

Exhibiting literature: The challenges of literary heritage's value in the museological context

Strepetova, Marina^a

^aIndependent Scholar, España, marinastrepet27@gmail.com



JOURNAL

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 February 2020

Accepted 12 June 2020

Published 12 June 2020

Keywords:

House museum; intangible heritage; literary heritage; museography.

ABSTRACT

Literary heritage represents a complex system that connects tangible and intangible elements. For this reason, its management and valorization in museological context are convoluted, since curators have to deal with its ambivalent nature. This article seeks to identify the main challenges of valuing intangible literary heritage through the analysis of interviews with specialists in literary heritage and museology from different countries. Results show that, firstly, there is a need to clearly define the concept and scope of literary heritage and, secondly, the growing importance of connecting literary heritage with cultural tourism to find new strategies for passing on its intangible meanings.

DOI: 10.1344/THJ.2020.2.2

1. INTRODUCTION

The question on how to present and communicate intangible heritage in a museum context has been a vital issue for museum studies. Especially since 2003, when UNESCO adopted its Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Blake, 2018). One of the main aims of this document was to define intangible heritage and to identify new ways to transmit intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Two years later, and in the same vein, UNESCO recognized the status of heritage to cultural expressions through the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The aim of this document was to give institutional recognition of heritagization of cultural expressions that can be considered part of our ICH. In this sense, this document establishes the need to define strategies to promote safeguarding and valorisation of ICH.

Both documents build the framework that allows us to coin the concept of museology of intangible, a notion that expresses the challenge of presenting, interpreting, and transmitting immaterial heritage through a discourse shaped by tangible mediums.

Our research focuses on literary heritage. This concept had its origins in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries when the attention to authors' geography increased (Baleiro & Quinteiro, 2018). Thus, the will to give heritage status to literature and express this recognition through monuments, house museums, plaques, and cultural activities such as routes gradually grew.

Among all these actions, museums become a privileged platform to transmit literary heritage, since educational purposes are one of museums' principal goals, and they have an active role on safekeeping and improving awareness of heritage meanings and its intangible dimensions (Carvalho, 2017). This way, house museums are not only a place for memory, but they must accomplish their pedagogic function (Torres González, 2013).

Thus, the reflection on the museology for literary heritage, due to its nature, i.e., its intangibility, places us in the present discussion on which are the best strategies for transmitting intangible heritage in museum context. An example of this is the work of van Eijnatten and de Nood (2018), where human interaction and the use of new technologies are valid procedures to integrate and share narratives, enhancing this way the visitors' experience.

Consequently, this paper aims to explore the valorization of intangible literary heritage in museum context, considering literary heritage as a part of ICH. The main goal is to outline a list of good practices on how to address museology approaches of literary house museums to enhance the experience of visitors.

2. DEFINING THE FRAMEWORK: LITERARY HERITAGE AND LITERARY HOUSE MUSEUMS

As Munmany (2017) states, heritage is a social process, and its building relies on society, who is continuously redefining what constitutes their heritage in virtue of different values (Prats, 2000). Considering this definition, literary heritage constitutes the legacy of literary works of a community. The concept of literary heritage, however, transcends being just a list of literary works and, following Uccella's definition (Uccella, 2013), it encompasses, on the one hand, intangible aspects of literary works, i. e., values, ideas... and, on the other hand, material objects related to the authors' world such as their homes, landscapes (imagined or biographical), libraries, everyday objects, books...

However, the main asset of literary heritage is its capability to evoke feelings, ideas, and emotions, which are generated by literary works. In this sense, literary heritage takes us back to the reading of literary works and recalls the world vision transmitted by them. Thus, literary heritage is a way to meet the cultural richness of books, not by reading, but empirically.

Considering that, the material objects of literary heritage require a previous work to become mediums for accessing and comprehending literary heritage since, without a previous heritage interpretation and mediation, the link between tangible and intangible

can remain unperceived for non-specialist people. Therefore, literary house museums are in front of the challenge to make visible and enhance literary heritage.

House museums are a typology of museum where the exhibition is placed in a former private space with pedagogic purposes. In a house museum, didactics merge with emotional connotations, since the intimate atmosphere, sometimes related with a personality, allows visitors not only an intellectual approach to the exhibition, but also an emotional experience (Pavoni, 2003).

Thus, given the importance of authors in literature, literary house museums are a privileged place to access to the atmosphere of the creative genius and near the environment where the writer found inspiration to their tales. As Munmany (2017) states, this connection with the privacy of a public literary personality is the main trait of literary house museums.

In terms of museology, the objects of house museums are interrelated with other objects, creating a scene or a context (Pérez Mateo, 2016) and linking the material, shown items with the intangible values bonded to the house and its former inhabitants. In addition to the above, the link to a renowned literary personality transforms the exhibition in a dialectic space that struggles to transmit intangible aspects of the authors and their work through the objects placed there (Arcos-Pumarola & Conill-Tetua, 2017). In this sense, in literary house museums becomes evident that there is no real split between tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Regarding museological aspects, the exhibition of a house museum is a challenging test bench for museography and different museological approaches, given the multiplicity of features that each house museum presents, as Pavoni (2003) shows in her work.

Even though each house museum is different and must deal with their characteristics when planning an exhibition, they are often clustered in associations to enhance the management and promotion of literary heritage through the exchange of experiences and shared projects. This is the case of ACAMFE in Spain, Espais Escrits in Catalonia or The State Literary Museum in Russia. These associations, formed by house museums with a shared cultural and linguistic background, look after safeguarding and promotion of their authors' legacy. Moreover, these museums' alliances help us to understand the situation of literary heritage safeguard in each country. So, ACAMFE joins more than 50 Spanish house museums. Also, the association gets along with other international institutions that allow promoting Spanish literature and its heritage all over the world. In the case of Catalonia, we can see how not statewide but regional association "Espais escrits" dedicates to the safeguarding of Catalan language, literature, and its tangible and intangible heritage. Despite being autonomy alliance, the net joins more than 60 institutions that presented Catalan literary heritage and helps them to manage it. In Russia, on their behalf, there are a lot of different projects that help literary museums to manage the tangible and intangible heritage of Russian language, like The State Literary Museum that links different museums all over the state. Also, it can be noted that the online project "Cultura.FR" that tasks to explain the history of Russian literature. Besides, many Russian, Spanish and Catalan house museums are members of ICLCM International Committee for Literary and Composers' Museums whose mission is developing of research and exhibition of literary heritage.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to identify the actual challenges of literary heritage's museography, we carried out qualitative research. This research has the aim to delve into the difficulties that literary heritage sites have to take into account. For this purpose, various interviews with specialists

in literary heritage and its management were realized. The selection of was subjective, based on researchers' experience in this area and also based on geographical accessibility. The main idea was to select the people who work with literary heritage every day and deals with different tasks: from safeguard this heritage at global and country levels, studying it scientifically till its transmission to other people through museum's exhibitions, visits, literary routes, etc. The collecting of various points of view allowed us to examine the problem in its entirety.

The interviewed experts are listed below:

- Experts in literary heritage:
 - Technician of the Catalan Literary Heritage Network "Espais Escrits" and author of a PhD thesis in literary heritage.
 - Expert in Italian and Catalan literary heritage and author of a book on literary heritage management.
- Presidents of literary heritage networks:
 - President of ICOM International Committee for Literary Museums and Head, Academic Research Department of The Leo Tolstoy Museum-Estate "Yasnaya Polyana" (Gosudarstvenniy Muzei Leo N. Tolstogo Yasnaya Polyana).
 - President of "Written Spaces", Catalan Literary Heritage Network, and head of the foundation Josep Pla.
- Museographers with experience on literary heritage exhibitions:
 - Exhibition technician of Vil.la Joana, literary museum of Jacint Verdaguer.
- Guides of literary museums:
 - Ex-president of Institute of Catalan Letters and guide in Jacint Verdaguer's literary museum "Vil.la Joana".
 - Guide in Jacint Verdaguer's house museum in Folgueroles

The interview consisted of 16 open questions. Even so, the number of questions varied according to the interview's time. The interview's main goal was making interviewees express their thoughts about literary heritage and its definition as tangibility and intangibility, relations between the literary heritage and literary tourism, the musealization, and the importance human mediation, in this case, house museums management and the actual issues like the importance of objects and spaces. As well the vital question was the last one where the interviewees reflect on the improvements in literary heritage management in global and country aspects.

The interview analysis focused on detecting common and contradictory ideas shared by interviewed participants, the divergence of understanding of literary heritage, and challenges of literary heritage management and musealization.

4. THE COMPLEXITY OF HERITAGE AND ITS INTANGIBILITY

As mentioned before, literary heritage is a complex system that connects tangible and intangible elements.

The literary heritage's essence is composed of its intangibility; in other words, ideas, knowledge, traditions, and other conceptions that make us think, teach us, and tell us stories. The intangibility secretes in the author's words and becomes tangible through the book's pages. After that, literary heritage broadens itself and gets tangible, including papers,

pens, tables, houses, yards, all those objects that inspired an author to create his or her writings.

Thus, literary heritage management should keep in mind this complexity:

- intangibility that, according to Italian expert, consists of all those conceptions provided from the author's writing, narration, or thinking, in other words, all those ideas, emotions and feelings, intuitions which accompanies us during the book's reading.
- tangibility, i.e., the visible side of literary heritage: authors' bequest. First, most noticeable is the books that belonged to the author and their papers. Nevertheless, literary heritage broadens thanks to institutions, which give value to handwritings, archives, libraries, author's personal objects, and their recreations. This *heritagizing* work has the aim to ease the understanding of the author's ideas.

The different parts of literary heritage complement each other and generate the literary image of an author or a territory. Its promotion, according to the interviewed experts, depends on the cultural tourism and promotional politics of the community. At the same time, it was declared that literary tourism is still immature since the conception of literary heritage is new for the community. There is a lack of promotion and a lack of true specialists. The literary house's guide adds that, given this scenario, the main objective for the most literary organizations is making professionals in cultural tourism read books and inspire them before promoting the places associated with literary heritage. The other problem, according to the experts, is that in many countries, for example, in Catalonia, the main target of literary tourism is students who study literature at school or university. In this sense, there is a need for projects whose main object consists of extending the target audience.

The expert from Italy stands out the work of the Catalan Literary Heritage network that consists of promoting authors. She also compares it with different Italian networks. There is network Parchi Letterari whose mission is to safeguard literary landscapes, museums, routes, and promote the Italian literary heritage. On the other hand, there is an institution that focuses more on commercial projects like online literary tourism agency "Feltrinelli Viaggi". The idea of a literary tourism agency is exciting. However, it could be problematic when it only has a commercial character because there is no true valorization of all the literary heritage of a community. Instead, those projects focus more on recent authors and their bestsellers, searching for economic benefits.

In the case of Russia, the expert stands out the lack of stability in the area of literary tourism's offers compared to the last ten years. There were different contracts between literary museums and Railways Company of Russia. These contracts allowed providing transport for tourists, who visited certain places associated with the works of Tolstoy, Chekhov, or Pushkin, but nowadays, all contracts expired, and they are looking for new sponsors.

Another general problem of literary heritage management consists of a lack of collaboration between organizations, which manage literary heritage, and public administration, which manage cultural tourism and literary tourism as its part. In this sense, there should be explored how to build a closer relationship between tourism and heritage in the literary area.

Another big challenge for literary heritage is the existing barrier between visitors and literary heritage. Many tourists do not want to visit a literary museum because they do not have any knowledge about the author or their books. Therefore, we asked whether it is possible to visit a literary museum without any knowledge about the author. According to interviewed experts, the literary museum's main objective consists of stimulating and encouraging the reading of one author, giving necessary biographical information, and

turning visitors of the center into readers. In the same vein, Italian specialist refers to Orhan Pamuk's museum that was created to stimulate the reading of his novel "The Museum of Innocence ". The specialist from Catalonia declares that this idea of stimulating future readers is good, but nowadays, not all literary museums are prepared for accomplishing this goal. Nevertheless, the literary museum of Jacint Verdaguer "Vil·la Joana" in Barcelona is an excellent example of how a literary museum can be useful for inspiring new readers. Technicians highlight that this particular exhibition is prepared to receive all types of visitors because it consists of different parts focused on literature in general, the city of Barcelona, history, architecture, and not only about Verdaguer and his books. This concept of creating a space that communicates not only biographical information, but also another historical and cultural that broad the museum's account is an inspiring idea for broadening literary museum's themes and attracting visitors and promote literature.

5. HUMAN MEDIATION IN LITERARY HOUSE MUSEUMS

All specialists outline that guided tours are the best choice for visiting a literary museum. The main reason is that they offer more details for being introduced to the intangible world of the author. Italian expert pints at the importance of doing the first visit with a guide, since it could help to create the right notion about the account and contents of the museum. According to Catalan specialist and guide, the guides can create a unique atmosphere and be trustworthy to the author's work and their vision of the world.

The ICOM's president also affirms that guides interaction helps to construct a dialogue between visitors and guide. This way, guides can adapt to visitors' background and help them to discover literary heritage.

Besides guided tours, the president of the Catalan association mentions all the cultural activities of house museums: workshops, seminars, roundtables... These activities benefit heritage centers, offering visitors multiple options to learn about literature. The guide is a specialist who moderates these activities and chooses the best discourse for enabling the understanding of the author's masterpieces. For instance, "Literary vermouth. Josep Pla a la Fonda Estrella" is an activity of Josep Pla's house museum in Calella de Palafrugell, Catalonia. During this, the participants work with the author's texts and make their analysis differently. It is a perfect activity where non-specialists could discover an exciting world of literature and have a pleasant experience working with texts, discovering gastronomical specialties of the region, and enjoying charming landscapes.

Thus, human mediation is essential when dealing with intangible literary heritage because the guides turn into interpreters of this heritage. They use objects and spaces as the starting point to transmit the author's biography, main ideas of masterpieces, historical context, and social relationships. Objects and spaces are guiding thread that fuses tangible and intangible parts of literary heritage.

6. OBJECTS, SPACES, AND THEIR ROLE IN THE PROCESS OF LITERARY HERITAGE VALUING

The intangible literary heritage is the essence of literary heritage, but it is invisible and its conservation is challenging. The intangible part only could be interpreted through tangible parts, in the case of literary heritage: objects and spaces.

The role of tangible objects is indispensable for literary museums. According to the specialists, many centers are opting for traditional museography that consists of presenting the author's tangible legacy, personal objects, houses, books... in their original state with some adaptations to museography's plan.



Figure 1: Presentation of Verdaguer's parents' room in the house-museum of Verdaguer in Folgueroles, using traditional museography and personal objects of the writer's family. Source Strepetova (2018).

The spaces could be original or recreated according to the author's or their family's memoirs. This way to present author's house museum like a historical monument has its allure because the house is transformed not only in a monument of literature, but it also shows the private spaces that belonged to the author and illustrates the cultural and social features of the author's historical moment (see Figure 1).

Even so, there are museums that combine different kinds of museography, like didactic museography. This is the case of the House Museum of Verdaguer in Folgueroles and Foundation Josep Pla in Calella the Palafrugell. In both, the visitor can find didactic elements, such as teaching boxes. Besides, there are examples of interactive museography, for instance, in Foundation Josep Pla, and Vil·la Joana (see Figure 2). Interactive modules and touching panels are situated there. This way, the museography allows creating original experiences and interaction between the visitors and the exhibition. So, the part of Vil·la Joana's exhibition is a module where visitors can use their senses beyond the eyes, i.e., hearing and touching.



Figure 2: "Touch the paper" – the module of the exhibition of Vil·la Joana, where it can be touched different types of paper and recreate this sensation when it is touched book's pages. Source: Strepetova (2018).

Unfortunately, this use of technology is not shared by all literary museums. There are some positive practices in Catalonia, but the majority of Russian and Spanish literary museums still present traditional museography. The main reason for that, according to the expert from the literary museum, is that the primary goal of literary heritage managers is safeguarding the author's heritage. Besides that, there is a lack of resources, support, and collaboration from administrative institutions, which do not usually invest in reforming literary heritage centers.

7. LANDSCAPES AND LITERARY HERITAGE

Literary and local heritage are closely linked, since there are many descriptions of landscapes in books, and it is known that landscapes were an inspiration source of different authors. When landscapes are mentioned, it is thought about not only nature but also urban landscapes, for example, the Saint Petersburg of Dostoevsky or the Dublin of Steven Joyce. Thus, the yards of literary house museums play a significant role, because there, literary authors spent days and get inspired for their works. Nevertheless, literary heritage gets beyond that and embraces the cultural landscape of a territory. That is because literary heritage is a vehicle for a local heritage: costumes, traditions, holidays, thinking, religion... The book is a perfect way to travel and to know another world, other traditions. Verdaguer's poetry helps us to discover the Catalan identity, Sholokhov novels lead us to explore the Cossacks culture, Cervantes' books open us the Spanish soul. Every author tells us his or her personal experience that relates to the intangible part of the culture of the community where he or she had been living or had been growing up.

According to experts, landscape helps to interpret the literary heritage better and to understand it. Literary routes are the best way to discover the connection that exists between literary heritage and landscape.

So, Verdaguer house museum's guide says that the landscape of Folgueroles, the native village where the author mentioned above was born, helps to understand the significance not only of the poetry of Verdaguer, but also to discover the Catalan country culture. In fact, this entire village breathes with the poet's name.

The landscape protection, then, is a fundamental issue when we speak about literary heritage. In this sense, there is a policy of literary landscape protection in Russia. Many literary museums have their lands protected by the government. Some museums join in the state nature preserves. The policy consists of safekeeping and promotion of the connection that exists between nature and literature. For example, one of the most famous museums is Yasnaya Polyana, House Museum of Leo Tolstoy, where the writer's houses and lands are situated. Landscapes of Yasnaya Polyana were mentioned in letters and diaries of Leo Tolstoy and his family and friends. The Museum-Preserve of Sholokhov is another excellent example of how to protect literary heritage, local traditions, and natural protection. Here not only literature and nature are preserved, but also traditional regional crafts are self-kept.

Landscape and literature complement each other. Landscapes blend into literature, and this fusion helps to promote different places and turn them into tourist sites. Notwithstanding, it is essential to find a balance to achieve common objectives: making visitants love this place, read the author's masterpieces, and come back with their family and friends. Actually, it is crucial in managing literary heritage to find support to accomplish these objectives.

8. CONCLUSIONS: NEW FORMS OF MANAGING THE COMPLEX LITERARY HERITAGE

The intangibility is an essence of the literary heritage. It consists of ideas, thoughts, emotions, customs, and traditions. Nevertheless, particular material objects like books, house museums, the author's personal objects, and its recreations play a significant role in the understanding of the intangible literary heritage and help us to its interpretation. Thus, it should be kept in mind, speaking about exhibiting literature, that this complex system of literary heritage and its tangibility and intangibility to create an exhibition that could transmit all this invisible part that hides behind objects.

On the other side, it is known that in our days, the best way to interpret literary heritage is through human mediation (Arcos Pumarola, 2019). The guide or mediator with discourse can create an atmosphere that eases the interpretation of literary heritage. Nevertheless, human mediation is not always logistically possible, so the museography plays an indispensable role in these heritage centers.

We have seen that there are not many literary heritage centers with exhibitions that go beyond panels, pictures, writings, and other static elements. This can be an option when the object of the museum is the tangible element itself, but in literary house museums, traditional museography is not always capable of expressing the intangible account of the museum, especially for those visitors with a little background about the author and their books.

In this sense, there are some experiences with using new technology for exhibiting literature, which could be an alternative to guide explications. When used in the right way, then, technology broad literary house museum's account and, this way, open the museum to non-specialist people.

As a way of broadening the discourse of those heritage centers, it must be taken into account the close relationship between literary heritage, local heritage, and cultural landscapes. Many writer's house museums preserve local heritage and surrounding landscapes. This link between local and literary heritage could be a base for the creation of new exhibitions and, this way attracts new visitors.

Even so, it is noticeable that the management of literature heritage depends on many factors, and one of them it is the collaboration of writer's house museums and foundations with public administration and companies that are working with the cultural heritage. Due to literary heritage is a recent phenomenon, there is a lack of its promotion, speaking of touristic or cultural activities. For that reason, one of the first objectives of many writer's house museums in different countries is to find the support of the administration and private companies and demonstrate all attraction of literary heritage and its competence.

In conclusion, literary heritage communication in literary house museums can be enhanced in many ways. Museography plays a vital role in it, and there is a need to identify new museographic proposals that can combine the preservation of original spaces and new ways to dialogue with different kinds of visitors with different backgrounds. Didactic museography and the use of new technologies are, in our opinion, particularly crucial for this goal. In this sense, future researches can focus on the identification of good practices and the analysis of the impact of adopting this type of museography in literary house museums.

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