

AESTHETIC AND NARRATIVE USES OF THE TRENCH IN HOLLYWOOD FILMS FROM 1918 TO 1930

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INTRODUCTION

In the discipline of military science, the trench, as noted by Carl von Clausewitz in his classic book *On War* (1832), is one of the material elements that should form part of any military strategy to lay siege to the enemy. The appearance of trenches thus fed a need to view the battlefield as a theatre of operations in which to trace lines in space for the dual purpose of protection and advance. However, von Clausewitz himself did not consider trench construction to be part of the art of war itself, but as a separate, older activity; according to von Clausewitz, the knowledge and abilities necessary for this task needed to be possessed beforehand by a skilled force, as in the case of the construction of barracks or the erection of tents in military camps. The fact that the trench could be understood either in strategic terms (the exterior view) or in terms of intervention in the territory (the interior view) sig-

nals its unique nature in the context of artistic depictions of the battlefield, or war landscapes.

Conceiving of the battlefield as a landscape means reflecting on how we perceive and give meaning to territory. Beyond the relationship between man and nature, the landscape of the battle represents a particular way of being and viewing the world. In this sense, if we understand the tradition of landscape painting in the West as a way of learning how to frame reality,¹ as suggested by landscape scholars Augustin Berque (1994: 5) and Jean-Marc Besse (2006: 146) or thinkers like Jean-Luc Nancy (2003: 114), the battlefield should also be understood as a laboratory for experimenting with the gaze. War landscapes constitute a field of perception that influences our way of representing the world, in the sense that Kenneth Clark describes in his classic *Landscape into Art* (1949), where the landscape went from being used as a symbol to being depicted as a pure impression: each of its

mutations conceals a different perception of the world. It is worth adding to this proposition that the *landscapisation* of the battlefield reinforces the quality of invention/representation inherent to landscape, described by Anne Cauquelin as a construction on pre-existing forms in *L'invention du paysage* (1989) and by Eugenio Turri as a theatre with actors and spectators in *Il paesaggio come teatro* (1998). In a key text on landscape photography, Santos Zunzunegui highlights this idea, pointing out that the landscape is not a phenomenon existing prior to its depiction, but the result of a series of operations and, therefore, a human construction (1994: 142-143). From this perspective, the landscape painter would have something in common with the military strategist: both share a need to organise and re-interpret space.

Based on these premises, the central purpose of this article is to analyse the use of the trench in film reconstructions of the First World War, particularly in depictions of its battlefields. To this end, we will begin by reviewing the changes in battle depictions resulting from the war, followed by an analysis of how these specific features are articulated in the image of the trench, both in terms of its compositional value and its narrative implications. The corpus of films we will refer to covers the period from 1918 to 1930, a time when the language of classical cinema was systematised and consolidated with the aid of its explorations of the image of the trench.

A NEW WAY OF VIEWING

In terms of the evolution of depictions of the battlefield, the First World War represented a paradigm shift. On the one hand, in the realm of painting the battle scene became subject to abstraction or crude representation, as suggested in the works of Otto Dix, who fought in the war: his drawings made on the front, which are practically Cubist (as if refusing to accept the hor-

ror of which he was a witness), take on a wildly Dantean quality in *La Guerre*, a series of etchings from the 1920s, in which the temporal distance emboldened the memory, resulting in a depiction of the horror² that placed it in a different cultural tradition: that of Goya's *Disasters of War* (1810-1815). There would be no more celebratory depictions of the battlefield, as the deadly force of war had reached previously unimaginable dimensions.³

It was in this context that photography and cinema acquired greater importance. The First World War was not the first to be documented by the new media, but it was the war in which they found their *raison d'être*, not only because of their widespread use (many soldiers took snapshots and motion picture cameras were able to film the battlefield *in situ*), but also, and especially, because of their close relationship with the machinery of war. A mechanised war needed a mechanised depiction. This is the view adopted in *Guerre et Cinéma* (1984) by Paul Virilio, who suggests that the battlefield and the war machinery associated with it are instruments of representation comparable to the painter's paintbrush and palette. Virilio highlights how war reveals, especially to filmmakers, the connection between military and film technology, as the former could be used as an influence both on avant-garde movements and on the evolution of the cinematic language of Hollywood, in its voyeuristic dimension of isolation and fragmentation of bodies (VIRILIO, 1984: 29).

Obviously, this would have a key influence on the depiction of the landscape. In several articles, Vicente J. Benet (2006, 2007) has explored how the battlefield of the First World War represented the passage from a totalising depiction of the war landscape to a fragmentary and dynamic formalisation of it; this is what he calls the shift from the theatre of operations, a scenographic model using a wide shot in which the battle was the unit of perception, to the mechanical view of

war, whose paradigmatic image is the identification between camera and machine gun in *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930). Contrary to its predecessor, this view is heavily fragmented. It is no longer possible to have a unitary vision; rather, the gaze is forcibly broken up into multiple images that must be re-articulated. This is something that D. W. Griffith, who visited the battlefields in preparation for filming *Hearts of the World* (1918), had already foreseen: "At the best, it is only possible to film snatches of a battle, and these could not be pieced together to give the public a sufficiently comprehensive idea of what a battle is like" (MOULD AND BERG, 1984: 54). As was the case in the evolution of the landscape genre of Western painting, the move from one extreme to the other of the dialectic between distance and proximity (the unitary gaze and the fragmentary gaze, respectively) set the course for the transformation of the battlefield and, consequently, the mutations in our visual culture. The new technologies generated new viewing mechanisms and thus new landscapes; this is a theory that underpins the work of Marc Desportes in *Paysages du mouvement* (2007), and explains the influence of the mechanisation of the war on the vehicles used in the depiction of the battle landscape: aerial views or machine gun sights contribute to a chaotic view of the conflict.

However, Benet identifies a territory where these fragmentations of the gaze were re-articulated so as to restore order: classical Hollywood cinema. Based on a melodramatic matrix that pivots around the hero, and a scenographic model where alternation between the wide shot and the detail shot did not undermine a homogeneous totality, Hollywood war films progressively diluted these models to introduce visual fragmentation, in terms of forms and of the traumatic experience of the victim on the battlefield. Films like *Hearts of the World*, *The Big Parade* (King Vidor, 1925) and *Wings* (William A. Wellman, 1927) depict battles that introduce semi-documentary

images, abstract shots of explosions and aerial perspectives, respectively, calling the traditional space into question, although ultimately they are controlled and given a scenic logic.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE TRENCH IN THE SO-CALLED ART OF WAR RATIONALISES THE BATTLE SPACE

Within this logic of the staging of chaos, Benet assigns considerable importance to the development of the soldier's point of view, which not only makes it possible to explore the visual experience of the battlefield, but also its traumatic subjectivity; in this way, a visual correlation is established with the 1920s novels that constructed the figure of the victim. The gaze of the young Paul Bäumer (Lew Ayres) when he sees the death of a French soldier in *All Quiet on the Western Front* is probably the paradigmatic case in this respect, as he lowers his eyes to see that a bomb has literally wiped out his adversary, leaving his hands on the barbed wire as the only trace. In this way, visual fragmentation, a dimension of a potentially chaotic and dehumanised form of representation, could recover the humanity of the scene with this technique of focalisation through editing. For Benet, this is the tension present in Milestone's film and in G. W. Pabst's *Westfront 1918* (*Vier von der Infanterie*, 1930): the fight between the human and the technological, between the face and the machine gun, on the battlefield. The cinematic technique of shot-reverse shot became the allegorical representation of this dialectic tension.

Considering this shift towards the (cinematographic) fragmentation of the battlefield and its subsequent re-ordering, the motif of the trench assumes an important role in two senses: the geometrisation of space, on the one hand,

and the staging of an exterior/interior landscape dialectic, on the other. What we seek to argue in this article is that the trench, the paradigmatic geography of the First World War, constitutes a space for identification of and reflection on these formal questions. Below we will explore each one in an effort to understand its importance in cinematic depictions of the battlefield.

THE LINE THAT CONTAINS AND GUIDES

In *Le paysage envisagé* (2009), Robert Ireland notes that the representation of the battlefield contains a dialectic between smooth and striated space. These two types of space are defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*; smooth space as vectorial or projective and striated space as metric. According to this logic, in the first case “space is occupied without being counted, and in the second case space is counted in order to be occupied” (1987: 362). The conception of smooth space is associated with depictions of the battlefield that Benet defines as classical depictions, where the totalising (or panoramic) gaze turns it into a space of transit and connection through which the chaotic confrontation between the two sides unfolds. Conversely, the presence of the trench inverts these terms to give preponderance to striated logic: its appearance in the so-called art of war rationalises the battle space; the original terrain is domesticated by lines that organise it, an organisation confirmed in aerial views that accentuate the geometrical and Cubist face of the landscape. And at the same time, the trenches block fluid circulation over the terrain, at both narrative and visual levels: here, the war and the view of the attack become a war and a view that are contained, paralysed. The soldiers remain in excavated lines and their advance is halted.

However, for the camera that films it, the trench also represents an excuse for mobility,

because by virtue of its form, it also offers a line along which the eye and the camera can move. In the compositional logic of classical landscape painting, motifs like the river or the road act to focus the gaze of the spectator, ordering the different elements present in the picture while at the same time guiding the eye. In his study of painting through the analysis of detail, Daniel Arasse identifies the importance of these trajectories in landscape depictions: “Landscape painting is a privileged place for the use of that gaze that momentarily encompasses the surface of the picture on its voyage across it. The word ‘voyage’ partly explains this privilege: the voyage of the gaze across the painting reproduces the physical journey which the fictitious horizon in the depiction proposes to the spectator” (2008: 242).

The line of the trench would play just this role. In the middle of one of the battles in *What Price Glory* (1926), Raoul Walsh’s adaptation for Fox of the autobiographical story that had also given rise to *The Big Parade*, the platoon, after taking another trench, which the soldiers all fall into together, receive the order from the captain (played by Victor McLaglen) to prepare the bayonets. So that everyone can hear him, the captain walks quickly through the trench, marching past the others and giving orders. The camera follows him from above in a fluid tracking shot that aligns the hole in the ground with the trajectory of the character, the camera and the spectator, underscoring the compositional value of the trench. In the context analysed here, this movement is situated half-way between the scenographic model and the mechanised and fragmented gaze, between the ordering of the space and the loss of the spectator, as although the camera marks a clear compositional line, with its mechanical tracking it transgresses the notion of the immobile, all-powerful eye that commanded the action in traditional painting. In any case, it represents the introduction of a rational logic within the battle, similar to the shift that Erwin

Panofsky took from Ernst Cassirer in his essay on perspective as a symbolic form: the shift from a psycho-physiological space to a mathematical space (1995: 11).

The alignment between the trench and the camera's movement is taken up and reinforced in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, in which Lewis Milestone uses numerous tracking shots like those in Walsh's film. However, one of these shots, repeated several times, stands out with a voice of its own: it is a shot in which the camera pans along the row of faces of soldiers who, poised with their guns in the trench, await the arrival of the enemy. The function is thus more descriptive than narrative, and the gaze of the young men, fixed on the enemy horizon (contrary to Walsh's film, where the heat of the battle has already begun and a relative degree of disorder reigns), outlines the narrative, historical and political meaning of the trench: a row of faces looking ahead, towards a conquest to be made. This is the logic of the front; a line, a border, the Western Front that gives the film its title, which is tracked by our mobile eye. It is an articulation between the singular (a single rectilinear movement) and the multiple (the line of faces) that is present in the very idea of patriotism (different individuals who serve a single idea under the same flag) and in the narrative structure of the film itself, which at times is profoundly choral, often using a series of close-ups of the soldiers to capture the diversity of their expressions; this is what we see when the soldiers, besieged by falling shells, wheeze one after another in a chain of anxiety. Thus, in the 1920s and early 1930s, a period of consolidation of the language of classical Hollywood cinema, the trench became a potential space for learning, a place in which the camera could experiment with possible ways of guiding the spectator's view of the action.

Finally, this compositional function is reinforced in cases where the mobility is not exterior, but interior. In *Shoulder Arms* (Charles Chaplin,

1918), made during the war, Charlie's wanderings through the trenches are accompanied by fluid tracking shots back and forth, following his figure and thus underlining the compositional logic of the trench. Chaplin takes a complex approach here, working not only with forward or backward mobility, but also with the action that mobility reveals at different depths: in one case, the smoke from a falling bomb obscures his silhouette; in another, an aerial attack draws progressively closer from the background, with bombs falling closer and closer to the soldier in the foreground. The trench line thus sketches out a suspense story, in the same way that the boat in *The Immigrant* (1917) articulates the relationships and conflicts between characters. Chaplin, before Walsh or Milestone, had understood that the trench line could be used cinematically as the axis of the narrative.

THE INTERIOR/EXTERIOR DIALECTIC ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The traditional interior/exterior landscape dialectic described by Carl Gustav Carus in his celebrated letters on landscape painting (2002: 137) represents an effort to strike a balance between the totality of the landscape and the relationships between its different parts. In the specific case of battle landscapes, this dialectic would be expressed through the depth of field, as noted by Vicente J. Benet (2007: 42) in his exploration of battle depictions in the history of European painting. Benet points out that from the time of the Thirty Years War, classical depictions reflected an increasing interest in anecdotes and moments of *pathos* occurring in the foreground of the paintings in the form of victims or corpses, while in the distance we see the whole battle. In this respect, the trench would constitute an orographic representation of this idea: a personal story is placed in the foreground, while the battle of history is left to the background.

CONCEIVED OF AS A SPACE OF CLOSURE AND MELODRAMATIC INTIMACY, THE INTERIOR SPACE OF THE TRENCH ALSO BECOMES A DEVICE FOR OBSERVATION OF THE EXTERIOR LANDSCAPE THAT BREAKS WITH THE TRADITIONAL PARAMETERS OF COMPOSITIONAL BALANCE OF THE CLASSICAL SPACE

The separation implicit in the idea of the trench constitutes a boundary between the dimensions of story and history. While the war unfolds outside it, the trench, the hole in the ground, is the interior space that allows the recruits to live in a community, sharing a can of beef (*The Big Parade*) or watching over a corpse (*All Quiet on the Western Front*). It also operates as an interior space, where they can recognise and feel pity for the dead enemy; the Other is treated as an equal and is given a last puff on a cigarette or a final drink, as we see in *The Big Parade* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*. This intimate isolation of the trench is, in reality, an updating of earlier techniques, like those used by Griffith to depict the American Civil War in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915): in the midst of the conflict, the youngest children of the two families die in an embrace in the relative shelter of a tree on the edges of the battlefield; fleeing the Atlanta fire, the Camerons' second son dies, tended by an African American man, beside a fence that isolates them from the frenzy outside.

However, the most interesting cases from a cinematic perspective are those where the interior and the exterior are combined in specific actions that operate on the threshold between them. In other words, the cases where the boundary of the trench, which sets up a safe interior space in opposition against a threatening and abstract exterior space, becomes the main device

for the *mise-en-scène*. The characters often play with what can and cannot be seen to confirm that they are clear of danger: in *The Big Parade*, for example, Slim (Karl Dane) first sticks two empty helmets above the trench to ensure that the enemy is not poised to open fire; for a moment, the spectator is fooled, as if it were a game of hide-and-seek. This playful dimension is accentuated in *Shoulder Arms* by Chaplin, who discerned the potential offered by the threshold and vested that potential with a comic dimension. Assuming a steady stream of crossfire directly above the trench, he unhesitatingly raises a bottle for the bullets to smash open the top, or a cigarette for the passing shots to light it, so that he can drink and smoke. After this, he plays once again with the imaginative potential of the space outside the trench when he grabs his gun and starts shooting through a crack: we cannot see whether his shots hit their mark, but what we can see is a blackboard where he keeps score of his hits, and from which he takes a point off when an enemy shot hits him. This almost *Lubitschean* version of the sniper experience confirms the creation of an invisible and abstract exterior space, left to the spectator's imagination, in opposition against the visible and safe interior space of the trench.

The trench can also mark the threshold through which to evoke a moment of humanity in a magnificent, almost unreal detail, even though it may have fatal results: in *The Big Parade*, James (John Gilbert) peeks out above the trench to pick a flower, while at the end of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Paul (Lew Ayres) reaches outside to catch a butterfly, and it costs him his life. This outcome takes the underlying theme of the threshold to the extreme: while in Vidor's film we are shown the empty stretch of land outside the trench, in Milestone's film a detail shot reduces the space almost to nothing, showing only a butterfly, into which, from opposing trenches, enters Paul's hand and the gun that will take him down. In the end, the battlefield is stripped of its

spatial dimension and turned into a single hand that falls lifelessly to the ground. The fragmentation of the gaze and the abstract space, concepts intimately linked to the trench, are thus re-read to show the *pathos* of the battle, concentrated in the hand of the protagonist. This extreme case, like all the others mentioned above, presents us with a key idea: that the boundary constituted by the trench is established as a basic structure for reflection on the human dimension in the war.

Conceived of as a space of closure and melodramatic intimacy, the interior space of the trench also becomes a device for observation of the exterior landscape that breaks with the traditional parameters of compositional balance of the classical space. From the edge of the trench, or from inside it, the perception of the world changes: the very low horizon that can be seen in a ground-level view when the soldier peeks out expands the image of the sky and limits the section occupied by the land; this perspective is taken to its extreme in low-angle shots, where the sky is omnipresent. In this respect, the views of the battlefield from inside the trench that we see in several scenes of *All Quiet on the Western Front* resemble the series of photographs, baptised with the name *Equivalents*, taken by Alfred Stieglitz from 1923 to 1932. The weightlessness and abstraction of Stieglitz's skyward gaze are implicit in the mechanism of observation from the trench, especially when the soldier Paul, hiding in a hole in the graveyard, looks to the sky to glimpse soldiers leaping over the hole. Their bodies appear alone against an enveloping sky, as if they were flying. Through the editing, the dialogue between opening and closing is articulated in Paul's heaviness and the weightlessness of the soldiers leaping over him. The result is an exclusively cinematic landscape; a formal transformation that corresponds to what Stieglitz's clouds represented in the visual culture of the era: a shift from the photographic pictorialism of the nineteenth century towards the modern

photography of the twentieth century, in terms of the loss of the formal referent.⁴ Thus, in Lewis Milestone's film, the trench marks a tilting point away from the classical depiction of war and towards its abstraction through the edit; a metamorphosis that would institutionalise and systematise (cinematic) depictions of war from the time of the birth of sound films.

CONCLUSIONS

The First World War marked a turning point both in the nature of military conflicts and in the way they were depicted: the vast panoramas suffered a crisis and gave way to striated spaces in which soldiers, in constant danger, were limited to a furtive, fragmentary view. And just as machine guns replaced the traditional weapons, paving the way for technological warfare, painting yielded its place to the mechanical view offered by the photograph and its fleeting snapshots of the battle. In this context, the depiction of the landscape would undergo a profound transformation. At the same time, as the war raged on, D. W. Griffith, with his film *The Birth of a Nation*, consolidated the language of classical cinema, based equally on a mechanical apparatus and on fragmentation, both in its creation (deconstruction in frames) and its articulation (deconstruction in shots).

In the 1910s, both the war and the screen thus offered new ways of approaching reality through technology: the first with automatic weapons and the second with the film camera. These were two realities that developed in parallel, coinciding slightly when Griffith visited the battlefields, as they both operated in the same direction: with technology, the world could be viewed in a different way. In the years that followed, from 1918 to 1930, Hollywood would work on this new way of viewing in films like *Hearts of the World*, *Shoulder Arms*, *The Big Parade*, *What Price Glory*, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

At that time, when filmmakers turned to the battlefield, and particularly to the trenches, they found fertile terrain to work in. In the films of Chaplin, Vidor or Milestone, the trench is not a merely decorative or iconic element, but an element with full meaning on the visual and narrative levels. It may seem hard to believe, that the trench, a space of containment and potential abstraction of the battlefield, an element that geometrisés the landscape, could have contradicted the clarity of representation advocated in Hollywood. And yet, it did not distort films, as it did in the paintings of Otto Dix; rather, it took on a fully structuring role.

On the one hand, the trench became a fundamental compositional element that facilitated the mobility of the camera, providing a guiding line. On the other, its organisation established dynamics between interior and exterior spaces of the battlefield that define the situations experienced by the characters, who are sheltered in their own melodramatic stories while outside the clamour of war rages on. In both cases, as guiding line and as interior space in opposition to the space outside it, the trench constitutes a device for what Tom Gunning (1986) called narrative integration: beyond the spectacular appearance of images, of violent fragmentation or the virtuosity of the filmmakers, the figure of the trench organises the elements of the battlefield in a way that vests them with visual, emotional and historical coherence.

Thus, through this line, the space of the battlefield, and specifically the trench, became a laboratory for ways of viewing, a testing ground for the techniques of classical cinema: as the resources of its language were established, the tracking shot, scene composition and the interior/exterior dialectic were put into practice in fictitious war landscapes. ■

NOTES

1 Jean-Marc Besse notes: "The historical invention of the landscape has been placed in relation with the invention

of the picture in painting, but also with the invention of the 'window': the landscape would be the world as seen through a window, whether that window is only a part of the picture or blending together with the picture itself as a whole. The landscape would be a framed view and, in any case, an artistic invention. [...] Landscape painting has taught us to look at the world, but it has taught us to see it precisely as a landscape picture" (2006: 148). For a study of the holistic dimension of the landscape, see *Tutto è paesaggio*, by Lucien Kroll (1999).

2 ROCHLITZ, Rainer (2003). Otto Dix entre vérisme et allégorie (p. 31); LORENZ, Ulrike (2003). Otto Dix dessinateur (pp. 56-57). Both articles can be found in the anthology edited by Christian Derouet (2003).

3 In relation to an exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Christian Derouet notes that "military painting, which had known times of greatness in the official Salons to compensate for the defeat of 1870 (think, for example, of Detaille and Neuville), glories of the Musée du Luxembourg, disappeared without a fight in 1918. The intolerable nature of the suffering endured and the widespread grief distanced this heroism from the painter's brush, from the work of commemoration whose most beautiful song in France is still the cycle of the *Nymphéas* by Claude Monet. [...] The avant-garde, the amateurs, separated art and commemoration. In France, from that time on, war could no longer be considered beautiful" (DEROUE, 2003: 22). Original quote in French: "*la peinture militaire, que avait connu des heures de bravoure dans les salons officiels français pour compenser la défaite de 1870, pensez à Detaille et à Neuville, gloires du musée du Luxembourg, disparaît sans coup férir en 1918. L'intolérable des souffrances endurées, du deuil généralisé écarte cet héroïsme du pinceau, du travail de mémoire dont le plus beau chant reste en France le cycle des Nymphéas de Claude Monet. [...] L'avant-garde, les amateurs, séparent art et commémoration. En France, de la guerre, il ne peut être désormais question dans le beau.*"

4 For more information on Alfred Stieglitz's contribution, with his *Equivalents* (1923-32), to the visual culture of the twentieth-century landscape see Philippe Dubois, *Le regard vertical ou: les transformations du paysage* (1999).

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AESTHETIC AND NARRATIVE USES OF THE TRENCH IN THE HOLLYWOOD FILMS FROM 1918 TO 1930

Abstract

Throughout the history of painting, landscape depiction has been considered a laboratory of the human gaze on the world. The First World War, with the new view of the battlefield that it introduced, profoundly altered the classical forms of depiction, replacing them with a mechanised and fragmented view closely associated with the development of photography and cinema. As Vicente J. Benet has suggested, Hollywood echoed these profound changes in their film versions of the war, although it organised them according to a narrative logic. In this paper we seek to analyse how the battlefield and, particularly, the trench, fit within this logic of the history of landscape painting, using several Hollywood films from the period from 1918 to 1930 as case studies. We consider the trench, first of all, as a compositional element, which can structure the image and orient the mobility of the camera. Secondly, we analyse the implications of the trench for the creation of a dialogue between its interior space, as a stage for melodrama, and the exterior space where the battles and danger lurks. In both cases, we propose that the trench as a form and as a narrative element plays a role in structuring and integrating the logic of the narrative.

Key words

Landscape; First World War; Hollywood.

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USOS ESTÉTICOS Y NARRATIVOS DE LA TRINCHERA EN EL CINE DE HOLLYWOOD DE 1918 A 1930

Resumen

A lo largo de la historia de la pintura, la representación del paisaje se ha considerado un laboratorio de la mirada humana sobre el mundo. La Primera Guerra Mundial, con el nuevo acercamiento que propuso al campo de batalla, alteró profundamente las formas clásicas de representación y las sustituyó por una visión mecanizada y fragmentaria estrechamente vinculada con el desarrollo de la fotografía y el cine. Como ha analizado Vicente J. Benet, el cine de Hollywood se hizo eco de estos profundos cambios en sus versiones fílmicas de la contienda, aunque las organizó según una lógica narrativa. En este texto queremos estudiar cómo el campo de batalla y, particularmente, la trinchera, se insertan en esta lógica de la historia de la pintura de paisaje a partir de algunas películas de Hollywood del periodo 1918-1930. La abordamos, en primer lugar, como valor compositivo, que puede estructurar la imagen y orientar la movilidad de la cámara. En segundo lugar, estudiamos las implicaciones que tiene para la creación de un diálogo entre su interior, escenario melodramático, y el exterior, espacio de batalla y peligro. En ambos casos, concluimos que la trinchera como forma y como elemento narrativo juega un papel estructurador e integrador con la lógica del relato.

Palabras clave

Paisaje; Primera Guerra Mundial; Hollywood.

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