

Modes of Representation in Galician Visual Poetry

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Visual poetry in Galicia had a plural and discontinuous existence in the twentieth century.¹ Its development in Galicia follows national (Spanish) and international artistic practices, while also engaging in the configuration of a local, national, and transnational Galician identity. The practice of different styles of visual poetry shows a rich line of creativity, especially in the last four decades. Their approaches coincide with socio-cultural and economic changes in Spain, such as the end of the dictatorship in 1975, the consequent normalization of the Galician language, and more recently the progressive influence of globalization. This essay considers how current Galician visual poets reconceptualize these issues in the context of an international cultural and visual aesthetics.²

The Rise of Visual Poetry

The increasingly technological world we live in facilitates the convergence of different cultures—oral, printed, visual, digital. As part of this cultural and artistic blend, which affects the way we interact with the word and the world, interartistic practices such as visual poetry are reemerging. These other textualities are one of the most significant artistic marks of our times, but they did not arise in a cultural vacuum; they form part of a historical antimechanistic approach to art, which in the twentieth century found expression through the spirit of the avant-gardes.³

When studying intermedia poetic practices such as visual poetry, we have to take into consideration that while verbal poetry, the dominant poetic genre in the printed age, requires a monolinear regime of reading (a sequential syntax, one typeface), visual poetry requires a synaesthetic reading, which means that there is a simultaneous activation of several modes—visual, audial, verbal—to decode the poem. This active reading process has formal and thematic implications, which I address in this essay. Also note

that manneristic and hybrid styles emerge in periods of social unrest in which more than one scale of values prevails (Tsur). The recent popularity of this genre, in Galicia and elsewhere, is in part due to a technocultural shift. The current visual and technological culture is closing gaps in space and time; but, ironically, the speed at which we receive new information does not correspond to the time we need to digest it. The resulting anxiety of communication abandons traditional verbal, linear, and teleological poetry styles in favor of mixed modes where the visual is enhanced. In this way, the concept of generational poetic groups is not linked to a specific ideology or identity, as it was in the debates among Galician poetic groups of the 1980s and 1990s.⁴

In sociohistorical terms this new creative path reveals a shift away from a simple correlation of (linguistic and political) identity, nationality, and territory and toward more flexible, globalized, and postnational forms of identity. Galician poetry provides a microcosmic example of this shift: from the linear, verbal poetry that is intrinsically connected with the emergence and development of cultural nationalism to the intermedia forms of visual poetry that problematize those correlations. The assumption that verbal language is the chief vehicle for expression is questioned in this shift. Verbal poetry, closely identified with the survival of the nation, in the new, post-national context becomes a marginal element. This change does not mean that verbal language is not important or that it must be reduced to just one or two words in a poem. The context in which visual poets work today enhances first the visual aspect of a verbal language (and of other languages as well) and then the process of articulation. This perceptive mode of thinking is multilingual, more inclusive and complex since it activates several parts of our brain.

Galician Visual Poetry: A Brief History

The history of Galician visual poetry provides a surprising counternarrative to the historical image of Galicia in the last centuries, as an isolated region poorly industrialized and developed, seen by both central and local eyes as a diminutive other. Galician visual poets today, like their peers in the rest of the world, are multifaceted. Some multimedia artists who work in cultural and artistic spaces of constant renegotiation and challenge can work in and out of the conventional artistic scene. Galician poets have access to the same information and media technologies that other artists do. They move, more

than ever before, in an interdisciplinary world where the juxtaposition of images, words, sound, and performance is an essential part of the poetic mode. This artistic environment contrasts with the prevailing narrative of historical marginalization and cultural convention. But visual poetic practices in Galicia have a long history. Pattern poems can be traced back to medieval times, when Galician-Portuguese was the language of poetry and culture in the Peninsula. Some of the first examples of visual and verbal artifices (such as acrostics and labyrinths) were created by and in the court of Alfonso X of Castile; they followed the techniques of the times. In the twentieth century, visual poetry in Galicia reemerged in the context of the international avant-gardes.

The writer and artist Daniel Alfonso R. Castelao (1886–1950), in *Cousas da vida* (“Snippets of Life”) and *Cincuenta homes por dez réas* (“Fifty Men for Ten réas”), was a pioneer in the interartistic practice of combining verbal and graphic languages. Another extraordinary avant-garde poet was Manoel Antonio (1900–30). Although only one of his books was published during his lifetime, *De catro a catro: Follas d’un diario d’abordo* (1928; “From Four till Four: Pages from an Onboard Journal”), he is the most widely praised poet in Galicia by both traditional and experimental poets: “Probablemente non hai poeta vivo en Galicia que non (se) reivindicue (d)a poética manuelantoniana” (Casas, “Poesía” 181; “There is probably no poet alive in Galicia who has not been influenced by the poetics of Manoel Antonio”).⁵ His distinctive and influential work is considered visual poetry because form, space, and typography are semantic and essential components of the book. Vicente Risco (1884–1963), better known as a prose writer, was also interested in interdisciplinary poetic practices. His “U . . . ju juu . . . (Poema futurista),” a visual poem in the futurist style, was published in 1920 in the iconic nationalist magazine *A nosa terra*. Galician poets of these decades knew the international literary and artistic avant-gardes of the times. Some, like Risco, were in contact with Vicente Huidobro and other international avant-garde poets.

Galician Visual Poetry since the 1970s

A familiarity with neo-avant-garde movements informs the work of Galician visual poets today, who like their predecessors use both traditional and innovative devices. Some use them to protest against globalization, neoliberalism, the pervasive power of the mass media, the dissemination of clichés, the multimedia industry, and institutions such as the church and the mili-

tary. Their rebellious art has an immediate impact on the spectator through popular icons, extralinguistic elements, and multiple artifices. These visual poets attack art as a commodity, as a product of an academic and intellectual regime, and as a museum piece. They approach art and identity issues from nonconformist cultural practices. They explore the materiality of the languages used, look for visual interactions between text and context, subordinate linear expression to experimentation. This work allows them to open up a space for new avenues of meaning without falling into an impersonal or technological determinism.

The end of the dictatorship in 1975 and the establishment of the first normalization code of the Galician language in 1982 are two factors that provided the impetus for a new visual poetry, which was politically contestatory, collective-oriented, and experimental. Its style was influenced by surrealism. The main proponents of this poetry were the members of the group *Rompente* (1976–83): Antón Reixa, Manuel M. Romón, Alberto Avendaño, Alfonso Pexegueiro, and Camilo Valdeorras. *Rompente* can be translated as “breaking away,” an idea that embodied the group’s rebellious political, literary, and intellectual aims. Its members published collectively—works such as *Silabario da turbina* (1978; “ABC of the Turbine”), the series *Tres tristes tigres* (1979; “Three Sad Tigers”), and *A dama que fala* (1983; “The Lady Who Speaks”)—but each member also published separately. These works of poetry referred in one way or another to aspects of verbal language. This emphasis is evident in the titles themselves. In *Silabario da turbina*, “silabario” is the old-fashioned schoolbook children used to learn to read. In *A dama que fala*, “fala” refers to the act of speaking. *Tres tristes tigres* reminds us of the children’s tongue twister and also the humorous and experimental novel *Tres tristes tigres* (1963), by the Cuban author Guillermo Cabrera Infante.

The myth of Galicia’s Celtic origins, created by the poets of the *Rexurdimento* to construct Galician nationalism, was of no interest to these writers.⁶ Significantly, *Rompente*’s manifesto “Textos de resistencia e comunicación” (“Texts of Resistance and Communication”) remembers the aesthetic commitment of the avant-gardes in the figure of Manuel Antonio (more focused on the visual avant-gardes) rather than the poets Rosalía de Castro and Manuel Curros Enríquez, who were more committed to the search for a Galician national identity but followed a verbal, linear, teleological tradition in their verse.

In works such as *galletas kokoshcka non* (1979; “No Kokoshcka Biscuits”), by Romón, and *Silabario da turbina, facer pulgarcitos tres* (1979; “Make Tom

Thumbs Three”), and *As ladillas do travesty* (1979; “The Transvestite’s Pests”), by Reixa, verbal and sequential syntax still predominate over visual and spatial syntax. The Galician language is used as an artistic artifact but also as a cultural and political vehicle of resistance. The Rompente writers use different registers and styles—satirical, ironic, and metapoetic—to criticize the United States military and the Vietnam War. There are references to popular culture: rock and roll, radio and TV programs, and so on. Experimentation is done at literary, linguistic, spatial, and semantic levels. Examples of spatial experimentation are the use of lines in reverse order at the top of the page, white spaces, and repetition of a poem on the same page. Several languages may be present in a poem. A poem may contain translations of whole poems or fragments of poems into French, English, or Spanish. This multilingualism expresses a deconstructive and subversive attitude toward the imposition of a national culture and literacy, which produced diglossia and emphasized a monolingual and monocultural society. The formal experimentation (use of different typography, languages, translations, visual devices) gives the Galician language the literary and cultural status of any other language. Multilingualism, multimedia, irony, satire, and irrationalism point the way to further experimentation.

A dama que fala constructs an imaginary visual-verbal play of artistic codes, in which the key word *slide* and its equivalent in Spanish, *diapositiva*, are given to read the poem in a visual mode:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| (diapositiva 1) | eu son efectivamente o esquimó da fotografía |
| (d. 2) | sen mirar para atrás unha cona lateral afurricando
a minería dos lagartos contra min (outra vez d. 1) |
| (d. 3) | mais abaixo o esquimó en tanto que esquimó
faise o amo da situación |
| | esfrega o nariz contra o plexiglás en xeral (71) |
| (slide 1) | I am indeed the eskimo of the photograph |
| (s. 2) | without looking back a lateral cunt fucking
the lizards’ mining against myself (again s. 1) |
| (s. 3) | farther down the eskimo being an eskimo
becomes the master of the situation
rubs his nose against Plexiglas in general |

The poem concludes with a political note: “(agradecemos ao exército dos estados unidos de américa as facilidades que nos brindou para tomar estas

imaxes e poder contar esta historia)” (“[we thank the army of the united states of america for the facilities given to us to take these pictures and be able to tell this story]”).

The end of the 1970s was a rich moment for visual poetry in Galicia. Rompente was its most popular manifestation, but there were other, more personal and self-reflexive modes of visual poetry—for example, *Poemas caligráficos* (1979; “Caligraphic Poems”), by Uxío Novoneyra (1939–99), a poet whose visual work includes *Os Eidos 2: Letanías de Galicia e outros poemas* (1974; “The Fields: Galician Litanies and Other Poems”), *Muller pra lonxe* (1955–85; “Woman in the Distance”), and *Do Caurel a Compostela* (1956–86; “From Caurel to Compostela”). Novoneyra’s avant-garde poetry left a mark on Galician poets of the last three decades. In *Poemas caligráficos*, he draws on the concept of calligraphy as a spiritual and aesthetic experience, one still practiced in Asian—especially Chinese and Japanese—and Arabic cultures. He was not alone; the poetic side of calligraphy had also appealed to neo-avant-garde poets in the 1960s, such as the Uruguayan Julio Campal (who died in Spain). For Novoneyra, poetry is seen as a whole process, an act of performance that goes beyond mere writing, drawing, or reciting. In this metagraphic work, he condenses the verbal and visual in a trompe l’oeil to create an abstract and metaphysical poetry. This interartistic approach opens up a perception of art in Western tradition that has been almost forgotten since the advent of the printing press, when the visual and verbal became separate modes of communication and specialized practices. Such inclusive poetry differs from a more visible and sociocritical poetry, represented by Reixa and Rompente.

Galician Visual Poetry since the 1990s

Visual poetry in Galicia entered another productive period in the 1990s, with an interest in the republication, in a technological context, of former poetic works. Reixa continued to be prolific and versatile in this decade. His *Ringo Rango* (1992) is a book and a video. The two combine visual poetic practices of the 1970s, used by Rompente, and a humorous and satirical tone. The strong performance and musical component and the new technocultural environment add a dynamism to Reixa’s poetry and provide a channel for his multiartistic interests. *Upalás* (1998), an anthology with republished poems by Rompente (Cochón Otero and González Fernández), is another example of the growing interest in and receptivity to visual poetry.

Upalás is dedicated to Joan Salvat-Papasseit, a central figure in the Catalan avant-gardes, similar to Manoel Antonio in Galicia. A year later, Reixa published *Escarnio* ("Derision"), a bilingual book in Galician and Spanish, plus a CD-ROM that contains verbal, videographic, and video performance poetry. He continues to experiment with the visual (painting, drawings, film) and verbal (poetry, drama, novel) and also parodies the conservatives who governed Galicia between 1989 and 2005. Ironically, his recent works (e.g., *Escarnio*) were partially financed by the Xunta, a new practice that is common nowadays in Galicia and elsewhere. In his poetry, it is not so much the verbal aspect that changes—language is still used as a political tool—as the integration of different technologies and formats.

The shift from verbal to visual becomes more pronounced at the turn of the twenty-first century, as poets grow more eclectic and more oriented toward graphics. Some of these authors are Lino Braxe, Claudio Rodríguez Fer, Lois Gil Magariños, Pedro Gonçalves, and Antón Risco. They tend to eliminate the verbal component in favor of a graphic and kinetic form. In many works now the only thing in words is the title. With the proliferation of new technologies and a cultural environment open to artistic experimentation, many visual poets mix different codes, techniques, and materials to compose simple but appealing poems that reach a wide audience, an audience increasingly less concerned with the topic of nationalism and more receptive to international issues, technology, and the visual.

Braxe is a visual poet, scriptwriter, playwright, essayist, and journalist. He is known outside Galicia for his participation in collective events, mail art exhibitions, and anthologies. His *Territorio: Poemas obxecto e visuais* (1999; "Territory: Object and Visual Poems") attacks institutional powers (e.g., the church) and dictatorial regimes (e.g., Nazism). He also makes verbal and visual references to artists and writers such as Manuel Rivas, Jules Verne, Edgar Allan Poe, Goethe, and John Houston. Braxe's poetry does not follow Reixa's or Novoneyra's visual practices of the 1970s; they focus on semantics and tend toward immanence, which addresses international rather than national readers.

The titles of Braxe's poems are usually ironic in relation to the visual content, a device that many visual poets use today. *Poemas obxecto e visuais* has an introduction, linear pagination, conventional page formats, and editorial information—not the normal practice among contemporary visual poets. Braxe's techniques resemble the style of Joan Brossa (1919–98), an influential poet and plastic artist of the Spanish neo-avant-gardes. Braxe's

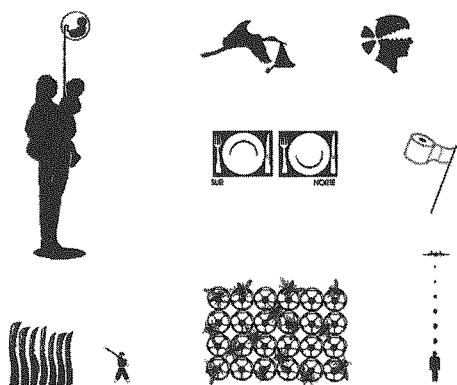
"Europa" provides a critique of economic imperialism: an American one-dollar bill is attached to a geographic map of Europe. The bill suggests that Europe's main currency is the United States dollar, although the euro was introduced to the world financial markets in 1999—the same year Braxe's book was published—and launched as a currency in 2002. The combination of collage techniques, a composition in layers, the use of objects (the dollar, a paper clip), the title, as well as the absence of the euro create thematic tension, a visual ellipsis.

Another multifaceted artist is Claudio Rodríguez Fer. His apparently simple poem "A vida" ("Life") is highly suggestive. The blood-red tones of the word-trees allude to life, death, passion, sex, violence, prison, hate, and war. The title could refer to an individual life or to a collective experience; it also evokes political movements that use red as their symbol, like Marxism, Communism, and Maoism, so "a vida" could signify a way of life. The metallic columns suggest life in prison; the word-trees and symbolic red, creativity and art as an organic process. The interaction between visual and verbal makes us reflect on life as a continuous and dynamic process where opposites are at play. Rodríguez Fer shares with Novoneyra and Antón Risco the concept of art as a continuum and also as a metaphysical and personal expression. The graphic presentation of his theme means the poem can be understood by an international audience.

Another shift in poetic practices in recent years is the increasing manifestation of collective activities, performances, and installations. Sometimes the motivation is to react against ecological disasters, such as the sinking of the oil tanker *Prestige* off the Galician coast in 2002, or international conflicts, such as the wars in the Balkans or Iraq. At other times the aim is educational and promoted by official institutions, such as Proxecto Alfabeto 05, the visual alphabet created in the town of Caldas de Reis in 2005, or the Dadaist collective art acts by Gil Magariños, or those that took place in Vilagarcía de Arousa in 2004. These artists also produce mail art, an international form that uses the postal system as a medium or, when e-mail artists are involved, the Internet. This expression is based on anticommercial, anticanonical, and interartistic values and on the idea that everyone can produce art. Pedro Gonçalves and Gil are the main members of Corporación Semiótica Galega ("Galician Semiotic Corporation"), a group of very active and unconventional poets whose works include *Futuro: Bolsa de mareo 2004* (with the motif of the disposable bags found on airplanes; "Future: Sick Bag 2004"), *De-funcionario*, *SPOT*, *Publipoemas* (a video-art work by Quique

Otero and Manolo Cortés) and the collective project *Translittera* (2005), devoted to new poetic languages, such as performance.⁷

These visual repertoires encourage artists to take formal and aesthetic liberties through the use of video clips, digital techniques, photomontage, and so on. An example of a visual work by Gil that takes a graphic approach to poetry is the following vignette. This vignette shows Gil's graphic



style, which keeps the verbal to a minimum. All the images are interconnected and convey an antimilitaristic message. The words “North” and “South,” side by side, alter the normal geospatial order; their being linked to empty plates suggests a critique of the hegemonic order that preserves hunger. The official construction of nations, often violent or forced, is ridiculed by a flag whose icon

is a roll of toilet paper. These sociocritical messages portray a world in crisis and demonstrate an artistic shift from verbal to visual and from national to global concerns.

Another significant collective work is *Extravíos* (2001; “Misplacements”), a short collection of visual poems with only thirty-five exemplars issued, signed by their authors: Gonçalves, Gil, Baldo Ramos, and Anxo Pastor. These poets, in their homage to the traditional poetic avant-gardes, show a strong similarity to Rompente’s homage to Antonio and Papasseit. Gil’s “Qwerty para anxo pastor” looks like a poem from the first avant-gardes, in its futuristic style. “Qwerty” is the first six letters in the second row of the keyboard. The visual arrangement of the letters, the typography, the orthographic signs, the repetition of several characters and empty spaces help create a dynamic pattern that also carries an antimilitaristic meaning. The graphic signs and characters in italics imitate the rain, which is a key word in the poem. The syntactic line “os homes chovendo en ringleira van” (“the men go raining in a line”) is reinforced with the repetition of the phoneme /i/ in italics, creating the kinetic illusion of a group of soldiers advancing on the battlefield. The evocative sound and visual referents (the rain, soldiers, the Ç, typing) converge at different levels—phonological, phonetic, graphic, orthographic, lexical, syntactic—to honor

both experimentation in the local language (Galician) and the universal theme of antimilitarism.

O libro dos abanos (Palabras no aire) (2002; “The Book of Fans (Words in the Air)”) is a collective book that resulted from an exhibition of thirty-five inscribed fans in the Santiago de Compostela art gallery, A Galería Noroeste de Xoias de Autor. This exhibition has two antecedents, as Anxo Tarrío says in the foreword to the book: the exhibition of fans in Vigo in 1922 and the exhibition of painted fans by Galician artists in 1966. The re-creation of earlier visual exhibitions is another example of the increasing interest and popularity of visual poetry in recent years. These new fans, composed by a wide variety of visual and nonvisual poets, such as Xosé M. Álvarez Cáccamo, Braxe, Darío Xohán Cabana, Arturo Casas, Yolanda Castaño, Emma Couceiro, Anxo Quintela, Xesús Rábade Paredes, Xavier Seoane, and Miro Villar, combine several literary traditions in a new expressive form.

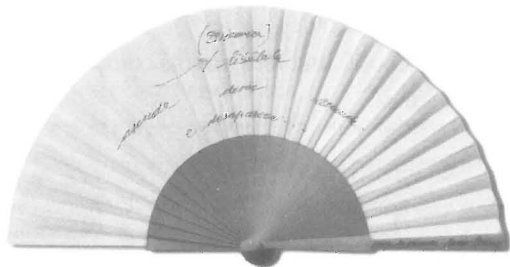
One poem in this collection is “Haiku da primavera” (“Spring Haiku”), by Xavier Seoane:

(Primavera)

A libélula
Ascende, desce, ascende
e desaparece . . . (88–89)

(Spring)

The dragonfly
Goes up, goes down, goes up
and disappears . . .

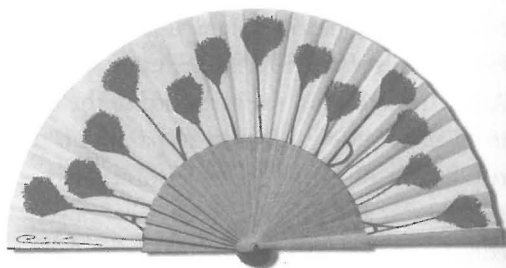


Seoane captures a fleeting and essential moment of springtime, imitating the haiku genre. He re-creates an animated landscape through a dragonfly and its dancing flight. There is neither thematic nor formal closure in the poem; the eternal dance is reinforced by the potential movement of the fan being waved by a hand in the warm air of spring. In its simplicity, condensation of meanings, rhythm, movement, color, and lines, this composition is both a visual and an aural poem. Its rhythms act on the senses like a mantra, capturing a moment that is part of a cyclic and primordial time of existence, in line with the haiku aesthetic and the spirit of the avant-gardes.

Another poem that reflects this graphic-visual fusion is Rodríguez Fer's "Abano público" ("Public Fan"), which constitutes a variant of "A vida":

Abano público
Variación sobre a vida
(gravado sobre corpo)
a vida (82–83)

Public fan
Variation on life
(engraving on body)
life

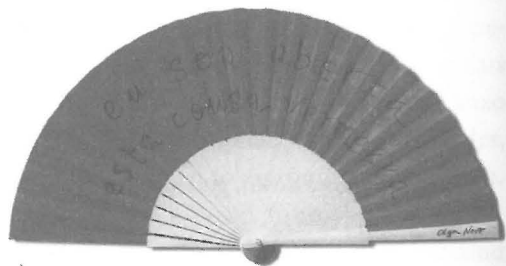


The author privileges a public space to make us reflect on art and creation as an organic act—like an engraving on a body. The format for a poem goes beyond the white page. That the medium can be a fan or a human body evokes ancient practices and Asian cultures but also the popular and contemporary urban tattoo. Rodríguez Fer's poems "A vida" and "Abano público" point out the organic and inclusive character of poetry and so recall Novoneyra's attitude two decades earlier.

This book includes poems composed by women writers and poets, like Olga Novo:

eu son aberta
esta cousa vermella
(62–63)

I am open
this red thing



This short composition draws our attention to the theme of female identity, gender perception, and subjectivity ("I am"). In English the poem loses the feminine grammatical mark *-a*: "I am open / this red thing." "Thing" is still associated with the subject "I." The subject of the poem, "eu," is the fan, the object, suggesting that women are things, like fans, available ("open") to be used when it is hot. Red enhances the idea of a female identity by evoking menstruation, giving birth, and sex. There is a strong female-authored poetic tradition in Galicia, but it is new in visual poetry, which is an art

form predominantly constructed by male authors. Novo's poem is thus an interesting hint of future possibilities for the genre.

A significant number of visual poetic initiatives are promoted and supported by the Xunta, by local governments, and by private financial entities. The risk here, of course, is that in their promotion of the arts these bodies may condition the message as well. The book *X: Espazo para un signo* (2005; "Space for a Sign"), which celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publishing house Xerais, has the support of the funding body Fundación Caixa Galicia. The only challenging element of this book is the letter *x*, which is distinctive to Galician (it does not exist in Spanish) and therefore is a visual expression of the uniqueness of the Galician language and its identity. Beyond these and other officially supported initiatives, more or less successful, visual poets of the 1990s are significant not so much for creating poetry with an antiverbal rhetoric as for actively enhancing a visual rhetoric. They encourage formal and aesthetic freedom, minimizing the traditional search for a national identity, and they work with a variety of international themes and techniques that connect visual images—static or kinetic—with verbal and aural components, thus conditioning readers to a hybrid perception.

Visual poetry in Galicia evolved in both form and theme during the twentieth century. Its most important periods were between the two world wars; the end of the 1970s, which coincides with the end of the Francoist regime; and the end of the 1990s, which is the time of a newly technologically aware and globalized society. Visual poems of the 1970s differ notably from today's technographic expressions. Nowadays poets privilege a shifting identity, a different order of things that blurs former fixed divisions among the local, the national, and the global. The multiple terrains Galician visual poets have mapped out since the 1970s show a new trend toward spatialization, a strong link between technology and literature, and an engagement with the materials used. We may look at this type of poetry as a consequence of the new postmodern and technological culture, as part of the spirit of the avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes with their inclusive and antimechanistic approach to art, or as part of a recurring reaction to times of crisis. Whichever approach we choose, Galician visual poetry today demonstrates a progressive internationalization of forms and themes in the artists' *modus operandi*, an increasing engagement with hybrid perception and multicultural literacy,

and a detachment of traditional verbal configurations of the local. All these features generate alternative avenues for further debate.

Visual poets today are interested less in working with the verbal language as a vehicle to represent identity than in utilizing space as a technique for presenting an interdependent image of Galicia, as a region that is becoming part of the cultural and international artistic mainstream. Galician visual poetry at the beginning of the twenty-first century is characterized by innovative artistic and interpretative cartographies that not only provide a new vocabulary for expressing identity but also locate Galicia as an active and dynamic player in the European and international artistic scene.

Notes

1. Visual poetry can be defined as an interartistic genre that combines at least two different languages, one verbal, the other visual. Recent trends give priority to visual syntax over verbal units. Visual poetry is one of many different modalities of experimental poetry, such as sound, performance, or hypertextual poetry. See Millán, "Las otras poesías" and "Utopía."
2. Multiple factors and spheres of artistic and political influence affected the production of visual poetry in Galicia during the twentieth century. An exhaustive interdisciplinary and comparative study of this subject is needed, but here I explore significant visual poetic trends in Galicia that mark different lines of action. Some stress cultural tensions and interactions between the national and the regional; others attend to more abstract aesthetic motifs; others echo a new technocultural context, which is stimulating new hybrid practices that recontextualize collective and subjective identity issues.
3. Visual poetry is not a new art form. Although it acquires independence as an artistic genre at the end of the nineteenth century, with Mallarmé and Apollinaire, its origins are deep-rooted, at the beginning of several civilizations, when the first impulses to combine the visual and the verbal appeared. For a world prehistory of visual poetry or pattern poetry, see Higgins. In the Western world visual poetry was always a marginal mode of expression, emerging in periods of social unrest—late medieval times, the baroque, late Romanticism. For a historical background of visual poetry in Spain, see Cózar.
4. For more about the poetic generational debates in Galicia, see R. Villar, "A poesía"; Inma López Silva qtd. in F. Alonso, *Momentos*.
5. All translations into English are mine.
6. For an introduction to nationalism in Galicia, see Cuba, Miranda, and Enríquez. Eduardo Pondal (1835–1917) used the mythic pre-Roman figure of Breogán to refer to Galicia's Celtic origins. Later, Álvaro Cunqueiro (1911–1981) employed the medieval magician Merlin in a similar way.

7. For more information on this original work and about the art of Corporación Semi-ótica Galega, see the Web site.

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