, now in a more political way related to the space race. The disdain of African Americans regarding space travel and lunar conquest will be mentioned following the idea that while the Nation was spending millions of dollars to take the man to the Moon, their children were dying of hunger back on Earth.

Finally, the establishment of NASA and the creation of Project A119, the signing of the OST (Outer Space Treaty), and the creation of the Post Apollo Program, which came after the success of the Apollo 11 mission, will be presented and examined. According to NASA's official website, under the conclusions/recommendations section of the report "The Post-Apollo Space Program: Directions for the Future", which was announced in September 1969 to President Richard Nixon, it is stated that:

the report noted that the United States should pursue a balanced robotic and human space program but emphasized the importance of the latter, with a long-term goal of a human

mission to Mars before the end of the 20th century. The report proposed that NASA develop new systems and technologies that emphasized commonality, reusability, and economy in its future programs.

(NASA, 2019)

In the third part, regarding the space race, I will discuss how close the race between America and the Soviet Union was. Besides a Cold War, the United States fought the Soviets for “dominion” over space, a race which, at times, was head-to-head, toe-to-toe. This part of the thesis will closely analyze the way the Soviets and Americans kept trying to outdo each other: when the Soviets sent a dog to space, the Americans sent a chimpanzee; when the Soviets got the upper hand on the race, sending the first man to space, Americans did everything in their power to outdo their counterparts and succeeded by putting the first man on the Moon.

The race between the Nations was an actual race: test launches, technological improvements, and animal and human testing were done back-to-back with the intention (by each Nation) of coming out victorious. After the United States of America announced their determination to conquer space, the Soviet Union announced their very own intent to go to space. Two years after announcing their intent, the Soviets launched Sputnik 1, and soon after, Sputnik 2. The race to place satellites in space, which initially was won by the Soviets, would be matched in 1958 with the launch of America’s first satellite, the *Explorer 1*. This race would continue for the following decade as each Nation would try to surpass each other. At the end of the race, and despite all the achievements (and failures) from either the Americans or the Soviets, it was the United States of America who conquered the Moon.

The final part of this subchapter will be focused on the American plan to achieve the ultimate goal: the Moon Landing. Such argument will discuss the creation of Project Mercury (the first man-in-space program) and the Apollo program (which would eventually lead men to step foot on the Moon). Some of the most important Apollo missions will be briefly discussed, as I believe it is necessary to comprehend the hardships and difficulties NASA experienced before the success of the Apollo 11 mission. At last, this subchapter will delve deep into the Apollo 11 mission and the Moon Landing itself – a moment that had been dreamt of eight years before by President Kennedy, a moment which would “not be one man going to the moon--if we make this judgment affirmatively, it will be an entire nation. For all of us must work to put him there.” (Kennedy, 1961), as John F. Kennedy put it in his 1961 speech to Congress.

The 1960's in America were indeed a time of evolution and novelty. The culture and politics of the decade created an atmosphere of change: John F. Kennedy introduced America to a new age, one of space and lunar conquest, and one of televised presidential conferences and debates; Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement provoked a process of endurance to racism and segregation by both black and white activists who thought the space race funds should have been put to more practical usage, like feeding the poor; the Cold War, which threatened the country, and which was experienced and dealt with by Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, and was taken care of at the time (or suppressed, as it, in a way, is being currently reignited).

In sum, despite all of these (and other) major occurrences which marked the 1960's, the Moon Landing seems to be regarded as the number one milestone, being seen as something no one dares to forget. After understanding the American perspective about the space travel and Moon Landing through a cultural and political lens, it would only make sense to guide such investigation to literature: in this case, to poetics.

In the third and final Chapter, the poetry written about the Moon will be studied. I will intentionally separate the chosen poets (and poems) into four sections, before adding a small personal conclusion. In the first subchapter, I will analyze Archibald MacLeish's poem "Voyage to the Moon", which was published on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1969, the day of the Moon Landing, in the front-page of *The New York Times*. In this section, I will attempt to gather information on how a poem even made it to the first page of *The New York Times*. Was it due to the magnitude of the event? Could it be because of MacLeish's proficiency as a poet? In any case, the fact that a poem that described the Moon Landing and lunar voyage made it to the first page of the newspaper is almost newsworthy itself.

The second part will include the memories of a road never traveled through the perspective of May Swenson and W. H. Auden. This section will be focused on the differences between the female and male perspectives regarding the Space Race and Moon Landing. I must mention that although both authors were a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, this research will look beyond that in order to not circumscribe itself to more recent schools. Auden's poem "Moon Landing" was written some years prior to his death which took place in 1973, and Swenson's poem "First Walk on the Moon" was published posthumously.

In the third part, the past, present, and future of the Moon Landing dream will be discussed through the analysis of poems by Robert Louis Stevenson, Neil Armstrong, and J.

Patrick Lewis. This section will make an effort to comprehend the severity of time through the study of “The Moon”, a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson representing the Moon as a dream; “My Vacation”, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century poem by the astronaut that first stepped foot on lunar soil; and lastly, “First Men on the Moon”, a 21<sup>st</sup> Century poem from J. Patrick Lewis. All of these poems were meant for children.

The fourth part of this final Chapter will include the discussion of two poems that criticized this milestone: Richard Brautigan’s “Jules Verne Zucchini” and Robert Hayden’s “Full Moon”. These will be analyzed from the point of view of those who were against the voyage to the Moon. Both poems’ criticism seems to be related to the mismanagement of millions of dollars which should have, in the opinion of these poets, been used to feed the hungry and the poor.

All of the referred poets had something to say about the Moon, but most importantly, their work surpassed the test of time. In my opinion, their poetry is the most valuable creative writing humanity has on the Moon Landing subject. The appearance on one of the most important American newspapers first page, for once, seems to strengthen the idea that words are never just words... they are powerful weapons of awakening for a chosen side, and in this case, for the first time, the chosen side was out there, on the Moon.

Before we start reading this Thesis, one needs to ask: how unreachable was the Moon in order for us, the Homo Sapiens species, to study her phases, learn her effects over bodies of water, create religions, imagine monsters, and kneel before her? Furthermore, how did it become less distant? When did we, humanity, feel it was possible to extend our grasp to the Moon? How did the Moon go from the unreachable goddess it was for millennia to another passed milestone, another checkpoint we ticked off? Lastly, the poetry: what words could come to describe such awe and wonder, to celebrate those days that truly belonged to humanity, to appreciate that together we cannot falter. In the words of May Swenson:

On the moon there shines earth light  
as moonlight shines upon the earth...  
(...)  
Can flesh rub with symbol? If our ball  
be iron, and not light, our earliest wish  
eclipses. Dare we land upon a dream?

(Swenson, 1994: 177)



## Chapter 1 – I like the sunset / It brings me back the moon<sup>1</sup>

The moon is the mother of pathos and pity.  
(Stevens, 1931)

The goal of this Chapter is to study the way humanity regarded the Moon before its undying need for conquering became a real issue. In the last decades, humanity has mostly thought about our natural satellite as yet another thing that is within our reach, yet another victory or milestone we have achieved or dominated. The truth is that there is so much more to the Moon than this. For millennia, cultures around the world have devoted themselves to the Moon and her powers, believing she had power over the growth of crops, for guidance and for hope. Now, only a few continue the tradition: farmers, for once, still follow the Moon phases as to know when to plant or harvest crops; those who follow the Wicca religion likewise try to keep the beliefs related to the Moon, as if these were still pure and untouched by human hand.

Though this Chapter's subject might seem odd to some, my idea of studying the Moon astronomically, religiously, and folklorically before studying its poetics doesn't seem to stand alone as circa one hundred years ago Roger Wray, author of "The Moon in Literature" said:

We see faces in the moon. We personify it in our poems. We deify it in our religions, fragments of which survive in countless lunar superstitions. The scientist knows the moon only as an oblate spheroid — a sort of byproduct of the earth, a globular mass that revolves with the regularity of a metronome. But literature reminds us that the moon is a big symbol, a toy left over from some primeval revelry, a lamp more magical than Aladdin's.

(Wray, 1922: 368)

Wray describes much of what can be found in the following Chapter, from stating that "Such is the moon of astronomy" (Wray, 1922: 367), to delving into the way that the Moon was been, by us, as a goddess: "Luna, Astarte, Isis, Phoebe (gentle sister of the ardent sun), or Diana (who still bathes in forest pools)." (Wray, 1922: 367). Wray continues his century-old text by stating that: "We have folk tales by the hundred — (...) of the moon's being made of green cheese, (...) of the man in the moon, and that sumptuous dream of fairytales — the blue

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this chapter is a quote from the 1999 song "My Wonder Moon" from the Hands on Approach album: *Blown*.

moon.” (Wray, 1922: 368). The Moon also seems to be a source of spiritual relief: “The whiteness of moonshine and the violet of dusk belong to the world of legends and old dreams. That may explain why travelers like to see Niagara, the Taj Mahal, and Venice, in the moonlight.” (Wray, 1922: 368).

Theories about the Moon are as old as humankind itself. There are the Greco-Roman myths of Selene/Luna, Hecate/Trivia, and Artemis/Diana (all names for Greco-Roman goddesses related to the Moon); there is also the bestial mythology of the Vampires and Werewolves in Europe and, more recently in Asia with a new facet to this genre, in the form of Great “Saiyan” Apes. One could argue that some of the myths are closer to our human realities: witchcraft, for once, can be seen as a human tradition regarding the Moon, and the grasp on Moon by the occult, while the Moon phases and Earth proximity can also relate to (and become) scientific phenomena through the existence of the blue Moon, the red Moon and, of course, the super Moon.

The Old Farmer’s Almanac (known in the Portuguese culture as *Borda d’Água Almanaque* by *Editorial Minerva*) is somewhat influenced by the Moon and her phases. In fact, and while I will not delve deep into the subject, this agricultural booklet has helped farmers around the world for centuries, teaching them how and when to care for crops and animals. As put by *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the Almanac:

[includes] climate information and seasonal suggestions for farmers; and miscellaneous other data. An almanac provides data on the rising and setting times of the Sun and Moon, the phases of the Moon, the positions of the planets, schedules of high and low tides, and a register of ecclesiastical festivals and saints’ days.

(*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1998)

Created in 1792, the Old Farmer’s Almanac includes a calendar of the year and shows the multiple astronomical phenomena that will take place each day/week/month. Depending on the phase of the Moon, farmers are recommended to plant or harvest certain produce, being furthermore recommended to shed their animals in certain days. As this Chapter is focused on the way the human experience regarding the Moon changed once she became humanely attainable; I believe that in order to comprehend the many ways the Moon and her phases are important in all facets of human existence, the role that the Moon has in the Almanac cannot be avoided as it is one of the most important entities of the booklet. I must also mention that

the use of the Almanac has never changed. Even after human beings landed on the Moon and “conquered” the satellite, farmers continued to base their agricultural moves on what the Almanac recommends.

This initial Chapter will delve into the mystical side of the Moon through the exploration of old and new beliefs about our natural satellite while it was still regarded as humanly unattainable. After all, the Moon is not only a natural satellite, but also a symbol for the mysterious, the feminine, and for cyclical change, inspiring many myths and storylines such as vampires, werewolves, and mermaids. My reasoning for this chapter is to present my research on aspects of culture related to the Moon and its phases, be they mythical or scientific.

### **1.1 – Blue Moon, Blood Moon, and Supermoons**

Despite being obviously less mythological than their succeeding counterparts, these astrological facts are not, by any means, less grand. Divided into four subtypes, the Moon can appear as either Blue or Red, Super or not.

Let us start by exploring the phenomenon of the Blue Moon and the famous expression “Once in a Blue Moon”. The Blue Moon takes two forms: the Seasonal Blue Moon and the Monthly Blue Moon. The first title is used to describe either the third Full Moon in a set of four, or the thirteenth full Moon in a year. Why? In the article “What is a Blue Moon and When Is the Next One?”, authors Vidgis Hocken and Aparna Kher explain that the “unlucky status of the number 13 and the difficulties of calculating the occurrence of such a Full Moon led to the extra Full Moon being named a Blue Moon” (Hocken, Kher: n/d). The Blue moniker was seemingly given to the Moon by the Christian ecclesiastical calendar as to “[ensure] that Lent and Easter coincided with the right Moon phases, and other celebrations and customs would still fall during their “proper” times.” (Hocken, Kher: n/d).

The latter name is used to define the second Full Moon in a month. Although it started as an “error [that] took on a life of its own and spread around as fact.” (Hocken, Kher: n/d), the moniker is nowadays used as a second definition for the Blue Moon. The cyclicity of the Monthly Blue Moon makes it slightly less rare than the Seasonal Blue Moon as it happens around once in every two and a half years.

In spite of its curious moniker, the Blue Moon isn’t actually blue, though it can, at times, appear to be blue. What is the cause for such phenomenon? The short answer is: atmospheric

conditions and things such as Volcanic ashes, smoke, or clouds can give the Moon a blue hue. In 1883, humanity experienced this phenomenon after the Krakatau volcanic eruption (widely known as one of the deadliest volcanic eruptions in history) made the Moon appear blue on the night of the catastrophe. The reason behind this? Sulfur dioxide and ash. Though small, these particles “were wider than the wavelength of red light, so once scattered, they absorbed the red light while allowing other colors to pass through. This resulted in surreal landscapes and many blue Moons.” (Begum: n/d). According to NASA, this phenomenon has occurred during other volcanic eruptions such as the 1983 eruption of Mexico’s El Chichon Volcano and the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines.

Now, considering that the Full Moon can be seen every twenty-nine and a half days, Hocken and Kher claim that “in the 1100 years between 1550 and 2650, there are 408 seasonal Blue Moons and 456 monthly Blue Moons.” (Hocken, Kher: n/d). Curiously, February is the only month which cannot experience a monthly blue Moon due to its 29,5 days periodicity. However, if February experiences no full moons whatsoever, that occurrence is called a “Black Moon”. For that to take place, both months before and after must experience a Blue Moon – an occurrence known as a Double Blue Moon; this phenomenon, Hocken and Kher argue, “is rather uncommon and takes place only about three to five times in a century. We saw a Double Blue Moon in 2018 in most time zones and will see it again 19 years later, in 2037, in many time zones.” (Hocken, Kher: n/d).

If the existence of the Double Blue Moon phenomenon is thought to be stretching the chances, there is another event called the Triple Blue Moon which happens when a Double Blue Moon Year coincides with a Seasonal Blue Moon Year. However, it seems that “Two seasonal Blue Moons in a year is an impossibility, as that would require 14 Full Moons in the same year” (Hocken, Kher: n/d). With this knowledge that we have now on this topic, one could ask: how often does “once in a blue moon” mean actually? Well, this year (2023) it means August 30-31. The next one will only roam the night sky in 2037.

Moving on to the Blood Moon (also known as Total Lunar Eclipse), it is an occurrence that can only happen during the full stage of the Moon while it passes through the Earth’s darkest shadow: the umbra. Despite having no astronomical impact, some believe that it can amplify witchcraft rituals and magics due to its dark red tone. This belief has been commented by many, namely Patti Wigington, author of the article “Lunar Eclipse Magic & Folklore”, as she explains how “In some modern magical traditions, a lunar eclipse is considered a sort of

metaphysical bonus round — in other words, any spellwork you do during this period is amplified and has a bit of extra power behind it.” (Wigington, 2019).

Now, why does the Earth’s shadow make the Moon appear red instead of black? This is due to the lesser resistance of the red wavelength to Earth’s atmosphere in comparison to other colored light. Violet and blue light, with their shorter wavelength, dissipates much quicker. This phenomenon, called Rayleigh Scattering, turns the Moon red as the only wavelengths left to hit the Moon are the longer ones: which are, in fact, red, as per seen in NASA’s “What You Need to Know About the Lunar Eclipse”: “It’s as if all the world’s sunrises and sunsets are projected onto the Moon.” (Wasser et al, 2022).

The last time humanity experienced a Blood Moon was on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2022. As the full Moon’s name changes depending on the month, the November Blood Moon was called a “Beaver Blood Moon.” In this specific occurrence, Jamie Cartier, author of “Beaver Blood Moon lunar eclipse 2022: Everything you need to know”, explains how in certain parts of Asia, Uranus, the seventh planet, could be seen near the eclipsed Moon, further stating how some parts of the world would only be able to experience a partial lunar eclipse.

At last, I shall briefly discuss the Super Moon: this astronomical event can augment the previous two if they coincide with one another, which happens to be the case of 2023’s monthly blue Moon, set to take place on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Coined in 1979 by astrologer Richard Nolle, the Supermoon is either a New or Full Moon that enters ninety percent of its maximum closeness to Earth. In the 2023 article “What is a supermoon? And when, in 2023?”, Deborah Byrd explains how “we in astronomy called these moons perigean full moons, or perigean new moons.” (Byrd, 2023), or simply Perigee.

The difference between a Full Moon and a Super Moon is noticeable. According to Deborah Byrd, the Super Moon “exceeds the disk size of an average-sized moon by up to 8% and the brightness of an average-sized full moon by some 16%.” (Byrd, 2023). Although one cannot visually recognize the size difference between a Full Moon (or a Micro-Moon, the smallest full Moon), Byrd explains, the brightness of the Super Moon is easily seen and recognized. For context, and following Byrd’s explanation, the size difference between a Super Moon and a Micro-Moon are that of a U.S. quarter vs. a U.S. nickel. The Super Moon phenomenon can occur whether the Moon is blue or red. In fact, and as odd as it might seem, if a Super Blue Moon occurs during an eclipse, it becomes a Super Blue Blood Moon.

Although the previous information is based on astrological facts and scientific evidence, the next subchapters will be solely based on myths and common beliefs. Many myths are drawn to these topics, to the Moon, to this mysterious satellite. For instance, things such as farming, witchcraft, and even some curses, are believed to be affected by the Full Moon.

## 1.2 – Witchcraft and the Occult

Although what has been previously discussed is backed up by scientific and tangible evidence, what comes next is arguably not: outside of those who actively believe and practice Wicca and other related religions, most people regard witchcraft as “make-believe”. Witchcraft is a global phenomenon that groups psychics, fortune tellers, magicians, and sorcerers. It is a pagan belief, yet to its followers it is seemingly as valid as any other religions.

Now, what is witchcraft, and what are its workings? To answer the first question, there are many variations of the concept: Ronal Hutton, an academic historian, for once, claims that the witchcraft of old is a myth altogether, up until the early 1950’s. That is when Gerald Gardner, an author and amateur anthropologist and archeologist, created the Wicca religion, naming himself “Scire” and becoming the first Gardnerian Wiccan (Hutton, 2001). The Wiccan Religion was created in Britain after the Second World War and mixed paganism, magical ceremonies, and occult material assembled by Gardner. Now, where does the Moon come to play in all of this? Well, according to Patti Wigington in “Moon Phases and Magic Workings”,

For many Pagans, the cycles of the moon are important to magical workings. It's believed in some traditions that the waxing moon, the full moon, the waning moon and the new moon all have their own special magical properties, and so workings should be planned accordingly.

(Wigington, 2019)

It seems that the Moon plays an important role in the Wiccan rites. “The Full Moon Rite”, for example, should be performed at night (if possible, with the Moon in sight), as an opening to a small feast. An invocation is due before the chanting of the rite, something that would equate to saying grace before a meal as a Christian. This rite includes a suggested prayer which takes the shape of a free verse poem, as seen in Scott Cunningham’s *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*:

Wondrous lady of the moon (...)  
O lunar Goddess,  
crescented-one, (...)  
puller of seas and ruler of women;  
all-wise lunar Mother, (...)  
I pray by the moon,  
I pray by the moon,  
I pray by the moon.

(Cunningham, 2004: 135)

Many other rites and spells also summon the Moon as an entity and rely on its powers. The “Drawing Down the Moon” ritual, for once, empowers a coven’s priestess into a trance, imbuing her with the Moon and temporarily granting her godlike consciousness. This rite traces back to classical times, being used by Thessalian Witches, who first appeared in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century in Thessaly, Greece. According to old works, known as tracts, the witches believed they could control the Moon. As seen in *The Encyclopedia of Witches, Witchcraft and Wicca* by Rosemary Guiley: “If I command the moon, it will come down; and if I wish to withhold the day, night will linger over my head;” (Guiley, 1989:108).

Some lores of the world believe the Moon influences humanity during lunar eclipses. For such people, the Moon is often regarded as an omen which inspires ill fortune, and also some myths and folk tales. According to Daniel Brown’s article “Blood moon: lunar eclipse myths from around the world” in *The Conversation*, for some ancient civilizations (such as the ancient Inca people), the lunar eclipse was associated with evil intent. For the ancient Inca civilization, the red hue of the blood moon was understood as a “jaguar attacking and eating the moon.” (Brown, 2018). The author continues by explaining how the Inca people believed the jaguar would eventually turn its full attention to Earth, potentially attacking people.

Furthermore, the ill fortune of the Moon is believed by some Indian people who, upon performing cleansing rituals, cover up their water and food. During the Blood Moon, “Pregnant women especially should not eat or carry out household work, in order to protect their unborn child.” (Brown, 2018). For some Hindu people, Brown continues, the lunar eclipse is thought of as a result of a demon by the name of Rahu drinking an immortality elixir:

Twin deities the sun and moon promptly decapitate Rahu, but having consumed the elixir, Rahu’s head remains immortal. Seeking revenge, Rahu’s head chases the sun and moon to

devour them. If he catches them we have an eclipse – Rahu swallows the moon, which reappears out of his severed neck.

(Brown, 2018)

In spite of these folklore tales, which have a negative view of lunar eclipses, David Brown explains that some cultures and civilizations have a more positive view on the phenomenon. In Islamic cultures, for once, the Blood Moon is not thought of as something superstitious. Instead, “the sun and moon represent deep respect for Allah, so during an eclipse special prayers are chanted including a Salat-al-khusuf, a “prayer on a lunar eclipse”. It both asks Allah’s forgiveness, and reaffirms Allah’s greatness.” (Brown, 2018). Likewise, the Native American Hupa and Luiseño Tribes from California “believed the moon was wounded or ill. (...) The Luiseño, for example, would sing and chant healing songs towards the darkened moon.” (Brown, 2018), the author explains. According to Constance Goddard Dubois in the 1908 “The Religion of the Luiseño Indians of Southern California”, one of such healing songs, sung by the Luiseño tribe, goes as follows:

Noshunupkwa hayinga moinga, noshunupkwa takwayak moinga, thenI-thought at-race in-moon, then-my-heart is-surprised in-moon. A race called hayish was held at the time of the new moon; hayinga is the locative case, as moinga is of moila, moon. No-shun, my heart, is used in speaking of thoughts, sometimes with a verb and sometimes without.-S.

(Dubois, 1908: 110)

Still according to David Brown, Christianity “has equated lunar eclipses with the wrath of God, and often associates them with the crucifixion of Jesus.” (Brown, 2018). Brown notes that Easter takes place on the first Sunday after the “first full moon of spring, ensuring that an eclipse can never fall on Easter Sunday, a potential mark of Judgement Day.” (Brown, 2018).

Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) is one of the most well-known poets with an enormous interest in spiritualism and the occult. In fact, according to Wit Pietrzak’s in “I Summon to the Winding Ancient Stair”: On the Symbolic Search for Wisdom in W. B. Yeats’s “Blood and the Moon”, Yeats “devoted a great part of his life to the study of occultism, Kabala and magical rituals.” (Pietrzak, 2009: 59). During his lifetime, the poet is said to have joined a secret society by the name of the Golden Dawn which would perform magical rituals. Pietrzak continues by explaining:



Despite the fact that his enchantment with the occult lasted all his life, Yeats was never fully satisfied with the supernatural motivation of his poetry and soon began to mould the acquired philosophy so that it might be applicable to his own purposes.

(Pietrzak, 2009: 59)

In 1915, W. B. Yeats wrote “Lines Written in Dejection”, a poem in which the poet “laments the loss of an imaginative world populated by mythical creatures” (Howes, 2006), according to Marjorie Howes in *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*. In the poem, the poetic “I” describes the loss of wild witches, “holy centaurs”, and “Banished heroic mother moon”:

WHEN have I last looked on  
 The round green eyes and the long wavering bodies  
 Of the dark leopards of the moon?  
 All the wild witches, those most noble ladies,  
 For all their broom-sticks and their tears,  
 Their angry tears, are gone.  
 The holy centaurs of the hills are vanished;  
 I have nothing but the embittered sun;  
 Banished heroic mother moon and vanished,  
 And now that I have come to fifty years  
 I must endure the timid sun.

(Yeats, 1915)

Instead of these mythical creatures, the poetic “I” clarifies that “the speaker has nothing but the sun, which he describes, according to Marjorie Howes as “embittered” and “timid.”” (Howes, 2006). Thomas Parkinson, author of “The Sun and the Moon in Yeats’s Early Poetry” goes as far as arguing that:

The statement of the poem, then, is that Yeats’s art has lost its roots in popular lore and folk belief, so that he is left with only the intellectual elaborateness of a desiccated civilization. In such a circumstance the intellect (the sun) may be embittered in its very ascendancy, for it lacks the courage of its reveries, spurning the wild possibilities of the folk imagination.

(Parkinson, 1952: 50)

After some research into witches and witchcraft in general, we come to realize that it mostly boils down to the power of words and sentences, just like in any other rituals. The

coming and going of words creates an echo that sometimes resonates with the human soul and allows it to feel “the divine”. Divine or not, the Moon was always seen as a magical entity that reigned silently over humanity.

### 1.3 – Mythical Creatures of the Night

Werewolves, vampires, Dracula and even the Great Saiyan Ape might look nothing alike, yet they all share a common feature: the rising of a full Moon. While werewolves are arguably the supernatural entity that is most influenced by the Moon, other creatures, such as Vampires, and even Dracula, take great power from her. Now, how does the Moon influence such creatures?

Well, a Werewolf, for once, “a cursed human who undergoes a type of moon madness every month at the full of the moon” (Guiley, 2005: 205), is often, though not always, connected to the Moon. Portrayed as brute and frightening, hairy creatures, werewolves live almost exclusively in the great outdoors, prowling and howling at the Moon. In spite of the fictional portrayals of werewolves we see in cinema and literature, some humans believe themselves to be truly able to turn into wolves when the Moon is full. The reason for this? Lycanthropy, a mental health condition that makes humans believe they are, indeed, wolves or werewolves. According to Rosemary Guiley in *The Encyclopedia of Vampires, Werewolves, and Other Monsters*, a case of this happening, documented in the *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* in 1975, is that of a 37-year-old Appalachian farmer (later diagnosed with chronic undifferentiated schizophrenia) who, upon believing he had become a wolf,

let his facial hair grow, making believe that it was fur. He slept in CEMETERIES and occasionally he would lie down on highways in front of approaching traffic. He howled at the moon. Mr. W.’s own explanation for his erratic behavior was that he had been transformed into a werewolf.

(Guiley, 2005: 205)

On a personal note, the closest myth I knew came in 1986 when the main character on the Dragon Ball series underwent an ascension under the light of the full Moon. Goku is forcefully transformed from a human with a tail into a “Great Saiyan Ape” (also known as Oozaru). The lunar myth comes into play moments before when the young hero states: “Did

you guys know that a terrible monster comes out when the moon is full?”, as seen in the YouTube Video “Goku Turns Great Ape First Time” (SSJ Goku, 2017). The Oozaru is yet another legend of lunar transcendence, a variation of the werewolf myth alongside with J.K. Rowling’s Animagus, a werewolf that can undergo the transformation at will, instead of forcefully during a full Moon.

Vampires are similarly associated with the Moon and lunar eclipses, and, curiously enough, with werewolves in Slavic folklore through the representation of the Vudodlak, also known as Varcolac in Romanian. According to Rosemary Guiley in *The Encyclopedia of Vampires, Werewolves, and Other Monsters*, the Varcolac, a vampire which takes the shape of a werewolf, “is a Romanian eclipse demon associated with vampires, and which often takes the shape of a dog. In European lore, some vampires are believed to be able to shape-shift into wolves.” (Guiley, 2005: 205). Now, how does the Moon influence these creatures? Seemingly, it is the Moon who gives vampires their power, making them the strongest during the full Moon and weakest during the new Moon. Moreover, the “rays of the moon enable the vampire to resurrect himself.” (Guiley, 2005: 205).

The most famous representation of a vampire is arguably that of Count Dracula who appeared in 1897 through the hands of Bram Stoker (1847-1912) as he “borrowed upon folklore about the moon, vampires, and werewolves” (Guiley, 2005: 205) in order to write *Dracula*. In Stoker’s representation, the immortal Count, a part wolf, part bat creature was described as having a “lofty domed forehead (...) The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy mustache was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth;” (Setiger, 2012: 92).

Count Dracula appears to be the paramount of this kind of mythology with a whopping nine movie series. According to IMDb, the *Dracula* series starts in 1958 and spans to 1974. However, there are a lot of other Moon-related contents: *Van Helsing* and *Castlevania* are great examples of Vampire-driven fictions, and despite being substance and technology related, Dr. Jekyll’s alter ego appeared only by the moonlight and Dr. Frankenstein’s monster was also born during a full Moon. Perhaps the silver light of the full Moon night served as an inspiration for gothic themes in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and of course Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. It seems that these supernatural creatures, influenced and strengthened by the Moon, have been historically bound, as

the werewolf is entwined with vampire beliefs, (...) Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, for instance, was unabashedly a werewolf as well as a blood drinker. The werewolf theme was largely eliminated from *Dracula* stage adaptations, due to the difficulties of convincingly presenting such a total physical transformation in the theatre. The vampire and the werewolf became discrete in the public mind.

(Skal in Steiger, 2012: 93)

The last mythical creature of the night to be researched and discussed in this subchapter is the Mermaid. It can be argued that the first Mermaid-like creature is a Syrian goddess by the name of Atargatis. This goddess shares features with two others as her "nature closely resembled that of her Phoenician counterpart, Astarte, though she also showed some kinship with the Anatolian Cybele." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1998). Due to her myth being chronologically close to Ancient Greece, her myth was spread around as another form of Aphrodite's.

The Homeric Sirens, arguably the most famous portrayal of mermaids to ever exist, represent a breed of half-fish female creatures who possessed magical voice that lured seamen to their deaths on the reef of their shores. There is a real-life condition which makes people appear to be mermaids (one which, unlike Lycanthropy, is not a mental illness): Sirenomelia (or Syrenomelia) "is a condition not compatible with the normal life, however nine cases of 'mermaid' survived to reconstructive surgery have been reported until now." (Romano et al, 2006). Despite my belief that mermaids are a lunar myth, the only evidence of such idea that I came across are depictions of mermaids and sirens in movies and series, namely the fourth movie from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series where carnivorous mermaids prowl the waters during the night, much like Homeric sirens did.

Where else does the Moon come into play when it comes to mermaids? According to Marcia J. Kemble in "Mermaid in Folk Literature", the Moon can be represented in the mirror "frequently seen in a mermaid's hand [which is] sometimes considered to be a symbol of the moon, which is associated with the cycles of the tides and women's bodies" (Kemble, 1992: 70). Still in the same text, Kemble presents a traditional ballad entitled "The Mermaid" which I shall now share:

The moon shines bright, the stars give light,  
And my mother is looking for me;  
She may look, she may look with a watery eye  
She may look to the bottom of the sea, the sea, the sea  
She may look to the bottom of the sea.

(Traditional Ballad *quoted in* Kemble, 1992: 68)

#### 1.4 – The Moon Goddesses of the World

The existence of Moon Goddesses is a transcultural issue, and because of this I will mention some Moon deities from many of the world's cultures. However, and since every culture and religion have tried to convey a metaphor onto the Moon, only three Moon Goddesses will be mentioned here.

Goddess Atargatis, whom I previously mentioned, was Syrian; Astarte was Phoenician; and Cybele, Anatolian. According to Patty Wiginton's article "Lunar Deities", the Inuit have a God known as Alignak, the god of the Moon and weather; the Celts, in turn, believe in Cerridwen, the goddess of the Moon and the underworld who is often associated with the full Moon; the Chinese believe that Chang'e (also known as Heng'e), the goddess of the Moon, became that goddess after drinking an elixir of eternal life; the Aztecs believe that the beheaded skull of Coyolxauhqui (the Goddess of the Moon or the Milky Way) is the Moon; the Polynesian believe that Sina lives on the Moon; and the Egyptians believe in Thoth as a lunar deity, God of magic and wisdom. (Wigington, 2018).

Despite all of the available ground to cover, this thesis will briefly focus on the vast and complex Greco-Roman pantheon. The Greco-Roman mythology holds place for three Moon deities, who, for the sake of clear reading, will be referred to as "The Triad".

The Triad of goddesses was composed of Artemis, Selene and Hecate for the Greeks, or Diana, Luna, and Trivia for the Romans. Each of these mythical goddesses had qualities other than being the embodiment of the Moon, yet the three were known for that reason as well. Each member of the Triad seems to represent a lunar phase: "Artemis is the waxing moon, Selene the full moon, and Hecate the dark moon." (Gardner in Jones, 2005: 46), however this is yet again taking from Wicca Religion.

Artemis (or Diana) is the daughter of Zeus (or Jupiter), and the Greco-Roman goddess of wildlife and hunting, being furthermore known as the virgin goddess. According to NASA's official website, Artemis "personifies our path to the Moon as the name of NASA's effort to

return astronauts and a new wave of science payloads and technology demonstrations to the lunar surface.” (Dunbar, 2021). The same goddess, while under the Roman terminology Diana, was adapted by DC Comics as Wonder Woman and lived among the Amazons before finding out her fate.

Often depicted in the wilderness with her bow and arrow, Artemis had to share the Olympian dais “with her twin brother, Apollo, god of the sun, music, and poetry.” (Poltrack, 2022). Beyond her representation as the Goddess of wildlife, Artemis, the Moon Goddess and personification of the New Moon is “seen to personify the astral body as did Selenê in the Greek pantheon. This aspect was strengthened by syncretisms with other goddesses” (Budin, 2016: 159).

Moving onto Selene (or Luna), she was daughter of Titans Theia and Hyperion, and sister to Helios or Apollo (the sun), and Eos or Aurora (the dawn). She mothered fifty daughters alongside Endymion, a young man who chose eternal sleep as to preserve his youth. Statues of Selene depict her with a pair of horns that resemble a Crescent Moon Crown as she was a “goddess who was not only associated with the Moon, but who personified it.” (NicMhacha, 2005: 58).

Selene, whose name in either Greek or Latin means “Moon”, is regarded as the divine personification of the Moon. Worshipped during New Moons and Full Moons, Selene is “usually represented as a woman with the moon (often in crescent form) on her head and driving a two-horse chariot.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1998), being also represented alongside her brother Helios, on horseback. Selene’s nightly chariot journey helped ancient Greeks to comprehend the movement of the natural satellite across the night sky.

Probably of Chthonic origin, Hecate (or Trivia) is the Goddess of spell crafting and magic. Hecate is often portrayed as having three bodies who stand back-to-back in order to fully visualize her surroundings; in sculpture, Hecate’s represented as having either three bodies with one head, or one body with three heads. This goddess was one of the deities “who dwelt beneath the Earth’s surface and who were mainly concerned with matters of basic living: fertility, childbirth, crops, fate, and death.” (NicMhacha, 2005: 61). Moreover, as an offering to Hecate, believers would offer scraps every New Moon at crossroads as a plea for the goddess to pacify or bind evil spirits.

As the personification of the Waning Moon, Hecate was offered the sacrifice of dogs every month during the New Moon. The goddess’s association with the side of human

experience that is filled with darkness, despondency, death and despair could be connected to the sacrifice of dogs. Additionally, Mark Cartwright in *World History Encyclopedia* presents a further “canine connection” by speaking about “the Egyptian god Anubis who guided souls to the underworld, and the Greek three-headed hound of Hades, Cerberus, [who] might be an earlier form of Hecate.” (Cartwright, 2017). Cartwright continues by explaining how Hecate “was especially appealed to by sorceresses for aid in their magic and spells and appears on surviving examples of curse tablets.” (Cartwright, 2017). In Sharynne MacLeod NicMhacha’s *Queen of the Night: Rediscovering the Celtic Moon Goddess*, the author discusses these sacrifices by explaining how offerings:

of food in the form of scraps or specially prepared loaves were left at a crossroad every new Moon for Hecate Chthonia. These may have been intended to placate or bind the dangerous spirits that were thought to lurk at the crossroad or to solicit the aid of the deities for the same purpose.

(NicMhacha, 2005: 61)

Now one could ask, when did The Triad of Artemis (or the Triple Goddesses) first begin? According to Ed Whelan, a contributor to Classical Wisdom,

At some point, the Romans began to conflate the three goddesses, possibly in the Republican era based on images on coins. This was because the three shared many characteristics. Most prominently, all three were female and associated with the moon. They were thought to protect or favor those who invoked them. The Triad is part of a tradition of Triple-deities that are common in mythologies around the globe.

(Whelan, 2022)

The Triad seems to prove that the Moon is thus not only a natural satellite, but a sign of spirituality and magic. Fitting as one for one with the moon phases (excluding the New Moon), the Triad rises and falls in a cycle known to us still. Since the Greco-Roman pantheon is one of the founding pillars of Europe, Moon related beliefs are seemingly as old as time. The Triad represented the divine personifications of the Moon as

The moon goddesses – Hecate, Diana, or Selene – surveyed the world below them and awaited the summons from their disciples to draw down the power of the moon (...) The moon is nearly always associated with the feminine vibration.

(Steiger, 2012: 114)

## 1.5 – Closing Thoughts

It seems that there have been (and are) many ways to look at and think about the Moon, ways that go beyond the need to conquer her. The Moon has been around in different cultures since the dawn of times, and we, humans, have always been curious beings with an unquenchable need to discover and conquer. But, as I hope to have shown, since before we decided to conquer the Moon, she helped guide our ancient civilizations.

With that being said, there is so much more to this natural satellite than goes beyond the Space Race. One could watch its phases, its rare events and even its proximity to Earth and delve deep into astronomy, or one could plant and take care of crops and cattle following the rules and advices of the Old Farmer's Almanac, thus following something that is closer to astrology; one could even chant and worship the Moon, practicing an occult art or following the Wicca religion, or read *Dracula* and witness the portrayal of creatures which are themselves influenced by the Moon.

As a result of what I would call Fantastical or Marvelous way of thinking, the Moon's phases, her light and power made us, humans, believe that the Moon is not only the Moon. While researching cultural evidence related to the Moon, I found myself dipping in and out of the multidisciplinary areas of expertise. After all,

(...) once in a while the odd thing happens,  
Once in a while the dream comes true,  
And the whole pattern of life is altered,  
Once in a while the moon turns blue.

(W.H. Auden, n/d)



## Chapter 2 – The 1960's and the Birth of the Final Frontier

If this capsule history of our progress teaches us anything, it is that man, in his quest for knowledge and progress, is determined and cannot be deterred.  
(J.F. Kennedy, 1962)

The 1960's in the United States of America was a decade of war, revolutions, and space travel. Through the analysis of three main topics – culture, politics, and space race – I shall discuss the advancements in technology, social and political issues such as the fight for civil rights, and the events which would culminate in the Moon Landing. Although much will undoubtedly be left unsaid, I must mention that, for the purpose of this Thesis, the first two parts will be solely focused on cultural and political issues which either influenced or were influenced by the Moon and the Space Race, leaving room on the third part for the Space Race itself.

As a guiding note, I must mention that all the subchapters will see the decade through from beginning to end. Therefore the decade will be analyzed three times, from three different perspectives. This might mean some topics and dates might be repeated, albeit from two different scopes: for example, the American Civil Rights Movement will be found in two sections, since it can't be constrained or isolated to either cultural or political, for it is part of both.

In the first part, it is my goal to delve into the state of the art of the 1960's, exploring TV and cinema novelties; I will explore some of the many advances in technology, alongside the important role of social rights movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement. In the second part of the chapter, and regarding politics, I will go over the mandates of the four presidents which made the moon landing possible: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon. Moreover, I will go over issues such as the Vietnam War and the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the third and final part, I will approach the Space Race as a whole, examining the race between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, the preparations for the voyage and, at last, the Moon Landing moment itself.

From the first televised presidential news conference starring John Fitzgerald Kennedy to one of the last milestones of the hippie movement at the Woodstock Festival, the 1960's were indeed an epoch of ideas and ideals, of social and governmental crisis, and of pleas for peace during a War that was to be lost. Many of the notorious cultural and political events that will

be discussed played a role in making sure the decade ended on a stellar note with the landing of humankind on earth's only natural satellite: the Moon. The 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1969 was an achievement for the whole of humanity. Yet, as seen in my free translation from *História Universal*, edited by Grupo Editorial Oceano and Instituto Gallach,

it was clear that the scientific and technical development of humanity had reached a superior stage. Maybe stronger than ever, it was then also clear that said humanity, which had begun space conquest was, nonetheless, lightyears away from solving, back on earth, many of its basic and elemental needs, such as the effective eradication of starvation, illiteracy, and war.

(Toribio, 2001: 3843)

Despite our massive achievement, it was clear much had yet to be fixed. Let us then briefly analyze some important cultural and political aspects of the 1960's in an attempt to contextualize the Space Race.

## 2.1 – Cultural Phenomena

The decade of 1960 began with a cultural innovation when, on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960, the first nationally televised political debate took place as two presidential candidates faced each other. The debate between J.F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon was watched by upwards to 70 million Americans who, for the first time, were able to form their opinions not only on the candidates' speeches, but on their looks or mannerisms.

The difference between the demeanor of two candidates is discussed in “Behind the scenes of the first televised presidential debates 60 years ago” as author Bill Newcott explains that “Kennedy seemed confident; Nixon seemed like he didn't want to be there.” (Newcott, 2020), further stating that “The two men stood in stark contrast, literally: on black-and-white screens, Kennedy was dominant against a light background, while Nixon seemed to blend into his surroundings.” (Newcott, 2020). Before the debate, Nixon was in the lead; however, when the debate was over, Kennedy “opened a 48 to 43 percent lead, according to JFK's internal pollster Lou Harris, this was “the first time that either candidate had been able to show the other one open water.” (Newcott, 2020).

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1961, and after being elected as the 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America, John Fitzgerald Kennedy took part in a nationally televised presidential news conference, being the first U.S. President to do so. In the conference, Kennedy versed on the Geneva negotiations, the famine in the Congo, and other subjects such as Soviet-American relations. The importance of this televised presidential news conference is touched upon in “An Early Use of Television as a Political Tool: The 1961 News Conferences of President John F. Kennedy and the Republican Opposition” and when author Judith Hoover explains how Kennedy “initiated the age of television’s importance in creating political trends, attitudes, and images in the minds of American voters. Kennedy had used television to his advantage in the nominating process” (Hoover, 1988: 41).

The following year, 1962, would bring advances in science and television alike: on March 15<sup>th</sup> for once, five research groups announced the discovery of Anti-Matter, and later that same year, on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, ABC released its first colored TV series – “The Jetsons” – by Hanna-Barbera, which coincides in theme with my research topic, as Matt Novak explains in a *Smithsonian Magazine* article entitled “50 Years of the Jetsons: Why The Show Still Matters.”:

This nostalgia for the futurism of yesteryear has very real consequences for the way that we talk about ourselves as a nation. (...) Why is there a misconception today about Americans being more supportive of the space program? Because an enormous generation called Baby Boomers were kids in the 1960s; kids playing astronaut and watching shows like “The Jetsons”; kids who were bombarded with images of a bright, shiny future and for whom the world was much simpler because they saw everything through the eyes of a child.

(Novak, 2012)

Novak’s point is that the eyes of children bear a different light, one of hope and honest belief. “The Jetsons”, however, was one of the many TV shows that portrayed a happy future over the stars as, the author argues, the show “was the distillation of every Space Age promise Americans could muster.” (Novak, 2012).

As a side note, I must mention a curious situation that “The Jetsons” seemingly predicted: the building of a Hotel in the Moon. In 1967, two years before Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon, Barron Hilton (who was then the family business president) laid out the idea of building a Hilton Hotel on the Moon. According to a *CNN* article entitled “Hilton’s bizarre 1967 plan for a space hotel”, when speaking at an American Astronomical Society

conference in May 1957, Hilton stated: “Scarcely a day goes by when someone doesn’t ask me, jovially, when the Lunar Hilton is going to be opened. They’re joking, of course – but I don’t see it as a joke at all,” (Prisco, 2021). One could ask, what would this hotel look like? Well, still according to the same article, written by Jacopo Prisco,

The entrance would have been at surface level, with the rest of the structure 20 to 30 feet underground, to keep a constant temperature more easily – surface temperature on the moon can vary from a scalding 260 F (127 C) to a freezing -280 F (-173 C).

The Lunar Hilton was designed with three levels: a mechanical one at the bottom for all the equipment and engineering; a middle one with two 400-foot corridors containing 100 guest rooms; and a top one for public space, including a cocktail lounge.

(Prisco, 2021)

Another example of this space exploration imagery in the arts was the first draft of the “Star Trek” series pilot entitled “Cage”, which was released on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1963. “Star Trek” became yet another science-fiction televised series adding on to the ever-rising spatial conquest theme that filled the 1960’s. Glen E. Swanson, author of ““Space, the final frontier”: Star Trek and the national space rhetoric of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and NASA” argues that the theme of space in the series was based on a “mid-century belief in the viability of space exploration [which] saw a revitalization of the American frontier by those who sought to use the growing popularity of the nation’s space rhetoric to spread their message of exploration and conquest.” (Swanson, 2020).

The series’ monologue, uttered by Captain Jean-Luc Picard in every episode, mentions space as the “final frontier”: “Space... the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its continuing mission... to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations. To boldly go where no man has gone before.” (YouTube: StarTrek's Monologue, 2008). The monologue, Swanson explains, was “the result of a postwar popularization of space that was very much present at the time of Star Trek’s creation.” (Swanson, 2020).

Following the chronological line I established for these subchapters, 1963 was also very important for Civil Rights: the ongoing Civil Rights’ fight saw African Americans and the freedom riders (what Black and White activists were known as) kept fighting for equality in the South, where they were met with violence and resistance by segregationists as they attempted

to use “white-only” bus stops and restrooms. In June 1963 there was the standoff between Governor George C. Wallace (American politician and Alabama’s 45<sup>th</sup> Governor) and two Black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood. The standoff took place at the University of Alabama as Wallace tried to prevent the young students from registering, a result of Wallace’s vow to “stand in the schoolhouse door [in order to preserve] segregation now, tomorrow, and forever.” (Yarbrough, 1995: 122). It wasn’t until the President John F. Kennedy’s intervention, that the standoff would cease.

By August 28<sup>th</sup>, Martin Luther King uttered the “I Have a Dream” speech in front of a crowd of a quarter of a million people at the March for Jobs and Freedom in Washington. The notorious speech, where King recognized the hardships of the American people, was ultimately one of hope for the future: “even though we have the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed” (King, 1963).

The five years that followed 1963 saw a halt on American culture regarding the space and the Moon. It wasn’t until April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1968, that *2001 A Space Odyssey* was released, premiering at the Uptown Theater in Washington, D.C. Directed by Stanley Kubric, the film received mixed reviews with many blaming the Hippie Movement for its success. In *The New Yorker*’s 2018 article “*2001: A Space Odyssey*: What it Means, and how it was Made”, author Dan Chiasson states how Pauline Kael, a movie critic, argued that “The ponderous blurry appeal of the picture may be that it takes its stoned audience out of this world to a consoling vision of a graceful world of space.” (Chiasson, 2018). Curiously, the film included imagery of the dreamt-up space Hilton Hotel as this odd idea “was brought to life with even more visual flair in Stanley Kubrick’s masterpiece *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which included a scene in the lounge area of a Hilton space hotel.” (Prisco, 2021).

Later that same year (1968), on December 9<sup>th</sup>, the NLS, a system for hypertext and computer mouse was developed and publicly presented for the first time in San Francisco at the Fall Joint Computer Conference (DARPA, n/d). The framework, envisioned by Douglas Engelbart, had been funded by DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) and the U.S. Air Force. As DARPA puts it, the system became known as “The Mother of All Demos” because “it demonstrated the revolutionary features of NLS as well as never-before-seen video presentation technologies” (DARPA, n/d).

In the fated last year of the decade many events arose: by February 5<sup>th</sup>, the United States of America's population reached 200 million; by April 7<sup>th</sup>, the Internet's symbolic birth took place with the publication of the first Request for Comments, better known as RFC1. Just days before the grand event, David Bowie released his single *Space Oddity*, with the lyrics stating:

Now it's time to leave the capsule if you dare  
 This is Major Tom to Ground Control  
 I'm stepping through the door  
 And I'm floating in a most peculiar way

(David Bowie *Space Oddity* Lyrics, 2013: 1:40)

So it would be that, on July 16<sup>th</sup>, Apollo 11's liftoff took place and astronauts Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins departed from Earth with the goal of becoming the first to step foot on the Moon. The liftoff, broadcasted with Walter Cronkite, can be revisited on YouTube, in the video entitled "Liftoff for Apollo 11" from ABC News.

The Moon landing was arguably the milestone of the century. When American author Joyce Carol Oates (b.1938) was inquired by *Harper's* magazine about what she believed should be put in a time machine (that was to stay on the Moon for the future generations), the writer "recommended the confessional poems of Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell, and W.D. Snodgrass. Oates named a roster of midcentury American poets who continue to be identified as "confessional" (*Poetry Foundation*, n/d). As a side note, some of these confessional poets, later regretted the use of the confessional style. Adrienne Rich, for example, expresses her disdain in her poem "In Those Years" as she states that:

In those years, people will say, we lost track  
 of the meaning of we, of you  
 we found ourselves  
 reduced to I

(Rich, 1991)

Another notorious cultural milestone which took place at the end of the decade was the Woodstock Festival which opened in Bethel, New York, on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969. The festival, which lasted until August 18<sup>th</sup>, took place in Max Yasgur's Dairy Farm and included performances from artists such as Richie Havens, Tim Hardin, Ravi Shankar, Melanie, Arlo Guthrie, Joan Baez, and others. (Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, n/d).

As the 1960's drew to a close, by November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1969, the Apollo 12 mission occurred. Despite being the sixth crewed flight of the Apollo program, Apollo 12 was the second crewed flight to land on the Moon, after Apollo 11's success. Charles Conrad and Alan Bean, members of crew, thus became the third and fourth people to walk on the natural satellite, staying on lunar surface for one full day and seven hours.

The cultural impact of NASA and the Apollo missions was further seen in literature: in the years before and after the Apollo 11's mission, many books were written and published. The 1968 Erik Bergaust's book *Murder on Pad 34*, for once, investigates an accident that took place in January 1979. The book, which criticizes NASA, "concludes that the human and fiscal sacrifices made in Project Apollo have been in vain, since the Soviet Union (seen as the reason for Apollo) may not be going to Moon at all." (Launius, Hunley, n/d). Another example is that of the 1969 *Project Apollo: The Way to the Moon*, written by Peter Jeffrey Booker, G.C. Frewer, and G.K.C. Pardoe. The book describes NASA's growth during the 1960's, thus condensing "the essential details of ten years of American space activities into a short narrative." (Launius, Hunley, n/d).

Other honorable mentions, which were written and published in the years and decades that followed Apollo 11's mission, are the 1970 *First on the Moon: a Voyage with Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Edwin E. Aldrin*, written by Neil Armstrong with Gene Farmer and Dora Jane Hamblin, the 1978 *Moonport: A History of Apollo Launch Facilities and Operations*, written by Charles D. Benson and William Barnaby, and William B. Breuer's 1993 *Race to the Moon: America's Duel with the Soviets*. (Launius, Hunley, n/d).

With all these technological, cultural, and social events, the 1960's in the United States of America materialized John F. Kennedy's dream to put men on the Moon. Though considered a decade of free love and vibrant colors, the 1960's were likewise a decade of war and social conflict. That is perhaps why the Apollo 11's success mattered most: it was a breath of fresh air for the Americans and something they could hold on to and be proud of.

## 2.2 – Political Issues

Often considered one of the most turbulent decades of American history, the political events that shaped the 1960's impacted the lives of most Americans. The turmoil that this decade was to be in political terms had a lot to do with the challenge that the Moon posed as a new frontier. It is now safe to say that despite not being a conjoined effort *per se*, Presidents

Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon passed a metaphorical torch hand-in-hand as to achieve the greater good – that of putting man on the Moon and planting the American flag on Earth’s only natural satellite.

As previously mentioned, I shall now discuss the politics which are related to the lunar “voyage-to-be”. For the sake of this section, I will begin my argument by speaking about the 1958 National Aeronautics and Space Act which was signed by the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America, Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower. Eisenhower, who served as President from 1953 to January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1961, signed into law an Act which established NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration). As seen in the Act, found in National Archives, the act had as some of its main objectives the following:

- (1) The expansion of human knowledge of phenomena in the atmosphere and space; (...)
- (3) The development and operation of vehicles capable of carrying instruments, equipment, supplies, and living organisms through space; (...)
- (5) The preservation of the role of the United States as a leader in aeronautical and space science and technology and in the application of thereof to the conduct of peaceful activities within and outside of the atmosphere;

(National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958 *in* National Archives)

Curiously enough, the creation of NASA was nothing other than an absorption of its federal predecessor, NACA (National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics), as seen in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*’s 1999 article “National Aeronautics and Space Administration”.

I must mention (as a side note) that before NASA’s establishment, American scientists considered it a rather odd and uncommon plan. Called project A119, this top-secret plan involved the idea of detonating a thermonuclear bomb on the Moon. The goal for such bizarre idea? In a *The Next Giant Leap* article, Mark Piesing explain that “Project A119’s primary purpose was as a show of force.” (Piesing, 2023), as to essentially “scare off” the Soviet Union. Piesing continues, stating that:

The bomb would explode on the appropriately named Terminator Line – the border between the light and dark side of the Moon – to create a bright flash of light that anyone, but particularly anyone in the Kremlin, could see with the naked eye. The absence of an atmosphere meant there wouldn’t be a mushroom cloud. There is only one convincing



explanation for proposing such a horrendous plan – and the motivation for it lies somewhere between insecurity and desperation.

(Piesing, 2023)

In time, America's finest would come to agree that landing a man on the satellite would be a far better and safer show for the world – and a blow on the Soviets. Piesing finishes the article by mentioning a curious fact: seemingly, most of Project A119 details have been destroyed.

On January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1961, Eisenhower's successor as the commander in chief would begin his mandate. After his first appearance on television, now President John F. Kennedy announced the country's intention of putting a man on the Moon before the end of the decade. This announcement, which can nowadays be revisited in the YouTube video "JFK's Famous Speech to Congress on Space Exploration (1961)", filled Americans with hope and promise.

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1962, and during a speech uttered at the football stadium of Rice University in Houston, President Kennedy attempted to persuade Americans to show their support for the Apollo missions, as seen in the YouTube video "JFK Moon Speech" from the *JFK Homecoming* channel. During the 18-minute-long speech, Kennedy explained his dream, justifying it by saying:

why some say the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask, why climb the highest mountain? Why 35 years ago fly the Atlantic? We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things not because they are easy, but because they are hard. Because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we're willing to accept. One we are unwilling to postpone. And therefore, as we set sail, we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure that man has ever gone.

(YouTube: *JFK Moon Speech*, 2013: 2:34)

Outside of that intention, the American political scene was destructive: the Cold War had no sign of stopping and, and by October 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis came close to starting a war between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the midst of the countries' development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, the Soviets installed missiles in Cuba, which could be easily used to attack American cities. This confrontation between the USA and the

Soviet Union was seen as a political crisis, being often argued that “the West [contended] that the missile crisis led the Soviet Union to build up its military power.” (Garthoff, 1989: 133).

The year after the Cuban Missile Crisis, on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1963, the two superpowers signed the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty in Moscow, showcasing a clear fear of the atomic bomb that started with the Hiroshima and Nagasaki massacres. The treaty, which was also signed by the United Kingdom, “banned all tests of nuclear weapons except those conducted underground.” (Freedman, 1998).

On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1963, President John F. Kennedy, the 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America, was assassinated at around 12:30 pm as the car which contained himself and his wife, Jacqueline Kennedy, alongside Texas Governor John Connally and his wife, when passing the Texas School Book Depository. According to the official John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum website under “November 22, 1963: Death of the President”,

The president's body was brought to Love Field and placed on Air Force One. Before the plane took off, a grim-faced Lyndon B. Johnson stood in the tight, crowded compartment and took the oath of office, administered by US District Court Judge Sarah Hughes. The brief ceremony took place at 2:38 p.m.

(JFK Library, n/d)

Despite the widely known conspiracy theories that surround President Kennedy’s assassination, I shall refrain from any information beyond the one found in the previously mentioned website which states that less than an hour before Lyndon B. Johnson took his oath of office, “police had arrested Lee Harvey Oswald (...) He was being held for the assassination of the President Kennedy and the fatal shooting, shortly afterward, of Patrolman J.D. Tippit on a Dallas street.” (JFK Library, n/d).

Just a few days after Kennedy’s assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson announced that Cape Canaveral launch site, located in Florida, would be renamed Cape Kennedy, announcing a day after that the NASA Launch Operations Center would also be renamed to John F. Kennedy Space Center. Despite President Johnson’s open support for the space program, NASA’s budget suffered cuts early on his mandate because of the on-going Vietnam War and Johnson’s Great Society programs which were focused on ending poverty and racial discrimination and improving issues such as education.

At that time, America's main concern would involve an attempt to win the Vietnam War, one which had begun in 1955 (and that would cease twenty years later). America's participation in the Vietnam War was mostly drawn on the bias that, if left to win, China's communist ways would take over the globe. Ironically enough, the same four presidents who envisioned, commanded, and brought the Moon Landing to fruition, were the same who tried to tilt the Vietnam War to their side while maintaining the Cold War "cold". In spite of having to keep the possibility of war with the Soviet Union at bay even during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States of America interfered directly in the Vietnam War while having no solid reason to do so, except for its struggle to achieve a leading military and economic position in the international scene. The Vietnam War and the Space Race were the two major sides of the same struggle.

By 1967, Johnson's administration proposed the OST (Outer Space Treaty) which would be signed into law on January 27<sup>th</sup>. The Treaty, as Lyndon B. Johnson put it: "means that the moon and our sister planets will serve only the purpose of peace and not of war... It means that astronaut and cosmonaut will meet someday on the surface of the moon as brothers and not as warriors for competing nationalities or ideologies." (Mann, 2021).

In a dinner that followed the signing of the treaty, the President was informed that three astronauts had been killed in a fire during training for the first manned Apollo flight. Ed White, Roger Chafee, and Gus Grissom lost their lives on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1967, a "flash fire" inside of the Apollo 1 capsule. The final manned mission of Johnson's mandate took place on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1968, with the launch of the Apollo 8 mission.

Johnson's term would end on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1969, as he was replaced by Richard Nixon. Nixon, who would come to be the 37<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, had previously been a U.S. Senator in California. In the following four and a half years, the President would end the American struggle in Vietnam and reduce the tension between China and the Soviet Union. As seen in the White House's official website, Nixon's accomplishments include:

revenue sharing, the end of the draft, new anticrime laws, and a broad environmental program. (...) One of the most dramatic events of his first term occurred in 1969, when American astronauts made the first moon landing. (...) Some of his most acclaimed achievements came in his quest for world stability.

(WH.GOV, n/d)

The Space Race was a factor which did not leave the President's mind as shortly after beginning his term as President, Nixon "empaneled a group of experts to provide him with recommendations on the nation's future direction in space" (NASA, 2022), as seen in NASA's official website under "50 Years Ago: President Nixon Directs NASA to Build the Space Shuttle". However, due to tight federal budgets, Nixon was unable to support many of the panel's ideas and recommendations.

I must call attention to the fact that soon before Apollo 11 took off, five hundred (mostly) African American protesters, led by Ralph Abernathy (a civil rights leader) protested Apollo's takeoff, having brought with them "four mules and two broken-down wagons, which were recognizable symbols of rural poverty. The protesters intended to draw attention to the disparities between those in poverty and those that were championing the space race." (Combs, 2021: 32). Once in the launch area, Ralph Abernathy confronted NASA administrator Thomas Paine; during this confrontation, Abernathy argued that the Apollo mission was funded with the help of African Americans, and that "this technological achievement was made possible by all Americans, but not accessible to all Americans." (Combs, 2021: 32). While active during the 1960's, the newspaper *Provo - The Underground Tab*, a radical Dutch student collective, made a comment about Thomas Paine's observations,

In a sense, of course, Paine was right. If the nation was interested in building human cities, ending poverty, etc. it probably wouldn't have created moonism in the first place. It simply wouldn't have been able to. (...) Those who wield power had already made a [sic] irrevocable decision. As long as they hold power so will their decisions prevail.

(*Provo the Underground Tab*, 1967: 1-15)

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1969, President Nixon, alongside 500 million others around the world, saw two American astronauts walk on lunar soil, at last achieving John F. Kennedy's promise to Americans. On the fateful day, Nixon had an interplanetary call with Apollo 11 from the Oval Office. According to the Richard Nixon Foundation official website, "Nixon himself considered [the call] the most important call he had made during his time in office, even more specifically, "the most historic phone call ever made from the White House." (Richard Nixon Foundation, n/d).

In September 1969, and after the success of the Apollo 11 mission, "The Post-Apollo Program: Directions for the Future" was created. As seen in the "SPACE TASK GROUP REPORT

TO THE PRESIDENT SEPTEMBER 1969”, the program was set on continuing spatial exploration while maintaining America’s leadership in these (and other) scientific endeavors. This vision ought to have understandable values, and a balance of many short-term objectives, in order to pursue a long-range vision of spatial dominance. The three main aspects that steered the program were “flexibility”, “challenge” and “opportunity”, as the Space Task Group would see reasonable and attainable. The program saw Mars as the next target and “manned exploration of Mars as the next step”. (The Post-Apollo Program: Directions for the Future, 1969: 10-11).

In the years following the Apollo 11 mission, President Nixon continued his support for the space program. In fact, by January 1972, Nixon approved development of the space shuttle program; with the program, the President “directed NASA to develop and build a reusable space transportation system (...) The reusability of the shuttle’s components was expected to provide regular access to space to many customers, while at the same time reducing costs.” (NASA, 2022).

It can be argued that if John F. Kennedy’s statement had died with him, or, in other words, had been forgotten or disregarded by his peers and successors, the space race would have been lost to the Soviets. If it weren’t for the conjoined efforts of Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, this massive achievement would not have changed the course of history in the same way.

### **2.3 – The Space Race**

Since the dawn of fire, it can be argued that humanity has competed against each other. Such competition has been seen in the fight for the most essential supplies (such as food and water), or in the fight for imagined frontiers. It seems such is the nature of humanity, and so, when it came to putting a man on the Moon, one can imagine, men would not change their ways. The primordia of the space exploration and conquest would eventually become a subject for boasting and, above anything else, it would become yet another result for a competition among Nations.

When it came to the space race fight, we saw the United States of America and the Soviet Union face off. In August 1955, and in response to America’s spatial conquest goal, the Soviets announced their very own intent to go to space. Two years later, in 1957, the Soviets’ goal was achieved as, on October 4<sup>th</sup>, the Soviet Union launched the first orbiting satellite

originated from Earth. According to a *National Geographic* article entitled “Oct 4, 1957 CE: USSR Launches Sputnik”, the satellite, called Sputnik 1,

an 85-kilogram (187-pound) metal sphere the size of a basketball, was launched on a huge rocket and orbited Earth at 29,000 kilometers per hour (18,000 miles per hour) for three months. When it finally fell out of orbit in January 1958, Sputnik had traveled 70 million kilometers (43.5 million miles) around the planet.

(*National Geographic*, n/d)

By November 3<sup>rd</sup> (and a month after the launching Sputnik 1) the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 2 into space, thus becoming the first country to send into orbit a living organism. The dog, named Laika, would pass away 5-7 hours after takeoff.

Faced with the Soviet Union’s “success” in the space race, and in order to compete with the Soviets, Americans launched their very first satellite known as *Explorer 1* on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1958. In NASA’s official website, under the title “Explorer 1 Overview”, we are told that the satellite, was launched using the Jupiter C rocket which belonged to the U.S. Army Ballistic Missile Agency. We are moreover taught that:

The primary science instrument on Explorer 1 was a cosmic ray detector designed to measure the radiation environment in Earth orbit. (...) Explorer 1 revolved around Earth in a looping orbit that took it as close as 354 kilometers (220 miles) to Earth and as far as 2,515 kilometers (1,563 miles). It made one orbit every 114.8 minutes, or a total of 12.54 orbits per day.

(NASA, n/d)

By October that same year, Project Mercury was created. According to NASA’s “Project Mercury Overview – Introduction”, the first American man-in-space program had as some of its objectives: “to orbit a manned spacecraft around Earth (...) To investigate man’s ability to function in space [and] To recover both man and spacecraft safely” (NASA, n/d).

Later in 1958, after the establishment of NASA, America launched SCORE, the first communications satellite in the whole world. SCORE (Signal Communications by Orbital Relay Equipment) was launched on December 18<sup>th</sup> and operated for thirty-five days. In a publication by the National Air and Space Museum called “Communications Satellite, SCORE”, it is stated that SCORE proved that it was possible for satellites to

receive signals from one location on Earth and immediately retransmit to another, as well as receive a signal, store it on an onboard recorder, and then transmit on command from the ground. These technical accomplishments provided the basis for future communications satellites.

(National Air and Space Museum, n/d)

Though these technical accomplishments would be recognized on a later date, there was one immediate sign on the satellite's public impact as a few days after the launch, "President Eisenhower presented a Christmas message of good will and peace through SCORE that was beamed to countries around the world." (National Air and Space Museum, n/d).

In the years that followed, the race between the Soviets and Americans continued. In 1959, the Soviet Union launched into space *Luna 1*, the first "cosmic rocket"; that same year, the United States launched *Explorer 6*, a pioneer satellite which took the first pictures of Earth (as viewed from space). By 1960, the Soviets launched *Sputnik 5* with two dogs and an array of plants: all of which returned alive from space. In 1961, America sent Ham, a chimpanzee, into space, becoming the first great ape to survive the voyage. (Schierkolk, 2015: 835).

In 1961, and while Project Mercury was still active, NASA created the Apollo Program. The program, which would put the man on the Moon, consisted of, in total, eleven spaceflights. According to Adam Mann in a *Space* article entitled "The Apollo Program: How NASA sent astronauts to the Moon" when speaking about the success of the Apollo Program, "12 astronauts had walked on or driven over the moon's surface, conducting scientific research and snagging rocks to bring back to researchers on Earth. These samples are still being used to make new discoveries more than 50 years after they were collected." (Mann, 2020).

In the years following the creation of the Apollo Program, various manned missions would take place, namely the July 1961 mission, which made John Glen the first American in orbit; the October 1962 mission, which became the first long-duration American flight (having lasted for 9 hours and 13 minutes); and the May 1963 mission, the first American flight which lasted for more than one day (lasting for 24 hours and 20 minutes in between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of May), as described in James M. Grimwood's *Project Mercury: A Chronology*.

Going back to April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1961, the Soviets suddenly got the upper hand as Yuri Gagarin became the first man to reach space on board of the *Vostok 1*. The soviets' thoughts on the mission, which, according to BBC's "Yuri Gagarin: the spaceman who came in from the cold"

by Stephen Dowling, lasted for one hour and forty-eight minutes, were that “should the maiden mission be successful, the first human in space become a face recognized around the world, the first cosmonaut would become a weapon of soft power.” (Dowling, 2021). Additionally, Dowling explains how the mission was not publicized:

The Soviets kept quiet about Gagarin's mission until he had returned safely to Earth – and then broadcast the news far and wide via the state news agency Tass. The reports sent shockwaves around the world, not least in the US, which had been trying to beat the Russians to the first manned flight.

(Dowling, 2021)

As to match the Soviets’ achievements, the previously mentioned Mercury-Redstone 3 spaceship took off, making Alan Shepard the first American in space on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1961. Though Shepard did not orbit Earth, it is known that the astronaut flew 116 miles high for nearly sixteen minutes.

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1963, the Soviet space mission *Vostok 6* was launched with Valentina Tereshkova onboard, who became the first civilian, and woman, in space. Valentina Tereshkova orbited Earth forty-eight times in the three days she spent in space. The Soviets’ spatial conquering continued when, on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1965, Cosmonaut Alexey Leonov left his spacecraft (*Voskhod 2*) for around 12 minutes, thus becoming the first person to walk in space. By February the following year, the Soviet *Luna 9* ship became the first to achieve, as described in NASA’s publication “Luna 9” by Artem Ivankov, “a lunar soft landing and to transmit photographic data from the Moon’s surface to Earth, preceding the U.S. Surveyor 1 soft lander by about 4 months.” (Ivankov, n/d).

The *Apollo 8* mission, which placed astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell Jr., and William Anders in orbit, had clear objectives, namely the need to “demonstrate translunar injection; CSM [Command and Service Module] navigation; communications and midcourse corrections; consumable assessment; and passive thermal control.” (NASA, 2009), as seen in NASA’s 2009 publication entitled “Apollo 8”.

The next big moment in the space race would come on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1969, when the Apollo 11 took off. On liftoff day, ex-President Lyndon B. Johnson spoke about the dream that had, at last, become a reality: “I doubt a human could be as concerned or troubled until splashdown as I am or have been.” (Mann, 2021). The mission’s main objective, that of landing a crewed ship



on lunar soil and safely return to Earth, would fulfill John F. Kennedy's dream which had been set eight years earlier, in 1961, as described in NASA's publication "Apollo 11 Mission Overview": "The primary objective of Apollo 11 was to complete a national goal set by President John F. Kennedy on May 25, 1961: perform a crewed lunar landing and return to Earth." (NASA, n/d). On the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, three days after takeoff, the astronauts performed what was described as a "lunar orbit insertion maneuver" (NASA, n/d).

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, by the 109 hour and 24 minutes flight mark, man was at last on the Moon as Neil Armstrong left the Eagle and stepped on lunar ground. Twenty minutes later, "Buzz" Aldrin followed suit, becoming the second man to walk on the Moon. Soon after, the two astronauts were able to talk to President Richard Nixon via satellite telephone.

Before beginning their ascent to Earth, Armstrong and Aldrin spent a total of twenty-one hours and thirty-six minutes on lunar soil (seven of which were spent sleeping). In that time, the astronauts collected rocks and dust which was to be retrieved to Earth. The Moon dust was "described as 'powdery' and it stuck to the spacesuits of Aldrin and Armstrong. The pair also tested moving around on the surface, experimenting with kangaroo hops and loping to get around." (Royal Museum's Greenwich, n.d.).

Still in lunar soil, the astronauts famously planted the American flag on the natural satellite. The flagpole had been designed in a specific manner, keeping in mind two problems: it had to be compact, and it had to look good. The size of the flagpole had to be manageable due to the spacecraft's lack of space, as put by Kiona N. Smith in a *Forbes* article called "How Apollo 11 Raised the Flag on the Moon, and What it Means Today": "Apollo 11 (like every other spacecraft in human history) had very little room to spare, and very little available mass to allocate to frivolous things like flagpoles, so the flagpole had to be light and compact." (Smith, 2019). The second problem, the looks of the flag, were likewise important as it had to look good on camera, as Smith explains: "with no wind to make it wave, engineers worried that the flag would just droop unimpressively." (Smith, 2019). Smith further explains how NASA engineer Jack Kinzler had only around three months to design a flagpole that solved both problems:

To make sure (...) the flag was properly photogenic and not disappointingly droopy, Kinzler decided to hang its top edge from a horizontal crossbar, which folded out from the top of the flagpole and locked into place. He hemmed the top edge of the flag into a sleeve that

would slide over the crossbar, exactly the way a curtain slides onto a curtain rod. The lower corner of the flag would also connect to the flagpole.

(Smith, 2019)

Out of pure coincidence, and as a curious fact, the hem of the American flag left by the Apollo 11 astronauts was sewed by a Portuguese woman: Maria Isilda Ribeiro. In a free translation from *Radio Renascença*'s article "Portuguesa coseu as bainhas da bandeira que está na Lua. (...)": "50 years ago Maria Isilda Ribeiro worked in the United States. NASA ordered various flags to be taken on the trip to the moon. Annin & Company's, where Maria Isilda Ribeiro worked, was elected due to having a special fiber." (Almeida, 2019). In a rather curious, unexpected, and personal turn of events, during my research on this specific topic I was informed by family members (and Maria Isilda herself) that Maria Isilda Ribeiro is a first cousin of my paternal Great Grandfather.

Although Apollo 11 was a three-man flight, Michael Collins, one of the astronauts, remained on lunar orbit throughout the mission. With this, Collins became the only American who had no way of watching the historical moment with his own eyes. Although unable to witness the Moon Landing as it was happening, in a 2009 press release in celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission, the astronaut clarified that he had no regrets, further explaining that it was an honor for him to serve his country. In a *Space* article called "Michael Collins, Apollo 11 Command Module Pilot" by Nola Taylor Tillman, Collins' notes are mentioned: "In his notes while circling the moon alone, he wrote, "I feel very much a part of what is taking place on the lunar surface." (Tillman, 2021). Such was the atmosphere on the day of the Moon Landing as seen in the following transcript of the dialogue between Michael Collins and Bruce McCandless (who served as Mission Control communicator for the Apollo 11 mission):

**110:09:18** McCandless: I guess you're about the only person around that doesn't have TV coverage of the scene.

**110:09:25** Collins: That's all right. I don't mind a bit. (Pause) How is the quality of the TV?

**110:09:35** McCandless: Oh, it's beautiful, Mike. It really is. (...)

**110:09:39** Collins: Oh, gee, that's great! Is the lighting halfway decent? (...)

**110:09:43** McCandless: Yes, indeed. They've got the flag up now and you can see the stars and stripes on the lunar surface.

**110:09:50** Collins: Beautiful. Just beautiful. (Long Pause)

(Jones, 1995)

After the 195+ hour mission, the ship re-entered the atmosphere splashing down near Honolulu (Hawaii's capital), being later on recovered by the USS Hornet. Back on Earth, the astronauts were put in quarantine for weeks as to make sure they were of perfect health and as to “ensure that they hadn't brought back any “moon bugs”.” (Howell, 2019).

The mission was a success, and the astronauts were received with enthusiasm and joy: the American leader, Richard Nixon, was showered with congratulatory praises from nations all around the globe; newspapers' headlines spoke of nothing else as it was estimated (by NASA) that one in every two citizens of the world had been aware of the event; the astronauts and other members of NASA were likewise congratulated for their bravery and success. Although the Moon never ceased to be seen as a supernatural entity, it became then, and forever on, reachable to humanity. And the United States was, once and again, the leader of the world. Imagination, dreams, art, culture, technology, and politics were, once and again, clearly together to shape the history of this leading nation. For it seemed that Commander Armstrong and Lunar Module Pilot Aldrin had done it. And indeed it was: “(...) one small step for (a) man; one giant leap for mankind.” (Jones, 1995).

### Chapter 3: Moon Landing Poetics

In the Chapters written so far, we have come to understand the way humankind thought about the Moon while she was still regarded as an unreachable and unattainable satellite. We have additionally seen how things changed once we began following our wonder for lunar exploration, and the moment when humans first stepped foot on the Moon. In the following chapter, I will delve into the poetry of the Moon and of the Moon Landing through the analysis of poems by authors which either commended or criticized this milestone.

Before moving onto the Subchapters, I call your attention to a handful of great poets that talked about the Moon during the nineteenth century – before we even dreamed about setting foot in the Moon.

Many Anglo-speaking poets talked about the Moon, as she was and still is, an object of awe. This short list, composed of six lyricists born in the 1800's will for sure sound familiar to the attentive reader due to the resounding fame of their work. The chosen poets will be listed chronologically according to their birth dates. Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Gertrude Stein, Robert Frost, and E. E. Cummings all had something to verse about our natural satellite.

Starting with Thoreau, the transcendentalist wrote “The moon now rises to her absolute rule” (Thoreau, 1950), a poem where the poetic “I” states the power of both the Moon and humanity over nature. This is metonymized with water bodies such as the thistle, the river, and the ripe fruit and ends saying “But man never severs the stalk / Which bears this palatable fruit.” (Thoreau, 1950), which is a metaphor for killing mother nature, and act that we haven't yet done.

Whitman in turn, vastly known as the father of Free Verse, says in “Song of Myself, 35” (published in his world-famous book *Leaves of Grass*) that the Moon, more than just controlling the waves and tides of the five oceans, shares wisdom by her light, asking: “Would you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?” (Whitman, 1855). Opposite to this thought (or not), Dickinson wrote “The Moon is distant from the Sea – (387)”, a poem that was published posthumously and ranges four quatrains that again impose the fact that the Moon is responsible for the waves and tides. This can be read throughout the poem and specifically on the last two lines: “Obedient to the least command / Thine eye impose on me –” (Dickinson, 1890).

Gertrude Stein wrote “[The house was just twinkling in the moon light]”, a poem that describes a household sprinkled by Moonlight. Said household seems to be led by the woman, due to the man of the house being satirized as a “blessed baby” (Stein, 1999).

Robert Frost wrote “Waiting—Afield at Dusk”, a three stanza free verse poem that describes a man waiting at night, daydreaming for a woman he hadn’t seen in a long time: “But on the memory of one absent most, / For whom these lines when they shall greet her eyes.” (Frost, 1913). E. E. Cummings, in turn, wrote “Crepuscle”, a lyrical poem in free form that seems to represent the poetic “I” as a Merman “[setting his] teeth in the silver of the moon” (Cummings, 1917).

All these poets were worthy of this study, nevertheless this work will focus on poetry directly related to the Moon landing, the exception being Robert Louis Stevenson’s “The Moon”, due to the fact that at the time of this poem (1885), the Moon Landing was far from even being dreamed of.

In the first part, I shall cover Archibald MacLeish’s poem “Voyage to the Moon” which was submitted and published by *The New York Times*. Published on the day of the Moon Landing, “Voyage to the Moon” is arguably the most important poem of this milestone as it the poem which describes the three-day long Moon voyage of the Apollo 11 astronauts “through risk of death and “unfathomable emptiness” (...) Then comes the transformation: Earth replaces Luna as the celestial object overhead.” (Knox, 1985: 774).

The second part will analyze May Swenson’s “First Walk on the Moon” and W. H. Auden’s “Moon Landing”. While Swenson’s poem is focused on the way new technology enlarges our language, Auden’s poem describes how futile the whole ordeal was, an “immovable perspective [which] is deeply grounded in literary culture, myth, and legend.” (Knox, 1985: 775), as put by H. Knox in “Space Poems: Close Encounters Between the Lyric Imagination and 25 Years of NASA Space Exploration”. Although it can be argued that Auden should be a part of a latter subchapter called “The ones that would rather stay”, I chose to juxtapose him as the “no” to Swenson’s “yes”.

In the third part, I will discuss Robert Louis Stevenson’s “The Moon”, Neil Armstrong’s “My Vacation”, and J. Patrick Lewis’ “First Men on the Moon”. Being written for the young, all three poems have a child-like wonder which will be analyzed in order to understand how our message about the Moon has changed when children are the target audience.

In the fourth part, I shall analyze Richard Brautigans' "Jules Verne Zucchini" and Robert Hayden's "Full Moon", two poems which would rather see man on Earth rather than spending outrageous sums to see mankind step foot on the satellite.

A small biography of each author will be included as to situate the poems and poets in the Moon Voyage Poetry timeline (which, in this particular case-study, ranges from 1885 to 2001). Then, each poem will be analyzed first as a whole, and then in a scrutinized manner (either by verse or by theme). All of the analyzed poems present in the following subchapters can be found in its entirety in the Annexes section.

With that being said, let us now delve into the Moon Voyage and Landing Poetics:

### **3.1 – Archibald MacLeish's "Voyage to the Moon"**

Published on the day of the Moon landing, Archibald MacLeish's "Voyage to the Moon" stood strong on the first page of *The New York Times* with the banner headline "Man Walks on Moon". The presence of a poem in the front page of *The New York Times* was out of the norm for the daily newspaper's template: in fact, according to Joshua Benton and Nieman Lab in *The Atlantic's* "Sometimes Even Newspapers Need Poetry", the newspaper was supposed to include "standard eight-columns-across grid and parsimonious use of three huge photos (...) flanked by just two wide columns of text" (Benton & Lab, 2019). The decision to have MacLeish on the front page was made by associate managing editor Abe Rosenthal who "knew the occasion required something less direct than all prose. What the moment demanded was a bit of poetry." (Benton & Lab, 2019). Curiously, while this unprecedented print could be bought for ten cents in 1969, a reprint of the first page is now sold online for at least 60 dollars.

Born in May 1892 in Illinois, MacLeish is recognized as an author, a lawyer, a teacher, an editor, and a poet whose "almost continuous publication of poetry, always has given the impression that he looked upon the writing of poetry as his particular destiny" (Carrington, 1965: 1) as he felt that, in his life, there was no option other than that of becoming a poet. MacLeish was additionally active in U.S. public offices and activism, namely acting as the 9th Librarian of Congress, an Assistant Secretary of State, and as a chair of the U.S. delegation during the founding of UNESCO which took place in London in 1942. In "Archibald MacLeish: A Study of his Prosody for the Oral Interpreter", Richard Hale Carrington speaks on MacLeish's decision to be both a poet and activist, stating:

Perhaps the reason for this irresistible urge to be a poet as well as an activist in society is related to MacLeish's concept of the poet's importance of guiding society. The poet in his poetry provides an image of life in which society can believe. Man must then strive to make his life conform to that image.

(Carrington, 1965: 4)

During his time as a writer, MacLeish published multiple books, plays, and poetry collections. His first play, for once, entitled *Panic: A Play in Verse* (1935), portrays the American Depression and the generation of capitalists who were eager to leave capitalism behind. *Conquistador* (1932), in turn, is a work which narrates the conquest of Mexico through the story of an old man who had once been a soldier, Bernal Diaz. Found in *Collected Poems 1917-1982*, "Ars Poetica" is arguably Archibald MacLeish's most known poem, being one which "conveys in its images, imitative form, and self-contradictions MacLeish's permanent conviction that a poem should both mean and be." (Poetry Foundation, n/d).

While MacLeish's early work's theme was the "reconciliation of idealism with reality" (Poetry Foundation, n/d), most of the author's poetry shared the same "diverse but characteristic themes: doubt, loss, alienation, art, aging, the quest." (Poetry Foundation, n/d). MacLeish's poetry was awarded the Pulitzer Prize two times: in 1933, with *Conquistador*, and in 1953, with *Collected Poems 1917-1952*. In 1959, MacLeish was again awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his play *J.B.* (1958), this time in Drama.

In the last years of his life, MacLeish retired from the public eye becoming "not so much an elder statesman as an elder of various churches: the churches of friendship, of patriotism, of poetry, of love, of death" (Poetry Foundation, n/d.) Having not lived to see his 90th birthday, MacLeish passed away the day after Patriot's Day in April 1982.

MacLeish's interest in the Apollo missions did not begin in July 1969, nor did his relationship with *The New York Times*. In fact, seven months prior, MacLeish wrote a text about the Apollo 8 Mission, indicating that it could be a "new Copernican revolution" (Benton & Lab, 2019). Apart from the idea that there's a human brotherhood that is many times defied by greed and grief (in this case, by the Vietnam War and the Cold War), MacLeish defended that we, humans, began describing ourselves "not as God-directed actors at the center of a noble drama, but as helpless victims of a senseless farce" (Benton & Lab, 2019).

Curiously, according to Benton and Nieman Lab's article, upon returning to Earth from the Apollo 8 Mission, Commander Frank Borman chose a passage of MacLeish's article "A Reflection: Riders on Earth Together, Brothers in Eternal Cold" when addressing the Congress. The quote in question is "brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold—brothers who know now that they are truly brothers." (Benton & Lab, 2019).

"Voyage to the Moon" can be found in the poetry book *Collected Poems, 1917-1982*, published by The Estate of Archibald MacLeish in 1985. Divided into seven parts, the poetry book includes, among others, twenty-nine uncollected works, some of which had been previously published and others which were taken directly from manuscript after the author's death. On the collection's blurb, it reads: "These reflect the span of his life, for they include poems that were apparently omitted by inadvertence from his early books, others that were written in his last years, and still others of too private a nature to be published during his lifetime." (The Estate of Archibald MacLeish, 1985).

"Voyage to the moon" is a free verse poem composed of nine stanzas and twenty-nine lines. Written in very straight-forward fashion, the poem carried out the news that man had, at last, stood foot on the Moon. The decision to include the poem in the front page of *The New York Times* was, as previously mentioned, made by editor A.M. Rosenthal who commented 20 years later that: "What the poet wrote would count most, (...) but we also wanted to say to our readers, look, this paper does not know how to express how it feels this day and perhaps you don't either, so here is a fellow, a poet, who will try for all of us." (Rosenthal, 1989)

In the first five lines stanza, the poetic "I" describes a nomadic entity on the nightly skies that sprinkles morning dew in the mundane vegetation and rivers: "O / silver evasion in our farthest thought –" (MacLeish, 1985: 17), invoking the Moon for the first time. The Moon, this silver light, which lives in the deepest of our thoughts, is a visitor that comes every night, as can be read on the "one-liner" stanza: "and we have found her" (MacLeish, 1985: 17).

The third stanza focuses on time and on how humanly unreachable this satellite was since the dawn of humankind: "She was a wonder to us, unattainable" (MacLeish, 1985: 17). The Moon meant another world to us: a lot of ideals, feelings, cultures, and civilizations were drawn to (or drew something from) that silver light in the night sky. However, and as anything considered humanly unattainable, we, as a species, needed to conquer it: "From the first of time, / before the first of time, before the / first man tasted time, we sought for her." (MacLeish, 1985: 17).



How did humanity take on such endeavor? How did we pursue this immense entity, which was out there, just out of our reach? As seen in Chapter 1, we told stories of Gods and Goddesses, we created religions and invented beasts which were either ruled or overpowered by the Moon. We tried to grasp the way the Moon phases affected our sustenance and lifestyle, trying to comprehend her for she was “a light beyond our lights, our lives – perhaps / a meaning to us – O, a meaning!” (MacLeish, 1985: 17).

The fourth stanza, also a “one-liner”, describes the conquest, the footprints, and the planting of the flag on the Moon: “Now we have found her in her nest of night.” (MacLeish, 1985: 17). The fifth stanza initiates an analepsis to explore the journey: “The Voyage to the Moon”. This stanza recounts and gives emphasis to the three-day Apollo 11 journey, pointing to the dangers and awes that the astronauts faced as Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins “crossed the invisible tide-rip where the floating dust / falls one way or the other in the void between,” (MacLeish, 1985: 17).

It seems important to underline the two final lines of the fifth stanza and how accurate these were in describing the ever-present possibility of death that accompanied the astronauts throughout their mission, as they “followed that other down, encountered / cold, faced death, unfathomable emptiness.” (MacLeish, 1985: 17). This idea, described by the poetic “I” in its realist style, was supported by Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin’s perspective on the Moon surface, which he described as “Magnificent desolation.” (Jones, 1995).

Much could have gone wrong during the “Three days and three nights we journeyed,” (MacLeish, 1985: 17), especially on the final stages of the mission. Reiterating the poetic “I”’s reference to death and immeasurable emptiness, a speech had been prepared for President Richard Nixon to read to the world in case of the death of the crew. “In Event of Moon Disaster” was written on July 18th, 1969, and reads on the first paragraph: “Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay on the moon to rest in peace.” (Safire, 1969). The text was all throughout very grim and dark, with a solemn farewell note to the Apollo 11 team which, as we all know, was never needed. However, the existence of such preparation further corroborates the dangers of journeying to outer space and, furthermore, landing on the satellite: a dangerous shot in the dark, as described in MacLeish’s poem.

The sixth stanza draws upon the fourth day of voyage after the descent of the crew from the Eagle and the first footprint on lunar soil: “we descend, / make fast, set foot at last upon her beaches, / stand in her silence” (MacLeish, 1985: 17). In these lines, the poetic “I” recalls the

time spent by the astronauts planting the American flag, collecting rocks and Moon dust, and moving around the lunar surface before we “lift our heads and see / above her, wanderer in her sky,” (MacLeish, 1985: 17). At last, the Moon was within our reach. Earth’s only natural satellite could finally be explored by humans, no longer being just “a wonder to us past the reach of wonder, / a light beyond our lights, our lives,” (MacLeish, 1985: 17).

The magnificence of the voyage to the Moon made by Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins is brought forth in the last three one-liner verses of the poem. In the Moon’s horizon, Earth comes into view to be seen in all her glory: “the rising, / earth, / a meaning to us, / O, a meaning!” (MacLeish, 1985: 17). In that moment, Planet Earth turned out to be more than the just astronauts’ home, becoming, in itself, a wonder.

Archibald MacLeish’s “Voyage to the Moon” nearly perfectly represents the voyage the astronauts embarked on. Curiously enough, the Moon walk took place close to the time when Archibald MacLeish submitted the poem to *The New York Times* which meant that MacLeish had no idea if the astronauts were actually able to set foot on the Moon (or even walk in the lunar soil) – something described by editor A. M. Rosenthal in 1989:

The poem was written on the assumption that the astronauts themselves had touched the moon. But the moon walk was taking place at about deadline time. Suppose it was delayed. We would need a poem rewrite, fast. (...) After the moon walk, Mr. MacLeish was informed he could stand down; the poem was running in all editions.

(Rosenthal, 1989)

MacLeish’s poem portrays humankind’s wonder and desire for Moon exploration and conquest. “Voyage to the Moon” is an extraordinary poem not because of its content, but because of the way it perfectly described a situation the poet had no actual knowledge of. Moreover,

Fifty years after “Voyage to the Moon,” in a fractured country, it seems impossible to imagine the sort of moment of communal awe Apollo 11 inspired. Almost as impossible as a poem running on the front page of *The New York Times*. But there was a time, not that long ago, when journalism saw its limits, stepped aside, and let the moment sing.

(Benton & Lab, 2019)

The country was fractured indeed, with minorities fighting for their civil rights, the national army trapped in a lost war, and the hippie movement trying to create a sort of psychedelic renaissance. This obviously tore the country in more than three sections since every side was itself more liberal or conservative, more warlike or peaceful, more open-minded or dogmatic. As Abraham Lincoln once said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” (Lincoln, 1858). However mighty and resounding this utterance may seem, it would be proved wrong by its own people. The United States of America were torn during the 1960’s, and yet, they made us stand on the Moon.

### 3.2 – May Swenson and W. H. Auden

The following subchapter will attempt to analyze the female *versus* the male perspectives on the Moon Landing. Both May Swenson and W. H. Auden had something to say about the technological milestone, and both of them left it written in stone. We shall begin with May Swenson’s “First Walk on the Moon”.

Anna Thilda “May” Swenson was born in Utah on May 28th, 1913, and came to be considered one of the best mid-century poets as “her typographic innovations and exuberance earned comparisons to e.e. cummings and her careful attention to the suggestiveness of objects, persons, and events of ordinary life could recall Elizabeth Bishop” (Poetry Foundation, n/d). After finishing her BA, Swenson began working as a Salt Lake City reporter before working as a stenographer, a ghostwriter, and, from 1980 to 1989, as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. In the early 1930’s, Swenson moved to New York City, and circa twenty years later she began working at New Directions Press. Before her death in 1989, Swenson wrote and published a copious amount of poetry collections (from 1954 to 1987). All her further works were published posthumously.

Swenson’s work was well-renowned as the poet was granted multiple awards, namely: the Award in Literature from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim fellowship for poetry in 1959, and Yale’s University Library Bolligen Prize for American Poetry. May Swenson would pass away in December 1989, in Delaware.

During her time as an author, Swenson wrote and published multiple poetry collections such as the 1958 *A Cage of Spines* – her second work, which got the poet to the finals of the National Book Awards the following year; her 1970 poetry collection *Iconographs* would come to be considered her best work and also the most known. Amongst others, the collection

included themes such as nature, science, faith and religion. Her work also includes a co-translation (alongside Leif Stjoberg) of *Windows and Stones: Selected Poems* of Tomas Tranströmer from her mother tongue (Swedish). In a *Kirkus Reviews* 1958 assessment of May Swenson's poetry collection *A Cage of Spines*, the author states that:

[May Swenson] combines a woman's lyric gift with a colorful sense of metaphor and an original angle of vision that puts her in -- or near -- the best tradition of women poets. Her poems have charm, insight and a concrete perception so acute that it often touches on the metaphysical.

(Kirkus Reviews, n/d)

Written before 1978, "First Walk on the Moon" is a poem composed of twelve free verse stanzas. The poem starts by depicting the solar system with three points of focus: the Sun, the Earth, and the Moon, pointing to the fact that our language is too earth-centered to apply to this new lunar paradigm. The poetic "I" acts upon it by using the right words between inverted commas, with words such as "magma, flower, and sand", signaling that we need new words to describe this vast new environment. Such idea has been touched upon by H. Knox in "Space Poems: Close Encounters Between the Lyric Imagination and 25 Years of NASA Space Exploration" through the words of Robert Kelly: "What we have needed / is a language / always needed a tongue / to caress / our technology.". Knox continues by stating: "This means being more creative with the language we have inherited, learning to adjust both it and ourselves to the new world revealed to us by science and transformed before our eyes by technology. Only thus can we live in the present and be late 20th Century poets." (Knox, 1985: 771)

In Swenson's first stanza, the Apollo 11 spaceship (the Eagle) is referred to as the "fabricated insect we flew." (Swenson, 1978: n.p.) en route towards the satellite. Behind the spaceship and the astronauts stood the "Cloudy earth / waned, gibbous" (Swenson, 1978: n.p.) and the cultures and religions which worshiped the Moon. Although such adjectives as waning and gibbous (or waning and crescent) are usually given to the Moon, the poetic "I" gives such attributes to Earth, a potential argument of the new linguistic paradigm that the Moon Landing imposed. In the last three lines, the Moon landing is described as a situation in which we "Pitched / out of orbit we yawed in, to impact / softly on that circle." (Swenson, 1978: n.d.).

The theme of a new linguistic paradigm is maintained in the second stanza where "ground" is said to be the wrong word for what the lunar soil really was: "So far, we haven't the name. / So call it 'terrain,'" (Swenson, 1978: n.p.). The horizon is said to be rounder than

back on Earth, and the lunar landscape is described via a flurry of comparisons which paint a portrait of our satellite's "terrain":

a slope of rubble where  
 protuberant cones, dish-shaped hollows,  
 great sockets glared, half blind  
 with shadow, and smaller sucked-in folds  
 squinted, like blowholes on a scape  
 of whales.

(Swenson, 1978: n.p.)

So far, the poem seems very realistic in its manner, despite its object of study never having been seen or touched by the poet. The third and fourth stanzas focus on the Moon Landing and on the astronauts themselves. The horizon is described as a "dark 'mare'" (Swenson, 1978: n.p.), the astronauts as having "heads transparent spheres, / the outer visors gold. (...) our shadows long, / thin fissures, of 'ink.'" (Swenson, 1978: n.p.).

In fourth stanza itself, a rather unexpected turn of events is the fact that the first footprint is mostly ignored, and the importance is given to the tracks – not one, but many:

Our boot cleats sank  
 into "grit, something like glass,"  
 but sticky. Our tracks remain  
 on what was virgin "soil." But that's  
 not the name.

(Swenson, 1978: n.p.)

With this, the poetic "I" makes it seem like the peak moment is not the landing but instead the "present" ever-passing moment that fleets through our fingers (or should I say, steps). In the following stanza (the fifth), the lack of gravity, attrition, and oxygen are mentioned, alluding to the fact that it was technology that brought humankind to the Moon: "We brought back what we breathed / was on our backs" (Swenson, 1978: n.d.). In the same token, the poetic "I" describes the Moon as a void place as there was no trace of life: "We saw no spore / that any had stepped before us. Not / a thing has been born here, and nothing / had died, we thought." (Swenson, 1978: n.p.).

The numerous practice-runs the astronauts had gone through before the voyage are undermined in the sixth stanza as the poetic “I” alludes to the fact that their efforts had been nearly for nothing: once on lunar soil, the astronauts tried to walk, yet they sillily waddled around like infants due to the massive gravity differential: “We had practiced / to walk, but we toddled” (Swenson, 1978: n.d.). On the same stanza, yet another semantical “if” can be found, again pointing to lack of accuracy of the word “alien “floor”.” (Swenson, 1978: n.d.). In the seventh stanza, the poem surely moves on to mention the planting of the American flag with the lines:

Our gauntlets lugged the cases of gear,  
 deployed our probes and emblems,  
 set them prudently near the insect liftoff  
 station, with its flimsy ladder to home.

(Swenson, 1978: n.d.)

Stanza number eight mixed up daytime with nighttime as the expression “the sky black / vacuum” (Swenson, 1978: n.d.) points to the way the horizon was fully dark (perhaps, one could argue, because of the lack of atmosphere). Many of the tasks the astronauts performed, which were mentioned in Chapter 2, are referred to by the poetic “I” as things such as “‘clods’ of clinging “dust,”” (Swenson, 1978: n.d.) which were collected with the goal of being brought back to Earth. The following stanza continues to explain the task of collecting Moon dust and rocks: “So, floating while trotting, hoping not / to stub our toe, we chose and catalogued / unearthly “rocks.” These we stowed.” (Swenson, 1978: n.p.)

The tenth stanza revisits the lunar time paradox where “all night it was day, you could say” (Swenson, 1978: n.d.). The poetic “I” soon proceeds to nickname the Moon as “a ghost moon that swiveled.” (Swenson, 1978: n.p.), much like in MacLeish’s “Voyage to the Moon” where the Moon is called upon as “silver evasion in our farthest thought – (...) a wonder to us, unattainable.” (MacLeish, 1985: 17).

Even the lunar sky had all the stars out of place as it was neither north (nor south) hemisphere: “Maneuvering by numbers / copied from head to head, we surveyed / our vacant outpost.” (Swenson, 1978: n.p.); these three lines refer to the sea of tranquility where the Eagle had landed. Again in this stanza the lack of lunar vocabulary available is mentioned as the Moon is referred to as “petrified / sea bed,” inert “volcanic desert” (Swenson, 1978: n.p.). The eleventh

stanza celebrates the milestone while retrieving the childish aspect of inexperienced human movement on the Moon:

It was possible to stand there.  
 And we planted a cloth “flower”:  
 our country colors we rigged to blow  
 in the non-wind. We could not lift  
 our arms eye-high (they might deflate)  
 (...) we took each  
 other’s pictures, shooting from the hip.  
 Then bounced and loped euphoric,  
 Enjoying our small weight.  
 (Swenson, 1978: n.p.)

In the final stanza, the poetic “I” imagines how “Our flash / eclipsed the sun at takeoff.” (Swenson, 1978: n.p.), a way of describing humankind as what it is: a force of nature. The significance of the Moon Landing milestone, alongside its technological and linguistic factors are also reconsidered in this concluding stanza as:

The dark dents  
 of our boots, unable to erode, mark how  
 we came: two white mechanic knights,  
 the first, to make tracks in some kind  
 of “sand.” The footpads found it solid, so  
 we “landed.”

(Swenson, 1978: n.p.)

As recurrently found throughout “First Walk on the Moon”, the poetic “I” ends the poem by mentioning the lack of semantic skills to describe this prowess: “The footpads found it solid, so / we “landed”. But that’s not the right name.” (Swenson, 1978: n.p.). The Moon Landing was indescribable to Swenson due to its technology surpassing out semantic abilities of descriptions: there were no words for the Moon Landing before the Moon Landing. Not just a problem of language to describe technology, rather a lack of words to effectively talk about what the Moon and Moon Landing were. We were truly seeing her for the first time, touching her for the first time, and it was not how our imagination had described her along the centuries. As Arthur C. Clarke (1917-2008) once said: “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” (Clarke, 1962).

Moving the argument from May Swenson to the next poet, we shall now read W. H. Auden and his poem “Moon Landing”. Born in York on the 21st of February 1907, Wystan Hugh Auden was an English poet, dramatist, critic, and playwright who was considered, at the time of the Moon Landing, “the greatest living English poet of the age” (Martyris, 2019). According to Auden’s biography written by Monroe K. Spears for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, at 18 W. H. Auden enrolled at Oxford University where he studied English and “established a formidable reputation as poet and sage” (Spears, 1998).

By 1930, W. H. Auden published his first book, *Poems*, an “electrifying, enigmatic and extraordinarily influential debut collection” (Faber and Faber, n/d), with the help of T. S. Eliot (1888-1965). In the following decade, Auden would publish other books, such as *The Orators* (1932), *Letters from Iceland* (1937) and one of his most famous poems “Funeral Blues”, in 1938. In 1939, Auden left England, getting his American citizenship that same year. In 1940, Auden published *Another Time*, a poetry collection (the first book he wrote in America) in which one of his most famous poems, “September 1, 1939” is found.

In 1947, Auden published *The Age of Anxiety: A Baroque Eclogue*. According to Glyn Maxwell in *The Guardian*’s article “WH Auden’s “The Age of Anxiety”, the book is essentially a long poem divided into six sections: “a prologue, a life-story, a dream-quest, a dirge, a masque and an epilogue” (Maxwell, 2010). Including four characters from different backgrounds who “meditate on their lives, their hopes, their losses, and on the human condition.” (Maxwell, 2010). *The Age of Anxiety* would, according to Maxwell, inspire a “symphony and a ballet” (Maxwell, 2010) and win the poet the Pulitzer Prize in 1949. 1956, Auden won a National Book Award in Poetry for his poem “The Shield of Achilles”. W. H. Auden passed away in September 1973 in Vienna, Austria.

Written on the 29th of August 1969, “Moon Landing” would soon after be published in the print version of *The New Yorker* on the 6th of September 1969 issue. In *The Paris Review* article “Auden’s Grumpy Moon Landing Poem”, author Nina Martyris speaks about the poem, stating:

“Moon Landing” is not considered to be one of Auden’s better poems; it is set aside as trite and artificial. And yet it is one of my favorites because it is so quintessentially Auden, showcasing his literary tics and touchstones.

(Martyris, 2019)



“Moon Landing” is composed by ten quatrains in free verse style. The poem is often characterized as a “Grumpy Poem” which argues “enthusiastically that the chief benefit of the fact of space travel, of man’s leap off of the planet, properly should be to make men imagine more fully what their lives on earth can and should be.” (Cheever, 2004: 239).

In the first quatrain, the poetic “I” seems to impose some sort of male bias as it begins with a reference to the “phallic triumph” (Auden, 1969, n.p.) that was the rocket launch before explaining how such adventure would not have happened if the gender roles were reversed:

It's natural the Boys should whoop it up to  
so huge a phallic triumph, an adventure  
it would not have occurred to women  
to think worth while, made possible

(Auden, 1969, n.p.)

In the second quatrain, the male pride is again mentioned as the poetic “I” describes a few social and psychological properties which are usually attributed to men, such as the “huddling in gangs and knowing / the exact time” (Auden, 1969, n.p.). Still in this part, the reasoning behind the Moon Landing is adjectivized as “less than menschlich.” (Auden, 1969, n.p.) or, in simpler words: under human.

Despite being seen as a sub-human deed, the third quatrain nearly elevates the voyage as the poetic “I” portrays the journey as “A grand gesture.” (Auden, 1969, n.p.). According to Nina Martyris, the poetic “I” condemns “the motives behind this “grand gesture” as “somewhat less than menschlich” (Martyris, 2019) as he complains about how pointless the voyage was. Returning once again to a questioning state, the poetic voice spawns the doubt in the reader, going back and forth with the male exactness and precision, as opposed to the uncertainty and fluidity of the female gender: “We were always adroiter / with objects than lives, and more facile / at courage than kindness” (Auden, 1969, n.p.). The poem is written on a continuous *enjambement*, and on the passage from the third to the fourth stanza as the poetic “I” emphasizes that:

(...) from the moment

the first flint was flanked this landing was merely  
a matter of time. But our selves, like Adam’s  
still don’t fit us exactly, modern  
only in this---our lack of decorum.

(Auden, 1969, n.p.)

The “grumpiness” of the poem, Nina Martyris argues, is found in the two previous stanzas as the poetic “I” questions the meaning of the voyage as he asks “But what does it period? / What does it osse?” (Auden, 1969, n.p.) before explaining that the Moon Landing was “merely / a matter of time” (Auden, 1969, n.p.). This, Martyris describes as a shrug: “Yes, it’s a shrug, but what an eloquent shrug, one that evokes with breathtaking economy the epic arc of human progress from man’s first tryst with fire to his bouncing among lunar craters a quarter of a million miles away.” (Martyris, 2019).

Starting the fifth stanza, the poetic voice compares the astronauts to the Homeric heroes, who “were certainly no braver / than our Trio, but more fortunate” (Auden, 1969, n.p.), cherishing the Apollo 11’s trio of cosmonauts’ bravery as he diminishes their luck in comparison with a blunt and sour joke: “Hector / was excused the insult of having / his valor covered by television.” (Auden, 1969, n.p.). While acknowledging the voyage’s mythical dimension, one could read the skepticism coming from Auden as, curiously enough, according to Edward Mendelson in “‘So Huge a Phallic Triumph’: Why Apollo Had Little Appeal for Auden”:

someone at the Times, possibly managing editor Abe Rosenthal, offered to commission W.H. Auden to write a poem about the meaning of the event. Auden had replied that it would have no meaning at all. (...) W.H. Auden [then] wrote a skeptical poem about the moon landing after he had declined a request to write a celebratory one.

(Mendelson, 2019)

The sixth and seventh stanzas describe the poetic voice’s perspective and reasoning about the subject as the Moon is compared to a desert unworthy of such excitement: “Worth going to see? I can well believe it. / Worth seeing? Mneh! I once rode through a desert / and was not charmed” (Auden, 1969, n.p.). In Martyris’ article, the author states how “Nothing in this poem is more petty, more comically wounding than the childish “‘Menh!’” (Martyris, 2019). Martyris continues by stating:

Untouched by the moon’s “lonely beauty”—to quote the otherwise unlyrical Neil Armstrong—Auden quotes instead his hero Dr. [Samuel] Johnson, who, when asked whether or not the Giant’s Causeway in Northern Ireland was worth seeing, responded: “Worth seeing, yes; but not worth going to see.” Auden perversely inverts the quote.

(Martyris, 2019)

The poetic “I” soon states they would prefer a quiet garden with no chatterers nearby: “give me a watered / lively garden, remote from blatherers” (Auden, 1969, n.p.), subtly aliasing the Earth as a good place to live: “where / on August mornings I can count the morning / glories where to die has a meaning,” and “no engine can shift my perspective.” (Auden, 1969: n.p.).

In the eighth and ninth quatrains, the poetic “I” starts by giving grace for the lack of impact of the human landing on the satellite by braving the words: “my Moon still queens the Heavens / as She ebbs and fulls, a Presence to glop at,” (Auden, 1969, n.p.). With these words one could argue Auden channeled his personal views about the Moon Landing: despite the “conquest”, the Moon would, for him, continue to be a symbol of femininity, remaining “her virginal self. Unsoiled by big fat boots and human hubris, she will continue to grace his Austrian cottage” (Martyris, 2019). On Leonard A. Cheever’s “The Spacecraft of Pablo Neruda and W.H. Auden”, this same idea is discussed as Cheever explains how: “Auden’s speaker insists that his moon always will remain private and inviolate. It is actually the moon’s power to stir his imagination, especially concerning matters religious and moral, that the speaker is defending (...)” (Cheever, 2004: 245)

Changing religious perspective, the poetic voice summons the Moon’s father (who in Greek mythology was Zeus). The poetic “I” ends the ninth stanza by stating that the madness had come to halt, and that at the end of the day: “Irreverence / is a greater oaf than Superstition.” (Auden, 1969: n.p.). On the tenth and final quatrain of “Moon Landing”, the poetic voice calls out for much of what we believe to be true: our leaders will continue to make an ugly show out of history. With such statement, the poetic “I” hopes that artists, chefs and saints can remain happy and unconcerned:

Our apparatniks will continue making  
the usual squalid mess called History:  
all we can pray for is that artists  
chefs and saints may still appear to blithe it.

(Auden, 1969, n.p.)

Having analyzed these two poems, we can conclude that while Swenson says there were no words for what had happened, Auden seems to point at the fact that the words needed to entertain the world come from artists. Moreover, these words empower us to see other ways of looking at the world, a way more profound and truthful. This approach does not derive from

technology, instead from art and poetry. We need not refer only to the neologisms, but also to the new ways of speaking, the new metaphors, the new paradigms. Though slow, the Zeitgeist seems to prove itself undeniable, over and over again: unstoppable in its march. Through Swenson's perspective, the Moon Landing seems to have been milestone to add to our stepping in this human realm towards the horizon. But, for Auden, it is the imagination, the gods and goddesses, the myths and the symbols that seem to be able to lead us there.

### 3.3 – The before, the then, and the now

The following subchapter will include the analysis of three poems through a scope of time: the first, Robert Louis Stevenson's, in which the Moon was still regarded as unattainable, followed by the first-person experience of Neil Armstrong, and by the child-like description of the Moon Landing found in the work of J. Patrick Lewis.

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on November 13th, 1850. At 16, Stevenson enrolled at the University of Edinburgh, where he studied Law with the goal of becoming "a lighthouse engineer like his father. [however, instead] of applying himself to his studies, he became known for his outrageous dress and behavior." (Poetry Foundation, n/d). Stevenson was a poet, a playwright, an historian, an anthropologist. Ailed by disease all of his life, the poet traveled constantly looking for a place with a climate that would help his lung function. Stevenson died in December 1894 after settling down in Samoa.

Stevenson was immortalized by two of his most famous books: the 1881 *Treasure Island* (a children's book) and the 1886 book *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Curiously, according to Robert Louis Stevenson's biography from the Poetry Foundation, both famous books:

have curious origins. A map of an imaginary island gave Stevenson the idea for the first story, and a nightmare supplied the premise of the second. In addition to memorable origins, these tales also share Stevenson's key theme: the impossibility of identifying and separating good and evil.

(Poetry Foundation, n/d)

Stevenson wrote multiple poems, with some of them being found in collections such as *The House Beautiful* (1887) and *A Child's Garden* (1885). The poem chosen for this thesis is

entitled “The Moon” and, although it is now in public domain, it can be found in his 1885 poetry collection previously mentioned.

“The Moon” is divided into three quatrains and follows a paired rhyming scheme. The poem begins with a suggestion: in the first stanza, the poetic “I” makes a statement by declaring that “The moon has a face like a clock” (Stevenson, 1885: 51). What does this suggest, one could ask? Passage of time and truth perhaps. In the second line, the moonlight “shines on thieves on the garden wall”, reinforcing the side of the Moon that shows the truth (the all-seeing Moon). The third line reinforces the Moon’s light and her ubiquity as she is “On streets and fields and harbour quays,” (Stevenson, 1885: 51). From the fourth up to the seventh lines, the poetic “I” begins an enumeration of creatures:

(...) birdies asleep in the forks of the trees.

The squalling cat and the squeaking mouse,  
The howling dog by the door of the house,  
The bat that lies in bed at noon,”

(Stevenson, 1885: 51)

All of these creatures, from the night and from the day, “All love to be out by the light of the moon.” (Stevenson, 1885: 51). In an invective step, in the third quatrain, the poetic “I” explains how all of these creatures “that belong to the day / Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way” (Stevenson, 1885: 51), reinforcing the idea that both animalia and plantae realms sleep during the night: “And flowers and children close their eyes / Till up in the morning the sun shall arise.” (Stevenson, 1885: 51).

The child-like wonder of Stevenson’s poem (which was written eighty-four years before the Moon Landing) showcases the permanence of the Moon in the night sky, be it as a source of reflected light or a symbol for curiosity and wonder. It furthermore reiterates the idea that for some people the Moon was just out there, shining on.

Our second poet is the immortal first footprint on the lunar soil: Neil Alden Armstrong. Born on the 5th of August 1930 in Wapakoneta, Ohio, Armstrong is mostly known as the “spacecraft commander for Apollo 11, the first manned lunar landing mission” (NASA, 2012). At age sixteen, Armstrong became a licensed pilot, becoming a naval air cadet one year later, aged seventeen. After enrolling at Purdue University in Indiana, Armstrong received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Aeronautical Engineering “and a Master of Science in Aerospace

Engineering from the University of Southern California. He holds honorary doctorates from a number of universities.” (NASA, 2012). Neil Armstrong died on the 25th of August 2012.

After resigning from NASA, Neil Armstrong became a professor of aerospace engineering at the University of Cincinnati, Ohio, where he worked from 1971 to 1979. After this, Armstrong served as, among others, a National Commission on Space and Chairman of the Presidential Advisory Committee for the Peace Corps.

It was during his time as a professor at the University of Cincinnati that Armstrong wrote the poem “My Vacation”. Described as an imaginative yet “typical assignment for the first-day back to primary school: ‘What I Did on My Summer Vacation.’” (UCMagazine, n/d.), the poem is made up of two quatrains in crossing rhyming scheme. The poem was released in “The Mini Page (Especially for young readers)” on the July 15-21 (1978) issue.

The poem begins by referring the Moon Landing, a milestone that nearly a decade before took the former astronaut to visit the Moon: “Nine Summers ago, I went for a visit. / To see if the moon was green cheese.” (Armstrong, 1978). The idea of the Moon being made up of “green cheese” is not only a play on the child-like thought that the Moon is, in fact, made of cheese, but an allusion to John Heywood’s 1546 statement found in *The Proverbs*: “Ye fetch circumquakes to make me beleeve, / Or thinke, that the moone is made of a greene cheese” (Heywood, 1546).

This idea, which would continue to be used by poets and authors throughout history, would be played with by NASA. On April Fools in 2002, NASA published the “Astronomy Picture of the Day”. Using a slightly altered picture of the Moon taken in 1965 by the Ranger 9 probe, NASA explained the image (NASA, 2002)

In the first quatrain, the poetic “I” seemingly alludes to the interplanetary communications made between the astronauts and President Nixon: “When we arrived, people on earth asked: ‘Is it?’” (Armstrong, 1978), to which the answer was “No cheese, no bees, no trees.” (Armstrong, 1978).

In the first two lines from the second quatrain, the poetic “I” describes the Moon’s soil and the view of the Earth in the horizon: “There were rocks and hills and a remarkable view / Of the beautiful earth that you know.” (Armstrong, 1978). The poetic voice quickly ends the poem with a curious remark for the earthbound: “It’s a nice place to visit, and I’m certain that you / Will enjoy it when you get to go” (Armstrong, 1978). The last line could allude to Nixon’s 1972 approval of the space shuttle program development. Armstrong was, after all, the first of

the twelve people who got to step foot on the Moon, and it was him who left the plaque which reads: “Here Men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon, July 1969 A.D. We came in peace for all mankind.” (See Annex 1). The poem is arguably of very easy comprehension, keeping Julius Caesar’s motto “I came, I saw, I conquered” in mind.

Our third poet for this subsection is J. Patrick Lewis and his poem “First Men on the Moon”. Born in Gary, Indiana, in May 1942, Lewis is a poet and prose writer mostly known for creating child poetry. Lewis got a Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree before getting a PhD in Economics from the Ohio State University. According to his Poetry Foundation biography, “Lewis taught in the department of Business, Accounting and Economics at Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio” (Poetry Foundation, n/d). His career as a teacher ended in 1998 when he became a full-time writer.

J. Patrick Lewis has written over fifty children poetry books with a wide range of subjects. Amongst his publications we can find *A Hippopotamusn't and Other Animal Verses* (1990), *Two-legged, Four-legged, No-legged Rhymes* (1991) *The Shoe Tree of Chagrin* (2001), (which won him the Society of Children’s Book Writers & Illustrator’s Golden Kite Award, *Burst of Firsts: Doers, Shakers, and Record Breakers* (2001), and *The Last Resort* (2002) (which was translated into more than a dozen languages). His contributions to children’s literature have been acknowledged with the 2011 Poetry Award from the National Council of Teachers of English and the Ohioana Awards’ 2004 Alice Louise Wood Memorial Prize. Moreover, according to the Poetry Foundation, “Lewis served as the nation’s third Children’s Poet Laureate, now called the Young People’s Poet Laureate, from 2011 to 2013. He lives in Westerville, Ohio.” (Poetry Foundation, n.d.)

Published in the 2001 book *Burst of Firsts: Doers, Shakers, and Record Breakers*, Lewis’ poem “First Men on the Moon” is made up of five crossed rhyme quatrains and draws inspiration from the sentences uttered by each astronaut as the poetic “I” mentions Armstrong’s “The Eagle has Landed!” and Aldrin’s “A magnificent desolation” utterances.

Being a children’s poem, “First Men on the Moon” is a very straightforward and direct poem. In the first quatrain, the poetic “I” describes Armstrong and Aldrin’s mission in time and space:

That afternoon in mid-July,  
Two pilgrims watched from distant space  
The moon ballooning in the sky.

They rose to meet it face-to-face.

(Lewis, 2001)

In the second quatrain, the poetic voice describes the Moon Landing as they explain how the lunar module Eagle was shaped like a spider: “Their spidery spaceship, Eagle, drooped / Down gently on the lunar sand.” (Lewis, 2001). In the two following stanzas, the poetic “I” describes how, when the spaceship landed on the Moon, everything went silent for a moment, as if every person on Earth and in the Moon were holding their breaths: “And when the module’s engines stopped, / Rapt silence fell across the land.” (Lewis, 2001).

The moment Neil Armstrong descended from the lunar module is described on the third quatrain. Moreover, the famous words from the astronaut are mentioned, alongside the feeling of unity felt by all Americans (and perhaps the world), bringing forth President Kennedy’s idea that this achievement would belong to all:

The first man down the ladder, Neil,  
Spoke words that we remember now—  
“One small step...” It made us feel  
As if we were there too, somehow.

(Lewis, 2001)

In the fourth stanza, the planting of the American flag on the natural satellite and the collection of lunar dust and Moon rocks picked up by the astronauts is mentioned: “When Neil planted the flag and Buzz / Collected lunar rocks and dust,” (Lewis, 2001). Their awkward movements, which have been previously commented on by the poetic “I”, to that of kangaroos: “They hopped like kangaroos because / Of Gravity. Or Wanderlust?” (Lewis, 2001), or perhaps, I must add, both?

In the fifth and final stanza of “First Men on the Moon”, the poetic “I” assumes a Parnassian style of writing, as the language used is very precise and descriptive. As the poetic voice explains the moment those back on Earth witnessed the Moon Landing in amazement, they surely argue that such moment will not be easily forgotten:



A quarter million miles away,  
One small blue planet watched in awe.  
And no one who was there that day  
Will soon forget the sight they saw.

(Lewis, 2001)

Despite the poems ranging one century from first to last, with that very necessary pit stop on Armstrong's poem, they trace a very clear story: the Moon as wondrous and marvelous, the conquering moment, and the afterwards with recollections of the magical moment in July 1969. Utterances like: "Don't tell me the sky's the limit when there are footprints on the moon." (Brandt, n.d.) could only occur after such a paradigm shifting moment.

### 3.4 – The ones that would rather stay

While some of the world poets praised the lunar Landing achievement, recognizing that at last the Moon was within our reach, others sided with those who protested against the Moon Landing and the millions of dollars which had been spent on the Apollo missions. This subchapter will include the analysis of poems by poets Richard Brautigan and Robert Hayden. I shall begin this section with the discussion of Brautigan's "Jules Verne Zucchini" before moving to Hayden's "Full Moon".

Richard Gary Brautigan was born in Tacoma, Washington on the 30th of January 1935. Known for his dark humor and social criticism, Brautigan was a poet and novelist considered by Robert Novak in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* as "the bridge between the Beat Movement of the 1950s and the youth revolution of the 1960s." (Poetry Foundation, n/d). Despite (or in spite of) living a hard early life (marked by poverty, mental illness and even electroshock therapy), "Brautigan wrote of nature, life, and emotion; his unique imagination provided the unusual settings for his themes. Critics frequently compared his work to that of such writers as Henry David Thoreau, Ernest Hemingway, Donald Barthelme, and Mark Twain." (Poetry Foundation, n/d).

From a large bibliography that kept increasing until his last days, we can find works such as the 1957 "The Return of the Rivers", *A Confederate General from Big Sur* (1964), *The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966* (1971), and *Trout Fishing in America* (1967), a book that "achieved such popularity that several communes across the country adopted it as their name." (Poetry Foundation, n/d). In 1976, Brautigan tried to find solace in Japan (having lived

in the country on-and-off up until his death). It is believed that Richard Brautigan committed suicide in September of 1984, but his body was not discovered until the 25th of October.

Like many others, Brautigan acknowledged that exploring outer space while war and famine thrived on Earth was, to say the least, hypocritical, as seen in his poem “Jules Verne Zucchini”, written on July 20th, 1969:

Men are walking on the moon today,  
planting their footsteps as if they were  
zucchini on a dead world  
while over 3,000,000 people starve to death  
every year on a living one.  
Earth  
July 20, 1969

(Brautigan, 1969)

Though not much is there to be taken from the poem, one can understand that Brautigan’s perspective was one shared by many Americans. As seen in the previous Chapter, many protested the Moon voyage, focusing their argument on the same issue as Brautigan: the misuse of funds and the hypocrisy of spending millions of dollars on sending three men to the Moon, “a dead world / while over 3,000,000 people starve to death / every year on a living on.” (Brautigan, 1969).

As a side note, Jules Verne (1828-1905) also had something to say about the Moon. His work won’t be discussed here due to it being written in prose. However, his book *From the Earth to the Moon: A Direct Route in 97 Hours, 20 Minutes* tells the story of a Moon Landing circa one century prior to the actual event. Five years after that novel, Verne wrote *Around the Moon* as a sequel to the referred book. Forever a genius, Verne also predicted the submarine in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the circumnavigation voyage in *Around the World in 80 Days*.

Another poet who joined the protest against this voyage was Robert Hayden. Born in August 1913 in Detroit, Michigan, under the name Asa Bundy Sheffey, Hayden enrolled at the University of Michigan in 1944 where he received his graduate degree. It was here that he first took influence from W. H. Auden, “under whom Hayden studied at the University of Michigan” (Poetry Foundation, n/d). He later on became an English professor at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he remained for twenty years. He was furthermore the first African

American poet selected to be Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, a position nowadays known as U.S. Poet Laureate.

At age twenty-seven, Hayden published his first poetry collection entitled *Heart-Shape in the Dust* (1940), before publishing numerous other bodies of work such as *Ballad of Remembrance* (1962) and *Angle of Ascent: New and Selected Poems* (1975). In 1942, the author won a Hopwood Award for a work in which “Hayden to also write about that period of history, creating a series of poems on slavery and the Civil War” (Poetry Foundation, n.p.) before winning (in 1966) the grand prize at the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Senegal with his work *A Ballad of Remembrance*. Robert Hayden died in Michigan in 1980, having his tome *Collected Prose* (1984) published posthumously.

Written the year after President Kennedy announced the wish of putting men on the Moon (in 1962), the poem “Full Moon” focuses on much of what has been said throughout this thesis, yet does it in a “Reverse Ode” fashion, depreciating the milestone due to reasons of equity for humankind. When asked by Al Poulin, in 1975, to “identify a poem of yours that you feel is representative of the folklore, and the dependence on folklore” (Hayden, Poulin, 1975, p.10), Hayden replied: Let’s see, there are several. (...) in “Full Moon”, there is some.” (Hayden, Poulin, 1975, p.10).

Composed by seven tercets with no fixed rhythmic scheme (free verse), the poetic “I” begins “Full Moon” with what can only be described as the sourness of having something robbed from you: “No longer throne of a goddess to whom we pray, / no longer the bubble house of childhood’s / tumbling Mother Goose man,” (Hayden, 1962).

The poetic “I” explains that the Moon has lost a bit of her mysticism, something Victoria R. Combs alludes to as she states that Hayden reflects “upon the significance of actually landing on the moon and how it changed the moon’s place in poetry and the universe.” (Combs, 2021: 40). In the second stanza, the poetic voice refers to the ascension of the Moon “as the brilliant challenger of rocket experts, / the white hope of communications men.” (Hayden, 1962). Combs suggests a curious idea relating to the expression “white hope” as she explains how:

Hayden personifies the moon as being in opposition to being reached by man, and he identifies reaching the moon as a “white hope” ostensibly referring to the idea of the “great white hope”, which is a term associated with white racial pride.

(Combs, 2021: 40)

On the third stanza, the poem changes perspective, stating that some of his loved ones, who “were watchers of the moon and knew its lore;” (Hayden, 1962) are now dead. The third stanza moves on to the fourth through *enjambement* as the poetic “I” testifies to the rituals of the waxing and waning phases, rituals of growth and loss:

planted seeds, trimmed their hair,

Pierced their ears for gold hoop earrings  
as it waxed or waned.

It shines tonight upon their graves.

(Hayden, 1962)

The fifth stanza draws upon the story of Christ in the cross, referring to the “garden of Gethsemane” (Hayden, n.d.) and saying the moonlight was made holy by witnessing the tears of the catholic “savior”. The sixth tercet maintains the biblical inspiration saying the moonlight lit “the exile’s path / of Him who was The Glorious one, / its light made holy by His holiness.” (Hayden, n.d.). In the seventh and last tercet, the poetic “I” shows a much more “Armageddonistic” belief, stating the moon, as soon as dominated by man, as we read: “Already a mooted goal and tomorrow perhaps / an arms base, a livid sector, / the full moon dominates the dark.” (Hayden, 1962).

According to Victoria Combs, in these three lines, Robert Hayden criticizes the Apollo program, further criticizing “how the American focus on going to the moon connects to the threats of the Cold War, and he suggests that they may even militarize the moon and use it as an arms base, which further takes away the moon’s poetic mystique” (Combs, 2021: 40). Combs continues, stating:

Poems like Hayden’s manage to provide a deep criticism of the U.S. government’s lack of consideration in going to the moon in a less explicit manner than the protests and speeches; however, they still stand as an effective means of expressing opposition to the United States’ ventures into space.

(Combs, 2021: 41)

While to the date the lines “Already a mooted goal and tomorrow perhaps / an arms base, a livid sector,” (Hayden, 1962) are still far from true, the Earth we live in is too stubborn to leave behind its warlike motifs. Even past the colonialist era, we live in a neocolonialist

world that still flinches at the idea of giving up a war. If there was a chance to win over the Moon, and that chance guaranteed profit and power, nations would fight for primacy over the satellite. After all, “the full moon dominates the dark.” (Hayden, 1962).

Despite the completion of the enterprise and the success of the voyage, Hayden and Brautigan’s perspective is worth studying. There seems to be a need for an anti-hero narrative in every storyline. Much like the *Restelo*’s Old Man passage in *Os Lusíadas* epic, Brautigan and Hayden claimed that no good could come from such a wild endeavor. Both poets believed that if the funds required for such a journey were put forth for more earthbound intents, like feeding the poor, much more human results could have been accrued.

### 3.5 – The Journey of a Millennium

All the presented poets had different stances on the Moon and the Moon Landing. Brautigan and Hayden were clearly against the Moon Landing initiative and latter victory, and it is arguable that W.H. Auden was on their side. Being that Stevenson’s poem was neutral to this matter, the “For and Against” ratio adds up to four in favor the Moon Landing and three against. This reveals much of how a controverse theme this was and how split the opinions about it must have been. Nowadays, there’s a new issue that adds to the wars and famine: the environmental crisis.

Robert Louis Stevenson had no idea the Moon was to be conquered, so he wrote a serenade for her light, a simple song regarding how beautiful and serene her presence is. With glances of an all-seeing eye for the night’s sky, the moon stands tall in Stevenson’s poem, mighty and free. Robert Hayden found the moon flight premise bothersome as people on earth were starving. The whole idea that some deserve more than others seemed to trouble him to the point of referring the garden of Gethsemane, where according to Christian belief, Christ died for the whole of humanity’s sins.

Archibald MacLeish foresaw the Moon Landing moment almost exactly in his poem, yet stood ready to rewrite in case his accuracy was off. A renowned poet called for action by a newspaper, for that indescribable moment needed poetry more than just words. Richard Brautigan however, much like Hayden, found it horrific that for two to transcend, millions needed to be left behind, suffering poverty and dying of hunger. In his mind, the voyage to the Moon was some sort of useless boast.

May Swenson, however, found it amazing that, from a milestone so impressive, new language possibilities emerged: “soil” was not the right word for what the astronauts stepped on. Swenson’s positive perspective states that new words were needed, as well as a new way of using them. Still with that positive mindset, Armstrong got to tell the world that someday we’d go too. Despite the odds being very biased towards the impossibility of such event, I like to believe that the images and footage of the experience shall suffice me, as well as humanity.

Auden’s poem found the whole thing under human and a vain affair, a boastful overpriced campaign to win against the Soviets. A petty competition with Russia that cost a “small fortune” to see through. But vain affair or not, the Moon Landing was a successful American operation and J. Patrick Lewis remembers with pride the day humankind stepped in a place other than home. And he tells our young through verse: we’ve already been there.

Arguably a source of inspiration like no other, the Moon was conquered “That afternoon in mid-July,” (Lewis, 2001), and accepting that that occurrence shifted the human perspective towards the satellite like nothing ever had before, the Moon still rules the night sky. And, “Although the Moon has inspired more verse than all the rest of the heavens put together, few poets have ever thought of it as a planet rather than a conventionally discrete source of illumination for their serenating.” (Arthur C. Clark, 1970: p. 295).

## Conclusion

My research has tried to cover some of the most important cultural and literary features related to the Moon and the Moon Landing, but the amount of information of the chosen Master's theme only allowed for what I consider to be a draft for future research. With that being said, I believe that I have proved to be capable of autonomous research and problematization. I dealt with myths and mysticisms, pseudo-sciences (and actual sciences), and the state of things during the 1960's (getting to know the cultural and political backgrounds of the decade, as well as the development of the Space Race). At last, I went through some poetic works that the Moon Landing inspired and getting to this final part of the work, it would suffice for me to say that it was a pleasure doing this research as I found much more than what I was expecting. Yet, since the conclusion is a paramount part of any project, let me systematize:

Considered by most a deity of a religion that precedes manmade time, the Moon was always seen as far more than just a natural satellite: a guardian of the night's sky, a many-faced goddess, a caretaker of life on Earth which was, for many, a miracle in the sky, unreachable and untouchable. By the same token, the Moon has for long dictated when to do or not do something, being feared when at its red state, considered an omen when blue. Even sneakier than the Moon's veil is human curiosity: we need to know what we need to know, and we had to get to know the Moon. It was a humankind's quest.

It was the 1960's, a time of great innovations in science and technology, a time of wars and famine, a time for a great milestone and for a voyage none would soon forget. The Moon Landing was, in my opinion, the most groundbreaking achievement of the millennium – not forgetting about the birth of the Internet. As Helene Knox put it, the Moon Landing and the first step on the Moon was “a greater evolutionary breakthrough than the first slither of whatever sea creature first finned its way onto terra firma, because that, at least, was on the same planet!” (Knox, 1985: 779). The Voyage to the Moon will forever stand as our first step towards Space Conquest: it was a deep dive of nearly four-hundred thousand kilometers in space to land on an unbreathable desert, our only natural satellite.

From such breakthrough, human perception was changed and with it our language changed as well. Perhaps that's why the poets had something to verse about. Amongst others throughout time, Robert Louis Stevenson, Robert Hayden, Archibald MacLeish, Richard Brautigan, W. H. Auden, May Swenson, Neil Armstrong, and J. Patrick Lewis had something to say either about the Moon or the Moon Landing. Poetry about the Moon is nearly endless –

and that's why only a few poets and poems were chosen. These works surpassed the test of time. The chosen poems and poets are some of the most invaluable works we have on the theme (this opinion of mine is based on the fact that there aren't many others).

In Chapter 1, the various cultures relating to the Moon were approached, namely the astrological facts and the science behind the Blue Moon, the Blood Moon, and the Super Moon. These astrological facts are related to the periodicity of the Full Moon (Blue), to the place where the Full Moon occurs in relation to the Earth's Umbra (Blood), and to the proximity to Earth (Super). One could argue that this kind of knowledge was needed in order to plan a successful Voyage to the satellite as understand the satellite before beginning the mission was crucial.

Having briefly mentioned the *Old Farmer's Almanac* and how the Moon phases affect the growth of seeds and crops, I furthermore explained the way the booklet precedes the voyage and how it is still here. For more than half a century after the grand moment, the Almanac remains a reference point to farmers around the world. One could argue that our ancestral knowledge seems to want to stay with us, no matter what.

The belief in witchcraft and the influence of the natural satellite in the occult arts were seemingly so strong that a religion came out of it: Gardnerian Wicca is a religion that observes the Moon and praises her existence, being one "worthy of study as a part of modern history" (Hutton, 2001: 206). One could possibly argue that Wicca doesn't seem to add up to the same weight as any other religion, however some defend "the notion of Wicca [a] viable new religion" (Hutton, 2001: 381).

The fantastic beasts of the night went further than just Dracula and werewolves as the belief that the Full Moon is somehow able to empower out feral side (or awake old curses) seems to be deeply rooted in human memory: the Oozaru, the Animagus, and mermaids are all beings whose lore heavily related to the Full Moon phase. With that being said, the human cultures appear to be somewhat addicted to the Moon as lunar deities of the world's cultures are many and come in various forms. Having focused my research on the Greco-Roman Triad, we cannot downgrade the other beliefs in any way. Gods and Goddesses, Saints and Demons, Heroes and Beasts, all of these amass when the keyword is the Moon.

The culture of worship and praise of the Moon was our culture before we reached the natural satellite, almost as if our curiosity got the best of us. Although for a long time lunar travel was beyond humankind's imagination, our attention has never left the Moon: we always



found a way to include the Moon and her powers in our day-to-day life, whether through the worship of the Wicca religion or the entertainment granted by supernatural beings.

In Chapter 2, the 1960's were reviewed in order to get a better understanding about major cultural and political aspects of that period. As to try to fully comprehend the decision to go to the Moon, the implications and difficulties of said situation were commented on through an analysis of the politics behind the voyage.

As context is unavoidable, I believe that the culture and history sections of this American Literature thesis are vital: without the knowledge of what we thought of the satellite during the Moon Landing era, or what was going on throughout the 1960's to make this grand attempt a success, I believe the poetry that came forth would be a major symptom of how historical change needs a language change as well.

Starting with the culture subchapter, the thesis unveiled a massive imaginary of spatial exploration. Examples ranged from *The Jetsons* to *Star Trek*, not forgetting *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The technological advancements were also massive during the decade with the symbolic birthdate of the Internet and the various Apollo missions which culminated in the 1969 Apollo 11 mission when men walked on lunar soil.

During the Politics subchapter, we scrutinized how the four presidents of the U.S.A. worked their part to make mankind walk on the Moon, and how this achievement belonged not only to Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, but to the whole of humanity. Despite beginning with Dwight Eisenhower's first steps towards the space exploration goal, the true start came when J. F. Kennedy uttered that man would walk on the Moon in that decade still. Despite his untimely death, Kennedy's words were listened to and sought after by his successor Lyndon B. Johnson. Johnson renamed various sites with Kennedy's name and made sure his dream came true, leaving it to Richard Nixon to talk to the astronauts after what we can call a "job well done". The Cold War was behind the American and the Soviet need to lead the world, and the race was part of the competitive struggle.

In the Space Race section, I tried to understand how the Moon Landing was a contested milestone, one that wouldn't come without a fight. Before this work I always knew there had been a race for the first step on the Moon where Russia and America were at the center of the predicament. However, I had never understood how close the race was, with even a soft landing from the soviets prior to the "great leap for mankind".

There would be infinite other resources to study, but as a teacher once told me: “Context is unquenchable.”. And, with a proper, even if brief, contextualization of the Moon Landing, the thesis could move towards the literature section of the work: the poetry that dealt with the Moon Landing.

The literature chapter of this thesis names eight poets that wrote either on the Moon or the Moon Landing itself, creating a timeline that spans from 1885 with Robert Louis Stevenson to 2001 with J. Patrick Lewis. All of these poets had different approaches to the subject, and different points of view about the Moon Landing: some loved it, others loathed it. Besides Robert Louis Stevenson, which preceded the Moon Landing event by more than half a century, all the poets had something to say about the Apollo 11 mission and their opinions/perspectives can be divided into “for” or “against”.

Three out of the eight poetic voices that wrote about the event said it would be better to spend the funds on helping humankind thrive on Earth: Robert Hayden thought the Moon would become an arms base if conquered; Richard Brautigan aimed at the end of starvation of humans back on Earth, and W. H. Auden pointed to the whole futility of the ordeal. However so, there were those who would stand against them and declare that the Moon Landing was the technological and scientific milestone of the millennium: Archibald MacLeish stood tall on *The New York Times* with his pre-emptive (and flawless) description of the voyage; Neil Armstrong described his lunar “vacation” in two quatrains, and J. Patrick Lewis remembered the voyage of the 20<sup>th</sup> of July of 1969 with immense pride.

However, if I had to point out the poem most in tune with this giant paradigm shift, it would be May Swenson’s “First Walk on the Moon”. Why? For the reason that it celebrated change. As previously said, the Moon Landing might have not killed the Moon’s mysticism, but it struck a hard blow to it. Swenson fully comprehended that such a technological feat would go beyond itself: it would change the *Zeitgeist* and it would have to imply another language deriving from this new way of looking at the Moon and the world, as a whole.

As every problematic theme must, the Moon Landing divided the world and its voice. Looking back, it seems that for once we took the correct path: we planted a flag on a flying rock, four hundred thousand kilometers apart from our home, out there, in outer space. We began a mission bigger than ourselves, a mission of space exploration. No matter how far we may reach in this Universe, we must always remember that first step: that unprecedented “First Walk on the Moon”.

The thesis initial plan was to study only the foundational and canonical poets of the theme: MacLeish, Auden, and Swenson (with a mention to Armstrong's poem). During the research, however, I found that the topic was more controversial than I thought: there were those who wanted to stay, there were those who thought it better to feed our young and raise our awareness here on Earth. Despite being on their side by principle, I do know that human curiosity cannot be stopped.

On a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, I do think we will end up draining the planet and when that happens, we will need alternatives. If anything, I think we are going slow on our "out-of-Earth" missions. The Moon was not enough, and it can be argued that Mars won't be enough. The final frontier is there, and it is vast.

In sum, this work focused on understanding the human patterns relating to the Moon, be they cultural, magical, scientific or others. With this information, it stood strong that the Moon is a very dear entity for humankind. Despite the questions about it, we never feared it. Instead, we feared that something might happen to it as we innately knew life on Earth is not sustainable without the Moon. The interest on the satellite held steady for centuries up to a point where our technology was on par with the possibility of voyaging to the Moon.

I reiterate: the 1960's in America began with the presidential dream of landing a man on the Moon, and though we know that J.F.K.'s life was cut short, Johnson's work to see through his vision was relentless. With all the tests done, and after successes and losses, the Apollo 11 Mission proved itself to be one of the biggest marks of modern-day history. However, a deed is never closed within itself. It was not what we had done before that mattered most: it was what was to be said of it. Being a controversial theme in times of war, the poets of the generation had to rally to a side: for or against.

Hayden, for one, feared the successful outcome of what MacLeish would later foresee. Brautigan plagued the lack of effort for those suffering on Earth and Auden pointed at the pointlessness of such an attempt. Armstrong casually described the visit that Lewis would praise thirty years later. Yet, among all these perspectives, May Swenson's would make the most sense to me: Swenson understood the power that the milestone had on our language, literature, and lives, recognizing and touching upon the shift of mentality and words that the Moon Landing meant for us: not the individuals, but the species.

On a poem, separate from the one studied, May Swenson writes on the mere possibility of walking on the Moon. With her powerful metaphors she (much like MacLeish) foresees the

voyage and closes asking: “Dare we land upon a dream?” (Swenson, 1994: 117). It is with great pride in the human process that I can answer today: indeed we dared.

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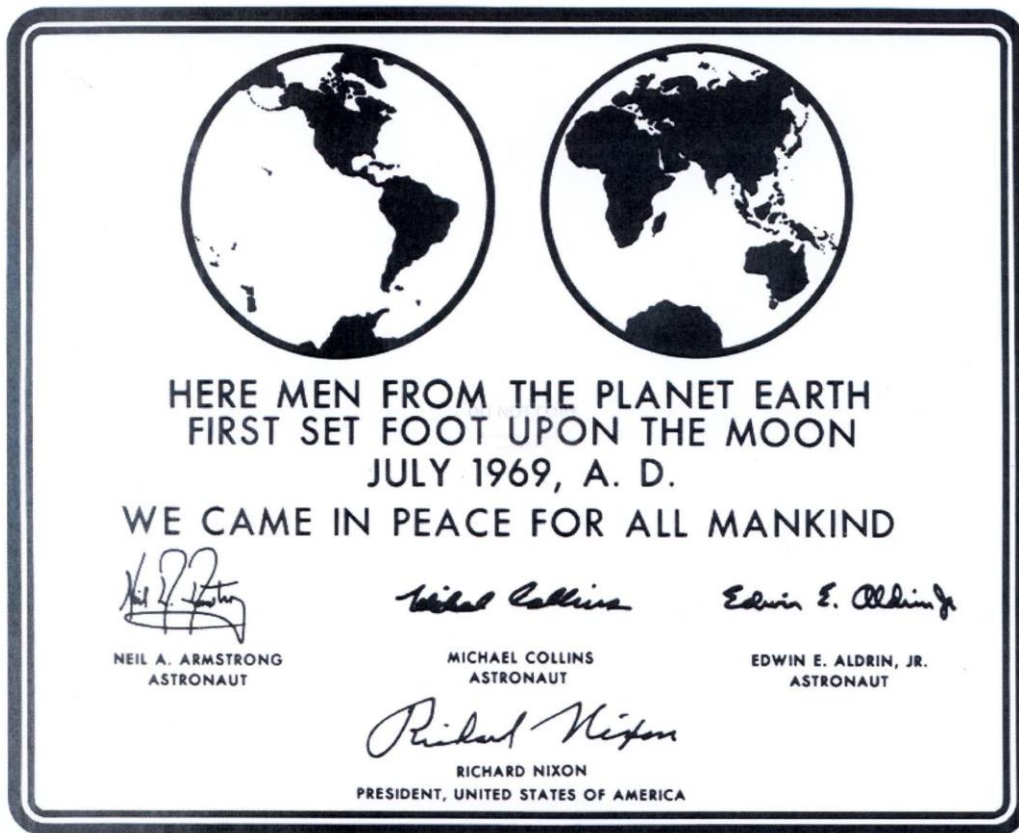
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Annexes



Annex 1 - Apollo 11 Plaque

**First Men on the Moon** – J. Patrick Lewis

"The Eagle has landed!" —Apollo II Commander Neil A. Armstrong

"A magnificent desolation!" — Air Force Colonel Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr.

July 20, 1969

That afternoon in mid-July,  
Two pilgrims watched from distant space  
The moon ballooning in the sky.  
They rose to meet it face-to-face.

Their spidery spaceship, Eagle, dropped  
Down gently on the lunar sand.  
And when the module's engines stopped,  
Rapt silence fell across the land.

The first man down the ladder, Neil,  
Spoke words that we remember now—  
"One small step..." It made us feel  
As if we were there too, somehow.

When Neil planted the flag and Buzz  
Collected lunar rocks and dust,  
They hopped like kangaroos because  
Of gravity. Or wanderlust?

A quarter million miles away,  
One small blue planet watched in awe.  
And no one who was there that day  
Will soon forget the sight they saw.

**First Walk on the Moon** – May Swenson

Ahead, the sun's face in a flaring hood,  
was wearing the moon, a mask of shadow  
that stood between. Cloudy earth  
waned, gibbous, while our target grew:  
an occult bloom, until it lay beneath  
the fabricated insect we flew. Pitched  
out of orbit we yawed in, to impact  
softly on that circle.

Not "ground"  
the footpads found for traction.  
So far, we haven't the name.  
So call it "terrain," pitted and pocked  
to the round horizon (which looked  
too near): a slope of rubble where  
protuberant cones, dish-shaped hollows,  
great sockets glared, half blind  
with shadow, and smaller sucked-in folds  
squinted, like blowholes on a scape  
of whales.

Rigid and pneumatic, we  
emerged, white twin uniforms on the dark  
"mare," our heads transparent spheres,  
the outer visors gold. The light was  
glacier bright, our shadows long,  
thin fissures, of "ink." We felt neither  
hot nor cold.

Our boot cleats sank  
into "grit, something like glass,"  
but sticky. Our tracks remain  
on what was virgin "soil." But that's  
not the name.

There was no air there,  
no motion, no sound outside our heads.  
We brought back what we breathed  
on our backs: the square papooses we  
carried were our life sacks. We spoke  
in numbers, fed the ratatattat of data  
to amplified earth. We saw no spore

that any had stepped before us. Not  
a thing has been born here, and nothing  
had died, we thought.

We had practiced  
to walk, but we toddled (with caution,  
lest ambition make us fall  
to our knees on that alien "floor.")

We touched nothing with bare hands.  
Our gauntlets lugged the cases of gear,  
deployed our probes and emblems,  
set them prudently near the insect liftoff  
station, with its flimsy ladder to home.

All day it was night, the sky black  
vacuum, though the strobe of the low sun  
smote ferocious on that "loam."  
We could not stoop, but scooped up  
"clods" of the clinging "dust," that flowed  
and glinted black, like "graphite."

So, floating while trotting, hoping not  
to stub our toe, we chose and catalogued  
unearthly "rocks." These we stowed.

And all night it was day, you could say,  
with cloud-cuddled earth in the zenith,  
a ghost moon that swiveled. The stars  
were all displaced, or else were not  
the ones we knew. Maneuvering by numbers  
copied from head to head, we surveyed  
our vacant outpost. Was it a "petrified  
sea bed," inert "volcanic desert," or  
crust over quivering "magma," that might  
quake?

It was possible to stand there.  
And we planted a cloth "flower":  
our country colors we rigged to blow  
in the non-wind. We could not lift  
our arms eye-high (they might deflate)  
but our camera was a pistol, the trigger  
built into the grip, and we took each

other's pictures, shooting from the hip.  
Then bounced and loped euphoric,  
enjoying our small weight.

Our flash  
eclipsed the sun at takeoff. We left our  
insect belly "grounded," and levitated,  
standing on its head. The dark dents  
of our boots, unable to erode, mark how  
we came: two white mechanic knights,  
the first, to make tracks in some kind  
of "sand." The footpads found it solid, so  
we "landed." But that's not the right name.

**Full Moon** – Robert Hayden

No longer throne of a goddess to whom we pray,  
no longer the bubble house of childhood's  
tumbling Mother Goose man,

The emphatic moon ascends--  
the brilliant challenger of rocket experts,  
the white hope of communications men.

Some I love who are dead  
were watchers of the moon and knew its lore;  
planted seeds, trimmed their hair,

Pierced their ears for gold hoop earrings  
as it waxed or waned.  
It shines tonight upon their graves.

And burned in the garden of Gethsemane,  
its light made holy by the dazzling tears  
with which it mingled.

And spread its radiance on the exile's path  
of Him who was The Glorious One,  
its light made holy by His holiness.

Already a mooted goal and tomorrow perhaps  
an arms base, a livid sector,  
the full moon dominates the dark.

**Jules Verne Zucchini** – Richard Brautigan

Men are walking on the moon today,  
planting their footsteps as if they were  
zucchini on a dead world  
while over 3,000,000 people starve to death  
every year on a living one.

Earth

July 20, 1969

**Moon Landing** – W. H. Auden

It's natural the Boys should whoop it up for  
so huge a phallic triumph, an adventure  
it would not have occurred to women  
to think worth while, made possible only

because we like huddling in gangs and knowing  
the exact time: yes, our sex may in fairness  
hurrah the deed, although the motives  
that primed it were somewhat less than menschlich.

A grand gesture. But what does it period?  
What does it osse? We were always adroiter  
with objects than lives, and more facile  
at courage than kindness: from the moment

the first flint was flaked this landing was merely  
a matter of time. But our selves, like Adam's,  
still don't fit us exactly, modern  
only in this---our lack of decorum.

Homer's heroes were certainly no braver  
than our Trio, but more fortunate: Hector  
was excused the insult of having  
his valor covered by television.

Worth going to see? I can well believe it.  
Worth seeing? Mneh! I once rode through a desert  
and was not charmed: give me a watered  
lively garden, remote from blatherers

about the New, the von Brauns and their ilk, where  
on August mornings I can count the morning  
glories where to die has a meaning,  
and no engine can shift my perspective.

Unsmudged, thank God, my Moon still queens the Heavens  
as She ebbs and fulls, a Presence to glop at,  
Her Old Man, made of grit not protein,  
still visits my Austrian several

with His old detachment, and the old warnings  
still have power to scare me: Hybris comes to



an ugly finish, Irreverence  
is a greater oaf than Superstition.

Our apparatniks will continue making  
the usual squalid mess called History:  
all we can pray for is that artists,  
chefs and saints may still appear to blithe it.

**My Vacation** – Neil Armstrong

Nine Summers ago, I went for a visit.

To see if the moon was green cheese.

When we arrived, people on earth asked: “Is it?”

We answered: “No cheese, no bees, no trees.”

There were rocks and hills and a remarkable view

Of the beautiful earth that you know.

It’s a nice place to visit, and I’m certain that you

Will enjoy it when you get to go.

**The Moon** – Robert Louis Stevenson

The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;

She shines on thieves on the garden wall,

On streets and field and harbour quays,

And birdies asleep in the forks of the trees.

The squalling cat and the squeaking mouse,

The howling dog by the door of the house,

The bat that lies in bed at noon,

All love to be out by the light of the moon.

But all of the things that belong to the day

Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way;

And flowers and children close their eyes

Till up in the morning the sun shall arise.

**Voyage to the Moon** – Archibald MacLeish

Presence among us,  
wanderer in the skies,  
dazzle of silver in our leaves and on our  
waters silver,  
O  
silver evasion in our farthest thought—  
“the visiting moon” . . . “the glimpses of the moon” . . .  
and we have touched you!  
From the first of time,  
before the first of time, before the  
first men tasted time, we thought of you.  
You were a wonder to us, unattainable,  
a longing past the reach of longing,  
a light beyond our light, our lives—perhaps  
a meaning to us . . .  
Now  
our hands have touched you in your depth of night.  
Three days and three nights we journeyed,  
steered by farthest stars, climbed outward,  
crossed the invisible tide-rip where the floating dust  
falls one way or the other in the void between,  
followed that other down, encountered  
cold, faced death—unfathomable emptiness . . .  
Then, the fourth day evening, we descended,  
made fast, set foot at dawn upon your beaches,  
sifted between our fingers your cold sand.  
We stand here in the dusk, the cold, the silence . . .  
and here, as at the first of time, we lift our heads.  
Over us, more beautiful than the moon, a  
moon, a wonder to us, unattainable,  
a longing past the reach of longing,  
a light beyond our light, our lives—perhaps  
a meaning to us . . .  
O, a meaning!  
over us on these silent beaches the bright earth,  
presence among us.