PURDUE UNIVERSITY

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture
ISSN 1481-4374
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

Volume 13 (2011) Issue 5 Article 7

Landscape in Irish and Iberian Galician Poetry by Women Authors

Manuela Palacios González
University of Santiago de Compostela

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb

Part of the Comparative Literature Commons, and the Critical and Cultural Studies Commons

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, Purdue University Press selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Recommended Citation

Palacios González, Manuela. "Landscape in Irish and Iberian Galician Poetry by Women Authors." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 13.5 (2011): <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1905>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

PURDUE UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY PRESS <http://www.thepress.purdue.edu>

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>
Purdue University Press ©Purdue University

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series.* Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 13 Issue 5 (December 2011) Article 7
Manuela Palacios González,
"Landscape in Irish and Iberian Galician Poetry by Women Authors"
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss5/7>

Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 13.5 (2011)**
Special issue ***New Trends in Iberian Galician Comparative Literature.***
Ed. María Teresa Vilariño Picos and Anxo Abuín González
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss5/>

Abstract: In her article "Landscape in Irish and Iberian Galician Poetry by Women Authors" Manuela Palacios González reflects on the similarities between Irish and Galician women poets with regard to their treatment of landscape. Although Ireland and Galicia have been construed as green, fertile Arcadias, contemporary Irish and Galician women poets have engaged in a radical revision of this anachronistic stereotype. Women poets of these two communities suggest in their works that there is more than a chronological coincidence between a growing ecological awareness and the increased presence of women writers in the last thirty years. Both ecocriticism and ecofeminist literary practice provide the tools for Palacios González's analysis and she aims at identifying the role of gender in the poets' rapport with nature. Of particular relevance are questions about the choice between an instrumental or a disinterested vision of nature and the emotions of belonging and alienation evoked alongside her enquiry into the possibility of an alternative bond between women and nature.

Manuela PALACIOS GONZÁLEZ

Landscape in Irish and Iberian Galician Poetry by Women Authors

One of the features most frequently resorted to in order to highlight the similarities between Spanish Galicia and Ireland has been their landscape. In the Galician cultural sphere, the nationalist minded intellectuals of the generation Nós struggled to assert the geographical likeness of both regions during the first decades of the twentieth century. Their goal was to elaborate on the brotherhood of the peoples of the European Atlantic shores who allegedly share Celtic bonds (on generation Nós and Galician national identity see, e.g., Flitter). Parallel to the reinforcement of similarities between Galicia and Ireland ran the project to signal the differences between Galicia, on the one hand, and Castille and the Mediterranean culture on the other, thus drawing some essential traits of the Galician national identity (see, e.g., Risco Agüero).

The Galician Celtic imaginary may not have an irrefutable historical basis, but it has been construed as Celtic through the cultural practices of generations of writers and intellectuals. As for the myths which bind Galicia and Ireland, one must highlight the importance of the medieval compilation of texts about the invasions of Ireland, *Lebor Gabála Érenn* according to which Breogan (also spelled Bregan) was a mythical king of Brigantia (identified by many sources as a city in Galicia) whose great-grandchildren (the sons of Mil) invaded Ireland, defeated the local tribes, and took Tara, the capital city. This myth about the Milesians has marked much of the common cultural ground between Irish and Galician literature in the last two centuries. In fact, the poem "The Mystery," considered to be the first one written in Ireland, has been ascribed to Amergin, one of the sons of Mil. If Irish poetry starts, or so tradition claims, with this poem about nature, knowledge and power, thus conveying an anthropocentric purpose to dominate and exploit the natural environment, another early Irish poem, "Invocation to Ireland," also attributed to Amergin, elaborates on nature, fertility, power, and national identity similarly and as being mutually concomitant: the fertility of the natural environment has a direct correspondence in the abundance of tribes and their capacity to dominate other nations. As Anne-Marie Thiesse affirms, not without some irony, a "typical" landscape is part of the symbolic and material elements which a nation, which aspires to be recognised as such, must exhibit (14).

The above references to Amergin's poems have the purpose of showing that Irish poetic tradition is deeply rooted in the natural environment, although parallel to the invocation of nature's beauty and fertility runs its instrumental use, which has to do with knowledge, domination, and utility. Galician literary tradition also evinces a political appropriation of landscape. The question arises, then, about the way nature is re-presented nowadays in Irish and Galician literature and, in particular, in the poetry written by women. I would not like to give the impression that I see a "natural" association between woman and landscape, for this would perpetuate the binarism which has traditionally identified woman with nature and man with culture. Nevertheless, I adhere to those ecofeminist positions which denounce the exploitation of both women and nature by patriarchal interests (see, e.g., King 19-20). The main reason for my concern with the role played by nature in the poetry of Irish and Galician women writers is owing to the concurrence of several relatively recent factors: the growing ecological awareness throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century, the unprecedented emergence of numerous women writers in Galicia and Ireland during the same period, the progressive development of ecofeminist literature, and the parallel practice of a literary ecocriticism which is attentive to how literature negotiates the relationship between society and nature.

In order to implement an ecocritical analysis of contemporary poetry by Irish and Galician women writers, I need to see what type of nature is construed in this new poetry and whether this nature is conceived from an instrumental or disinterested perspective. What are the situations that favour the contact of the poetic voice with nature? Does nature trigger in the poetic voice a sense of belonging or of alienation? Is nature a blank space where we inscribe our beliefs or are we ready to listen to it and learn from it? In those cases where we identify the poetic voice or the observer as a woman, what type of woman is she? Are certain natural spaces favourable or hostile to a woman's participation in them? Is there a parallel interrogation both of stereotypical femininity and of anachronistic configurations of nature? Finally, has contemporary poetry by Irish and Galician women writers an

ecofeminist import? The above questions will be the guidelines of the following analysis, even though the Irish and Galician poets under discussion constitute a rather heterogeneous group and one cannot expect to find a single answer that will apply equally to all of these women writers.

Both Ireland and Galicia share an agricultural economic basis which, in past crises, forced their population to emigrate and which is now undergoing a dramatic transformation. The artificers of Celtic landscape in twentieth-century Irish and Galician literature — William Butler Yeats and Ramón Otero Pedrayo respectively, to mention just two of the most influential writers — often recreate rural spaces in a nostalgic and picturesque way. Their idealized, romantic perceptions of landscape are informed by the ideals of nationalism, which locates the national essence in the rural world although this political discourse is most likely to be produced by members of the urban middle class. Their bucolic representations seem to forge an obstinate discourse of permanence and belonging in the face of evident signals of change and estrangement. Actually, the political appropriations for the national cause that we find in these writers' perception of the land contravene ecocritical claims about the respect for the alterity and autonomous agency of nature. Besides, the prodigal Arcadia that results from many canonical representations purposefully ignores the hardship of labour conditions, the conflicts within the social hierarchy and the role of women in the shaping of the landscape.

I postulate that contemporary Irish and Galician women poets are currently challenging this picturesque rendering of the rural world. For example, Eavan Boland, an Irish poet who enjoys a wide recognition in Ireland and has achieved considerable international prominence, is responsible for a stimulating debate about the position of women in Irish poetic tradition. Interestingly enough, her objections to traditional representations of women in the poetry of her country have at one time been related to the figure of the peasant woman and the failure of most former poetry to deal with her challenging complexity. In Boland's poem "The Achill Woman" the poetic persona identifies herself with a student at Trinity College in a straightforward autobiographical gesture which acknowledges the class and cultural differences between herself and the peasant woman. This encounter with the "other" provokes the speaker's sudden realization that literary tradition has been blind to this woman's life and history: "and took down my book and opened it / and failed to comprehend / the harmonies of servitude, / the grace music gives to flattery / and language borrows from ambition" (Coulter, Corcoran, Boland 73). I suggest that the first step in the critique of the picturesque is the observer's awareness of her estrangement from the place and the people she is representing, rather than pretending that there is no such gap or that this fracture is of no consequence. This apprehension of difference need not result in alienation, for there remains the possibility of being "another," of recognising the differences and the similarities in our relationship with the environment (Murphy 23). Boland takes issue with Irish poetic tradition which, in its attempt to construe the nation, has turned the female figure into a sign, into a piece of rhetoric, while at the same time failing to record "the anguish and power of that woman's gesture on Achill, with its suggestive hinterland of pain" (Coulter, Corcoran, Boland 76).

In the attention Boland pays to the woman's poor clothes and her hands "blushing with cold" (Coulter, Corcoran, Boland 73), Boland shows her concern with social deprivation, while, as Stephen Copley and Peter Garside maintain, "the Picturesque translates the political and the social into the decorative" (6). As opposed to the effacement of politics and history implemented by the picturesque, Boland proposes that poetry should engage in the analysis of defeat and loss: "The coffin ships, the soup queues, those desperate villagers at the shoreline" (Coulter, Corcoran, Boland 77). The literary representation of bucolic places has most often turned rural spaces into the opposite of what human life really is, with its privations and labours. Suzanne Saïd, for instance, sees the bucolic places in the Greek and Latin tradition as a "utopia" both in the sense of *ou-topos* (place of nowhere) and *eu-topos* (place of happiness) (26-27). For Saïd, the bucolic landscape is an artificial paradise, a sweet retreat which opposes itself not just to the city but also to the peasants' work. In fact, the only hardship she observes in classical bucolic poetry is that about the difficulties of poetic creation. Boland is especially critical with the figure of the "peasant poet" and makes Yeats partly responsible for the promotion of this stereotype. When discussing her encounter with Padraic Column, she regrets his failure to record the "barbaric griefs of the nineteenth century": "All that heritage which should have been his — rage robbed of language, suffering denied its dignity — somehow eluded him" (83). Like women, peasants

had been oversimplified and falsified by the poetic tradition. Therefore, like women poets, the "peasant poet" should seize the opportunity to shift from the position of rhetorical image to that of author. They all should take advantage of the authority and power that go with authorship to challenge the traditional mystifications of femininity and peasantry. The problem with Padraic Column, according to Boland, was that: "he wrote Irish poetry as if he were still the object of it. He wrote with the passivity and simplification of his own reflection looking back at him from poems, plays and novels in which the so-called Irish peasant was a son of the earth, a cipher of the national cause" (84).

We may conclude that Boland's contribution to the critique of the picturesque contains several guidelines that are of import to ecofeminist theory and practice. To start with, she inscribes the figure of the female peasant in the representation of the rural landscape, thus making her experience visible, but instead of presenting her as a coquettish shepherdess — as much bucolic poetry does — Boland's Achill woman exposes the privations of the rural world and the inequalities within Irish society. Next, Boland turns this peasant woman into the force that provokes a critique of former literary tradition so, instead of being a mere object of representation, this female figure becomes a challenge to the ideological interests behind much literary discourse. With her dignified — not the least folkloric — presence, the Achill woman denounces how literature as an institution has of old taken sides with other dominant discourses that oppress, manipulate and obliterate the disempowered classes. Finally, in consonance with the claims of ecofeminism, Boland establishes a parallel between women and the peasantry with regard to the falsification that literature has made of their experience — paradoxically enough sometimes for the benefit of discourses on national liberation — and urges both groups to produce their own discourses and articulate their own experiences.

Boland's insistence on experience and reality actually establishes an opposition not just with the artificiality of literary conventions but also with extreme postmodern views that reduce the world to discourse. Of course, the pursuit of a representation of reality in the literary text that is not mediated by our cultural patterns is a chimera — an illusion not unlike the pastoral conventions. This tension between standpoint claims like Boland's — her belief that members of an oppressed group can and should produce alternative discourses about their experience — and the idea that nature may be a discursive product has been aptly negotiated by critics like N. Katherine Hayles, with her notion of "constrained constructivism," a view that acknowledges the constraints that nature imposes on any epistemological effort (99) and by Sue Ellen Campbell, who suggests that we could include nature as one of those forces outside ourselves which actually construct us (209). A considerable number of ecocritics refuse to restrict the role of nature to that of object of our attention, whether for protection or exploitation, and prefer to define the human and non-human relationship as one between mutually speaking subjects (see Donovan 77).

Galician women poets also elaborate on the experiential, creative and human aspects of their relationship with landscape. In fact, many of them grew up in rural areas and therefore have a first-hand acquaintance with life in the country. In many cases, their rural experience was limited to the period of childhood, while subsequent school and work drove them away to the city. Their poetic portrayal of the rural space does not seem to rise merely out of nostalgia but of the need to construe their subjectivity and to understand the role of country life in their identity. These memories of childhood do not present an Edenic garden but show a deep awareness of the satisfactions and the difficulties, the fulfilment and the privation of life and work in rural areas. The fact that their account of the rural experience is an autobiographical first-person one reduces the distance between the subject and the object of representation that we found, for instance, in writers like Eavan Boland. Nevertheless, these Galician women poets tend to acknowledge the presence of many other gulfs that affect their vision: language, access to education, abandonment of agricultural work, urban experience, etc. They problematize the epistemic privilege, i.e. the belief that their first-hand experience may provide them with the critical knowledge to understand their oppression. Their protagonists are not triumphant ecofeminist heroines and, rather than epiphanies, what they experience is the hardship in the articulation of their values. In spite of the supposed privileges that they now enjoy, these poets often attempt to challenge the logic of inferiorization that was imposed on them as children: the fact that living in the country and speaking Galician made them inferior to those who lived in cities and spoke Spanish. Much poetry by contemporary women, then, has engaged

in a valorization of a previously denigrated identity.

Luz Pichel is a Galician poet who has lived in Madrid for over thirty years. She has written a considerable part of her poetry in Spanish and has had her work published by institutions from all over Spain. Her collection of poems *La marca de los potros* (2004) presents much of what was her own rural experience as a child in a tiny Galician village. Pichel's poems register the fears, dangers, frustrations, conflicts, fantasies and satisfactions that peasants derive from their contact with nature. She is perceptive to the ways in which people shape landscapes with their fences and to the conflicts over land property that these divisions bring about: "To recognize the limits of our own lands / to accept them without quarrelling with the neighbour" (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine) ("Reconocer los límites de las propias tierras, / Aceptarlos sin pelear con el vecino" (2 14). These fences are barriers that only boys are allowed to transgress as the poetic persona cruelly expresses in what constitutes one of the first lessons about gender difference imparted during childhood: "I'll sink you like this / I'll sink your golden locks in the foul water of / the reservoir ... // There it goes! A lesson to stop you from jumping over the fences before I do / 'cause I'm older and stronger than you / That's what you get for being so clever" ("Así te hundiré. / Te hundiré los rizos dorados en el agua asquerosita de / la alberca ..." ("Ale! Para que aprendas a no saltar vallados antes que yo, / que soy mayor que tú y te puedo. / Por lista" (43 61). Pichel describes that agricultural work is easily ruined by multiple hostile forces and dangerous storms put the peasant's life at risk. Many are the dangers and the fears and the temptation is strong to take refuge in discourses about the beauty of nature so as to obliterate the feelings of loss and impotence. Thus, economic relations, the material conditions of production, the peasants' commerce with their products become now dignified topics for poetry because, according to Linda Vance, the responsible cooperation with the land, even if it is in economic terms, is one of the objectives of ecofeminism (137). The relationship with the land is not merely through perception with an active onlooker and a passive object of the observation. Human and non-human elements have a reality of their own to communicate. Their relationship is dialogical. In fact, the land reacts to the peasants' aggression by leaving its mark on their bodies. Childhood is not a time of wild freedom away from adult responsibilities, but a period of apprenticeship with certain obligations and many Galician women poets refer to their early experience of watching over the grazing cows, few rewards, and many punishments.

Galicia has shared with Ireland this agricultural economy that, at moments of crisis, has forced millions of people to emigration. Pichel expresses her gratitude to her brother because he granted her access to education with the money he sent home from the U.S. In her texts, the poet relates her initiation to writing with her expectations about her brother's presents from foreign lands: "Dear brother / if when you arrive in the Americas / you send me a letter with a pen case inside / I'll tell you what I was writing yesterday on the lamp glass / Won't you cry?" ("Hermanito, si cuando llegues a Las Américas / me mandas una carta con un estuche dentro, / te diré lo que estuve escribiendo ayer en los cristales del farol. / ¿Tú no vas a llorar?" [23 38]). Practitioners of pastoral poetry often make use of the figure of the traveller or stranger as the poetic persona who contemplates the bucolic landscape in a clear contrast with the villagers' domesticity, as if the latter did not want to leave their place and go elsewhere (Oliveira da Silva McNeill 247). Pichel, however, records in her writings the peasants' desire to escape and their fantasies about a more prosperous life in other lands.

Besides this type of poetry committed to the actual experience of the rural world and its concomitant revision of bucolic stereotypes in literary tradition, there is both in Ireland and in Galicia another kind of poetry which is concerned with the struggle of the individual in present-day metropolitan spaces and one wonders whether there is room for nature in these urban poems. In the city, nature slips through narrow margins and fissures and, more often than not, we only see its reflection on puddles and panes of glass. Multiple obstacles hinder our direct contemplation of nature but, nonetheless, it is extremely important in the city dwellers' life and imagination, as we gather from the poetry by Paula Meehan. Her collection *The Man Who Was Marked by Winter* (1991) contains numerous poems which corroborate the magic and balsamic function of natural elements in the context of a damaged and violent urban space. We need to be cautious, however, about the danger of a strained emphasis on the squalor of the city, since this could again lead us to identify the rural Ireland with the only authentic one, while metropolitan spaces might then be seen as perversions of

the true national spirit. In Meehan's verse, nature fits in our cupped hands, like the moon reflected on the water that the speaker carries through the streets like an offering in "Her Dream." Nature may also be an accomplice of the girl who ventures into the dark, solitary streets, thus intruding on a public space which is hostile to women and reserved only to men, as in "Buying Winkles," where the moon lights up the way for the girl through the gap left by the high buildings. This poem illustrates the ecofeminist claim that women should struggle to recuperate the night and it evinces the spatial politics that divide the city into public and private spaces along gender lines. In many poems, one cannot even glimpse the line of sky between the buildings, so the moon and the stars can only be contemplated through their reflection on the windowpanes or in the puddles. We cannot help being surprised at the speaker's resignation to the loss of direct contact with nature, to the extent that she seems more at ease with the simulacrum than with the real thing. This bears resemblance to Jean Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum (2) — an identical copy without an original — and illustrates the postmodern perception of nature in the city: "You ask me which I prefer — / the stars themselves or their mirror / image on the puddles of our path / home" ("Home by Starlight" 46).

In Meehan's poetry about the urban condition there is a domesticated nature which, though tended with love, has been removed from its original setting in order to introduce its beauty in people's homes. There abound vases with flowers, plant pots and small gardens in suburban developments. These are natural elements which the poems usually associate with women, perhaps for the reason adduced by Irish writer Catherine Dunne, speaking of her novel *In the Beginning* (1977): "God might make all the trees and I had Rose watering the plants" (Dunne qtd. in Pérez Vides 238). Woman is thus inscribed in the ethics of care and affection which essentialist feminists want to privilege in contrast with liberal and socialist feminist tendencies which consider this to be a patriarchal ruse to keep women away from participating in the public sphere. Besides this longed for nature in the cityscape, which is nevertheless fragmented, dwarfed and displaced, there is another natural protagonist with both a physical and symbolic relevance, the river Liffey, which divides Dublin into two areas of different social consideration. In the harbor where it ends, the Liffey is an important transport and commercial route, but in Meehan's poetry it also becomes a living being with a heart that pumps its water out to the sea. In the poem "The Pattern," the river becomes, above all other considerations, an instrument for the daughter to daydream about her escape from the restrictive patriarchal patterns which her mother dictates: "I'd watch / the Liffey for hours pulsing to the sea / and the coming and going of ships, / certain that one day it would carry me / to Zanzibar, Bombay, the Land of the Ethiops" (19).

As for other symbolic renditions of this river, we cannot ignore James Joyce's personification of the Liffey as Anna Livia Plurabelle, a contribution to the long tradition of feminine icons which, according to Ailbhe Smyth, are appropriated by dominant culture to signify almost anything but woman. Interestingly enough, Dublin is also the urban space for a Galician collection of poems, *As Arpas de Iwerddon* (Iwerddon's Harps) (2005) by Luz Pozo Garza, a book written on the occasion of the poet's visits to her daughter's newly formed family in Ireland. Pozo Garza's poems aspire to the fusion of the two Celtic communities, the Galician and the Irish, and they draw extensively on *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, the Book of Invasions which narrates the invasion of Ireland by the Milesians. Can this Celtic subject matter be relevant to modern city life? Olivia Rodríguez-González maintains that the poetic voice in Pozo Garza's texts often interprets everyday life in terms of the Celtic myths of literary tradition, thus furnishing the contemporary world with an oneiric and mystical dimension (10). Certain natural elements become recurrent emblems throughout the collection: birds, light, sleet, the camellia, the position of planets and stars. In "Trinity College," the rain, a symbol of durability in time and continuity in space, connects the university rector, who transcribes the pages of the *Book of Kells*, with the students drinking beer in the bar. In "St. Stephen's Green," the wind brings nostalgic messages from the speaker's homeland, Galicia, while the Dublin park triggers memories of another park in Vigo, Castrelos, where the poet lived some of her happiest moments with her beloved. The camellia, so common in Galician parks and gardens, to the extent of becoming an emblem for the nation in Pozo Garza's verse, is now planted in Irish soil: "But this time you carried a white camellia in the being / of our homeland / to plant it in the delicate cold of that boreal light / which fascinates us" ("mais agora traías unha camelia branca no ser / da nosa patria / para plantar no frío delicado desa

luz boreal / que nos fascina" ["As arpas de Iwerddon" 46]).

Bínn Eadair's garden — the family house garden in Dublin — with its rhododendrons is the appropriate place for the speaker to sit and read Yeats's *The Celtic Twilight* and Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, texts that in their turn refer to other tropes of nature, other flowers in literary tradition. Pozo Garza also celebrates in "Ritmos" other seemingly more humble plants like ferns, which do not share the mystical lineage of the rose but are dignified and tenacious. Pozo Garza is exceedingly attentive to all the natural elements in the city of Dublin and invests them with a mystical transcendence which has the double and contradictory effect of, on the one hand, augmenting their cultural significance by inscribing them in a literary and a national discourse while, on the other hand, detracting attention from their immanent natural condition. This symbolic appropriation of nature intends to fertilize the present with the historical and mythical substratum of the past, to enrich the national discourse by establishing bonds of friendship with other nations although, from an ecocritical perspective, the risk is making of nature an icon which, very much like the feminine icon, stands for anything else but itself.

Perhaps, it is the doom of nature in the city to have its presence restricted to a trope, a figure which encodes a natural space that has been lost, as in *Moda galega* (2002), by María Reimóndez, where the shop windows, rather than the trees, mark the seasons. The new generations of women writers are, for the first time in Galician poetic tradition, conscious of their problematic relationship with nature and of perverse human interference. Thus María do Cebreiro Rábade Villar — in her publications, the poet uses her first name "María do Cebreiro" — states: "I shall not speak about the sea. It is not possible any more" ("Non falarei do mar. Xa non se pode" [15]). This line has a special significance for the Galician reader who is reminded of the "Prestige crisis" — the oil slick pollution that resulted from the sinking of the oil tanker Prestige on the Galician coast in 2002. At that time, male and a conspicuously abundant number of female poets contributed with their poems to the growing awareness about the need for a social change. This tendency has become, according to María Xesús Nogueira, a frequent characteristic of the poetry of the last two decades: the production of collective books with a social motivation such as environmental crises, international conflicts, domestic violence, etc. The oil slick was not, unfortunately, the last environmental catastrophe in Galicia. In the summer of 2006 numerous fires burnt the Galician forests. Although this is a recurrent drama every summer, in 2006 it became a serious emergency as the fires reached suburban areas. Most of these fires were actually provoked by people who took advantage of severe climate conditions of drought and wind, but an irresponsible forest policy may also lie at the heart of the problem. Contrary to the principle of biological diversity, people have been allowed and encouraged to plant almost exclusively eucalyptus and pine trees for the benefit of the paper and timber industries. This monoculture has transformed the landscape with the additional risk that these species burn more easily and rapidly than former, local tree varieties like oak or chestnut. Galician women poets have been quick to register and denounce this environmental impoverishment and Antía Otero warned in 2003: "As a child / I used to watch the tides from my window. / Nowadays they have planted eucalyptuses" ("De nena / asexaba mareas desde a fiestra. / Hoxe plantaron eucaliptos" [55]). And other poets such as Marilar Aleixandre write against the fires: "why fire conspiring with the wind / you unwrite in the forest / my voice you howl without pity" ("por que lume conspirando co vento / desescribes no monte / a miña voz ouleas sen piedade" [29]) and Rábade Villar asks: "The eucalyptuses / which were burning like ships / in somebody else's sea. / How long have they been here? / Who cares about them?" ("Os eucaliptos / Que ardían coma naves / nun mar de outro. / Canto levan aquí? / A quen lle importan?" [47]).

Irish poet Biddy Jenkinson also denounces those recent transformations in the landscape which have brought about the destruction of landscape. She links poetic inspiration with the poet's rapport with nature and its related myths: "Poetic inspiration … should rise in a holy well where it will be whisked by the tail fins of brown trout, who keep the gravel untarnished, who face always into the pulse of the water, and who eat only rowan-berries" (404). She claims, however, that much of the landscape which has of old inspired Irish poets has been transformed so radically and deteriorated that this mystical and productive union with the land is no longer possible. Progress, the advance of civilization, and the European Union agricultural and farming policies have had, according to Jenkinson, perverse consequences: "Progress, heralded by the tour bus, advanced through the valley

in the form of EEC-subsidised sheep and high barbed-wire fences. Intensive sheep-farming has turned the brook into a brown, algae-clogged rivulet where no trout can stir" (405). There is, however, an ironic slant in Jenkinson's memories of herself as a young poet and her romantic search for inspiration in nature. The adult poet mocks the idealized, naïve perception that the young poet has of her natural surroundings and of herself: "it was the proper well for a young naturalist-poet, and its smooth surface would reflect long, dipping hair (but blur pimples), while passing clouds would conjure shadowy lovers among the water spiders" (405). Jenkinson is conscious that the people's names and the toponymy would trigger in the young poet illusions of "anachronistic chivalry." The epic accounts of Irish resistance to the English invasion, which have inspired so much poetry, may now be of questionable use for the contemporary Irish poet who is, herself, the descendant of those English invaders: "her ancestors had been Sassenachs, much to her disgust" (405). And yet, in spite of the distance between the adult mature voice and the young poet's inexperience, and in spite of the latter's illusive idealization of the landscape, Jenkinson vindicates the role of fantasy in the making of a poet and turns to the figure of the Hag who lies beneath the ground to express her conviction that present-day writers should draw their poetic inspiration from that "vitality under the heather crust" (408).

In conclusion, if literary tradition of Celtic inspiration still provides an influential model for the close contact between humans and nature, one perceives that, contrary to ancient appropriations of nature to obtain knowledge and power, contemporary poets like Pozo Garza and Jenkinson prefer to stress the amorous fusion of communities with a common cultural stock and aspire to a spiritual union with nature that will, in turn, fertilize their poetry. Alongside this, gender consciousness is conspicuous in recent poetry about nature: from Boland's interrogation of literary falsifications of women and peasant life to Galician women's especially active participation in poetry collections for the defence of the environment. Of particular notice is also the younger poets' production of a new poetic discourse which incorporates not just the denunciation of aggressions to the landscape but also the new ecologically minded practices. On a different level, there persists in some poets the appropriation of nature for the elaboration of national identity, which proves that this topic is far from resolved and that the bond between land and nation is a deeply rooted and a constantly renewed discourse. Such an instrumental approach to nature to reinforce the feeling of belonging is, however, interrogated by writers like Pichel who engage in a critique of the picturesque and expose the alienating economic and social structures of the rural world.

Works Cited

Aleixandre, Marilar. *Desmentindo a primavera*. Vigo: Xerais, 2003.
Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulations*. Trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.
Coulter, Carol, Clodagh Corcoran, and Eavan Boland. *A Dozen Lips*. Dublin: Attic P, 1994.
Campbell, Sue Ellen. "The Land and language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Poststructuralism Meet." *Western American Literature* 24 (1989): 199-211.
Copley, Stephen, and Peter Garside, eds. *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
Rábade Villar, María do Cebreiro. *Os hemisferios*. Vigo: Galaxia, 2006.
Donovan, Josephine. "Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Reading the Orange." *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Ed. Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1998. 74-96.
Flitter, Derek. "Icons and Imperatives in the Construction of Galician Identity: The 'Xeración Nós'." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 36.3 (2000): 296-309.
Hayles, N. Katherine. "Searching for Common Ground." *Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction*. Ed. Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease. Washington: Island P, 1995. 98-104.
Jenkinson, Biddy. "The Destruction of Poetic Habitat." *The Southern Review* 31.3 (1995): 404-08.
King, Ynestra. "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Ed. Judith Plant. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989. 18-28.
Meehan, Paula. *The Man Who Was Marked by Winter*. Loughcrew: The Gallery P, 1991.
Murphy, Patrick D. *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1995.
Nogueira Pereira, María Xesús. "Palabras de tierra para detener la marea. El paisaje en las poetas gallegas." *Palabras extremas. Escritoras gallegas e irlandesas de hoy*. Ed. Manuela Palacios González and Helena González Fernández. A Coruña: Netbiblo, 2008. 3-13.
Oliveira da Silva McNeill, Patricia. "'Heimlich' and 'unheimlich': Landscape in the Post-Symbolist Poems of W.B. Yeats and Fernando Pessoa." *Irish Landscapes*. Ed. José Francisco Fernández Sánchez and María Elena Jaime de Pablos. Almería: U of Almería, 2003. 103-09.
Otero, Antía. *O son da xordeira*. A Coruña: Espiral Maior, 2003.
Pérez Vides, Auxiliadora. "Literary Insights Into Contemporary Ireland: An Interview with Catherine Dunne." *Atlantis* 24.2 (2002): 231-43.

Pichel, Luz. *La marca de los potros*. Huelva: U de Huelva, 2004.
Pozo Garza, Luz. *As arpas de Iwerddon*. Ourense: Linteo, 2005.
Reimóndez, María. *Moda galega*. Santiago: Positivas, 2002.
Risco Agüero, Vincente Martínez. "A teleoloxía do nacionalismo galego." 1920. *Teoría do nacionalismo galego*. Ed. Xusto Beramendi. Santiago de Compostela: Sotelo Blanco, 2000. 28-45.
Rodríguez González, Olivia. "Introdución." *As arpas de Iwerddon*. By Luz Pozo Garza. Ourense: Linteo, 2005. 9-38.
Saïd, Suzanne. "Le Paysage des idylles bucoliques." *Les Enjeux du paysage*. Ed. Michel Collot. Brussels: OUSIA, 1997. 13-31.
Smyth, Ailbhe. "The Floozie in the Jacuzzi." *The Irish Review* 6 (1989): 7-24.
Thiesse, Anne-Marie. *La création des identités nationales. Europe XVIIIe-XXe siècle*. Paris: Seuil, 1999.
Vance, Linda. "Ecofeminism and the Politics of Reality." *Ecofeminism, Women, Animals, Nature*. Ed. Greta Gaard. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993. 118-45.

Author's profile: Manuela Palacios González teaches English philology at the University of Santiago de Compostela. Her interests in research include gender studies, translation, and connections between literature and the visual arts. In addition to numerous articles in English, Spanish, and Spanish Galician, Palacios González published the collected volumes *Pluriversos. Seis poetas irlandesas de hoxe* (Ed. and trans. Manuela Palacios González and Arturo Casas, 2003), *Palabras Extremas. Escritoras Gallegas e Irlandesas de Hoy* (Ed. Manuela Palacios González and Helena González Fernández, 2008), *Writing Bonds: Irish and Galician Women Poets* (Ed. Manuela Palacios González and Laura Lojo, 2009), *Creation, Publishing, and Criticism: The Advance of Women's Writing* (Ed. María Xesús Nogueira, Laura Lojo, and Manuela Palacios González, 2010), and *To the Winds Our Sails: Irish Writers Translate Galician Poetry* (Ed. Mary O'Donnell and Manuela Palacios González, 2010). E-mail: <manuela.palacios@usc.es>