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Alternative Genealogies?: History and the Dilemma of “Origin” in Two Recent Novels by Galician Women¹

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The paucity of women novelists and short story writers in Galicia has long been a concern for scholars and readers anxious that women's experiences be part of the national narrative (see, for example, Carré Aldao, Queizán, González Fernández, Hooper “Girl”). Happily, however, the last two decades have seen a gradual increase in the publication of narrative works by Galician women writing in one or both of the Galician and Castilian languages. In the last three or four years, the situation has advanced even more rapidly: although until 2001 no woman had won Galicia's most prestigious literary prize, the *Premio Xerais*, three out of the last five winners have been female.² Female novelists are clearly beginning to make an impression on Galician readers and publishers, and their emergence provides an unprecedented opportunity to explore the important question of women's role in shaping Galicia's past, present, and future. For if the details of women's lives are frequently absent from the historical sources on which the national narrative is built,³ and their role in the national myths of origin consequently marginal or passive, then perhaps it is in literature, with all its imaginative potential, where those myths of origin can be most comprehensively rewritten. That is, because it is less closely tied to sources than academic history writing, literature can be a key tool in reimagining a national history from which the voices of women (not to mention other minority groups) have for so long been excluded. In consequence, the challenge for women writers in Galicia, as for any other marginalized group seeking to resolve the dilemma of origin, is to find ways to work with and beyond the traditional historical

and narrative models that have for so long shaped our stories about who we are and where we come from.

This essay looks at two recent novels by Galician women that offer radically different responses to this challenge: Marica Campo's Galician-language *Memoria para Xoana* (2002), and Luisa Castro's Castilian-language *Viajes con mi padre* (2003). The two novels depart from the same premise: a Galician woman returns home after a period of absence and, seeking to understand herself and where she has come from, begins to trace her family history. The similarity, however, ends there, as Campo and Castro take up opposing attitudes towards the sources to which they must turn and the interpretation to be made of them. In consequence, the two authors propose very different models for resolving the dilemma of origins. Campo's narrator adopts a position informed by commitment to both feminism and nationalism, celebrating her identity as a woman and a Galician and her connection with past, present, and future Galician women. Meanwhile, Castro's narrator comes to question not only these categories of identity, but also the assumption that recovering their history is the only key to resolving the crisis of individual existence. My contention is that in their attention to the epistemological basis of the individual female Galician's confrontation with history, Campo and Castro introduce a new dimension to narrative in Galicia (whether female- or male-authored) that should not go unnoticed. This is especially interesting as they are female inhabitants of a stateless nation, or "Double Minorities," to use the apt expression coined by Kathleen McNerney and Cristina Enríquez de Salamanca. Whether like Campo they embrace or like Castro recoil from this status, their negotiation of it means that their works provide

a novel perspective on broader theoretical debates about the ethics and pragmatics of writing and rewriting history.

The conflict between the desire of the individual to recover and to authorize her own history and the expectations within or against which she must work is of course very far from being limited to Galicia. Western feminists have been wrestling with the epistemological consequences of the competing claims of identification by gender and by nation since even before Virginia Woolf drew attention to it with her famous statement, in *Three Guineas* (1938), that "as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (107). Even Woolf herself recognized, however, that it is impossible for a woman to detach herself completely from her homeland, whatever its faults, since "when reason has its say, still some obstinate emotion remains, some love of England [...]" (109). The dilemma that Woolf so neatly expressed remains central to both feminist theory and women's experience today. As Lois A. West writes in her introduction to *Feminist Nationalism*:

We struggle as outsiders with the decision-making powers of the state, still overwhelmingly in male hands, while we view ourselves as an integral part of our country or national group. (xii)

Gisela Kaplan, in an essay from the same volume, is more pessimistic: "Feminism and nationalism are almost always incompatible ideological positions in the European context" (3).

The uneasy negotiation between the individual, gender and national identification within which both Campo's and Castro's narratives are framed is further

complicated by the way that the female body and the language of reproduction have been appropriated by so many nationalist discourses. In these discourses, even while real women barely figure in the public life of the nation, the figure of “Woman” is central as the mother of the nation, and the nation itself is figured through what Catherine Davies calls the “pervasive and paradoxical” trope of the family (427). As Ann McClintock has argued, the trope of “the Family of Man” that was so frequently employed during the crucial period of 19th-century nation formation was created by compressing the concepts of time, history, and evolution (38). This trope, as McClintock demonstrates, conceals the paradox that sustains so many national histories:

Historical progress is naturalized as an evolving family, while women as historical actors are disavowed and relegated to the realm of nature. History is [...] figured as *familial*, while the family as an institution is seen as beyond history. (39, emphasis McClintock’s)

The resulting problematic connection between individual experience and collective experience, family history and national history, underpins both Campo’s and Castro’s novels, although, as we will see, they respond to it in very different ways.

We should recognize, of course, that it is not only feminist critics who have sought to expose the biological metaphors that underpin so many discussions of nation and history. Both Nietzsche and Michel Foucault (in his commentary on Nietzsche’s “Genealogy of Morals”) have drawn attention to the efficacy of the trope of genealogy in the writing of history. They deconstruct

the concepts of “genealogy,” “history,” and “origin” to draw a distinction between what Nietzsche calls *Ursprung*, on the one hand, and *Herkunft* on the other (Foucault 79). *Ursprung* (“origin”) in this distinction represents the object of traditional genealogy, conceived of as a linear search for “the historical beginning of things” (79). In comparison, *Herkunft* (“descent”) and its corollary *Entstehung* (“emergence”) are different aspects of an alternative which, Foucault tells us, “does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity” (81). Through this distinction, Nietzsche and Foucault offer a useful framework for exploring the relationship between historians—or indeed any scholars—and their sources. Furthermore, as Michael Mahon has observed, Nietzsche’s form of genealogy investigates “not the chronological process of what happened in time, but the historical record, the narrative account of what happened in time” (95). In its attention to the relation between the narration of history and the real consequences of the resulting narrative for people’s lives, Nietzsche’s reformulation of genealogy may provide a productive means by which to reframe the constant struggle of feminist (and other marginalized) scholars to find a way to deal with what has gone before.

This reformulation may help us, too, when thinking about literature. Literary history is, after all, closely related to national history both in genesis and development. Furthermore, the two areas traditionally share a concern for regulation of the other: as Davies has noted,

one of the ways in which sexual difference is constituted as a principle and as a regulatory practice of social organization is through literary tradition. (424)

In consequence, we might align the teleological model employed by literary historians since the Nineteenth century (and its tacit omission of those-not-like-us) with the form of genealogy that Nietzsche identifies with the search for *Ursprung*. This model and its attitude toward origins are appropriated by many marginalized groups today, whether naively or, as Linda Hutcheon has argued in the case of literary histories, due to “political pragmatism born of interventionist desire” (6). What Nietzsche terms *Wirkliche* (“effective”) genealogy, on the other hand, is a form of writing history that, as Foucault observes, paradoxically “opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’” (77). In so doing, it offers possibilities that are less certain, but perhaps for that reason more promising. The implications of these possibilities in literature are outlined in Stephen Greenblatt’s response to Hutcheon’s defense of pragmatism. Greenblatt recognizes that such an appropriation can indeed be tactically successful, but refuses to endorse this strategy. Agreeing with Hutcheon that the move to appropriate such models has motivations other than simple nostalgia, he argues that in many cases, histories (of all kinds):

are about occupying a place, laying claim to authority over it, and tracing or inventing the roots that confer legitimacy upon this claim. And they are therefore [...] as much about forgetting as remembering. (57)

The question of this “forgetting” and the conflicting strategies of “tracing” and “invention” that are available to counter it is the shared premise of the two novels that form the focus of this essay, and to which I now turn.

Marica Campo’s novel *Memoria para Xoana* (“Memoir for Xoana”) was first published by the Espiral Maior publishing house in 2002. *Memoria* is a short novel, only 63 pages in length, and it is a first for Campo—now in her fifties—who is better known as a poet.⁴ The novel has been enthusiastically welcomed by the Galician literary establishment: even before its official publication, it won the 2001 edition of the Premio de Narrativa do Concello de Vilalba. More recently, in 2003, it was awarded the prestigious Premio da Asociación de Escritores en Lingua Galega. This award, which is voted for by writers—that is, by one’s peers—puts Campo in the elite group of Galician women who have won Galicia’s top literary awards. Given the relatively small number of female novelists in Galicia, and the unquestionably low profile of those who do publish (Hooper “Girl”), Campo’s feat not only increases expectations for the future of female-authored narrative in Galicia, but also raises questions about the reasons for the success of this particular novel. Campo herself has used the novel’s success to set out her vision of writing as an inherently female experience. In an interview given shortly after the novel’s first publication in 2002, she observes:

Unha novela curta que me premiaron no Concello de Vilalba elaboreina en seis días. Isto non quere dicir que a xestación non fose longa, senón que o parto foi rápido. E rápido tampouco quere dicir doado.

There was a short novel for which I won the Concello de Vilalba prize and I wrote it in less than a week. That doesn’t mean the period of

gestation wasn't long, but that the birth itself was quick. And quick certainly doesn't mean easy. ("Ficha" 2002b)

Campo's description of the novel-writing process in terms of conception and birth reveals how deeply felt is the novel's central metaphor. This takes the form of a story told by a mother to her unborn daughter, the Xoana of the title, explaining the contribution that each of the six preceding generations has made to the child's life-to-be. From the epigraph, taken from the French thinker Georges Gursdorf, which declares that "Nacer é ser entregados á palabra" "To be born is to be given over to the word," the generations are shaped and bound together by the power of the word. This is manifested through the telling of many different kinds of stories, which form the links in the chain leading from the blind ballad singer Pepa Pérez and her (unnamed) mother, down to the cosmopolitan, classical violinist narrator and her unborn child. The question of language is at the centre of the history that Campo narrates, and which the narrator seeks to teach her child to read. Like the history of Galician women's writing, however, this is a fragmented narrative where the key is to "adiviñar a miúdo, ler entre as liñas, interpretar os silencios"—"guess in many cases, to read between the lines, interpret the silences" (39).

The story that the narrator reconstructs for her unborn Xoana begins, like so many national and teleological histories, with a myth of origin. In this case, the myth is dramatized in the story of the blind balladeer, *Pepa a Toupa* ("Pepa the Mole"), the first named woman in the line. One night, while she is singing at the November fair in Monterroso, Pepa is raped by a nameless brute,

que, abusando de dúas escuridades, a da noite e a da cegueira da rapaza, lle descargara, brutal e mudo, a enxurrada da vida.

who, taking advantage of two darknesses, the night and the girl's blindness, had discharged into her, brutal and silent, the torrent of life. (9)

Pepa, as the transmitter of tales of "amores de cabaleiros e antigas doncelas" "love affairs between knights and old-fashioned damsels" (10), represents the link between the old world of myth and legend and the present day, which the narrator seeks to transmit to Xoana:

[cantaba] con voz limpa e harmoniosa coplas de crimes e romances vellos que un día has coñecer porque chos deixarei escritos, xunto con este testemuño.

[she sang] in a clear and harmonious voice, songs of crimes and old ballads that one day you too will know, because I will write them down for you, together with this testament. (10)

This transmission, however, is subject to interference—and not only the sort that arises when an oral text is committed to paper. The story that has come down from Pepa is not the "true" story, but, like any myth of origin, invented to serve a purpose. Because she believes that a child should be born of love, Pepa recasts her own story as one from the ballads she sings, and the brute as "Xerineldo, aquel *paxe do rei benquerido*" "Xerineldo, that *page so well beloved of the King*":

Simplemente o vestiu coa roupaxe dun soño, Xerineldo, o protagonista dun romance carolinxiño que, de ter

existido, levaría arredor de mil anos no alén. Mais a miña tataravoa, que descoñecía estas cousas, sabía que un fillo ten que nacer do amor e por iso llo inventaba.

She simply dressed him in the clothing of a dream, Xerinaldo, the hero of a Carolingian ballad who, had he ever existed, would have been in the afterworld for about a thousand years. But my great-great grandmother, who didn't know about such things, did know that a child must be born of love and so she made the story up for her. (11, emphasis Campo's)

In consequence, as the narrator tells Xoana, their story is based on poverty and rape, but it is also based on a beautiful dream:

Quero dicir, Xoana, que vés da maior das pobrezaas e do máis brutal dos feitos, mais tamén do fermoso soño que poboaba a mente da miña tataravoa aquela noite de novembro [...]. Fixo, sen ela o saber, o que fan as ostras: envolver cunha substancia purísima o que é unha doenza ata convertela nunha perla.

What I mean to say, Xoana, is that you come from the greatest poverty and from the most brutal of acts, but also from the beautiful dream that inhabited my great-great grandmother's mind that November night [...] She did, without knowing it, what oysters do: place a pure substance around the source of the pain until it becomes a pearl. (12-13)

The novel, then, dramatizes the consequences of this dream through history, through the stories of Pepa's descendants:

her daughter Rosa, the beautiful, kept woman; Carolina, the widowed worker; Carmen, the political activist; and eventually the narrator herself, who leaves Galicia to travel the world as a concert violinist, until she too becomes pregnant and returns home to give birth.

Memoria para Xoana is in many ways a direct response to the frequently observed need for women's stories to be told if women's voices are to find a place in the national consciousness (Queizán). The novel illustrates both Hutcheon's pragmatic viewpoint that marginalized groups must employ the tried and tested structures of the dominant group, and the more familiar—if equally pragmatic—feminist argument that women's stories and histories need to be reconstructed, separated out, and put alongside the master narrative in order to raise their visibility. We see this in Campo's construction of a linear, maternal genealogy, from which men are all but excluded, but which briefly but regularly sparks into contact with the master narrative of Galician—and indeed Spanish—history. For example, the relationship of Carolina, fourth in the line of women, with the local cacique who is the father of her children, ends abruptly when he loses his three legitimate sons in the Carlist Wars (17). Meanwhile, Carmen—Carolina's daughter and the narrator's mother—is sent at the beginning of the Franco period to a convent in Zaragoza where, forbidden to speak her native Galician, she remains in silence for many months (26).

If the beginning of the story represents the myth of origin recast from a female perspective, the end of the story dramatizes the power that can be drawn from that myth and the reclamation of one's own heritage, one's own language and self-image. Returning to Galicia, the narrator discovers that there is

little room for the freedom of imagination that drives her narration and her existence. Instead, it is systematically demonized, she says, by the media above all:

Desgraciadamente habrá outros que si te pretenderán suplir á hora de pensar. Nunca lles verás o rostro, mais están aí, múltipodos e tentaculares. Refírome aos medios de comunicación, refírome a ese Gran Irmán que profetizara Orwell. Non enganan, repara nalgún dos seus lemas: *Deixe que nós pensemos por vostede*.

Unfortunately there will be others, others who will try to think for you. You'll never see their faces, but they're there, many-footed and tentacled. I'm talking about the media, I'm talking about Orwell's Big Brother. They don't deceive, look at one of their slogans: *Let us think for you*. (53, emphasis Campo's)

For the narrator, literature is the principal means of counteracting the effects of this Orwellian drive to conformity, and she passionately recommends it to her daughter:

Libre te quero, miña nena, coa liberdade que dá o coñecemento e a dúbida. Libre despois de percorreres, de te faceres dona dos pensamentos que nos deixaron escritos milleiros de mulleres e homes que non pasaron pola vida en balde. Teño que che dicir que me gustaría que foses unha boa lectora. Repara en que eu, a miúdo, apoio os meus pensamentos no que idearon outros e, daquela, xa son menos cativos.

I want you to be free, my child, with the freedom that comes from knowledge and doubt. Free after

studying and becoming mistress of the thoughts left written down for us by thousands of women and men who didn't live in vain. I have to tell you, I hope you're a good reader. See how I so often support my ideas with those of others: that way they seem less insignificant. (54)

The narrator has experienced this freedom for herself, in her friendship with Laura, a Galician novelist and academic who is the antithesis of her Petrarchan namesake. It is one of Laura's own stories, which provides the narrator with her consciousness-raising moment:

a historia dunha muller que se miraba no espello e non se vía, afeita como estaba a mirarse só nos ollos dos homes.

the story of a woman who looked into the mirror and could not see herself, accustomed as she was to viewing herself only through the eyes of men. (57)

Laura is notorious for never finishing her stories, and leaves this one at the point where the woman meets a passing Amazon, who teaches her how to see her real self. Motivated by the resonance with her own life, the narrator takes up the task of continuing the tale. One day after her encounter with the Amazon, the narrator writes, the woman sees her reflection in a stream:

Era un rostro novo, intelixente e ledado, ben distinto daquel inxenue e case aparvado que lle devolvían os espellos dos homes. Moralexa, como dirían nos vellos libros: nunca dependas da ollada de ninguén para seres feliz.

It was a young face, intelligent and happy, far from that ingenuous and almost foolish face that men's mirrors reflected back at her. Moral, as they would say in old-fashioned books: never depend on anybody else's gaze to be happy. (58)

Taking inspiration from this, the narrator sets out to rediscover Galicia, Galician history and literature, ashamed that although she has been around the world and visited Petra, Athens, Berlin and Paris,

non me eran familiares aínda Santa Eulalia de Bóveda, Santa Mariña de Augas Santas, ou a Frouxeira.

yet I was not familiar with Santa Eulalia de Bóveda, Santa Mariña de Augas Santas, or A Frouxeira. (61)

Each Galician item she rediscovers is described in terms of an equivalent from the Western canon. She soon discovers that it is not only her own reflection that she has been unable to see accurately. Even the poet Rosalía de Castro—the only woman to appear in the Galician literary canon—had appeared as Castilian scholars had depicted her, “co rostro desfigurado, presentado como unha muller de sensibilidade doentía” “with her face disfigured, presented as a woman of morbid sensibilities” (62). In fact, as feminist scholars have argued in the last two decades, Rosalía's public image as a nostalgic, melancholy pessimist belies her true nature as a radical and multifaceted intellectual, to be spoken of in the same breath as Virginia Woolf:

Despois descubrira e sigo a descubrila como a xenial e irrepitible escritora que e, esa poliédrica e fulgurante pedra preciosa que sempre amosa novas caras.

Then I discovered her, and am still discovering her, as the extraordinary, incomparable writer she is, a polyhedric and glittering jewel who constantly displays new faces. (62)

The recuperation and legitimization of Galician cultural icons in terms of the Western canon reaches its peak in the very last paragraph of the novel, when Pepa's old fiddle is discovered to be:

un Stradivarius co certificado de autenticidade que me expediu a casa Hills de Londres por unha cantidade semellante ao seu prezo.

a Stradivarius with a certificate of authenticity issued to me by Hills of London for a quantity similar to its price. (63)

Campo thus sets up the novel's conclusion to speak for both elements of the “double minority,” arguing that just as Galician women must be reincorporated into Galician history, so Galicia itself must take its rightful place alongside the Western canon.

Memoria para Xoana is not a subtle text, but it is a powerful one, not least because it so directly dramatizes many of the abstract questions currently preoccupying literary scholars. It does so by juxtaposing the story of seven women with the grand narrative of Galician history and identity, pointing up places where that narrative must be re-evaluated and, without doubt, re-imagined. *Memoria* adopts the standard form of genealogy as a linear search for origins: that is, what Foucault calls “Historian's history” (87) and Hutcheon calls “pragmatism” (6). In so doing, it reflects the dangers pointed up by Greenblatt: that however good their intention, the cynical co-option of existing

strategies “robs the hitherto marginalized groups of their revolutionary potential” (60). In the light of Greenblatt’s observation that the national myth is based, so often, on the act of forgetting rather than of remembering, it becomes increasingly difficult to read Pepa’s “beautiful dream” as the harmless, empowering romanticization Campo would have us see. Instead, it becomes an act of delusion or deliberate concealment that locks Pepa and her descendants into what Foucault calls “the endlessly repeated play of dominations” (85), perpetuating the hierarchies of power that enabled the rape in the first place.

The second novel I want to look at explores similar questions, but from a radically differing starting point. Luisa Castro’s fourth novel, *Viajes con mi padre*, was published by Spain’s prestigious Planeta publishing house in 2003. Although it begins with a similar premise—a Galician woman’s return to her childhood home after years spent living abroad—*Viajes* adopts a radically different position in its presentation of that woman’s relationship with her family and its history. In many ways, this difference stems from the authors’ very different attitudes towards the role and responsibilities of the writer. Unlike Campo, who is a declared feminist and nationalist, and whose commitment (as we have seen) indisputably drives her work, Castro portrays herself as a deliberately unaligned individualist:

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 ex-

perience alone can bring us to the collective and the universal, and not the other way round. (Hooper, “Forum” 111)

Castro’s decision to publish her novels (to date) in Spanish, despite being a native Galician speaker, is a very public symbol of her desire to avoid the potential pitfalls of being recognized and interpreted as a “nationalist” or “minority” writer:

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. (Hooper, “Forum” 117)

This position clearly informs Castro’s response to the problem of how the individual confronts her past and, in consequence, her present and future. Whereas Campo’s novel is structured around the shared secrets between women, *Viajes*—as is perhaps implicit in the mother’s absence from the title—focuses on the difficulty of relationships between mothers and children. At the same time, where *Memoria* focuses on the continuities between past and present, the fragmented, non-linear narrative of *Viajes* reflects its story of the frustrated and frustrating search for a meaningful past.

When Castro’s narrator makes her return journey to Galicia and to the family home, she realizes as never before that she and her mother are polar opposites and share none of the continuities Campo’s narrator finds with her female forebears. In acute contrast to the centrality in Campo’s novel of the myth and metaphor of birth,

when Castro's narrator attempts to piece together a similar story, she discovers that her mother, obsessed with the future, cannot even tell her daughter the time, place, or date of her birth:

¿Dónde estaba escrito, en qué lugar y de qué modo me había dado mi madre a luz? Si mi padre no me hablaba de su trabajo, mi madre nunca me dijo nada acerca de esta cuestión familiar y doméstica. Aún hoy, cuando pregunto no ya por razones sentimentales, asuntos que mi madre despeja ya como si en su cerebro no hubiera lugar para semejantes elucubraciones, sino por asuntos más prácticos como la fecha y la hora de mi nacimiento, su respuesta suele ser un invariable y molesto "no me acuerdo," como si mi nacimiento no hubiera sido algo experimentado sino acaecido, sin antes ni después y sin proceso intermedio. (15-16)

The mother is openly hostile to the idea of reconstructing the past:

"Para ella," says the narrator, "todos los descubrimientos estaban por llegar, nada en el pasado era digno de ser contado, la vida más que nada se parecía a un folio en blanco que había que estrenar todos los días y en el que se debía perseverar. (149)

Her daughter's desire to reconstruct the past is not to be celebrated, but bemoaned as "un pobre romanticismo, horas perdidas" (149). In fact, the only person who will help the narrator in her research is her maternal grandmother, who sings her old Galician ballads and tells her about her own father, who could read and write, and who emigrated to Cuba, where, so the story goes, he became a doctor. However, the

grandmother's own children—the narrator's mother and her siblings—do not believe her stories, claiming she "fantaseaba con un pasado glorioso y con un padre ilustrado, y que nada de lo que decía era cierto, que se lo inventaba todo" (12). This, the narrator tells us, is because having grown up in the postwar depression, their capacity for fantasy has been diminished, and "no pudieran imaginarse que en algún tiempo las cosas habían sido de otra forma" (12). In contrast, the attraction of the grandmother's story for the narrator lies in her suspicion that her great-grandfather may have been—like herself—a teller of stories: "A mí aún me seducía más la idea de que mi bisabuelo fuera un impostor, un inventor de su propia ficción" (13). She is captivated by the possibility that history is less about recovering some essential truth (was he or was he not a doctor? where? when?) than about finding a usable past that will help to make sense of the present. In this, her attitude echoes Foucault's assertion that if "the development of humanity is a series of interpretations," then "the role of genealogy is to record its history" (86). It is the fact that her great-grandfather is a teller of stories, rather than the verifiable facts of the stories that he tells, which provides a context for her own vocation as a writer, and this is the way she likes it: "No he investigado más ni ganas que tengo" (13).

Despite her natural tendency towards this novel interpretation of genealogy, however, the narrator finds herself drawn towards the more conventional, linear genealogy, tempted by the empowering possibilities that Hutcheon and Campo, among others, have emphasized. This desire for knowledge is intrinsically connected with her vocation as a writer: it is when she returns from her first major trip, to collect her first literary prize, that "viajar al pasado se convirtió para mí en una obsesión" (148). The local cemetery

paradoxically provides a location where the conflict between this obsession and her mother's rejection of it is played out. As her mother, thinking only of the future, shops for a niche in the cemetery big enough for the whole family, the narrator scrutinizes all the surrounding gravestones for illustrious ancestors who will give her a foundation with which to nourish "mi currículum de escritora recién nacido" (148). She is acutely aware that there is no room for conciliation between their positions, and that in pursuing her own goal, she risks destroying everything her mother holds dear:

Al tiempo que ella daba por concluida su obra funeraria, yo empecé con la mía. Mientras ella se empeñaba en el revestimiento de nuestro nicho, mientras ella colocaba en su mente un ladrillo encima de otro para taponar todos los orificios del panteón familiar, yo me empecé en el trabajo contrario, en socavar las paredes y los cimientos del edificio fantasma de nuestro pasado, en desenterrar a los muertos. (146)

This description echoes Foucault's defense, in his interpretation of Nietzsche, of the disruptive possibilities of genealogy:

the search for descent is not the erecting of foundations [...] it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified, it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself. (82)

This is exemplified in the narrator's trip to the local archive, where she finds her own birth certificate and discovers for the first time that all her life she has been celebrating on the wrong day:

mi partida de nacimiento [...] constaba que yo había nacido el día 9 y no el 10, a la una de la madrugada, y de dos progenitores que a su vez tenían ambos un padre y una madre. (148)

When she returns home to share her discoveries, her mother "me recibía en casa con el rostro torcido" (149), stung in part by the "disturbance" and "fragmentation" of things she believes comfortably consigned to an immutable past.

Although she spends weeks in the local record office, the narrator soon discovers that in the absence of memories, archives can only be of limited assistance. While a committed writer such as Campo might have extrapolated from this that the institutions of Galician literature are of limited assistance in the search for women's voices in the past or the present, *Viajes* goes in a completely different direction. The narrator maps out her family tree, but unlike Campo's, which starts with the founding myth and moves relentlessly forwards into the future, Castro's narrator must travel backwards, painstakingly, piece by piece, in search of a founding myth that she herself is forced to construct. And while Campo's narrator celebrates her female heritage, Castro's is frustrated by the absence of male names among her ancestors: "Todas eran mujeres, y con frecuencia su nombre era el mismo" (150). Unlike Campo's narrator, who draws strength from her female forebears, Castro's believes that "Aquel ejército de mujeres solas aún colaboraba menos que mi madre en mis propósitos de rescate de un pasado heroico," which disappears into the "tumba colectiva" of their uniformity (150). Instead of the rich, heterogeneous multiplicity of histories she is looking for, and a family tree that continues spreading upwards and outwards, she finds that her history:

se volvía unidireccional, las ramas no se abrían en ángulo recto, sino que se disparaban como una flecha hacia lo profundo, cada eslabón era un eslabón perdido, y aquel organigrama dejó de interesarme. (150)

I read this passage as a rejection, in individualist terms, of the search for *Ursprung* as embodied in the teleological model that underpins histories such as Campo's, based on the recovery of a cohesive identity (whether this be national or feminist).

The narrator's disillusionment with the search for *Ursprung* is confirmed by her final foray into genealogical research. Having exhausted the possibilities of the local record office, and on the recommendation of her paternal great-grandmother's ghost, she moves on to the Cathedral archive in Mondoñedo (163). However, the manuscript she is given is dusty and illegible; she can neither read the script, nor understand the Latin, and her grandmother's ghost does not reappear to help her (168). In fact, the only good thing to come out of her visit, she says, is that she meets her first lover, Gregorio, who is the expert she consults about the only word on the manuscript she thinks she can understand—"reo" or "criminal"—which, although it inspires all sorts of romantic stories in her mind, turns out rather more mundanely to be a standard abbreviation for the name "Rodríguez" (186). In other words, the mysterious origin, the *Ursprung* she was seeking, is no more than a chimera, concealing a far more prosaic reality.

Viajes con mi padre roundly rejects both the pull of identity politics and the pragmatic, teleological forms of history so often invoked in their name, as Castro makes the point that the value of genealogy lies in its opening up rather than closing down of possibilities. In the final passage of the novel we discover that

the narrator had initially planned to give the narration over to her grandmother's child-sized doll, the grotesque "Ernesto Balbino," who, "sin sangre ni hígado" (227), would have performed the traditional role of the historian as an objective mouthpiece for the past. The narrative in front of us, however, is compiled from personal journals, from conflicting memories, from family stories partially remembered or wholly forgotten. The decision to choose fragmentation and possibility over coherence and certainty recalls Greenblatt's argument that the "revolutionary potential" of new histories is found in:

the impurity of languages and ethnicities, in tangled lines of access and blockage, in the flesh-and-blood intensity of loss, assimilation, and invention, and in the daring intersection of multiple identities. (60-61)

Perhaps reflecting the author's frequently-expressed distrust of identity politics, the narrator comes to an understanding of history which echoes that expressed by Foucault, in his declaration that "the purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation" (95).

In conclusion, *Memoria para Xoana* and *Viajes con mi padre* offer two very different models for resolving the dilemma of the individual's confrontation with history. Where Campo draws strength from communities of identity and their associated models of history and narrative, Castro rejects the pull of identity politics in favor of the strength the individual can draw from what Greenblatt describes as "impurities," "inventions" and "intersections" (60-61), and Foucault as "disturbances" and "fragmentations" (82). Both approaches are potentially empowering, but also potentially

risky. The risks are perhaps most evident in Campo's celebration of the chimerical myth of origins, but present also in Castro's faith in the power of individual experience to resist the influence of the networks within which it must inevitably reside. Through their attention to the epistemological basis of the individual's confrontation with history, these two novels provide a basis for examining long-held assumptions about how we go about telling the stories that help us find out who we are. And, just as excitingly, they offer the prospect that Galician culture in the Twentyfirst century will, as it should, become ever more challenging, contradictory, and multi-voiced, as ever more previously marginalized writers follow in Castro's and Campo's footsteps, and "come home."

Notes

¹ An early version of this paper was presented at the V Annual Conference of Women in Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin-American Studies (WISPS), held at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, in the Spring of 2004. I am grateful to my WISPS colleagues for the subsequent animated and very constructive discussion.

² The first female winner of the Premio Xerais since its inception in 1984 was Marilar Aleixandre, for *Teoría de caos* (2001). The following year, Inma López Silva won for *Concubinas* (2002). The most recent female winner to date is Teresa Moure for *Herba moura* (2005).

³ Some excellent recent studies are now beginning to remedy this. See, for example, Allyson M. Poska's fascinating *Women & Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia* (Oxford UP, 2005).

⁴ Campo's published works include: *Tras as portas do rostro* (A Coruña: Baía Edicións, 1992; poetry); *Confusión e morte de María Balteira* (A Coruña: Baía Edicións, 1996; short stories); *Pedínche luz prestada* (A Coruña: Espiral Maior, 2001; sonnets; Premio Fiz Vergara Vilariño do Concello de Vilalba).

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