

## THE IMAGE OF URBAN TOURISM: REVISITING THE ROMANTIC TOLEDO

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Cultural tourism is a rising form of tourism, whose motivation is the visit to places with an important artistic heritage and monuments, or with an interest from the point of view of its population habits. One of the fundamental elements to bear in mind when designing the urban touristic product addressed to culturally motivated people is the image of the city. It has a determinant role in the attractiveness that it may awaken. That is the reason why there is an interest in creating suggestive images. The literature has greatly contributed to the conformation of some of them and those provided by Romanticism are among the most valuable ones. Due to their content and intention, the romantic experiences of the landscape and of the nature are rather close to the geographic current sensitivity.

The consumption of places for cultural reasons is a characteristic of our time and gives rise to a good number of touristic trips. The cities already appeared as their destiny from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries thanks to the «Grand Tour», whose aim was formative and of knowledge broadening. The sense of this trip changed with the time and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the «scenic tourism» appears, it acquired the characteristics of a romantic experience in the emotional search of the beauty.

In this work the romantic vision of Toledo along with its geographical and landscape characteristics is revisited. This city has generated a good number of images and representations which have changed according to the period. The imaged conveyed by Romanticism about the city of the Tajo arises in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS OF THE ROMANTIC VISION OF TOLEDO

The romantic vision that has been considered in this work derives from the experiences portrayed by cultivated writers and travellers that visited it. The publication of the memories that these travels inspired gave rise to a great number of books and periodic publications which were particularly important in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this paper a chronological criterion has been followed, using some of these testimonies written in the period between 1830 and 1875. This has permitted to comment on the impression that Toledo caused at the middle of that century.

Among the distinguished Europeans who arrived in Spain in that period some famous writers and travellers can be mentioned such as the French Théophile Gautier, Gustave Doré and Charles de Davillier, the British Edward Cook and Richard Ford, and the Italian Edmondo D'amicis. In addition to these, other less known authors such as Nathaniel Armstrong Wells might be added.

In what concerns the Spanish authors some of the impressions included are those of Francisco de Paula Mellado, editor, journalist and geographer and also those of Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, one of the most famous writers who passed regularly through Toledo and who found in the city a place of inspiration.

Toledo was in clear decadence in the middle of the 19th century, as it is manifested in the documents of the time and concretely in the *Diccionario Geográfico-Estadístico-Histórico* of Pascual Madoz. Once its economic bases had been lost, the urban center presented a ruined and deteriorated image.

This context was interpreted by the romantic travellers who found in the city a series of elements rather valued by this movement: the singularity of its landscape, the unique combination of environment and culture, carved along the history which makes of it a model of the picturesque aesthetic; the importance of its historic past, visible in its medieval configuration or in the huge gothic constructions, the favourite style of the current; the legendary fables which are part of its patrimony; and the existence of numerous ruins.

The geographical characteristics of Toledo were without any doubt appealing for different reasons, from its own location and its sinuous streets, to the singular combination of cultures that result of the confluence of Arabic, Jewish and Christian influences. The urban profile appears in many of these writings as the first element of presentation of the city. Moreover, the rocky escarpment surrounded by the Tajo, the landscape of the water banks or its emblematic bridges, whose silhouettes will be repeated in pictorial and literary representations, are described in numerous occasions. Apart from the natural component, other really characteristic aspects are the urban labyrinthine network and the surprise that it produces in the city's visitors.

In this period, Toledo becomes an example of the picturesqueness. The sense of the picturesque is amply valued by the aesthetic of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it involves the amplification, together with the sense of the sublime, of the traditional horizons of the beauty and of the taste. The characteristics of what is understood as picturesque landscape are already fixed in the previous century and are related to its pictorial values, to the existence of a visual variety and also to the emotion that it provokes, that goes far beyond the simple contemplation and that involves the feelings. This connects with the essence of the romantic thought. The language of reason is insufficient to discover the landscape and it needs another type of knowledge, based in the analogy and in the metaphor, which makes use of the language of the imagination, the creativity and the sensibility. The consideration of picturesque also includes the modest and the rough, very well valued because of its authenticity. Everything which contributes to impress the spirit or has an exotic, evocative, or suggestive component is also denominated like that.

The city of the Tajo has a «local colour» and for the Europeans who visit it, it hides several exotic elements. The traces of the history and particularly the Arabic inheritance

are responsible in this sense. The Muslim presence (Moorish) is evident here, in numerous urban spaces and in a good part of the houses. Moreover, from the confluence of the Christian, the Arabic, and the Jewish derives the interest and the surprise it produces. As a result of this, the urban landscape that turns out as a summary of all these influences along the history, impacts in the observant romantic spirit.

The sensibility for the past expressed by the Romantics is very close to a melancholic feeling. Their attitude is in line with the historicism, in the sense that they live the past and they feel it as present, that is to say, they recreate in an imaginary way an idealized past time, which substitutes the more prosaic present. A particular period serves as an inspiration of the romantic spirit: the Middle Age, which is recuperated and praised by this movement. The importance of the medieval inheritance of Toledo was the magnet that attracted numerous artists. The descriptions of the historical buildings of the city show the high appraisal that awakens the patrimony in the romantic authors.

The idealisation of the past is the reaction towards the difficult present. One of its consequences is the passionate and sentimental defense of the conservation of the urban space that keeps traces of the history.

The remains, even the ruined ones, of past and more heroic times are seen with pleasure, charged with a value which is not purely historic but essentially emotional. However, explaining the charm or the magic of the ruins implies the experience of the subject who creates a reality which goes far beyond the material elements that compose it. The emotional rapprochement towards the nature is an essential feature of the romantic thought. From its perspective there is no separation between the man and the landscape, but a deep connection between them. This idea leads to the acceptance of an intimate correspondence between the outer, the world, the universe, and the inner, the individual conscience. Thus, the landscape is internalized and it becomes a *state of consciousness* so that when talking about the landscape, the romantics talk about themselves as well. This explains the predilection they showed for getting to know directly those places that better connected with their feelings.

The Romanticism writers recover and spread mythic confabulations already existent and known. They use them as if they were real to increase the attractiveness of the urban spaces. With the legends, whether they have a real background or not, they manage to make a place more evocative. The popular element, present in the traditions, is also reflected in these fables. In Toledo there are a lot of them, which appear recursively in the travellers' narrations. *El baño de la Cava* (the legend of the cave of Hercules) or *La historia de Galiana la bella* are some of the better known ones.

## **FROM THE IMAGINARY RE-CREATION TO THE MATERIALIZATION OF URBAN «SCENARIOS»**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and specifically in the years around the middle of the century, the consequences of the authentic revolution of knowledge which meant the Romantic are observed. This gives rise to a discovery of the landscape with a subjective and sentimental interpretation, which is not limited to the description as it also involves the emotion. In addition, it is the moment in which the tourism starts to develop, being an activity that

increasingly involves wider social strata and not only higher class people as it was the case until then. The cities become the destination places for some romantic travellers who already have some expectations of sentimental search before their arrival. In turn, their subjective experience has generated, through the tales and illustrations gathered in the publications of the time, a repertoire of impressions that are part of the collective imaginary.

In the current globalization period, when the tourism has reached a great dimension as an economic and social phenomenon, those images are used for the touristic market and particularly for the segment dedicated to the consumption of the culture. However, due to its nature, is difficult that the romantic interpretation, exemplified in the city of the Tajo, but which could be extended to other places, can become just a product of consumption. It cannot be reduced to a few scenic components, recovered and preserved with greater or less wise. Separated from its experiential and subjective charge it acquires a nuance of lack of authenticity, incompatible with the romantic spirit.

The romantic vision rebuilt with its imagination an ideal time and space, from the traces it had left us. That romantic idealisation has been replaced by tendency of materializing urban «scenarios» which, sometimes, have nothing to do with the authentic places. In this respect the essentially visual nature of the touristic experience can be mentioned. It highlights these components in the reconstructions aiming at the literally «visualization» by the tourist of the remains of an already disappeared past. The pressure of the touristic activity is transforming a lot of places in theme parks of the History, a tendency that is also evident in Toledo.

This is related to the two forms of interpretation of the cultural tourism: a) as a culture destroyer, generator of false experiences addressed to a specific public whose effects lead to the loss of the local culture; b) as a good model of touristic activity which helps to protect the culture, to promote the respect for it, and that at the same time contributes to its diffusion, managing to make the local people proud of it. The more or less optimistic attitude towards the subject depends on the way the touristic management of a historical city is put into practice. The use of the images generated in other times is an interesting and useful element for this activity. But, in addition, it is part of a collective patrimony that should not be distorted.