

Kirsty Hooper

Forum

I. Reasons for a Forum

The rationale for including a Forum in this special issue arose from an awareness that the unfamiliarity for a non-specialist audience of Galician culture and its key issues could not be adequately addressed within the restricted scope of the present volume. Equally pertinently, any attempt to impose a single interpretation, however finely nuanced, seemed undesirable in the light of the dynamic, contestatory nature of contemporary Galician cultural debate. In this spirit, during December 2005, we contacted a range of people active in the world of Galician culture, including artists, writers, musicians, actors, politicians, publishers, journalists, and academics (and several respondents are many if not all of the above). We asked them all to introduce themselves, and then to answer the same four questions:

- 1 In your opinion, what role is there for national cultures (including Galician) today?
- 2 How would you define a Galician writer, artist, musician . . .? Can a writer, artist, musician . . . who was born outside Galicia ever be considered Galician? Why (not)?
- 3 To what extent do you think that new technologies such as the Web will affect the future of cultural nationalism?
- 4 And, finally, what will be (or ought to be) the main characteristics of Galician culture (or the aspect of it with which you are most familiar) in the first decades of the 21st century?

These questions were deliberately designed to complement and (we hope) illuminate the essays that follow, in their focus not only on present and past definitions of Galician culture and identity (1, 2), but also on the present and future possibilities of changing social and cultural spaces (3, 4). At the same time, they reveal better than any single-authored essay the broad and diverse spectrum of opinions (not to mention productive disagreements) that are driving Galician culture and Galician studies today.

II. Participants



Fran Alonso: I'm a writer and author of narrative, poetry, children's literature, and journalism. My professional work has been mainly in the cultural sphere, first in journalism and currently in publishing (I'm a Sub-director at Edicións Xerais de Galicia). I'm also a columnist for various Galician media outlets. I'm interested in the subversive and reinterpreted capacity of literature, which allows me to cast a critical, restive eye over the present, since I'm inescapably a child of my time. In this sense, I consider myself a contemporary writer.



Xosé Ramón Barreiro: Professor of Contemporary History in the Faculty of Geography and History, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. President of the *Academia Galega*.



Tucho Calvo (La Guaira-Venezuela, 1954), writer, editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *La Voz de Galicia* and literary director of Biblos Clube de Lectores. Photo: Carmela G. Boo.

Luisa Castro: I'm a writer, in Castilian and Galician.



María do Cebreiro Rábade Villar: I've written books of poetry and essays. I understand literature as a force for responding to certain restrictions, including those of gender and nation.



Ana Luna Alonso, Professor of Translation (French-Galician) in the department of translation and linguistics in the Faculty of Humanities and Translation at the Universidade de Vigo.



Henrique Monteagudo: Professor of Galician Studies and researcher at the Instituto da Lingua Galega, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. My principal

fields of teaching and research are history of the language (especially its social/ideological aspects: *Historia Social da Lingua Galega*, 1999) and Galician sociolinguistics (standardization and language planning). I am also a specialist on the life and work of Daniel R. Castelao (editor of his complete works, 8vv., 2000) and on Martín Sarmiento. Since 1999 I have been Secretario do Consello da Cultura Galega and coordinator of the language section (where I directed the ‘Informe de Política Lingüística e Normalización en Galicia (1980–2000)’, 3vv., 2002–04). I was a member of the editorial committee of *Grial. Revista Galega de Cultura* from 1988, and have been its co-director since 2003.



My name is **Cándido Pazó**, with the accent on the “o”, which means “small palace”. I was born in Vigo in 1960. I’m a theatre professional, meaning I act, write, direct, tell stories . . .¹

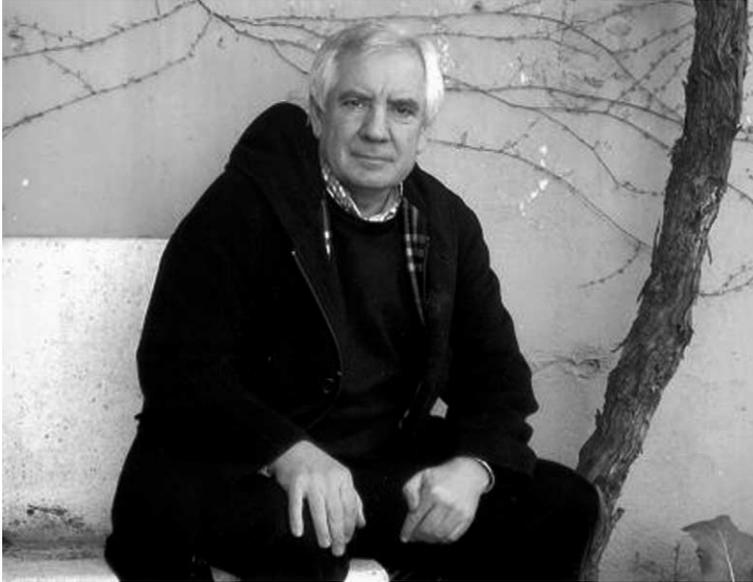


Ramón Pinheiro Almuinho: Born in Vigo in 1975, he graduated in History from the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (USC) and completed postgraduate work in Music Industry Management at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. Today, he complements his professional work as artistic director of Ouvirmos S.L. with teaching, being director of the postgraduate course “Traditional Galician Music” at USC and a professor at the Conservatorio de Música Tradicional e Folque in Lalín (CMTF). He is also artistic director of the *A tiracolo* collection of historical Galician recordings (edited by Ouvirmos and the Consello da Cultura Galega) and member of the advisory board of the Arquivo Sonoro de Galicia at the Consello da Cultura Galega. Readers should note that the Galician text was written using the reintegracionista norm.



María Ruido: I’m an artist, film-maker and essayist. I currently live in Barcelona, where I work in the Departamento de Imagen at the Universidad de Barcelona. I’ve

studied History and Theory of Art and since 1995 I have been working on projects on the social representation of the body and of identity/ies, on the female imaginary with regard to work, and on images and ways of constructing collective and personal memory, principally through video, photography and writing.²



Olegario Sotelo Blanco (Castro de Caldelas, Ourense, 1945). My concerns about Galician culture led me to found Sotelo Blanco Edicións (1980), which now has a catalogue of more than a thousand titles. My consciousness as an emigrant inspired my first books and articles. In 1993 I founded the Fundación Sotelo Blanco, which hosts conferences and exhibitions and co-sponsors research into Galician memory through the Vicente Risco Prize for Social Sciences. The Fundación now includes the Museo de Antropoloxía, which emerged from the desire to show people, especially the young, all the things that have such significance for our Homeland, but are now slowly disappearing. An important new initiative is the foundation, in 2005, of the Museo Galego da Emigración and the Chair of Emigration Studies at the Universidade da Coruña.

Xelís de Toro, novelist, has also published several children's books, and has interests in artistic activities such as multimedia performances, music, etc.



Dolores Vilavedra, Professor of Galician Literature at the Universidade da de Santiago de Compostela and literary critic, specializing in contemporary Galician narrative.

The Forum

1. In your opinion, what role is there for national cultures (including Galician) today?

FA: In the field of literature, which is the one that most interests me, the future needs to move beyond considering the literature of any culture, without exception, to be “central”. In a Europe where economic frontiers are coming down and goods are circulating freely, literature too must circulate much more freely and that will mean opening up highways to national literatures like Galician. More than this, national cultures such as Galician today have solid, high-quality literatures with a great deal to offer. And in the current climate, in which the commercial interests of major groups and the literary-agency lobby dictate demand, national literatures offer freshness, a certain ingenuity, and originality, far from well-polished formulas.

XRB: In Spain, as well as Castilian, the official language of the State, there are other languages that are also official in each of the respective autonomies: Basque (Basque Country), Catalan (Catalonia, Balearic Islands and Valencia) and Galician (Galicia). Each of them expresses or symbolizes a culture of its own. This does not weaken the global State culture, but rather enriches it. The current Spanish Constitution not only recognizes the existence of these different languages, but is also committed to supporting their use. These different cultures did not emerge from the transition from Dictatorship to Democracy, but have centuries of history. This is not the time to point out the asymmetrical relationship they have had with Castilian.

TC: Culture is a single entity, the sum of all knowledge. Today, as always, national cultures, local cultures and even the knowledge of a single family (the traditions of an artisan business, for example), are the basis of progress. When you look at Spain after Franco and then at Spain today, you can see the gulf between them, and the effects of a cultural renaissance in which the plastic arts, theatre, literature, music and even sport have reached unprecedented levels.

LC: I'm going to talk specifically about literature. I believe that writing is an individual activity, and thus cannot be subordinated to any collective project. One thing cancels out the other. There's only one way of creating culture, and that is from one's own work, from the root of the individual's experience, from the root of one's critical sensibility. Individual experience alone can bring us to the collective and the universal, and not the other way round. So for me, national cultures can only have a future, can only have coherence (and can only grow) in direct proportion to the future and the coherence of the projects carried out by their writers, individually, through their works, and not the other way round. A culture becomes great when it gives space to the greatest possible number of viewpoints, and the greatest possible amount of freedom. Freedom of thought and freedom of expression. I believe that minority national cultures run the risk of disappearing under political protectionism and exclusive projects. We can make ourselves a nice little window display, but that's not how great works or great personalities are made.

MCRV: I wanted to be clear that all cultures are national. And despite the rhetoric of globalization, the national remains a determining factor in the world today. What is happening is that not all cultures have the means to guarantee their existence as such. In this context, the opposition between national literature and literary nationalism – sketched out by authors like Antón Figueroa and Xoán González Millán – seems very pertinent. Non-hegemonic cultures must still defend their historical legitimacy, and literary nationalism is one of the instruments they can use, to put it bluntly, just to exist. Every strategy has its price. But the advantage of being in a situation of deficit is that it obliges those who experience it to take up a position. Or, to put it another way, it impedes the naturalization of conflicts, the simulation of neutrality. In this sense, the role of cultures like Galician would be to construct a space for collective reflection that constitutes a powerful alternative to the pressure exercised by the hegemonic spaces. It's not about imitating the cultural strategies of communities that are considered central, but rather of exposing the way in which relations of dominance, too, crisscross and restrict the cultural sphere.

ALA: I believe that the future of minoritized (if not minority) languages like Galician within the Spanish state depends to a great extent on those in charge of the different administrations, at a local and autonomic as well as a state level. In my opinion, the legal position of a co-official language like Galician within the state should mean that the rights of its speakers are respected and, in turn, advance the defence and diffusion of different Galician cultural products.

HM: The viability of “minor” national cultures is framed by the dialectic between globalization and localization. In my opinion, it basically depends on the capacity of

“minor” cultural communities to overcome the uniformizing tendencies imposed on the one hand by large media and entertainment groups (to call them “communication and culture industries” is a joke) and on the other, by political pressure from states that don’t recognize the national (or cultural and linguistic) diversity of their citizens. When I say “overcome” uniformizing tendencies I’m not thinking of a purist retreat of different cultural communities into themselves, or of taking refuge in a more or less venerable tradition, or even of strategies of resistance. I’m thinking about how every cultural community should defend its own perspectives and interests, should explore what makes it original and what it brings to humanity as a whole, I’m thinking about the ability to adapt to new circumstances, about creative renewal. I’m also thinking in a global context about openness, dialogue and collaboration between different cultures as a means to a richer humanity, a more pleasant way of life that offers each individual the possibility of realizing their potential. In my opinion, the unification of humanity in some fundamental aspects (non-violence, respect for human rights and basic liberties, economic progress and protection of the environment, rule of law and democratic government) is highly desirable, but the linguistic and cultural homogenization of humanity would be a catastrophic loss for all of us.

CP: [The role of national cultures is] to be themselves, which, in the globalized world that’s being imposed, “is right and necessary”. “National cultures” are destined to give color, many colors, to the monotony of globalization.

RP: It’s clear that the current socio-cultural changes linked with so-called globalization are provoking an obsession about everything to do with identity. But if the first wave of globalization experienced in the nineteenth century privileged the definition of a national identity, in the current process we are interrogating other sorts of identity, like sexual identity. The concept of national culture has changed irrevocably since the nineteenth century, but the fact of using it with its nineteenth-century connotations in a context like the present gives rise to all sorts of debates, most of them entirely sterile.

A differentiated culture in a common cultural sphere (for example Galician in Western Europe) is defined more by its particular combination and adaptation of shared cultural elements than by complete distinction in each of them. To put it more graphically, it’s the same as making different combinations of numbers. Culture comprises an inherited material and immaterial heritage (which we Galicians share and which includes the national conflict) and a new heritage forged by the present generation through its own life experiences, and thus more than simply re-elaboration of the inherited heritage. A major part of our rich collective heritage has been irrevocably lost and much more that has fortunately been preserved is known only by a tiny percentage of the population. This lack of knowledge, this (collective) ignorance of our own (collective) wealth is precisely the principal cause of descent into poverty. The principal danger – if that was the question – for the future of Galician culture, from my point of view, is our ignorance of ourselves. Because I believe beyond doubt that we can only hope to attain freedom through knowledge.

MR: In a globalized world like the one we live in, I believe that national and/or local cultures seem destined for an asymmetrical dialogue with the hegemonic

cultures, or at least it seems that way. The value that they can have, in fact, is a differential one, based on alterity and difference. We have to take into account that this difference is often absorbed by mainstream culture, but that's no reason to stop generating our own productions or trying to gain acceptance at any price into the global domain.

OSB: Galician culture is the sum of our traditions and way of life. This means that we must preserve everything that is now in danger of disappearing and take serious steps towards progress. Both in inland towns and coastal villages, we are watching a mountain of knowledge disappear along with our countrymen, knowledge that if we don't collect it in books, photographs, etc., for future generations, will disappear forever. Let me give you two examples: how many carpenters in Galicia today could build a cart? Or a fishing boat? We're losing the best of ourselves without even realizing and cultural institutions have the duty to collect and maintain this heritage for future generations. It's true that our culture exists in an increasingly globalized world, which means that we will absorb knowledge from outside through different channels; we have to seize the opportunity to make sure that while these cultures coexist and interrelate, each keeps its own identity.

XT: National cultures remain the primordial space where things happen, books are published, records are produced, plays are performed, etc., and at the same time a public, social space where the themes that interest a particular group at a particular time are discussed. What's happening now is that their role for defining identity is in crisis, because identities themselves are in crisis.

DV: I think [national cultures] will play a compensatory role, as they allow the individual to anchor themselves in an identity created from elements that are familiar and thus less open to the manipulation of the economy, business and marketing. At the same time, and perhaps paradoxically, they take on an exotic value in an intercultural context, in contrast with standardized cultures, which should produce in their users – those of the minoritized cultures – the effect of affirmation of their own culture, quite apart from any external value. As a result, minoritized cultures can be a very dynamic source of innovation in cultural models: as we see happening in ethnic music (e.g. African music).

2. How would you define a Galician writer, artist, musician ...? Can a writer, artist, musician ... who was born outside Galicia ever be considered Galician? Why (not)?

FA: In terms of literature (again I'm going to concentrate on what interests me most) language is always the identity card. A musician or a painter, using a language without words, can display their work worldwide without intermediaries. A writer, in contrast, always needs a translator to make their work known. As a result, in literature, the place of birth (or even the place of residence) doesn't matter, but the language you write in does. Anybody who writes in the Galician language will be a Galician writer and, therefore, their work will be part of the Galician literary system (as is the case with my work, or that of Manuel Rivas, Rosa Aneiros, Suso de Toro,

Teresa Moure, etc). A writer who writes in Spanish and lives in Galicia will belong, clearly, to the Spanish literary system and their work will belong to Spanish literature (for example, Camilo José Cela or Torrente Ballester).

XLB: The debate about what defines an author or artist as Galician, Catalan, Castilian, etc., is an old one. With regard to writers, the use of the Galician language is a defining element. Even if the author writes exclusively in Castilian (as is the case with Pardo Bazán, Valle Inclán, Torrente Ballester or Cela), his work doubtless contains elements of our culture such as descriptions, the characters' features, customs, etc., which means we cannot deny his position as a Galician writer, even if it is incomplete, because those descriptions, features and customs emerged from -and remained closely linked to- the language itself, and their being expressed in another language prevents them from being fully understood. The Galician language not only gives them its own musicality, it also situates them in a particular atmosphere that could even be said to make an economy of resources by allowing intuition dominance over full expression.

In terms of the work of artists, we must distinguish between abstract painting, which has no homeland by principle, and realist painting. In the latter case, there is something intuitive (landscape, coloration, composition) that allows some of us to know immediately that we are before the work of a Galician painter. On one occasion, at an international exhibition in a South American capital, I challenged myself to pick out the paintings that seemed to me to be Galician, and I was only wrong about one out of ten.

TC: Few people would disagree now that what determines the identity of a writer is the language they use, so a Galician writer is one who uses the Galician language. It might seem that when we talk about sculpture, music or painting it is more difficult to find that identity, but this is not necessarily the case. Art and music also have to look into their roots for the language of the tradition from which they emerge. Particular cultural registers, updated or reinvented, isolated or touched by other cultures, are really what a creator brings to the universal culture. In any case, everybody chooses the culture that best serves their inspiration or objectives, and in that sense many authors are clearly Galician despite being born elsewhere (to name but a few, writers as important as Marilar Aleixandre, Xavier Alcalá and Luís G. Tosar).

LC: A writer who writes in Galician forms part of Galician literature. So does a Galician who writes in any other language.

MCRV: A Galician writer/artist/musician, for me, is someone who participates in a project defined by its attention to cultural (by which I mean collective) rather than geographical criteria. Place of birth is a factor that has to do with chance, not historical reason. A cultural agent will be Galician by the extent to which they contribute with their work and with their ideas to the construction of a model of the country, independent of their geographical location. I think it's a mistake to make nation depend on territory (just think of the hugely important cultural and political work carried out by some sectors of the Galician diaspora). Traditionally, the most

common factor for nationalizing Galician writers has been the use of the language. Now we have to start thinking about other ways.

ALA: I think that whether or not one feels Galician is an individual decision. I understand that the most important thing is one's behaviour or attitude towards the country and its culture. In my opinion it is important to feel that you come from a particular place and to work towards a sense of identity and difference no matter where you find yourself.

HM: It's a complex question. It's one thing to be "Galician", as is anybody born in Galicia, or who lives in Galicia for a long period of time, but it's quite something else to create "Galician culture", which means situating an artistic or cultural product within certain parameters. For example, I think that in artistic or cultural activities where language is central (literature, theatre, the media), the bottom line these days is use of the Galician language: your choice of language not only places you within a collective identity and tradition, but also defines the public you're addressing. So I don't deny that Torrente Ballester or Cela are Galician; on the contrary, I believe they are Galician (at least insofar as they themselves and the public in general think they are). What I would argue is that strictly speaking, their work isn't "Galician literature", even when Galician themes, characters and settings predominate.

CP: A Galician artist is one who, whether born in Galicia or not, feels part and parcel of the civic, historical and cultural context that is conventionally described as Galician. In this light, they must assume, and incorporate into their work, the specificities of the context, and in doing so contribute, retrospectively, to defining it as a dynamic, shifting, but recognizable reality.

RP: I disagree to an extent with the way this question is formulated. National feeling is a personal question, unique and untransferable. You can't buy or sell national feeling, since we're talking about something intimate and spiritual, like religion. There are people who consider themselves denationalized (I'm not talking about self-styled apoliticians [sic]), whose daily attitude questions the existence of any national feeling within themselves. For the rest of us, when somebody feels themselves to be Galician, Chinese or English, when they truly feel it, then *de facto* they are. I believe more in people than in administrative accreditation. To have a Galician identity card isn't enough for a musician or their work to be considered Galician. What I'm trying to say is that there isn't a single understanding of galeguidade and so it can't be granted through certificates, documents or armies. The historical examples of works rejected by an author's cultural community and nevertheless reclaimed as a synthesis of national feeling by future generations are well known. The concept of galeguidade, like those of culture or nation, also evolves with the shift from one generation to another.

MR: A Galician is anybody who decides to be Galician, especially if they produce work in Galician and/or from within Galicia. Of course, from my point of view, one can be Galician without necessarily having been born in Galicia. As for definition, I haven't really thought about it. I know that for me, being Galician is part of the

co-ordinates of my life, but I don't feel especially rooted in Galician culture, my references aren't limited to it, nor do I always work in Galician. I wouldn't have any definition other than the will to be Galician.

OSB: To answer the first question, a person who gives something of themselves to the community through their art can be considered a writer, musician, etc. Thus, skill in any activity is fundamental to the task, so that if somebody has been educated in Galician, read Galician literature, knows the different Galician artistic traditions, they can truly be said to produce Galician literature, Galician art or Galician music.

Regarding the second question, I think there are many people born outside Galicia, many from emigrant families who didn't come back to Galicia for different reasons, and now their descendants are returning. After working here for several years they are perfectly integrated and can be considered Galicians. Can the culture they bring to us be considered Galician culture? We'd have to answer that question on a case-by-case basis. First analyze their work and then decide. In the same way we could say that there are many Galician artists who emigrated to different parts of the world and kept alive the flame of Galician culture through music or other artistic means.

XT: A person becomes a Galician writer/artist when they take the conscious decision to try to become part of that artistic/cultural sphere, when they decide they want to participate in that public space, when they want their work to be understood and seen within that cultural sphere. Of course they can be born outside Galicia.

DV: Of course an artist can be considered Galician if they were born outside the country: in fact, Galician literature has a long tradition of non-native writers, going back to the Middle Ages. In principle, in the case of the verbal arts, the criterion is clear: those who use the Galician language as their medium of expression are Galician artists. But what about music or painting? I think that in those cases the "criterio filolóxico" could be complemented with a "criterio sistémico" (which would also work for literature), which is that the artists in question submit their products to Galician channels of distribution and canonization, thus recognizing the legitimizing role of these channels. I'm talking about publishing, criticism, literary prizes . . . that function in a Galician cultural context that doesn't, of course, have to coincide exactly with Galicia's geographical boundaries.

3. To what extent do you think that new technologies such as the Web will affect the future of cultural nationalism?

FA: New technologies are doubly useful for the literatures of stateless nations. On one hand, they are tools for achieving an equal footing in terms of connection, communication, information, and documentation. On the other hand, they bring down the (almost invisible) borders that states traditionally put up around literary work in "peripheral" cultures. Personally, when I published my last work of fiction (*Males de cabeza* 'Headaches'), before putting it on sale in bookshops, I decided to make it freely available for a month on the web in PDF format (<http://www.vieiros.com/malesdecabeza/>) and the experience showed me that I gained,

above all, new readers from far away, people who couldn't physically get hold of the books. In addition, blogs are now building on that dynamic and even opening up spaces for literary creation with contents that might sometimes be very difficult for commercial publishers to take on. I myself consider the texts on my blog (<http://www.cabrafanada.blogspot.com/>) to be rather peculiar.

XLB: New technologies could become a powerful enemy of minority cultures if these cultures are feeble or lack strength. This isn't the case with Galicia, which is making full use of new technologies to disseminate its own culture.

TC: New tools for the transmission of knowledge always bring previously unknown challenges. Even here there are different categories, for example, a language like Galician isn't going to conquer the world from English. It means we have to create a web presence worthy of our culture that means we won't lose ground – especially among the young – and use the opportunity to reach people far from Galicia who care about us. In Biblos, we've used this as a way of attracting members from Brazil to Japan, passing through the Azores, USA, Britain, Ireland, Italy . . . while they're few in number, they show that Galicia's web presence ought to open more doors to the outside world.

LC: No idea. I'm in favor of all possible means of expression. I'm not a nationalist, or at least I'm a very moderate and pragmatic one. As an exclusive program it horrifies me. Galicia is a territory where several cultures coexist, the one that's expressed in Galician and the one expressed in Spanish. Any attempt to diminish this reality seems out of place to me. So I don't believe in cultural nationalism.

MCRV: Technologies are already affecting cultural nationalism. The web is generating new spheres of social interaction, places where people meet, discuss, argue, debate . . . It can even contribute to organizing new conceptions of public space, and thus become an important manifestation of civil society. By becoming part of the web, peripheral cultures leave evidence of their participation in an unstoppable process (of course, just because the process is unstoppable doesn't mean it isn't questionable). In the Galician virtual sphere it's important to highlight the role played by the channel Vieiros, a point of reference for news at decisive moments such as the Prestige crisis or the last Galician presidential elections, which opened up a new political epoch after the dark years of Fraguismo. This said, I also think we should be cautious before uncritically celebrating the transformative power of new technologies. This celebration, one of the new creeds of contemporary societies, conceals the fact that all media serve certain interests. Our attitude should be, then, one of vigilance. And the poetic and political counsel of Xosé Luis Méndez Ferrín in *Contra Maquieiro* (2005): “limpo coma o design/é o resplendor no ecrán da computadora/cando apagamos e saímos/non o esquezas un pelicano dorme na pantalla”-“clear as the design/is the glow on the computer screen/ when we switch it off and leave/ don't forget a pelican sleeps there.”

ALA: Any language or culture that doesn't come on board with new technologies will be condemned to survive only as part of the archaeological state heritage.

HM: New technologies could be considered a threat, because of the possibility that they will be at the service of the hegemonic languages and cultures, and thus contribute to reinforcing their capacity for control from a few centers of global power and the dominance of the politico-cultural oligopolis. At the same time, however, they can be a source of opportunities: they bring down the production and distribution costs of certain cultural assets, are adaptable to small-scale communication, create multipolar, decentralized rather than hierarchical and centripetal connections. Some technologies, in particular, clearly facilitate multilingualism: automatic translators and correctors, voice synthesizers . . .

CP: New technologies may help to raise the visibility of the defining elements of a "national culture", but at the same time they can also serve to dilute them. It's a contradiction but, being inevitable, we have to confront it positively.

RP: Cultural nationalism is not the same as national culture. To speak of cultural nationalism is to speak of a militant attitude and the Internet as a tool for organization, communication, information, exchange and propaganda and susceptible to whoever takes advantage of it, and I can't see why this should be any different for Galician nationalism.

MR: I think [new technologies] could be very important, because they allow the rapid, worldwide dissemination of works and ideas. I'd say that today it's a must to be online, which is one of the most effective channels for gaining visibility, and we shouldn't forget that the common languages of the web, like in any other exchange of goods or services, are English, Chinese, etc . . . that is, majority languages. As a result, one of the principal premises for generating this dissemination is the translation of projects, something that has a substantial effect on some forms of cultural production (literature), while it has less impact on others (audiovisual media, for example).

OSB: New technologies exist. They are tools we use and work with every day. We should welcome anything that helps the diffusion of Galician culture and thought. It's the same with the cultures of other countries. The human mind is never exhausted and wants to know more and more every day. We want to see what happens in different places around the world, have facts at our fingertips, without wasting time. At the same time, we should be retaining something of Galician idiosyncrasies every time we put something on the Web.

XT: The net, new technologies, open up not only new ways of making art/ culture/ writing, but also the possibility of seeing the world in different ways. The net facilitates the creation of groups united by interests, affiliation, identities that overlap and compete for attention with existing national identities.

DV: I think that for minority cultures, the advantages [of new technologies] are greater than the drawbacks. With regard to cultural nationalism as a protectionist discourse, it seems to me that it will be largely deactivated by the inevitable vanishing of borders – symbolic as well as material – created by the development of the online world.

4. And, finally, what will be (or ought to be) the main characteristics of Galician culture (or the aspect of it with which you are most familiar) in the first decades of the 21st century?

FA: I'm convinced that the most important thing for the future of Galician literature is to lose its timidity and take the step towards internationalization. It sounds difficult, but as a reader and as a publishing professional, I think contemporary literature in Galician is comparable to anything else being written across the world today. What this means is that we need to believe more in our own possibilities and be brave enough to make ourselves known despite the limitations, which, of course, a stateless nation always suffers. Galician literature has reached maturity and now it can be read by readers all over the world.

TC: The ongoing language disputes in Galicia mean that there are not only linguists but also many writers with a greater knowledge of language issues than in other cultures. And our well-known tendency to put ourselves down and be hypercritical with ourselves has made us so demanding that the majority of our artistic products are right up there in terms of quality. That's why in terms of literature, where there are certainly examples of the highest quality, we need to follow in the footsteps of children's literature, "O bosque animado", Milladoiro, Carlos Núñez, Leiro, our symphony orchestras (and a long et cetera), and open ourselves up to the outside world.

LC: Given what I said above, I clearly don't support the idea of a cultural program, for any country or for any nationality. I believe that people should receive the broadest and most polished education possible for them to develop freely. I believe that academic studies and the cultivation of our own history should be deep and exhaustive, but these disciplines, the humanities, history, art, which should have all the expansion and support possible, should not affect the present, cannot deform the present. Each to their own, creators to their freedom, scholars to their scholarship. We all have opinions, but we should stick to what we know.

MCRV: I'm going to talk about poetry and make some suggestions. Poetry must recover its connection with thought, in a strong, ambitious sense, to get out of this blind alley we once called postmodernity. No more whispered words, new bards, practitioners of the cult of the occult, defenders of the dialectic between meaning and form. The particular tension to which language is put in a poem turns poetry into a discourse opposed to appearances (appearances today, among other things, include the phantoms and simulacra generated by the mass media). I want and imagine 21st-century Galician poetry to be a new Enlightenment. I reclaim the intelligence of the poem. What exists is the subject matter. The rest is silence.

ALA: From a professional perspective, I think the importance of translation (and interpretation) is unquestionable in terms of the import and export of cultural forms, not only written literary texts, but any form of expression. In terms of intercultural mediation, there is still much to do and this is one aspect of linguistic and cultural normalization where on occasion, with few resources, we can make important steps forward. If we relate it with the previous question, by way of example, any web page created in our country should be in Galician by default and have versions in other languages so that people can get to know us better.

HM: I think that historically, Galician culture has demonstrated an enormous capacity for overcoming adverse conditions (40 years of fiercely centralist Dictatorship, and then some!). And it did so through a great effort not to fall into provincialism or to stagnate in rigid moulds. Now it faces the challenge of normalization. This means achieving full political-institutional recognition (in Europe, in Spain, in the Autonomous Community of Galicia itself), but also winning over Galician society, the sectors with the greatest resources as well as the general public. In brief, it has to modernize and diversify in order to reach the general public as well as the comfortably-off social minorities. To do so, Galician culture will need public policies aimed at encouraging cultural involvement. That is, the participation of all parts of society in the creation, reproduction and reception of a variety of cultural activities, not just the consumption of internationalized (that is, American) fluff. This in turn requires a diverse, developed infrastructure (museums, concert halls, cinemas, theatres) with the capacity to penetrate Galician society at grass-roots level. Finally, cultural creators will need to adapt to new media by creating autochthonous systems, for example in the audiovisual field and in terms of new information technologies, which of course implies a capacity for innovation.

CP: For me the most defining characteristic of Galician culture in the first decades of the twenty-first century has to be the same as in the last decades of the twentieth century: the language. It's not the only one, but without it "lo gallego" would become once and for all a sub-group of "lo español", which I mean in the most objective manner possible and with no intention of putting down or rejecting either of the concepts in inverted commas.

RP: I quote the maestro Fernando Lopes-Graça who, in response to a similar question about the Portuguese case in an interview for the journal *Principio* in 1935, gave the reply I transcribe here, having taken the license to substitute the name of Galiza for that of Portugal:

"(. . .) The few artists who have the courage to be of today, to affirm even a stuttering personality, those who possess, in reality, some originality (and there are some) do not count; the medium stifles them; and they end up conceding, or giving up, or killing themselves(. . .)

(. . .) So, the truth is this: In Galiza the artistic problem does not exist, although the problem of existence or of the artist's material subsistence may. But what we might properly call the artistic problem is this: investigation of the conditions, determinants and possibilities of artistic creation and contemplation, aesthetic debate,

the clash of artistic ideas, tendencies and currents, where you will find the real life of art – no, this problem does not exist here. It is sad, but it is the truth (. . .)”

MR: Galician audiovisual culture is very young. We haven't long had a cinema and video has been developing since the 90s. A good evidence of this is that many of us who make videos live outside Galicia, because in general, the new technologies applied to artistic production – especially audiovisual arts – haven't had much impact there. I think it's important for the public authorities, and private production companies, to strengthen the audiovisual industry, and for this, cultural institutions (museums like CGAC or MARCO, as well as TVG) should bear the greatest responsibility. I trust that the current changes proposed by PSdG-BNG, in terms of cultural policies and the new proposals they're coming up with, will bear fruit. They should empower not the culture of spectacle and exhibitionism, but rather in-depth projects that require research as well as the creation of infrastructures. And I hope that these policies will also open Galicia up to Europe and the rest of the world, that is, creating productions within Galicia, but with the capacity to compete internationally (strengthening international meetings and festivals, presenting Galician artists and producers abroad – as already happens, for example, with Basques and Catalans, creating grants and residencies, as well as exchanges with prestigious international institutions, translating and exporting works made in Galicia, supporting projects with worldwide appeal, etc . . .). Personally, for example, I know a little about the British scene, and I think it could be a reference point to some extent, and I also think that our productions could work over there, but of course, we need distributors, to generate interest for Galician artists and producers, a presence at festivals, etc . . . because going it alone is far beyond the abilities of many individuals.

OSB: As an editor working with Galician culture I want to be optimistic and think that we're on the way to cultural normalization. But this is going to depend on various factors, fundamentally political ones. The dynamization of all cultural aspects: music, theatre, art, sculpture, exhibitions, recovery of the non-material heritage, museums, dances, library networks, the book as a strategic sector, etc., has to happen harmonically. Education and culture are both key to the development of any society at any point in History. Another factor is for private entities, as far as they can, to empower all cultural aspects of Galicia. What we private entities have to do is collaborate with the public sector and exploit all synergies. The Sotelo Blanco group will continue working for Galician culture (and here I quote Álvaro Cunqueiro) so that our language might see a thousand more springtimes . . .

XT: I think that we've got a pretty big task ahead of us to make sure that the cultural/ artistic space plays a relevant role in Galicia. In my area, literature, the media's continual disdain and lack of interest, and the tiny social space literature occupies, are incredible. On going into a bookshop in Galicia, I'm still amazed to see books in Galician always hidden away in a corner. On the other hand, we creators also need to understand that if Galician literature/culture is going to survive, it will be because it offers something useful to Galicians of the present and the future. It will

make sense for it to survive if it offers ideas, gives answers, discusses themes that a particular society wants to talk and argue about.

DV: Galician literature – I’m going to limit myself to this – should stop trying to compete with “strong” literatures and concentrate its energies on offering original products with high added value that distinguish it from the international mainstream and make its consumption a conscious act. Of course, it should avoid mimeticism and doubling. It should be free from stagnation, but this doesn’t mean blindly striving for elitism.

Any other comments?

FA: When Galician writers travel abroad, to take part in festivals or literary events, we usually discover that the public in other countries hardly knows anything about our culture. Sometimes we have the sensation that the people we’re talking to think we write in a language and within a tradition that is almost anecdotal and marginal, that hardly produces anything. And that isn’t the case. Galician literature today has a very powerful literary production relative to its geographical extension, and we are building on a rich literary tradition that begins with medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric poetry, is rediscovered with Rosalía de Castro and includes authors like Álvaro Cunqueiro, Manuel Antonio, Luís Pimentel, Celso Emilio Ferreiro, Méndez Ferrín . . . As a result, one of the fundamental problems for the internationalization of contemporary Galician writers is, surely, external ignorance of our literary tradition and the absence of translations of our classics. This fact is due, without a doubt, to the fact that we belong to a culture without a state and therefore lacking the political and administrative infrastructure that would traditionally have given value to our literature. In that sense, it’s fundamental that the classics of Galician literature be translated so that readers (and all cultural agents) in other countries can reach us too.

Notes

* Questions were asked in Galician. Except where otherwise stated, responses were in Galician and were translated into English by Kirsty Hooper. We would like to thank Helena González Fernández of the Universitat de Barcelona for her assistance in setting up this Forum. We would also like to thank all of the participants for their time and their enthusiasm.

1 Original response given in Spanish.

2 Original response given in Spanish.