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Festa da Palabra

An Anthology of Contemporary Galician Women Poets

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INTRODUCTION

The origin of this anthology

After deciding to compile poems by Galician women writers of the contemporary period, it occurred to me that some might ask why such a project should be undertaken and for whom it was intended. It is important to suggest a possible public, not only because an anthology ought to have a purpose; there should also be a confidence that someone will respond to that specific purpose. Who will read an anthology as opposed to some other text, such as the complete poetry of the writers selected? It is worth taking a moment to present the particular orientation of this anthology, for the specifics are what have provided the definitive organization of this volume.

Its hypothetical readers, other than the habitual consumers of Galician literature—a constantly increasing group—are Hispanists who are aware of the cultural differences existing in the Iberian Peninsula and curious enough to devote time to increasing their familiarity with them. There is also a growing number of specialists in Luso-Brazilian studies who feel concern for the linguistic medium whose origin is common to Portuguese, even though the present political reality assigns Galicia and Portugal to separate governments.

For these reasons, I felt it important to present a selection of poetic compositions that (1) have appeared in texts not easily located outside Galicia, or which are out of print; and (2) have appeared only in Galician journals, with a
dispersity of publication that impedes a visión de conxunto. This anthology will provide contact with Galician literature for those who are not immersed in it. At the same time, that contact has an organizational principle, for Galician literature is a broad field and growing steadily. The decision to anthologize the genre of poetry written in Galician, by women, represents an effort to quickly introduce readers into the center of a dynamic and polemical situation: Galician poetry is at a peak of production, called by some its Golden Age. Moreover, the brevity of poetic texts in itself provides rapid entry into this literary world, and intensely reflects the cultural environment. Readers who have yet to acquire a full perspective of the Galician aesthetic as it is being developed in these recent years may be spurred to further their knowledge through these poems, aided by the introduction and the biographical material. This anthology is, admittedly, an exercise in subtle persuasion, aiming to broaden the public for a body of writing which historical and commercial circumstances have not heretofore brought to the general attention.

There is still another group of readers to whom this text should be of interest: those already familiar with the Galician language and its context. This group will find some of the authors to be familiar, others less so or not at all. I expect that in many cases, the poems themselves will be before them for the first time. Women’s voices, when making use of a language long prohibited, present a double marginality, hardly conducive to recognition by the general public. This anthology would emphasize, for Galician speakers themselves, the breadth and depth of the contribution female writers are making to their literary heritage, a contribution that is in the process of forging an identity, of exploring itself. Such a contribution
should and will attract increasingly more women writers to record their half of Galician reality, as it conflicts and coincides with the one that has until now been better known.

These reading publics, then, have conditioned the structure, length, and content of the present anthology. The introductory study which follows may include material already familiar to one of these groups, but it is nevertheless intended to satisfy a multiple viewpoint. What may not be new to some may well be new to others, and whether from a perspective of language or gender, Galician women will be seen to have much to offer to their literary heritage.

Rosalía de Castro: precursor

It is interesting, if not amazing, that the rebirth or rexurdimento of Galician letters, not unrelated to the growth in nationalistic sentiments in many areas of Europe during the era of romanticism, is closely associated with the name of a woman writer, Rosalía de Castro. Castro was participating in a more general European trend when she used popular lyrical tradition in the composition of her Cantares Gallegos (1863). The faithfulness and authenticity of her effort have their proof in the manner in which the Cantares have come to be so well known in her native Galicia. It is also important to note that the language she used was Galician, not entirely absent from written texts for several centuries previous to hers, but nevertheless very infrequent and certainly not often taken seriously as a literary medium. Some critics are also beginning to say that Castro herself was not taken as seriously as she should have been, for she remained the stereotype of the sentimental,
suffering female poet for many decades. The term "poet" is to be emphasized, as she received virtually no recognition for the five novels she produced and published during her lifetime. Those scholars who took notice of the prose were quick to classify it as sentimental as well, dismissing her supposed out-of-date romanticism as just that: out-of-date and indicative, therefore, of a writer who simply did not keep up with her time.

Yet Rosalía opened doors for the Galician language that have never since been shut, even during the difficult years of Franco's fascist regime; modern culture has had too many means of diffusion of its works for these to be concealed from the public eye. And she has become a symbol of a new-found strength, even while her female successors in the poetic genre have not frequently achieved the same degree of recognition and rarely manage to escape comparison to her.

An overall summary of the literary creation which Galician women have been responsible for since the latter half of the nineteenth century cannot be given here: the research is yet to be done and requires sifting through voluminous periodical publications, many of difficult access. However, it is work which in time will be done. Even without the all-inclusive material that is so desirable for this type of study, one can see that some of the writers have had a clear idea of their status as a minority within a minority, a group which had to call attention to itself as well as prove afterward that it had something of value to say. Some, on the other hand, have not been as concerned with altering the cultural context, and have contentedly followed previous models. It is not the silence of any of the writers themselves, but rather the silence that has surrounded them, which the present collection of poetry addresses.

It is hardly novel to state that women's voices
are less often—perhaps it would be more accurate to say less easily—heard in literary creation. In the case of Galicia, most Hispanists will immediately point out the work of Emilia Pardo Bazán and Rosalía de Castro. They are, in all likelihood, referring to Spanish texts, and in the case of the latter writer, to her verse, even to just one book, En las orillas del Sar, rather than to any other book. Some scholars may also recall the essayist Concepción Arenal, and others will point out that Elena Quiroga, a prominent contemporary writer, has frequently dealt with Galician themes in her novels. This requires that a definition of "Galician writer" as employed in this book be provided.

It cannot be denied that if a person is born in one of the four provinces of A Cruña, Pontevedra, Lugo or Ourense, his or her nationality is Galician. Whether or not this is placed on the same level as the Spanish nationality is not a question we are addressing at this stage. What must be taken into account, however, is the language used by the writer born in Galicia. Given the historical circumstances of the Spanish State, its present day designation and recognition of diverse autonomous regions, and the prevalent reactions of those residing in areas where a language other than Spanish has some regularity of usage, one cannot ignore language choice: to write in Spanish as opposed to Galician is to express a political orientation in virtually every case. Those who write in Spanish may deny this, but those who affirm and assume the Galician linguistic identity rarely will. For this reason, writers who consistently use Spanish for publishing (these frequently live outside Galicia) will not be included in the term "Galician writers." The decision is not without arguments to the contrary, but its very polemicity is representative of the importance held by the medium of expression. Curiously—or perhaps expectedly—it seems many of
these Galician-born writers using Spanish are male. The impression is that women have made a more consistent commitment to the regional language, which may have some relationship to their identification with a cultural as well as a gender group.

Regardless of gender, it is nevertheless true that writers in Galician definitely have been addressing that reading public which almost always has an intimate relationship to the geographical region in which this language is spoken. Galicians take this for granted and incorporate it into their reception of the text. Researchers from other national and linguistic areas who have specialized in the study of Galician writing--Italian scholars have worked with medieval documents in Galician-Portuguese, and etymological research has been done by Germans, while British and North Americans study earlier as well as recent periods--cannot truly separate nationality from vehicle of expression either. It is no longer necessary to read certain works out of a sense of commitment to the culture--'por obriga', as the Galicians themselves say--although the general attitude is one of greater openness toward what is being produced. Yet it is still a fact that the history of female writers in Galicia and in Galician has still not been written. This is not surprising, since even on the level of articles, criticism on the work of the "other" gender is extremely scarce. If we limit our attention to the non-Spanish texts which have been analyzed, the outstanding figure is, however, Rosalía de Castro. Even for her, the Galician poetry has generally been the concern of "in-house" studies.

As the national identity and the self-analyses of women have gained strength, new critical approaches come into play. This is similar to the growth in feminist criticism for literatures of many
languages. Re-readings and first readings are helping to deconstruct the masculine aesthetic which assigns lesser importance to texts produced by women, whatever their genre. Rosalía has vastly benefitted from the modern insights and will continue to do so. But, one asks, if there is a whole other Rosalía being read, one far from the intimate—perhaps the implication has been ‘impotent’—voice, which has for so long been studied, are there not other Rosalías? Are there not other women writers for whom the author of Cantares Gallegos and Follas Novas—books with some very energetic poetry—could well have served as a source of ideological encouragement, even if not as a direct model? Have not other Galician women felt a relationship with her along gender lines as well as the poetic?

However, this introduction is not meant to be an analysis of the ways in which Castro, a principal figure of Galician literature’s rexurdimento, may have influenced other writers, male or female, since that could perpetuate the idea that one woman only achieved literary recognition for out-of-the-ordinary talents. Rather, this is an attempt to round out the lopsided picture, to give it the depth and dimensions it is due but has not received as far as the inclusion of female writers in Galician poetry anthologies is concerned. For this reason, and because my purpose is ultimately to turn readers’ attention in the direction of Galician women writing today, several poets are mentioned briefly in the following section in order to complete the picture of the female poetic space in the geographical/cultural area which concerns us. They are not included in the selections, which belong exclusively to those women living and writing in Galicia today, but they are familiar to all of its literary world.
Galician Literary Foremothers

Francisca Herrera Garrido

The reedition of her novel Néveda (1920), plus the monographic issue dedicated to her by the journal Festa da palabra silenciada (3, 1986) have helped rescue Francisca Herrera Garrido (1861-1950) from obscurity. Although politically conservative, and thus a candidate for acceptance into the traditional cultural spheres, Herrera Garrido has not been a favorite with critics. However, the amount of books she published and the mere fact that she devoted so much time to writing, make her figure a fundamental one for the study of Galician women writers. At least some of her contemporaries must have recognized her importance, as she was elected to the Royal Galician Academy; simultaneously, others must not have agreed, as her induction into the prestigious institution was inordinately delayed. Her death made it unnecessary to provide entry into the Academy to a woman. Since then, and not forgetting the Countess Emilia Pardo Bazán, whose election as president to the first Academy never resulted in her actually presiding over a functioning institution, no other woman has achieved the position of official academician in Galicia.

Couceiro Freijomil provides positive comments about Francisca Herrera Garrido, calling Néveda the "historia de una doble seducción, relato fresco y fragante en que palpita la vida idílica de la Galicia aldeana." In his overall evaluation he observes the richness of her vocabulary, which would appear to be testimony to a certain quality of literary expression. This is true for Almas de muller! ¡Volallas na luz! (A Cruña, 1915), a
lengthy collection of poems which, even if very 'feminine,' do deal with themes of rural Galicia, of love and other emotions, poverty, popular customs and beliefs. It is not difficult to trace a connection between Rosalía de Castro's *Cantares Gallegos* and the *Volallas* of Herrera Garrido, although it is perhaps more interesting to look at the latter text on its own, discovering in what way its title—in English, "Women's Souls! Sparks in the Light"—is reflected in the compositions. As a matter of fact, the voices of the author's poems, frequently structured as narrations or dramatic dialogues, coincide in their social perspective with Castro: they defend goodness and honesty, which abound in the humble peasants and even more so in the women often forced to live alone and/or support a family with meager resources. These women are strong, morally admirable, and although they frequently are attractive, their beauty does not consist merely of physical attributes. A plainer woman's value is recognized in one poem through her capacity to care unselfishly for another human being, and she is ultimately more fortunate in love than her pretty sister. The examples are numerous and even though not direct declarations of feminine strength, are nonetheless illustrations of women's worth, both in the social realm and in the sentimental. They are accompanied by repeated allusions to the importance of using the Galician language to express ideas and feelings. Francisca Herrera Garrido's ideology may not contradict traditional religious doctrine, being especially supportive of acts of charity and forgiving, yet it definitely reveals a belief in not just women's but in Galician women's ability to live with dignity.

Filomena Dato Muruáis
Filomena Dato Muruáís was born in Ourense about the middle of the last century and died in 1926. She collaborated in periodicals and in her lifetime was a recognized poet. She received several literary awards, among the most important of which was the one given her in 1887 for the poem "Defensa das mulleres." This piece is included in her only book of Galician verse, *Pollatos* (Ourense, 1891). Her four additional volumes of poetry were written in Spanish.

Since her death in Moruxo, A Cruña, Dato Muruáís has been an infrequent object of attention by literary critics, despite her five published works. Ricardo Carvalho Calero, while establishing a loose connection between "Defensa das mulleres" and the *redondillas* of the Mexican Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, does not make an extensive nor highly positive analysis. (Galician-born Father Feijóo published a lengthy essay titled "Defensa de las mugeres" at the end of the eighteenth century; this may also have served as a point of reflection for Dato Muruáís.) Alejandro Pérez Lugín’s brief essay on her, included in *La correloira y la rúa*, likewise alludes to the poet’s lack of illusions as to the popularity of her books, even though her Catholic perspective should once again have been a guarantee of a certain reading public. A known but unstudied intellectual figure of Galician letters, and contemporary of the Countess Emilia Pardo Bazán, Dato Muruáís’ creative activity should prove of interest to scholars of regional women writers.

Carmen Prieto Rouco

Carmen Prieto Rouco’s presence in Galician literature is sometimes cited but rarely given
careful consideration. Born in Villalba, Lugo on January 13, 1901, she had contacts with Galician political organizations and her social concerns are an important element of her poetry. This does not stop her from presenting her Horas de frebe (lugo, 1926) in a manner similar to that of Rosalía de Castro, whose Follas novas she mentions. That is, Prieto Rouco calls her book "probe" (poor or meager) and asks forgiveness for bringing it to the public eye. One wonders how many readers took the book seriously, although parts of the content sharply belie the mea culpa of the introduction in that they are not the writing of an utterly uninformed mind. Yet Prieto Rouco was admittedly not a polished writer and did produce a good amount of naïve verse, some of a considerably religious nature. Other poems, while not representative of mature technique, rail against the caciques or rural bosses. They are an indication of a sincere concern for the hardships suffered by Galicia in the poet's lifetime.

María Mariño Carou

The personal circumstances of María Mariño Carou (1907-1967) may have helped keep her from public observation. Although born in the coastal town of Noia, she spent the last fifteen years of her life in the Serra do Courel. Her poetry consists of two books, Palabra no tempo and the unpublished Verbo no ar. Perhaps the geographical surroundings also contributed to the inwardness of the writer's perspective, for Palabra no tempo (Lugo, 1963) is an example of intimistic, contemplative poetry. Its title suggests that the predominant focus is that of time, and although comparisons should only be made with care, it is not impossible to sense a common perspective with the
poetry of Antonio Machado. Nearly all her life linked to Galicia, so that her physical environment differed considerably from that of Machado's, Mariño Carou's poetic voice does share the calm questioning of, and response to, its surroundings. The lyrical voice is never raised in protest, however, and it rarely refers to other humans, preferring to concentrate on the compenetration of Nature and the I, which is perhaps intended as a lesson for others rather than as a direct criticism of social mores. The indirect communication with the rest of the world is focussed on revealing the meaning of life in the Galician mountains of the interior: time is barely felt as a process, yet objects are charged with indications of its passing, with a sense of tradition set in a frame of silence that allows the observer to distill them, obtaining their essence. In a pantheistic way, everything is a source of reverent experiences in the poetry of María Mariño Carou and at the same time there is a romantic projection of the author upon her surroundings. This contact, expressed predominantly in tones of understatement, is nevertheless a depuration of experience. The stillness of the present, then, is misleading, for the observer has both entered into and been traversed by a world that consistently reveals its Galician features. At the same time, simplicity and the popularity of elements—gaiteiros, hórreos, country roads—are hardly folkloric. Time, felt in the constant references to onte, hoxe, parts of the day, what was and still will be, comes to be felt as distance, as the space within and along which situations and processes exist. Like Machado's too, Mariño Carou's poetry recalls impressionist painting: the images are those of the effect upon the observer rather than on the source of their appearance. These remembered images, and the importance conceded to memories as the source of knowledge, spurred forward by
contradictory conceptual processes. It is also common for the author to create--always briefly--an image which immediately diffuses, perhaps slipping into another, so that the glance never becomes authoritative; even the use of the possessive *meu/miña* does not indicate domination but rather intimacy, the proximity of the writer to her world. This is a world in which silence surrounds noise, in which what exists is the absence of things, a condition which creates continuous moments of paradox for the I that resides within. While not precisely reaching a pervasive existentialism or mysticism, María Mariño portrays a reality of contradictions and phenomenological paradoxes which she views with acceptance rather than desperation. In her impressionistic orientation, she alludes frequently to the glance, to human sight and its negation, blindness. Her work, cut short by an early death from leukemia, is no less worthy of study for its originality within the Galician literary context. A poet of almost deceptive simplicity, her contribution to Galician poetry in particular has not been overlooked, yet is far from having received close study. In essence, it is one of modern Galician writing's most mature approaches to the geographical environment which has always been vital for the understanding of this culture. Here it is much more personal and private than social, yet it is confidently portrayed and perhaps for this reason is so fundamental in reaffirming the status of the language as an apt medium for intimate poetry. *Palabra no tempo*, natural yet profound, is a freely guided lesson both in contemplation and in social ethic.

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Galician Women Poets Today
Today among the best known living female poets in Galicia are Xohana Torres, Luz Pozo Garza, and María do Carmo Kruckenberc Sanxurxo, all born between 1926 and 1931. In the post-Civil War period, they came to represent a group whose fourth member is Pura Vázquez, a few years their senior. In an interview, Kruckenberc pointed out to this writer the coincidence of there having been "one for each province": Torres, A Cruña; Pozo Garza, Lugo; herself, Pontevedra (Vigo); Vázquez, Ourense, and added that in her opinion they fit together, if not as a generation, at least as a poetic group. These four, it is important to point out, had to seek their mode or modes of expression in the most difficult moments of the Franco period—a condition which, in addition to being women writers, a less accepted segment of the Galician intelligentsia, was especially repressive for those utilizing a medium other than Spanish.

María do Carmo Kruckenberc

A writer who may be distinguished for her vitality, María do Carmo Kruckenberc's conservative German paternal heritage did not stop her from identifying with the Galician context in which she was raised. Author of numerous books—including one on bullfighting which demonstrates an outstanding artistic talent with its avant-garde-like drawings of bulls—Kruckenberc is a very visible member of the Asociación de Escritores Galegos. In her poetry one can trace echoes of male Hispanic poets, but there are other elements indicative of her own voice and gender. She has written poems inspired by Rosalía de Castro on more than one occasion, but these are far from superficial imitations: Kruckenberc takes her writing very seriously and
even her intimate poetry gives evidence of a welcome self-confidence. The strong voice of Canaval de ouro (1962) is that of a woman who is aware of her capacity to think, sense, and love, and who at least in part draws her strength from her natural surroundings. Her emotions take the form of running water, blood, stone, growing things, becoming at times close to the expression of the earth's own pulsations and surges. The value of Galician is also ever present, in the natural environment as well as in the literary forms employed. Particularly attractive to this poet is the medieval cantiga, which appears in Cantigas do vento (1956) and in the works recently published under the title Cantigas pra un tempo esquecido (1986). At times a spontaneous creator, Kruckenberg wrote a collection of such compositions for a friend (Ramón González Sierra do Pampillón), while on another occasion she chose to establish a deliberate intertextuality with the seven cantigas de amigo of the Galician troubador Martín Códax. The result is worthy of study in itself, for with her seven compositions, the poet has returned women's words to women, has written from the female point of view, and has also modernized the medieval texts so that the amiga's song can be heard by readers today as their own. With an additional air of humor, Kruckenberg's cantigas represent an ingenious reworking of a classical male literary tradition, an encouragement for other women writers to give their own form to Galician texts.

Finally, it is necessary to call attention to A sombra erqueita (1976), a favorite of the author. Marked by the social context of unrest, this book is a compilation of subtle battle cries and an affirmation of the poetic persona's determination to resist. At times searching for a compassionate response, other times accusing or even haughty, the I opens its world to the reader as the struggle of a
sincere writer, one consistently close to her native Vigo and Galicia as a whole, identified with the people and the language.

Luz Pozo Garza

The poetry of Luz Pozo Garza, while represented by several books—*O paxaro na boca*, *O concerto de outono* and most recently, *Códice calixtino*, are in Galician, *Anfíora* and *El vagamundo* in Spanish—must be viewed from a broader perspective. That is, while Pozo Garza employs words to create verse, these literary compositions are intimately supported by visual and musical motifs. Thus, as in the case of Pura Vázquez, it is almost obligatory to recall the poetry of Gerardo Diego. However, the writer from the province of Lugo is more a sharer of Diego’s motifs than of his techniques. Similarly, elements of writing by Juan Ramón Jiménez and Vicente Aleixandre have filtered into her work, especially as far as tone and profound simplicity are concerned.

Pozo Garza’s early poetry, written in Castilian, is representative of youthful confidence and strength. Its classical allusions build on established cultural themes such as time and love, and the use of the official language would indicate that the writer was following more traditional models rather than exploring her Galician identity. Interestingly enough, the original orientation of feminine intimacy has become a constant in her poetry, while she has left the first creative medium, Spanish, for the one she now considers more authentic for her. Pozo Garza has always been essentially a poet of love. The woman of *Anfíora*, as she invites and retains the male partner in a relationship, represents a sense of subdued
eroticism that over the years has gradually evolved into a mature vision of love, whose communication with that masculine other is complete and satisfying. With *Concerto de outono* and *Códice calixtino*, the author begins to study the meaning of life in general, and to come to an agreement with what awaits her at its end.

Whether portraying feelings of love or studying the meaning of life—whose ultimate reality is death—the lyrical creation of Luz Pozo Garza identifies with nature, and most particularly with trees, birds, rain, and light. The latter three are bound to her by their linguistic representation in her own name, and thus the poetic body is one with the life-giving processes and elements it breathes and upon which it thrives, within and outside of the poem. The interpenetrative situations allow the I to be inserted within a pattern of cyclical growth, death and rebirth characteristic of the natural world, achieving a calmness that has been noted by critics. The poetic persona’s solitude is logically not a negative state, but rather the opportunity for self-analysis, for coming to understand its surroundings and establishing its proper place among them. Most often that place is one formed by a pair of lovers, whose relationship is a totality of experience enveloped in its own eternal rhythm. In essence, only the absence of the lover can to any degree stay the progress of the I, for it has the potential to reduce her text to vibrant silence.

Like María do Carmo Kruckenberg, Luz Pozo Garza also finds a point of reference in the lyrics of Martín Códax, the well-known medieval poet from Galicia and commonly associated with the city of Vigo, as are the two women. Like her contemporary, in "Cantiga para ler en tempo de penumbra," from *Códice calixtino*, Pozo Garza presents her own version of the women’s perspective as she contemplates the formulaic meeting with the lover.
that for centuries has been focussed through the lens of male poets. This would indicate that both women have an awareness of the process of marginalization characteristic of women's voices and that there are spaces which need to be filled within the poetic environment.

Although their symbolism is sometimes reminiscent of Rimbaud, and there are images which show that she is not afraid to represent more violent realities such as that of Picasso's *Gernika*, Pozo Garza's poems are nevertheless profoundly Galician. The *homenaxes* to poets such as Luis Pimentel and Luis Seoane, the references to Anxel Fole, Alvaro Cunqueiro, and Rosalía de Castro, strengthen the ties to Galician culture as a necessary framework for literary creation. Vital to the reading of the written texts are the drawings which illuminate, highlight, and otherwise reinforce their content. Thus Pozo Garza--writer, artist, musician--creates a bright, fertile poetic profile, revelatory of a security of self, sensitivity, and precision at home in multiple creative media. And once more in a manner similar to that of Kruckenber, she evinces the need to give her voice a field of action that travels far outward before returning to its personal space, one in which love--for the land and people of Galicia--sets her smoothly and strongly in position. In doing so, she simultaneously increases the ability of her chosen language to reach beyond simple regionalism toward more universal poeticity.

**Xohana Torres**

The poetry of Xohana Torres gives the impression of having followed a process of *depuración*, not as strict as with Juan Ramón Jiménez, for there is more revelation in her poems
of the subjacent emotions that have been decanted, yet with a definite reliance upon simple directness as the foundation for their construction.

Do sulco (Lugo, 1963) is a collection of verse whose roots go deep into Galicia at the same time as they penetrate the author's own experience. Frequently the motifs of the poems are so traditional that one would expect to find a repetition of other poets. "Soidá," "Terra," "A chuvia," "A catedral," the four seasons and various geographical references such as those of "O Fisterre" and "Compostela" are oft-heard themes of Galician writers. Yet Xohana Torres' own voice is clearly in control as she constructs her lyrical world in an orderly, intimate manner. The tradition, a source of strength, becomes a point of departure, of growth, at the same time as it functions as a point of return, a place where the stabilizing sense of permanence can be renewed.

Torres' intimacy is intended to be shared, quietly, and honors the reader with the confidence it offers. This comes from knowing how much of her eu (I) to reveal without exaggerating the self-contemplation to the point where the reader would become a voyeur, an onlooker of the hidden. Torres' poetic companion is welcome, for her growth is presented as the personalization of an essentially collective process. One cannot help but be aware of the modern features interspersed with other, more romantic forms of contemplation. Thus "O naufraxio," balanced in favor of existentialism, is coupled with the strong avant-garde images of other compositions: those of a Manoel Antonio, the great Galician creacionista, perhaps tempered by an Amado Carballo of only a few years later, and which insert the poetic voice inside nature in order to boldly define it. Yet the contact she establishes is not frivolous. The elaborate games of Gerardo Diego or Vicente Huidobro
remain on the surface of lyrical composition, in spite of their linguistic agility. Their natural world can be anywhere that trees, water, sky or other features of nature can be found. Xohana Torres, however, never leaves Galicia, as the constant references to towns, specific geographical features, and climate indicate. And as she tells of her native land, she also tells of her family—simply, selecting meaningful memories which suggest a relationship pervading her entire existence.

Significantly, the majority of the human figures in Torres’ *Do sulco* are female. Without forgetting to portray herself, she recalls her mother and grandmother, continuing backward to her foremother Rosalía de Castro. The cathedral of Compostela also becomes a woman, while the motherly Galician earth provides the space within which all these figures exist. The *eu* itself fuses with this earth, its stone, plants, and all the rest of its components which surround her, in a contact so natural that the borderline between woman and environment loses clarity. The relationship is described with acceptance, tenderness, familiarity—never with fear or distrust, even when the moment of communion occurs in wintertime or before a violent sea.

Also significant is the link between feminine or maternal figures and silence. For Xohana Torres, silence is fertile—it is like a resting point from which past and future may be approached and understood, where one comes to terms with oneself, formulates questions, then moves in the direction desired. This may be either backward, in a reaffirmation of historical reality, or forward, in an effort to broaden one’s knowledge of the world and self. Thus the remembrance of things past is not indicative of reticence or inability to live in the present, nor is it a barrier to forward movement. The poet’s own vitality, her dynamicity
in initiating new perspectives, being reborn and giving birth anew to her reality never weakens. Her strong desires are a way of life as she speaks from, and even through, the Galician land, from its furrows or sulcos.

Writing as Women and as Galicians: The Search for an Identity

It is not an easy undertaking for women authors who preserve their singularity as women and preserve their Galician singularity as Galician women. It is not a simple matter to identify the ways in which women fit into the Galician cultural context. It has just been observed that four women were writing simultaneously in the post-Civil War period and among them was a sense of communication, of shared purpose, but the well-known author-critic Xosé Luis Méndez Ferrín designates Torres as a member of the grupo das Festas Minervais in his book De Pondal a Novoneyra. The Festas were literary contests which had been established in Santiago de Compostela in 1536 and were restored in 1953, and which provided an opportunity for performing in Galician for many intellectuals of the post-war period. Regardless of the categorization of the poets mentioned, it is important to stress the impact of the social structures surrounding their creations. Moreover, it could be suggested that although Paul Ilie and others have studied the concept of inner exile, the even greater repression of the linguistically marginal writer under Franco warrants further analysis. At a time when the regional or national (the choice of one term or the other is significant but not to be discussed here) languages of the Spanish State were strongly frowned upon, it was neither possible nor advisable to widely circulate texts written in Basque, Catalan, or Galician. Fear of being labeled a separatist, with the personal and professional adversities this
could occasion, hindered the development of these languages to the extent that Spanish was allowed to achieve.

Thus, on one level, the momentum which had been gathering since Castro published *Cantares Gallegos* in 1863 and which had passed through the mid-nineteenth century political regionalism to outright nationalism as evidenced by political parties, assemblies, and organizations such as the *Irmandades da Fala*—all this was immediately suppressed with the vehemently centralist *franquismo*. And, although it could be argued that as a rule in literature women's voices have always been less heard than men's, the ultraconservative government installed in 1939 undeniably left even less room for their diffusion. It is ironic that much of the literature produced by writers born in the Iberian Peninsula was actually conceived and published outside its confines, and particularly in Latin America. Galicia was fortunate enough to have numerous colonies in cities such as Buenos Aires, so as to be able to support editorial houses whose major administrators and authors remained close to Galicia.

Yet not only did the barriers fail to prevent the use of Galician as a cultural language, it also failed to stop women from using it in their writing. Some of them even achieved a relative frequency of publication. Kruckenbergh has over a dozen books, Pozo Garza about half a dozen, Torres has at least as many (not all poetry), and Vázquez has now surpassed twenty five books, a good number of which are verse. Although only Torres (of this group) has published creative works exclusively in Galician, only Vázquez appears to currently prefer the Spanish medium and models.

Several other names should be mentioned before taking a closer look at individual works, even though the list given here will not be complete.
Among the other women who have employed Galician are Xaquina Trillo and Julieta Gómez Paz, whose verse is essentially an attempt to capture the more folkloric vein of Rosalía de Castro; Dora Vázquez, Pura’s older sister, who it appears is most comfortable with children’s themes and basic religious beliefs, and thus with didactic writing suitable for elementary school texts; Elsa Fernández, born in Buenos Aires of Galician parents, whose brief Lonxanía is a sentimental homage to their land and language; María Manuela Couto Viana; the American Anne Marie Morris, whose fascination with the Galician language led her to write Voz fuxitiva (1964); and Margarita Ledo Andión and María Xosé Queizán. These latter two, as well as Torres, have been involved in other media such as radio, theatre, and film. Ledo Andión has resided for a number of years outside Galicia, but continues to use the language for publication and is an especially important representative of the new tendencies of Galician prose writing such as the incorporation of film techniques in narrative and the production of formulaic literature such as the detective story. Queizán has been instrumental in the area of the Galician essay and is one of the foremost feminists in the provinces today. However, her preferred genre is not poetry. To complete the picture of the best known women poets in Galicia today, reference must be made to Anxeles Penas, a bilingual writer in that she publishes in both Spanish and Galician, and Helena Villar Janeiro, who has consistently chosen Galician as her medium of expression. The latter has published several works—verse and prose—in conjunction with her husband, Xesús Bádate Paredes, which makes analysis of her voice more difficult. However, in the summer of 1985 she returned to individual writing with a poetry collection titled Rosalía no espello, which would indicate that she has entered a new phase. It is interesting to note
that she has not always been recognized as the co-author of the books published, which would indicate that women writers are still in the process of achieving equal critical reception. Ironic—but all too typical—is the fact that Villar Janeiro has found it easier to gain recognition as the author of works for children. Anxeles Penas of A Cruña appears to have been the most directly influenced by the formalistic innovations of avant-garde writers. At the same time, in a manner similar to Ledo Andión, there is evidence in her poetry of the social concern as expressed not only by Spanish language writers such as Alberti, Neruda, and Miguel Hernández, but by Galician poets as well: Curros Enríquez and Celso Emilio Ferreiro.

The list of names could be expanded, and more women are constantly affirming their literary capability. Particularly benefitted is poetry, given the strong resurgence of the genre and its incorporation of important classical elements such as the cantiga, as well as the use of more avant-garde techniques, such as the combination of the visual image with the verbal in the poetic text. Galicia's lyrical renovation has a double orientation, extending simultaneously backward toward established traditions and forward toward the future, in search of innovative composition. Women form part of both tendencies, although they may have taken longer to join the group of writers attempting to break with familiar canons. It would be an important endeavor to analyze whether Galician women writers have remained closer to traditional literary forms because they are women or because they are Galician. That is, given for example the influence of oral creation and popular forms on written texts, one ought to consider whether in the group of writers presented here the relationship can be drawn along gender lines rather than social features such as those deriving from a rural, non-technological
The anthologized poets have many professional activities. Luz Pozo Garza was for several years co-editor of the journal Nordés until it ceased publication. Queizán and Ledo Andiión were closely affiliated with Escrita, an important journal succeeded by Nó. Several women produce Festa da palavra silenciada, a declaredly feminist journal whose fourth issue was dedicated to Xohana Torres. Festa is especially significant in that its goal is to bring women’s writing—both past and present—to the forefront, demanding re-readings and first readings for unrecognized authors. It is logical for these journals to serve as outlets for the appearance of poems by the youngest female poets. Among them is Pilar Pallarés, who now has two published books and began in this manner. Pallarés, one of the youngest of the 'established' names, has begun to write what she terms feminist poetry and received recognition for her achievements through the prestigious Premio Esquío.

Returning the the afore-mentioned group of four—Kruckenberg, Pozo Garza, Torres, Vázquez—one finds even in more recent works a nostalgic tone, a recurring sadness and intimacy such as accompanies a solitary search or loss. All these women appear to be looking for something or someone, a goal which has not yet been realized. Poetic longing is not uncommon, but here the voice’s gender, simultaneously identified with a language that has been the object of efforts to marginalize it, rings out with greater clarity.

An example is Kruckenberg’s Canaval de ouro, with its metaphors of nails, thorns, needles and similar sharp objects fixed in an upright position. While these images can be interpreted as echoing Rosalía's "un-ha vez tiven un cravo/cravado no corazón," they should also be seen as the reiteration of the painful experience of searching for information, the desire to expand
one's knowledge which women have found more difficult to satisfy. Even more so the female writer, who encounters more obstacles and less frequent success.

For her part, Pura Vázquez' longing takes on a metaphysical or mystical character. Although not lacking in pantheistic undertones, her O desacougo has its likely source in Christian tradition, which values the striving to fulfill, comprehend, and achieve certain moral goals. Méndez Ferrín identifies her models as those of Spanish language poets such as Aleixandre. I would add the presence of Gerardo Diego without denying Aleixandrian surrealist features, which she curiously fits into traditional forms such as the sonnet. Again, for Vázquez there is a fusion of the poetic persona with the natural environment, a search through symbols that culminates in a modern doublet structure of random juxtapositions which include references to pain—coitelo, cravar—and immobility. This suggests a perception of the poet's limitations, but not defeat. Much of Galician women's work is a desire suspended, an impulse whose very strength keeps it alive until it finds the path to liberation.

Helena Villar, in No aló de nós, uses her voice in counterpoint with that of husband, creating a dialogue of decidedly existential questioning that echoes the other I while exploring nature as the realm which will ultimately provide self-understanding. In contrast to this direct quest, Pallarés is more consciously controlled: her verses are often the result of a search already completed and analyzed rather than being an odyssey within the poem itself. She has seemed less content than Villar, her disillusion foregrounded to a greater degree, until the latter's most recent book, Rosalía no espello, in which Villar appears no longer afraid to be critical of her condition.
Within the poets' search motif two elements are recurring: silence and resistance. For Torres, strength is derived from the remembrance of friendship and love, in addition to the contemplation of nature and the smallest aspects of reality. Her ability to keep her surroundings in perspective is her link to understanding her own difficulties. Yet frequently the writers do not identify the object of their quests; there is a silence within the discourse which is aware of its ties to other silences, aware of the problems of making itself heard. Such explicitness has concerned Tillie Olsen, whose book Silences tells of what is not written and why. But Olsen does not take up in depth the case of the writer who consciously regards her own discourse, creating a sort of meta-silence. Perhaps Torres comes closest to revealing a relationship between her feelings and her writing, as well as between her writing, censorship, Galician identity, and the social role of women. The poem which most directly expresses this is "A dura maxestade do silencio," from Estaciones ao mar (1980). In contrast, Pozo Garza's search is primarily for love, which she achieves, but is unable to forget the passage of time and tending toward an intimate, existential sadness. Clinging to a few slender supports—in so doing, comparing herself to Rosalía—Pozo Garza seeks rescue from the shipwreck of life. Her comfort lies in knowing that another, also a woman and a poet, had to struggle equally as hard. The focus of the two struggles is on the psychological effect, the personal space which provides security and stability from which to project one's emotions onto the written page. Torres, for her part, strives to define that space, those physical surroundings, giving the impression that for her, control over language gave her control over her reality.

It would be imprecise to stress the negative
features of Galician women's writing, for these poets do manage to overcome obstacles to communication, particularly by listening to their own voices and by establishing dialogues with the Other. Thus, Torres, Pozo Garza, Kruckenberg, and Pallarés often set up a conversational mode which provides the security of an accompanying ti ('you'). This second person has various identities: it may be a lover (real or imaginary), another Galician writer (Luis Seoane, Castelao or Rosalía, for example), or Galicia itself. Through images of strength—the verticality or fixedness of Kruckenberg's sharp objects, the movement forward by Pallarés as she confronts daily life in Galicia and especially in the rigid Compostela, Torres' ability to structure her surroundings, even Pozo Garza's tranquilizing love of music with a belief in its transcendent effects—through these elements the limit of retreat is set. In spite of references to pain, anxiousness at what the future holds, and other circumstances of negative connotation, there is an intimacy which affords a sense of place, calm security, and belonging—a room or place of one's own, to recall Virginia Woolf. Kruckenberg, for example, favors deictics which anchor the voice that inhabits her poetic spaces, even the unidentified ones. Pallarés' eu or 'I' also perceives the immediate context with little distortion, illustrating her proximity to the world rather than a withdrawal. In neither of these authors does this imply a simplistic representation of their surroundings, for in fact they display a tendency toward the abstraction of Galician nature as well as its transferral to an urban setting. The juxtaposition of both worlds is symptomatic of many Galician writers, for whom the resolution of the ancient agricultural/industrial conflict is still fundamental. As a whole, most of the Galician women can be seen as entering into a corporal union with
nature that is reminiscent of that described by Susan Griffin in *Woman and Nature*. Griffin suggests that within, even as, the natural world, women encounter greater freedom of movement and expression and thus can more closely approach the identity or meaning they seek. Once again, one must be cautious with generalizations; in the case of Galician poets, it is not necessary to postulate universal feminine constructs since there has long been an important role afforded the area’s landscape in its literature. Although Rosalía de Castro is undoubtedly a foremost contributor to this tendency, it is also likely that the model was provided by the male dominant Generation of 1898 and subsequently personalized, or regionalized, by the Galician essayists of the Xeración Nós. Among these, Ramón Otero Pedrayo, Florentino L. Cuevillas, Vicente Risco and others have been widely read in Galician circles, and their theories have been well received. Yet one wonders if the observation by the prestigious Unamuno that Galicia’s land with its soft, curving hills was feminine, was not taken too seriously. Even women writers have not seen fit to refute it, but perhaps this is because it ironically gave them an opportunity for self-definition, an identity even the masculine world would not deny them. In this way it would be natural to feel that for a Galician woman there is a heritage which includes the commonality of gender. In other words: if Galicia is female, and to be admired for its femininity, then a woman is akin to this land, belongs to and is part of it.

The above could be seen as a distinct advantage of female writers over male in a region which has been culturally and linguistically torn between Portugal and Castile for centuries. Several women have in fact composed poems specifically about Galician identity or social conditions and it is on these occasions that they most strongly show a sense
of fusion with the land. At the same time, the theme of Galicia leads them to reveal their most basic perspectives, both ideological and psychological. The homeland, as it becomes personalized, becomes not only the you addressed by the poems' I, but is also identified as mother, protectress, and source of support. Superimposed upon that initial image, the one first acquired in childhood, is the contradictory one of exploitation, poverty, and emigration, all of which lead to the prevalent status of women as widows (of the living or the dead) and as persons scorned by outsiders. The negative image is the one acquired through adult experience and imposed upon the earlier one. It is clear that a contradictory condition is in force here.

I suggest that for Galician women writers the patria or fatherland is even more predominantly a matria, term used by a male poet and repeated by other writers, one of whom is Helena Villar. This motherland is a social as well as a political entity which then closely parallels the women's own condition.

Xohana Torres provides a clear picture of the ambiguous circumstances surrounding this relationship between woman and national identity: for her, Galicia's positive connotations of hope, fertility, growth, communication, and intimacy are counterbalanced by those of doubt, death, frustration, distance, and most of all, silent isolation or alienation. Repeatedly, her poetic persona is drawn close to the Galician land only to lose contact. Hers is a process of frustration and renewed temptation, of desire that is experienced but not allowed expression. Only the positive emotion of love, coupled with the belief in the ability to produce -- the poet's own fertile creativity and her capacity to serve as nurturer -- is an adequate forward impulse.
Curiously, Pilar Pallarés provides a close parallel to the links between the telluric, the feminine, and poetic language as elements which form the path to one's identity and thus to continued existence. For her, creation is growth and life, but it can be arrested by the infertility of non-communication—a literally stony silence such as that offered by the Santiago streets through which she wanders. The city walls are at times a sort of prison from which her voice must escape, within which her identity must make room for itself, but they also provide the opportunity to extract a lesson for survival, with the struggle becoming process and the movement buoyed onward.

In the centennial congress commemorating Rosalía de Castro (Santiago de Compostela, 1985), I attempted to study what some of these women had to say about her as a precursor, what features of her writing could be models for subsequent generations of writers. There I found the same tendency to dialogic structure, plus—not unlike masculine poetry—frequent deliberate intertextuality. Some of the contemporary female poets have employed modifications or even direct lifting from Castro's better known verses. What is significant about this is that, until recently (referring to the youngest group of writers), Galician women poets have not rejected the image of Rosalía as a loving and patriotic, yet martyred and suffering, woman. Something like Galicia itself. Not always, of course, for even if not currently known for her political radicalism, Anxeles Penas in "Novas follas de dor pra Rosalía," uses the nineteenth century writer as interlocutor for her presentation of contemporary women's difficulties. Granted, the references to motherhood and war suggest the proximity of a specific historical context, for the Vietnam conflict was a foremost concern at the time of writing; still, the attitude suggests a revision
of the traditional relationship with the sanctified predecessor. As virtually the only female antecedent of today's Galician women poets, Rosalía does stand out. Yet although she herself cited a number of women authors, such as George Sand, Mme. de Staël, and Fernán Caballero, and wrote often about women, today's female writers show more evidence of having read Pablo Neruda, Federico García Lorca, César Vallejo, Pedro Salinas, and other male poets. An exception is a quote from Virginia Woolf which opens Pallarés' *Entre lusco e fusco*, although in the subsequent *Sétima soidade*, her portico citation and the source of the title is Nietzsche. Rather than condemn, this observation seeks to identify the forebears of many Galician women still writing poetry today as frequently male, thus showing that the concept of writing as a woman is not yet definitively established in this area.

However, we must turn to another group of writers, here tentatively termed the "university group" since many of its members are still or have recently been students at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. These writers, most of whom do not yet have books published--exceptions are Xela Arias' *Denuncia do equilibrio*, Ana Romaní's *Palabra de Mar*, and Pilar Cibreiro's *O vasalo da armadura de prata*--, can generally be said to have begun their literary careers in the post-Franco period. Among them are María Xosé Canitrot, Ana Romaní, Ana António Souto, and Cristal. Many of these women, even if not the same age as those discussed above, are in continuous contact with each other and seem to identify with a progressive feminist approach to literary creation and criticism. They are accompanied by a small but competent group of critics, such as Carmen Blanco, Teresa Barro, Pilar García Negro, and Encarnación Otero, and themselves practice criticism of the established Galician women authors. In truth, however, the reversal of
criticism’s tendency as a whole to concentrate on male Galician authors is fairly recent. It received encouragement in 1985, with the Rosalía de Castro centennial. At that time, not coincidentally, the most innovative critical approaches to Castro’s work dealt with her feminism and her nationalism: ironically, and justly, reaffirming her role as precursor of contemporary Galician literature.

New Directions

Galician women writers are now entering a new stage of literary activity, creative and critical. They continue to publish with regularity and are seriously starting to question many realities as presently defined. This does not mean they can or should only be feminists, but rather that often voices being heard are not in dissonance with the movement toward sexual equality. However, both women’s consciousness and that of the Galician identity make for complicated circumstances, interwoven yet not entirely equated. It is too soon to predict the outcome nor, I would venture to say, is it possible without spending considerable time in Galicia itself, for the historical moment is rapidly shaping the writing as well as some of the previous aesthetic concerns of the culture. A number of authors are being reformed by this momentum, as is the criticism which analyzes their intentions. What is true, however, is that to be involved with Galician reality, regardless of gender, is an exciting experience.

To conclude on a further positive note, I would emphasize that May 17, O día das letras galegas for 1987, was dedicated to Francisca Herrera Garrido—the only woman writer to receive this honor since Rosalía de Castro, the first recipient, when
commemoration began in 1963. Two women in twenty four years is a gross imbalance, yet perhaps this most recent choice indicates that women’s voices have begun to make themselves heard more clearly, and that the project of journals such as Festa da palavra silenciada is worthwhile. In Herrera Garrido, moreover, recognition is made not only of a poet but also of a novelist. Future criticism will undoubtedly address the prose production of Galician women writers, individually and as a group. The discoveries promise to be significant.

Final Note

One final observation about this anthology: undoubtedly readers will note variations in style and may feel that differences in experience or expertise separate some poets from the rest. I believe this is an important feature of the book, evidence that these women are involved in a search for identity that leads them along diverse paths. Personal preferences have led to the inclusion of several poems concerning the writer’s voice, the foremother Rosalía de Castro, and Galicia, and these motifs will serve as points of departure for future analyses. If the ‘Golden Age’ of Galician poetry is truly in progress, we must remember what it means to be a woman writing poetry at this time; finally there are enough writers of this gender to allow the comparison to be made.

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