



Manuela Palacios et Laura Lojo (editors) *Writing Bonds: Irish and Galician Contemporary Women Poets*. Bern Germany: Peter Lang AG, 2009.

Manuela Palacios González and Helena González Fernández (editors). *Palabras extremas: Escritoras gallegas e irlandesas de hoy*. Spain: Netbiblo, 2008.

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As part of the Galician project on Irish and local contemporary women poets, these publications concentrate on the importance of the debates surrounding contemporary women poets in both geographies (Ireland and Galicia) and how the intersection of such voices of critics and authors is relevant to the understanding of both countries. Throughout the abundance of poetic and critical references that are mentioned and commented along *Writing Bonds*, there is always the reminder left for the reader that some of the issues that bound Ireland and Galicia are those that are still to be reread, such as: nationalism, religion, land, nature and gender. The latter is particularly developed in the reflections of Manuela Palacios' chapter "The Course of Nature: An Ecofeminist Reading of Contemporary Irish and Galician Women Poets", followed by María Xesús Nogueira's "Dolls, Princesses and Cinderellas: New Feminine Representations in Contemporary Galician Women's Poetry" and Laura Lojo's "The Poetics of Motherhood in Contemporary Irish Women's Verse".

The book is divided in two parts that are meant to be critical as regards to gender, poetry, contemporaneity and, also, voice empowering. The second part entitled "Writing and Unwriting: Poets at Work" brings three of the most renowned authors in the above mentioned geographies today: Carmen Blanco, Mary O'Donnell and Luz Pichel talking about writing and belonging, as well as interviews with Anne Le Marquand Hartigan and Luz Pozo-Garza, by Laura Lojo and María Xesús Nogueira, in this order.

The first part of the book is a collection of five chapters that delve into the matter of women poets of the twentieth century in Galicia and Ireland focusing the topics of nature, nation, womanhood and belonging. The marked transcultural width critics and poets is accompanied by the reminder that the whole discourse on women's literature makes us "run the risk of homogenizing what is plural aesthetically and ideologically." (23-24). Taking as ideal the diverse example of authors that compose the book, with their distinguished visions on the dialogue between Galicia and Ireland, readers do not run that risk. Moreover, the volume provides us with notable remarks on

the relevance of Poetry, both by means of the critics and by the authors that speak mainly throughout the second part of the book.

Among important contributions from the poets, the first part opens with Medbh McGuckian, “Longer and Longer Sentences Prove Me Wholly Female: Medbh McGuckian and Feminism(s)”. Manuel Fernández-Rodríguez presents Olga Novo’s works and validates her poetic discourse as a space of alienness. Those highly interested in learning the writers’ own thoughts on poetics will definitely find the second part of the book deeply enticing. Maria Xesús Nogueira points out to the importance of women author’s voices within the revitalization of the canon in the 1990s; Carmen Blanco declares love and freedom as the basis for women’s happiness; Luz Pichel discloses her own ways with writing; Luz Pozo-Garza tells us of her influences – which for the Portuguese speaking public may sound very revealing. Anne Le Marquand Hartigan reinforces the word as the vehicle for personal and social empowerment.

In *Palabras extremas: Escritoras gallegas e irlandesas de hoy* by Manuela Palacios González and Helena González Fernández, six other researchers discuss contemporary destabilizing notions of the family and the role of women in the 1970’s and 1980’s, when they attained an intellectual and economic independence. Women writers represent the transformation of social women’s positioning.

The editors’ main aims are to make Irish and Galician contemporary poets’ productions and the criticism of their works known to establish a link between creation and criticism and to reflect upon such link in relation to tradition. Certainly, these objectives converge into the privileged space of discourse on national and gender identity.

Landscape is represented as a key factor in the rereading of the fragmentary depiction of women’s subjectivities in both the Irish and Galician cases. In spite of this common aspect shared by the two instances, the editors admit the existence of a plurality of poetic voices that constitute the literary system as a whole and the general context of the poets’ works. Nature dialogues with national identity, as much as with knowledge and power to denounce the postmodern condition of the female figure. This is evident in the first three chapters in which reflections upon the experience of the language and that of the nation are particularly highlighted by the Galician poets Xela Arias, Chus Pato, María do Cebreiro, and Emma Couceiro. In this sense, it is clear why the two geographies can be studied parallelly: both Galicia and Ireland exist within their philological possibilities (Spanish and Galician, English and Irish, respectively). Moreover, the feminine subjectivity is transcribed poetically in its capacity to transform language which could also change the world. The subversion that comes from the feminine writing can be seen in the deconstruction of identities, the multiplying positionings of enunciation, the breaking of linearity and the interruption of conventional readings.

The fourth chapter, “Corporeidad y lenguaje en la poesía irlandesa actual”, recuperates the figures traditionally associated to women (that of the virgin, the mother,

and the whore) and points out to how traditionally the female body is taken as the metaphor of the colonized territory. One of the ways in which both Galician and Irish poets deal with the revisioning of the traditional role of women in society and in writing is with the use of myth – Eva Bourke, Anne Le Marquand Hartigan and Katie Donovan in the Irish case, and Chus Pato and Maria do Cebreiro, in the Galician context. A dialogic link with the past is established through figures such as Mnemosine, Penelope, Helen, Casandra.

The second part of the book, entitled “Con voz propia: Ensayos y entrevistas”, is dedicated to essays and interviews by Maria do Cebreiro (chapter 7), Anne Le Marquand Hartigan (chapter 8), María Xesús Nogueira Pereira (chapter 9) and Luz Mar González Arias, interviewing Mary O’Donnell and Celia de Fréine (chapter 10).

Writing Bonds and *Palabras extremas* have proved to be of great excellence for anyone adventuring in Comparative Studies, or simply in the journey of fruition.

Work Cited

Hartigan, Anne Le Marquand. *Immortal Sins*. Salmon Poetry, 1993. Dublin, Ireland.