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Early Modern Autobiography and Political Identity: the case of John Lilburne (1614-1657)

Gaia Celeste

PhD candidate – University of Bristol

Abstract

The English Civil Wars (1642-1649) were an era of intense political experimentation. English men of all social status ceased to identify as Stuart subjects and gained an active political role. At the same time, (auto)biographical writing insinuated in the writing and reading habits of the English.

Historians have largely neglected the richness of autobiographical writing, searching in it facts rather than individuality. On the other hand, literary scholars have wrenched the self-writer from its historical framework. This paper wants to fill the interdisciplinary gap by situating first-person narrative within its ideological construct. It will focus on the life and work of John Lilburne (1614-1657), charismatic leader of the Levellers, a faction pushing for the extension of religious tolerance and secular rights during the late 1640s. The public face of his movement, Lilburne embodied the Levellers' ideas, eventually gaining the nickname "Freeborn John".

Surveying Lilburne's published works, and in the particular *The Legal Fundamental Liberties of the People of England* (1649), where the author digresses in a fascinating account of his life, I hope to suggest that Lilburne made an extensive use of personal biography to make his supporters identify with the Levellers' agenda.

Through personification, Lilburne translated complex religious and legal theories into a comprehensible rhetoric that could be spread by word of mouth. Lilburne's work suggests how identity-making processes were pivotal for the popular politics during the English Civil Wars.

Ultimately, this paper argues the centrality of autobiographical writing in respect of the historical process of identity-making. The different forms of self-writing that emerged in this period hint to the new centrality of the individual within society. They also represent an easy-access rhetoric that, if more extensively employed by the historian, could shed light on the politics of popular participation in Early Modern England.

Keywords

life-writing, autobiography, identity, self, English civil wars

Introduction

During the 1640s the British took up arms against each other in a world-shattering civil war that would forever change the face of their monarchy. Religious confessions multiplied, borders were redefined and philosophical ideas reconsidered while people shifted allegiance between King and Parliament. The changes in British society were so profound that a contemporary ballad would describe them as the world turning ‘upside down’ⁱ. What is certain is that the civil wars present us with a variety of revolutionary elements that keep sparking our interestⁱⁱ. The expansion of the political arena, for starters, places the civil wars at the dawn of modern democracy. The accent put on the self especially by radical puritanism, furthermore, is a complex and rich phenomenon that links to the rise of individualism in Early Modernityⁱⁱⁱ. As the core of the body politic shifted from the subject to the citizen, English collective identities became increasingly participatory. This revolution also passed through the printing press that transformed the ‘public sphere’^{iv} by granting access to the ‘war of letters’ to previously estranged sectors of the society. The massive outpouring of news of this period is today a lively field of study^v. But popular literature also evolved, experimenting languages and genres that would establish during the Eighteenth century^{vi}. Notably, biography and autobiography, whose history reached back to the classical past, became in this period increasingly common, offering to readers relatable stories and protagonists to identify with^{vii}.

In this fraught political landscape a man exploited both the medium (printing), and the genre (autobiography) to accomplish a unique rhetoric and a highly powerful propaganda: his name was John Lilburne, the public face of the Levellers, one of the most radical factions active during the 1640s^{viii}.

This contribution will deal with this fascinating figure and focus on his 1649 *The Legal fundamental liberties of the People of England*, a pamphlet that offers an interesting case-study to understand how Lilburne used his own life to personify the Levellers political agenda. Thanks to pamphlets like *The legal fundamental liberties* Lilburne was able to shape himself as a fictional character, the hero of the English constitutional rights. The making of *Free-born John*, the nickname Lilburne forged himself, implied the existence of a world he would inhabit and fight for: the community of free-born Englishmen, the Levellers utopian idea of a more equal country. In this paper I will investigate the political writing of identity that Lilburne exploited to build his public persona.

John Lilburne

Before delving into *The legal fundamental liberties*, though, we must take a step back and look at the man; understand his social status, his upbringing and the kind of people he belonged and talked to.

John Lilburne was born to a family of lesser gentry in 1615^{ix}. Being in a well-off family, connected to the court and to the mercantile North England, Lilburne was able to receive a formal education and at the age of 15 he was sent to London, where he apprenticed as a tanner. Much alike other sons of the middle class, Lilburne came of age having gained the analytical tools to comprehend the legal debate that was in full swing during the Stuart Age. Nevertheless Lilburne did not belong to any cultural elite. Accordingly, his language is that of the ordinary people and expresses the urge to bring the political out of the palaces and down to the streets. The popularization of

intellectual ideas that Lilburne fostered in his pamphlets is a patent appeal to a more participatory politics and to the replacement of the obeying subject with a modern active citizen. Lilburne's opinions on the Constitution, for instance, were mostly based on the widely spread simplifications of Sir Edward Coke's ideas concerning the constitutional importance of Parliament, the representative body of government demanded to make law in the name of its electors^x.

The staunch defence of England's Ancient Constitution, though, was not the only influence on John Lilburne's intellectual and political upbringing. Historical scholarship has shown the importance of puritanism for the radicalization of the political conflict^{xi} and Lilburne was no exception to this trend. The 1630s will go down in *The legal fundamental liberties* as those of his religious formation. By the end of his formative years, Lilburne came to embody what Max Weber would famously call "active ascetism"^{xii}, breaking into the public world in 1637, when he was sentenced for contributing to the publishing of his Puritan mentor John Bastwick's anticlerical pamphlets^{xiii} and that same year he launched his pamphleteering career with the *Christian Mans Triall*, a detailed account that declared the unrighteousness of his judges and fashioned him as a Puritan martyr^{xiv}.

The 1640s were the age of maturity and political fight. In 1642 a recently married John Lilburne joined the Parliamentary infantry. Historians have pointed to the importance of army life to understand the spread of radical ideas and the moving popular allegiance^{xv}. The formation of the Parliamentary Army had created a bonded community of defenders of the Constitution. This new collective entity, however, did not come lacking of internal fractions. Again, Lilburne's biography proves exemplary. After having rapidly ascended to the role of colonel, Lilburne soon started to doubt of the godly nature of the Parliamentary cause. In 1645, when the establishment of the New Model Army made clear that the civil war was meant to destroy one of the pillars of the Constitution, the Crown, Lilburne left the army and in a wave of public letters denounced its deceitful leaders. In 1647 Lilburne associated with Richard Overton and William Walwyn, starting what was soon to be labelled the Levellers' movement^{xvi}. While his preferred mean of publication kept being the public letter, a first person narrative that always concerned Lilburne's life and frequent trials, his political ideas were refined and the advocated the return to the Ancient Constitution became forward-looking: a pact of the people for the people, where privileges would be levelled on the basis of the universal principle *salus populi, suprema lex*^{xvii}, an ideal betrayed by the authoritarian Cromwellian regime. Unsurprisingly, Lilburne was soon accused for his controversial pamphlets^{xviii} and, together with his fellow Levellers, he was accused of high treason in 1649. It is precisely at this moment that he will pen *The Legal fundamental Liberties*.

Finally, the 1650s and the Commonwealth age saw the dissolution of both the old regime and of Lilburne's passionate activism. Incarcerated for large part of this decade, Lilburne became disillusioned in the cause he fought for converted to the more irenic Quakerism, and led a private life that would eventually end in solitude in 1657. Despite the tranquillity of his later years, the echo of the ideal community of citizens he helped creating with his polemical life-writing kept being alive. Lilburne, a contemporary sonnet proclaimed, might had been dead but John, the hero of the people's right, was a figure that would keep inspiring future generations of rebels^{xix}.

The Legal fundamental liberties of the People of England

The Legal fundamental liberties of the People of England was certainly one of the pamphlets that contributed the most to Lilburne's 'herofication'. This public letter was particularly firstly and foremost in reason of its publication date^{xx}. We've seen before that 1649 was a real turning point for Lilburne and for Civil Wars alike: faced with the allegation of high treason, Lilburne exploited his trial to denounce the unlawful Cromwellian rule, sealing the image of Free-born John, the champion of the Constitution. But 1649 was also the climax of the decade-long Civil Wars with the execution of King Charles I and the subsequent constitutional shift to the Republic. Furthermore, this pamphlet is fundamental for its content: a sort of political memoir, where the Leveller sits down and examines his own life. The intense life-writing offered in *The Legal fundamental Liberties* can be partially explained with Lilburne's own biography. Earlier in Spring 1649, as the Leveller was preparing his attack against the Cromwellian authorities, all the members of his family got smallpox and his two sons died. The tragic losses left Lilburne an embittered man^{xxi} and strengthened the bond with his wife and their only remaining daughter. Accordingly, the theme of family resonates in the entire pamphlet, being used over and over in Lilburne's «rhetoric of explanation»^{xxii} as the force that drove the protagonist/narrator's choices and his political fights. Lilburne's relationship with the past is never objectively referential, but rather evaluative in the sense that he judges past events on the basis of his morals and puts them in a teleological construct aimed at the present^{xxiii} which, in turn, can only be known through the conditioning past events^{xxiv}. All present action, represented by the salutation and the final appeal to the Speaker, is therefore retrospective and charged with the heavy burden of the past^{xxv}. Generally speaking, the standard of good housekeeping is the parameter that Lilburne uses to judge his story and to criticize the persecutory intervention of political affairs in his life^{xxvi}. Two pillars hold this narrative: puritan piety and domestic life. On one side, Lilburne is part of a community of elected set against what he refers to as England's «most perfidious and treacherous professed (sic) friends». Faith puts him on higher moral grounds than his enemies. On the other side, Lilburne's personal life-writing makes this ideal community accessible. On the other side, Lilburne's personal life-writing makes this ideal community more attainable by making of the protagonist of *The Legal fundamental liberties* a simple man, wholly devoted to «the future well-being of my wife and children»^{xxvii}. The effect is that Lilburne presents the highly relatable opinions of a good and pious family man, a powerful rhetorical device that personalizes the political discourse and triggers a strong sense of identification in the reader. Lilburne will spell this out in the closing passage claiming to be «An honest and true bred, free Englishman; that never in his life feared a Tyrant, nor loved and Oppressor»^{xxviii}. According to Rachel Foxley, the appeal to common law in Lilburne is pivotal in defining the denizen, the «free-born Englishman» that could be both a subject and a citizen^{xxix}, but Lilburne does something more than theoretically describing the just role of the citizen of the future: he embodies it making it a living individual.

Under a formal point of view, the pamphlet appears as a «large Epistle ... stiled ... in Print»^{xxx} that can be divided into three parts:

- The first two pages, with the colophon and the formal overture and dedication to the Speaker of the Commons;
- A second part where Lilburne stiles the «PLEA it self»^{xxxi},

- And the third part containing the autobiographical narration^{xxxii}.

Literary scholarship has noted that some of the earliest experiments in autobiographical writing were interjections of life-writing fragments into complex narratives, meant «to augment the sense of interior reality»^{xxxiii}. *The Legal fundamental liberties* is paradigmatic in this sense. Even in the occasions when Lilburne abruptly interrupts his narration to insert quotes, the originality and integrity of the autobiographical text is still never compromised^{xxxiv}. This is consistent with James Amelang's observations on Spanish artisans' autobiographies during the *siglo de oro* where he found that the interjections of popular literature and folklore represented the union between private and public life^{xxxv}. While its title and incipit do nothing to suggest that the pamphlet is going to be a piece of autobiographical writing, in its largest section life-writing and political commentary are mingled to the point of being indivisible. As often early autobiographers did^{xxxvi}, Lilburne is not fully aware that he is writing a memoir. The form and themes of the pamphlet are consistently political, but by putting his life in the mix Lilburne created a fictional intimacy that blinked at the Puritan practice of self-observation^{xxxvii} and shaded the political with the reality of everyday struggles.

The power of this rhetorical choice is better explained if related to the purpose of the pamphlet. The public letter^{xxxviii} was in fact meant to persuade the authorities to let Lilburne off the hook. To pursue his aim, Lilburne deployed his strongest weapon: the fascination he played on people, which was what «the prosecutors found criminal» in his work^{xxxix}. The public is therefore both an addressee of the pamphlet and its implicit co-protagonist or, to phrase it in Sharon Achinstein's words, «a potent body» whose conscience authorized Lilburne to overturn the establishment^{xl} because it shared with him his religious and lay values.

Conclusions

John Lilburne made extensive use of life-writing to convey his political claims. Biography and political agenda are so deeply interwoven in *The Legal fundamental liberties of the People of England* that it is impossible to tell the man from his fight. Thanks to this Gordian knot, Lilburne rapidly became the public face of his movement. He fashioned himself as the martyr opposed to sinner enemies^{xli} exploiting what Nigel Smith has called «remarkably crude conceptions of popular heroism»^{xlii}. Under the pretence of denouncing the plain truth, he sold a highly partial cover story^{xliii}: his version of the facts is that of the good family man, the apprentice that became his own master, the ordinary fellow to which his supporters could easily relate to, finding themselves made somehow bigger and worthier on the printed page. By ennobling his story to the written paper, Lilburne «commits an act of textual revolt»^{xliv} and creates a living land for him and for his fellow freeborn Englishmen, people who accessed the *communicative circuit* created by printed texts and performed the identity propagandized by the Levellers, experiencing new kinds of citizenship^{xlv}.

To conclude, I hope to have shown how the trialectic linking life-writing, identity and politics was pivotal for John Lilburne and the Levellers' success. Through personification, Lilburne translated complex religious and legal theories into a comprehensible rhetoric that could be spread by word of mouth.

The personalization of politics and the autobiographical writing were a trademark of Lilburne's rhetoric. Nevertheless, this study could be expanded in significant ways. English of all social levels increasingly practiced a variety of forms of autobiography

during the civil wars era. The life-writing of the 1640s is a real treasure-trove whose systematic study could contribute to shed light on the politics of popular participation during the English Civil Wars.

Notes

ⁱ The ballad would later be used by Christopher Hill for his eponymous 1976 *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, here used in the Italian translation by E. Basaglia, *Il mondo alla rovescia: Idee e movimenti rivoluzionari nell'Inghilterra del Seicento*, Torino, Einaudi, 1981.

ⁱⁱ M. Caricchio, *Popolo e Rivoluzione? La storiografia e i movimenti radicali della Rivoluzione inglese*, Milano, Guerini e Associati, 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ E. Bein Ricco, *La modernità e il protestantesimo*, in *Modernità, politica e protestantesimo*, Torino, Claudiana, 1994, pp. 205-254; J. Morrill, *The religious Context of the English Civil War*, in «Transactions of the Royal Historical Society», V, 34, 1984, pp. 155-178; O. Nicastro, *Politica e religione nel Seicento inglese. Raccolta di scritti*, Pisa, Ets, 1995. H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Protestantesimo e trasformazione sociale*, trad. it. L. Trevisani, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1994, pp. 41-131; M. Walzer, *La Rivoluzione dei Santi: Il puritanesimo alle origini del radicalismo politico*, trad. it. M. Miegge, Torino, Claudiana, 1996.

^{iv} M. Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri nella Rivoluzione inglese. Gli autori di Giles Calvert 1645-1653*, Genova, Name Edizioni, 2003; J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda during the English Civil War and the Interregnum*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004; J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003; K. Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000; T. Watt, *Cheap print and popular piety, 1550-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

^v M. Infelise, *Prima dei giornali. Alle origini della pubblica informazione*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2002; J. Raymond, *News and Newspapers and society in Early Modern England*, London and Portland, Frank Class, 1999.

^{vi} S. Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994; M. Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri nella Rivoluzione inglese. Gli autori di Giles Calvert 1645-1653*, Genova, Name Edizioni, 2003; D. Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic, Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 93-191; K. Sharpe, S. Zwicker, *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of XVII century England*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, California University Press, 1987, pp. 246-317; N. Smith, *Literature & Revolution in England, 1640-1660*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1994; S. Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 1-61.

^{vii} J. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe*, Palo Alto, Stanford University Press, 1998; L. Z. Bloom, *The Diary as Popular History*, in «The Journal of Popular Culture», 9, IV, 1976, pp. 794-807; G. Garavaglia, *Come in un romanzo: Vite per la libertà nella prima rivoluzione inglese, 1640-1660. Suggestioni per una rilettura della pubblicistica coeva*, in A. Giuffrida, F. D'Avenia, D. Palermo, *Studi storici dedicati a Orazio Cancila*, Palermo, Quaderni – Mediterranea. Ricerche Storiche, 2002, II, pp. 709-741; L. A. Renza, *The Veto of Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography*, in «New Literary History», 1, IX, 1977, pp. 1-26; J. Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993; I. Tassi, *Storie dell'io: Aspetti e teorie dell'autobiografia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2007; K. J. Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 1978.

^{viii} H. N. Brailsford, C. Hill eds, *I Livellatori e la Rivoluzione Inglese*, trad. it. B. Maffi, Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1962; J. Frank, *The Levellers: A History of the Writings of Three Seventeenth-century Social Democrats, John Lilburne, Richard Overton, William Walwyn*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1955; P. Frascani, *I Levellers: lotta politica e coscienza rivoluzionaria nell'Inghilterra del secolo XVII*, in «Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli», 1, 1972, pp. 47-75; D. Wootton, *Leveller democracy and the Puritan Revolution*, in J. H. Burns ed., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 412-442.

^{ix} The overview of John Lilburne's life is based on P. Gregg, *Free-Born John, The biography of John Lilburne*, London, Phoenix Press, 2000.

^x For the constitutional debate see H. J. Berman, *Diritto e rivoluzione, L'impatto delle riforme protestanti sulla tradizione giuridica occidentale*, II, trad. It. D. Quagliani, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010; A. Cromartie, *The Constitutionalist Revolution: The Transformation of Political Culture in Early Stuart England*, in «Past & Present», 163, 1999, pp. 76-120; N. Matteucci, *Le origini del costituzionalismo moderno*, in L. Firpo ed., *Storia delle idee politiche, economiche e sociali. L'Età moderna*, I, IV, pp. 559-636; J. G. A. Pocock, *Il Momento Machiavelliano: Il pensiero politico fiorentino e la tradizione repubblicana anglosassone*, II, trad. it. A. Prandi, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1980; J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; C. C. Weston, *England: ancient constitution and common law*, in J. H. Burns ed., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 374-412.

^{xi} For the religious context and Puritanism see P. Adamo, *La città e gli idoli: Politica e religione in Inghilterra 1542-1572*, Milano, Unicopli, 1998; P. Adamo, *La libertà dei Santi: Fallibilismo e tolleranza nella Rivoluzione inglese 1640 - 1649*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1998; P. Adamo, G. Giorello, *La «tolleranza armata». Politica e religione nella Rivoluzione inglese (1640-1660)*, in E. Bein Ricco, *Modernità, politica e protestantesimo*, cit.; J. Morrill, *The religious Context of the English Civil War*, in «Transactions of the Royal Historical Society», V, 34, 1984, pp. 155-178; J. Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-42*, Longman, 1993; O. Nicastro, *Politica e religione nel Seicento inglese*, cit.; H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Protestantesimo e trasformazione sociale*, trad. it. L. Trevisani, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1994, pp. 41-131; M. Walzer, *La Rivoluzione dei Santi* cit.

^{xii} See also M. Walzer, *La Rivoluzione dei Santi* cit.

^{xiii} John Bastwick, *Letany* (Leiden, 1637).

^{xiv} N. Smith, *Literature & Revolution in England, 1640-1660*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1994, p. 132.

^{xv} M. Stoye, 'Memories of the Maimed': *The Testimony of Charles I's Former Soldiers, 1660-1730*, in «History» 88, 290, 2003, pp. 204-226.

^{xvi} H. N. Brailsford, C. Hill eds, *I Livellatori e la Rivoluzione Inglese*, cit.; J. Frank, *The Levellers*, cit.; P. Frascani, *I Levellers*, cit.; D. Wootton, *Leveller democracy and the Puritan Revolution*, cit.

^{xvii} John Lilburne, *England's Birth-Right Justified: against all arbitrary usurpation, whether regall or parliamentary, or under what vizer soever ... by a well-wisher to the just cause for which Lieutenant Col. John Lilburne is unjustly in-prisoned in New-gate, London, Larner's Press at Goodman's Fields, Printed Octob. 1645*; This was the principle at the core of the Levellers' manifesto, see *An agreement of the People for a firm and present peace, &c.*, E. 412, 21. October 28, 1647 and the later editions of 1648 and 1649.

^{xviii} *The Prisoners Plea for a Habeas Corpus* (4th of April 1648), *The Lawes Funerall* (15th of May 1648), and later *England's New Chains discovered* (26th of February 1649) and *An Impeachment of High Treason against Oliver Cromwell ... and Richard Ireton* (10th of August 1649).

^{xix} Upon Lilburne's death a sonnet appeared, mocking the existence of two people within the same John Lilburne «Is John departed? And is Lilburn gone?/Farewel to both, to Lilburn and to John./Yet being dead, take this advice from me/Let them not both in one grave buried be./But lay John here,/lay Lilburne hereabout./For if they ever meet they wil fal out» in P. Gregg, *Free-Born John*, cit.

^{xx} The pamphlet first came out on the 8th of June 1649. A second «Edited and Revisited» version with the addition of this polemical note to the colophon «London, Reprinted in the grand year of Hipocritical and abominable dissimulation, 1649» was dated by collector George Thomason on the 4th of August. For this study it was also used the Italian translation by V. Gabrieli in *Puritanesimo e Libertà, Dibattiti e Libelli*, Torino, Einaudi, pp. 231-292.

- ^{xxi} Lilburne clearly stated in his previous pamphlet *An Impeachment of High Treason against Oliver Cromwel (sic) and his son in law Richard Ireton* (May 1649) that he was facing the “greater tryal of my dependence upon God, than ever I had in my life”.
- ^{xxii} P. M. Spacks, *Imagining a Self. Autobiography and novel in Eighteenth century England*, Cambridge 1976, p. 313.
- ^{xxiii} D. Bertaux (ed.), *Biography and society*, cit., pp. 62 on.
- ^{xxiv} H. Porter Abbott, *Diary Fiction: Writing as action*, Ithaca 1984.
- ^{xxv} N. Smith, *Literature & Revolution in England*, cit., p. 242.
- ^{xxvi} At page 42, for example, has to choose how to settle and provide for his family: one choice is to move to Holland and find «a little repose», another is to accept a «place», in London, which Lilburne honestly can't do because he is unsatisfied with the new government. But Lilburne loves his country, which he doesn't want to leave therefore he can either learn a new job or acquire lands. But again, the choice cannot be taken because the law of the Kingdom are too much for him to start a new farm.
- ^{xxvii} John Lilburne, *The legall fundamental Liberties*, cit, p. 42. See also D. Underdown, *A Freeborn People, Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996.
- ^{xxviii} John Lilburne, *The Legal fundamental Liberties*, cit., p. 75.
- ^{xxix} R. Foxley, *John Lilburne and the Citizenship of 'Free-borne Englishmen'*, in «The Historical Journal», 47, IV, 2004, pp. 849-874. P. Adamo, *La libertà dei Santi*, cit.; P. Adamo, *La città e gli idoli*, cit. and D. Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, cit.
- ^{xxx} The letter he refers to in this quotation was the cited pamphlet *The Prisoner's Plea for a Habeas Corpus* (1648), in which he denounces Oliver Cromwell. John Lilburne, *The Legal Fundamental Liberties*, 1649a, p. 3.
- ^{xxxi} John Lilburne, *The Legal Fundamental Liberties*, 1649a, p. 3-18.
- ^{xxxii} John Lilburne, *The Legal Fundamental Liberties*, 1649a, pp. 19-75.
- ^{xxxiii} H. Porter Abbott, *Diary Fiction: Writing as action*, Ithaca 1984, pp. 18, 85.
- ^{xxxiv} On page 28, for example, Lilburne pauses to present the «true Copy» of a letter he sent to Cromwell's generals and that was forwarded by «Mr. Sexby», renown Leveller. On page 36 Lilburne copies a Declaration published by Parliamentarians on May 23 1649, he notes authors, dates and publishing place and states that in it «I finde these very words».
- ^{xxxv} J. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus*, cit., pp. 143 on.
- ^{xxxvi} J. Olney (ed.), *Studies in Autobiography*, Oxford 1988, pp. 129-130.
- ^{xxxvii} Puritanism put an accent on self-observation. P. Adamo, *La libertà dei Santi: Fallibilismo e tolleranza nella Rivoluzione inglese 1640 - 1649*, Milano 1998 e P. Adamo, *La città e gli idoli: Politica e religione in Inghilterra 1542-1572*, Milano 1998.
- ^{xxxviii} Public letters are considered forms of proto-autobiographies, see H. Porter Abbott, *Diary Fiction: Writing as action*, Ithaca 1984. See also D. Zaret, *Petitions and the "Invention" of Public Opinion in the English Revolution*, in «American Journal of Sociology», 101, VI, 1996, pp. 1497-1555.
- ^{xxxix} S. Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*, cit., p. 48
- ^{xl} S. Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*, cit., pp. 23, 28.
- ^{xli} John Lilburne, *Le libertà fondamentali del popolo d'Inghilterra*, cit., p. 242.
- ^{xlii} N. Smith, *Literature & Revolution in England*, cit., p. 136.
- ^{xliiii} J. J. Wallach, *Building a Bridge of Words*, cit., p. 455.
- ^{xliv} N. Smith, *Literature & Revolution in England*, cit., p. 136.
- ^{xlv} J. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus*, cit., pp. 189, 219-224; R. Darnton *What is the History of the Books* (1982).

Bio

Gaia Celeste is a first year PhD student at the University of Bristol. She is currently working on an interdisciplinary project combining historical and literary studies. Her research interests lie in the political culture of the English Civil War and in particular in the different forms of life-writing performed during this age.