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# Beach, Modernity, and Colonial Encounters in Santander and Castro Urdiales in Amós de Escalante and José María de Pereda, 1864–1877

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Veamos la ciudad. Es un conjunto  
De hoteles nuevos y de casas viejas;  
Éstas arriba, aquéllos en el muelle,  
Limpios aquéllos y podridas éstas.

Sinesio Delgado, “Santander”, 1887<sup>1</sup>

In 1871, Amós de Escalante fancied human history representing itself on a narrow strip of land surrounding the town of Castro Urdiales in Northern Spain. The village of Urdiales reminded the writer of the quiet dawn of humanity, when nature nourished humankind, still uncorrupted by progress and wealth. The town (Castro), built next to the village, seemed to bear testimony to bloody ages of warriors, whose need to defend their wealth had thrown humanity into inequality and violence. Against the background of the village and the town, the beach appeared as the mark of the new civilization, capable of synthesizing the contradictions of pre-modern ages. The beach, Escalante writes, is a modifying force, a “new industry” which absorbs the age-old conflicts by means of “enchantment”:

Tres edades humanas están allí representadas en el cantil de la costa, dentro de una distancia de media legua: Urdiales, la aldea primera, agrícola y pescadora, alimentada por la mar y el campo, tranquila, pobre y estacionaria; Castro, la villa, la sociedad armada, armada por necesidad para defender lo adquirido, nutriendo su

fuerza de la más pura sustancia de la aldea, y por la posesión de la fuerza conducida al abuso de ella, a su castigo, el recelo constante de los más fuertes, y el constante desvío de los más débiles; y en fin, la playa, la empresa de ayer, la industria nueva, que por encanto establece, mejora, modifica y crea; que a su vez mina la fortaleza, echa por tierra sus muros, y llama a sí y absorbe y emplea en provecho propio los elementos vitales que a duras penas existían dentro del angosto recinto de piedra. (*Costas y montañas*, 20)

Escalante's landscape, where history unfolds and reveals itself in nature represented from a highly positioned vantage point, can be easily classified as the predecessor of the *fin de siècle* images of space and time combined.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, the author's choice of words, blending the history of humanity into the ages of human body, suggests that not only the distinction of space and time, but also the separation of the macrocosm and the microcosm are questioned in his landscape. In Escalante's "tres edades humanas," simultaneously referring to the "ages" of history and to the microcosmic ages of childhood, youth, and old age, time is allegorically individualized and charged with eschatological overtones.<sup>3</sup> Within this complex set of references, the realm of the beach is selected as the privileged scenario of a new age of the human kind and the human body.

In the description, Escalante did not separate the touristic development of the seaside from the industrial exploitation of the sea itself. When referring to the "playa, la empresa de ayer, la industria nueva," the Cantabrian author intermittently implies the sea bathing installations of the Brazomar beach and the whale — and fish — canning factories built in the port.<sup>4</sup> In the northern seacoast of Spain, both industries arrived approximately at the same time — the mid-19th century — and determined the area's modern face.<sup>5</sup> As we shall see, sea bathing and industrial development appear hand-in-hand in a number of texts about Cantabria written in the second half of the 19th century. I propose to read them as narratives about the ways in which industrial development transformed the Spanish countryside, produced new forms of human exploitation of nature, brought unseen human figures and machines into familiar landscapes, and remapped traditional habitats. I will analyze in detail the relations



*Boceto original de Conservas González-Arizmendi, S. L., empresa de Castro Urdiales existente en 1963, población donde escabechado y conserva son actividades florecientes desde el siglo XIX. Metalgrafía Ramiro P. del Río (Luarca y Bilbao).*

Fig. 1. The Castle of Castro Urdiales, the beach, and an old-fashioned fishing boat on a fish can. (Reproduced in Homobono, 66)

between sea bathing and modernity in Escalante's 1871 *Costas y montañas. Diario de un caminante* and José María de Pereda's *Escenas montañosas* (1864), *Tipos y paisajes* (1871), and *Tipos trashumantes* (1877). In these and similar writings about the beach, which I will term "beach narratives," the beaches equipped for sea bathing in the second half of the 19th century will appear to be highly encoded cultural scenarios in which Spanish modernity claimed its dominance over the Spanish rural and coastal periphery. In order to

understand these narratives, one shall first consider what it meant, for a 19th-century regional author, to see hotels, bath pavilions, bathing machines, and summer tourists overtake familiar shores.

### 1. COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS ON THE BEACH

Within Spain's marginal modernity, the development of the beach and the narratives accompanying it are particularly interesting because they give voice to local authors from Spain's own margin: its rural coastline, its border in flux.<sup>6</sup> As we shall see, some of these authors experienced the modernization of their native lands as a reversed colonial conquest, which stirred old discussions about the role of the Empire, the ownership of lands, and the balance of civilization and barbarity in modern culture.



Fig. 2. Fisherwomen on a fish can from the 1920s (Reproduced in Homobono, 85)



Fig. 3. Old-fashioned fishermen's community on a fish can from the 1940s (Reproduced in Homobono, 100)

The local population experienced the development of seaside resorts as a sudden closure of the sea, now separated from the mainland by fences and walls. From the socio-economic perspective, the creation of the sea bathing facilities was accompanied by the processes of privatization of public property — the seashore — and by transformations of traditional class relations. Seasonal visitors arriving to spend the summer by the sea joined the local bourgeoisie, bringing new forms of exploitation and making local businesses increasingly dependent on the strangers.<sup>7</sup> Very little is known about the ways in which lower classes perceived the modernization of the beach areas; on the other hand, the response of the local bourgeoisie and aristocracy to the new

phenomenon of beach tourism found its expression in the *costumbrista* beach narratives written by the local upper class writers. Although some of these writers, like Pereda the factory owner, participated in the industrialization and distribution of lands, in their stories they focus on the negative transformations of the countryside and the troubles of a big city, brought to the seaside by the *forasteros*: the uncertainty of class hierarchies, moral laxity, and illnesses.<sup>8</sup> They also nostalgically evoke traditional seaside occupations, such as fishing and sailing, replaced by the rising tourist business.

The images of old-time beach communities blown off their habitats by the beach industry dominate Spanish beach narratives. Fishermen and their wives, sailors, contrabandists, and their seaside villages under threat of extinction inhabit Spanish stories set on the beach and Spanish beach paintings. Far from the Cantabrian region, on the island of Mallorca and in Valencia, fishermen and sailors, whose occupations and living spaces came under threat in the last decade of the 19th century, were preserved on Santiago Rusiñol's and Joaquín Sorolla's canvases<sup>9</sup> and on the pages of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's Valencian stories.<sup>10</sup> In Santander, they found a sympathetic chronicler of their lives and habits in Pereda.<sup>11</sup>

The 'new industry' of the beach did not fail to render symbolic homage to the traditional civilization that it subdued. The pictures of old-fashioned fishermen and, most frequently, fisherwomen appeared on the cans of fish produced by the factories that made manual fishing labor useless.<sup>12</sup> The name of the first fully equipped Spanish beach, *El Sardinero* in Santander, reminded its visitors about the community and the business that it came to replace. The metaphors of a ship or a boat manifested themselves in the architectural design of the beach facilities,<sup>13</sup> while the bathers were often dressed as sailors and fishermen.<sup>14</sup> In reality, some sailors and *sardineros*, deprived of their jobs by the industrial transformation of their businesses, could return to the beach as *bañeros*. By doing so, they would stop being self-employed individuals depending only on nature and their own luck for maintenance, and would become the employees of the enterprises that privatized the seaside and cut access to the sea, which used to be their main source of income. The work of the *bañeros* required considerable physical strength and, at times, audacity, and could benefit much from the sea folk's familiarity with the water. Escalante describes the frightened bathers

assisted by a sailor: “sentados o en cuclillas estaban a mojo asidos a una maroma, o a las manos callosas del marinero que los asistía.” However, as one of Pereda’s characters visiting sea baths fearfully found out, the ‘bañeros’ would require monetary compensation for the display of such seemingly natural qualities as physical strength and the readiness to save a drowning person:

- Pero, ¿no están ustedes para sacar de tales apuros?
- Cuando se nos manda.
- ¿Y si no se lo mandan a ustedes?
- Nos estamos, como ahora, paseando por el arenal...
- [...]¡Canastos! Pues, ¿cómo hay ahora otros bañeros con aquellas mujeres?
- Porque los han pedido y pagado (“Un aprensivo”, II, 51)

In his portrayal of the beach environment in *Tipos y paisajes* and *Tipos trashumantes*, Pereda suggests that the Cantabrian beaches were colonized by new “savages” who came to replace indigenous low-class fishermen and sailors and who promoted their “barbarian” manners amidst the local population, also transformed into savages. Among the colonizers, Pereda names foreigners and visitors from Madrid. However, the most frequent and symptomatic figures of the beach colonizers are *indianos* and *indianas*, descendants of local families who made their fortunes in the colonies and came back to invest or spend money on the beach.<sup>15</sup> Pereda’s texts suggest that the colonization of the beach brought back home the very set of problems which the Spanish Empire strived to resolve in its overseas possessions.<sup>16</sup> Among them were the need to defend the territories against the invaders coming from other European countries and the United States, the effort to build an orderly social structure, and the imperial struggle against immorality and illnesses in the colonies.

In “El espíritu moderno” (1864) from *Escenas Montañesas*, Pereda’s narrator witnesses the invasion from Spain’s colonial adversaries — France, Germany, England — in the native lands and the peculiar cultural mix that it produced. In this account, the invaders and the local *indígenas* are presented as equally savage agents of industrial development. Hence the yellow color covering all faces as its mark:



Más adelante, caras barbudas con el sello francés más puro; otras medio ocultas por la boina vasca, y otras indígenas, pero todas veladas por el polvillo amarillento de la calamina [...] Hablábase en un grupo el vascuence, en otro el francés, aquí el alemán y allá el inglés [...]. (I, 260–1)

In “Las interesantísimas señoras” from *Tipos transhumantes* (1877), Pereda portrays a mysterious couple of young and well-dressed female visitors of a highland resort, who make the locals wonder about their nationality, language, civil and class status: “Como nadie las conoce en el pueblo, las conjeturas sobre procedencia, calidad y jerarquía, no cesan un punto” (II, 25). According to the narrator, there is no communication between the visitors and the local community. Spying, eavesdropping, and mythmaking mark this cultural encounter and make communication impossible. The ‘invaders’ use barbarisms (*aisé*), which the indigenous people try to interpret in order to understand the origin of the visitors. They wear exotic clothes, thus



Fig. 4. Female bathers dressed as sailors, *El Sardinero*, end of 19th century (The Zubieta Collection, reproduced in Gil de Arriba 1992, 59)

provoking uncertainty about their social status: “unos las creen elegantísimas, y otros charradas y amaneradas” (II, 25). Other stories make it evident that, in addition to breaking the linguistic and class unity of the seaside towns, the visitors bring to the seaside contagious diseases. Thus, in “El artista” (*Tipos transhumantes*) the author revisits the hygienic foundation of sea bathing from the point of view of the local community exposing itself to the illnesses transmitted by the summer visitors. The so-called *artista*, the protagonist of this story, has tuberculosis. As we find out from his monologue, his

illness is both hereditary and contagious: this dull character, which, as he himself reveals, was a premature baby, is a son of an *indiano* who died from the same disease, having previously transmitted it to his wife. The hygienic dangers that such visitors suppose for the community come to the surface when one realizes that this sick character, who came to the beach looking for a cure, works as a barber in a local barbershop, where he can easily infect the clients.<sup>17</sup>

As far as the moral dangers of the beach culture are concerned, they become visible as soon as the bathers enter the picture. In the Spanish beach narratives, the discussion about the visual regime of Modernity complemented the colonial theme, producing the figure embodying the industrial renovation of the beach: the savagely undressed female bather.

## 2. FEMALE BATHERS UNDER MALE EYES

The possibility of undressing or being seen undressed on the beach blurred centuries-old divisions of the public and private spheres and challenged the boundaries of the high, middle, and lower class norms. In Pereda's and Escalante's accounts, encounters with the undressed bodies on the beach produced a profound confusion in the viewers, who realized that in the area of the sea baths the familiar rules of tabooing or displaying different parts of human body were no longer in place. While the shock and the scandal of uncovered human flesh contributed to the attraction of the beach *per se*, the effect was particularly dramatic on male viewers watching female bathers (Urbain 128–144).<sup>18</sup> For them, it was the female "savage" invader who embodied the colonial problematic of the beach better than anyone else.

Earlier we have seen Escalante's narrator welcome the transformation of the beach overlooking the landscape from above. As soon as the narrator made his way to the town and saw the bathers, his attitude became much more critical. The bathing women were the first to attract his attention. The sight instantly disturbed him, as he realized that he could no longer tell a noble dame from an ignoble seductress:

Las diversas escalas del universo femenino veíanse representadas en los diversos grupos, cuyas breves faldas, rojas y azules, blancas y negras, esmaltaban con crudos toques la descolorida arena. Largos rizos que despeinaba

el viento, pupilas encendidas en el sol meridional, damas de blasón y linaje, y aventureras sin otras armas que las de su hermosura, con éxito lastimoso esgrimidas, en provecho del diablo. (23)

Lack of clothing and common activity made it impossible for this male to distinguish between the “different scales of female universe,” their suggestive beauty produced anxiety, and it did not take long for the devil to appear in this description.<sup>19</sup>

The perplexity of Escalante’s narrator in the face of the sudden confusion of gender and class behavior on the beach is characteristic of male beach narratives in general. Cultural taboos on showing certain body parts for upper class women, the age-old symbolization of the female body, the traditional notions of upper (i.e. permissible) and lower (i.e.



Fig. 5. *The Bather and the Bañera*, artist unknown. (The Zubieta Collection, reproduced in Gil de Arriba 1992, 110). The bather is dressed in a marine costume.

ostracized) body, even the precepts on hair styles, all seem dangerously mixed up in his image. Indeed, the “brief skirts” laid bare women’s legs and thighs, which, unlike the neck and the shoulders, could never be seen in proper society. That is why the very sight of them made the narrator doubt about the lineage of the women he observed. In the meantime, the untamed hair — culturally related to a woman’s unmarried status and thus to virginity — immediately made him suspect in the bathers a desire to seduce, either him or everyone else.<sup>20</sup>

In “Los baños del Sardinero a vista del castellano rancio. Fantasía higiénica” (1865),<sup>21</sup> Pereda describes a summer visitor from Castile deeply troubled

by the sight of women on the beach. This jovial character, whom we first see planning an erotic attack on his female companions in the carriage heading to the sea, left the beach frustrated and almost deprived of libidinous instincts after he observed the same female companions transformed by the bathing suits (456). Initially, Pereda's protagonist was uncertain about the effect that the sight produced on him. He felt attracted and appalled by the picture, could not stop meditating about the transformation of the female body on the beach, and eventually rationalized his impressions pointing out the arbitrary nature of dressing norms and prescriptions:

Esas señoritas se guardarán muy bien de enseñar en la calle media pantorrilla, y aquí no se les da una higa por correr en pernetas por el arenal y recibir a sus amigos en camisa.[...] Está visto que en hombres y mujeres, todo, todo es hijo de la costumbre y de las circunstancias. (453)

Gradually, the sight of the beach made the character reconsider not only the conventions of gender behavior, but also the class nature of the moral norms. On the lower class Second beach he inquired how the seemingly uniform space by the sea could harbor moral norms and dressing codes so different from one another: “¿Cómo es que hay tanto rigor en el otro arenal y en éste tanta tolerancia?” (454). His local guide gave no plausible explanation. The truth was, however, that when the former no-man's lands of the beach became private property, it was up to the owners to decide the regulations of dress codes and beach behavior.<sup>22</sup>



Fig. 6. *Tha Coquette Bather*. (19th century caricature, reproduced in Gil de Arriba 1992, 111.)

The development of the beach facilities and the emerging beach cultures converted the narrow border between land and sea into a disputed territory on which the bourgeois values and distinctions were questioned, reassessed, and packaged anew for the rising consumer society. John K. Walton remarks:

The rise of the seaside resort coincided with a growing concern within European elites to regulate manners and morals in the interests of the restrictive definition of civilization and a repressive version of religion. The use of the beach and shore for bathing, lounging, gazing, and promenading raised precisely these issues of morality [...] and civilization [...], in an intermediate setting between land and sea, culture and nature, mundane solidity and dangerous fluidity, in which property rights and legal jurisdiction were often in flux. (280)

Pereda's beach narratives demonstrate how, on the modernized Cantabrian beaches of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, traditional class distinctions, dress codes, and the norms of morality and hygiene were intertwined with the changes in land ownership and the dynamic of industrialization. As we have seen, the tourist development of the beach made the authors revisit Spanish colonial ideology and reconsider the transformations of the public and private spheres. I will now examine the metaphorical dimension of Pereda's insight about the rising beach culture and the processes that accompanied it.

### 3. PLUNGING INTO COLONIAL HELL: BEACH DEVELOPMENT AND THE METAPHORS OF MODERNITY

The protagonist of Pereda's "Los baños del Sardinero" summarized his impressions of the beach as the prophecy of the approaching Last Judgment. For this visitor, the thrilling experience of the beach, with its temptations, disillusionments, and display of flesh, was but a metaphor of the imminent display of all corporeal and mental impudicity in the face of God. Interestingly enough, this character only envisioned women being judged and condemned, thus inadvertently keeping for himself the privileged position of the observer or even the proper Judge.<sup>23</sup> His use of male-female references at this point is tellingly ambiguous:

Lo que yo veo es que delante de la cara de Dios no valen trampas, y van a salir *muchas* a relucir el día del juicio, porque allí *todos* hemos de estar peor vestidos que los bañistas del Sardinero chico, por no decir tan desnudos como los del Sardinero grande. (I 455 italics mine)

In this context, it is not surprising that the female bathers are described as *infelices* (453) and “las condenadas de las hembras” (452) and compared to the female “disciplinantes de los que van en la procesión de mi pueblo el Viernes Santo” (453). The presence of a Church representative (supposedly a priest) among the bathers also suggests an interpretation of sea bathing as a religious ritual of sorts, while a steam boat entering the visitor’s visual field, filling the scene with smoke, completes the picture of the Judgment and the future punishment (453).

Familiar colonial motives frame the representation of the beach as the scene of the Last Judgment and eventual Condemnation. Pereda’s character experiences the beach as an environment promoting “savage” customs: “Pues mire Usted, en medio de todo, no deja de gustarme esa franqueza salvaje que reina aquí entre ambos sexos” (453). Two symmetrical reminders of the New World frame the statement. “¿Por dónde se ve a la América?” the visitor inquired as soon as he saw the sea (449). Although his guide did not answer, the visitor insisted and asked again after he saw the steamer: “¿Vendrá de América, eh?” (453). Apparently, the view of the beach made the Castilian visitor feel himself in the colonies, no



Fig. 7. ¿Por qué llaman esto El Sardinero? (Private Collection, Santander. Reproduced in Alonso Laza, 61). The marine theme is present in both male and female bathing suits.

matter how hard his local companion tried to dissuade him and bring him back to reality.<sup>24</sup> Simultaneously attracted and shocked by the unheard-of nudity and savage behavior of upper class women, the abundant hair on male arms and legs, which made him remember the civilizing effect of shaving, and the glimpse of the private parts in a public place, the visitor could not find peace until he subconsciously fancied himself in the Americas, thus reenacting the colonial encounters on the far-away beaches of the New World.

The writer's eye distinguished the colonial theme in the very topography of Santander, the way the city revealed itself to the summer visitors on their road from the Plaza Nueva to the beach. In "Los baños de Santandero," the carriage transporting the visitors takes a tour of the varied dimensions of the Spanish colonial past, as Pereda the regionalist saw it.<sup>25</sup> Not only do the travelers encounter a half-finished church (an ambiguous witness of the local piety and religious proselytism); the coach takes them, via Moctezuma street, right to the symbol of the Castilian supremacy: the bullfighting arena. "¡Y qué fea es la condenada calle!" the Castilian visitor exclaims contemplating the marker of the glorious Conquest of the New World (448). Facing the bullfighter's ring, however, he becomes radiant:

¡Bien, canario! le confieso a usted que se me hincha la vanidad de castellano cuando veo entrar a los pueblos por esas reformas. Una plaza de toros no debe faltar nunca en ninguna población nuestra que se aprecie en algo. O somos españoles o no lo somos. (448)

While the interlocutor, who seems to have his doubts about the reformist message of the bullfighting arena and the Castilian supremacy in general, replies with a sour "Claro...y ¡viva la Pepa!," the carriage moves on and makes visible the mark of the new industrial colonization of the rural space between the town and the beach. In the midst of green meadows, gardens, and small houses, Pereda's travelers see the steam and the smoke coming from the pipes of a factory. We have just seen that in Pereda's stories, where there is smoke there is fire — namely, the infernal fire. On this occasion, however, the author plays the theme of Hell, otherwise ubiquitous in his early sketches about the industrial modernization, with self-reflective humor, as the steam factory turns out to produce nothing other than stearin, a raw material

for candles and soap, indispensable for the purification of both soul and body. What is even more interesting, however, is that by mentioning this factory Pereda himself steps out as not only the chronicler and the toughest critic, but also as the direct participant of the infernal industrial pollution. According to García Castañeda, the factory that the travelers see is *La Rosario*, the candle and soap factory which belonged to Pereda (I 448).

The metaphor of the beach development as a colonial Hell becomes even more complicated as soon as one realizes that, in the view of so much savagery, there is no one to remind one of civilization. After all, the Castilian invader, who speaks with a grotesque accent, constantly curses, declares a fetishistic predilection for fat women, and always tries to imitate Don Juan, is a savage of sorts, observed by a withdrawn narrator and portrayed with condescending and ironic overtones. When the narrator poses as a witness of the events or a protagonist, he also insists on interpreting the beach vacationing as the type of colonization in which both sides — the colonizers and the colonized — are or become “savages.”

Thus, in “El espíritu moderno,” quoted earlier, the local upper classes imitating the invaders are portrayed as modern members of the “clase indígena acomodada” (I, 261). In this story, the visual image of a modernized area is structured around the same metaphor of Hell which appeared on the beach to the Castilian visitor of El Sardinero. Here the Hell is industrialized land, filled with uncanny holes of landmines and subterranean passages. Once again, the steam from the factory pipes finalizes the metaphor, here made even stronger thanks to the presence of a calcination oven. At the end, the narrator collects and emphasizes all infernal metaphors in one piece of advice to the reader: “[H]uya de toda comarca en que haya un *paso de nivel*, un *túnel*, una fábrica de tejidos *al vapor* o un *horno de calcinación*. Por allí ha pasado el espíritu moderno y se ha llevado la paz y la poesía de los patriarcas” (I, 263, italics in the original).

Our understanding of the functionality of the metaphor of the colonial Hell would be incomplete until we inquire into the nature of the implied reader, whom the author wants to divert from the industrialized areas. Did Pereda write for his compatriots, warning them about their objective “savage” condition under the new order? Did he expect to stop the invaders? His invocation to the reader in “El espíritu moderno” makes it clear that the writer’s interlocutor is a leisurely



traveler who has read Pereda's other stories from *Escenas Montañesas* and wishes to make a first-hand acquaintance with their prototypes:

Es muy posible que algún lector de mi libro, al distraer sus ocios por las bellas praderas de la Montaña, quiera buscar en ellas los modelos de las escenas campestres que yo he pintado. [...] Pero es preciso que no tarde mucho en emprender la expedición. Al paso que hoy caminamos, dentro de pocos años la industria habrá invadido completamente estos pacíficos solares, y entonces ya no habrá tipos. (I, 263)

If the impulse of *Escenas Montañesas* consisted in creating a collective dialogue about the region in a way proper for the *costumbrista* writing, the modernization is described as the factor that made Pereda's labor necessary by endangering the writer's models and prototypes. At the same time, Pereda's attempt to establish contact with his narratee is marked by a number of tensions symptomatic for the quick-changing public of the modernized Spanish society.<sup>26</sup> According to Magdalena Aguinaga, the "relación de afecto y familiaridad con que tratan los diversos narradores peredianos a sus narratarios indica una cercanía entre ambos, y, por consiguiente, una compenetración" (166). However, in "El espíritu moderno" and other stories about the consequences of the modernization, the unity between the narrator and the narratee appears as fragile as the persistence of the old types described in the *costumbrista* fiction. Pereda's narratee is a Romantic male traveler looking for authentic experiences in the face of nature. It is this traveler who, according to the author, would be disappointed if he does not hurry to see the remote places before modernization transforms them into Hell. The author's discourse is thus a talk about community under threat of extinction, addressed to readers that are themselves almost extinct.<sup>27</sup>

The same industrial changes of the countryside which provided Pereda with the material for his writings and whose dramatic effects on the landscape and the population secured the writer's mission, transformed the community of Pereda's readers in ways which complicated the communication between the writer and his audience. Pereda's vision of the industrial change as colonization did not suit the local public of different classes, portrayed as "savages". In the meantime, the travelers described as savage colonizers, if they read at

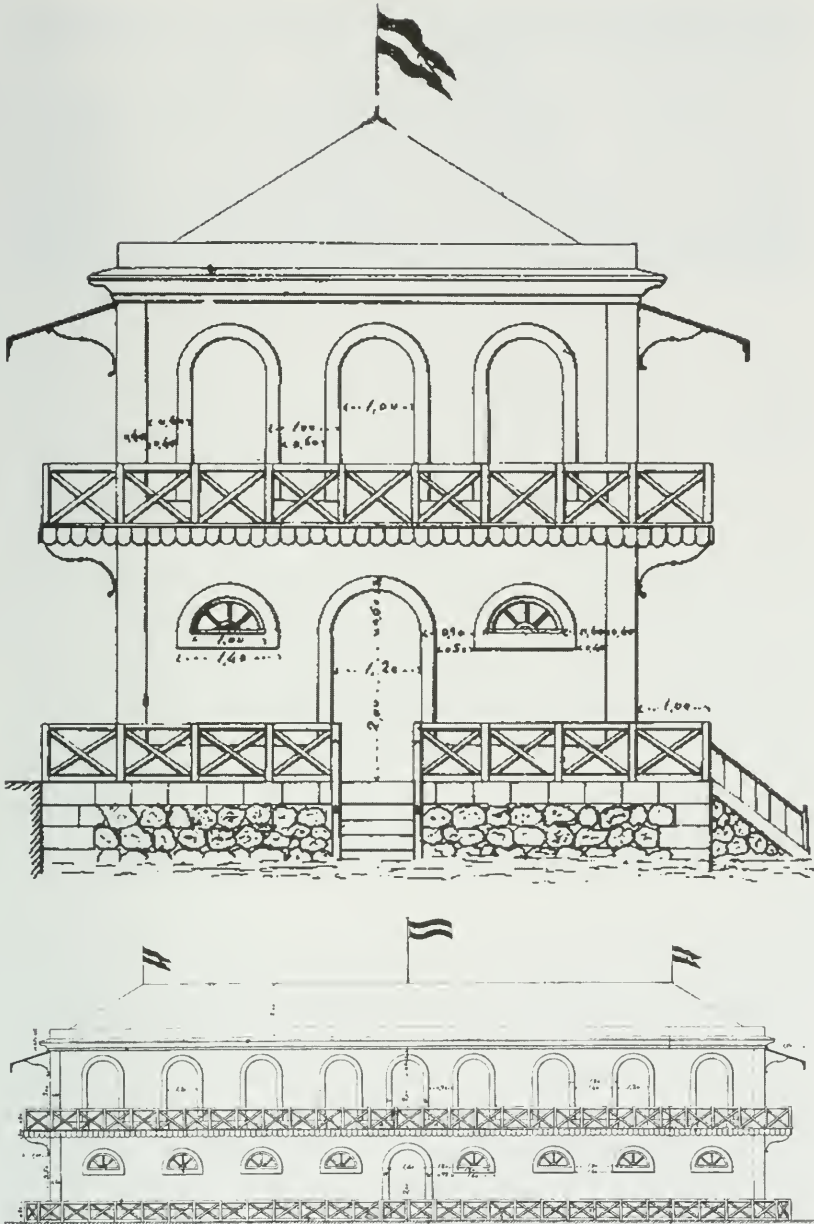


Fig. 8. Project of a bathing installation in Castro Urdiales, 1868. (Reproduced in Gil de Arriba, 147). The sea-bathing pavilion, whose elongated shape suited the necessity of cutting the free access to the beach, is designed as a ship).



Fig. 9. Colonial theme on a fish can (around 1920s). (Reproduced in Homobono, 105)

all, did not share the author's literary tastes. The "barber-artist" from *Tipos transhumantes (el artista)* brags about his acquaintance with Galdós, his client in Madrid, but his judgment about the shape of the writer's beard is much deeper than his knowledge of his works, which he only knows "por encima" (II, 33). At the same time, he is fond of *Gil Blas* (II, 36) — the book that secures the connection between the beach cultures and Hell, as it features the demon Asmodeus as one of its characters. The other "type" from *Tipos transhumantes* — the so-called Wise Man ("Un sabio," II, 39-49) who arrived at the Sardinero beach from the Madrid athenaeum, is filled with Krausist ideas, denounced as "ilustrada ignorancia" (II, 41). Pereda's fellowman Amós Escalante was also condescending when describing the reading habits of the beachgoers, especially the female ones, as he portrayed one of them, "la que vaga solitaria y grave con un libro entre las manos, más hojeado que leído" (23).

\* \* \*

Pereda and Escalante were some of the first writers who reflected the schism in the Spanish literate community as the loss of communication between those who write and those who read. Mass tourists, who came to the provinces to substitute Romantic travelers (who were usually writers themselves), did not write and carried in their hands the books of which the writers would not approve. Their texts add the reading itself — the source of writer's fame and, in many cases, the writer's income — to the list of values threatened or shifted by the emerging beach culture.

Writing about the beach marked the end of the epoch of upper class travel writing, in the same way as the tourist exploitation of the

beach, the privatization of the seaside, and the building of beach facilities marked the end of the quiet existence of the beach as a remote no man's land or a utopian wild space populated by fishermen. It did not take long for "summer novels," summertime newspapers and magazines, and lowbrow humor anthologies to come to replace romantic travel literature.<sup>28</sup> Already in 1871, Escalante predicted that the new beach environment would eventually produce a new type of text, which the writer considered the only appropriate one to describe the multi-faceted phenomenon of the beach development. Escalante envisioned a book for mass reading, which "aparecerá en manos de todos, a bordo del bote, dentro del coche, bajo la sombrilla, sobre el césped, en el regazo, asomando por el saquillo repleto de la viajera, rebosando del bolsillo abierto del turista." (195). According to the writer, different types of scientists and scholars would come together to describe the beach in this future "special book":

Estos parajes, este mar sublime, esta playa suave, despejada y abierta, tendrán su libro especial un día. Vendrá el geólogo a analizar sus rocas y lanchares, el prehistórico a descubrir sus fósiles, el naturalista a recoger y clasificar sus conchas vivas: vendrá el geógrafo a titular sus cabos y ensenadas, sus fuentes y los accidentes menores del paisaje; vendrá el historiador a decir la razón de sus baterías y armamento, el empleo que ambos tuvieron y si fueron de algún provecho, y a qué generaciones sirvieron, y de qué riesgos y enemigos las guardaron. (195)

As the author predicted, such a book required a contribution from a new type of a chronicler: a historian and a statistician of the present, rather than the past. It also needed submissions from a humorist, together with a poet and a writer.

Y con él vendrá otro cronista de especie diversa, más impuesto en las cosas y menesteres actuales que en estériles recuerdos de lo pasado; más aficionado a estadísticas contemporáneas que a enumeraciones arqueológicas: más diestro en picar curiosidades presentes que ocupado en merecer póstumos aplausos de un sabio venidero, hurón y desabrido; y vendrá el pintor

que dibuja, y el prosista que describe, y el poeta que canta, y el humorista que esparce semilla sutil y leve de vario ingenio, para que el ingenio de cada cual la fecunde y convierta en espiga y substancia [...] (196)

As we have seen, the texts reflecting the tourist exploration of the beach indeed require a multifaceted approach. Beach narratives are not mere reflections of the beach, nor are they simple stories set on a beach by a writer's caprice. As written discourses emerging from and circulating within public spaces, these narratives are to be analyzed against the background of the cultural codes, economic processes, and social transformations involved in the functionality of such spaces. At the same time, as texts challenging the autonomy of art or reflecting a threat to such autonomy, beach narratives offer an opportunity of tracing the language of literature back to the *realia* which brought it to life. From these perspectives, the infernal metaphors of Pereda's stories and the physical anthropomorphism of Escalante's landscapes are as much facts of life as they are literary features. They bear testimony to the disturbing effect of modernization on the values, distinctions, and patterns of life of the upper and middle class male society of the Spanish periphery.

More than a century has passed since Escalante predicted the future publication of a new book about the beaches. Only in the last decades, however, have disciplines started to cooperate in order to arrive to a synthetic knowledge of the beach phenomenon and its implications. Geographers, sociologists, and historians are now making their contributions to the full-fledged understanding of what the beach means for our modern culture.<sup>29</sup> However, Escalante's much-desired book would be incomplete until literary critics join other natural and social scientists in order to explain what happened to the Western imagination when masses of men, women, and children decided to travel to the seaside, change clothes in public, and plunge into the salty waters of the sea.

## Notes

1. Salvador García Castañeda, "El Santander de 1887 visto por Sinesio Delgado y siete cartas de Pereda" (2000), 549.

2. Lily Litvak emphasizes the importance of examining vantage points in the turn-of-the-century discursive and visual representations of nature as temporality. Having analyzed the mountainous landscapes in Pereda, de Escalante's compatriot, the critic concludes: "En este panorama, la gran extensión del campo espacial determina la amplitud del campo temporal, y ello se obtiene esencialmente por el punto de vista, muy alto, casi en la cumbre de la montaña, y por la línea del horizonte extremadamente lejana" ("Después del arco iris" 11).

3. Litvak detected a similar complexity and interdependence of the theological, metaphysical, and geological references in Pereda's landscapes: "Para Pereda el paisaje que se revela ante sus ojos constituye un texto inscrito con jeroglíficos que van desde las rocas de las montañas hasta la más humilde hierba. Todo ello revela un mensaje sobre su propio medio e historia material pero también sobre el poder divino" ("Geología y metafísica" 241). De Escalante's landscape, structured around human, historical, and eschatological allegories, may be analyzed in the context of German Romantic and post-Romantic historiography (Novalis, Schelling, Hegel) and its transformations in the works of Karl Christian Friedrich Krause and his Spanish followers. See, for example, Julián Sanz del Río's annotated translation of Krause's *Ideal de la humanidad para la vida* (34–40), where the historical development of the humankind is presented as the three phases in the revelation of the essence of divinity to the humanity. In de Escalante's visual historiography one can also distinguish the elements of eschatological Catholic doctrine of the Three Ages of God, based on Joachim of Fiore's mystical doctrine, and its 19<sup>th</sup> century secularized transformations in the notion of the three ages of man — a product of the German Idealist thought. According to Schelling, the history of humanity and of the human spirit unfolds itself in three ages. The first primitive age is essentially passive; the second, which was initiated by the rise of the Roman Empire, brings fourth the human will and action. The third age, relegated to the future, promises to bring together the principles of passivity and action. See also López-Morillas, *El krausismo español* and Díaz, *La filosofía social del krausismo español*. On Pereda's landscapes, see Anthony Clark's *Pereda, paisajista*.

4. The image of a whale and the references to salmon and whale capture — presumably the traditional business of Castro-Urdiales (reflected already in the *Libro de buen amor*) — appears on the town's coat-of-arms and in the *copla* which de Escalante explained in the passage about the "three ages of man," quoted above. The landscape culminated in the description of the sea baths, bath facilities, and the bathers in the Brazomar beach as the *loci* of the town's "current excellence":

[L]a actual excelencia de la villa está en las olas que mojan sus términos. Está la playa de baños en una entrada que hace la costa al saliente de la villa, gráficamente nombrada Brazo-mar, donde desagua un arroyo del mismo apellido, que baja del valle de Sámano.

5. Luis Sazatornil Ruiz quotes an 1850s reference to “unos sólidos y aseados baños” in Castro Urdiales (110). The first fish-canning factory in Spain opened in Castro Urdiales in 1840 (Homobono 65). According to Homobono, in 1845 there were already five fish-processing plants in Castro Urdiales with the total capacity of 3,070 *arobas*. Two more factories opened by 1847.

6. On the importance of studying marginal discourses of modernity, see the volume *Modernism and Its Margins*, edited by Anthony Geist and José Monleón, especially pages xxviii–xxx.

7. The families that acquired lands and received permissions for building the sea bathing installations were the same ones that built factories and plants and founded fishing companies. Exemplary is the history of the Pombo family, which in 1868 received the concession for the construction of the sea baths on El Sardinero beach in Santander. By the 1890s, the Pombos possessed the whole infrastructure ranging from the hotels to the tramline used for transporting visitors to the seaside. Gil de Arriba describes the Pombo family as “la mayor propietaria de suelo en el Sardinero, ya que para 1897 la familia poseía, además de la galería de baños, el Gran Hotel, el Hotel Castilla, el Hotel Hoyuela, el Hotel Paris, el Casino y un tranvía de vapor establecido en 1892 y que servía para enlazar Santander con el Sardinero” (“La difusión social y espacial del modelo balneario” endnote 7).

8. After mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, sea baths were prescribed for several mental and corporeal diseases, including melancholy, insanity, and tuberculosis (Courbin 57–73). In the light of 19<sup>th</sup> century hygienic theories, sea bathing appeared to be a healthy alternative to the sickly conditions of the big city (see Pedro Felipe Monlau’s *Higiene de los baños del mar*, 1869, esp. 248–250). From this point of view, tourist development of the beach was inseparable from the urban industrialization, of which it was a flip-side. It was the grimaces of the urbanization, such as air pollution, high concentration of poor population, and bad hygienic conditions, that created the need to take sea baths. Ironically, the population most suffering from the consequences of urban development and industrialization — the working classes — could not afford the costly “sea remedy,” and thus the stories depicting the populace of the summer resorts were not filled with sick workers, but rather with *señoritos* tormented by no particular disease except idleness.

9. Fishermen's huts on Rusiñol's landscapes painted in Sóller (Mallorca) and Sorolla's vivid images of fishermen, their wives, and their children on the beach are particularly relevant in this respect. I am grateful to Professor Nina Davis for her suggestion that I study these images. Visual representations of the beach are analyzed in the articles by Lily Litvak and Francisco Javier Pérez Rojas accompanying the catalogue of the exhibition *A la playa: el mar como tema de la modernidad en la pintura española, 1870–1936*.

10. In the ending of "En el mar," from *Cuentos valencianos* (1893), Blasco Ibáñez eloquently describes the miscommunication and incompatibility between the unfortunate fishing community, haunted by death, and the joyful *veraneantes*: "bajo las palmeras, seguían desfilando los vistosos trajes, los rostros felices y sonrientes, todo un mundo que no había sentido pasar la desgracia junto a él, que no había lanzado una mirada sobre el drama de la miseria" (I, 104). There is a direct connection between Blasco Ibáñez's images of fishermen and Sorolla's beach landscapes (Gerli).

11. See, for example, "La leva," "La buena gloria," "Fin de una raza," etc. Magdalena Aguinaga's *El costumbrismo de Pereda* features a complete typology of Pereda's fishermen characters (74–78, 119).

12. The situation of the old-time sea communities was further complicated by the consolidation of ship owners and the vendors of the produce, which led to the creation of big companies in charge of the entire fishing cycle, from the construction of ships and purchasing of devices, to hiring crew members and selling the produce. Another factor transforming the seaside communities at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the proclamation of the State monopoly on the import of colonial goods, such as tobacco. Blasco Ibáñez's Valencian stories document very well the challenge of industrialization and its consequences for the traditional population of the seaside of the Levante.

13. Luis Sazatornil Ruiz describes the style of the first beach facilities in a way that makes recognizable the references to the boat. The author himself does not recognize the sea metaphor in this architecture. He does, however, remark about the Swiss influence: "El edificio suele extenderse longitudinalmente, sobre la línea de playa, impidiendo a menudo la visión de ésta y limitando el acceso, pese al derecho reconocido al uso público de las playas" (111).

14. The traditional striped black and white or black and blue fabric of male bathing suits established a direct relationship between male bathers and sailors. In the *Higiene de los baños del mar*, Monlau recommended male bathers to wear "chaqueta de marinero" while on the shore, and "pañetes de pescador" when bathing in the sea (188).



15. Although many critics have remarked about Pereda's antipathy towards the foreigners and visitors from other parts of Spain, the colonial overtones of the writer's attitude have not attracted their attention. López de Abiada's analysis of the cultural clashes portrayed by Pereda is especially useful for approaching the topic from the perspective of the colonial discourse. According to the critic, Pereda shows how "el forastero introduce en la comunidad categorías y características culturales que alternan-o, incluso, destruyen-irreversiblemente el equilibrio sociopolítico existente (185).

16. Denial of the inner industrial colonization of the Highlands did not prevent Pereda from supporting Spanish colonial politics overseas. About Pereda's view of the Spanish colonial wars, see García Castañeda. Similarly, the functionality of the *indianos* as modern colonizers in Pereda's stories does not deny Pereda's love for his *indiano* brother, Juan Agapito; nor does it erase Pereda's own contribution to the colonization of the area as the owner of soap factory. In Noël Valis's terms, the full ideological complexity of Pereda is yet to be addressed: "[se trata] de un Pereda miembro de una poderosa minoría santanderina de indianos e industriales. Accionista. Propietario de una fábrica de jabones. Consejero del Banco de Santander" (17).

17. Tuberculosis, one of the most dangerous diseases of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, inspired awe and encouraged myth-making, as its true origin was unknown until 1882, when Robert Koch discovered the tubercle bacillus. Pereda also presents to us a different type of a seemingly ill visitor, who only uses hygienic theories as a pretext to spend time on the beach (*el sabio*).

18. From this point of view, beach narratives written by female authors — Carmen de Burgos's *Flor de la playa* (1920) and Elena Soriano's *La playa de los locos* (1954) — are particularly interesting. Elisa, de Burgos's female protagonist carrying some autobiographical traits of the author herself (Núñez Rey 66), feels as uneasy as her partner Enrique at the sight of undressed bodies of both sexes on the beach: "Apenas si consentían sin protestar mirar a los que se bañaban y a las mujeres y hombres que iban a la playa" (323). However, Burgos' narrator, too, pays tribute to the masculine beach discourse when she meditates about the effects which the continuous exposure to female bodies produced on the *bañeros* (323–4). In Elena Soriano's *La playa de los locos*, the narrator does contemplate without any anxiety the body of her lover on the beach. In this text, the taboo on female nudity is rejected together with the taboo on free expression of female sexuality. No wonder that the novel was prohibited by censorship and could only be published in 1984.

19. Rita Felski observes that demonization of women was a by-product of women's newly acquired importance within the circuit of modern commodity exchange: "feminization of modernity [...] is largely synonymous with its demonization" (62).

20. Spanish authors found different ways of appeasing the anxiety caused by the sight of the female body escaping traditional cultural symbolization. Gradually, the norms of cultural tabooing were revised, and the demonization of the bathing women in the early beach narratives was replaced by a more detached view of the female body in a swimming suit. Wenceslao Fernández Flórez's newspaper columns about the upper class beach culture of the French Riviera, written in 1920s and 1930s, document the evolution in the mind of one male observer. In the articles, collected in the volume of *Conquista del horizonte* (1932), the reader can see how the initial anxiety eventually produced a new, rearranged, set of norms of bodily display designed to appease the imagination of the viewers who did not want to seem 'vulgar':

Si se trata de un espectador vulgar, apenas saca de esta experiencia otro resultado que un conocimiento restringido de la Humanidad al través de las piernas.[...] Pero si el espectador gusta de las especulaciones filosóficas, no se resistirá a meditar acerca del cambio que se operaría en las costumbres humanas si todo el mundo vistiese únicamente *maillot*. (77)

The narrator concludes that nudity's only purpose is to re-establish in rights proper clothing and thus, confirm moral values of civilization, of Spanish civilization in the first place: "Así, la playa de Biarritz nos torna tan aburridamente honorables que nos sentimos colmados de comprensión y de gratitud hacia esos obispos españoles, que han dictado recientemente sabias medidas acerca del indumento en las playas" (77).

The development of women's sports and sport attire was another factor affecting the upper class dress codes.

21. The subtitle "Fantasía higiénica" disappeared after 1871, when the story became part of *Tipos y paisajes* (García Castañeda, I, XXII).

22. Santander's Second beach was privatized later than El Sardinero, and its intended public included those middle and lower class bathers who found the prices and the rigidity of the upper class El Sardinero prohibitive.

23. Earlier on, Pereda's character declares his male supremacy by stating: "por regla general estamos nosotros, en ropas menores, más graciosos que las mujeres" (I 452).

24. When asked about the origin of the boat, the guide replied unenthusiastically: “No, señor, vendrá de Andalucía” (453).

25. Before the first tramline was opened in 1892, the visitors had to take the carriage in order to get to the beach.

26. Mutual understanding and unity between the narrator and the narratee is proper to *costumbrista* writing in general and for Pereda’s stories in particular (Román Gutiérrez I 189–223).

27. In reality, however, *Escenas montaÑesas* circulated and were consumed among the heterogeneous reading public of the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of its stories initially appeared in the local almanac *Abeja MontaÑesa*, whose readers were the very same members of local high society and bourgeoisie who figure in Pereda’s sketches as modern “savages.” When the sketches were collected in a book, published in Madrid, the popular Basque *costumbrista* Antonio de Trueba provided the preface, in which he accused the young author in presenting a caricatured and unfavorable image of the region. Lawrence H. Klibbe, Pereda’s biographer, describes the perception of the writer’s first book as a failure whose reason had to do with the miscommunication between the author and his intended audience:

These readers of the new middle class desired not only a realistic panorama of their province but a vision of the Highlands in which the spirit was happy, optimistic, humorous, and light. [...] Some explanation can be also offered in the mentality of the new rising bourgeoisie who wanted only pleasant publicity about Santander for commercial, social, and political advantages. (29)

28. An end-of-the-century humorous manual for traveling in a railway recommended the travelers: “No leer dentro de coche, porque daña a la vista: es tolerable, sin embargo, leer, durante algún rato, periódicos o libros de letra abultadita, y sobre materias amenas, verbigracia, *Las Mil y Una Barbaridades*, la *Higiene de los baños del mar*, etc.” (Gil de Arriba 134).

29. I am particularly indebted to those sociologists, historians, and geographers who study the beach as a complex cultural phenomenon: Carmen Gil de Arriba, Alain Courbin, José Ignacio Homobono, Jean-Didier Urbain, and John Walton.

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