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**History in Poetry and Truth in Selected American Poems of the Modern Era****A B S T R A C T**

The conflict between history and poetry exists since the ancient times of Plato and Aristotle till later ages. Controversy accompanies such a conflict throughout the ages. Therefore, the present paper delves deep into how poetry reveals the truth of the historical events or the stories of the past. The present paper aims to examine the role of the poet as a historian, how the poets present these historical events truthfully, and how these poems preserve their literary identity. Two American poems are selected from the Modern Era (1900s-1940s), Katharine Rolston Fisher's "Alice Paul" in (1918) and Robinson Jeffers's "Moon and Five Planets" in (1940).

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التاريخ في الشعر والحقيقة في قصائد أمريكية مختارة من العصر الحديث

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الملخص

الصراع بين التاريخ والشعر موجود منذ العصور القديمة لأفلاطون وأرسطو وحتى العصور اللاحقة. وإن الجدل يصاحب مثل هذا الصراع على مر العصور. لذلك، يتعمق هذا البحث في كيفية كشف الشعر عن حقيقة الأحداث التاريخية أو قصص الماضي. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة دور الشاعر كمؤرخ، وكيف يقدم الشعراء هذه الأحداث التاريخية بصدق، وكيف تحافظ هذه القصائد على هويتها الأدبية. تم اختيار قصيدتين أمريكيتين من العصر الحديث (١٩٠٠-١٩٤٠)، قصيدة كاثرين رولستون فيشر "أليس بول" في (١٩١٨) و قصيدة روبنسون جيفرز "القمر والكواكب الخمسة" في (١٩٤٠).

الكلمات المفتاحية: التاريخ ، الحقيقة ، الشعر ، العصور الأدبية ، الحقائق ، العواطف

In early-centuries, it has been recorded that documents of knowledge are in the form of poetry. Such a record is used because of the special rhythm of poetry that makes the process of memorizing easier. One of these documents of knowledge is history or the way people at that times date their historical events. Therefore, a comparison between history and poetry always had been set from early times.

Literature is a reflection of societies and in many times it mirrors their historical events. Poets, as part of these societies, write in the form of poetry these historical events. In a way or another, the historiography of poetry is not that different from history. Historians record historical events, while poets rewrite and retell these historical events with an intention of presenting feelings, and expectations or prophecies.

The present paper is an interdisciplinary analysis of the interconnection between history and poetry in selected American poems from the Modern Era (1900s-1940s), Katharine Rolston Fisher's "Alice Paul" in (1918) and Robinson Jeffers's "Moon and Five Planets" in (1940) as representatives of this era. Through a detailed exploration and examination of the presented poems, the present paper shows how Fisher and Jeffers can play the role of historians, how these poets present the historical events truthfully, and how these poems preserve their literary identity while presenting the historical matters.

In early centuries, the best means of remembering a story, oral history, or even law statements is poetry (epic poetry). Tina Marie says that many of the early ancient survived poems are a history of people of the past and recorded information of their culture, religion, and politics. According to Marie, the ancient works are in a poetic form to make the process of memorization easier (2013). As a result, a connection or a matter of comparison between history and poetry always has been set over centuries.

Concerning the truth of history and that of poetry, Dmitri Nikulin, in his book The Concept of History, regards history to be "similar" to art. For him, history narrates incidents of the bygone years. Such a process of narrating intends to "communicate the truth." Though

there is no “intention” to deform anything, Nikulin argues that the “ ‘really’ ” of what occurred is certainly ‘distorted.’ This distortion due to the way the narratives “being (re)interpreted and (re)collected” (2017, p.37). While the truth of poetry lies in the power of poetry to represent life. Matthew Arnold tackles such a statement in his Study of Poetry. He argues that “in poetry, as in criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth.” In doing such a “criticism,” poetry expressing it in “excellent rather than inferior... true rather than untrue on half-true.” According to Arnold, truth and “seriousness” are the important features to produce “best” poetry (2013, selected essays, the study of poetry).

Katharine Rolston Fisher’s poem “Alice Paul” is dedicated to the American feminist Alice Paul the leader of a feminist march who leads a feminist protest in front of the White House. As a feminist activist, she has an effective role in raising the women’s voice to ask for their own right to vote.

Feminist activity re-emerges in Europe and America during the first three decades of the 20th century, but this time the target is woman’s right to vote. Many women’s rights activists appear and play their effective role in such a wave. One of those important activists is the American feminist Alice Paul.

Alice Paul is regarded to be part of the first spark of this feminist protest. Douglas Bond reports that Alice Paul is a “women’s rights activist and social reformer.” After spending twelve months in work for “the National American Woman Suffrage Association,” Paul starts thinking about changing the situation and end “the begging for the vote.” As a result, she works to be a co-founder in establishing the “Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage” (1997, p.402).

Paul keeps protesting in a peaceful way even when such a revolt makes her suffer. Mary Ellen Snodgrass states that in addition of being a co-founder of the “Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage in 1913,” Alice Paul is regarded to be “the first nonviolent protester to picket at the White House gates” (2015, pp.334, 335). Bond narrates that Paul leads a “women’s suffrage campaign in the United States” along the second decade of the 20th century, and plans for “nonviolent” marches. During her “suffrage activism” in 1917 Paul is also known for “her hunger strikes” (1997, p.402).

One of her most important campaign marches is that one in front of the White House. Snodgrass records that “on January 10, 1917,” Alice Paul leads an “all-female” protest in front of the White House in Washington, DC. This march is decorated by the “gold, purple, and white sashes of the National Woman’s Party” (2015, pp.334, 335).

The documentation of such an event is not limited only to history, Katharine Rolston Fisher (1871-1950), the American poet, historicizes Alice Paul and her feminist march in poetry as well. Fisher’s poem is titled by the name of the American feminist “Alice Paul” and making such a reference supports the historical narrative of the poem.

Fisher starts the poem as a speaker, as if she is giving a testimony, she says:

I watched a river of women,
Rippling purple, white and golden,
Stream toward the National Capitol. (ll. 1-3)

The poet, which is also the speaker of the poem, reports the historical event as someone who sees it from above. Fisher portrays the all-female protest as a “river of women.” The poet records the official colors of the march scarfs. The women’s river is “rippling” with “purple, white and golden” scarfs. Fisher is direct in referring to the march destination. The feminist river “stream[s] toward the National Capitol.” The poet gives the poem reader accurate historical details (Inez Haynes Gillmore, 1921, p.6).

Fisher continues the historiography of such a feminist event; she records:

Along its border,
 Like a purple flower floating,
 Moved a young woman, worn, wraithlike.
 All eyes alight, keenly observing the marchers.
 Out there on the curb, she looked so little, so lonely,
 Few appeared even to see her;
 No one saluted her. (ll. 4-10)

Once more, the poet is direct in locating the protest which is “along” the White House “border.” Fisher portrays how the historical march is led by Paul. Fisher documents Paul as “a young woman... wraithlike” for being the bold leading figure of the protest. The poet portrays Paul as a “little, lonely” brave leader who is “keenly observing the marchers.” “No one saluted her” is a line that has a historical connotation. It stands for the lack of the government support that Paul experiences at that time in order to make American women get their right to vote (Gillmore, 1921, p.6).

In the end of the poem, the poet gives a historical confession about Paul, she reports:

Yet commander was she of the column, its leader;
 She was the spring whence arose that irresistible river of women
 Streaming steadily towards the National Capitol. (ll. 11-13)

Fisher documents that Paul is the “commander... leader” of this historical feminist protest. The poet admits that Paul takes the first step to make such a march arises and streams “towards the National Capitol” (Gillmore, 1921, p.6).

In addition to such a historiography, Fisher gives the same effort in celebrating the literary aspect of the poem. The poet presents the poem with imagery, and this is observable in the image of river. Fisher depicts the women’s march as “river of women” (ll. 1) and refers to the march with descriptive verbs that are related to the river such as “rippling,” “stream toward” and “floating.” Simile is another noticeable literary device that Fisher uses. She portrays Paul “like a purple flower floating” (l. 5) (Gillmore, 1921, p.6).

Robinson Jeffers’s poem “Moon and Five Planets” portrays Finland situation when she is invaded by the Soviet Union in 1939. Besides that it reflects the world general mood at that time.

During the World War II (1939-1945), Finland joins the war as a result of being invaded by the Soviet Union. Such an invasion is also known as the Winter War. Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki record that Finland involves in such a war with “the Soviet artillery barrage on the southeastern border and with air raids against Finnish towns on 30 November 1939.” This step, Kinnunen and Kivimäki report, is taken based on “the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939.” The historians also narrate that “in the morning of 30 November 1939,” the Soviet Union Army attacks “1,600-kilometer border” of Finland, and “14 Finnish” towns and areas are ruined by the “Air Force” (2012, pp.1, 144).

The Winter War is seen by the international community. Kinnunen and Kivimäki document that Finland experiences a lonely fight against the Soviet Union “from 30 November 1939 until 13 March 1940.” Such a condition makes the Finns live “with mixed feelings of national pride and isolation.” What is worth to be mentioned is that media positively reacts to this country “bravery... in its lonely victimhood” (2012, p.5).

The unbearable Finnish losses that come out of such war make the Finns start to think about a compromise. Kinnunen and Kivimäki document that “in early March 1940,” the Finnish forces are exhausted, on “the verge of collapse,” and suffer from a severe lack of ammunition. Consequently, the Finnish side expresses his readiness to discuss the “harsh peace offer” which is presented by the Soviet Union side. Unfortunately, Finland suffers from the increasing of “human losses,” and the advanced Soviet army forces the Finnish to retreat. Another side of this war territorial losses is “the Soviet annexation of Finnish Karelia... in March 1940” (2012, pp.44, 63, 150).

Finland refuses any international support because such a thing would mean the involvement of the supportive countries in the war. Kinnunen and Kivimäki document that “in March 1940,” and during the last days of the war, Finland rejects the British and French suggestion of “sending a military expedition.” On the contrary, Finland submits to “the Soviet peace terms” a way to leave the war (2012, p.2).

The Winter War is an event that is documented not only by historians but poets as well. The American poet Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) historicizes the Finnish-Soviet war in his poem “Moon and Five Planets” in (1940). The poem records the last days of the war when Finland expresses her readiness to negotiate the Soviet offer and end this cruel war.

In the second part of this short poem Jeffers records the historical facts of such a war; he says:

This beautiful day dying in such splendor is the tenth of March,
Nineteen forty; Finland today
After all her winter valor and the great war in the snow
Is beaten down by machines and multitude.
It will be long before the moon and five planets meet again;
And bitter things will have happened; not worse things. (ll. 6-11)

Simply, the poet historicizes with clear and direct choice of words the Finland-fall day. Similar to any historian, Jeffers records that on “the tenth of March, / Nineteen forty;”

Finland is defeated. The poet mentions the historical war-details such as “winter, snow, great war, March, Nineteen forty, Finland, machines and multitude.” The poet describes the historical event with accurate mentioning to the war season, month of Finnish retreat, the exact year, the country name, and the enemy warfare means to invade. Moreover, Jeffers sheds light on what will happen next in this world war (1941, p.129).

Though it is a short poem, Jeffers does care for the literary characteristic of the text. The first thing to be observed is the shift in mood. The poet starts the first part of the poem with a calm romantic mood that fills with natural figures like:

Five and a brilliant young moon
Reach like a golden ladder from the saffron - lined sea - rim
High up the dark blue dome of heaven.
Today we saw the first flush of wild - flowers, glad was our hillside
With yellow violets and blue - eyed grass. (ll. 1-5)

After presenting these lines the poet shifts in tone to the cruel harsh part that depicts the warfare mood. By presenting such an attitude, Jeffers tries to show the world as it is and the world with the horrors of war. The poem can be thought of as an anti-war poem. The poet, through such a technique, tries to show the reality of war. The second thing to be noticed is the prophecy that Jeffers presents in the last line. “And bitter things will have happened; not worse things” (l. 11), this literary line predicts the following: poets are prophets, and the prophecy of the poem comes true for that after the Finnish-Soviet war Finland experiences the Finnish-German war till the end of the World War II (1941, p.129).

Conclusions

The findings show that Fisher and Jeffers are able to play the role of historians for multiple reasons. First, the two poets convey the same main historical details of history but with their own poetic style. It means that the poets reveal their own feelings and emotions or that of those who involved in the historical matters while reporting the historical events. Second, during making these poems the poets are direct, clear, and objective enough in referring to the historical matters. Third, through analyzing the two poems, the similarity is noticed between what has been presented by the two poets and that of the presented historians. Forth, in a way or another, the tackled poets are part of the historical events they record. Fisher experiences the feminist protest herself since she is a feminist activist, and Jeffers witness the fall of Finland like any other witnesses; this makes the record of these historical events not limited to historians. Moreover, the presented poets write their poems in the same time of the historical occurrences; this can be regarded as the fifth reason. As a result, the poets take the role of the historians while playing their role as poets.

The analysis notes that the poets present the truth of the historical events and this is noticed in various ways. Through the analyzed poems, the poets record the same historical information and details. Fisher presents the same historical figure’s name with the exact location. Jeffers records the exact dates (like years, months, day, and seasons).

The two poems preserve their literary identity while presenting the historical matters. Such preservation is made through the using of the different literary techniques. Fisher presents the poem with the use of imagery and simile, and Jeffers introduces the poem with a prophecy and uses the shifting in mood.

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