Travel narratives of Camilo José Cela, Juan Goytisolo, and Miguel Delibes

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Abstract

The twentieth-century Peninsular Spanish travel narrative is interesting in the way it has been used as a method to gain an intuitive understanding of the nature of the Spanish personality during the Franco dictatorship. Even more interesting is the genre’s focus on the social stratum of the nation’s provincial inhabitants for insights into the Spanish “national character.”

I am wishing to consider the travel narratives of Camilo José Cela, Juan Goytisolo, and Miguel Delibes who all ventured into Spain’s most “unremarkable” regions in order to capture this national collective character. I will focus on travel writing as a form of temporary, and at times voluntary exile on the parts of all three, to see just how and why each writer sought out the Spanish personality through an analysis of it’s provincial popular culture.

The genre of the travel narrative and the formation of the Spanish character also extend to the study of the theories of the Generation of ’98. In what Paul Ilie called a “new subjectivism,” the Generation of ’98, with a rediscovery of the Spanish landscape, sought to link these physical contours of the land to the collective and individual mind, thus seeking out the land’s psychological effects on the national character.