

THE TRAVELING LIGHT

Landscape and light, for a new intimate geography: a geopoetic expedition in the country of perception.

A proposal by Davide S. Sapienza

There is a way, a wide and potentially boundless freeway for Europe to affirm unity and brotherhood of its peoples. It is the long walk of our Earth and it is called *Paisagem* - Landscape. It belongs as a DNA to the connecting principle of life, and its home is called *Geografia*, Geography. The ancient Greeks, creating the legacy of their beautiful and founding European culture, said it all: *geographia* is the writing – the actual calligraphy – of the Earth. It was an intuition, the perception born out of its practice and observation. The questioning of our role in geography and about landscape. What do we know of our geography? Are we really aware that the intimate geography is the one we recognize and respect, nurturing it to keep it alive and becoming the inspiration of our life as a community of individuals being part of it? How do we recognize this intimate geography, its landscape, if we do not practice our perception? We should always remember, that ecology – the harmony of the ecosystem of which we are part of, not masters – is the practice of perception. So we need fresh and new perceptions to interpret the new world we are going to face after the Covid-19 pandemic. And in order to do so, there is no fresher perception of young people.

Even when we are not aware of it, the landscape defines our lives, in very practical and daily manners. But geography is what shapes our way of thinking, eating, feeling, living our emotional and spiritual lives, beyond the realm of our material lives. Geography is what decides the fates of peoples and peoples can alter and contribute to their geographies, in good ways, or without the needed awareness of being part of it and therefore recipients of what is done to geography and landscape. A geopoetic project on landscape is a process of training our perception and knowledge without prejudices.

Alentejo is quite a spectacular living school for this: the vast horizon, the human landscape where the people merges with the landscape, which also provides for their support, the Atlantic Ocean and a climate of beauty and light. It is the home of the Alentejo *genius loci*, the spirit of place. Evora, Alentejo, is the cultural and historical core of this intimate geography that needs to be recognized and practiced. An example in the development of the new geography we will need to explore, in order to become again “the first dwellers”, the explorers beholding, for the first time, a new landscape – a landscape that did not change its physical features, but whose outlook changed exactly because our intimate geography changed. In this geopoetic process, my guidelines give a lot of credit to human senses and vision: to our unique X factor in the species, that is, creativity, imagination and what makes us unique, Culture.

Today, I see, observe, and absorb, events that I might be able to understand in two, three, twelve, or twenty seven years. But, in this very moment, I can catch the fleeting vision and then can create paragraphs and stories gathering the words from the rapture established when the time to translate the writing of the Earth comes. If I respond to this call of the wild, what comes to me in the shape of an idea materializes and goes through my hands. My perception ever changing, will then ignite the unique human process of creativity and I can taste the essence expanding itself until it becomes a narrative. It literally is a cerebral photosynthesis - a process stemming from the emotional experience and going through the synapses until it becomes a form of knowledge – a temporary but solid enough knowledge to endure its freshness and lead me towards the next experience - the following fleeting glare.

This glare is like the cairn – the stone man erected by peoples and wanderers since the old ages to show the way to follow; it allows me to overcome fear to reveal the goal that is never there, yet within reach. So that is where the Alentejo Geopoetic Expedition “The traveling light” could lead – we can write a new poetic book of the region if we practice its geography and landscape, in rewriting our intimate geography.

We have so many tools at our disposal: they are like the hidden wires of our nervous system. We only need to recognize and make them visible. In Zen they say that the master appears when the student is ready. These ever growing glares, like the trail signs of a rugged path, seem just able to lead us towards a vision of the deeper truths belonging to the human psyche, where we we also understand that through the principle of the interconnection between the elements, our being is one single fluxus – Life.

Imagine the youth vision as this new intimate geography and landscape. What do we really know about “them”? What is their way of seeing things? What do they *want* to know? What are their dreams? How are they going to create new narratives? We do not really know. We can only invite them to join an ideal of landscape. There is nothing truthful and faithful to landscape as geography: we only need to tune in and understand what it is telling us. In a country of light and beauty – no borders, only horizons, alive in our minds and spirits. Through our bodies, by crossing open ground we can conjure ideas and define a new culture. As Josè Saramago beautifully wrote: “there’s never been any shortage of landscape in the world”. And this is an infinite resource, renewable and renewing.

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