

SEEDS

MEANS FOR A SUSTAINABLE ART PRACTICE

Colloquium - Faculty of Fine-Arts of the University of Lisbon, 2 > 3 september 2023

VITICULTURA PERFORMATIVA **PERFORMATIVE WRITING AS RESEARCH METHOD**

Lucía Álvarez-Borrajo
Faculty of Fine Arts. University of Sevilla. Spain

ABSTRACT

Performative writing within an artistic research paradigm and around a case study titled *Viticultura Performativa* is contributing to safeguard the local intangible viticulture heritage.

By grafting contemporary art and traditional viticulture with an eco-art-activist and transdisciplinary character we inquire which kind of narrative could promote a positive collective imaginary which helps us journey together to the *cosmopolitan village*?

We demonstrate that performative writing can be not only a research method but also becoming a way of poetic resistance that enables subaltern voices to be heard within European debates about the rural cultural context.

KEYWORDS: Performative Writing · Intangible Heritage · *O Ribeiro do Avia*

«The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes»

Marcel Proust

The academic context of this text is the Faculty of Fine Art at University of Seville, within the research group HUM 841 Landscapes Observatory. Performative writing not only to give account of the investigation but also as research method *per se* around a case study titled *Viticultura Performativa* is contributing to safeguard intangible viticulture heritage and also enables subaltern voices to be heard within the rural debates that are happening nowadays in contemporary art. Concurrently performative writing as a research method is becoming a way of poetic resistance drawing upon our own empirical experiences.

Therefore, our PhD dissertation had been epistemology framed within a performative research paradigm. It is noteworthy that is being written entirely from a rural area in *O Ribeiro do Avia* (Huetz de Lempis, 2021:165) at the outskirts of a *particular periferia de la periferia* (Tejo, 2019:267). This territory belongs to the grand landscape area called *Ribeiras encaixadas do Miño e do Sil* and situated in Northwest of Spain above Portugal, in Galicia. The typologies of productive space made by French geographer Abel Bouhier in 1979, framed it as terraced vineyards¹ category. In addition, recently research by Paula Ballesteros-Arias's indicates that:

« [...] the origin of terrace agricultural system can be dated to the first centuries of the Early Middle Ages, and it was the beginning of the rural landscape transformation that shaped the traditional organization still in use today in many areas of Galicia» (Ballesteros 2019:5).

Consequently, throughout this paper we are grafting art research and traditional viticulture with an eco-art-activist² and transdisciplinary character from a place inhabited by «an almost extinct traditional peasant identity» (Lozano 2021:188) we inquire the following: which kind of narrative could promote a positive collective imaginary which helps us journey together to the *cosmopolitan village*³? To answer this question the qualitative research methods employed among others were: participant observation by doing an autoethnography text⁴, *performative writing*, walking as aesthetic practice or rural *derive*. With these assumptions the final aim is not only for make a contribution to *safeguarding without freezing*⁵ the traditional

¹ Terraced vineyards are named as *socalcos* in Galician.

² *Ecoartivismo* is defined by Spanish artist and academic Verónica Perales as a distinguished praxis with a strong procedural character (the goal is the way), the use of public spaces, technology and collaborative methods to implicate participants and to speak out «the voice of the community». Eco-art- activist praxis are focused on «*LO QUE SÍ PODEMOS HACER*», the things we can do (Perales, 2010:08)

³ Cosmopolitan village is a concept coined by Jaime Izquierdo after Yves Champetier following words: «The future village: repopulated, connected, cosmopolitan». After studying the hegemonic intellectual power that the city has over the village, Izquierdo's goal is revert that paradigm to reinvent from the villages a new interrelation rural-urban for facing actual challenges like climatic emergency and biodiversity loss impact. In that way the cosmopolitan village have to pursue its original function as nature genuine manager but on the actual context as post-industrial society. However, that is not an idea so utopic as Henri Madras' in *Le voyage au pays de l'utopie* because Izquierdo not only make an erudite historical analysis but also is making action proposals. To think, to perform and to live are the three action verbs upon Jaime Izquierdo articulates a new discourse about the village and its renewed relationship with the nature and its new cosmopolitan aspirations (Izquierdo 2019:228).

⁴ Autoethnography is an academic qualitative research method used by anthropologists to insert personal experience among the historical data.

⁵ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/safeguarding-00012>

viticulture intangible heritage but also give voice⁶ to subaltern communities keeping open channels between generations to value peripheral knowledges⁷.

Performative writing is a postmodern academic writing and at the same time a form of performance. It is contextualized within the end of meta-accounts when the linguistic turn happened in the second half of last century. The art theorist Peggy Phelan describes it as the way:

« [...] enacts the death of the 'we' that we think we are before we begin to write. A statement of allegiance to the radicality of unknowing who we are becoming, this writing pushes against the ideology of knowledge as a progressive movement forever approaching a completed end-point." (Phelan 1997:17)

Therefore, the text works like a mirror. In this way it is possible to problematize the singular “ I ” which is not recognized in traditional academia. Claire McDonald argues that the researcher is somebody within the research and not only somebody who collects stories but also guards them. From that position, knowledge is generated but also a text, a narrative which allows others to tell their own. In that way, «to learn to see the world » (Merleau-Ponty 1995:63), «we rewrite it», as the philosopher Marina Garcés argues. The aim of telling those stories is not only to give account of the researcher’s experience but also allowing the readers a venue where their own stories are reflected. The objective is not only to catch the reality but also trigger new narratives.

Furthermore, because we are conscious of how important are stories to make Worlds. Art is capable of touching emotions and to convey to society in an urgent and direct way matters has been proved by scientific methods. Therefore, the role of artist researchers is transcendental to our society because:

⁶ In the academic course 2019/20 our PhD dissertation project had the provisional title *Self-portrait without voice and the soul basted. The art practice as research. The performative writing as method.*

⁷ Peripheral s (Burgos *et al.* 2020:38) are those subaltern knowledges produced by marginal collectives (women, indigenous people, peasants) that had been silenced by the hegemonic occidental knowledge production.

[...] It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories. (Harraway, 2019:65).

This paper unfolds in two parts which are visually distinct by using: *Times New Roman 12* typeface within an traditional academic writing style and *Courier New 10* font to expose an autoethnography text. The autoethnographic text inserted is an attempt to tackle the problematic of our neo-rural identity which by serendipity had been revealed during our academic research. That happens when Lorena Lozano, artist, biologist and researcher, selected our project *Viticultura Performativa* to be published in *Culturarios • Humus de iniciativas culturales*. This is a national research project about the cultural mediation in rural areas realized in 2021 by El Cubo Verde and sponsored by Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation. The research output are a book and the collaborative documental *Red Difusa*. El Cubo Verde is an informal Spanish network of art spaces and projects where artists and cultural managers are concerned in generating synergies and collective learning around creation in rural environments.

Lozano describes the cultural agents who are living in north-occidental territory of Spain where she was in charge of study *as a kind of illustrated return who find in the landscape a source of well-being and intellectual interest* (Lozano 2021:190). Furthermore, she adds that all the projects share a characteristic:

[...] *a identity of resistance* (Castells 1998:30) which proclaims different principles from the institutions; and *identity of project* when the social agents, based on the available cultural materials, build up a new identity and reset their own social position (Lozano 2021: 190).



Fig. 1

Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. Contemporary boundary posts finding in the surroundings of our village for the work in progress *Buscando las lindes*. Fig. 3 Boundary post inspired by the previous to signalling the neglect intangible heritage within our own art project EMERXENCIAS ARTISTICAS. © Lucía Álvarez-Borrajó.

In 1972 a picture of the Earth was took from the Apollo 17. *The Blue marble* became a symbol of environmental movements. That year, when Spain still was under the dictatorship of General Franco I born in a humble stone house in a little village in Ribeiro do Avia. My maternal grandparents make the family living from working in their own vineyards. On my father's side the house was self built by them following a vernacular design in which the two cows lived under the first floor. My grandfather was a carpenter and also worked in the wolfram mines. My uncle Gilberto went to Castilia to reap the wheat. In that year Henri Lefebvre argued how the countryside not only is a built up of layers of facts but also ways of thinking, perform and living (1972:39). Nowadays, based in those three verbs Jaime Izquierdo brings together the new discourse about the village and its renewed relationships with nature and ground-breaking cosmopolitan aspirations (2019:228).

I am a housewife and PhD researcher living in a renovated ruin situated in an abandoned village up the hill close by a short walk through the woods from the village where I was raised. Sound rounding by vineyards an old lady lived here with her pig until mid 1980's. In 2012 I moved with my English partner and our two black labradors from the English countryside after been lived in Hong Kong for almost two years. We were not immigrants but expats. For me living here is not like *driving over lemons* but is my life purpose. I was six years old when my family migrate to Seville. I did not know how to speak Spanish but only Galician. I remember the experience of feeling confined in a flat in Triana after being able to play outdoors all the time. I remember thinking what a rich life I had before living in the countryside and not understanding how city people could see us a poor.

I am a woman fitty one years old living in a tiny village where the council of less than 5,000 inhabitants don't provide us with FTTH. I have two hands that are learning to do academic writing. Two hands which also know cooking, cleaning, carving the landscape with willow and raffia in an almost barren vineyard. Two hands which are very conscious that the forest, the river, the stones, the people, the viruses, the ones from here and those from beyond, a wolf with in sheep's clothing and the vineyards, belongs to one fragile environment. The seeds for sustainability deep rooted in that childhood dearth of but not love or food and because of that sustainability, for me, is not a fancy word with marketing proposes but the core of my practice.

Performative writing is the contemporary art practice I could afford to do. One morning in my daily routine of writing a PhD diary I mixed two words: viticulture and performative. In that time I did not know what that meant. Nowadays throughout performative writing I can reach international audiences as been demonstrated when I was invite to a cycle of conferences at the Faculty of Fine Arts at University of Lisbon on September 2023. A event which was part of the project: Seeds. Means for Sustainable Art Practice co-funded by the European Union within Creative Europe Programme. I reached the right platform to expose how the our cultural landscape are destroyed, and with it all the drystone walls, to transform it in a massive speculative vineyard. However, my voice is still very small to be listen to and sometimes I can not afford travel expenses.

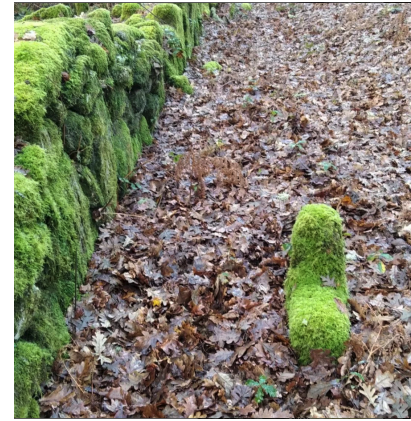


Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 4. *Os ollos da Santa*. Photograph taking during a route done by with Avia Walking Group to see for the last time the drystone walls which will be destroyed to build a 100 Ha vineyard in Leiro Council. © Manuela Vázquez. Fig. 5. *Camino*. In 2018, the knowledge and technique for the construction of dry-stone walls was inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. Fig. 6. *As Tregarizas*, an unsuccessful collaborative viticulture project © Lucía Álvarez-Borrajo

As conclusion, performative writing as research method within artistic research paradigm and around a case study titled *Viticultura Performativa* is becoming the key tool to safeguarding not only the rural cultural landscape and traditional viticulture intangible heritage which is in danger of becoming lost but also a place to give voice to subaltern subjects. In our own research, writing *per se* is not only becoming a way of poetic resistance but also a knowledge producer from the academia which we have demonstrated as venue where there is a possibility of combining different discourses but gifted with equal cultural value.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Álvarez-Borrajo, L.**, *Viticultura Performativa*, en «Seamos radicales», Sala de exposiciones San Felipe Neri. Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, 2021 | p 34.
- Álvarez-Borrajo L.**, *Un selfie autoetnográfico. Escribiendo e caminando cara a aldea cosmopolita*, en «Mazarelos (6)», 2022 | pp 54-62.
- Austin, J.**, *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Baigorri, A.**, *¿Ruralia de nuevo? Desarrollo local en el marco de la urbanización global*, en «Perspectivas teóricas del desarrollo rural», 2007 | pp 193-231.
- Ballesteros-Arias, P.**, *El paisaje rural gallego. La arqueología y la etnografía como métodos de estudio de su genesis y transformación en el tiempo*. Universidad del País Vasco, 2019
- Bussard, O.**, *El libro de la campesina. Economía doméstica rural*. Salvat, 1928.
- Burgos, B., Sanz, R., y Quiroga, F.**, *Pensar y hacer en el medio rural: prácticas culturales en contexto*. Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte, 2002.
- Ferrás, C., Macía, X., García, Y., et al.**, *El minifundio sostenible como un nuevo escenario para la economía gallega*, en «Revista Galega de Economía (13)», 2004 | pp 1-25.
- Foster, H.**, *The Artist as Ethnographer*, en «The Return of the Real». The MIT Press, 1996 | pp 173-203.
- Garcés, M.**, *La estandarización de la escritura. La asfixia de pensamiento filosófico en la academia actual*, en «Athenea Digital 13 (1)», 2013 | pp 29-41.
- González, T.**, *The Issue of Enunciation: The Subject in the Artist Text*, en «Zer, 14 (27)», 2009 | pp 149-163.
- González-González, M., y Ochoa-Palomo, C.**, *El giro narrativo en España. Investigación y formación con enfoques auto/biográficos*, en «RMIE Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa, 19 (62)», 2014 | pp 809-820.
- González-González, M., y González-Monteagudo J.**, *Descolonizar los lenguajes de los poderes*, en «Práxis Educativa No 50», 2023 | pp 1-14.
- Haraway, D.**, *Seguir con el problema. Generar parentesco en el Chlhuluceno*. Consoni, 2019.
- Huetz de Lemps, A.**, *Viñedos y vinos del noroeste de España*. Cultura Líquida Editorial, 2021.
- Izquierdo, J.**, *La ciudad agropolitana. La aldea cosmopolita*. KRK Ediciones, 2019.
- Lefebvre, H.**, *La revolución urbana*. Alianza, 1972.
- Lippard L.**, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of The Art Object from 1966 to 1972*. University of California Press, 1973.
- Lozano, L.**, *¡No más pueblos sin fiestas!*, en «Culturarios, Humus de iniciativas culturales en el campo», 2021 | pp 186-207.
- McDonald, C.**, *How to do things with words: textual typologies and doctoral writing*, en «Journal of Writing in Creative Practice», 2009 | pp 91-93.
- Meskimmon, M.**, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*. Routledge, 2011.
- Mulas, P.**, *Wine and Art: Joseph Beuys' Discussion in Defense of Nature at the Zaccagnini Cellar in Bolognano, Abruzzi*, en «Lexia. Rivista di semiotica cibo e identità culturale. 19», 2015 | pp 481-490.
- Perales, V.**, *Práctica artística y ecofeminismo* en «Revista de la asociación para la creatividad (15)», 2010 | pp 2-22.
- Phelan, P.**, *Mourning Sex*. Routledge, 1997.

Pelias, R., *Performing on the page: Performative Writing*, en «The Creative Qualitative Researcher», Routledge, 2019.

Pelias, R., *Performative Writing as Scholarship: An Apology, An Argument, An Anecdote*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association, 1998.

Pollock, D., *Performing Writing*, en «The Ends of Performance. New York University Press», 1998 | pp 73-103.

Sánchez, N., *Estudio de caso: El Cubo Verde*, en *La función del arte en el proceso de transición a la sostenibilidad: casos anglosajones y españoles*. Universitat Politècnica de València, 2018 | pp 259-276.

Scott, J., *Los dominados y el arte de la resistencia*. Txalaparta, 2003.

Spivak, G., *¿Puede hablar el sujeto subalterno?*, en: «Orbis Tertius (3)», 1998 | pp 175-235.

Steward, C., *Driving Over Lemons*. Profile Books, 1999.

Tejo, C., *Discurso desde los Márgenes: Mujer y Arte de Acción en la Galicia Contemporánea*, en «BRAC-Barcelona Research Art Creation», 2019 | pp 263-284.

Árias, F., Camón, L., Gallardo, J., García-Dory, F., Lozano, L., Montesino, M., Parrhesia, P., Piccione, A., Waid, S., y Zireja, I., *Geografías culturales | Culturarios. Humus de iniciativas culturales en el campo*. PACAbooks, 2022.