

# THE MAN IN THE MOONE: GODWIN'S NARRATIVE EXPERIMENT AND THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

Tomás Monterrey  
Universidad de La Laguna

## ABSTRACT

In his innovative voyage to the Moon, Bishop Godwin, contrary to his Aristotelian formation, portrayed the revolutionary cosmology of his age taking into account the equally revolutionary tenets of the historiography practiced by Camden. I shall argue that this celestial journey constituted a coherent response to the new scientific procedures of learning and knowing. Godwin carefully selected the narrative elements to achieve an impression of authenticity and named his hero after Domenico Gundisalvo to indicate a new stage in the development of human knowledge. The story, loosely introduced as an "essay of fancy," explored serious topics, such as Godwin's anthropological ideas in relation to extraterrestrial societies or to the man of science conceived as the new Adam. It inaugurated a singular type of writing, whose normal evolution was truncated by a number of circumstances, including the fact that it was believed to be a Spanish story.

KEY WORDS: Renaissance English fiction, Francis Godwin, narrative genres, antiquarian historiography, theological anthropology, Tenerife.

## RESUMEN

En su novedoso viaje a la Luna, el Obispo Godwin, traicionando su formación aristotélica, representó la revolucionaria cosmología de su época teniendo en cuenta los principios igualmente revolucionarios de la historiografía utilizada por Camden. Intentaré demostrar que este viaje espacial constituyó una reacción coherente con los nuevos métodos científicos del conocimiento y el saber. Godwin seleccionó cuidadosamente los elementos narrativos para conseguir dar la impresión de autenticidad y bautizó a su héroe con el nombre de Domenico Gundisalvo para señalar una nueva etapa en el desarrollo del conocimiento humano. El relato, denominado con la vaga fórmula de "ensayo fantástico," analizaba asuntos muy serios para la época, como las ideas antropológicas de Godwin sobre las sociedades extraterrestres o el hombre de ciencia concebido como el nuevo Adán. *El hombre en la Luna* inauguró una clase singular de obras literarias, cuya evolución normal se vio truncada por una serie de circunstancias, incluyendo el hecho de que se creyó que se trataba de un relato español.

PALABRAS CLAVE: novela inglesa del Renacimiento, Francis Godwin, géneros narrativos, historiografía de antigüedades, antropología teológica, Tenerife.



*The Man in the Moone* (1638, abbreviated *MiM* henceforth), by Bishop Francis Godwin (1562-1633), was introduced to its contemporary readership as “an essay of fancy, where Invention is shewed with Judgment.”<sup>1</sup> This definition reveals not only that “imaginary voyages” did not form any genre in the literary consciousness of the period (Racault 82), but also that it did not fit in any of the accepted genres in pre-Civil War England. Godwin’s brief tale of the Spaniard Domingo Gonsales’ voyage to the Moon has been given lukewarm consideration in different histories of English literature, either as a Renaissance utopia (Trousson 130-31), or as an early seventeenth-century picaresque adventure (Salzman 219-20). The debate whether it is true or proto-science-fiction remains open depending on the theoretical approaches to this genre (Aldiss 70-71, Philmus “Murder”). Other aspects of the story in connection with subjects like travel writing, warfare or Renaissance historiography, have seldom been explored. Even as a fantasy, it poses serious problems for criticism, because —according to Kathryn Hume’s definition of fantasy— it does portray a “departure from consensus reality” (21); but it is a departure consonant with the early seventeenth-century vanguard physics and “the scientific plausibility of a world in the moon” (Nicolson 96). Owing mainly to the very nature of its plot, it is unrelated to every major literary trend converging in the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century, so that it has never been the target of scholars engaged in examining the ancestors of realist fiction.<sup>2</sup> Rather, it has frequently been treated just as a graceful celestial voyage, devoid of any further relevance for the English novel. Indeed, soon after its publication, Godwin’s fantastic adventure became a source of humour and parody, like in Cyrano de Bergerac’s *L’Autre Monde* or *Histoire Comique* (1657) following Baudoin’s translation in 1648, or in Aphra Behn’s play *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687), inspired by the publications of both the third edition of *MiM* and the English translation of Cyrano’s work in the previous year. Domingo Gonsales’ story continued to stir the imagination of the early eighteenth-century satirists —evident in Defoe’s *The Consolidator* and Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*— until it became virtually forgotten in the Romantic period, when the novel was an established and robust genre, modern historiography had perfected its methodology and the first, widely-accepted masterpieces of science-fiction had been published.

Godwin’s contrived impression of authenticity results from a clever combination of genres, discourses and factual data. Both the portrayal of the solar system and the events occurring on Earth are filtered through an erudite, analytic gaze, anticipating thus a narrative stance characteristic of more developed forms of novel writing. It is plain that to consider this exceptional piece of writing under the light of forthcoming literary manifestations or more developed scientific evidence dis-

---

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from *The Man in the Moone* are taken from the Grant McColley edition (Northampton, MA: Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, Oct. 1937), which is derived from the first edition.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Davis (42-84), and McKeon (65-76, 96-113).

torts the novelty and the charm which it still exhibits. What was Godwin attempting to do in *MiM*? What discourses or literary methods did he have at hand for such an innovative project? What were his literary achievement and legacy? These initial questions outline the aim of this article. In my analysis, the fantastic voyage will be regarded as Godwin's intellectual and literary response to the challenges posed by the philosophical and technical advancements of his times, particularly the scientific historiography and the exhaustion of the Scholastic philosophy, whose effects will prevail from the Restoration onwards.

Francis Godwin, who was the son of Thomas Godwin, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and who had been granted the bishopric of Llandaff and then transferred to the wealthier see of Hereford for his historical books,<sup>3</sup> was aware of the varying fortunes involved in writing, particularly for a Bishop, amidst the political and religious tensions during the reigns of the first Stuarts (Clegg 197-229; Merchant 51). However, his apparent submission to the establishment contrasts with the unlicensed publication of his *Nuncius Inanimatus* (1629) under the pseudonym "Ed. M.Ch." Like Kepler's *Somnium* (1634), *MiM* also appeared posthumously, five years after his death. On 1st August 1638, it was entered in the Stationers' Register as a book written by Domingo Gonsales (the main character) and translated from the Spanish by Edward Mahon (McColley x), who signed the preface or introductory note "To the Ingenious Reader" and stated the fantastic nature of the tale. Though Godwin's authorship has never been challenged, Neville Davies has tentatively suggested in a footnote the possibility that it was first written "in Latin (like *Utopia*, [...] and Kepler's *Somnium*) and that his son Morgan translated it, as he did the *Annales*, perhaps revising it as well. [...] The Latin basis of the lunar greeting may possibly be the remnant of an original Latin text" (311). I strongly thought of this possibility as well when I translated *MiM* into Spanish. I felt that the tortuous syntax of the English text would spring either from a Latin source text or from a mind naturally habituated to think in Latin when writing. These residual Latinisms may be apparent in the long sentences and the profusion of relative clauses, as well as in other types of subordinate clauses which look like direct translations of present participles, past participles and ablative absolutes. A similar syntactical jumble of short clauses in the brief preface may reasonably indicate that both parts were written by Godwin.<sup>4</sup> This point is central for the forthcoming discussion since the authorial —not editorial— distinction between the extrafictional voice of E.M. and the autobiographical narration of Domingo Gonsales foregrounds the hybrid nature of the text —vaguely labelled as "essay"— or, in other words, the incapacity of any acknowledged literary genre to satisfy the imaginative depiction of the cur-

---

<sup>3</sup> Godwin's history books are *Catalogue of the Bishops of England* (1601, revised 1615) and *Annals of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary* (1615).

<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, Singer believes that the introductory note was written by the editor (182). However, it was not common, as Racault reminds us, to acknowledge the fantastic nature of the voyage (84-85).

rent philosophical (scientific) speculation within the narrow limits of credibility and authenticity required by the new seventeenth century epistemology. In fact, since John Wilkins<sup>5</sup> reminded his readership audience that the bishop's tale was a matter of fancy, one is tempted to think that *MiM* stirred amongst its first readers—or at least in himself—an effect of verisimilitude or suspension of disbelief, chiefly owing to Godwin's "truly astonishing" (Bachrach 80) wit for adapting both scientific evidence and contemporary travellers' reports to his fictional pattern.

As a student at Christ Church, Oxford, Godwin was a diligent and conscientious scholar. When he was reading for his M.A., he is believed to have heard Giordano Bruno's lecturing on Copernicus' theory of heliocentrism, as well as on his ideas on the infinite space and the possible existence of mountains, oceans and a society on the Moon (Singer 181).<sup>6</sup> Another important influence was the eminent historian William Camden. Although they were at Christ Church in different periods, they visited Wales together in 1590 for antiquarian research. But whereas Godwin's history books have not struck critics as innovative in methodology or insight, *MiM* was carefully delineated following a strict reliance on physics and documentary evidence. He not only adapted and combined skilfully the cosmology proposed by modern natural philosophers—like Copernicus, Brahe, Bruno, Gilbert, Kepler, or Galileo—as well as the information provided by travellers and navigators—mainly the collections of Hakluyt and Purchas, González de Mendoza's *The Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China* and Nicholas Trigault's *De Christiana expeditione apud Sina*<sup>7</sup>—but he also put into practice certain narrative methods and techniques associated with rationalistic—rather than romantic, fantastic or allegorical—modes of writing.

Alan S. Weber has shown that *MiM* illustrates a remarkable departure from the Mediaeval celestial voyages by representing the universe according to the current theories which challenged the Ptolemaic conception of the solar system and the "doctrine of the elemental spheres" (43). Indeed, a superficial comparison of *MiM* with Kepler's *Somnium*, that Godwin is believed to have read in manuscripts given certain calculations and similarities, immediately reveals the literary modernity of the former. Kepler made use of the more traditional dream episode during which a narrator read a book that contained the story of the magic journey to

---

<sup>5</sup> In 1638, young John Wilkins (who would become a founding member and the first Secretary of the Royal Society in 1660) published the treatise *A Discovery of a New World in the Moon* in thirteen propositions. As both this book and *MiM* came out from John Norton's printing house, it is believed that Norton himself informed Wilkins about *MiM*, its author and editorial process (McColley x). Two years later, Wilkins produced a fourteenth proposition devoted to discussing the impossibility of travelling there, though praising *MiM* as "a very pleasant and well contrived fancy" (240).

<sup>6</sup> See Michel for a comprehensive discussion of Giordano Bruno's ideas on the universe.

<sup>7</sup> Some excerpts of his works, which had been translated into English by Trigault in 1615, appeared in the 1625 edition of *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, vol. 3, book 2, chapters. 6-8 (London, 1625) 350-411.

Levania and the reading was interrupted as the narrator woke up. Since Kepler's aim was to exemplify his astronomical observations, he supplied an extensive set of notes and a further geographical appendix to explain the literary, physical and mathematical details of his story. On the contrary, Godwin chose the picaresque fiction, the utopian literature and the travel writing as models, and allowed his hero Domingo Gonsales put his autobiographical experience in writing. The difference is crucial. In Kepler the magic voyage and the scientific explanations remain two distinct discourses and texts, whereas in *MiM* the new cosmology is embedded within the setting, the real chronology and the cultures of both the Moon and the Earth. Although it is true that Tycho Brahe's hypotheses—rather than Copernicus' heliocentrism—were supported,<sup>8</sup> the new astronomical knowledge gave shape to the world itself which Gonsales journeyed, saw and described as the story developed from one episode into another. It is paradoxical that precisely this fantastic narrative “precociously” (Philmus, *Into* 42) exhibited the emerging principles of the scientific thought—or speculations in natural philosophy—which Godwin successfully deployed by means of a lucid control of plausible situations and factual events. In this respect, for the first time in European literature, a flying device, or “engine,” was conceived, improved, tested and used, before Gonsales found himself unawares on the way to the Moon. Theories like the movement of the Earth, the attraction of the planets or the negation that the fire element occupies the upper sky, were not discussed, but irrefutably asserted by the eyewitness narrator. The persuasive technique of the memoirs written by a foreign (Spanish) adventurer, half rogue and half discoverer, was counterbalanced by ironically deriving his hero's name from Domenico de Gundisalvo (Latin for Domingo González), the director of the Toledo School of Translators—founded in the twelfth century by the Castilian King Alphonse x—and responsible for rendering the Aristotle's books on Astronomy from the Arabic into Latin.<sup>9</sup>

The picaresque narrative prevails in the parts set on the Earth, both before and after visiting the Moon. As an upper class Spanish “pícaro,” Godwin's brave but minute hero was more concerned with his dubious enterprises, his obscure dealings and the Court of Justice, than with the intellectual apprehension and theological consequences of his experiences and perceptions. Gonsales bears some resemblance to Nashe's Jack Wilton, the protagonist and narrator of *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), as regards his social class and warfare, his travels to distant places and the introduction of historical events and personalities. Godwin's text, however, lacks the lively situations and refined style of Nashe's prose, perhaps because Latin, not

---

<sup>8</sup> Gonsales witnessed the diurnal rotation of the Earth, but he expressed his reservations about Copernicus' heliocentrism. He thus implicitly admitted Tycho Brahe's theory that the Earth is fixed, the Sun and the Moon orbit the Earth, while the other planets revolve round the Sun.

<sup>9</sup> The Indian Fleet Captain's name, Adphonso de Xima, reinforces the idea that Godwin named his hero after the Spanish translator, since its pronunciation is very similar to Alphonso x, “the tenth” being in Spanish “décimo.”



English, was his natural language for writing, but above all because his story had a different purpose altogether. Nevertheless, the picaresque element elicits the ambiguous morality of Gonsales and stresses his resolute and resourceful character, who being a Spaniard<sup>10</sup> was fitter than a German —according to Kepler— for the celestial journey (Kepler 72), adding therefore more authenticity to the tale than Kepler's performance of Icelandic magic.

For the section set on the Moon, which was believed to be inhabited —following Bruno, Kepler and many others— Godwin switched to the utopian literature. Again, it is largely aimed at illustrating current philosophical hypotheses about our satellite, like the existence of seas and dry land,<sup>11</sup> high peaks, the effects of the double light from the Sun and the Earth, and the harmonious proportions of measures and dimensions (i.e. weaker gravity power, magnified sizes as one Lunar day equals one terrestrial month, etc.). In sketching the ideal social organization of the Lunars and their high degree of moral perfection, Godwin evinced his prelate's condition. Although he avoided dealing openly with theologically controversial matters, his views on ecclesiastical and anthropological issues —orthodox Anglican as they were— were displayed by means of the Lunar social structure itself.

The utopian society of the Moon must be understood in terms of theological anthropology, since —unlike common Renaissance utopias— there has not been a process for achieving social perfection.<sup>12</sup> As another world was being explored, Godwin had to give an answer to the central questions of the divine grace and the

---

<sup>10</sup> This, of course, is not the only reason why Godwin created Domingo Gonsales a Spaniard. I have suggested elsewhere (Monterrey) many other motives. Firstly, Spain (which included Portugal since the Portuguese Crown was held by the Spanish kings between 1580 and 1640) had discovered the new world and possessed the vastest colonial empire, with excellent maritime communications, so that it was likely that a Spaniard was also the first to reach and explore the Moon. Godwin attempted to replicate the voyage of Columbus by sending his hero to the University of Salamanca, where Copernicus' heliocentrism was discussed for the first time in Europe by Father Diego de Zúñiga (Moss 129-32), as well as by departing to the Moon from the Peak of Tenerife in the Canary Islands, regarded as the highest peak of the world. Secondly, because it was a Catholic country. This implied that the Gregorian calendar had already been introduced; Jesuit missionaries (among them the learned translator, cartographer and astronomer Father Matteo Ricci) had exceptionally been allowed to enter China and had been acquainted with the Chinese exotic culture and her relatively advanced astronomy; to claim credibility, the hypothetical original Spanish version of the story had been supposedly published with the consent of the ecclesiastical and Inquisitional authorities two or three years just after the exceedingly cruel execution of Bruno (or considering the publication year after the process against Galileo, during which Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* and Zúñiga's commentary to *Job* were only forbidden). Thirdly because, yet, the English readership was familiar with Spanish issues owing to the intense commercial activity, political enmity and colonial rivalry.

<sup>11</sup> The spots commonly called as "*el hombre della Luna*, the Man of the Moone" (24) were believed to be in fact bits of dry land surrounded by a huge ocean.

<sup>12</sup> By the legend of the first Irdozonur lineage and the sending of wicked children to the Earth, Godwin equated the Lunars with the Terrestrials as pertaining to the same category within the divine creation.

original sin, one of the most controversial subjects in his epoch. He not only supported the belief in a universal revelation of Christ (in the Moon being a necessarily different one from ours, since they did not react at hearing the names of Mary, Peter or Paul); but also, by referring the legend that the first Irdonozur came from the Earth and married the Queen of the Moon, he circumscribed the human loss of Edenic qualities to the realm of Earth. The Lunars, who were subjected to the dangers of moral imperfection because they were not spiritual creatures,<sup>13</sup> still enjoyed all preternatural gifts, such as natural food supply, minimum work, natural energy provision for light and heat, healthy climate, no ideological controversy, one single language, moral excellence (visible in their height and age), no crime, “seeds” (40) of contention —if any— being settled by the wisdom of the elderly, absence of pain at dying, incorruptible body,<sup>14</sup> or marital fidelity. Other issues, however, like clothing in uniform tunics or the physical/moral hierarchy, were unavoidable for an Episcopalian dignity of strictly Aristotelian formation. As unfallen creatures, Lunars were in need of neither redemption nor evangelisation, because they already worshipped the name of Christ. With respect to the religious organisation, Godwin ironically showed his Protestant —rather than Anglican— point of view through his Catholic spokesman. Though he was a loyal Bishop, his unlicensed publication of *Nuntius Inanimatus* might indicate that he had grown critical against Charles I’s ecclesiastical politics. The presence of Hiruch, a kind of religious authority in the sacred realm of Insula Martini (‘God’s Island’ in the Lunar language, but derivate from the Protestant reformer Martin Luther), mirrored a utopian state of the Church with respect to both unfallen nature and civil government. Unlike in Britain, the ecclesiastical and political government were separate, and the latter was advised by the former. This statement does not imply Godwin’s nostalgia for the Medieval order of Christianity, but rather an appeal to the independence and authority of the Church of England. There was still a higher religious personage, Imozes, who was older and inhabited a remoter area of the Moon. Domingo Gonsales compared him with the Pope, according to his frame of reference; but rather his name —similar to Moses— is suggestive of divine communication and prophetic utterance. Like the Prophet on the summit of Sinai or Adam in the Earthly Paradise, Imozes lived a kind of absolute sacred retirement. Together with the sovereign Irdonozur, he constituted the highest rank of the necessarily hierarchical organisation of the Lunar Edenic society.

---

<sup>13</sup> Lunars, who were naturally unbiased to sin, could identify those children possessing a “wicked or imperfect disposition” (39) by external signs, such as their short stature or low resistance to light. They were subsequently sent away towards a remote hill in the North of America and changed “for other children, before they [should] have either abilitie or opportunitie to doe amisse among them” (40).

<sup>14</sup> Incorruptibility is here a complex issue. On the one hand, it is a preternatural gift; but, on the other, it was thought to be a property of the immediate order of perfection from the low, earthly state of the fallen mankind to the glorious, highest realms of heavens. Whereas the former is just one more quality of the unfallen Lunar society, the latter was illustrated by the corruption of victuals that Domingo Gonsales was given by the demons on the ascending journey.



The legend of the first Irdonozur's coming from the Earth, marrying the Queen "inheretrix" (29) of the Moon and final returning to his native planet echoed teachings of alchemy, which most certainly were reinforced in the text by numerology and the Lunar names. This is the only Selenite myth narrated; their historical past remains ever present and well preserved —what a dream for the antiquarians!— from generation to generation in the ample 'archives' where each family keeps the uncorrupted bodies of their ancestors.<sup>15</sup> Domingo Gonsales discarded the legend of Irdonozur as false, on the grounds that no record gave notice of any man arriving from the Moon and that, like on Earth, the origins of a culture, city or nation were often marked by the interventions of gods and heroes. This rational, materialist procedure of discerning historical facts from mere imaginative fabrications seems more appropriate for a rogue than for a Bishop, but it epitomises the same method employed by Godwin in selecting the narrative elements and designing the plot of *MiM*. The emergence of a new, scientific history writing based on the proof of reliable documentary evidence —practiced by William Camden— meant another Renaissance novelty as revolutionary as the new conception of the solar system.

In *History and the Early English Novel*, Robert Mayer has coined the umbrella term "Baconian historiography" for the historical discourse of the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England. Some of its features include "a taste for the marvellous, a polemical cast, a utilitarian faith, a dependence upon personal memory and gossip, and a willingness to tolerate dubious material for practical purposes, all of which led to the allowance of fiction as a means of historical representation" (4). He then considers the two main types of modern historical writing during the period. On the one hand, the "new history" (20) or "scientific modern history" (25), which constituted the "historical revolution" (20), designates the method carried out by William Camden and the antiquarians. On the other hand, the "humanist modern history" (25), featured by Machiavelli and Thomas More, aimed at delivering "political and moral lessons" (29). Although these two modes existed and were supported on theoretical grounds, Mayer remarks that history writers usually made use of both tendencies, what he calls "the practitioners of 'Baconian historiography'" (28). As a history writer, Godwin also applied Camden's precepts of "scientific historiography" in *MiM* to authenticate the events and facts. For example, the episode of Tenerife (12-17) is conspicuously based on the travel literature collected by Hakluyt and Purchas.

During great part of the sixteenth century, the Peak of Tenerife was regarded with a mixture of novelty and awe for its reputation of being the world's

---

<sup>15</sup> The keeping of uncorrupted ancestors was a practice amongst the native Guanches of Tenerife. Thomas Nichols, author of the first published monography about the Canary Islands, told of a cave he had visited where they kept the mummified bodies of their nobles and chiefs: "I have seen caves of 300 of these corps together; the flesh being dried up, the body remained as light as parchment" (131).



highest summit, and used accordingly in literature. On approaching Tenerife, the “Indian fleet” (12) was attacked by three English boats. In a desperate attempt to save the people and some goods, the captain ordained to approach the island even though it was impossible to reach its port. Gonsales got ready his engine and escaped flying when the vessel struck a coastal rock half a league off the island. A similar event was narrated in the account of James Lancaster’s voyage to Pernambuco. There are two versions.<sup>16</sup> The victims of Lancaster’s attack were Spaniards in the first version and Portuguese in the second. In both cases they “sought to save themselves by flight,” meaning by this ‘to flee’ or ‘to escape.’ Gonsales also relates that “we thought it a wiser way to fly” (14), and repeats “our Captain therefore resolved peradventure wisely enough [...] to fly, commanding us to disperse our selves” (14); but, to everybody’s amazement, his fleeing turned out into a real flight.

The English merchant Thomas Nichols, reputed to be the author of the first book wholly devoted to the Canary Islands, affirmed that “The toppe of this pike conteineth of height directly upward 15 leagues and more, which is 45 English miles” (131). But this description could lead to confusion. If ‘directly’ was understood ‘vertical,’ Teide would have risen above 237,600 feet (72,400 metres) over the sea level.<sup>17</sup>

Thomas Nichols actually calculated the distance of the total way from the sea-shore —directly— to the top. Similarly, Sir Edmund Scory<sup>18</sup> in his description of Tenerife gave full detail of the different stages and landscapes, as well as valuable pieces of advice, for anybody attempting to climb the mount from the sea-shore upwards. Godwin preferred Nichols’ description in order to design the most plausible exit to the Moon. He simply changed “directly” for “perpendicularly”: “*El Pico* [...] being in all estimation at least 15 leagues in height perpendicularly upward, above the ordinary level of the Land and Sea” (17). Accordingly, the farthest distance from which the Peak was reported to be perceived was increased from 60 or 70 leagues to “no less than 100. leagues off” (13).

---

<sup>16</sup> According to Castillo (“Las Canarias” 104-07), one version was published by Hakluyt, “The Well Governed and Prosperous Voyage of M. James Lancaster,” and the other, *Lancaster His Allarums*, was written by Henry Roberts.

<sup>17</sup> Perhaps inspired by this impression, John Donne turned Tenerife into a symbol of the disharmony and imperfection of the world in *The First Anniversary*: “Doth not a Tenariff, or higher Hill/ Rise so high like a Rocke, that one might thinke/ The floating Moone would shipwracke there, and sink?” (76, ll. 286-88).

<sup>18</sup> Castillo (“El texto” 93-8) suggests that Scory visited Tenerife most probably at the beginning of the seventeenth century. He was one of the first authors who wrote about the nature and the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of Tenerife and claimed to have ascended the famous mount. His notes were published by Samuel Purchas in the 1626 edition of *Purchas His Pilgrimage* under the title “Extracts taken out of the Observations of the Right Worshipful Sir Edmund Scory, Knight, of the Pike of Tenerife” (Book VII, Chap. XII, Sec III, pp. 784-787). It was likely that Godwin obtained accurate first-hand information about Tenerife from Sir Edmund Scory, because he was the grandson of the Bishop John Scory, who had also occupied the see of Hereford between 1559 and 1585.



Both Nichols and Scory were amongst the first English writers who described the city of La Laguna —former capital of the island— the Peak and the customs of the native tribesmen of Tenerife (called *Guanches*); but neither of them mentioned the occasional risings of rebellious Guanches (called *alzados*) which followed the Spanish conquest. Despite the actuality of this episode, Guanches were renowned for their nobleness, hospitality and high moral values, as well as for their physical strength. Surrounded by a halo of mystery for inhabiting the Fortunate Islands, the Guanche race has sometimes been regarded as descendant of the mythical Atlantis people. In *MiM*, on the contrary, they seem to illustrate the human untamed aggressiveness or uncivilized degradation. And yet Godwin was true to facts. He faithfully depicted the violent situation and the places where the *alzados* were forced to settle:

As for my selfe, being now ashore in a Country inhabited for the most part by *Spaniards*, I reckoned my selfe in safety. Howbeit I quickly found the Reckoning, I so made, mine Host had not been acquainted with all; for it was my chance to pitch upon that part of the Isle, where the hill, before mentioned, beginneth to rise. And it is inhabited by a Savage kinde of people, that live upon the sides of that hill, the top whereof is alwayes covered with Snow, and held for the monstrous height and steepnesse not to be accessible either for man or beast. Howbeit these Savages fearing the *Spaniards*, (betweene whom and them there is a kinde of continuall warre) hold themselves as near the top of that hill as they can, where they have divers places of good strength, never comming downe into the fruitfull Valleys, but to prey upon what they can finde there. (16)

By the time Godwin was composing *MiM* the Peak had surely been climbed and the *alzados* had utterly disappeared or become, as González de Mendoza stated, “verie much Spaniarde like” (308). But he was following the accounts of the sixteenth century informants. The French Captain Laudonnière, whose voyage to Florida had been translated and published by Hakluyt in 1587, mentioned the occasional attacks and the fate of those Spaniards in Tenerife who ventured outside the colonised areas:

The inhabitants in this Isle being heretofore pursued by the Spaniards, retired themselves into this mountaine, where for a space they made warre with them, and would not submit themselves to their obedience, neither by foule nor faire meanes, they disdained so much the losse of their Island. For those which went thither on the Spaniards behalfe, left their carkases there, so that not so much as one of them returned home to bring newes. Notwithstanding in the ende, the inhabitants not able to live in that place according to their nature, or for want of such things as were necessary for the commoditie of their livelihood, did all die there. (2)

According to Hair (217), the *alzados* Guanches were also known in Britain through André Thevet’s *Les singularities de la France Antarctique* (1558). Thevet also asserted that no Spanish expedition attempting to measure the height of Teide had ever returned, so it was believed that they had been attacked and plundered by the *alzados* who still dwelt the base and slopes of the Peak (Pico 23). The episode of



Tenerife demonstrates that Godwin's accuracy in handling exact bits of information contained in such popular travel book collections is admirable; indeed, a delicate embroidery of a committed antiquarian as he was.

The historical discourse of the period, according to Mayer, was characterised by a strong contamination of "fabulous narratives" (114) and "imaginative texts" (146). Though rationally convincing for its age as the "impossible" (Campbell 2) voyage was, no historicity was claimed outside the narrator's autobiographical report. Quite the opposite, its plausibility was counteracted by the prefatory note "To the Ingenious Reader." It not only modulated the degree of the credibility: "It was not the Authors intention (I presume) to discourse thee into a beleife of each particular circumstance" (2), but it also situated the story —by defining it as "an essay of Fancy" (2)— in an ambiguous, debatable territory between truth and imagination, between philosophy and entertainment.

"Essay of Fancy" may be a successful category to label *MiM* in the very age that witnessed the formation and establishment of the modern science, the novel, and the essay itself. The rise of the "essay" coincided with the scientific revolution. Largely unrelated to classical models,<sup>19</sup> the Renaissance essay was characterised by the exhibition of the author's own voice and the urgency of subject-matter. In the early seventeenth century, unlike today's essays, its content was much more informative than formative, like "Newes" (Lennard 47-77). But it was also a kind of "allusive or parabolical" narration, following Bacon's terminology, as it also aimed at the expression of "some special purpose or conceit" (*Advancement* 98). In this sense, apart from depicting the new conception of the solar system, Godwin dealt with other two major issues in relationship with science: one was philosophical and the other, for lack of a better expression, personal promotion.

Gonsales' intention to suggest the construction of a fortification in St Helena and his zeal to conceal his engine from everybody's sight until the King had examined it pointed out a sincere, noble vocation for strengthening his country, both in warfare and in colonial expansion, during the particularly violent period of the Thirty Years War. However, by his constant insistence on gaining fame and glory out of the 'engine,' the rogue's loyalty to his nation seemed to target at profitable revenues rather than at a patriotic moral commitment. Almost at the onset of the scientific revolution, Godwin was already establishing the ever-controversial marriage between science and power, and was using the printed book as a means to advertise this kind of innovations, including elements of cryptography and codifying secret messages.<sup>20</sup> In fact, he said that he was willing to impart instruction on new fast long-distance communication (10), a subject developed at large in his more conventional Latin essay *Nuncius Inanimatus*.

---

<sup>19</sup> The sense number 8 of the entry "essay" in the *The Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that originally it implied "want of finish," and quotes the famous definition from Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* who still considered it "an irregular undigested piece."

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed study on this subject see Neville Davies.





The philosophical issues also involve theology and cosmology, as we have seen in relation with the alleged preternatural nature of the Lunars. For an Aristotelian Oxford graduate as Godwin was, to name his hero after the Spanish twelfth-century introducer of Aristotle in Western Europe implied a decidedly renovation of the Scholastic doctrines. As indicated above, Domingo Gonsales' reticence to admit Copernicus' heliocentrism evinces the difficulty of accommodating new convictions with the long established philosophical tradition, or —less probable— Giordano Bruno's notion of an "acentric" (see Mendoza) universe. Nevertheless, the Nolan's thought —obliterated for a long time after his execution— flutters in Gonsales' assertive contemplation<sup>21</sup> of the truth about many philosophical controversies over the universe and the solar system (i.e. the growing size of the fixed stars, the pure aether filling the star interstices, the absence of the element fire in the upper levels, or the plurality of worlds as exemplified in the Moon). Bruno's philosophical celestial space and the plurality of worlds ceased to be regarded as mere speculation and started to materialise in the years following his death owing to the introduction of Gilbert, Kepler and Galileo's respective scientific contributions to the physics and cartography of heavens, and especially of the Moon. Therefore, Domingo Gonsales' journey from Tenerife to the Moon and back to China was just a veritable tour through a space already drawn by his contemporary nature philosophers. In this sense, the Chinese exotic, non-Christian culture and its Lunar-like tune language may be regarded as a remarkable parabolic narration about the plurality of worlds and the unity of substance in the universe.

The invention of a suitable transportation —the engine— powered by interstellar migratory *ganzas* (a sort of wild swans) turns Godwin's hero into a paradigmatic modern technician or engineer. Francis Bacon's catalogue of experiments, *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626), is often cited in this respect since a similar attempt at flying was referred (122), but Godwin owed little debt to either this work or to *The New Atlantis*, where the utopian temple of knowledge, Salomon's House, was described in its ending part. Instead he conceived the Southern Atlantic island of St Helena as a new Earthly Paradise for experiments and research. Discovered by the Portuguese in 1502, St Helena had been preserved by the Crown for its strategic position to supply the navigation on the Eastern routes with fresh water and food. Any human settlement was forbidden to prevent shortage or spoil of its natural resources, except for a small chapel and two hermits who undertook the care of occasional sick mariners ("The Monsons" 33). It was on this basis that Gonsales reached St Helena when he returned from the East Indies. He was left there in the company of a "blackmoore" (9) servant, Diego, to take care of him during his recovery, since apparently nobody else lived on the island.<sup>22</sup> Echoing the reports of James Lancas-

---

<sup>21</sup> It must be noted, however, that Bruno's main battle was not against religious beliefs but against arguments founded on misleading sensorial perceptions.

<sup>22</sup> Later records do not mention the hermits (Lancaster 402, Thomas Cavendish 345).

ter and Thomas Cavendish, Godwin exaggerated the exuberance and fertility of St Helena, “the only paradice, I thinke, that the earth yeeldeth” (7). Whereas visitors plainly said that neither vines nor grains were cultivated there, he pluralized the vine-plants and claimed that “Corn likewise growing of it selfe, incredible plenty, as Wheate, Pease, Barley, and almost all kind of Pulse” (8). The Anglican Bishop challenged thus the traditional image of Eden by devising an updated version. For this purpose, vegetation associated with the Christian symbols of bread and wine was introduced, while women, as well as apple-trees, were excluded, preserving thus the place from sin in the same manner than it was preserved from society and commerce. It is significant that the tree of knowledge and its forbidden fruits constitute the only one he explicitly mentions as lacking on the island: “as for Apples I dare say there are none at all” (8). This statement has profound implications for a theological apology of the scientific/technological revolution and its consequences for the established parameters regarding philosophy and religion. In this new Eden, Domingo Gonsales became the modern Adam: the technician and scientist. His surmounting human natural limitations and his interest in cryptography —privileging mere communication over the divine gift of verbal words— accentuate that radically modern identity.

Despite much critical insistence in ascribing Godwin’s “essay of fancy” to the Lucian tradition of Moon voyages, *MiM* epitomises the birth of a new type of writing as a result of the application of both the scientific historiography and the display of the new cosmology, which effected a new epistemology altogether. However, according to the reception theory and the Barthesian notion of intertextuality, the meaning of a text depends to a high degree on the reader’s process of decoding. The destiny of Domingo Gonsales during the century following its publication was going to be much more different than the glory he wished to gain. As soon as *MiM* was published, John Wilkins started to prepare the fourteenth proposition of his treatise on the Moon to prove the impossibility of a voyage there by the sole means known at that time. Needless to say that the outbreak of the Civil War put an end to the potential formation of a “scientific romance” tradition, which of course had no place in the Restoration culture. Moreover, ever since its publication, *MiM* was held to be a Spanish story. Even though its second edition appeared in 1657 bearing the initial F.G.B. of H., in the preface to *The Blazing World* (1662) Margaret Cavendish ignored the English text in benefit of the French celestial voyages (124), acknowledging thus the striking novelty of Cyrano de Bergerac’s works. The French libertine, believing that the tiny Domingo Gonsales was the true author, ridiculed him by presenting him as the monkey-pet of the Selenite Queen dressed in full Spanish outfit (65-66). When the third edition appeared in 1686, *MiM* had little to say to the rationalistic society it had anticipated half a century before. It simply helped feed the satirical vein of Behn, Defoe and Swift. For its legitimate, unacknowledged and hybrid progenies, Godwin’s Lunar adventure represents a landmark in our Western heritage, though it remains —like the aether explained by Bruno and journeyed by Gonsales— a rare piece of writing in the interstices of history, canons and genres.



## WORKS CITED

- ALDISS, Brian. *Trillion Years Spree: The History of Science Fiction*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1986.
- BACHRACH, A.G.H. "Luna Mendax: Some Reflections on Moon-Voyages in Early Seventeenth-Century England." *Between Dream and Nature: Essays on Utopia and Dystopia*. Ed. Dominic Baker-Smith & C.C. Barfoot. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987. 70-90.
- CAMPBELL, Mary Baine. "Impossible Voyages: Seventeenth-Century Space Travel and the Impulse of Ethnology." *Literature and History* 6.2 (1997): 1-17.
- BACON, Francis. *The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis*. 1605, 1627. London: Oxford UP, 1969.
- . *Sylva Sylvarum: Or a Natural History in Ten Centuries*. 1627. N.p.: Kessinger, 2002.
- CYRANO DE BERGERAC, Savinien. *Voyage dan la Lune (L'Autre Monde ou Les États et Empires de la Lune)*. 1657. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1970.
- CASTILLO, Francisco Javier. "Las Canarias en las crónicas de Richard Hakluyt y Samuel Purchas." *Revista de Filología* 18 (2000): 104-07.
- . "El texto de Sir Edmund Scory sobre Tenerife." *Tabona* 8.1 (1992-93): 93-115.
- CAVENDISH, Margaret. *The Blazing World and Other Writings*. London: Penguin, 1994.
- CAVENDISH, Thomas. "The Prosperous Voyage of M. Thomas Cavendish Esquire in the South Sea." *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Comp. and ed. Richard Hakluyt, vol. 11. New York: AMS Press, 1965. 290-347.
- CLEGG, C.S. *Press Censorship in Jacobean England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.
- DAVIS, Lennard. *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*. New York: Columbia UP, 1983.
- DONNE, John. *The First Anniuersary: An Anatomy of the World*. 1611. *John Donne's Poetry*. Ed. Arthur Clements. London: Norton, 1974. 65-81.
- . "Essay." Def. 8. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 1933.
- GODWIN, Francis. *The Man in the Moone and Nuncius Inanimatus*. 1638. Ed. Grant McColley. *Smith College Studies in Modern Language* 19.1 (Oct. 1937).
- GONZÁLEZ DE MENDOZA, Juan. *The Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China*. Trans. R. Parke. London: E. White, 1588.
- HAIR, P.E.H. "Africa (Other That the Mediterranean and Red Sea Lands) and the Atlantic Islands." *The Purchas Handbook*. Ed. L.E. Pennington. Vol. 1. London: Hakluyt Society, 1997. 194-218.
- HAKLUYT, Richard, comp. and ed. *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. 12 vols. 1598-1600. New York: AMS, 1965.



- HUME, Kathryn. *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*. New York: Methuen, 1984.
- KEPLER, Johannes. *El sueño o la astronomía de la luna*. Ed. Francisco Socas. Huelva: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Huelva, 2001.
- LANCASTER, James. "The Memorable Voyage of M. James Lancaster about the Cape of Buona Esperanza." *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Comp. and ed. Richard Hakluyt. Vol. 6. New York: AMS, 1965. 387-407.
- LAUDONNIÈRE, René. "The Second Voyage unto Florida." 1587. *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Comp. and ed. Richard Hakluyt. Vol. 9. New York: AMS, 1965. 1-100.
- MAYER, Robert. *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- MCCOLLEY, Grant. Introduction. *The Man in the Moone and Nuncius Inanimatus*. By Francis Godwin. *Smith College Studies in Modern Language* 19.1 (Oct. 1937): vii-xiv.
- MCKEON, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740*. London: Radius, 1988.
- MENDOZA, Ramón. *The Acentric Labyrinth: Giordano Bruno's Prelude to Contemporary Cosmology*. Shaftesbury (UK): Element, 1995.
- MERCHANT, W. Moelwyn. "Bishop Francis Godwin, Historian and Novelist." *Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales* 5 (1955): 45-51.
- MICHEL, Paul-Henri. *The Cosmology of Giordano Bruno*. Trans. R.E.W. Maddison. Paris: Hermann, 1973.
- . "The Monsons of the Portugall Ships for the Indies." *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Comp. and ed. Richard Hakluyt. Vol 6. New York: AMS, 1965. 33.
- MONTERREY, Tomás. "Temas españoles y elementos realistas en *The Man in the Moone*." *Fifty Years of English Studies in Spain (1952-2002): A Commemorative Volume*. Ed. Ignacio Palacios Martínez et al. Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2002. 509-515.
- MOSS, Jean Dietz. *Novelties in the Heavens: Rhetoric and Science in the Copernican Controversy*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.
- NEVILLE DAVIES, H. "Bishop Godwin's "Lunatique Language". *Journal of Warburg and Courtland Institute* 30 (1967): 296-316.
- NICHOLS, Thomas. *A Pleasant Description of the Fortunate Ilandes Called the Ilands of Canaria*. London, 1583. Rpt. "A Description of the Fortunate Ilands." *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Comp and ed. Richard Hakluyt. Vol. 4. New York: AMS, 1965. 125-36.
- NICOLSON, Marjorie. "Cosmic Voyages." *English Literary History* 7.2 (June 140): 83-107.
- PHILMUS, Robert M. *Into the Unknown: The Evolution of Science Fiction from Francis Godwin to H.G. Wells*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1970.
- . "Murder Most Fowl: Butler's Edition of Francis Godwin." *Science Fiction Studies* 23.69 (July 1996). <[http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/review\\_essays/philm69.htm](http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/review_essays/philm69.htm)>.
- PICO, Berta, & Dolores CORBELLÀ, eds. *Viajeros franceses a las Islas Canarias*. La Laguna: Instituto de Estudios Canarios, 2000.



- PURCHAS, Samuel. *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. London, 1625.
- RACAULT, Jean-Michel. "Les jeux de la vérité et du mensonge dans les préfaces des récits de voyages imaginaires à la fin de l'Age classique (1676-1726)." *Métamorphoses du récit de voyage*. Ed. François Moureau. Paris: Champion, 1986. 82-125.
- SALZMAN, Paul. *English Prose Fiction 1558-1700: A Critical History*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1985.
- SINGER, Dorothea Waley. *Giordano Bruno: His Life and Thought*. New York: Henry Schuman, 1950. <<http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/bruno00.htm>>.
- TROUSSON, Raymond. *Historia de la literatura utópica: viajes a países inexistentes*. Trans. Carlos Manzano. Barcelona: Península, 1995.
- WEBER, Alan S. "Changes in Celestial Journey Literature: 1400-1650." *Culture and Cosmos* 1.1 (Spring-Summer 1997): 34-50.
- "The Well Governed and Prosperous Voyage of M. James Lancaster." *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Comp. and ed. Richard Hakluyt. Vol. 10. New York: AMS, 1965. 43-64.
- WILKINS, John. *The Discovery of a World in the Moone: Or, a Discourse Tending to Prove That 'Tis Probable There May Be Another Habitable World in That Planet*. London: John Maynard, 1640.

