

THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SPANISH AGRARIAN LANDSCAPES: AN APPROACH THROUGH THEIR REPRESENTATIONS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Beyond a geography of the evident that only brings us to the forms of the territory and the epidermis of things, it is the landscape, a complex product that is built slowly in accordance with specific and interrelated dynamics of natural, social and cultural character. Yet it is its cultural dimension which, in giving full value to the landscape as such, provides the key to its understanding. Thus the landscape can be understood as the result of a process in which a set of natural components, which form the physical framework of an environment or geographical space, becomes territory or country through a secular history of conquest, appropriation, organization and standardization on the part of a human community and ends up being codified or metamorphosed in landscape by some perceptions, representations and cultural symbolizations.

In this point, phenomenology approximates us to a method of approach and understanding of the landscape reality as a phenomenon that emerges from the multisensory experience of the world organized essentially around the gaze. Now, the intentionality inherent in the interpretation that we are using here implies a multiplicity of perceptions; although we will only deal with the artistic gazes, since perhaps it is with them with whom the landscape reaches its more complete dimension. These gazes are different from the others (the technical, administrative, scientific, economic ones) due to the fact that they look for the recreation of reality, turning the immediate perceptions or the impression that they left on the memory into literary and iconic representations.

Thus literature, painting and the descriptions of travellers have been creating a kind of virtual hypertext that influences the interpretation that the whole society makes of its environment. We understand, therefore, that the landscapes of Castile in the writers of '98; the thirsty landscapes of the fields of Nijar by Goytisolo; the rural landscapes of Barreta, Marcote and other Basque painters; the *masía* of Miró; the Aragonese landscape painted

by Baulas or the meadows painted by Godofredo Ortega; and the Empordà of Pla or the rural worlds of Llamazares ,threatened by the forgetfulness, are but *resilient* archetypes of landscapes that have lost the functions which generated them.

II. LITERATURE, PAINTING AND LANDSCAPES: CONTEXTS AND ARQUETYPES

Methodologically, literature is understood in this work as a form of hermeneutic knowledge that links, on the one hand, nature, society and culture; on the other, built, perceived and represented landscape. This is why, from Geography, the interest of the cultural images coming from literature has been emphasizing for the geographic knowledge of the landscape.

Similarly, the iconic representations of the painting are linked to diverse technical supports that determine the way the artist approaches and filters the reality that emerges in his images. Now, here we were with a methodological challenge: the systematic approach to the study of the artistic representations of the Spanish agrarian landscapes. In response to it we will explore two methodological possibilities. In the first one, we will establish contextualised phases in accordance with historical and cultural references. In the second one, we select archetypal typologies of the Spanish agrarian landscapes.

III. CONTEXTUALIZED REPRESENTATIONS OF SPANISH AGRARIAN LANDSCAPES

There is a multiplicity of agrarian landscapes in Spain to which different figurations and landscape representations correspond, that will reach their highest diffusion as the rural is being appreciated as a whole like literary and pictorial subject. Accordingly, it could be argued that in Spain we cannot properly talk of landscape as a substantive reality, able to create a specific cultural heritage, until the 18th century, from the intentionality in the pre-romantic gaze of some learned travellers. However, it can be detected indeed earlier proto-landscape perceptions to which it is advisable to allude as precedents. We devote therefore a section to the proto-landscape images of the antiquity and to the first landscape representations of the learned.

Now, it will be necessary to wait for the 18th century so that the landscape appears like a distinctive and specific experience of a society. The learned travellers choose the Iberian Peninsula as an alternative to the usual destinations of the Grand Tour. In general the main reason for their gazes is not the countryside but this is represented under rational criteria in an almost endless kaleidoscope. Nevertheless, although the landscape is scarcely present in the Spanish literature of the time, there are plenty of references to the countryside in the iconic production of the learned artists.

The romantic gazes are between the sublime and picturesque. The romantic travellers appreciate what the learned had criticized. In their work they convey the sense of nature, a nature all the more appreciated the more it moves away of human domestication. They also appreciate the picturesque, that is, what is worthy of being painted, for that reason they depict some agricultural landscapes that, as a whole or because of the characteristics of their singular elements, seem worthy of interest. For his part, the Spanish romantic prefers the city, but also a map linked to the more rustic and melancholic agrarian spaces of the Peninsula.

El señor de Bembibre by Gil and Carrasco depicts the foggy landscapes of the Bierzo. In these landscapes everyday life becomes legend (Bécquer) and picture of regional customs in Estébanez Calderón.

Some travellers, like Roberts, came to Spain to paint images of the South. His dreamy landscapes, which combines the rural and the urban, had great influence on some Spanish painters like Villaamil. However, native artists as Barrón or Cortés Aguilar showed preference for the most colourful, bucolic and unreal vision of the Spanish countryside.

In the second half of the nineteenth century a phase of consolidation of the bourgeois vision of the world most practical and objective commences in Spain. The faithful interpretation of reality becomes literary objective. In this context, we witness the representation of regional agrarian landscapes and their most conspicuous expressions.

The landscapes of Mediterranean agricultures are very well depicted in several authors: Fernán Caballero, Valera, Alarcón, Blasco Ibáñez. The Atlantic agricultural landscapes gain prominence as deposit of culture and base of identity: Pereda (1894) recreates the mountain of Santander. Palacio Valdés writes the chronicle of a threatened rural world in Asturias. Pardo Bazán uses the rural landscape of the Galician village as frame of reference. For their part, the poets contributed sentimentalism to the regional agrarian landscapes. Rosalía de Castro conveys all the melancholy and damp of her homeland landscape.

The figurative nature of the landscape painting - which Haes introduces - finds its best expression in the realism and the costumbrismo that will dominate the Spanish artistic scene during the second half of the 19th c. This growing prominence of the landscape translates into a proliferation of artists who recreate all the landscapes of Spain. At this moment, perhaps because the incipient urban growth generates certain nostalgia for the nature among the bourgeois classes, the painters select rustic scenes and create a wide variety of images of regional agricultures.

The previous generations to the civil war look for the souls of Spain. The generation of '98 discovers the primordial landscapes of the Spanish character, among which the Castilian rural world is selected as metonymic archetype of the national whole, through an invention of Castile as plateau and rural in which the geographic ideas of Reclús connect to the vision of the nature of the Free Institution of Education. Azorín, Unamuno, Antonio Machado and Maeztu, based on the geographic determinism, reinvent a Castile plateau whose geography is the mirror to look into the past to explain the decay of the whole nation.

But, at the same time, those writers of '98 are travellers, and they develop their thought as they walk throughout other Spanish landscapes, which surprise them – as it happens to Unamuno with the Hurdes or to Azorin with the tragic Andalusia - because of their beauty darkened by the poor and miserable inhabitants. But, above all, an antagonistic image is being created from the gazes of travellers like Andersen Nexø, Somerset Maugham and, mainly, Costas Uranis. The important thing is that the agrarian landscapes of all the Spanish writers of the previous period to the Civil War of 1936 will be connoted as archetypes of deeper realities.

Among the painters, often associated with generations and literary groups, it can be observed how different trends create diverse interpretations of the same landscapes. Along with the most autochthonous tendencies the influence of the avant-garde will be present.

Thus, some of their more important artists try to represent their perceptions through the stylistic proposals of the different avant-gardes.

The countryside appears as a refuge and link in the post-conflict and pre-democratic generations. Travelling literature - following the wakes of Camilo J. Cela, *Viaje a la Alcarria*, Joseph Plá, *Viaje en autobús* and Alvaro Cunqueiro, *El pasajero en Galicia*- becomes a means to show reality and to learn from it. From here, numerous writers cross the fields of Spain with diverse objectives. Later, when the Spanish narrative recovers vitality, already at the end of the sixties, it will link to the territories of the city. However, the rural landscapes, mostly Andalusian and Castilian, will be present in unique authors like Delibes, Caballero Bonald or Alfonso Grosso. At the same time, poetry still keeps the powerful rural spirit of Machado in Muñoz, Leopoldo Panero, Luis Felipe Vivancos or Mario Lopez.

The painters who remain in the country (Vaquero Palacios, Evaristo Valle, Zabaleta, Perceval, Francisco Lozano, Canejas, Colmeneiro, Julio Quesada and Tusset) take refuge in their landscapes by representing them with very personal styles that walk from the impressionism to the abstraction.

During the democracy the creators approach the nature and the country with nostalgia. In this context, the agrarian landscape is part of the new environmental discourse with its marketing, which tends to turn the creative connotations into tempting products and virtual expressions of landscapes that often have been lost, but that the city dweller wishes to know and to recreate. Well-known writers such as Muñoz Molina, López-Andrade, Ana Maria Matute, Llamazares, Delibes, Aquilino Duque, María Barbal or Bernardo Atxaga keep the rural landscapes of the childhood in their works. In similar tones, poets such as Felix Grande, Eladio Cabañero, Parrón Camacho, Cesar Aller, Trapiello or Valente give clues to their readers so that they keep their existential landscapes alive.

In a world that tends to the virtual, the iconic images of the agrarian landscapes have been acquiring a growing demand of society and market; consequently, it is witnessed a proliferation of works in which true artistic landmarks coexist with banal approaches without soul.

IV. ARQUETYPES OF SPANISH AGRARIAN LANDSCAPES

C.G. Jung considers that the archetypes are inborn forms of perception and intuition that determine how we understand the world. They are like universal contents allowing us to organize significantly everything we contemplate. Thus, the real landscape is tinged with the archetypal landscape passed on from generation to generation. Now, what characterizes the present Spanish rural landscapes is the increasing distance between their images really contemplated and their representations. In fact, from the feeling of this distance we tackle our second proposal of systematization of the representations of the Spanish agrarian landscapes:

— Topic agrarian landscapes. We find in literature and painting landscapes of the climate; agricultural models; landscapes of towns; blessed and cursed landscapes.

— Creative world landscapes. Legendary landscapes of the *Clavileño* magazine, to be walked, travelled, recognized; landscapes of Cela and Aldecoa to walk and to see. Rural universes dominated by the slow and cyclical pace of the seasons, which Josep Pla describes

skilfully. Recreation of multisensory and subjective universes, anchored in time and out of the progress. Worlds painted with the green and the *orvallos* of Galicia by Maria Antonia Dans. Ingrained lands with which Zabaleta creates his own cosmos.

— Symbolic, atterritorial and shielded **by memory landscapes**. Landscapes that lock up and locked up lives such as those in the North of Catalonia which M^a Barbal reconstructs in *Canto rodado*. In Delibes's opinion they are worlds that will live while the stories that they lock up can be told.

— Arcadian landscapes of the childhood, nostalgia and memory.

— Immobilized landscapes, described with forgotten dialects.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Travellers and writers created very deeply ingrained images until the Civil War of 1936 to display a multiple vision of Spain (rich, cheerful, luminous, paradisiacal /poor, tragic, dry) which matched specific landscapes which have been taking root like archetypes. Finished the war, we witness a renewed version of archetypes on the part of different contemporary writers who make clear their position before the complex, changing and chaotic reality: the paradoxical harmony of the world of poverty after which dignity and beauty can be discovered; the Arcadian landscapes of memory as nostalgic response to the emergence and the accelerated change; the mythicizing of the wild and unspoiled landscape that still survives in some peripheral spaces.

All these images, although they are part of an almost vanished agrarian world, must be understood and taken into account since they have ingrained in the collective memory, causing that the population begins to value its agrarian landscapes as expressions of patrimonial wealth and factors of quality and well-being for its lives. For this reason, in these times of accelerated changes and crisis, the landscape has become a core and *resilient* component of our culture.

