



Four things from my time (Memories)

Josep Miracle (Barcelona, 1904)

“The farmhouse of Can Mantega seemed like the center point of a partition line: on the other side - to my left - the orchard; on the other side - to my right - the fields. All was grandiose, of enormous proportions. Half a dozen men worked there constantly, moving from one side to the other depending on the seasons and agricultural needs. It can be said that the field only claimed men twice a year: for sowing and for harvesting; the orchard was more of an everyday thing, and though it was farther from my observatory, there was no operation that was not closely followed by me. For this reason I could describe with some detail the alternating cycles of vegetables - cycles that imprint throughout the garden a kaleidoscopic change in the geometry of their canvases, both in layout and color. I have seen the bearing and earthing of encampments of beans and tomatoes, with their pyramid structures based on reeds; and with the alternating green of its vegetation, I have seen cabbages and broccoli, artichokes and beans, pumpkins and melon trees thrive there.

Attenuated by the distance, I have heard the exaltations of the produce as they were watered. I have seen the planting and harvesting in a steady rhythm of uninterrupted continuity, without moving, sitting on the ground, with my legs lowered gallery down, hands clinging to the bars and my face embedded between the two irons.

But I have seen, above all, the strenuous operation of plowing that immense field on the right, with man following animal, fists clinging to the stevia, the harrow opening the bowels of the earth, making his way there, from one to the other, coming and going, one furrow beside another furrow, and another still and another, until the whole field was shaken, as if curled up by so many crests in row. And I have seen it followed by the spread of furrows, step by step, one hand holding the skirt, the other hand stapling the seeds from the skirt and scattering them forward and around. And I saw the flattener pass behind me undoing the crests and covering the furrows, leaving the seed buried. And then I saw the men disappear, the field left in the hands of nature, the sun and the serenity. Within weeks those seeds sprouted from the ground, coating it in a very fine green. And I saw that very fine green turn a very strong green, and the grass grew, until over the months, the green turned yellow and the grass turned into stems. And all the stalks acted like a kind of sea, brandished like waves in the gust of the softest fan of wind. And then those men came back. And the field converted into a heap of curved backs of the men seen all year in the orchard.

They put themselves, as it were, in battery formation and brandished the sickle, they undertook countering that sea of silk, and they made their way down to the last wave. Following them, other men collected the fallen stalks, and with four strokes of the hand they made the bundle of sheaves. And they piled them up, and they made sashes. And in two or three days of that wheat field there was not even one upright stem, all were grouped in bundles, and the bundles scattered in the immensity of the field. Until it was time to beat. An hour that I would call glorious, and that today's machines have probably erased forever. Those horses around him rolled on a bed of wheat ears; those pitchforks regrouped the scattered stalks, the men wearing those big straw hats; and that dust of gold that seemed like a veil of mist on the stage, all this makes up a bucolic picture that those to come - even the peasants - will ignore, and that those of us who have been lucky enough to see, will never forget. Then came the great deflation, separating the grain from the chaff, with that scavenging operation that turned the golden mist into a golden cloud. And the bagging of the wheat - "don't say wheat that is not in the sack and although well tied" -, and in building the haystacks, the straw so well arranged around the hanger, which resulted in the image of a shallow cabin and a lot of height, perfectly round in its perimeter, perfectly connected in its terminal, and the percherón cup for the poetry of keeping a pot of cooked earth hanging upside down. Of all that great scenery, of that magnificent bucolic scene, nothing has endured for years. Now a whole street passes through, with tall houses on both sides: the street dedicated to Joan Güell."

