

Exploring the Genre: Spanish Discoveries in the Pacific Northwest at the End of the 18th Century

Explorando el género: los descubrimientos españoles en el Noreste del Pacífico a finales del siglo XVIII

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Abstract: the present study will portray the existence of specific aspects that distinguish the Spanish travel literature at the end of the 18th century in the Pacific Northwest explorations. Although the production of this narrative was very abundant, due to the secretiveness the Borbonic government kept on those explorations, they didn't have a lot of popular acknowledgement like similar narratives in the rest of Europe. This study deals with specific narrative analysis: textual studies, genre analysis, discursive formations, etc.

Keywords: Genre, Travel Literature, Pacific Northwest

Resumen: el presente estudio describe la existencia de diferentes aspectos que distinguen la narrativa del viaje a finales del siglo XVIII en las exploraciones del Pacífico Noroeste. Aunque la producción de esta narrativa fue muy prolífica, sin embargo, debido al secretismo con que la monarquía borbónica mantuvo estas exploraciones la mayoría no se difundieron como otras narrativas similares en el resto de Europa. Este estudio se concentra en el análisis narrativo específico: estudio textual, análisis del género, formaciones discursivas, etc.

Palabras claves: Género, Literatura de viajes, Noroeste del Pacífico

The issue of genre is one of the slipperiest of narrative studies, not only because of the ambiguity and common problematic that we assume when we adopt the term, but also, in regards to the material to which this essay is devoted, the Spanish narrative of travel in the Pacific Northwest at the end of the 18th century. Although Spain was the shared destination place of the Romantic tour, the common and generic place related to maritime Spanish travel

narrative finds itself condemned to uncertainty and despair when we get away from the great Spanish oceanic voyages from the 15th and 16th centuries, or even the achievements of the British (Cook, Vancouver) and French (Le Pérouse) narratives of the same kind during the Enlightenment epoch. Nevertheless there is a common consent that the specificity of literature of Oceanic travel narrative does exist with its own characteristics, fluidity and change over time; however, the 18th century Spanish narrative of the sea hasn't been the center of attention of literary studies:

“Hay que buscar en los viajes la información histórica y geográfica, pero también leerlos como literatura sin más, como depósito de la sensibilidad múltiple de los viajeros del setecientos hacia el Otro que se descubre en las fronteras del planeta”¹.

Most of the studies dedicated to the topic of the Spanish travel narrative in the Pacific Northwest during the Reform of the Age of Enlightenment focused on the historical and archival documentation found in various libraries throughout the United States, Spain and Latin America. However there have been few studies related to specific literary analysis: textual studies, genre analysis, discursive formations, etc. The production of this narrative was very prolific (Diaries from Bodega y Quadra, Francisco Mourelle de la Rua, Juan Pérez, Alcalá Galiano, Malaspina, etc); however, due to the secretiveness in which the Borbonic government kept those explorations, they didn't receive a lot of popular acknowledgement. Although Spanish government anxiety about foreign incursions during that time led to unwillingness to publish the surveys, such evasiveness seems to have extended out to literary studies as well.

Keeping in mind the assumptions made by Foulke, who distinguishes the professional and established tradition of “maritime voyages” and “history of sea literature”², most of the voyages' narratives can't be appreciated entirely apart from the maritime history, due to the technical and linguistic lexicon associated with these enterprises and the inexperience of not being a sailor. The absences of these contexts, experiential and historical, have affected our cultural readings throughout the centuries and more specifically of our contemporary age. All the same, these narratives are another piece of the big ship we have called the history of travel

¹ Bernabeu Albert, Salvador, “¿Ilusos o ilustrados? Novedades y pervivencias en los viajeros del setecientos”. *Revista de Occidente*. 260 (2003): 36-55 (p. 55)

² “Treatment of the ‘history of sea literature’ has been minuscule and the study of ‘voyages narratives’ in generic terms is just emerging from its infancy”, Foulke, Robert. *The Sea Voyage Narrative*. New York: Twayne Publisher, 1997, p. 195.

narrative, and perhaps a sub-genre of what we should bear in mind as travel narrative of the sea, and more specifically and temporarily, a scientific-literary manifestation of the XVIII century where the sea narrative of travel is an index of the crossroads of the Modern Age. Those literary aspects are the contextual leitmotifs of my readings. As mentioned before, and in spite of the transcendence of the voyages narrative during the second Age of Exploration, the Spanish narrative has found itself relegated to the historical enterprise, isolated from the narrative of travel. Since the 18th century is considered a “Hinge century”, most of the narrative manifestations are transitional. As such, many of the narrative forms reach the end of their development, or in many other manifestations, open new tracks. As Perry Adams mentioned in his classic study *Travel literature and the evolution of the novel*:

“The literature of travel is gigantic; it has a thousand forms and faces [...] the *récit of voyage* cannot be a literary genre with a fixed definition any more than the novel is; it is not even *sui generis* since it includes so many types both by form and by content. For, like other forms just as amorphous, it evolves and will continue to evolve”³.

I believe this is the case, especially representative, of the corpus of material studied in relation to the Spanish Exploration of the Pacific of the Northwest.

The Spanish expeditions in the Northwest encompassed two phases, the first one of them (1774-1788) with five trips. Juan Pérez undertook Spain's its first departure of exploration in the frigate *Santiago* in January 25, 1774 in order to explore this region to the 60°- 65° of north latitude. He culminated his voyage on August 27 of the same year. Iota was a relatively fruitless expedition because it was carried out with only a small vessel and the crew was decimated by scurvy. The international pressure and the governmental commitment ensured that from then on future expeditions would be carried out by midshipmen explicitly assigned from the Spanish peninsula in order to counteract the international initiatives already taking place on the part of the Russians to expand the settlements with furs trade, or as well, on the part of the English toward occupation, as well as part of the search for the Mythical Northwest Passage. Without doubt, this last factor was instituted like inescapable gear of the previous one.

In 1775 the expedition of Bruno de Hezeta, in which the mariner Bodega y Quadra would participate for the first time, followed Perez's expedition. Although the objective of the

³ Adams, Perry G. *Travel literature and the evolution of the novel*. Lexington:University Press of Kentucky, 1983, p. 281

metropolis intended to supply the other Spanish viceroyalties, the competitive reaction was immediate when news of the occupation by the English arrived to Nootka, as well as the fact that Captain James Cook camped for water of the Pacific (it was Captain Cook's last trip-- 1776 to 1779--- before perishing in a skirmish with the natives). The international interest in the zone was decisively a priority. On the part of the Spanish, this interest would not manifest until 1779 when the third expedition was carried out under the command of Ignacio Arteaga and of Bodega y Quadra. The war against England (1779-1783) prevented the fourth and fifth expeditions, in the command of Esteban José Martínez, did not take place until 1789. The Hispanic-English dissention and the lack of trust for both contenders would give rise to a confrontation in the port of Nutka, which would be settled with the Treaty of the Escorial in 1790.

It is from 1789, when the second phase of explorations was initiated in the Northwest, that the events before described coincided with the main objective initiated by the English expeditions: the coastal exploration in search of the Northwest Passage. The campaign in the Pacific demanded a greater degree of recognition, and therefore, that of those involved in it. Because of the confrontation with the English and of the international scientific agenda, the Spanish government decided to send diligent new navigators with impeccable naval backgrounds; among who figured Bodega y Quadra, proxy of the crown, sent to settle the arisen argument and to negotiate the general terms, before mentioned, of the Treaty of the Escorial. With respect to the scientific agenda, the most notorious personage in charge of one of the Spanish expeditions was Alejandro Malaspina (1791), as well as those from Alcalá Galiano, Cayetano Valdés and Jacinto Caamaño in 1792. During that last year, these two expeditions coincided in Nootka with Bodega de la Quadra, whose objective, previously cited, was to appease the injured British aspirations.

There are two main current distinctions of the undetermined sea travel genre:

“Logs are legal documents precisely recording the ship's position, weather and sea conditions, and major events on board like punishment, death, or any endangerment of the ship; entries are written by the officer on watch, without, expressions of attitude or opinion, and falsifying them is a crime. Journals, on the other hand, record personal impressions and have all the defining characteristics of narratives, including plot”⁴.

⁴ Foulke, Robert. *The Sea Voyage...*, p. 74)

Nonetheless we cannot impose such a distinction in the tradition of the 18th century sea narratives because both functions are developed simultaneously. As a starting point from the expectations contemporary readers have about the travel narrative described by Tzvetan Todorov in his study *The Journey and its Narrative*, we can isolate the specific features of this literature: tension between the observing subject and the object, and the situating in time and space of the experiences reported by the narratives. The first feature describes the tension between objectivity and subjectivity, science and autobiography; travel narrative comes into being from the fusion of the two⁵. It is well known that this kind of literature belongs to the larger family of travel narrative, which is circumscribed to the medium in which it is developed, the sea, therefore it is linked to the expansion of the western hemisphere from the Marco Polo and Columbus, the Renaissance voyages until the first half of the 20th century, when the air/astronomical voyages put an end to the Colonialist period of Western civilization. This epoch corresponds to the time “where the explorer is curious about the other and secure in his own superiority” as mentioned by Todorov⁶.

Among the textual characteristics extracted from the corpus of study it is necessary to underline two main distinctions:

a/ the reinforcing of empirical methods and structures of knowledge: attention to observations, descriptions, inclusion of pictures, maps, quantity of documents elaborated by the crew about the same trip; references to the international political enterprise: propagandistic rhetoric, style, language; formal aspects related to the literature of the sea, linked to the most legendary tradition of the 16th century, and at the same time, distant from its goals and forms.

b/ the different formal narrative device particular to the travel literature of this time, the assorted use of the narrator in the third and the first omniscient person, singular or plural, thematic and the time and space issues.

The large reforms in the Spanish Armada initiated at the beginning of the 17th century and established by José Patiño (1670-1736), José Campillo and Cossío (1692-1743), El marqués de la Ensenada (1702-1781) and Antonio Valdés and Fernández-Bazán (1744-1816) favored a renaissance of the scientific formation of the officials. The Royal Company of Midshipmen trained officials of great intellectual worth. Jorge Juan Santacilia (1713-1773), and Antonio of

⁵ Todorow, Tzvetan. “The Journey and Its Narratives” *Travel, Pleasure and Imaginative Geography 1600-1830*. Edited by Chloe Chad and Helen Langdon. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, p. 293.

⁶ Todorow, Tzvetan. “The Journey...”, p. 295.

Ulloa (1716-1795) prompted the renewal of the Armada. El Marqués de la Ensenada initiated the reorganization of the Armada and the maximum exponent of the Spanish science in the 18th century. Among other prominent figures that contributed to the scientific development, it is precise to emphasize Vicente Tofiño San Miguel (1732 -1795), Josef of Mendoza and Ríos (1763-1816), Gabriel de Ciscar (1760-1829). The Spanish science is linked to the different assignments of the Armada in this epoch and concretely to the elaboration of the logbooks. The constancy, tradition and importance of these binnacles are collected in the specific functions that are indicated in the Instruction of the Company of Royal Midshipmen. The abundance of material written, as well as the spirit illustrated of the epoch and the academic formation of the pilots is shown in an explicit way in article 81, which refers to the notarial work of the captains of the ships and of its pilots:

“Servirá para la formación de el diario que cada Guardia / Marina de vera hacer de el viaje, de todo lo que observaren y subcediere en / el, sobre que zelaran sus Oficiales cuidadosamente y los Comandantes de los / Navios, y particularmente que no saquen los unos copias de los diarios / que hicieren los otros, si no es que cada uno por si mismo le trabaxe; y debe-/ran a su arribo à èl puerto entregarlos a su Comandante para los / fines que convengan”⁷.

This practice was promoted to such an extent that the pilots should teach their subordinate to edit them. It gave rise to the existence of several routes and logbooks on the part of various crewmembers. The need to coordinate was contemplated, thus giving rise to various efforts to verify the truth. The scientific project designed promoted a planning in order to compare the exhaustive one collected of the data offered and at the same time safeguards all the information collected:

“84 .- Los Pilotos deveran tambien exercitar à los referidos cavalleros / Cadetes en el uso de las cartas de marear, en el conocimiento / de sus rumbos, en el modo de tomar las distancias de unas tierras / à otras, enseñandoles y explicandoles con toda claridad y distincion / los nombres de los cavos, puntas, ensenadas, yslas, baxos, escollos, / arrecifes, placeres y puertos y finalmente todo lo que conduce à la / mas exacta y inteligencia de lo que combiene saver para la buena direccion / de la navegacion sin dejar nada por omisión”⁸.

⁷ Alía Plana, Miguel. *La armada y la enseñanza naval (1700-1840) en sus documentos*. <http://www.derechomilitar.info/artidoc/ensenaval.pdf>, p. 389.

⁸ Alía Plana, Miguel, *La armada...*, p. 390.

The corpus of study is varied and, in many cases, excessive, due to several manuscripts written by several members of the crew and compiled about the same trip. Most of the most representative journals belong to Juan Pérez Hernández (?-1775), Dionisio Alcalá-Galiano (1762 - 1805), Francisco de Bodega y Quadra (1743 - 1794), Estebán José Martínez (?), Cayetano Valdés Flores Bazán y Peón (1762 - 1835), Francisco A. Mourelle de la Rúa (1750 - 1820), and Alejandro Malaspina (1754 -1809.)

One of the main concerns during the 18th century was mapping the land discovered. In coastal charting, a mariner such as Bodega de la Quadra would keep a careful record of the course of their ship. Distances were calculated by means of a log, and prominent features along the coast were triangulated. Surveys of an intricate coastline, such as that of the Pacific Northwest, were done by triangulation from rowboats. Drawings of the coast were sketched as it appeared from the boat. During 19th century surveying of the coast was greater accuracy achieved through the common use of the chronometer and crews who would measure it with chains and theodolites. Bodega de la Quadra's description of the process done and method used to design it is meaningful to note:

“Para la disposición de esta derrota, por la variedad de cartas desde los 58 grados, a donde había yo subido con la goleta Sonora, tocaba insuperables dificultades en la discreción del método, y así determiné construir una carta [...] Situar en la misma toda la carta de Monieur Bellín de color encarnado para su fácil distinción, igualmente situar desde el mismo sitio la carta que trae La Historia de las Californias de puntos negros, y últimamente situar la carta de la Academia Imperial de Petesburgo de color amarillo, con cuya variedad sobre un mismo plano fuese fácil atender a todas las suposiciones para que al primer golpe de vista, no se ocultase la mas leve reflexión sobre que (se) hiciese”⁹.

Another major characteristic of this corpus of narrative is related to the references to the international political enterprise: propagandistic rhetoric, style, language, and the nationalistic. In general terms there was a significant distinction between the Columbian rhetoric, whose agenda was oriented to the Catholic majesties and whose purpose was to convince them of the economic discovery, and the writings of the different members of the crews involved in these explorations, whose main purpose was to testifying and record the daily events. Even if the latter writings were directed to the Crown, the purpose differs from the former, primarily in the convincing purpose which testifies to the accomplishments of the

⁹ Bodega y Quadra, Juan Francisco. *Juan Francisco de La Bodega y Quadra. El descubrimiento del fin del Mundo (1775-1792)*. Ed. de Salvador Bernabeu Albert. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1990, p. 115.

specified mission: exploring the Pacific Northwest. Nevertheless there are many other factors which intervene in the rhetoric of recognition, where the apology or justification prevail in order to justify the personal merit, as for instance in the case of Bodega y Quadra journals. As I have already analyzed in my article “Los discursos de reconocimiento de Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra”¹⁰, the commander offers different discourses of personal, professional, and recognition of the otherness. The empirical commitment of the crew isolates the narration into specific goals portrayed by the orders that the Viceroy Bucarelli set in the first voyage of Juan Pérez.

These dispositions can be transformed in: the formalization of the possession taking, the ethnographic collection of the greatest possible information with respect to the tribes (government, religion which they profess, rites, etc.), the exchange of objects versus the illegal appropriation, as well as the concession of gifts to the Indians, the discipline among the crew, and the secret character of the expeditions with respect to other countries.

Beyond any discursive analysis that this kind of text can be approached as part of the relation between texts and historical context, or the current readers and the texts, there are three aspects of textual study around the genre. I have briefly divided those facets in three orders: thematic aspects, discursive aspects of the narrator, and last but not least, time and space.

The formal aspects related to this literature of the sea, linked to the most legendary tradition of the 16th century, and at the same time, distant from its goals and forms, reached in the 18th century a variety of distinctiveness. While reading these manuscripts, the first person and the third persons of the writings distance us from the legendary tradition of the oral world and from the Renaissance tradition, although we can't forget the literary tradition formed, as for instance in this description done by Francisco Mourelle:

“Las canoas son de la misma hechura de un arpa, de manera que no se examina diferencia entre ellas y este instrumento; pues hasta su misma proa hace la curvitud que en aquel se necesita para afianzar las cuerdas. Ellas son tan livianas que cualquiera hombre las toma con una mano, por cuya razón parece que vuelan cuando navegan”¹¹.

¹⁰ García Sánchez, José M. “Los discursos de *reconocimiento* de Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra.”. *Dieciocho. Hispanic Enlightenment*, 29.2 (Fall 2006), pp. 165-77.

¹¹ Mourelle de la Rúa, Francisco. *Explorador del Pacífico*. Madrid: Ediciones Cultura hispánica, 1978, p. 261.

This aspect occurs directly in another example mentioned before and is focused in the agenda of the writer and the discursive analysis of our current time. What were the meanings of the narrative statements of the exploration of Bruno de Hezeta? What differs (?) Bodega y Quadra's first journal from his last journal, while at the same time his style and objectives differ from the ones of Fray Miguel de la Campa.

Another interesting topic of the sea voyages is the cyclical and linear aspects of the narration, as well as the interaction with space. Since in all the journals there is a beginning and an ending of the narration, yet the daily routine of the journals describes the recurrent pattern of the voyage, the linear and cyclical concept of time are interconnected. It is worthy to note how the brief observations about the weather, the maritime streams, the wind, and the tides are interpolated with different issues with the indigenous people or among the crew, where the narration inspires a more literary approach. While the current reliable technology has made the interlocking measurements of time and space available, the technical observations of these journals have been relegated to a secondary order in the scientific approach to these narratives. Today they are only anecdotic comments. In all the cases, including the notes from Fray Miguel de la Campa, for instance, the coastal observations followed the instructional commands in all the journals dictated by Bucarrelli in Juan Perez's first trip: "Día 5: Tuvimos el mismo viento, caminando el mismo rumbo y nos hallamos en 18 grados 10 minutos"¹².

Regarding the thematic face, although the sea is the boundary of the horizon, and routine would seem to be the strict border of the narratives, nothing is further away from this affirmation. As with any other narratives of the epoch, the Spanish explorers had friendly and dangerous encounters with indigenous people; they suffered illnesses, mainly scurvy, they dealt with the inclemency of the Pacific Northwest weather, and encountered problems with the international powers, mainly England.

These sketches in the narration make the daily routines appear at the crossroad between the literary and the historic. For whatever reason, the former never caught the attention of the literary schools. Today, when the borders of such traditional division have demonstrated the imaginary and subjective territory of different cultures, the study of those texts needs more than just historic attention.

¹² Bernabeu Albert, Salvador. *Trillar los Mares*. Madrid: CSIC, 1995, p. 5.

The documents studied here are the last epigone of the encyclopedic character of the Enlightenment, which would open new paths to the specialization of geographers, historians, philologists, and anthropologists, during the 19th century. As a genre of the end of the 18th century, Sea travel narrative is characterized by its hybridist form, not only from the formal aspects that shape it, but also from the scientific spectrum that projects toward the next century, and contradictorily by its literary projection.

The search for the Northwest Passage was the quest of a modern narrative, which uncovered a passage from the imaginary toward the scientific knowledge. Pimentel defined it as a passage from the marvelous to the rational (142). The voyage of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police vessel St Roch II in 2000 suggested that global warming might have given a sense of reality to the navigable Northwest Passage. The paradox is served.

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