

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Geography, Landscape and Identity in Spanish Writers of the Generation of '98

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Abstract:

Spanish writers of the so-called Generation of '98 reacted to the national crisis of the late nineteenth century. Faced with this critical situation, this group of writers showed a reformist attitude and went looking for the true keys of national identity, beyond the obvious. They attached great importance to the knowledge of the physical and human geographical aspects of the territory, and were particularly interested in landscape, which afforded innovative and valuable images, according to the double point of view (explanation and understanding) promoted by Humboldt in what was at the time modern geography. This incorporation of the geographical perspective, related to the direct influence of the ideas of Francisco Giner and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, was a feature of the writers of the Generation of '98, and, based on that, they distinguished in the Spanish landscape a set of qualities and values that allowed them to raise it to the category of symbol of the Spanish history and national identity. In this way geography and literature were joined in an original way in the work of the writers of the Generation of '98, and that convergence was projected in their way of understanding and appreciating the Spanish landscape, which latter influenced different other representations of Spanish landscape (artistic, scientific, geographical).

Keywords: modern geography; literature; generation of '98; Spanish landscape; symbol; Spanish national identity.

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Introduction

The Spanish writers known as the Generation of '98 reacted collectively in the face of the national crisis at the end of the 19th century. This crisis involved, among other things, Spain's military defeat in the conflict with the United States and the loss of its last overseas colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines). Facing this critical situation, that group of writers displayed a reformist or, as they said in that era, 'regenerationist' attitude and dedicated themselves to searching, beyond mere outward appearances, for the keys to national identity. All of them attributed great importance to knowledge of the physical and human geographical aspects of Spain, and took a very special interest in the landscape. Writers such as Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), Pío Baroja (1872-1956), José Martínez Ruiz (1873-1967), who signed his works with the *nom de plume* 'Azorín', and Antonio Machado (1875-1939) formed the Generation of '98. Additionally, painters such as Aureliano de Beruete (1845-1912), Jaime Morera (1854-1927), Darío de Regoyos (1857-1913), Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923), and Ignacio Zuloaga (1870-1945) formed an associated contingent of artists.

This article examines the main features of the vision of the Spanish landscape harbored by the writers of Spain's Generation of '98, paying particular attention to its geographical content and its relationship to the search for national identity. The article falls along the line of studies that have, for some time now, reflected an interest in considering the characterization of the geographical and landscape aspects of artistic, pictorial and literary expressions, and its theoretical and methodological orientation essentially mimics those adopted in such studies. To this end and based on the value, for geographic knowledge, of understanding the keys to the geographical and landscape aspects present in certain literary works (Pocock 1981, 1988), which constitute concrete manifestations of what some authors, following Hugh C. Prince, have called the 'geographical imagination' (Prince 1962; Daniels 2011), several studies have been carried out, focusing on authors or groups of authors that have been considered significant in this regard. For example, we can recall those that have centered on the works of authors like Ivan Turgénev, John Ruskin, Thomas Hardy and Arnold Bennett (Cosgrove 1979; Hudson 1982; Jones 1987; Paul 1987), and on the writings of some Spanish and Mexican authors (Tort i Donada 2006, 2010; Mollá Ruiz-Gómez 2016). As regards the Spanish writers of the Generation of '98, there is a marked contrast between the numerous studies that have been devoted to them from various points of view (literary, sociological, philosophical or historical, among others) and the scarce works that have relied on a geographical perspective. Despite the interest that this last aspect shows in the work of these writers, there have been few studies that have focused until now on the consideration of their geographical contents, taking into account the whole group or some of its most significant exponents (García Fernández 1985; López Ontiveros 2009; Martínez de Pisón 1973, 2012; Ortega Cantero 2002, 2007, 2016; Zulueta Artaloytia 1988).

The writers of the Generation of '98 are undoubtedly the best Spanish example of a connection between literature and geography. The geographical ideas and reasoning are very present in their works, in which they offered, relying on those ideas and reasoning, original assessments of the landscapes of Spain and their relations with the national

identity. These writers elaborated a finished literary geography of Spain, and they also coined valuable images of their landscapes, that influenced to a great extent later cultural and geographic visions of those same landscapes. The main purpose of the study that follows is to provide an overall interpretation of the geographical basis and the results of the assessments of Spanish landscapes and their meaning with respect to national identity promoted by the writers of the Generation of '98, one of the most relevant and influential literary groups of contemporary Spain. It is about adding the consideration of an interesting case, and particularly significant in the Spanish literary trajectory, to the panorama of the studies on the connections between geography and literature and the configuration of literary geographies.

The interest in geography and Spanish landscape

The Generation of '98 writers exhibited, throughout their work, great interest in Spain's geographical characterization and its landscape. In his first major novel, *La voluntad*, published in 1902, Azorín wrote the following: 'The measure of an artist can be taken in his sense of nature, of the landscape... As an artist, a writer's quality is determined by his capacity to interpret the *emotions of the landscape...*' (Azorín 1902/1968: 130). Some years later, in 1916, in his book entitled *Un pueblecito*, Azorín also spoke of Spain's ignorance of geography: 'Spain: a country where nobody knows geography. A little bit of world geography. Nothing of the geography of Spain.' (Azorín 1916a: 87). The literary works of the Generation of '98 writers revolved to a large extent around the sought-after regeneration of Spain, which, in order to be effective, had to be based on better knowledge of its geographical characterization and an enhanced appreciation of its landscape. Both aspects, geography and landscape, are very much present in their writings and showcase the influence of the modern geographic ideas on their literary and intellectual horizons.

The Generation of '98 writers felt the need to better grasp the Spanish reality, which was indivisible from the geographical and landscape conditions existing at that time. As a result, they accepted the idea that the geography and landscape were of considerable help in gaining an insight into the Spain they sought. There was a significant geographical aspect to the intellectual perspective of the Generation of '98 writers, a geographical point of view that played a key role in their processes. This was due to the incorporation of the keys of geographical knowledge of their time, with their forms of observation and reasoning, and the ways of valuing the landscape associated with that geographical perspective. The work of the writers of the Generation of '98 offers descriptions, interpretations and evaluations of reality firmly based on ideas and geographical reasoning. And this was one of the most original and distinctive features of their writings. The writers of the Generation of '98 included a lot of geographers, and this dimension is important to understand the characterization and scope of their literary work.

The presence of the geographical point of view has been indicated in the work of several writers of the Generation of '98, especially in relation to their experiences as hikers and their views of the landscape. For example, it has been said that Unamuno described landscapes 'like the most expert geographer would,' and that some of his writings are even regarded as 'perfectly structured and developed geographical monographs' (López

Ontiveros 2009: 105-6). Unamuno's geographical leanings appear frequently in his works, and one can undoubtedly speak of Unamuno the geographer. A text by Azorín entitled 'En la montaña', included in his book *España. Hombres y paisajes*, from 1909, has been said to offer "the best, though not the most usual, way to write geography" (Martínez de Pisón 1973: 419). It can be said that the writers of the Generation of '98 offer in their work a valuable modality of literary geography, comprising altogether what one author has called 'a literary map of Spain' (Martínez de Pisón 2012: 20).

The interest amongst the writers of '98 in characterizing Spain's geography and landscapes was manifested in two ways. The first was through a personal and direct engagement with the land by means of frequent trips and excursions. The writers of the Generation of '98 put into practice their intention of better learning the reality of Spain through excursions. In their opinion, there was no better way to grasp that reality than by experiencing it in person and seeing its landscapes and people directly. This attitude was in close agreement with that promoted by modern geography of the time, which was equally agreeable to basing knowledge of the realities studied on direct observation. The excursions of the writers of the Generation of '98 are part of an intellectual tradition that spanned the modernity that was started by Romanticism, and which made visual experience the basis for all knowledge, whether scientific or artistic. As with modern geographers, they supported their knowledge of Spain's reality, and of its landscapes and peoples, on visual experience, on the direct observation of the subject, and turned their outings into the basis for that knowledge.

Observation was the main instrument used by the Generation of '98 writers to characterize the landscapes they visited on his travels. They were keen, reflexive observers who were not only capable of taking into account the physical and human traits of these landscapes, but also of organizing them and interpreting their actions and effects. Their way of describing landscapes exhibits a clear connection to the modern geographical tradition. They are interested in the physical and human shapes of landscapes, and that interest aligns with the priority granted to the visual experience when studying and learning the landscape. Their point of view, therefore, was predominantly morphological. They paid attention to a landscape's external and visible form, to its appearance, and they were interested in both its natural and human components, in the relationships between them, and in the resulting arrangement of the whole. The landscape, then, for the Generation of '98 writers is the same as it was for modern geography of that period: an ordered whole, the expression of geographic order.

The second way in which the interest amongst the writers of '98 in characterizing Spain's geography and landscapes was apparent was in their reading of works that could help them to experience and appreciate it, such as geographical dictionaries and narratives, or certain travel books and others of various types. With regards to this way of approaching the landscape through written texts, worthy of note is the close connection that some '98 writers established between literature and landscapes, such that at times the evocation of a landscape arose from reading a book intimately associated with it.

In *Un pueblecito* Azorín also referred to the connection that can be established between literature and landscapes. In his view, autumn days are 'the pleasant, harmonious and profound days of the high Castilian plateau,' they are 'the days of the Guadarrama and

of Gredos;’ and also ‘the days when the meaning of the Castilian landscape is joined with that of the deep meaning of the classics.’ He adds that some pages of *La Celestina* and *El Lazarillo de Tormes*, two great Spanish literary works of the 16th century, ‘prompt us to meld, *painfully*, with the landscape, the environment and the art of Castile.’ Reading these pages can help us to ‘feel at one with the cities and the old landscape’ (Azorín 1916a: 14-6). Unamuno, meanwhile, speaking about one of his trips to the monastery of Yuste, closely linked the literary work of Fray José de Sigüenza, the *Historia de la Orden de San Jerónimo*, published in 1595-1605, which speaks of said monastery, with the landscape of the geographical region in which it is located: ‘The language and style of this work coincide wonderfully with the landscape we find today in the area of Yuste’ (Unamuno 1922: 225). The connection between the written text and the landscape is clear to Unamuno: ‘The land speaks to us in the same language serious, unhurried and pristine of P. Sigüenza’ (225).

The interest of the ‘98 writers in travel books, in which they sought news about Spain and impressions and assessments of its landscapes, is also related to this inclination. In travel books they saw a source of rich and vivid impressions and information, often more valuable than conventional and academic texts for an understanding of certain historical, geographical and landscape-related aspects. In Unamuno and Azorín, who were always interested in knowing Spain’s ‘inside story’ or ‘intrahistory,’ which they viewed as more authentic than conventional ‘external history,’ we can find eloquent examples of this positive appraisal of travel books. Unamuno spoke, for example, of ‘the greater lessons drawn from travel books than from History books’ (Unamuno 1895a: 37). And Azorín, as Inman Fox has noted, ‘sought real «history» —the history that lives on— in works of fiction and travel books,’ the latter forming part of his ‘favorite readings’ (Fox 1988: 115).

The writers of the Generation of ‘98 not only took into account the historical dimension of travel books, but also took an interest in their geographical and landscape aspects. A good example is what Azorín wrote about the modern ‘discovery’ of the *Sierra de Guadarrama*’s landscape by French travellers. In the *Guide du voyageur en Espagne* by Jean-Baptiste Bory de Saint-Vincent, in 1823, Azorín found ‘sketches of landscapes,’ some of which are presented in the description of Napoleon’s passage through the *Sierra de Guadarrama*, during ‘a ferocious storm,’ in which one can perceive an intimate relationship between the energy expended by the emperor and conditions on the mountain, with its ‘outcroppings and grandiose, severe, almost black scree, on this stormy day’ (Azorín 1913: 270-1). And, according to Azorín, it was precisely the travel books by the French writers Théophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas and Amédée Achard, from the 1840s, that ‘led us to see those magnificent mountains that Velázquez and Goya had placed in the backgrounds of their paintings’ (Azorín 1918: 207). Other travel books were also used by Azorín to form his images of the Spanish landscape. Among them, Richard Ford’s *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain*, initially published in 1845, supported by its author’s invariably ‘acute’ and ‘reflexive’ observations in two volumes full of ‘extremely astute observations, blunt judgments and original points of view,’ constituting, in Azorín’s opinion, ‘one of the best books we have on Spain’ (Azorín 1911: 4).

The Generation of ‘98 writers also took an interest in the geographical knowledge of their time and the possibilities for reform attributed it, as they firmly believed that one

had to know the country's geographical characterization in order to improve it. Geography, and geographic knowledge, thus acquired national and patriotic significance. In the late 19th century the geographer Ricardo Macías Picavea spoke of the 'truly patriotic character' of geography, which he considered 'the first national science' (Macías Picavea 1895: 346). And Azorín later expressed a very similar view: "The basis of patriotism is geography. We will not love our country, we will not love it well, if we do not know it. Let us feel our landscape; let us infuse the landscape with our spirit' (Azorín 1916a: 95-96). And that is what the writers of the Generation of '98 succeed in doing: discovering Spain's geographic reality, feeling its landscapes, and spiritually delving into the qualities and meanings that could be attributed to it.

This exploration of the reality of Spain's geography and landscapes through the reading of literary and geographical texts was complemented and enriched by the other approach, the personal and direct one, as the '98 writers made frequent trips and excursions. They all travelled regularly, thereby achieving direct knowledge of Spain's landscapes. But the interest of the Generation of '98 writers in understanding the Spanish landscape was not limited to the aesthetic aspects, as had been the case with the Romantic authors. It also opened up broader perspectives, with the points of view of modern geography very prominent among them. From this close contact with the landscape, these authors of '98 gained a notable geographic aspect in their work, undoubtedly one of the most singular and salient features of their writing. It is understandable that we wonder why geography and the landscape occupied such a prominent place in the work of the Generation of '98 writers. To answer that question, we first have to say something about the relation of the writers of this generation with the thinking of Francisco Giner de los Ríos, a liberal, reformist intellectual who was very influential in the Spanish world of that era. In 1876, Giner de los Ríos founded the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, an educational facility involved in a very significant modernizing effort.¹

The influence of Francisco Giner and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*

The vision of landscapes advanced by Francisco Giner de los Ríos and his colleagues at the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* had a direct influence on the writers (and painters) of the Generation of '98. Azorín spoke of the important impact Giner's vision and the *Institución* had on the authors of his generation, and on the emergence of a renewed interest in Spain's cultural traditions and landscapes:

The spirit of the *Institución Libre*—that is, Giner's spirit—has shaped the group of '98 writers; that spirit has sparked a love of Nature and, consequently, landscapes and all things Spanish, and Castilian, a love that has renewed our painting (Beruete, Zuloaga, etc.); a spirit that has made us turn and look back on the traditional literary values; the old poets have been brought back to life; editions of the classics have been produced again, unlike ever before; and a new school of philologists and critics has arisen with a spirit that did not exist before. (Azorín 1916b: 92-3)

Juan López-Morillas rightly observed that Francisco Giner had ‘discovered’ the Castilian landscape, ‘of whose appreciation and praise he left abundant testimony,’ long before the writers of ‘98 did (López-Morillas 1988: 103). And José Ángel Valente observed that the vision of Spain—not only political and moral, but also the physical vision, of its geographical nature and its landscape—which runs through Spanish literature since the ‘98 writers ‘is, to a very considerable extent, traceable to Giner.’ He added:

There is, indeed, a way of feeling Spain’s history, art, landscape and its reality that has been attributed, with a certain exclusivism, and without much scrutiny, to the Generation of ‘98 writers, without exploring its origins or roots very thoroughly. With regards to these feelings, and their connection and indebtedness to Giner’s influence, few perspectives could be more valuable than that of Azorín, perhaps the writer of the group who most consciously embraced the Generation’s shared principles. (Valente 1965: 5)

Francisco Giner de los Ríos and his associates at the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* offered, from the 1880s on, an updated image of the Spanish landscape, and that image incorporated the concept of landscape begun by Humboldt and, therefore, based on the idea that to truly understand the landscape, to understand what it *is* and what the landscape *means*, you have to combine explanation and understanding, science and art, reason and emotion (Ortega Cantero 2012). Approaches to the landscape were to be based on an open and flexible, plural and integrative point of view, seeking the interpenetration of diverse but complementary perspectives. The aim was to put into practice what Vincent Berdoulay and Hélène Saule-Sorbé called the ‘mobility of the gaze,’ a dual maneuver required of the modern observer of the landscape: physical movement, from one place to another; and intellectual movement, between various fields of knowledge, particularly between scientific and artistic perspectives (Berdoulay and Saule-Sorbé 1998).

Incorporating this geographical perspective, Giner and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* offered the first modern view of the Spanish landscape, one that was closely related to their ideology and reformist aspirations. In so far as they believed, like modern geographers, that there are close relationships and correspondence between landscapes and men, understanding the former was, for Giner and those who supported the Institution, a way of comprehending the Spanish people, their character and their history. Consideration of the landscape occupied a prominent place when it came to revealing the characteristic features of the nation’s identity, and the way of understanding it entailed, for Giner and his colleagues at the *Institución*, a clear intention of collective affirmation, and a search for the national community’s distinctive traits. Their vision of the landscape is inseparable from that search for Spain’s national identity, influenced by their nationalist, liberal and progressive perspective.

In this way Giner and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* constructed a renewed, modern image of the Spanish landscape and, above all, of the Castilian landscape, one which highlighted its natural, historical and cultural values, in addition to its symbolic qualities, and the possibility of seeing in it a national symbol of their own history and culture. In this way they opened the door to a new way of viewing the landscape, in which

were fused, in accord with the geographical way, explanations and understanding, nature-based and cultural perspectives, careful observation, and the attribution of values and meanings. That was their contribution, in many aspects seminal, to Spain's modern landscape culture. And that way of seeing and assessing the landscape, with its geographical aspects, was that which directly influenced the authors of the Generation of '98.

Those writers approached the Spanish landscape by following the path opened by Francisco Giner, incorporating the orientation of modern geography, and the relation between Giner and those writers enables us to understand the notable geographic aspects of their images of that landscape (Ortega Cantero 2007). There are so many connections and similarities between Giner's images of the Spanish landscape and the ones later contributed by the aforementioned Generation of '98 writers.

The vision of Spanish landscape

The '98 writers approached the landscape following the path that had been blazed by Francisco Giner and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*. That direct relationship with the landscape perspective of Giner and the *Institución* allows us to better understand some of the most significant characteristics of the work of the '98 writers in this regard, as is the case, firstly, with the simultaneous presence, in their portrayals of landscapes, of a naturalistic, explicative focus, along with another more sentimental one, rooted in understanding. In this way they occupied an intermediate position between those harboring strictly naturalistic literary visions of landscapes, and the most symbolist writers, seeking a balance between the two.

For the writers of '98, the concrete, natural characterization of the landscape, and the feelings it produced, were equally important. The former was related to the naturalistic curiosity that their vision of the landscape often featured, and the prominent presence in it of the descriptive facet, while the latter involved impressions and assessments of the outdoor experiences appearing in their works. There is, thus, in the vision of the writers of '98 a certain balance between observation and contemplation, between description and feeling, between the attention given the outside world and that assigned its inner correlation, in the world of feelings and sensations. In this way it is an attitude that incorporates the legacy of the *Institución* and, through it, the key features of the modern geographic perspective, with its intention of fusing explanation and understanding.

The Generation of '98 writers' vision of landscape features a notable geographical content, expressed through various aspects. One of them is their attitude to the landscape, which is characterized by their interest in learning about it and in basing their knowledge—as the most advanced geographers of their time recommended—on direct contact with it, through trips and excursions. Another telling aspect in this regard is the vocabulary they use, which forms part, with other components of various kinds, of a rich geographical terminology that refers to both natural and human elements of the landscape. In parallel, their way of understanding landscapes is shaped to a great extent by geographical criteria. They pay attention to physiognomic aspects, the external and visible forms of the landscape, but they also seek to relate these formal aspects to the underlying natural order.

And their landscape images, very often panoramic views, evidence a clear geographical bias, almost always exhibiting a simultaneous and complementary interest in the components and elements of landscape, natural and human, and in the relationships between them and the whole ultimately produced. For the writers of '98, as for modern geographers, the landscape is an ordered 'whole,' a system whose organization results from the internal relationships between its components. The landscape is, in short, the expression of a natural and geographical order.

No less expressive of the geographical content we are discussing are some other characteristics referring to the arguments offered by the '98 writers. Ideas and arguments of a geographical nature are common in their reasoning; for example, when they talk about the influences and parallels to be drawn between the physical and natural factors of a particular landscape or territory, and the groups inhabiting it. Once again there appears here the idea that there is an underlying natural order, and that this order also encompasses mankind. The '98 writers harbor an idea of landscapes that corresponds quite closely to the concept of the natural landscape, which does not exclude humanity, an approach prevalent in the modern geography of the 19th century.

And to this we must add, finally, that these connections between landscapes and the people who inhabit them are of two types: individual and collective. This dual relationship, which appears frequently, for example, in Unamuno's landscape-related writings, makes it possible on the one hand to delve into what the landscape entails as a personal and subjective experience, and secondly to affirm the existence of connections, material and symbolic, between the landscape, the history that has transpired in it, and collective—or national—identities resulting from that history. In addition, the vision of the landscape projected by the writers of '98 is always based on an idea and a feeling of the history of Spain. Unamuno, for example, said he wished to 'trace history through geography,' and believed that the motherland 'is revealed and symbolized in its landscapes,' and that "the historical soul' is forged through 'the natural, geographic soul, and the geological one' (Unamuno: 1944/1966: 705-6). This also relates directly to the legacy of Giner and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, with its way of understanding of the landscape as an expression and symbol of history and the collective identity arising from it.

Images of landscape

The preceding may help us to understand the geographic sensibility revealed by the landscape images of the Generation of '98's writers. Therefore, these images take on a remarkable geographical interest not commonly found, at least to such a degree, in the world of literary creation, and which is largely due, as noted, to their direct relationship to the views of Giner de los Ríos and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*. Let us examine some examples of this way of looking at and assessing landscapes by the '98 writers, endeavoring to pay attention to both their direct relationship with the perspective of Giner and the *Institución*, and the geographical nature of their images.

It is easy to find representative examples in this regard in the images of the landscape of Castile, which was undoubtedly that which drew the most attention and interest from both Giner and his collaborators at the *Institución*, in addition to the '98 writers. Giner had

spoken about it before, especially in his 1886 article 'Paisaje,' and had advanced two reflections that had a significant influence on subsequent considerations of landscapes. He had referred, firstly, to the values and qualities attributable to Castile's landscape. Secondly, taking into account the forms, the physiognomic characterizations, and the qualities that could be associated with these forms, he had pointed out the differences between the landscape of Castile and that found in northern Spain, especially Galicia. In the Castilian landscape of the province of Madrid, Giner distinguished two main types: the mountains and the plains. His geological and botanical characterizations demonstrate a striking contrast. However, according to Giner, this divergence was greatly attenuated by the presence of values and qualities they both shared:

Mitigating this contrast is a fundamental feature throughout the region, spanning the mountains and the plains. In both there dwells a very robust inner strength, a stark grandeur, even in the most picturesque and idyllic sites, a nobility, a dignity, a splendor, like those seen in Greco and Velázquez, the two painters who best represent this character and way of being poetic about what could be called Spain's backbone. Nothing yields a better idea of this than their comparison with the most common forms found in the North and Northwest of Spain, especially in Galicia. On the banks of Saja or the Nalón, but even more on the delightful banks of the Miño, or the *Rías Bajas* of Pontevedra, everything is grace, harmony, proportion, charm: the valleys are closed and small; the hills, small; the skies are light blue; the green of the trees, transparent; the fields are lush and shining: all Nature smiles and casts a dim light that envelops everything and makes impossible the rough accentuation of strong contrasts. It is a feminine beauty, the expression of activity carried out without struggle, at an unhurried pace. Here, in contrast, there appears everywhere the indomitable effort that strives to break through a great number of obstacles; and, just as on the same day and in the same place ice is followed by the heat of the tropics, so does the sun shine blindingly, almost bitterly, in a sky of pure blue, then almost black. This is what might be called the manly, masculine tone. (Giner de los Ríos 1886/2004: 795-6)

Both the attribution of values and the comparison proposed by Giner are based on the consideration of the natural features of landscapes' geographical forms and the qualities associated with them. Their values and meanings are closely related to their natural characterizations, and this approach is faithful to the modern geographic perspective initiated by Humboldt (Ortega Cantero 2012: 675-89). This same type of attribution of values, and this same type of comparison with the geographical bias they entail, are often found in the images of the Castilian landscape of the writers of '98, who in this way evidence both their debt to the perspectives of Giner and the *Institución*, and the attention they give, in addition, to the ways of seeing and assessing the landscape suggested by modern geography. Azorín offers a good example of this when speaking of Castile:

This is not the Basque landscape: gentle, melancholic, dreamy, romantic. Nor is it the Levantine: clear, radiant, naked, with classic lines and profiles. These are not the

vague northern mountains, blurred by the mist. These plains are not the diaphanous plains of the Levante, traced by a line of graceful almond trees or a steep golden bank lush with heavy tendrils. Here the colors are intense, energetic, dark; an impression of strength, nobility, austerity emanates from the hue of the land, from the low-lying, stunted, dark vegetation, the oaks and oak groves, with the same sweeping, dignified, majestic undulation the earth suggests as it stretches away. (Azorín 1920: 205)

A comparison of the images of the Castilian landscape offered by Giner and Azorín, respectively, allows one to appreciate not only the affinity between their points of view and assessment criteria, but also the great degree to which the ideas they use to describe the area's qualities coincide: both employ terms like nobility, dignity (or dignified) and strength, and the splendor and effort of the former correspond to the majesty and energy of the latter. And we find something similar when Unamuno compares the landscape of Castile with those of northern Spain. While the Basque landscape, for example, is 'a domestic, homey landscape, in which one sees more land than sky,' a 'spring or autumn landscape,' in which 'everything is small,' with 'little valleys between mountains,' the Castilian landscape is a 'winter or summer landscape,' in which 'summits abound,' and where 'there is more sky than earth, which is lost on the horizon' (Unamuno 1903/1966: 90). On another occasion, he states, like Giner, that Galicia's is a 'feminine' landscape: with 'earthy and squat mountains of undulating and sinuous contours, like feminine breasts and hips,' and 'its lush manes of chestnut, pine, oak, elm and a hundred other types of trees, covering those curves and swellings,' give it a 'markedly female character' (Unamuno 1911/1966: 307).

Along with general considerations on Spanish landscapes and their differences, the writers of the Generation of '98 also offered more specific, detailed visions in which they provided their accounts of their experiences with certain landscape areas, almost always with more precise characterizations of their geographical components. Those images of the different Spanish landscapes presented by the Generation of '98 writers were closely related to their personal experiences with those landscapes. They came into direct contact with the different Spanish landscapes on their excursions. They were able to observe their natural and human features in addition to understanding their historical and cultural significance. They always displayed a notable curiosity about geography on these trips, and a clear desire to understand the underlying geographical aspects of the landscapes they were observing.

The '98 writers combined observation and emotion, description and feeling in their views of the Spanish landscape. Antonio Machado offers numerous examples of that approach, many of them contained in the best of his works dedicated to the landscape: the book of poems titled *Campos de Castilla* and originally published in 1912. It could be said his images of the landscape around Soria make up a true 'emotional geography' (Martínez de Pisón 2012: 65), where the geographic elements the author observes are handled poetically. In the poem titled 'A Orillas del Duero,' included in *Campos de Castilla*, Machado writes:

I saw the horizon enclosed by dark
 hills, crowned by oak trees and ilexes;
 naked rocks, some modest meadows
 where the merino grazes and the bull, kneeling
 in the grass, ruminates; the riverbanks
 showing off their green poplars to the clear summer sun,
 and, silently, far away passengers,
 so tiny! —wagons, horsemen and muleteers—
 crossing the long bridge, and beneath the arches
 of stone the darkening of the silvery waters
 of the Duero.’ (Machado 1912/2003: 104).

Azorín also presents several examples of an approach towards the landscape tinged by geographical curiosity (Ortega Cantero 2002). His attention to the countryside is present throughout his work, but two books are particularly expressive in this sense: *España (Hombres y Paisajes)*, from 1909, and *Castilla*, published in 1912. Azorín was an attentive, meticulous observer who knew how to distinguish details of the landscape and describe them precisely and sensitively. The Castilian landscape held a distinguished place in Azorín’s works, just as it did with Machado and Unamuno. But he also paid attention to other landscapes in Spain and offered some particularly insightful, valuable images of the Mediterranean landscape of eastern Spain which clearly revealed the geographical aspects of his writing. Casting aside certain generally accepted Romantic prejudices about the landscape, Azorín succeeded in giving a modern, updated image to that landscape of eastern Spain, one open to the perception and assessment of its Mediterranean geographical features. One text on the mountainous landscape of his native region of Alicante, included in his book *España*, published in 1909, provides a good example:

Today I climbed a Levantine mountain. [...] This mountain has groups of pine trees scattered here and there which give off a pervasive aroma of resin. [...] These pines have never felt the hand of the resin collector. They grow free, rebellious, happy. [...] The aroma of the pines mixes with the smell of the savin and juniper trees, lavender and rosemary. In the subtle yet strong air of the Levantine and Castilian landscapes the aromas expand in all their freedom: the entire landscape is aroma. (Azorín 1909/1982: 421)

And it is precisely this text of Azorín that was assessed by a distinguished Spanish geographer in these terms: ‘We have here the best way, although not the usual one, of writing geography. The best because it includes life, and not the usual one because, even though geographers sometimes talk *of* the mountain, they almost never do so *on* it’ (Martínez de Pisón 1973: 419).

Miguel de Unamuno also presented very clear examples of the significant geographical aspect of his landscape images. As Unamuno himself said, the excursions were a means for ‘studying living geography’ in order to ‘do geography’ (Unamuno 1922: 26, 111). His images of different Spanish landscapes offer an accurate representation of

the geographical features characterizing them. His image of the Pas Valley in Cantabria, in the mountainous region of northern Spain, is a prime example:

Emerald prairies, groves of trees and among them the cabins of the local shepherds, which resemble tombs with their slate roofs. A roadway with grass growing in it, which twists and turns as it bends around the massif at the back of Pas, all shadow and silence. In the back runs the Pas River, which occasionally brings a waterfall to life. (Unamuno 1911/1966: 284)

Again, some of his better images are dedicated to the Castilian landscape. Originally from the Basque region, from 1891 on Unamuno was a professor at the University of Salamanca, that impressive Castilian city. He made the Castilian landscape his favourite, including its mountain ranges and plains, its old cities and small villages. His view of the Castilian countryside also featured a notable geographical aspect. A modern-day geographer, one very familiar with that landscape, observed that Unamuno had known how to clearly and precisely perceive his geographical characterization. He masterfully captured the ‘relationships between the land and the group of human beings who lives on it,’ describing ‘its villages, and the work of their residents, with a precision we would be able to call geographic’ (García Fernández 1985: 123, 131).

Among the numerous images of the Castilian landscape in his work, the ones found in his five 1895 articles titled *En torno al casticismo* are particularly interesting. He shaped a truly expressive portrait of the characteristic geographical features of that Castilian landscape, with its ‘weather that experiences both extremes,’ from ‘heavy downpours and snowfalls’ with their erosive effects to the ‘scorching fields, barren and extended, without foliage or streams’ (Unamuno 1895b: 71). And all that is present in a landscape that Unamuno describes masterfully:

They can cover leagues and more leagues of deserted land without making out much more than the never-ending plain where the wheat turns green and the stubble yellow, some monotonous, serious procession of brown oaks, hardy evergreens spaced so you slowly pass them by, and sad pines that lift up their uniform heads. From time to time, on the bank of some poor, half-dried up pool or a clear river, a few poplar trees acquire an intense and profound life in the infinite solitude. Ordinarily these poplars announce the presence of man; over there is some village, stretched out on the plain under the sun, toasted by it and hardened by the icy cold, quite often of adobe dwellings, tracing the silhouette of its bell tower in the blue sky. (Unamuno 1895b: 71)

Mountains occupied a prominent place in these images created by the ‘98 writers, and not only acquired great metaphorical and symbolic value in their writings, but also major significance in their quest for the keys to national identity. Unamuno also offers some particularly interesting examples in this regard. From his perspective, mountains acquired major significance as central organizing elements, forming the backbone of Spanish geography as a whole while simultaneously serving as the symbolic expression of the

greatest cultural and moral values of the nation's landscapes. Unamuno sees mountains metaphorically as the 'rocky skeleton of Spain,' or as 'the bone structure of the homeland' (Unamuno 1944/1966: 537). Above all Unamuno showed his fondness for the mountainous landscape of the *Sierra de Gredos* range, part of the Central System. The mountains of Gredos were, according to Unamuno, the 'spine of Castile,' the 'backbone of Spain,' as well as 'the eternal,' the expression and symbol 'of eternity, of what continues existing beneath the history' (571, 637, 645). Following this symbolization perspective, the image of Gredos acquired very notable national and religious tinges in Unamuno's work: he said one had climb to its summit in order to 'receive the sacrament of the confirmation of the Homeland' (Unamuno 1915/1992: 73). Unamuno attributes high symbolic value to the mountain of Gredos in this fashion. It closely unites the religious dimension with the patriotic and national, expressing his understanding of the key elements in the identity of Castile and Spain.

Finally, I am now going to make reference to another important aspect of the interest in the Spanish landscape by the Generation of '98 writers: the attention they paid to the images offered by other writers, both prior to their era and among their Spanish and foreign contemporaries. The most complete and systematic example was provided by Azorín in his book *El paisaje de España visto por los españoles*, published in 1917. This book began to compose the history of the attraction to, and feeling for, the Spanish landscape, moving closer to the genealogy of its literary and cultural image. Azorín collected and commented on significant number of modern literary views of various Spanish geographical landscapes.

Azorín not only observed the significance gained by the landscape among the modern writers of the late 19th and early 20th century in that book. He also pointed out the influence of these literary images in shaping the cultural image of the landscape, the manner with which to view it, perceive it and appreciate it. Only when 'the artist brings it into the painting or literature,' when it already 'is created in art,' is when 'we start to see the landscape in reality,' Azorín wrote (Azorín 1917: 43). He added, not without reason, that the modern image of the Castilian landscape had been largely created by literature.

Conclusion

In conclusion, everything presented to this point enables us to say that the writers of the Generation of '98 offered an updated image of the Spanish landscape, one characterized by its notable geographic aspect. They viewed that landscape through geographical criteria, and discovered in it some keys to the historical and national identity of Spain. Their vision of the Spanish landscape wielded a significant influence on the cultural and intellectual scene of their own era and subsequent periods. And that influence was not limited to the literary world. It was also felt in other cultural spheres and the field of geography as well. A good example can be found in the geographer Manuel de Terán, the founder of a major Spanish school of geography, who labels the writer Antonio Machado as one of his 'greatest teachers outside the university' (Terán 1976: 131). Terán's work in geography clearly shows the influence of the Generation of '98's view of the landscape. What occurred there, finally, was an original interaction between literature and geography. On

one hand, the perspectives of geography influenced the vision of the landscape developed by writers of the Generation of '98. In turn, that literary vision gave rise to images with a clear geographical aspect that influenced the geographical knowledge of their own era and subsequent periods.

Notes

¹ The *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* [Free Institution of Education] was a private school founded in Madrid in 1876 by a group of liberally-minded and reformist university professors who had been expelled from the University for ideological reasons. Its driving force was Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915), professor of Law Philosophy at the University of Madrid and one of Spain's most renowned personalities at the time. He had a great influence on teaching in Spain, introducing highly reformist ideas and practices. He also influenced other aspects of national life, such as scientific research, the cultural landscape and politics. The *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* was based on the idea that educational reform had to underpin any effort at true social and political reform. Thus, in order to reform education, the *Institución* brought to Spain the most advanced ideas on knowledge and pedagogy at the time. The Institution carried out its work for sixty years, from 1876 to 1936, and has been described as 'the most significant pedagogical movement in the modern cultural history of Spain' (López-Morillas 1972: 244).

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