

TRAVELLERS THROUGHOUT SPANISH LANDSCAPES: FROM 18TH CENTURY TO MODERN DAY

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Travel writing is very rich in social content and information, something that obliges us to focus on one aspect of it: the description of scenery, without forgetting the principal messages that derive from it. Our aim here is to analyse the evolution of the traveller in Spain up to the present day, taking the 18th century as a reference point, because of the number of foreigners who visited it and the Spaniards who started to travel abroad.

Spain was not part of the *Grand Tour* as a result of the Black Legend and so it was necessary to wait for the second half of the 18th century for the first visitors to come, visitors who would break down the Black Legend's clichés. It is assumed that in the texts left by travellers from all periods there might be exaggeration, falsehood and subjectivity.

1. ENLIGHTENED TRAVELLERS: SECOND PART OF THE 18TH CENTURY

While we will concentrate on the interest they show in the scenery in this study of travellers, a single exception will be made for the first of them as he lived in Spain for twelve years (1777-89) as French ambassador, was an Enlightenment man and is possibly the traveller whose vision most closely matches reality. Here refer here to Jean-François Bourgoing with his *Imagen de la moderna España* (1789). In this book we can read that Spain was «as interesting as it was little known», the result of his great passion for objectivity, his fine sense of irony and his learned observation. He also focussed on Spain's rugged and complex geography, its great regional differences and its corrupt administration.

The first great traveller in the normal sense of the word was the enlightened cleric Joseph Townsend who, in his *Viajes por España* (1786-87), displayed his fine observant spirit as he was able to record his geological and humanist knowledge at a moment when naturalism was flourishing.

The enlightened minority in our country understood that travelling was an ideal factor for cultural enrichment. The most important travel work of this group is by Antonio

Ponz. In his letters from European cities, especially Rome and above all from his *Viaje de España* (1772-94) the following topics of geographic interest stand out: depopulation, reforestation, improving agriculture, industry and mining, the roads and waterworks, with a lively interest in analysing the landscape and urban outlook being displayed.

As the 18th century was drawing to a close, Spain was visited by a scholar who had trained as a linguist: Wilhelm von Humboldt, the brother of Alexander, who decided to write his *Diario de viaje a España* (1799-1800). Although his general vision was quite pessimistic, he would finally state: «It is a marvelous country whose inhabitants I shall always love».

2. ROMANTIC TRAVELLERS: 19TH CENTURY

Amongst the Romantic travellers, there is no doubt that it was Richard Ford who, with his masterful narration of journeys, exercised the greatest influence with his *Manual para viajeros por España* (1845), as he came to see Spain (1830 and 1831) after several journeys around Europe (1815 and 1822). He starts by referring to: «this, the most romantic and peculiar country in Europe». After describing the different ways and forms of travelling, he goes on to note that the country's climate is disparate, the peninsula is «one mountain or agglomeration of mountains... seven distinct chains of mountains».

The last foreign Romantic traveller was the French aristocrat Charles Davillier, accompanied by the artist Gustave Doré, who with his illustrations would help to explain the journey perfectly. Between them they provided the finest work of travel literature, free from exaggeration and very close to the reality of the country, as a close reading of *Viaje por España* (1862-73) will show.

The influence of the Romantics could be felt in a large number of Spanish travellers who travelled around Europe. Pedro Antonio de Alarcón travelled *De Madrid a Nápoles* (from Madrid to Naples) (1860-61), travelled through part of his province, in *La Alpujarra* (1873) and above all there were his *Viajes por España* (1883).

3. MODERNIST AND SOCIAL REALIST TRAVELLERS: LATE 19TH CENTURY TO THE MID-20TH CENTURY

The Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren who was one of the founders of modernism, and the Basque painter Dario de Rogoyos travelled through Spain in 1888. As a result of the journey, Rogoyos would collect his impressions in the book *España negra* (1899). They start by criticising earlier travellers, accusing them of looking for comfort: «them and the railways have vulgarized the passion of travellers». During the first decades a series of foreign travellers visited who were interested in Spain's cities.

Miguel de Unamuno, one of the writers of landscapes of the Generation of '98, wrote two travel books: *Por tierras de Portugal y de España* (1911) and *Andanzas y visiones españolas* (1922). Both contain a series of texts about his «excursions». Unamuno was interested in the «variety of landscapes» in general, but also in visiting major cities, contrasting life in large cities with that in the small ones.

John Dos Passos, who stood out for his social concerns, wrote a book about his journey around Spain: *Rocinante vuelve al camino* (1923). In its pages we find an aspect that is

worth highlighting: a constant insistence on the great scenic differences between regions. The Englishman Laurie Lee first came to Spain in 1931. He returned shortly after the start of the Civil War, motivated by social reality, and wrote about his experiences almost four decades later.

The painter and author from Santander, José Guíérrez-Solana, was impressed by the short work by Verhaeren and Regoyos and decided to describe his experience of travelling over three decades in *La España Negra* (1900-20) and *La España Negra (II) Viajes por España y otros escritos* (1913-36).

Two British travellers from the strand of social realism who had got to know the country during the period of the Republic visited it again under Franco, with the aim of publishing their experiences in the 1950s, we refer to two men who were close friends. The correspondent and traveller Gerald Brenan, in *La faz actual de España* (1950), starts his diary with a phrase that is clearly laudatory for someone who knows us well: «The Spanish are a very interesting people and their country is one of the most beautiful in the world», but he does shy away from underlining the hard and unequal situation of the postwar period. The British correspondent Sir Victor S. Pritchett would publish *El temperamento español* a few years later (1954). He met the Generation of '98 and this changed his life, in fact, he admitted that of all the countries he had visited «Spain is the one that has made the greatest impression on me».

4. FRANCOIST TRAVELLERS AND THE LANDSCAPE: THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The scenery and descriptions of it not only became a tourist resource but many authors of the time also turned to them to avoid other problems. Amongst the Francoist travellers who are most interesting as travelled abroad, we find the journalist Valeriano Salas and the correspondent Julio Camba, about whom a work has been written with contributions from him.

Two Spanish writers connected to the regime undertook journeys around Spain as a whole from the mid-20th century, on which it could be said that they observed it without seeing the social situation. Víctor de la Serna in *Nuevo Viaje de España. La ruta de los foramontanos* (1955) and *Nuevo viaje de España. La vía del Calatraveño* (1960) provides us with two large selections of previously published articles, with the aim of «navigating towards love and a full understanding of this country without violence». And there was Camilo José Cela, the author of the three volumes of *Viajes por España* (1948-1964) that are collected in his complete works. Sometimes he refers to himself as a «vagabond», other times as a «traveller». His first journey was the «Viaje a la Alcarria» that he carried out in 1946 and that he would repeat forty years later.

5. HYPERREALIST AND NEOROMANTIC TRAVELLERS: THE TRANSITION FROM ONE CENTURY TO ANOTHER

The first account of a journey around the Spain of autonomous communities is by Manuel de Lope who, having been absent from his country for two decades because of

family exile, wrote a two-volume work: *Iberia. La puerta iluminada* (2003) and *Iberia. La imagen múltiple* (2005). These form a hyperrealist journey through the 17 autonomous communities, through a country that is passionately experiencing its new position in the world, a Spain that is different from the one he knew when he left in 1969.

We have noted this boom in travel books as many autonomous communities have in fact been able to publish anthologies with texts by travellers over time. In current travel books what interests us is not the journey, but what remains of it, the cluster of sensations.

The neo-romantic with the greatest weight at present in travel literature is Julio Llamazares, who having written various novels based on significant places in his life and having journeyed through various zones and regions, wrote his *Atlas de la España imaginaria* (2015) in which a series of places appear in no geographical order that are related to important sayings in Spanish or to classical authors. Manuel Leguineche stands out amongst Spanish travellers to foreign countries in recent decades.

6. FINAL REFLECTIONS

To conclude, we should recall that Rull and Serrallonga said that: *travel = holidays*. This has now reached its ultimate expression with the tourism industry, and the figure of the traveller disappearing to be reserved for great adventures. We believe that we have shown that travellers have followed their paths, independently of tourism.

If the fundamental objective of travel literature has been to analyse the description of landscapes, we have seen how these have developed from an interest in nature, the rural, to focus finally on the urban.