

**THE INTERNATIONAL DOURO/ARRIBAS DO DOURO LANDSCAPE:
ECO AND LITERARY TOURISM POTENTIAL**

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ABSTRACT: This article addresses the richness, diversity, and uniqueness of the landscape of the International Douro, also known as *Arribes do Douro/Arribes del Duero*, one of the oldest borders in Europe (1297). The natural, cultural and literary characteristics of this area, combined with the climate and morphology, make it imperative to explore the territory for tourism, boosting the economic development of an often-abandoned rural area of the Portuguese interior. Suggesting a sustainable use of tourism, this article approaches the work of some of the writers who have left their print on the area, such as Miguel de Unamuno, and also discusses the recent initiative of the

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Freixo de Espada à Cinta municipality to promote literary tourism, the Freixo Festival Internacional de Literatura - FFIL (International Literature Festival of Freixo). The primary aim of this article is to demonstrate that incorporating literary texts and literary tourism experiences into International Douro's landscape fruition can enhance cultural awareness and boost local economies.

KEYWORDS: International Douro; Cultural Tourism; Literary Tourism; Miguel de Unamuno; FFIL

RESUMO: Este artigo aborda a riqueza, diversidade e singularidade da paisagem do Douro Internacional, também conhecida por Arribas do Douro/Arribes del Duero, uma das fronteiras mais antigas da Europa (1297). As características naturais, culturais e literárias desta fronteira, aliadas ao clima e morfologia, tornam premente uma exploração turística deste território, potenciando o desenvolvimento económico de uma zona rural do interior português, votada, não raras vezes, ao abandono. Sugerindo um aproveitamento sustentável do turismo, abordam-se alguns escritores que deixaram a sua marca indelével no território, como Miguel de Unamuno, e aborda-se igualmente a recente iniciativa da Câmara de Freixo de Espada à Cinta para promover o turismo literário, o Freixo Festival Internacional de Literatura (FFIL). O objetivo primordial deste artigo é tentar demonstrar que a incorporação de textos literários e de experiências de turismo literário na fruição das paisagens do Douro Internacional pode aumentar a consciência cultural e impulsionar as economias locais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Douro Internacional; Turismo Cultural, Turismo Literário; Miguel de Unamuno; FFIL

Lembro-me de ter parado no meio da ponte que une as duas margens do rio, de um lado, Douro, do outro, Duero, e ter procurado em vão, ou fingido procurar, a linha de fronteira que, parecendo separar, une afinal os dois países.³

José Saramago, 2009

1. Introduction

The International Douro, also known as *Arribas do Douro* or *Arribes del Duero*, in Spanish, is the area where the river traces the border between Spain and Portugal, forming the deepest and most extensive valley in the Iberian Peninsula, a privileged natural space that showcases the rustic beauty of the granite landscape, enriched with a unique biodiversity.

Covering the Portuguese municipalities of Miranda do Douro, Mogadouro, and Freixo de Espada à Cinta, this natural space exhibits a great morphological contrast, which, associated with the climate, explains the ecological and landscape diversity; nevertheless, it remains probably the most unknown and underestimated natural space in the country.

The most striking element of the landscape is the Douro River, which begins in the peaks of Sierra Urbión in the Soria province and, upon reaching Portugal, defines a natural and one of the most ancient (1297/CE) and “impermeable” borders of Europe, between Portugal and Spain, along approximately 122 km (Brito, 1994, p. 75). In this section, the river carved one of the most imposing and largest fluvial canyons in the Iberian Peninsula, with altitudes of up to 400 meters, producing a landscape of impressive beauty. This breathtaking scenery is known as the Iberian Peninsula's "Grand Canyon," or *Arribas do Douro / Arribes del Duero*.

³ I remember stopping in the middle of the bridge that joins the two banks of the river, on one side, the Douro, on the other, the Duero, and searching in vain, or pretending to search, for the border line that, appearing to separate, actually unites the two countries (our translation).

In terms of tourism, the Douro river's border section is yet to be fully exploited, when compared to the well-known and notorious Douro wine region, which is likely one of the most visited destinations in Portugal and whose images are quite vivid in tourist minds, classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

In cultural and literary terms, the rugged landscape and the steep slopes of the *Arribas do Douro* have always attracted writers and poets. One of these authors is Miguel de Unanimo (1834-1966), whose fascination with this landscape is well known. Wandering through the Peninsula, one of his travel accounts, - *Los Arribes del Duero. Notas de un viaje por la raya de Portugal ilustradas com 15 fotografias* - is a spiritual and knowledge journey, whose impressive and evocative descriptions left their striking traces in the landscape.

In Portugal, little had been done, until recently, to explore the literary and cultural attractiveness of the International Douro's landscape. Birthplace to several famous writers, like Trindade Coelho, born in Mogadouro, António Maria Mourinho, born in Sendim, Miranda do Douro, or Guerra Junqueiro, born in Freixo de Espada à Cinta, the International Douro has a considerable literary heritage. To promote it, since 2017, the Freixo de Espada à Cinta municipality, in partnership with Editorial Novembro, has been supporting a set of initiatives in order to develop cultural and ecotourism in the region. One of these initiatives is FFIL, Freixo Festival Internacional de Literatura (International Literature Festival of Freixo), marketed as a cross-border initiative, intended to become a "stage for public art", reuniting national and international renowned authors. Held every year, this festival bears the name of the XIX century poet who has become an ambassador of the northern village, Guerra Junqueiro⁴.

In this article, we intend to highlight the contributions of some of these writers, who also shaped the landscape by their actions. We also aim to discuss and approach some of the strategies put in place by the municipalities to develop literary and cultural tourism, taking advantage of the literary routes for some of these Iberian writers. To that purpose, we argue that literary texts, like Unamuno's travel books, and literary tourism initiatives, like FFIL, give a new layer of significance to the landscapes, supplement factual information material, and allow for a new, more complex and rich imagery, which serves

⁴ <https://rr.sapo.pt/noticia/pais/2017/05/31/manuel-alegre-galardoado-com-premio-literario-guerra-junqueiro/85114/>

as a new framework in the visitors' gaze and tourist experience. Studies on geography, literature and tourism serve as the article's foundation, to emphasize the potential of this landscape – International Douro - as a literary destination, which may contribute to the sustainable growth of the local economy.

2. International Douro Geographical Framework: a Natural Border, a Singular Space, a Unique Landscape

Rivers, as easily defined references, have been used to establish political borders, since their canyons are particularly useful, as they were initially considered difficult to cross. The action of water courses on the landscape, combined with the morphological, geological, hydrological, and climatic characteristics of the regions through which they circulate, can sometimes condition man's occupation of space, as well as his economic activities, and give the territory unique natural features. The international section of the Douro River, known geographically as Arribas do Douro/Arribes del Duero, is a good example of a space that, in addition to serving as a political bridge between Portugal and Spain, has very specific physical and human characteristics, in the set of peripheral spaces limited by the Portuguese-Spanish border.



Figure 1 - International Douro Location (Image source: the authors)

The international Douro/Arribas do Douro border is located in northeastern Portugal, in Trás-os-Montes, covering the municipalities of Miranda do Douro, Mogadouro and Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta. The equivalent *Arribes del Duero* is located on the Spanish bank, in the western Spanish provinces of Zamora and Salamanca, whose provincial limit is defined by the Tormes River, a tributary of the Douro's left bank. It is important to point out that the term *Arribas do Douro*, on the Portuguese bank, comprises the border section defined by the enclosed valley of the Douro River, while the designation *Arribes del Duero* corresponds not only to the International Douro, but also to the abrupt slopes carved by the river, shortly after its passage through the Spanish city of Zamora.

The Douro is one of the Peninsula's longest rivers, with a total length of 938 kilometers, making it the second longest of the Iberian rivers that cross Portugal, after the Tejo/Tagus (1009 km of total length). It traces the Portuguese-Spanish border for 122 kilometers and covers a 200-kilometer area of Portuguese territory, which is currently navigable from Barca de Alva to the mouth, in Porto (Brito, 1994, p. 75). When compared to the other major rivers on the peninsula, it also has the largest hydrographic basin and flows at the highest average altitude inside the Iberian Peninsula (Pascoal, 2000, p. 31).

According to Amorim Girão, in his *Geografia de Portugal* (1960), the Douro River can be divided into three separate segments. The first section is located entirely within Spanish territory, between the source and the city of Zamora; a second section - mostly international - includes the river's sections between Zamora and Barca de Alva, largely corresponding to the Arribas do Douro and the international Douro, the subject of our study; and a third - entirely Portuguese - encompasses the national section of the river Douro, from Barca de Alva to its mouth in the city of Porto (Pascoal, 2000, p. 33).

The Douro River begins at Lagoa Negra, in the Picos de Urbión, in the Spanish province of Soria, at an elevation of 2080 meters. This river travels a lengthy journey in Spanish territory, circulating on the erosion surface of the Pliocene plateau of the North Plateau, from its source in the "Fuentes del Duero" until the point where it begins to define the political border. Surrounded by high mountains, the Douro receives some important tributaries from the Cantabrian Mountains to the north, the wrinkles of the Iberian System to the northeast, and the Central System to the southeast and south. Thus, the Pisuerga, Valderaduey, and Esla run on its right bank, forming wide and extremely large arteries, while the Douro River gets tributaries from the Central Division System's highlands, the Adaja, and the Tormes, among others, on its left side (Pascoal, 2000, p. 33).

The geology of this section of the border allows us to see the preponderance of Hercynian granitic intrusions between complexes of metamorphic rocks. As a result, the Douro River carved a deep valley in Paleozoic rocks, predominantly granites but also schists with quartz veins intermingled. There is also evidence of the presence of a set of active faults in this border sector of the Douro, which perfectly aligns with the western margin of the Hesperic Massif, an unstable area from a seismic standpoint, as demonstrated by the presence of several significant tectonic faults (Pascoal, 2000, p. 22).

The Arribas do Douro form a unique landscape in the border context, as evidenced by its geology or morpho-tectonic, among other physical characteristics, in a space where the river excavated a true geological "throat," an authentic fluvial "cannon", with bottlenecks and steep slopes, whenever it crosses a granite mantle, being, like other rivers of northern Portugal, in a so-called "active phase of vertical erosion.". This landscape of erosion caused by the Douro River on the surface of the Meseta, gave rise to a series of escalations caused by tectonic deformations, as well as the associated accidents such as faults and residual reliefs, which are clearly visible when we examine the morphology of the eastern Trás-os- Montes. (Pascoal, 2000, p. 23) The outcome was two landscapes: one in the north, on the border between Miranda do Douro and Fornos - municipality of Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta – (Fig. 2), and the other in the south, on the border between Fornos and Barca de Alva - municipality of Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta (Fig. 3).

There are major disparities between the shale and granite locations in terms of water circulation and surface modeling, as Hermann Lautensach (1994, p.481) has pointed out. In the International Douro Valley, this circumstance will undoubtedly result in some morphological deviations. While the valley is tightly embedded in a "canyon" (or a closed V) in the first section – Fig. 2, the shape of the valley changes in the second section, becoming more open as the granite outcrops across the river diminish, as is typical of the northern section. The slopes in the northern sector of the border Douro, where the river flows through granitic rocks, are significantly steeper than in the southern half, where granite outcrops decrease, and schists take over (Fig.3) (Pascoal, 2000, p. 23).

In the third section of the river, delimited by Amorim Girão (1960), downstream of Barca de Alva, the Douro River exclusively enters Portuguese territory and takes on the E-W direction it previously had (in the first section), when it circulated in the Castilian tertiary basin. When Douro enters national territory, it takes a more regular path and does not have as many significant level changes as it did on its international journey, but it

remains equally entrenched and on a rocky landscape almost all the way to the mouth. In this last portion, we can see that the number of tributaries it receives is high on both banks.



Figure 2 - International Douro Landscape in the north section (Photo source: the authors)

The Sabor, Tua, Corgo, Tâmega, and Sousa, on the right bank, most of them going NE-SW, while the Coa, Varosa, Paiva, and Arda, flow on the left bank, in a NW-SE or even NS orientation. These tributaries have certain distinguishing characteristics. Certain features define these tributaries. They are all plateau rivers, as Amorim Girão pointed out, with massive declivity, sometimes decreasing their profile lines to almost perpendicular to those of Douro, as the Vilariça and Varosa streams illustrate. As a result, they have a high erosive potential and occasionally collect water that would have otherwise flowed into surrounding hydrographic basins (Pascoal, 2000, p. 27).

The northern section, the target of this study, belongs to Trás-os-Montes region, which is defined by an extensive plateau with altitudes ranging from 700 to 800 meters. The Douro valley is deeply embedded here, with steep, basically granite cliffs. The valley becomes more open as you travel south, with flat valley bottoms and steep slopes remaining; there are still minor planar regions and remnant reliefs topped by quartzites. Being part of the so-called *Terra Quente Transmontana* (Trás-os-Montes hot land), this

location, where the valley already resembles the "Douro vineyard" is characterized by its microclimate, with low precipitation and mild winter temperatures.



Figure 3 - International Douro Landscape in the south section (Image source: the authors)

3. International Douro/Arribas do Douro: Water Landscapes and Tourism Potential in the Iberian Border

To be completely implemented, a region's endogenous development must begin with the optimum exploitation of its natural resources or areas of environmental importance, as well as the people's cultural legacy. In addition to a natural heritage of great value, relatively well preserved, the International Douro, like other border river sections, has a cultural heritage that is critical to recognize and disseminate. Cultural and heritage tourism, religious, monumental, food and wine tourism, ecotourism and nature tourism, which is bolstered by the growing importance of river tourism and active tourism, including hiking, boat tours, and other multi-adventure activities, are among the tourism typologies that can be explored in this region (Cruz, Ruiz & Zamareño, 2018, p. 220).

Aside from the scenic beauty, the Douro River has long been and continues to be a favored mode of transportation between the interior and the coast, thanks to its

characteristics as a natural "corridor." The objective of making the Douro navigable all the way to the border and beyond dates to the 16th century, as do efforts to improve navigation. The original purpose was to create seaworthy conditions for the transportation of goods, especially minerals and cereals, as well as the famous Port wine, which was shipped in barrels on "rabelo" boats. With the completion of the works at Cachão da Valeira in the mid-18th century, the Douro would become navigable along its whole length. Various dams in the Douro, upstream as far as Pocinho, were built in Portugal during the twentieth century, restricting the river's navigability. Upstream, on the international section of Douro, navigation possibilities are more limited due to significant height differences between the Portuguese and Spanish dams, which prevent vessels from being transferred. Under these conditions, navigation in the International Douro is only possible in the segment between each dam. Thus, the "Douro's Route," a long-sought project by both the Portuguese and the Spanish to make the Douro navigable from its source (in the Spanish lands of Soria) to its mouth (in Porto), became impractical. Nevertheless, it is still possible to enjoy the nature, art, culture and richness of the river, by trekking or canoeing the Douros' Route⁵.

The international Douro's unique landscape, along a valley deeply embedded in the grandeur and vastness of the plateau, can be used for river tourist circuits, such as the one that currently exists between the Portuguese dam of Miranda do Douro and the "embalse" of Castro, a few kilometers upstream. The commoditization of the Douro River and its Arribas/Arribes for sightseeing is the product of a collaboration between the Municipality of Miranda do Douro and Protur, a firm based in Zamora, an excellent example of cross-border cooperation. In Freixo de Espada à Cinta, the municipality also organizes river cruises from the Congida river beach to Mieza, in Spain (Campesino-Fernandez, 2016).

For these few examples of joint dynamization of the border, and of tourist activity in general, to be more successful, Júlio Meirinhos argues that the development of this activity is also only possible if accessibility to the region is improved, taking advantage of the integration and enhancement of endogenous resources, the dynamization and modernization of the economic structure, the increase of professional training and research and development activities, and infrastructural developments (Meirinhos, 1995).

⁵ <https://www.rutadelduero.es/index.php>

Tourism should also be promoted in all its forms, including so-called “cultural tourism”, which values the human potential of the region and the ethnological heritage, highlights the importance of pilgrimages and local festivities, popular traditions, gastronomy, and handicrafts (some of which are already extinct), as well as the museological and architectural heritage of the small riverside populations, namely chapels, churches, pillories and manor houses. Another factor that will enable the border region to capitalize on its natural potential is the encouragement of "environmental tourism," which thrives in these settings. Archaeological engravings, like the Mazouco horse, or the countless viewpoints over the river are also a fantastic way to travel around the region and enjoy breathtaking views over the landscape. In recent years, the international Douro’s municipalities have been restoring this amazing heritage. In addition to the fabulous views, you can see the large birds that inhabit these cliffs, including falcons, hawks, and vultures, flying beautifully in the blue skies. Local table wines are also produced in this region, along with almonds and olive oil. In Trás-os-Montes, where the creation of silkworms is a multiseccular history, tourists may also learn about the silk industry, which has traditionally been the most significant industrial sector.

Both sides of the Iberian border have created tourist programs in recent years. The European Union's admission of the two countries has renewed interest in border cooperation as a development tool for both countries. All of this occurs in the context of cross-border cooperation, which has proven to be crucial in addressing the modernity issue. While it is critical to coordinate joint action measures across countries, border tourism is still a source of revenue that must be tapped through the appropriate mechanisms and institutions (Moral Cuadra et al., 2012). We’ve witnessed a revival of traditional shopping tourism, which revolves around markets and commercial enclaves that give life to multiple villages along the border, which is now accompanied by initiatives aimed at better exploitation of natural resources, whose exceptional spaces are characterized as "ecological corridors," displaying fauna and flora with undeniable tourist appeal (López Trigal, 2016).

Monumental and museum tourism has taken on a new dimension in recent years, aided by the UNESCO list of sites designated as World Heritage Sites, which have strewn the Iberian Raya with structures that bring tourists closer to knowledge of the local culture and facilitate understanding of broad chapters of its history (Hortelano Mínguez, 2015, pp. 253-254).

Pilgrimages and popular festivals are examples of traditions that originate cross-border visitor flows on both sides of the Portuguese-Spanish border and in the Douro region. In addition, municipalities in both countries organize trekking activities on the old smuggling routes, which established a unique type of 'submerged economy' at the time and whose memory is now a tourist attraction (Pascoal, 2000).

However, there are still limitations to the joint tourist use of the International Douro, between Portugal and Spain, since there are still bottlenecks that must be overcome. And perhaps the biggest bottleneck is the lack of cross-border cooperation in managing common environmental and natural resources. In this case, the hydrographic basins stand out (it is worth mentioning here, perhaps as a good example of cross-border cooperation, the Associação Ibérica de Municípios Ribeirinhos do Douro⁶, an example that urgently needs to be continued and that could be so important for the defense and development of the area covered by the largest river in the region), energy resources, natural parks and reserves, forests, and hunting resources. Regarding this association, reference should be made to its active role in the popular movement unleashed when the controversy surrounding the installation of the nuclear “cemetery” in Aldeadávila de la Ribera arose (Pascoal, 2000).

Border areas like the International Douro can benefit from their tourist potential because they have a geographical location that is currently gaining increasing significance within the European Union. However, border and adjacent regions, such as Trás-os-Montes, Zamora and Salamanca, must continue to invest in a new framework of Iberian accessibility, with the interpenetration of both countries' economies, a long-term goal for these areas (see Interreg 2021-27⁷).

Finally, we believe that exploring literary representations of the International Douro's landscapes through literary tourism, i.e., tourism motivated primarily by literary fiction and/or literary writers' biographies, can be a powerful tool for boosting regional economies and developing this niche tourism in the area.

⁶ <https://aimrd.es/> ; <https://www.publico.pt/2022/03/23/local/noticia/municipios-ribeirinhos-douro-pretendem-maior-agrupamento-territorial-europa-1999894>.

⁷ <https://www.poctep.eu/en>

3.1. Literary Representations of the International Douro/Arribes del Duero: Miguel de Unamuno

Literary tourism is a modality of micro-products and segments that decisively drive the progress of these territories, materialized through the Douro River and the tourist diversity that is reflected in both sides of the border (Hortelano Mínguez, 2004). The Douro region, especially the Douro wine region, has long attracted the attention and interest of writers, poets and tourists. The romantic literature of end-of-summer harvest excursions or Miguel Torga's work in the memorialization process and perception of the Douro landscape are emblematic examples of this trend (Leitão, 2017). However, the *Arribas do Douro* landscape was irrevocably influenced by other authors.

In 1905, Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), the Spanish essayist, writer and philosopher rector of the University of Salamanca, published in the journal *Hojas Selectas* (37, pp. 18-31) a small travel narrative entitled *Los Arribes del Duero. Notas de un viaje por la raya de Portugal ilustradas con 15 fotografías*”, where he recalls the five-day trip that he had done with 3 other friends from Bilbao in 1902 to the so-called *Ribera salmantina*. The text, which was also a part of his *Obras Completas*, was republished in 2018 in a volume edited by Rui Jacinto and Vicente Cabero, and it remains one of the most impressive literary and artistic representations of the *Arribas do Douro* landscape.

Unamuno's travels in the Peninsula embody his theories, thoughts and biography: the yearning for survival, knowledge, ubiquity, escape from society, painful doubt, which can be found throughout his other literary creations (Lloréns-García, 1999). The Spanish *costumbristas* and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, featuring the emblematic figure of F. Giner de los Ríos, strive to encourage travels and excursions as appropriate ways of addressing the country's knowledge, paving the way for the later 98 Generation. Unamuno, like Giner de los Ríos, believes that excursions are the best way to experience living geography and get to know the country. Unamuno's love of excursions allows him to "clear the dust from the library," yet he must return to the library, and recreate his prior travel experiences in quest of an aesthetic expression.

In *Los Arribes del Duero*, Unamuno approaches a leitmotiv of his work: the feeling of nature within the framework of his poetic philosophy, highlighting his affinity with Rousseau (Villar Ezcurra, 2021). In some circumstances, the envisioned landscape

becomes a vision, an aesthetic contemplation; in others, it becomes the landscape of the soul, a mirror - sometimes distorted - of the country's or the poet's reality.

Resquebrájase la tal meseta en hondos desgarrones, mostrando al descubierto sus peñascosas entrañas, pétreos cimientos de la austera llanura castellana. El agua tenaz, que talla las rocas gota a gota con secular trabajo, ha ido carcomiendo su lecho berroqueño y buscando salida entre revueltas y esguinces. (Jacinto & Cabero, 2018: 112).⁸

In this context, Unamuno's descriptions of the landscape shift from realism to symbolism. Faced with the ineffectiveness of realistic landscape descriptions, Unamuno commonly resorts to intertextuality and to references well-known by readers.

Se da vista al Duero y con él a un paisaje dantesco, tal cual los imaginara Gustavo Doré. En lo alto, apuntados picones que se asoman al abismo, peñas y aserradas crestas; a lo largo, inmensas escotaduras que encajándose de un lado y de otro, en la disposición llamada de cola de milano, forman la garganta por cuyo hondón corre el río. Los enormes cuchillos van perdiéndose en gradación de tintas hasta ir a confundirse con la niebla." (Jacinto & Cabero, 2018: 116).⁹

By referencing a recognizable imaginary, provided by Gustave Doré's etchings of Dante's *Inferno*, Unamuno stimulates the reader's imagination, notably in the representation and reinterpretation of Charon, the ferryman who transports the dead souls across the River Styx to Hades. Unamuno depicts the International Douro region as a simile of this Dantesque landscape.

⁸ Such a plateau cracks into deep tears, revealing its rocky entrails, stony foundations of the austere Castilian plain. The tenacious water, which carves the rocks drop by drop with secular labour, has been nibbling away its granitic bed and looking for a way out between revolts and sprains (our translation).

⁹ We sighted Duero and with it a Dantesque landscape, just as Gustave Doré imagined it. At the top, pointed peaks, rocks and sharp crests gaze over the abyss; Along its length, immense notches that fit together on one side and the other, in the so-called dovetail arrangement, form the canyon through whose depth the river flows. The huge knives are lost in a spectrum of colors until they merge with the mist" (our translation).



Figure 4 - Charon, ferryman of the dead, Gustave Doré (Photo source: Wikimedia Commons)

But this vision of Inferno, of rocky peaks and vertiginous abysses, is not without splendors: the landscape is a fusion of contrasts where the dark and gloomy rocks are flooded by light, and the river takes on human characteristics:

Juegos de luz animan la dantesca garganta; peñas en claro se destacan sobre el tono oscuro de las peñas en sombra, y allá en lo alto, dominando al ceñudo paisaje, algún milano se cierne bañándose en luz. Suben del río perezosas nieblas que se agarran a los peñascos, y fingien el alma de éstos que de ellos se desprende con pesar. El Duero, que dibujando su vena central, su líquido senderillo de espuma, corre encajonado en el fondo de estas gargantas, es el mismo que pasa amplio y solemne, abrazando a la feraz llanura y como gozándose en ella, por tierra de Zamora. Todas estas gargantas dantescas son obra de él, obra de la lenta labor del agua terca. El fuego bosquejó a la tierra su esqueleto, dio el bloque, es

el agua el artista pacienzudo y tenaz que modela sus contornos. (Jacinto & Cabero, 2018: 116).¹⁰

The tourism fruition of the *Arribes del Duero* is indelibly etched by Unamuno's evocative pictures of this landscape. And much as the Douro river's obstinacy carved a deep and entrenched valley in the imposing granite rocks, D. Miguel's travel narrative has left a significant impression in this region, shaping traveler's relationships with nature, culture, and literature.

As a result, this travel book, written by a confident *costumbrista*¹¹, advocates for local and folklore customs, as well as the need for a greater understanding of the Iberian countries, which depends on cross-border cooperation and strategies to develop both sides of this peculiar border that separates, but also unites, Portugal and Spain, a common "Iberian soul" (Jacinto & Cabero, 2018: 13).

Spain and Portugal's DMO's (Destination Management Organisations) should integrate this text in their marketing and branding strategies of the region and take advantage of its powerful imagery, since "literary places are no longer accidents of history, sites of a writer's birth or death; they are also social constructions, created, amplified, and promoted to attract visitors" (Herbert, 2001:313). One of these strategies is event-based tourism, centered on literary festivals about authors or their work (such as centenaries) (Mansfield, 2015), among other emergent products of literary events, such as book fairs, literary-themed dinners, themed night-time events, late-night character nights, reading sessions, literary contests and games.

4. Literary Festivals as a Branding Strategy

¹⁰ Lighting games animate the Dantesque throat; bright rocks contrast with the gloomy tone of the shadow rocks, and a kite hovers above the frowning terrain, soaking in light. Lazy mists emerge from the river, cling to the rocks, and pretend to be their souls, which regrettably separate themselves from them. The Duero, which draws its central vein, a liquid trail of foam, from the bottom of these gorges, is the same river that flows across Zamora's land, wide and somber, enveloping the lush plain and rejoicing in it. All of these Dantesque throats are his creation, the result of the tenacious water's laborious work. Water is the patient and tenacious artist who molds its shapes after fire traced its skeleton to earth and gave the block (our translation).

¹¹ *Costumbrismo* is the literary or pictorial interpretation of local everyday life, mannerisms, and customs, primarily in the Hispanic scene, and particularly in the 19th century. *Costumbrismo* is related both to artistic realism and to Romanticism.

Literary festivals are a cultural phenomenon whose primary goal is to reaffirm identity and relive tradition (Gentile & Brown, 2015: 31), and they are used as a specific tool for place branding or as a tourist asset that values the city where they are organized. Tourists will be able to interact with the local community that organizes these types of events. According to Mintel (as cited in Hoppen et al., 2014: 42), Literary festivals foster social interaction among a variety of groups, including authors, readers, and visitors-celebrities.

As cities compete for the interests of - and the cultural capital that comes with - the creative tourism, literature and writing festivals, book fairs and other types of festivals related to books have emerged from among a slew of festival types. Literary festivals (also known as writers festivals) have been flourishing in cities with long histories of writers, writing, and publishing, such as London and Edinburgh (Sapiro, 2022). Literary places emerge as a result of their current literary activity, and not necessarily of their literary past. As a result, the phenomenon of literary celebrity has emerged. The association between star high-profile authors and literary festivals provides an opportunity for the city to build cultural capital. Simultaneously, they can also provide a more interactive experience by encouraging contact between audiences and guest authors.

Even though up to September 2022 just one city in Portugal has been designated as a UNESCO City of Literature, Óbidos¹², local municipalities, and even the private sector, are engaging in the production of cultural and literary festivals as a promotion and marketing tool (Martinez Tejero, 2021). Tejero enlisted 39 literary festivals in a recent survey released in 2021, but did not include Poetry festivals, which she views to be of a different sort. Among these 39 festivals, we can highlight, *Correntes d'Escrita*, which was held for the first time in 2000, in Póvoa do Varzim, organized by the city Council and counted 70 attendees in 2000 and up to 700 in 2016 (Marques, 2016). *Folio*, the Óbidos International Literature Festival, had its first edition in 2015, and has since then grown to become one of Portugal's most important literary events. Other notable examples include *Escritaria*, in Penafiel and *LeV – Literatura em Viagem*, which has been held in Matosinhos since 2006. Aside from these larger-scale festivals, there are others of a smaller scale, but they demonstrate that municipalities support the organization of these events because of their potential to invest in culture and tourism, boosting local

¹² <https://www.citiesoflit.com/>

economies and fostering sustainability while creating employment. That is the case of FFIL, the International Literature Festival of Freixo de Espada à Cinta.

4.1. Freixo Festival Internacional de Literatura (FFIL – International Literature Festival of Freixo de Espada à Cinta)

Since 2017, Freixo de Espada à Cinta municipality, in partnership with *Editorial Novembro*, has been promoting a set of initiatives to develop cultural and ecotourism in the region. One of these initiatives is *FFIL*, the International Literature Festival of Freixo, marketed by the municipality as a transborder initiative, intended to become an “exhibition public art” to discuss literature. The festival is held every year, in Freixo de Espada à Cinta, the birthplace of the Portuguese XIX century poet Guerra Junqueiro, who has become an ambassador of the northern village¹³.

Aside from street names, statues, and the House-Museum of Guerra Junqueiro's family, the municipality has poems and images evoking the poet strewn across the community. These murals continuously remind visitors of Guerra Junqueiro's work and life, and his presence serves as a permanent reminder of the artist's importance to the village's history (Fig. 5).

FFIL fosters social interaction among a variety of groups, including authors, readers and visitors, celebrities and represents a major branding opportunity for this small village of Northern Portugal. The mission of this event is to promote Guerra Junqueiro's poetry by analyzing its significance and encouraging its inclusion in The National Reading Plan¹⁴. Furthermore, it also strives to stimulate literary production and consumption by establishing the Guerra Junqueiro Literary Award, which is given annually to a well-known writer. Manuel Alegre won the prize in 2017, Nuno Júdice in 2018, José Jorge Letria in 2019, Ana Luísa Amaral in 2020, and Hélia Correia in 2021¹⁵.

¹³ <http://www.cm-freixoespadacinta.pt/noticia.php?id=78>;

¹⁴ [http://www.cm-freixoespadacinta.pt/documentos/comunicacao/comunicacao_social/FFIL/Nordeste - 06-06-2017.pdf](http://www.cm-freixoespadacinta.pt/documentos/comunicacao/comunicacao_social/FFIL/Nordeste_-_06-06-2017.pdf)

¹⁵ <http://www.cm-freixoespadacinta.pt/noticia.php?id=387>



Figure 5 - Mural devoted to Guerra Junqueiro in Freixo de Espada à Cinta (Image source: the authors)

In 2020, the organization decided to extend the prize to the Portuguese diaspora, and since then, every year, the Lusophony prize has been delivered also to writers from 6 Portuguese-speaking countries, Cape Verde, Brazil, S. Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea Bissau Mozambique and Angola¹⁶.

According to Avelina Ferraz, curator of the prize, this award in Lusophony intends to be "a contribution to a movement that creates a Lusophone cultural union and to make literature responsible for all of us being citizens of the world". "Guerra Junqueiro's legacy is and will continue to be a source of inspiration for the formation of many poets and writers of the 20th and 21st century," underlines Avelina Ferraz, of Editora Novembro, adding that, "as long as this is the case, we can fully celebrate the Portuguese language." (Mairos, 2021)

Promoting such an initiative in this Manueline village is an opportunity for the City Council to boost cultural tourism and promote the village's reputation in the Portuguese-

¹⁶ <https://www.jornaldeangola.ao/ao/noticias/freixo-festival-internacional-de-literatura-premeia-sete-escretores-da-lusofonia/>

speaking world. As former Mayor Maria do Céu Quintas points out, "it is a source of pride to have Guerra Junqueiro as a local son. "Recognizing that there is an affective and effective relationship to the heritage of letters and the culture of words makes this cultural mission even more challenging with our communities in the Diaspora" (Mairos, 2021).

5. Conclusions

This study attempted to assess the uniqueness and diversity of the landscape of International Douro, a rich natural, cultural, and literary heritage setting, peppered with key features for the tourism industry, a reference on the Portuguese-Spanish border and with Duero/Douro River as a symbol, particularly linked to today's society, where market niches are sought, in accordance with the principles of sustainability and rural development.

In the Iberian Raya, cross-border cooperation has taken an especially interesting path in tourism development, considering the need to carry out strategic planning initiatives that lead to the use of the abundant resources that nature has bestowed, in an environment that would eventually lead to effective "border and cross-border tourism". The investment in infrastructure has been critical for the improvement of destinations, and the promotional actions engaged in the institutional framework on both sides of the border have led to the design of new tourist routes and itineraries, taking advantage of the synergies of a nature prodigal in flora and fauna, inserted in protected landscape – the Douro's International Park - that extends on both sides of the Portuguese-Spanish border, becoming today a powerful catalyst for leisure and tourism, in an increasingly competitive market. Literary texts, like Unamuno's travel books, and literary tourism initiatives, like FFIL, give a new layer of significance to the landscapes, supplement factual information material, and allow for new, more complex and rich imagery, which serves as a new framework in visitors' gaze and tourist experience.

In the settings of the Douro's waterscapes, cultural, literary, and ecotourism are increasingly essential assets for boosting economies that have been somewhat neglected. As investments in tourism products have increased, effective and cooperative procedures have strengthened ties, as the Spanish and Portuguese have reached joint action formulae within the framework of the European Union, accomplishing an old dream of José Saramago, shared not only in his 1981 book, *Viagem a Portugal*, but also later in his blog, in 2009:

Pensei então que uma boa maneira de começar o livro seria glosar o famoso Sermão de Santo António aos Peixes do Padre António Vieira, dirigindo-me aos peixes que nadam nas águas do Douro e perguntando-lhes de que lado se sentiam eles, expressão talvez demasiado óbvia de um ingénuo sonho de amizade, de companheirismo, de mútua colaboração entre Portugal e Espanha. Não caiu em saco roto a utópica proposta. Naquele mesmo lugar do rio, rodeados pela água comum, acabam de reunir-se os representantes de 175 municípios ribeirinhos de um lado e do outro para debaterem sobre a criação de uma agrupação capaz de coordenar ações de desenvolvimento e definir planos viáveis de futuro. Talvez nenhum dos presentes tenha lido a minha versão do sermão do Padre António Vieira, mas o espírito do lugar andava a chamá-los há trinta anos, e eles foram. Bem-vindos todos. (Saramago, 2009).¹⁷

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¹⁷ I thought then that a good way to start the book would be to gloss over Father António Vieira's famous *Sermão de Santo António aos Peixes*, addressing the fish swimming in the waters of the Douro and asking them which side they were on, perhaps too obvious an expression of a naive dream of friendship, of companionship, of mutual collaboration between Portugal and Spain. The utopian proposal did not fall on deaf ears. At that very spot on the river, surrounded by common water, representatives of 175 municipalities on both sides of the river have just met to discuss the creation of a grouping capable of coordinating development actions and defining viable plans for the future. Perhaps none of those present have read my version of Father António Vieira's sermon, but the spirit of the place had been calling them for thirty years, and they went. Welcome everyone. (our translation)

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