

I

REFLECTIONS ON AESTHETICS FROM THE EUROPEAN
OCCIDENT

REFLEKSIJE O ESTETICI SA EVROPSKOG ZAPADA

EUROPE: THE SPACE AND TIME OF REFLECTION

On the Complutense Research Group *La Europa de la Escritura*

We are currently witnessing a moment in which the emergence of new circumstances in Europe from which to address cultural heritage requires the scientific community to engage in deep reflection. For centuries Europe was the space of reference for the development of knowledge. Over the millennia its soil amassed the successive contributions left behind by the different fields of knowledge like traces of mankind's intellectual passage. The various cultures that exist today all over the planet are either rooted in Europe or were recognized, studied, assessed and even challenged or subjugated in Europe. It is to this intellectual space that people keen to further and increase their knowledge flocked from all over the world until only recently.

However, the socio-political transformations that took place in Europe and the rest of the world throughout the 20th century brought changes with wide-ranging repercussions on how cultural interest is now experienced and, above all, on how concern for knowledge is felt and valued. The new generations no longer view in Europe as an unquestionable cultural reference; on the contrary, somewhat to the dismay of people and institutions, knowledge and the achievement of the soundest and most effective specializations are no longer pursued in Europe but in other geographical areas, in technologically developed countries like the United States, China, Japan and Canada whose huge economic potential applied to scientific research enables creativity to be developed effectively and what were until only recently unthinkable scientific objectives to be attained.

In view of this change of attitude and the indubitable beckoning effects which fertile soil, that of the highly developed countries, has on technological and scientific research for young generations, the countries that make up today's unified Europe have embarked on the long but inexorable path towards educational convergence in order to fight against the exile of the youngest generations by adopting a similar educational model and devoting sizeable aspects, but it can also be viewed as the confirmation of a defeat, as the shedding of a necessary attitude of self-esteem in respect to aspects in which Europe has been and cannot cease to be unavoidable space of research. We are referring to the field of the humanities. Thirst for scientific and technological competitiveness is tipping the scale, one of whose arms should bear Europe's historical heritage *par excellence* – that of humanistic tradition, that of art and the nascent civilisations which, although deposited on European soil, could end up being studied outside Europe if European universities neglect it, leading to the departure of a boat of young philologists, philosophers, archaeologists, historians and others who, having completed their training outside Europe, would return to perform their work in places or documentations

centers holding the resources for their own specialities. It would be particularly painful to see the future of the humanities, sacrificed for the sake of scientific progress on account of its scant immediate profitability, shift to countries which, on account of their economic potential, would be capable not only of giving impetus to science and technology but also to all the fields of knowledge that have an impact on anthropological development, on the cultivation of the inner self, that is, on giving impetus to the humanities. By banishing from European soil those who wish to know and develop the studies that precisely stem from and are rooted in that European soil, Europe is squandering its most valuable assets, its intellectual heritage and its wealth.

It is necessary to look beyond short-term profitability, to shed the double yardstick when taking an interest in scientists or humanists, and recognize the need for thought as well as for knowledge, shying away from competitive goals and choosing formulas that involve collaboration. Only then will long-term profitability balance the imbalances and will it be possible to speak of a European Union which above and beyond political union and economic union, has succeeded in achieving cultural union, recognition of the similarity of interests that are conducive to respect, knowledge and preservation of the most diverse cultural values, which is basically the very essence of democracy. The European space of research can furthermore be shaped as an open, interdisciplinary space based on intercommunication and the pooling of efforts, which stimulates the flow not only of students and teachers but also of knowledge and concerns. And these, in our opinion, are some of its most positive aspects and most refreshing attractions.

In 1998 this atmosphere of intellectual effervescence became the backdrop to the first meetings of Spanish, French and Italian researchers interested in embarking jointly on a project based on studying the relations between writing and image. In addition to a series of meetings at Paris 7 University and the Faculty of Philosophy of the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, this project led to the establishment of a *Seminario Permanente sobre Escritura e Imagen* (Ongoing Seminar on Writing and Image) whose subtitle, *La Europa de la Escritura* (The Europe of Writing), was intended to express the concern of the time and a prospective intent.

In the year 2005, the journal *Escritura e imagen* (ISSN 1885-5687) appears, directed by Ana María Leyra Soriano, Professor in Aesthetics, and then the research work carried out since 1998 gets consolidated through the constitution of the Complutense Research Group *La Europa de la Escritura* (Ref. 930196), first co-directed by Profs. Ana María Leyra Soriano (Faculty of Philosophy) and Javier de Prado (Faculty of Philology), both of the Complutense University of Madrid. Since 2010 Prof. Javier de Prado retires. Prof. Lourdes Carriedo (Faculty of Philology) takes over the co-direction of the journal until the present day.

La Europa de la Escritura focuses its research on reflection on the material character of writing and the analogies between image as “text” and writing as “graphism”. Several lines of research can be considered within this framework: historicity of writing and notation; relationship between visual and virtual; image as intermediary device of the literary work; artistic-literary hybridation in contemporary narrative; writing of intimacy and memory. Lastly, the activities of the group *La Europa de la Escritura* have given place to a wide number of international meetings, whose

papers have been published by editorial houses both Spanish and international. We mention here those ones celebrated in the last years and some publications:

Jornadas-homenaje a Ramón Gaya en el centenario de su nacimiento (Homage to Ramón Gaya in the Centenary of his birth) Faculty of Philosophy, 2010.

La irrupción de la imagen en la narrativa contemporánea. Imagen pictórica, fotográfica y cinematográfica (The Irruption of Image in Contemporary Narrative. Pictorial, Photographic and Cinematographic Image), Faculty of Philology, 2011.

Homenaje a Eduardo Chillida. Caminos de encuentro entre el pensamiento y el arte (Homage to Eduardo Chillida. Paths of Encounter between Thought and Art), Faculty of Philosophy, 2012.

La irrupción de la imagen en la narrativa contemporánea II. Imagen pictórica, fotográfica y cinematográfica (The Irruption of Image in Contemporary Narrative II. Pictorial, Photographic and Cinematographic Image), Faculty of Philology, 2015.

La irrupción de la imagen en la narrativa contemporánea III. Imagen fotográfica y fílmica (The Irruption of Image in Contemporary Narrative III. Photographic and Filmic Image), Faculty of Philology, 2017.

Entre escritura e imagen. Lecturas de narrativa contemporánea. Carriedo, L., Pícazo, M.D. (Dir.) Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2013.

Entre escritura e imagen II. Imágenes fijas, imágenes cinéticas. Carriedo, L., Reboul, A.M., Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2018.

Ana María Leyra Soriano, Professor in Aesthetics
Faculty of Philosophy
Universidad Complutense, Madrid