Displaying Compostela: Literature, Tourism and Cultural Representation, a Cartographic Approach

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Abstract : Santiago de Compostela became a stable object of literary representation during the period between 1840 and 1915, approximately. This study offers a partial cartographical look at this process, suggesting that a cultural space like Compostela's becoming an object of literary representation paralleled the first stages of its becoming a tourist destination. We use maps as a method of analysis to show the interaction between a corpus of novels and the emerging tradition of tourist guides on Compostela during the selected period. Often, the novels constitute ways to present a city to the outside, marking it for the gaze of others, as guidebooks do. That leads us to examine the ways of constructing and rendering communicable the local in other contexts. For that matter, we should also acknowledge the fact that a good number of the narratives in the corpus evoke the representation of the city through the figure of one who comes from elsewhere: a traveler, a student or a professor. The guidebooks coincide in this with the emerging fiction, of which the mimesis of a city is a key characteristic. The local cannot define itself except through a process of symbolic negotiation, in which recognition and self-recognition play important roles. Cartography shows some of the forms that these processes of symbolic representation take through the treatment of space. The research uses GIS to find significant models of representation. We used the program ArcGIS for the mapping, defining the databases starting from an adapted version of the methodology applied by Barbara Piatti and Lorenz Hurni's team at the University of Zurich. First, we designed maps that emphasize the peripheral position of Compostela from a historical and institutional perspective using elements found in the texts of our corpus (novels and tourist guides). Second, other maps delve into the parallels between recurring techniques in the fictional texts and characteristic devices of the guidebooks (sketching itineraries and the selection of zones and indexicalization), like a foreigner's visit guided by someone who knows the city or the description of one's first entrance into the city's premises. Last, we offer a cartography that demonstrates the connection between the best known of the novels in our corpus (Alejandro Pérez Lugín's 1915 novel La casa de la Troya) and the first attempt to create package tourist tours with Galicia as a destination, in a joint venture of Galician and British business owners, in the years immediately preceding the Great War. Literary cartography becomes a crucial instrument for digging deeply into the methods of cultural production of places. Through maps, the interaction between discursive forms seemingly so far removed from each other as novels and tourist guides becomes obvious and suggests the need to go deeper into a complex process through which a city like Compostela becomes visible on the contemporary cultural horizon.

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