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"The King is dead. Long live the Queen!": the representation of death in the Victorian Age.

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Abstract

This research had the propose of investigating the reasons why and how people who lived in England during the Victorian Age used to deal with death in the way it was done. With this intention, it was used in the research the methodology called Systematic Bibliographic Review – SBR, which made possible the selection and reading of books and articles that allowed a Sociological, Historical and Demographical comprehension of that period. These study fields were explored to be able to understand the relation and influence of them in life and mentality of those people, who lived in a time of Demographic Transition caused by the ascension of Capitalism and Industrial Revolutions.

Key words: Demographic Transition, Victorian Age, death.

Introduction

The main objective of this research was to be able to identify which death rituals were performed by the English population during the Victorian Age. For this reason, the research had two other objectives: to reunite enough information to understand and reconstruct the Historical period, focusing specifically on the first moments of the Demographic Transition and collecting data from the Sociological point of view to be able to analyse the relation between the society's structure and its acts.

Results and Discussion

As pointed out, the methodology used in this research was the SBR, which is divided into three steps: entry, processing and exit. The results just could be achieved and written in the third step because books and articles were rigorously selected and read in the other two phases.

The research was divided into two parts. The first one analysed the death rituals during the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period to understand how behaviour towards death used to change and some conducts used to persist through the time.

For this reason, when the second part of the research, which was entirely about the Victorian Age, started to be done, it was possible to understand that the ascension of Capitalism and the two Industrial Revolutions changed completely the death rituals.

These two events changed drastically life in England. The industrialisation and the growing of cities and science changed people's way of understanding religion, soul, and community. Moreover, it was during the Second Industrial Revolution that started in England what is called Demographic Transition. This event, described as a period when the mortality rate is reduced before a drop in fertility rate, happened because of the changes in life quality and social standards in that period¹.

Under those circumstances, people's mentality and lifestyle changed and it influenced in how they started to react to death: dying stopped to be considered a usual event of life to become the most difficult episode to accept in life. Therefore, their reaction was trying to keep as many physical memories as possible of the dying one as a heritage. For example, cemeteries became places of frequent visitation, *post mortem* photos became a common practice and it was well seeing towards society,

as a signal of respect, the use of mourning clothes for a very long time².

Image 1. *Post mortem* photos.



These are two *post mortem* photos. The first one, on the left, it was probably taken more days after the baby's death if compared to the second one, because the *rigor mortis* can be already seen. Source: (SCHMITT, 2008, p. 126-127).

Conclusions

In the final analysis, it was possible to comprehend that these death rituals were mainly practised the richest ones in England. Moreover, it was not possible to comprehend if there was a real connection between the Demographical Transition and the death ritual changes as it was between the death rituals, Capitalism, the Industrial Revolutions and religion changes.

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¹ MASSIMO, Livi-Bacci. *Historia mínima de la población mundial*. Barcelona: Editora Ariel, S.A., p. 107-146, 1999.

² SCHMITT, Juliana. *Mortes Vitorianas: corpos e luto no século XIX*. São Paulo: Centro Universitário Senac, 2008.